Developing an Entrepreneurial Training Program

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WABN
WORCESTER ALBANIAN BUSINESS NETWORK

Abstract

Immigrant are more likely to become entrepreneurs, however, they lack support in the early stages of their entrepreneurial journey. Entrepreneurial training programs allow for teaching both the technical and social aspects of entrepreneurship. This project developed and implemented a five-week training program. This training program taught aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs about the journey of an entrepreneur, including topics such as ideation, customers, and business structure. A mock business assisted the evolution of the participants' skills. The program cultivated a pitch presentation by the participants to a panel of judges. Based on the participant feedback and our experience, the team provided WABN with recommendations for future renditions of this program to assist aspiring entrepreneurs in the Worcester community.

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Training Aspiring Immigrant Entrepreneurs

In the United States, 25% of all business start-ups are owned by immigrants, despite them only making up 13% of the population, as shown in Figures 1 & 2. Immigrants have a strong motivation to succeed in their entrepreneurial ventures due to the challenges they faced relocating and assimilating to a new culture (Kerr & Kerr, 2019). In addition, second-generation immigrants share some of these traits, especially the ones related to opportunity recognition, entrepreneurial motivation, risk propensity (Chababi, 2014). However, evidence suggests that immigrant startups fail at a slightly higher rate than native-born businesses (Fairlie, 2012). Most immigrant entrepreneurs fail due to a lack of entrepreneurship education and preparation (Coonan, 2016).
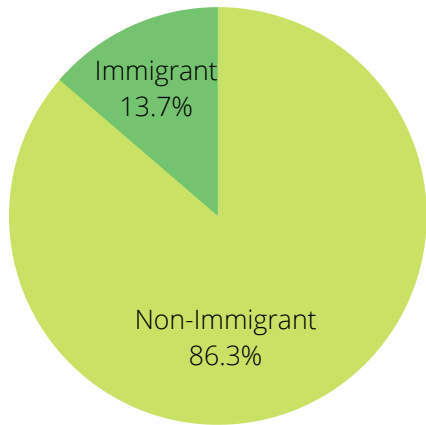
Figure 1: The percentage of the US. population that is immigrants or native born (Budiman et. al, 2020)
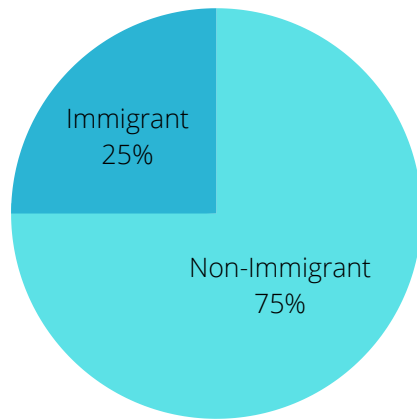
Figure 2: Percentage of businesses opened in the US by immigrants and Non-Immigrants

Over the past 40 years, entrepreneurship programs have thrived due to the global wave of entrepreneurial development. Entrepreneurial education and training provide entrepreneurs with tools that will help further develop their business and aid them through challenges as they arise. Entrepreneurship programs have been implemented by NGOs to support these immigrant entrepreneurs in their early stages of starting a business (Coonan, 2016).

The Worcester Albanian Business Network (WABN) is an organization that works to mentor aspiring entrepreneurs, support local businesses, and provide a network for those looking to expand their business (WABN, 2020). WABN would like to develop its capacity to train aspiring entrepreneurs about what starting a business entails, so they can make more informed decisions on their business ventures or decide whether to start one at all. The goal is to help aspiring entrepreneurs create an understanding of ideation (creating a business idea), the basics of business finances, and envision how their business will fit into the market in terms of customers and competition.

This project developed a five-week entrepreneurial training program to aid aspiring entrepreneurs in learning about the early stages of entrepreneurship, such as ideation/product creation and the entrepreneurial mindset. We created and tested the program with a group of three participants, so that WABN can implement the modules in the future. The modules focused on four critical areas of early-stage entrepreneurial development: ideation and problem identification, customers and competitors, risks and costs, as well as finance. The team analyzed the execution of the program by evaluating the progression of technical skills and social competence through a mock business. The program was revised through focus groups and instructor-observation, resulting in revisions to the program structure. WABN received the revised program, which they hope to implement in future renditions of this program to assist local aspiring entrepreneurs in the Worcester community.

"50% of all business fail within the first five years" - US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Immigrants and Entrepreneurship

Immigrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs, regardless of if they are first or second generation (Coonan, 2016; Flores 2013). First generation refers to the immigrants that have permanently moved to the host country in adulthood, while second generation Americans are native-born children of immigrants or those who migrated before the age of 21 (Flores, 2013). While some second-generation immigrants (SGI) were born in the US and did not have the struggles of the immigrant journey, the second generation shares some the same entrepreneurial strengths as the previous generation, such as opportunity recognition, entrepreneurial motivation, risk propensity (Chababi, 2014; Kerr & Kerr, 2019). In New York, the self-employment rate of second-generation immigrants is actually higher than first generation by 5%, displaying that second-generation immigrants are just as likely or even more likely to become entrepreneurs (Flores, 2013; Kerr & Kerr, 2019).

During recent years, there has been a surge in entrepreneurship and "side hustling" (Laney, 2013). Foreign immigrants move to the US with economic goals, which tend to foster entrepreneurial passion and drive. This opportunity-based migration relates to the idea that many people migrate to seek new opportunities not offered in their home country (Zolin, 2016). One example is the Albanian immigrant community in the United States (Bonacci, 2019). For Albanian immigrants, the opportunity to work for themselves and strive for the best appealed to many, as the Albanian government had full control of job availability. Albanians who then decided to migrate to the US (Bonacci, 2019). For Albanian immigrants and others migrating to the US, the immigration journey and struggles to assimilate in a new country foster an entrepreneurial personality (Kerr & Kerr, 2019; Laney, 2013; Mikula, 2020; Zolin, 2016). In general, the entrepreneurial personality is characterized by resilience and tolerance for risk, which, according to researchers, stems from the migration journey and beginning life in a new country with little to no resources (Mikula, 2020).

Today's job market is one of the most competitive in decades, driving immigrants to entrepreneurship (Laney, 2013; Mikula, 2020; Zolin, 2016). However, the most common struggle for immigrants is the lack of recognition of their foreign education or relevant employment experience in the host country. Most professions do not acknowledge foreign qualifications. Between 2009 to 2013, 7.6 million U.S immigrants educated to the university level in foreign countries or in the US were unemployed or employed at unskilled jobs (Nacamulli, 2017). Researchers have branded the lack of jobs for educated immigrants as "Brain Waste" (Nacamulli, 2017; Mattoo, 2008). These factors, such as today's job market and brain waste all push immigrants toward starting their own enterprises (Kerr & Kerr, 2019; Laney, 2013; Mikula, 2020; Zolin, 2016).
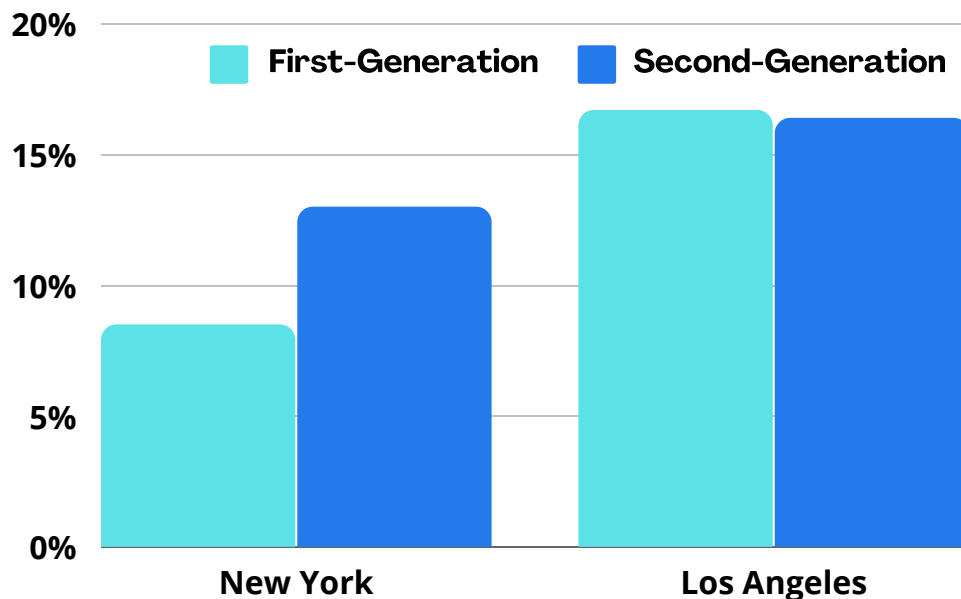

Figure 3: The percentage of self-employment amongst first and second generation immigrant in New York and Los Angeles (Flores, 2013).

Entrepreneurial Theories and Education

The literature on entrepreneurship tends to focus on the traits approach, formation of new ventures, studies of successful strategies, and environmental factors, however, there is no consensus on what constitutes an entrepreneur (Bull & Willard, 1993; Doris & Irena, 2013; Van de Ven, 1993). One approach to defining an entrepreneur is the trait theory which focuses on studying the "psychological traits of people identified as entrepreneurs" (Bull & Willard, 1993). Researchers also concentrate on the formation of new ventures, where the strategies utilized by those who create businesses are used to define entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is also characterized by studying successful entrepreneurs to analyze the reasons for their economic prosperity (Doris & Irena, 2013). Other theories study the effect of environmental factors, such as financial support, government policy and program, openness and competitiveness in the domestic market, and cultural and social norms, on entrepreneurial actions where external drivers motivate a person to pursue entrepreneurship (Bull & Willard, 1993; Doris & Irena, 2013; Van de Ven, 1993). All of the entrepreneurial theories are summarized in Table 1.

Entrepreneurship is typically taught to minimize the risks for start-up businesses and to prevent business failures over the long term (Kuratko & Morris, 2018). Entrepreneurship education provides entrepreneurs with tools that will help further develop their business and aid them through challenges as they arise. Education combines the entrepreneurial theories of the traits approach, study of successful businesses, and study of venture formation into various topics. For aspiring entrepreneurs, these programs have curricula that are focused on "finance, marketing, people management, etc. all with the slant of the start-up or small business focus" (Blass, 2018). The curriculum of these programs for aspiring entrepreneurs examines case studies of successful entrepreneurs to show and highlight important lesson takeaways (Mwasalwiba, 2010). The education program also covers the entrepreneurial journey by explicitly detailing the steps one must take to become an entrepreneur, as shown in Figure 4 (Carbonell et al., 2014).

