ACCESSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ENTREPRENEURS WITH DISABILITIES
ABOUT US

Multidisciplinary Research Team:

UIC has been a pioneer in both entrepreneurship and disability studies. In 1982 it was the first university to offer an undergraduate entrepreneurship course in a Marketing Department; simultaneously it was the first university to offer a PhD program Disability Studies. Today there are over 100 different academic programs specific to Disability Studies and to Social Entrepreneurship across the United States. This endeavor is the first research undertaken that blends these two distinct disciplines.

The researchers bring a unique perspective to national issues relating to social entrepreneurship and disability studies, having joined their departments from Finland and Australia. The newly formed partnership was created through a common vision of social justice in their respective fields, particularly as it relates to labor market theories and practices. The project synthesizes theoretically distinct operational business typology models with human rights literature; economic and social analysis; and institutional and contextual employment frameworks. This multidisciplinary approach to current market and social problems makes an important and relevant contribution to theory, policy and practices of social entrepreneurship in general and social entrepreneurs with a disability.

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Start-Up Resources

Abilities Fund
- The Abilities Fund offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to prepare for business by providing access to a suite of business development tools specifically designed for individuals with disabilities.
- The Abilities Fund Website
- E-mail: info@abilitiesfund.org
- Phone: (888)222-8943
- Resources:
  - Choosing a Business Idea
  - Feasibility: Test Your Idea
  - The 5 C’s: Building Blocks of Business Planning
  - Staying Afloat During Start-Up
  - Home Based Business
  - Social Security Benefits & Self-Employment
  - Legal Business Structures
  - Pricing Strategies
  - Networking & Mentors
  - 6 Steps To Staffing Your Firm
  - Microenterprise and Microlending

Center for Nonprofit Success
- The Center for Nonprofit Success is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide the training, knowledge, and resources to help nonprofit organizations succeed. We believe that the most important asset in an organization is its people, and our programs and services are designed with your most important asset in mind.
- Center for Nonprofit Success Website
- Phone: (202)469-6773

DisabilityBiz
- DisabilityBiz.org is a part of the Seed Business Network, a nonprofit organization that provides resources to people with disabilities who are interested in starting up their own business and also counseling for continuing businesses. Information in their Business Resource Center relates to the following areas: business start-up, business planning, business finances, business networking, and business marketing.
- DisabilityBiz Website
- Phone: (949) 413-1555
- Resources:
  - Business Resource Center
  - Disability Resource Center
Disability.gov

- Disability.gov is a federal government website that provides an interactive, community-driven information network of disability-related programs, services, laws and benefits. Through the site, Americans with disabilities, their families, Veterans, educators, employers and many others are connected to thousands of resources from federal, state and local government agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations. New resources are added daily across 10 main subject areas: benefits, civil rights, community life, education, emergency preparedness, employment, health, housing, technology, and transportation.
- [Disability.gov Website](#)

DisabilityWorks

- DisabilityWorks, an initiative from the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the City of Chicago, is designed to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities throughout Illinois.
- [DisabilityWorks Website](#)

Division of Minority and Women's Business Development (DMWDB)

- The mission of DMWBD is to promote equality of economic opportunities for MWBEs and to eliminate barriers to their participation in state contracts. We supplement New York State’s economic leadership with information and resources that increase access to information and opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses throughout the State.
- [DMWDB Website](#)

IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)

- DCEO is designed to provide easy, fast access to the information you need. From our business-oriented domain name, to a user-friendly design that helps you navigate quickly, we’ve worked to make illinoisbiz.biz your one-stop tool for economic development information.
- [IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Website](#)

Institute For Justice: Clinic on Entrepreneurship

- The Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship at the University of Chicago Law School advocates for economic freedom, so that entrepreneurs from Chicago’s inner city can chart their own courses in life, build up neighborhoods, and create jobs. We provide free legal assistance, access to resources, and advocacy for entrepreneurs in the Chicago area.
  - [Clinic on Entrepreneurship Website](#)
  - E-mail: general@ij.org
  - Phone: (703)682-9320

iSE: Growing the Social Economy

- iSE researches the needs and nature of business while also providing training services, business support, and business-specific training. We work with a whole range of organizations from grass-roots community groups to national
charities, community cafes, organizations working in health and social care, public sector spin-outs, co-operatives, women’s groups and individuals starting out.