Categories of Theory	Description
Definition of Entrepreneurs	Separate a non-entrepreneur from an entrepreneur
Traits Approach	Studies of psychological traits of people identified as entrepreneurs
Formation of New Ventures	Strategies utilized by those who started a new business
Studies of Successful Strategies	Studying successful entrepreneurs to analyze the reasons for their economic prosperity.
Environmental Factors	External drivers that motivate a person to pursue entrepreneurship

Table 1: Different categories of theory used to describe entrepreneurship (Bull & Willard, 1993).

Figure 4: The beginning steps of the entrepreneurial journey that aspiring entrepreneurs must go through

Entrepreneurial Education vs. Training

In addition to entrepreneurship education, researchers have developed entrepreneurial training programs that have similar goals but different program objectives. Education programs focus on building knowledge and skills for the purpose of entrepreneurship, while training aims to build general knowledge and skills in preparation of starting a business (Valeria et al., 2014). Training programs differentiate their content by focusing on business development but avoiding business management education. Research suggests that business management education traditionally trains students to operate within existing hierarchies and serve as managers of established firms, while entrepreneurship training goes beyond business education to address the unique conditions entrepreneurs face such as risk-taking and market adaptability (Valeria et al., 2014). The benefits of entrepreneurial training and education are compared in Figure 5.

Training programs also teach the general business knowledge and skills that business management education teaches, like accounting, marketing, risk assessment, and resource mobilization, but incorporate these topics into broader lessons that promote self-development. These training programs are not formal, degree-granting programs while education programs are typically degree-granting (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Training programs tend to be more personalized and focus on developing elements of a person's own skills such as confidence and effective communication, rather than just focusing on teaching entrepreneurial topics. This method of self-growth equips the participants with a broad skill set needed in any aspect of life including entrepreneurship (Garcia & Ustymchuck, 2020). Technical knowledge, however, is still taught successfully. An example is the implementation of entrepreneurial training programs in the United Kingdom (Cowley 2009). Due to these benefits , we developed an entrepreneurial training program.

Education
- Formal
- Lecture-based
- Certification

Technical Skills

Training
- Personal
- Practice-based
- Mentorship
- Informal
- Social Skills

Figure 5: Venn Diagram on the benefits of entrepreneurial educationcompared to training

Developing an Entrepreneurship Training Program

Across entrepreneurial training programs, there is enough variation that it can be difficult to find a common purpose from one program to the next (Mwasalwiba, 2010). Training programs may target potential entrepreneurs or practicing entrepreneurs. In terms of content organization, there are three major types of entrepreneurial training: education about enterprise, education for enterprise, and education in enterprise (Garcia & Ustymchuck, 2020). Education about enterprise focuses on teaching entrepreneurial theories, as shown above. Education for enterprise focuses on aspiring entrepreneurs for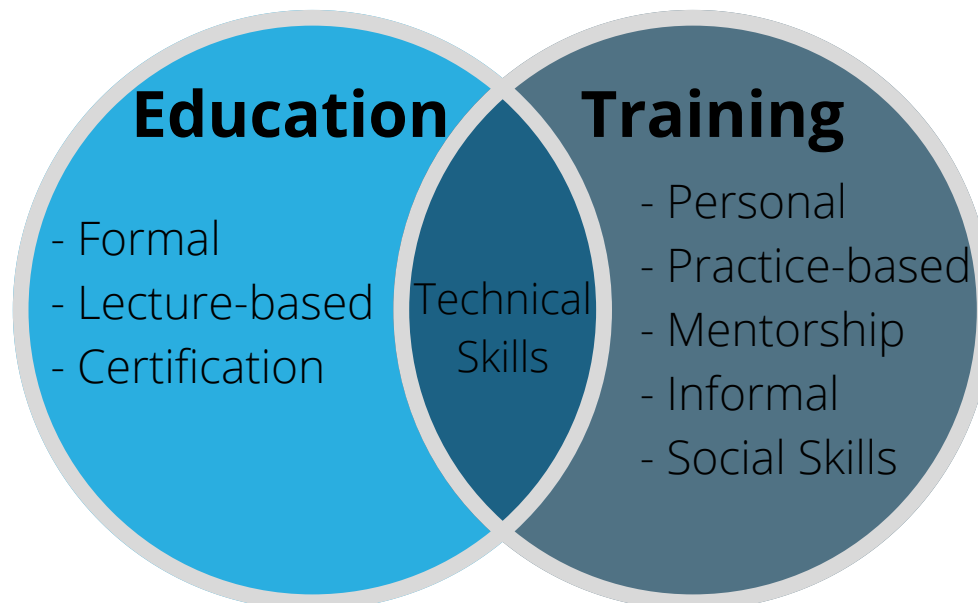 a career in self-employment, encouraging participants to set-up and run their own businesses. Education in enterprise teaches management training for established entrepreneurs and focuses on the future growth and development of a business (Garcia & Ustymchuck, 2020).

Entrepreneurship training programs focus on the development of personal skills and abilities. Common topics include "socio-emotional skills like self-confidence, risk propensity, motivation, resilience, and self-efficacy" (Valeria et al., 2014, p. 37). These personal skills that are developed can be defined as social competence and are associated with successful entrepreneurs (Garcia & Ustymchuck, 2020). Social competence is defined as the "array of skills that assist individuals in interacting effectively with others, including the ability to perceive others accurately, to express one's own emotions and reactions clearly, to be persuasive, and to make a good first impression on others" (Garcia & Ustymchuck, 2020, p.73).

An entrepreneur can use their social competence to create bonds with their community, other entrepreneurs, and any potential investors in their company. The strength and scale of these bonds, or networks, is often defined as an entrepreneur's social capital. In order to promote access to financial and business resources, an entrepreneur must strengthen both their social capital and social competence (Garcia and Ustymchuck, 2020).

The approach to entrepreneurial training is crucial in developing social capital and social competence. A personalized and informal approach to training benefits individual participants as opposed to a traditional, broad education. The best method is a skill-based approach, which seeks to train students about the mechanisms of running a business (Bennett, 2006; Mwasalwiba, 2010). A skill-based approach has been found to increase development of social competence. An example of the skills based approach is the improvement of confidence at performing a social task such as an elevator pitch. The repetition of performing elevator pitches builds confidence and instills the social competence to successfully perform the activity (Bennett, 2006). This learning technique is founded on a basis of active learning, where the participants learn by performing the actions as opposed to being lectured. Our project's training program heavily incorporated a skills-based approach into our training methods.
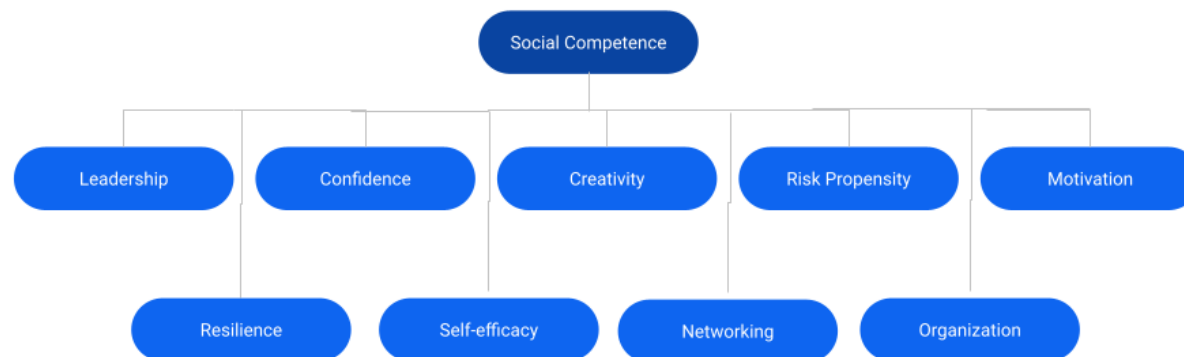

Figure 6: Tree diagram depicting the skills represented by social competence.

Online Training Programs

Digital technology is a valuable resource that promotes the accessibility of educational programs. Online education has grown, and digital entrepreneurship training is available to those who may not have access otherwise. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the increased use of online meeting programs allows for instant global reach and brings plenty of opportunities. A lack of transportation or cost may prevent potential entrepreneurs from participating in education programs, particularly in immigrant or poor communities (Lyons & Zhang, 2017). By creating a digital entrepreneurship education program, the students have an easy connection to the instructors/creators and affordable access to vast amounts of resources (Vorbach et al., 2019). The digital format forces self-enabled learning, which will help further develop the students' skills (Vorbach et al., 2019). However, there is no proof that an online format for entrepreneurial programs is more effective than traditional programs that are held in person. "When it comes to online-based entrepreneurship education, our knowledge about its effectiveness is very limited " (Moberg, 2021, p. 2). These online programs suffer from a phenomenon known as "Zoom fatigue" (Tony & Urbaczewski, 2021). Zoom fatigue is when students appear as "zombies" and do not respond or retain information taught in an online session (Tony & Urbaczewski, 2021). This state of mind occurs due to a lack of engagement and decreases the effectiveness of online entrepreneurial education (Tony & Urbaczewski, 2021). An example of zoom fatigue is shown in Figure 7.

In order to retain engagement, trainers typically employ three tactics that promote interest while still being able to effectively convey the information: expectation management, engagement, and nudging (Brown et al., 2020). Expectation management includes conveying clarity around the course intent, learning objectives, its value (the course rationale), and goals.
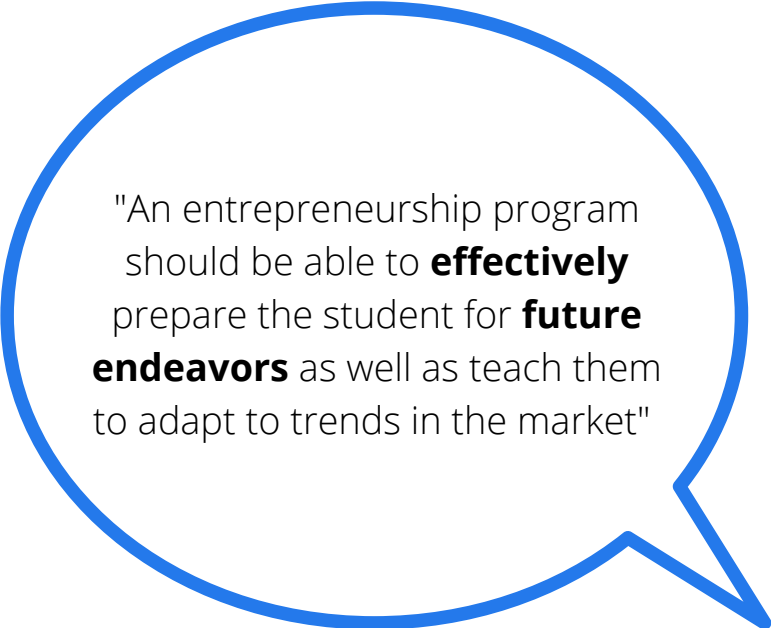
This approach helps to ensure a shared understanding between the instructors and participants regarding course aims, course relevance, connection to the real world, and clarity regarding key content.

Engagement refers to "strategically promoting resources; tracking and monitoring online engagement; and recognizing and affirming positive online engagement" (Brown et al., 2020, p. 11). Examples of this include complimenting and thanking participants for their engagement and continuing to use activities and teaching elements that appear to promote interest. The last tactic, nudging, is promoting active discussions by involving participants by speaking to them or asking them to participate. While nudging may not always be beneficial, it can promote engagement through discussions (Brown et al., 2020). Our program fought to overcome Zoom fatigue by using expectation management, engagement, and nudging to produce an engaging experience.

Figure 7: A person struggling with zoom fatigue.

Evaluation of Entrepreneurship Training

"An entrepreneurship program should be able to **effectively** prepare the student for **future endeavors** as well as teach them to adapt to trends in the market"

An entrepreneurship program should be able to effectively prepare the student for future endeavors as well as teach them to adapt to trends in the market (Wenninger, 2019). The most effective entrepreneurship programs are the courses with an experiential component that teaches students the skills necessary to develop their own businesses (Duval-Couetil, 2013). For entrepreneurial training programs, the evaluations are directly tied to their desired outcomes. There are three major groups of indicators which are relied on: rate of start-ups created, impacts on socio-emotional characteristics, and development of key business knowledge (Mwasalwiba, 2010; Pittaway & Edwards, 2012; Wenninger, 2018).

As our program focuses on the development of personal skills and technical skills, we evaluated our program based on the impact on socio-emotional skills and key business knowledge of our participants. For elements of the training program that are more qualitative, such as socio-emotional characteristics, instructor reflections can be used (Cathcart, 2014). The qualitative measurements instructors were looking for were changes in students' attitudes, perceptions, interest, self-efficacy, confidence, abilities, and skills towards entrepreneurship from the beginning of the program to the end. The course was considered successful if positive impacts were made on these qualities (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

In order to measure the impact on technical knowledge, an assessor will conduct an action-based, experiential, and learning-by-doing (ABELD) evaluation (Wenninger, 2019). An ABELD evaluation quantitatively measures if participants successfully performed tasks that had predetermined outcomes. An example of an ABELD assessment is having students create business products and a mock business for a specific economic sector of interest to present the knowledge learned during the education course (Solomon, 2007; Wenninger, 2019). The mock business presentation would be evaluated by determining if the participants incorporated the necessary knowledge learned from the course, such as customer base and revenue streams.

In addition to educators assessing the participants, it is also important to integrate the participants into the evaluation process by allowing them to provide feedback on what went well and what didn't (Duval-Couetil, 2013). Oftentimes the participants can provide invaluable input that can improve the experience of the education program (Duval-Couetil, 2013). This will let the educator revise the program and develop better teaching methods for the future.

Entrepreneurship in the Worcester Albanian Community
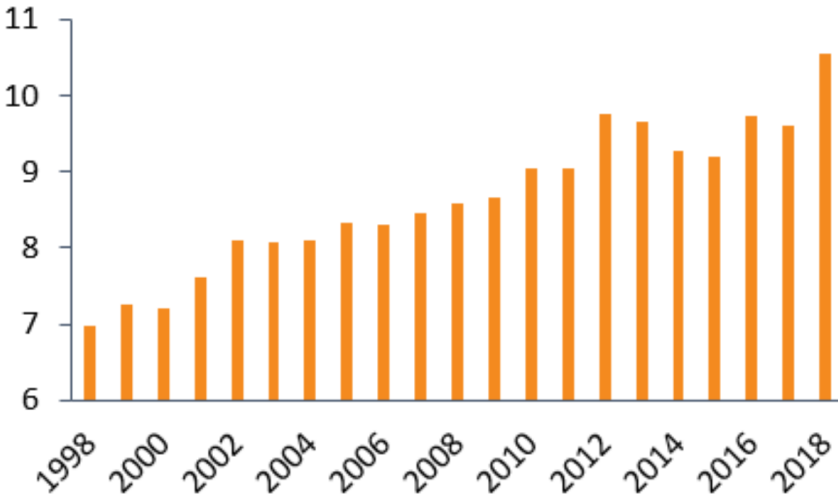
Figure 8: Number of Businesses in Worcester from 1998-2018 (Mikula, 2020).
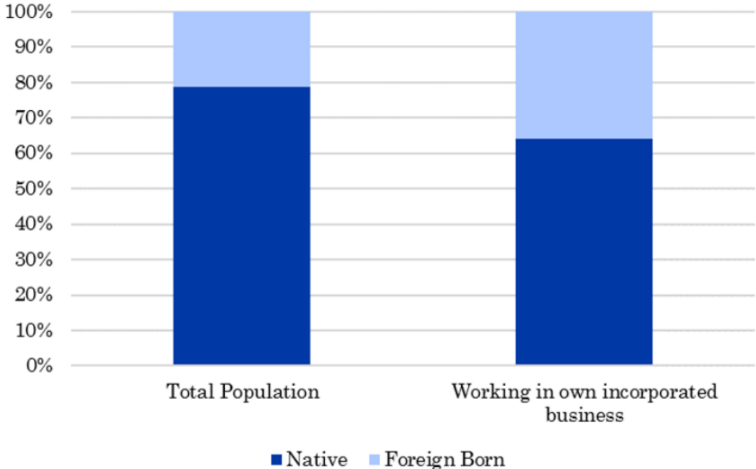
Figure 9: Comparison of immigrants with relation to Worcester's total population and the rate of business ownership (Worcester Regional Research Bureau, 2018).

The need for entrepreneurial training is prevalent in the Worcester immigrant community. The immigrant community of interest for this project was the recent Albanian immigrants to Worcester, who comprise 6.3% of the population living in Worcester County (Worcester Regional Research Bureau, 2018; Worcester Magazine, 2016). Many Albanians left their home country because of limited opportunities, the lack of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and disregard for the rule of law and intellectual property rights under the communist government. The Albanian immigrants who fled the communist regime were those in search of opportunities to raise their socio-economic status. The opportunity to work for themselves and strive for the best appealed to many Albanian immigrants (Bonacci, 2019).

In the city of Worcester, local entrepreneurship has become a key cog in the economic engine. From the 2008 recession to 2018, Worcester's economic recovery has been especially slow compared to the Massachusetts average and its top five industries, which are manufacturing, healthcare, professional services, retail, and finance, have lost jobs. Meanwhile, the number of businesses in Worcester has grown by 51% over the last 20 years, as shown in Figure 8(Mikula, 2020). A report by the Worcester Regional Research Bureau (2018) found that immigrants make up 22% of Worcester's population. The trend toward entrepreneurship seen throughout the US is also visible in the Greater Worcester Area where immigrants comprise 36% of incorporated businesses, as shown in Figure 9. This large increase led to a saturated market with heavy competition, adding to the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs. Immigrant entrepreneurs also face cultural and social barriers; 49% struggle to speak English and, in a survey, 50% said the reception of their business in the Worcester community was neutral, somewhat unsupportive, or very unsupportive (Worcester Regional Research Bureau, 2018).

Available Entrepreneurial Programs

In Massachusetts, there are programs and organizations in place to support aspiring entrepreneurs. The largest of these programs is EforAll, which is more broadly focused on entrepreneurship for all skill levels. EforAll (Figure 10) provides entrepreneurial training such as Business Accelerator and Pitch Contest to enhance the skills of the local entrepreneurs (EforAll, 2020). Business Accelerator is a mentorship program that helps individuals gain business training, find a professional network, and develop their idea into a successful business. Meanwhile, Startup Worcester is a program specially targeted at entrepreneurs in the early stages. The program accepts 12 applicants each year and provides exclusive resources such as membership to the Chamber of Commerce, WorcLab shared offices, and The Venture Forum (Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2021).

These limitations create the need for easily accessible entrepreneurial education programs focused on pre-entrepreneurs, an issue that our entrepreneurship program addressed. Another organization working with entrepreneurs in Worcester is our sponsor, the Worcester Albanian Business Network (WABN). WABN aims to help foster successful businesses in the local Albanian community (WABN, 2020). The organization works to mentor aspiring entrepreneurs, support local businesses, and provide a network for outreach. WABN has the infrastructure and connections needed to reach and assist those in the community and has graciously sponsored our project.

Figure 10: EforAll's Logo

Figure 11: Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce's Logo

Figure 12: WABN's Logo

Approach

This project developed a five-week pilot program to teach aspiring entrepreneurs from Worcester's Albanian community the four critical areas of early-stage entrepreneurial development: ideation and problem identification, customers and competitors, risks and costs, and business structure. We achieved the project goal through four objectives, as shown in Figure 13.