- iSE Website
- E-mail: info@i-se.co.uk
- Resources:
  - Starting a Social Enterprise

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
- The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.
- JAN Entrepreneurship Website
- E-mail: jan@askjan.org
- Phone: (800)526-7234
- TTY: (877)781-9403
- Resources:
  - JAN's Entrepreneurship Series: Developing Your Business Plan
  - JAN's Entrepreneurship Series: Starting a Non-Profit Organization
  - JAN's Entrepreneurship Series: Resources to Assist Veterans to Start a Small Business
  - JAN's Fact Sheet Series: Self-Employment for Artists with Disabilities

**Worksupport.com: VCU RTC**
- VCU-RRTC provides resources for professionals, individuals with disabilities, and their representatives. Our team of nationally and internationally renowned researchers is committed to developing and advancing practices to increase the hiring and retention for individuals with disabilities.
- Work Support Website
- E-mail: RRTC@vcu.edu

**Consulting Services**

**Foresight Sustainable Business Alliance**
- The networking group provides support to members interested in business startup to be environmentally respectful, and socially responsible.
- Foresight Sustainable Business Alliance Website
- Phone: (773)271-1990

**Griffin Hammis Associates (GHA)**
- GHA specializes in community rehabilitation improvement, job creation and job site training, employer development, Social Security benefits analysis and work incentives, self-employment feasibility and refinement, management-leadership mentoring, and civic entrepreneurship. Our customers are wide ranging and include businesses,
community rehabilitation programs, state and local governments, universities, individuals, and others from the public and private sectors.

- **Griiffin Hammis Associates Website**
- E-mail: cgriffin@girffinhammis.com
- Resources:
  - Choose, Launch, Grow: Should a severely-disabled person be self employed?

**Michael Barber Micro Enterprise Development**
- Michael Barber Micro Enterprise Development helps people with disabilities launch profitable small businesses by providing adaptive business development services, skill building and mentoring for micro entrepreneurs with disabilities. They work collaboratively with a person’s support team to be creative and diligent about addressing the necessary supports and services that must be put in place to be sure the business is stable for years to come.
- **Michael Barber Micro Enterprise Development Website**
- E-mail: michael@barbermicro.com

**Open Doors Organization**
- The Open Doors Organization was founded for the purpose of creating a society in which all persons with disabilities have the same consumer opportunities as those without. We aspire to teach businesses how to succeed in the disability market, while simultaneously empowering the disability community.
- **Open Doors Organization Consulting Website**
- Phone: (773)388-8839

**Tim’s Big Heart Foundation’s Business Start-up Program**
- Tim’s Big Heart Foundation’s Business Start-up program helps people with intellectual disabilities start their own business with the support of their family and community. They work with selected families on an individualized basis and in a highly customized way in order to provide the necessary support in the development of business plans.
- **Tim’s Big Heart Foundation’s Business Start-up Program Website**
- E-mail: info@timsbigheartfoundation.org

**Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)**

**Business Center of Decatur**
- The Business Center of Decatur is a business incubator, in which a number of new and growing businesses operate with affordable rents, shared office services and access to professional, technical and financial assistance during early, critical stages of development.
- **Business Center of Decatur Website**
- Phone: (217)423-2832

**Gaebler Ventures**
• Gaebler Ventures is a news and information website that provides useful news and information to small business owners, entrepreneurs and others who are interested in business. We are a daily magazine on the Web.
• Gaebler Ventures Website
• Resources:
  • Start A Business
  • Buy A Business
  • Business Plan
  • Running A Business
  • Entrepreneurial Finance