Objectives:
- Identifying and selecting aspiring entrepreneurs
- Establishing rapport and understand the participants' background and motivation
- Developing educational training modules
- Evaluating and revising program elements for WABN's training efforts
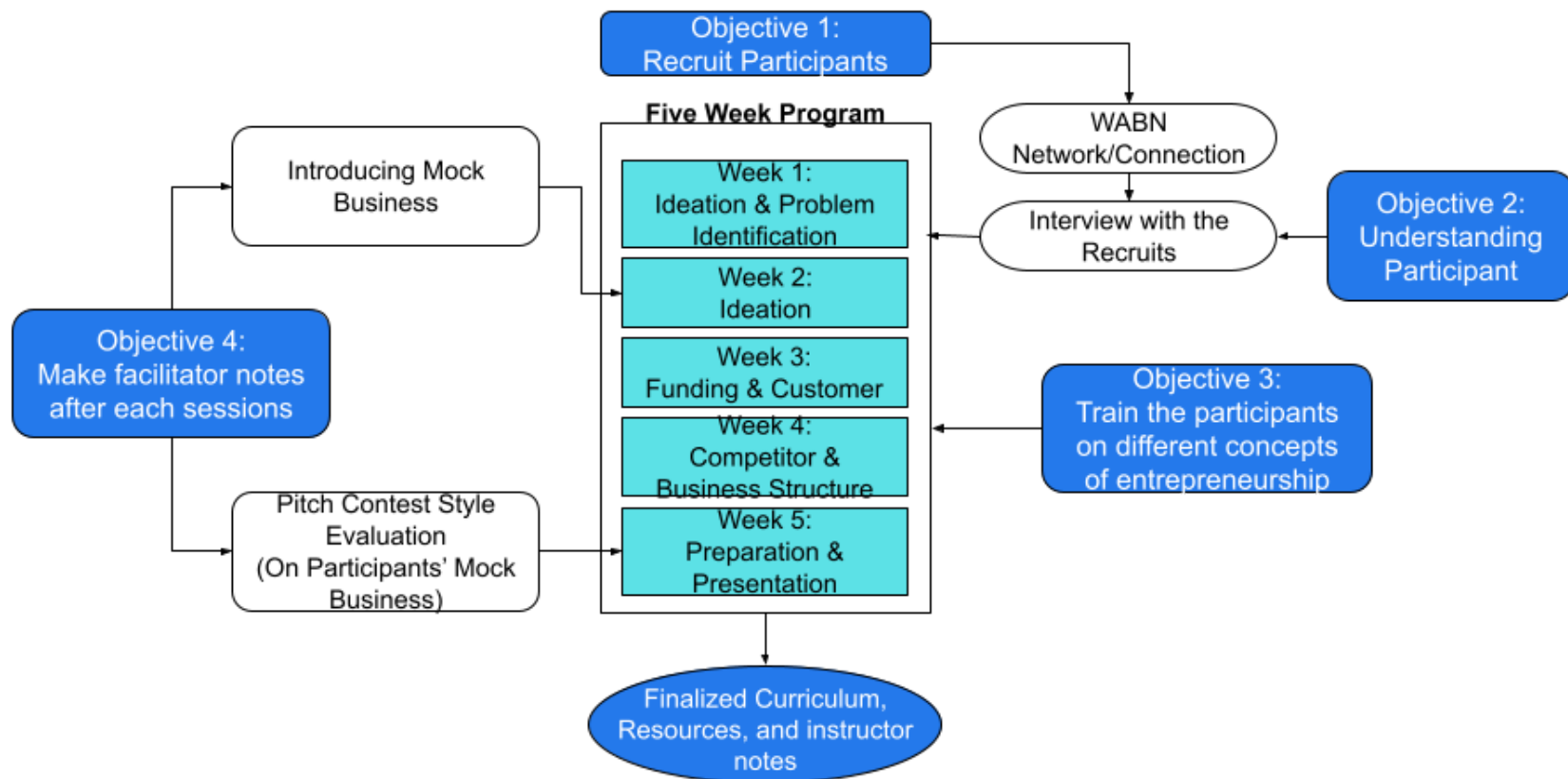
Figure 13: Methods to develop five-week pilot program.

To recruit participants, we used WABN networks---Facebook, LinkedIn, and Whatsapp--- to promote the project. The promotion had an attached Google Form with questions to determine if the applicants matched the type of candidate we sought. The team searched for aspiring entrepreneurs age 20-30 who could commit to meeting twice a week for one hour. This project focused on those who are new to entrepreneurship and were looking to learn more about setting up business ventures. The team did not consider those who are further along the entrepreneurial journey. The promotion flyer is shown in Figure 14.

DREAM.
INNOVATE.
CREATE.

MARCH 29 - APRIL 30

THINKING ABOUT STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

Join a **FREE**, five-week, student-led online program covering important topics for beginners such as **identifying** business opportunities, **targeting** your market, **assessing** your competition, and **developing** a business plan

SPONSORED BY:

Worcester Polytechnic Institute — **WPI**

Worcester Albanian Business Network — **WABN**

SPACE LIMITED!
ONLY 10 SPOTS AVAILABLE

Figure 14: The training program's promotion flyer to recruit participants.

Pre-Program Preparation

Assessing the Interests of Participants and Establishing Rapport

We conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants to understand their backgrounds, hopes, and reasons for participating in the program. During the interview, we asked questions such as "How much prior experience with entrepreneurship/starting a business do you have? Do you have an idea of what type of business you are looking to open or what product you would like to sell (If not it is completely fine as well)?" The interview questions can be found in *Supplementary Materials, B*. From the interviews, we tailored the modules more closely to their interests and needs. For example, the interviews showed that the ideation phase needed the most attention, so we dedicated more time to that topic.

Once the interviews were completed, the team analyzed the results by developing short profiles of each of the entrepreneurs. Each profile was one to two pages and highlighted the entrepreneur's interests and their experiences (See Supplementary Materials, B). The project team looked for commonalities in background and concerns/areas of weakness. The data obtained influenced how we developed the training modules and the five-week program.

Throughout the interviews and the program, we built rapport with the participants through conversation and created a friendly environment. The team developed a connection with each participant to further understand their motives and to encourage trust between the project team and the participants. All sessions were created to be interactive and promoted engagement in an open discussion.

Develop Entrepreneurial Training Modules

The team conducted a synchronous, online training program on Zoom that started on March 29 and ended on May 2, 2021. The program ran for 5 weeks (10 sessions), and was designed to combine lectures, activities, and collaboration. Because traditional lectures are less effective when teaching entrepreneurship (Wenninger, 2018), we opted for group activities in order to make the program more engaging. Short lectures were incorporated to introduce new topics since subjects? such as value proposition, target markets, and entrepreneurial mindset require some guidance. The team kept total lecture time under 20-30 minutes to display the importance of the supporting activities. This time limit was selected based on research by Avraham Z. Cooper and Jeremy B. Richards (2017), who found lectures become less effective after 20 min (Cooper, & Richards, 2017).

Each week represented a new topic of entrepreneurship. We divided the topics into two subcategories describing different aspects of entrepreneurship and each subcategory was covered in their own separate meetings. The topics of entrepreneurship were chosen using a combination of the journey of an entrepreneur and the topics within the social business model canvas. In these meetings, we started the session summarizing the previous meeting then leading a topic specific activity. Participants created their own mock business during the first two weeks, and the participants applied each new lesson to their mock business throughout the program. This pedagogical method allowed the participants to learn and practice the steps an established entrepreneur would take.

Evaluation and Revision of Methods

In order to gauge participants' improvement and the effectiveness of this program we employed a pitch competition. The pitch competition is a widely used method of portraying mock businesses created in entrepreneurship training courses (Solomon, 2007).The participants explained their mock business and incorporated concepts they have learned over the course of the program such as customer profiles and business design framework (Figure 15). We evaluated the participants by qualitatively measuring confidence when presenting, effective communication (i.e. clear and succinct), and concise slides (Wenningers, 2019). This evaluation method was chosen because participants were required to think critically about their business ideas, revisit past concepts for better knowledge retention, and integrate multiple concepts into one coherent presentation (Wenningers, 2019).

In addition to evaluating the pitch competition, the team also recorded each session. A consent form (Supplementary Materials, B) was sent out to each participant to ask for permission for recording. The recordings were given to WABN and used as a reference material for any future groups that wish to advance and improve this project. Additionally, at the end of each session, the project team reflected on the session, where topics/issues to keep in mind were noted for future sessions. These reflections were used to put together a coherent self-reflection on the program at the end of fifth week. These reflections were made available to future groups for reference. We also asked participants to provide feedback of what went well and what did not. At the midpoint of the program, the participants were asked to participate in a focus group style discussion and asked to provide feedback on what was working well and what could be improved for the remaining sessions. At the end of the program another focus group style exit inquiry (Supplementary Materials, E) was completed to ask the participants their opinions on the whole program. These group discussions were used to help evaluate what changes could be made to the program.
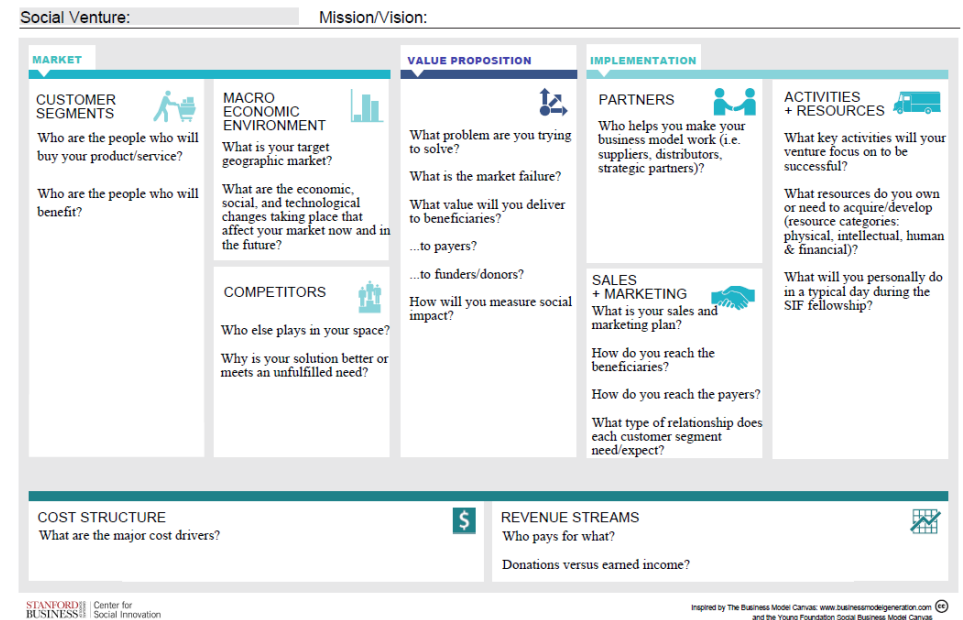

Figure 15: The Social Business Model Canvas, used as a "rubric" to measure technical knowledge. (Stanford University)

Social Networks Drive Immigrants to Entrepreneurship

Based on individual interviews with each of the three participants, we identified their main motivations to join the program. Our three participants were Lazy, Chrisly, and Elisa (Figure 16), and all three were second generation Albanian American, as their parents migrated here from Albania in the 1990s. They were born and raised in Massachusetts and are currently in their third year of college. Each participant was interested in this entrepreneurial training program since they all felt that entrepreneurship was a valuable asset. Our participants did not plan to open a business immediately; rather, they had noticed entrepreneurial activity in their Albanian community, which had sparked their interest in learning more. One participant spoke about the "Albanian-owned convenience stores and restaurants less than 10 minutes from home." Another participant cited "Gyro city, the best food place in Boston that is always so busy."

Seeing these local Albanian entrepreneurs brought inspiration to the participants to do more research into opening a business. The social networks surrounding our participants motivated them to explore entrepreneurship.

These motivations differed from previous research about the drivers of immigrant entrepreneurship, as previous studies have focused heavily on the entrepreneurial traits that immigrant entrepreneurs pass down to others. In the literature there is no notion of the role of inspiration and motivation being shared among social networks. However, among our sample, first generation immigrant entrepreneurs simply ignited interest in entrepreneurship by being business-owners themselves instead of teaching and developing traits. This interest brought them to our program, where each participant wanted to learn the basics of where to begin an entrepreneurial journey.

(a)   *(b)*   *(c)*

Figure 16: Participants for the entrepreneurial training program. (a) Chirsly, (b) Lazi, (c) Elisa

The Journey-Based Training Program

The team designed and tested a five-week entrepreneurial training program. In the first iteration, the team designed a program with the larger focus on ideation and problem identification. The program originally intended to spend the first four sessions of the program on problem identification and ideation. After the third session in the program, we decided to make a revision in the curriculum of the course. The team noticed a lack of engagement from the participants due to the repetitive nature of the information being portrayed. The participants were able to quickly pick up the concepts of Problem Identification and Ideation making a fourth session on these topics redundant. This resulted in the order of the sessions on Customers and Competitors to be changed as well as splitting the "Finance" session into two separate sessions, Value Proposition and Revenue Streams. The updated schedule is provided in Figure 17. Additionally, to keep a sense of comfortability with the participants the instructors also participated in most of the activities alongside the participants.
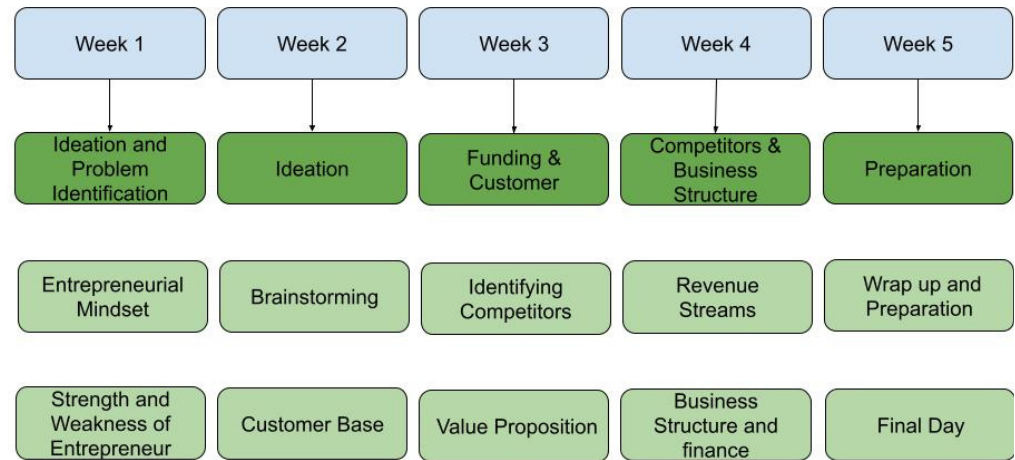
Figure 17: Five-week program schedule, with dark green representing the weekly topics and light green representing each session.

Entrepreneurial Journey	Program Sessions
Problem Identification	#1, #2
Creation of Ideas	#2, #3
Market Research	#4, #5, #6
Funding	#7
Business Structure and Permits	#8

Table 2: Relationships between program's sessions and the steps of entrepreneurial journey

The first week, the team presented an introduction to the entrepreneurial mindset, how to come up with an idea for a business (ideation), and the traits/characteristics that define a successful entrepreneur as outlined in the previous chapter. In the first session (Figure 19), the participants were presented with three separate products and asked to identify problem areas within the product's design that could be improved and come up with some solutions to these problems. The second meeting of the week (Figure 20) focused on development of social skills such as creativity and quick thinking, passion, and adaptability. The activity for this day gave the participants a product and asked them to give a quick pitch to sell that product to the general public. The most important concept from this day is that the participants should be open to having an honest reflection of themselves and not be afraid to have areas of improvement.

Time	Topic	Reason
5 mins	Introduction	Quickly get to know each other, no ice breaker
5-7 mins	Program Overview	Give the participants an insight into what they will learn
3 mins	Characteristics of a Successful Entrepreneur	Bring into thought what makes an entrepreneur successful
6-9 mins	Companies Changing	Show that successful companies are willing to change
10-15 mins	Problem Identification Activity	Innovative and Problem Identification Activity
5 mins	Debrief	Understand what they were supposed to learn
5 mins	Come up with their own problems	
3-5 mins	Entrepreneurial Mindset	Talk about aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset
2-3 mins	Wrap up	Quick review
Total Time: 46-59 minutes		

Figure 19: The agenda of the program's first session (Week 1 Day 1)

Figure 18: Instructors welcoming participants on zoom.

Time	Topic	Reason
5 minutes	Welcome/Recap	Refresh the participants memory from the previous day
3-5 minutes	Ask for their strengths (activity)	gets the participants thinking about some of their strengths and weaknesses
1 minute	Introduce Pitch Activity	Innovation and Passion Traits
7-10 minutes	Activity Round 1	
7-10 minutes	Activity Round 2	
5 minutes	Debrief	What did we learn?
5-6 minutes	Video	Networking
1-2 minutes	Areas of Improvement	It's ok not to be perfect in everything
10 minutes	Our Weaknesses Conversation	Open discussion about where and how we all can improve
3-5 minutes	Wrap Up/Introduce Mock Business	Talk about what we will start next week
Total: 47-59 min		

Figure 20: The agenda of the program's second session (Week 1 Day 2)

Week 2

The second week further developed the ideation and problem identification aspect of entrepreneurship. The first day (Figure 22) focused on brainstorming ideas for their mock businesses and introduced the concept of painstorming, which is identifying inadequacies, or "pains", in common processes. The group then discussed different problems and the participants came up with products or services solving either the whole problem or part of the process that created the problem. The participants used the ideas they generated to create the basis of their mock business. The second day (Figure 23) focused on introducing customer base and target markets. At the start, the participants took part in an activity that aimed to show how major companies first determined their markets. The participants were able to select the correct markets by considering the products and unique characteristics of the companies mentioned. The second half of the meeting aimed to find the customer base of participants' mock businesses. The participants ended the session by giving the first pitch for their mock business.
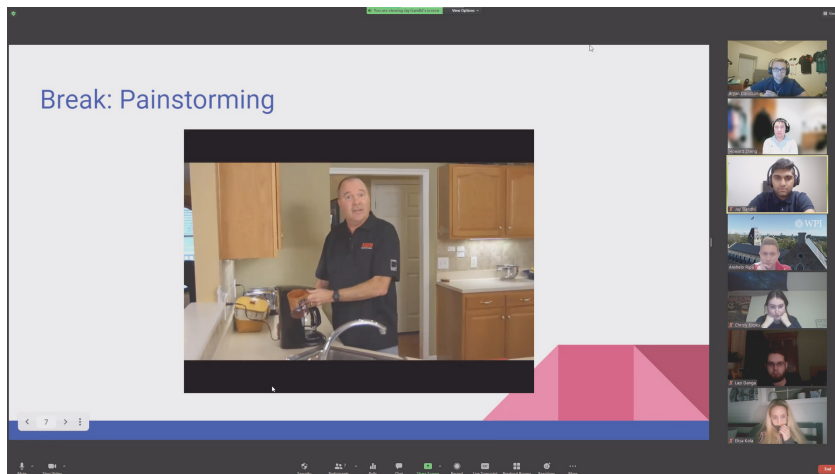
Time	Topic	Reason
5 mins	Reviews and start	Refresh the participants memory from the previous day
5 mins	Intro to Mock Businesses	Introducing the idea of mock businesses and how they will use them
	Entrepreneurial Journey	Explain the steps that participants will go through with Mock Business
5 mins	Brainstorming Examples	Give participants an idea of how/what to brainstorm
6 mins	Painstorming Video	Give participants insights on how to identify potential product
9 mins	Brainstorming Ex. Continue	
25-27 mins	Brainstorming Session	Finding mock business ideas
3 mins	Shark Tank Video	Show an example of how the last day is going to run
Total: 58-60 mins		

Figure 22: The agenda of the program's third session (Week 2 Day 1)

Time	Topic	Reason
5 mins	Introduction/Review	
15 min	Customer Kahoot	Show how to identify the customer base
5 min	Debrief	What did we learn from the Kahoot?
5 min	Buyer Persona	Show example of buyer persona and why it'll be helpful
25 min	Mock Business Customers	Start to identify customer base for Mock Businesses
Total: 55 mins		

Figure 23: The agenda of the program's fourth session (Week 2 Day 2)

Figure 21: Instructors teaching the participants about painstorming

Week 3

The third week focused on the different types of competitors faced by a business as well as understanding a product/service's value and value proposition. The first session (Figure 25) examined the differences between direct and indirect companies, and it helped participants identify what types of competition their mock businesses faced. The second meeting of this week (Figure 26) focused on understanting a product's value in the eyes of a consumer and creating value proposition statements. The session started by explaining how customers determine the value of a product (benefits of the product over the cost) and was followed by an activity where participants tried to identify to which company a value proposition statement belongs. This activity aimed to help the participants identify persuasive value proposition statements that identify a company's intentions. The session ended with a mock draft for each participant's value proposition statements.

Time	Topic	Reason
2 mins	Introduction/Review	
1 min	Direct Competitor	Show def. of Direct Comp. (Same Customer, Same Solution)
1 min	Indirect Competitor	Show def. of Indect Comp. (Diff Customer or Diff Solution)
1 min	How to Stand Out	Quick Conversation about Participants' customer base
10 mins	Competitor Activity	Show real-life examples of direct and indirect competitors
5 mins	Debrief	Explain what they learned
5 mins	Instructor Mock Business	Show examples with our Mock Business
30 min	Mock Business Discussion	Discuss what are participants' competitors
Total: 55 mins		

Figure 25: The agenda of the program's fifth session (Week 3 Day 1)

Time	Topic	Reason
5 mins	Value Proposition	Introduce Value Proposition
10 mins	Activity on VP	Active learning activity on Value Proposition
5 mins	Debrief (NABC)	Teach NABC
20 mins	Mock Business Activity	Discuss participants' Value Proposition
15 mins	Mid-program Pitch	To gauge participants' progress on the knowledge taught so far
Total: 55 mins		

Figure 26: The agenda of the program's sixth session (Week 3 Day 2)

Matching Game!

Wendy's:
Taco Bell:
Shaws:
Stop & Shop:
Microsoft:

1. to deliver superior quality products and services for our customers and communities through leadership, innovation and partnerships
2. to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more
3. offering safe, wholesome, quality guaranteed products in clean, modern and attractive stores is the foundation for consumer confidence
4. creating a better future: for our customers, for our people, for our company and for our communities
5. making the best Mexican-style fast food, providing fast, friendly, & accurate service

Figure 24: Particpants completing a value proposition activity

Week 4

The fourth week focused on identifying a company's avenues for revenue and business structure/advertising. In the first meeting (Figure 28), the participants were shown seven ways businesses generate revenue and this was followed by an activity asking the participants to identify the revenue streams for five well-known companies. We then introduced the difference between fixed and variable costs. The session ended with the participants identifying their potential revenue streams from the seven introduced earlier that day. The second meeting (Figure 29) focused on the different types of business structures. The project team brought in our sponsor, Ardian Preci, to present the different types of business structures such as Sole Proprietor, LLC, S-Corp, and C-Corp. Ardian then went on to explain advertising and the importance of being able to be recognized with a simple logo.