Illinois Small Business Development Centers
• Illinois Small Business Development Centers located throughout the state provide information, confidential business guidance, training and other resources to early stage and existing small businesses.
• Illinois Small Business Development Centers
• E-mail: ienconnect@mailmw.custhelp.com
• Phone: (800)252-2923
• TTY: (800)875-6055

Jewish Vocational Services: Duman Program
• We offer support and educational training programs for all entrepreneurs, including veterans, ex-offenders, and even home-based businesses.
• Duman Entrepreneurship Center Website

Turner Center for Entrepreneurship
• The Turner Center for Entrepreneurship is a not-for-profit program located at Bradley University. The centers provide business counseling, technical assistance, training, and educational activities for individuals interested in owning their own businesses. We not only work with individuals in the community, but also with students hoping to start their own businesses. We also help existing entrepreneurs and businesses who want to expand or take advantage of new opportunities and technologies, are interested in marketing their products and services internationally, or are seeking to commercialize new products and technologies.
• Turner Center for Entrepreneurship Website
• Phone: (309)677-4321
• Resource:
  • Illinois Small Business Development Center

Women's Business Development Center
• The mission of the Women’s Business Development Center (WBDC) is to provide services and programs that support and accelerate women’s business ownership and strengthen their impact on the economy.
• Women’s Business Development Center Website
• E-mail: wbdc@wbdc.org
• Phone: (312)853-3477
• TDD: (800)526-0844
• Resources:
  • WBDC Micro Finance Program
  • Mentoring services
  • A Simple Guide to Your Company’s Financial Statements

Training, Seminars & Online Courses

Abilities Fund Exploring Self-Employment Workshop
  • Exploring Self Employment workshops provide aspiring entrepreneurs with the information they need in order to decide if self employment is the right choice for them. Participants explore critical issues related to business planning in an interactive group setting. The workshop provides tools and information to help participants learn about testing business ideas, analyzing markets, finding customers, examining personal and business finances, and business planning. Services provided by NVR, Social Security benefits planning, and access to capital for Nebraskans are also discussed.
  • Abilities Fund Website

Start-Up NY/Inclusive Entrepreneurship
  • Start-Up NY/Inclusive Entrepreneurship helps people with disabilities and/or economic disadvantages obtain the training and business development resources needed to establish, grow, and sustain successful business ventures.
  • Start-Up NY Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Start-Up USA: Training
  • START-UP USA provides technical assistance and distributes resources nationally to individuals interested in pursuing self-employment. This includes live web cast series with successful entrepreneurs who share their secrets for success.
  • Start-Up USA: Training Website
  • Resources:
    • Webcasts

Riata Center Venterans Entrepreneurship Program (VEP)
  • The VEP is designed around two central elements: a) focused, practical training in the tools and skills of new venture creation and growth, reflecting issues unique to disability and public benefits programs; and b) the establishment of a support structure for graduates of the program.
  • VEP Website

Syracuse Entrepreneurial Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities
  • The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) offers cutting edge, experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management to post-9/11 veterans with disabilities resulting from their service to our country. The EBV is designed to open the door to business ownership for our veterans by 1) developing your skills in the many steps and activities associated with launching and growing a small business, and by 2) helping you leverage programs and services for veterans and people with disabilities in a way that furthers your entrepreneurial dreams.
Syracuse Entrepreneurial Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities Website
E-mail: ebvinfo@syr.edu
Phone: (315)443-6007

Veterans2Ventures (University of Illinois at Chicago)
• The Veterans2Ventures program at the University of Illinois at Chicago is designed to foster and support veterans returning to the greater Chicagoland area who aspire to be entrepreneurs. The program offers veterans aspiring to start and operate their own companies an opportunity to join the vibrant UIC entrepreneurial community – to learn from the best, get experienced advice and mentorship while launching their business or joining an entrepreneurial startup, and participate in a supportive student, alumni, and entrepreneur community.
• Veterans2Ventures Website
• Email: v2v@uic.edu
• Phone: (312)996-2670