Time	Topic	Reason
2 min	Revenue Stream	Understand and Explain Revenue Stream
5 min	Examples	Show example of Revenue Stream using real companies
3 min	Cost	Understand and Explain Cost
15 min	Activity	Comprehensive activity that includes VP, Buyer, RS, and Cost
25 min	Mock Business	Help participant develop their Mock Business
Total: 50 mins		

Figure 28: The agenda of the program's seventh session (Week 4 Day 1)

Time	Topic	Reason
30 min	Business Structure	Explain LLC, S-corp, C-corp, etc.
30 min	Branding	Understand and explain advertisement
Total: 60 mins		

Figure 29: The agenda of the program's eighth session (Week 4 Day 2)
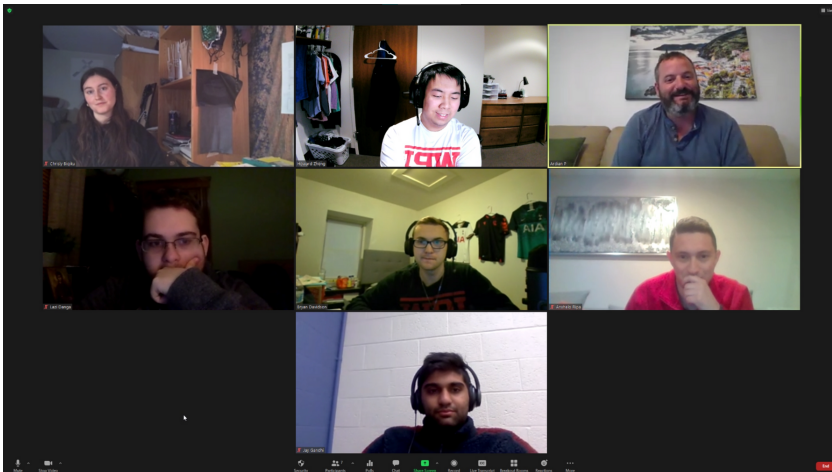
Figure 27: Mr. Preci explaining business structures

The fifth week focused on preparing the participants for their mock business presentation on the final day. In the first meeting, the participants were educated on the importance of having a hook for their pitch and worked to create an engaging hook statement. The rest of the session was left for the participants to design their slideshows and a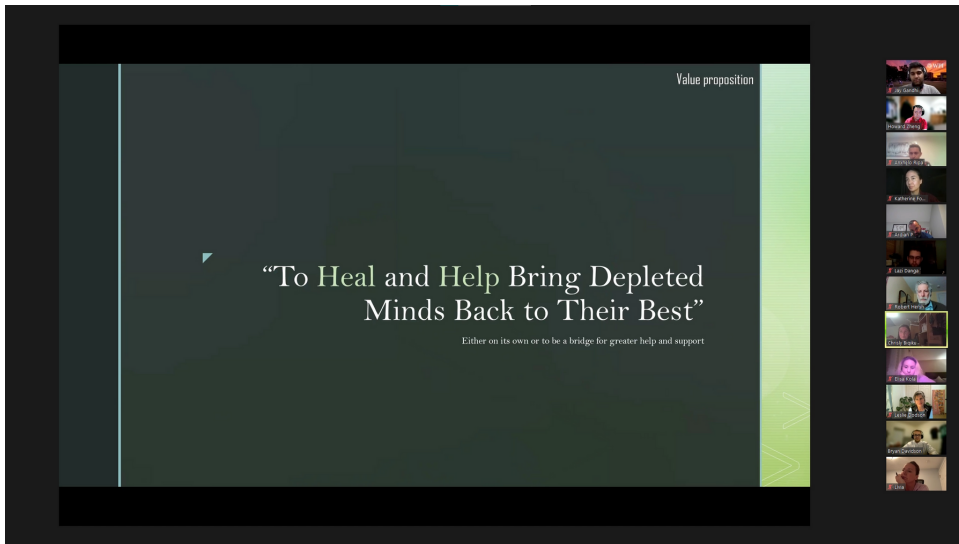sk for any advice/guidance. The second meeting of this week was the mock business presentation/evaluation. The individuals presented their mock business in the form of a pitch competition (Figures 30-32). The businesses were presented to a panel consisting of the project team, professors from WPI and guests invited by WABN. The participants were able to apply all the knowledge they had gained in the program to give an effective presentation. The project team successfully used this presentation as a means of evaluation of the effectiveness for the program.
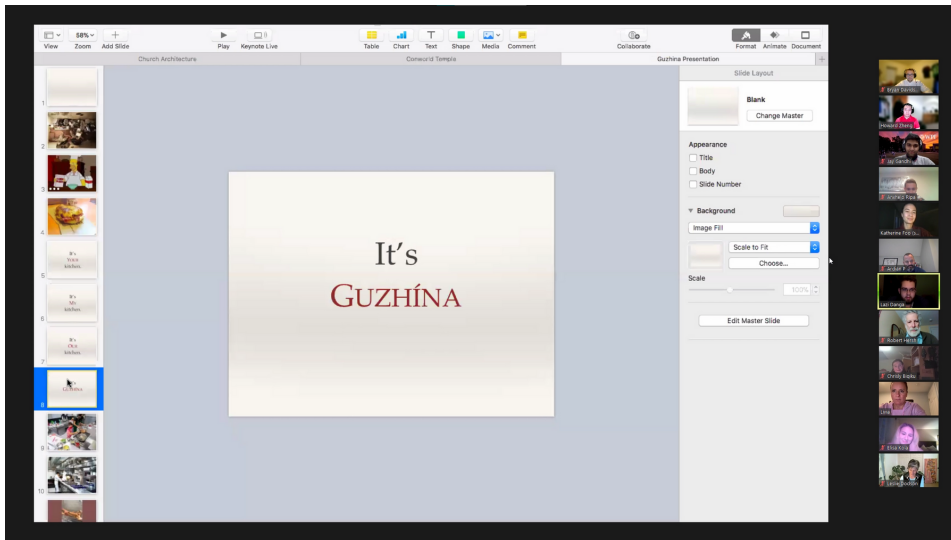

Figure 30: Chrisly's Mock Business Presentation

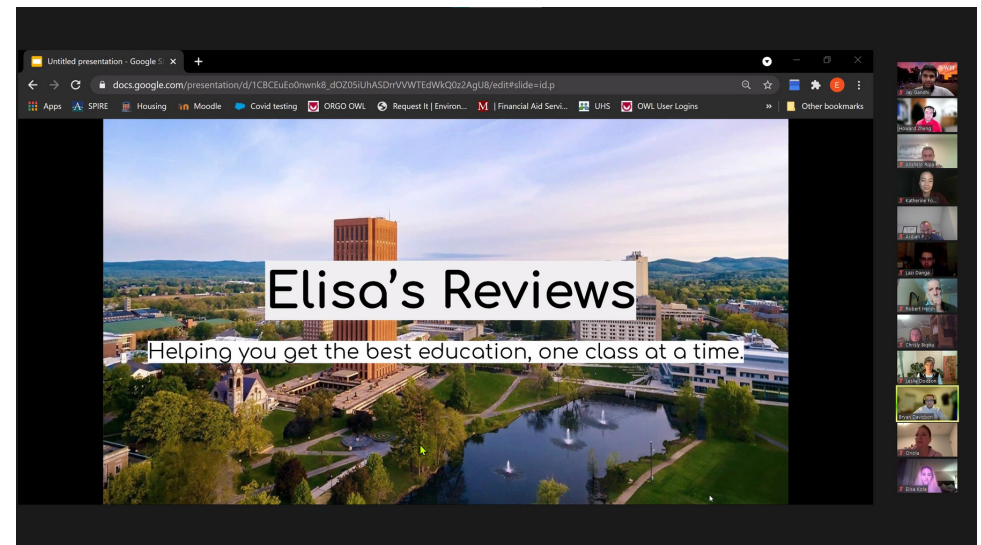*Figure 31: Lazi's Mock Business Presentation*

Figure 32: Elisa's Mock Business Presentation

20

Technical Learning Outcomes

We analyzed the progression of the participants' technical knowledge using the social business canvas model. In the beginning of the course, participants would not have been able to fill out any of the categories or understand their meanings, such as macro-economic environment or how to develop a value proposition. Throughout the program they learned the necessary concepts and were confident in their abilities to fill out the social business model canvas. The participants completed the Social Business Model Canvases shown in Figures 33-35. The technical knowledge gained throughout the program was displayed during the participant's final pitch presentations. Using the Social Business Model Canvas as a guide, the participants pitched their idea to the panelists. In the presentation the participants's improvement in their value propositions was evident based on the scores received from the panelists. The panelists were asked to rate the effectiveness of the participants value proposition (on a scale of 1-5); Lazi's average score was 3.8, Chrisly's rating was 4, and Elisa's was 4.2.
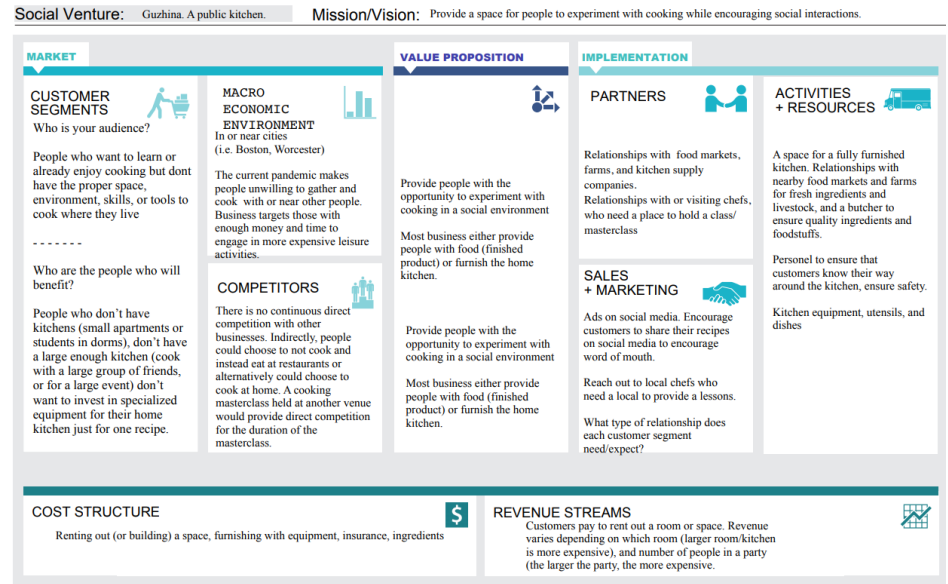

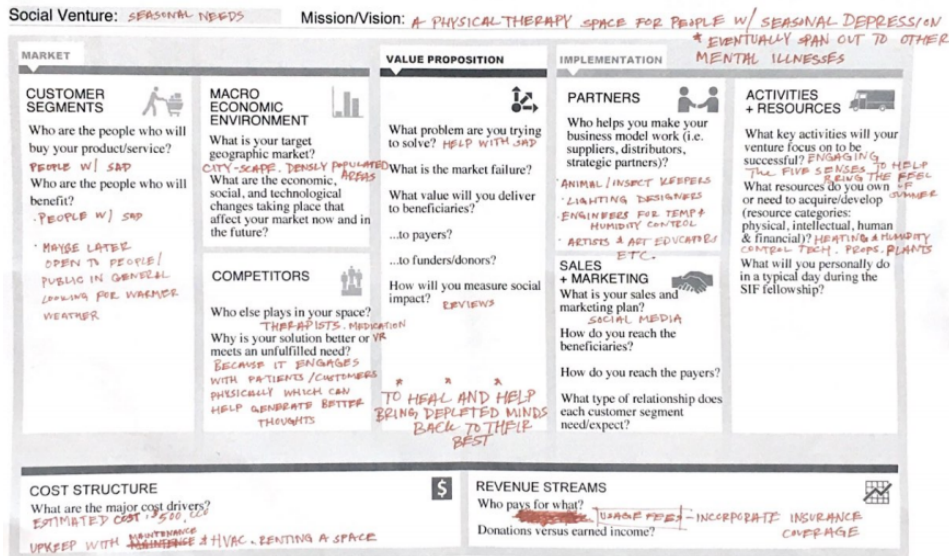Figure 34: Lazi's Social Business Model Canvas for his Mock Business

Figure 33: Chirsly's Social Business Model Canvas for her Mock Business
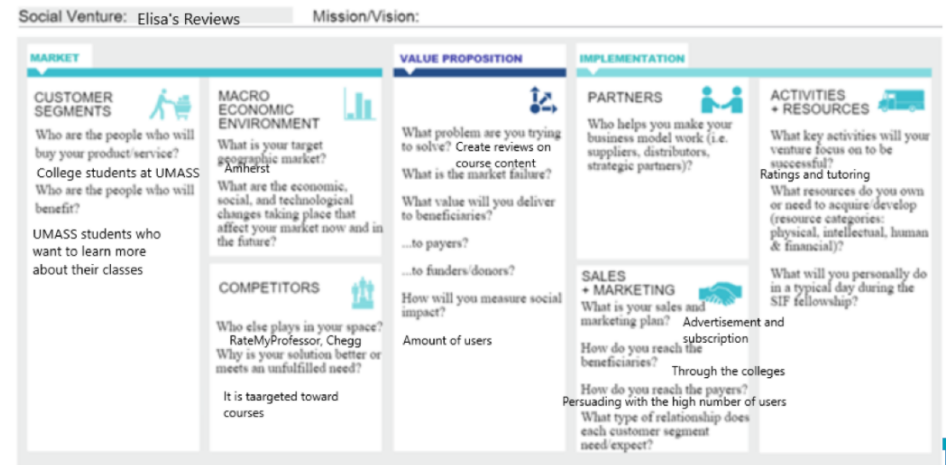

Figure 35: Elisa's Social Business Model Canvas for her Mock Business

Lazi's Social Learning Outcomes

Lazi's Strengths

- Confidence
- Eloquence

Lazi's Areas of Improvement

- Organization
- Being Precise

Lazi's areas to improve were his organization and preciseness while speaking. This was noted by the instructors during his initial pitch for his mock business as he failed to make a concise argument. He was not able to clearly state how he intended to run his kitchen and how his consumers would be able to access the materials needed. During his midpoint pitch, Lazi was able to create a solid foundation for his idea of the open kitchen and was able to give some specificity as to how it would operate. His plan was to separate the kitchen into different operating spaces that customers could rent out with some spaces only having basic cooking supplies and others having ovens and stoves depending on what meal the customer planned on cooking. In Lazi's final pitch he was able to effectively communicate his idea to the panelists giving them a clear understanding of his intentions. This is shown in the panelists response form when they were asked to rate the clarity of his business (out of 5) all five of the panelists rated him a 4. Another noted improvement from Lazi was his quick thinking and adaptability as pointed out in a panelist comment, "what was most interesting was how the questions opened up new possibilities that he was willing to consider".

"Lazi was very good at thinking quickly and making a comeback from difficult questions."

Chrisly's Social Learning Outcomes

Chrisly noted that her self-confidence and organizational skills were areas she wanted to improve. We also observed the same areas during her first presentation of her idea. Chrisly's voice sounded insecure during the pitch and she was unable to be persuasive. The lack of persuasion was emphasized by the fact that Chrisly's pitch was difficult to follow and the information was not well structured. In the mid-point pitch, Chrisly was able to show progress in organization by determining that she would design an indoor park that was environmentally controlled to feel like Summer. The biggest improvement was seen toward the end of the program. In the final pitch, Chrisly was very organized and showed signs of her extensive research in the field. This improvement was also noticed by the panelists, one of which stating: "I was very intrigued by the idea of a social-medical space for treatment and for community engagement." Chrisly was persuasive and was able to convince the panelists on the profitability of her idea, "her interest in the idea was clearly conveyed." When rating Chrisly's pitch, the panelists gave Chrisly a 4.2 out of 5. There was also an improvement in her confidence, although, the panelists noted that Chrisly could still improve her confidence while pitching, "I was very intrigued by the idea of a social-medical space for treatment and for community engagement. My only suggestion is to let Chrisly know that she can be more confident about her idea."

Chrisly's Strengths

- Creativity
- Motivation

Chrisly's Areas of Improvement

- Self-confidence
- Organization

"Clearly, this is something she would like to do and even though she was a little nervous in her presentation, her interest in the idea was clearly conveyed."

Elisa's Social Learning Outcomes

Elisa's Strengths

- Creativity
- Self-efficacy

Elisa's Areas of Improvement

- Confidence
- Public Speaking

When Elisa initially tried to pitch her mock business, she had been very hesitant while speaking, often not completing her thoughts, and she lacked detail within her explanations of how her review system worked. She possessed a general idea for a review system on the content that a course provides but not much detail past that point. Elisa showed little improvement with her mid-program pitch as she was still hesitant to dive into her mock business and tried to only give minimal information on how her course reviews would function, at times simply stating "students would say what they learned in the course". However, by the end of the program many of the panelists noted the clarity in Elisa's mock business during her final presentation. She was able to confidently pitch her business and effectively communicated the importance it would play for students. Her average rating for the persuasion of her mock business given by the panelists (out of 5) was a 4.4. Elisa was able to successfully identify her target market with one panelist pointing out, "she's identified a niche market that is actually quite large". However, her nerves started to creep back in during the question and answer portion. One panelist noted Elisa needed to, "stand/sit still during Q&A to maintain professional demeanor" and another wrote "her answers in Q&A were not as thoughtful as Chrisly's or Lazi's."

"Elisa's pitch was confident and compelling and she's identified a niche market that is actually quite large."

Challenges of Online Learning

Throughout the program, our goal was to allow the participants to be comfortable and interested in the program, and therefore prevent this program from feeling like an obligation or a college class. For example, we spoke with colloquial language and used examples in our activities that the participants could relate to. Introducing some informality was very successful, as one participant had said "it does not feel like a class, which makes it fun and interesting." While the program was able to successfully interest the participants, we struggled to retain their interest over the course of each session. Teaching the entrepreneurship program through Zoom can be very difficult as participants become disinterested very quickly. At the beginning of the hour, the participants were engaged but the interest waned, and the participants experienced Zoom fatigue as the hour went on. In the second week, the course started to get repetitive, and the participants' attention dropped drastically. This occurred because we originally planned for ideation to be two weeks when the participants only needed one week, thus rendering the third session less useful. The participants' disinterest in the third sessions is shown in Figure 36.

For our program, we used expectation management and engagement, but did not use nudging to retain interest. Nudging is calling out participants to speak on the spot, and we did not wish the participants to be uncomfortable or forced to speak. Using expectation management was very beneficial, as having our objectives for the program provided clarity for the participants. One participant had even requested that we take a few minutes at the end of each session to talk about what the next session involves, something that we incorporated into each session afterwards. We also found the engagement strategy effective, which is "strategically promoting resources; tracking and monitoring online engagement; and recognizing and affirming positive online engagement" (Brown et al., 2020). We were able to affirm which aspects created positive engagement and what resulted in negative engagement. We found that most of the lecture-style components dropped participant engagement while the activities and real-life examples increased engagement. The use of activities and discussions was successful at keeping them engaged. One useful activity was where the participants would annotate the screen. They would be able to write on a Zoom "whiteboard" and it appeared to be something the participants enjoyed.

Figure 36: Images of the participants facing Zoom fatigue during the third session.

Instructor Reflections

While reflecting on the program's effectiveness, we concluded that this entrepreneurial training program had further developed the instructors as well as the participants. We found that learning to become an instructor improved our social competence just as much as being a participant. It also revealed the large amounts of preparation required to be an effective instructor, as every minute of each session must be planned. Another aspect of our reflection as instructors was the feeling of being the teacher. As students who have never been placed in that position, it was exciting to see our participants progress and grow. Watching and guiding the personal development of our participants became an emotional investment, one that motivated us to further improve the program.

> **"**
> We do not learn from experience. **We learn from reflecting** on experience.
>
> **John Dewey**, Educator and Philosopher

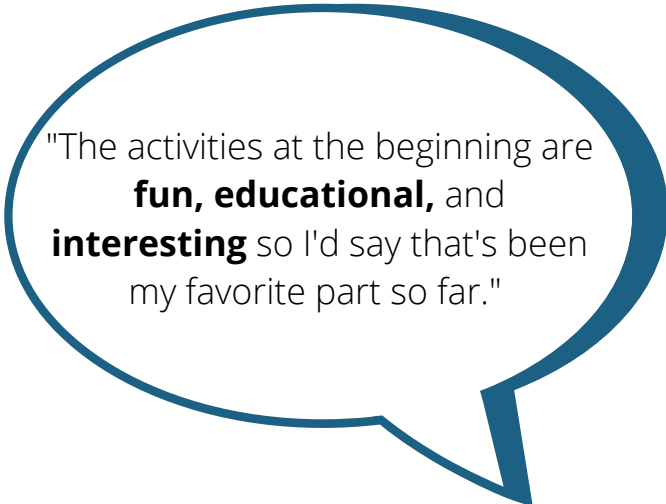*Figure 37: Quote from John Dewey about reflections.*

Figure 38: Instructors reflecting on their time teaching

Participant Reflections

Program Strengths

When the participants were asked to provide their perception of the program, they had positive reflections. Coming into the program, the participants were unsure of how an entrepreneurship class would be set up. One participant expected it to be technical-based and less about their own self-growth. They all enjoyed the informality and personalization of the program as they felt it was more valuable than a generic course that was not tailored. They appreciated that the informality allowed them to make mistakes and grow without any consequences. All three participants said they felt like the program aided the development of their social competence. Another element the participants enjoyed was the use of active learning, especially at the beginning of the session when they have not learned the concept. One participant said "the activities in the beginning are fun, educational and interesting so I'd say that's been my favorite part so far. And they lead into the information/class topic really well, so it's engaging." These reflections affirm that a skill-based approach with a personalized training program produces a positive experience for the participants.
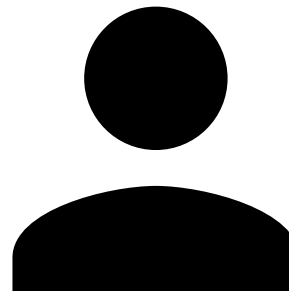
Areas of Improvement

Nonetheless, there were elements of the program that the participants did not like as well. What the participants disliked was the number of times they were put on the spot to make a pitch. Despite disliking being put on the spot, they did see the educational value. One participant even said they disliked "the on-the-spot stuff only because it gets my stress levels going, but at the same time it's very helpful." Additionally, the participants mentioned adding a full meeting solely to discuss the mock business, as they felt like more time should be dedicated to the mock business. They also wished that the program had dedicated more time to the financial aspects of starting a business, stating that they felt it needed more time. Lastly, the participants enjoyed the use of Mr. Ardian Preci as a guest speaker, and felt that more guest speakers who were experts in the field could be brought in to speak on different subjects.

"Give the Social Business Model Canvas **earlier** as a guide and we can fill it out at the end of each session."

"The activities at the beginning are **fun, educational,** and **interesting** so I'd say that's been my favorite part so far."

After planning, developing and running the program, we have developed a set of recommendations. First, we want to advise future iterations of this program to arrange for a longer promotion period. For this pilot entrepreneurial training program, we obtained a limited number of recruits for a couple of reasons. One person had decided not to sign up because they had misunderstood the target age range for program participants (Figure 39). Another potential entrepreneur decided to not join due to the lack of earlier notice (Figure 40). There were also two additional recruits who had signed up but then did not follow through with the training program. Thus our training program had only three participants for the duration of our training program.

Figure 39: Comments on the promotion showing a potential recruit who seemed interested but would have preferred a later start date.
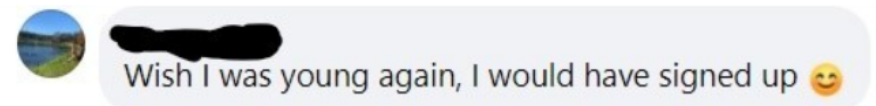

Figure 40: Comment on our promotion showing the potential recruit who felt they were too old for the training program.

Recommended Revisions

We would retain the short lecture format which allowed us to keep a sense of informality while including a multitude of activities. We wanted to prevent them from feeling uncomfortable, so we created a friendly and informal environment. We also participated in each activity ourselves, putting us in their shoes and allowing for them to feel more comfortable participating in the active discussions. We also followed strategies used in research, such as expectation management and engagement. Using expectation management was very beneficial, as having our objectives for the program and for specific sessions provided clarity for the participants. We also found the engagement strategy effective, which is recognizing elements that produce positive engagement and continuing to use those specific elements. For our program, one element we affirmed was engaging was the use of activities where the participants would annotate on the screen. They would be able to write on a Zoom "whiteboard" and it appeared to be something the participants enjoyed. We recommend future instructors to continue to use these tactics to keep the future participants engaged.

In terms of program structure, we recommend adding one extra day to cover the cost analysis of the business more extensively. The current version of the program combined revenue stream and cost together in one session and this prevented the team from covering both topics extensively. The consequence was evident in the final pitch presentation, only one out of three participants considered the cost for their mock business. One panelist explicitly wrote about Lazi's business that "he didn't really think much about startup costs, profitability, [and] staffing" and Lazi himself agreed during the focus group discussion afterward, saying that he "would like to learn more about financial analysis." The recommended schedule is shown in Figure 41. We would advise adding two additional weeks, four sessions, including; a day to flesh out the participants' mock businesses, a day to fully explain cost and funding, splitting business structures and advertisements into their own days, and giving an extra day for the participants to practice their pitches. These recommendations come from the end-of-program focus group where the participants were asked what they thought could be improved in the program.
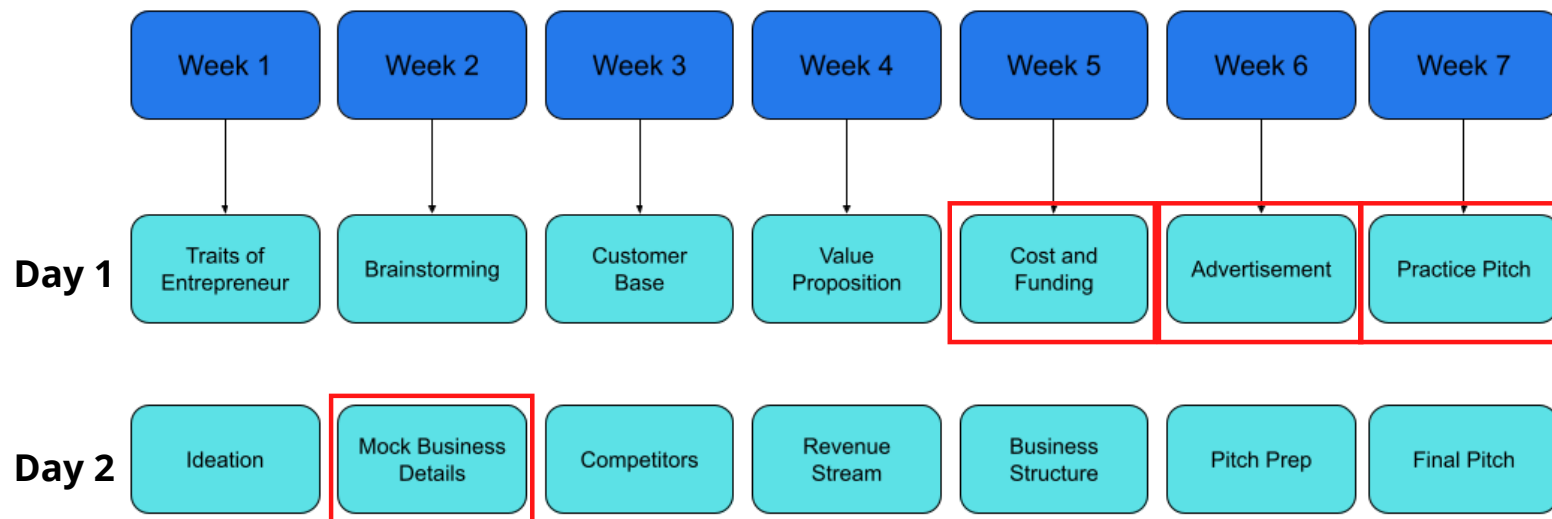

Figure 41: Recommended Schedule for Future Instructors

Conclusions

Development of the participants' technical skill and social competence were the main important findings. As evidenced from their ability to complete the social business model canvas, the participants also improved their technical knowledge. Our training program taught technical knowledge necessary for being an entrepreneur, including skills such as problem identification, customer and competitor analysis, creation of value propositions, and knowledge about business structure. The program increased the participants social competence, as evidenced by the mock business presentations. The largest areas of improvement were skills such as motivation, confidence, organization and creativity.

The personalized entrepreneurial training program worked very well, as our participants appreciated the time and dedication spent on each person individually. For example, when Lazi started the program, he was confident but failed to be concise and persuasive in his arguments. As the program progressed, Lazi presented a concise and clear argument for his mock business. Chrisly and Elisa both started the program with creativity but lacking in self-confidence. By the end, both of them felt they improved in their confidence through the program's activities which allowed them to practice. The informality and focus on self-growth of an entrepreneurial training program was found to successfully engage and train participants. Additionally, we found that teaching the content of our training program through a skills-based approach was an effective teaching method. While our participants struggled with Zoom fatigue in the lecture-heavy sessions, we incorporated activities as often as possible and found they kept the participants engaged. This allowed the participants to retain the information taught. One participant said "The activities in the beginning are fun, educational and interesting so I'd say that's been my favorite part so far.

And they lead into the information/class topic really well so it's engaging." Through methods suggested by Brown et. al. (2020), we were able to retain engagement and keep the participants focused for most of the program. This engagement with a skill-based approach aided us in developing the participants' social and technical knowledge.

The goal of developing and testing an entrepreneurial training program targeted at aspiring Worcester Albanian immigrant entrepreneurs was achieved. As seen in all participants, they were able to learn the basic technical knowledge about entrepreneurship as well as develop skills needed in other aspects of life. Social skills like confidence, resilience, creativity, motivation and networking were developed and practiced throughout the program. The participants developed these skills while learning about the technical aspects of becoming an entrepreneur: identifying the problem, forming the idea to solve the issue, brainstorming, and determining the market as well as revenue stream. The entrepreneurial training program was a useful tool for our participants who managed to learn many valuable lessons and skills.
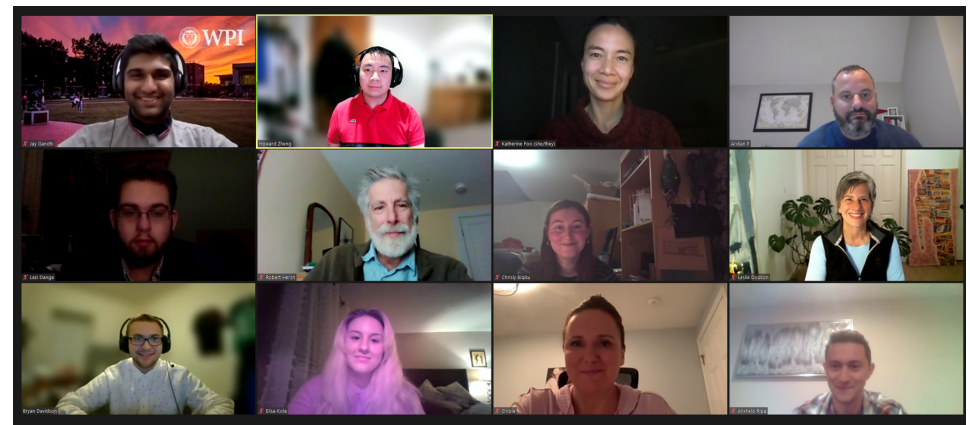

Figure 42: Zoom Image with everyone involved with this project.

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