Worksupport.com: VCU RTC
• This online course will cover the basics and frequently asked questions that individuals with disabilities may have when thinking about starting a business. The course content is appropriate for individuals with disabilities as well as those who support them including family members, community rehabilitation providers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, employment specialists, and others.
• WorkSupport Website
• E-mail: RRTC@vcu.edu
• Resources:
  • Link to Course Info @ Worksupport.com
  • Link to Course Info @ Start-Up USA

Youth Entrepreneur Education Program
• The Central Florida Disability Chamber Youth Program promotes business skills for both self employment and the job market, and the development of life management and problem solving skills.
• Youth Entrepreneur Education Program Website

Resources for Transition-Aged Youth

The Road to Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities (NCWD-Youth)
• The Road to Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities was developed to serve as a resource for organizations working with youth on career exploration and employment options, and policymakers who support youth programs through policy and practice. The Guide shows how entrepreneurship education can be implemented in programs and offers suggestions on how to introduce self-employment as an option for all youth, including youth with disabilities.
• The Road to Self-Sufficiency Website
• Email: contact@ncwd-youth.info
Skills to Pay the Bills (ODEP)

- Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success is a curriculum focused on workforce readiness skills to youth, including youth with disabilities. Created for youth development professionals as an introduction to workplace interpersonal and professional skills, the curriculum is targeted for youth ages 14 to 21 in both in-school and out-of-school environments.
- Skills to Pay the Bills Website

What Can YOU Do Campaign

- Through its national “What can YOU do?” public outreach initiative, the Campaign for Disability Employment reinforces the reality that people with disabilities want to work and that their talents and abilities positively impact businesses both financially and organizationally. Their website provides resources for people with disabilities related to job training, mentoring, and entrepreneurship.
- The What Can You Do Campaign Website

YO! Disabled & Proud

- YO! connects, organizes and educates youth with disabilities! YO! gives youth leadership opportunities, social networks, resources and more. YO! is for youth with disabilities to be PROUD of who we are and what we can achieve!
- YO! Disabled & Proud

Young Entrepreneurs Project

- The Young Entrepreneurs Project (YEP) is an inclusive career-readiness program that addresses barriers to employment in meaningful and measurable ways. YEP remains the only school-based career-readiness program in Boston targeting youth with disabilities.
- Young Entrepreneurs Project

Incubators

Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago

- ICNC helps companies access both public and private resources, including finding and securing grant or loan money, accessing government services, and troubleshooting.
- Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago Website
- E-mail: info@industrialcouncil.com
- Phone: (312)421-3941

LifeLabs

- Life Labs is a technology and grassroots-focused initiative of United Cerebral Palsy dedicated to identifying, developing, and supporting ideas that will make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. Through dynamic collaborations with individuals, businesses, and communities, we help bring innovative ideas to life.
- LifeLabs Website
SIUC Small Business Incubator Program
  • The SIU Carbondale Small Business Incubator Program’s mission is to accelerate the start-up and expansion of small businesses in southern Illinois. The program is here to provide the guidance and consulting necessary to make sure those start-up and expanding firms have the tools necessary to succeed.
  • SIUC Small Business Incubator Website
  • E-mail: harfst@siu.edu
  • Phone: (618)536-4451

University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana EnterpriseWorks
  • EnterpriseWorks is owned and operated by the University of Illinois to help launch successful startup companies. EnterpriseWorks has a broad range of assistance programs designed to help science-based startups with a focus on helping University of Illinois entrepreneurs and also offerings for the greater Champaign-Urbana community.
  • EnterpriseWorks Website

University of Illinois at Chicago Innovation Center
  • The Innovation Center is a collaboration, education and incubation center embedded in the University of Illinois at Chicago. They initiate programs and participate in activities that bridge research and education with industry. During each engagement, companies, educators, experts and students collaborate on real world problems and deliver real world results.
  • University of Illinois at Chicago Innovation Center website

Vocational Incubator Program (VIP)
  • The mission of the Vocational Incubator Program (VIP) is to offer vocational training programs and Business Incubator services that provide the Division of Rehabilitation Services customers with the opportunities for success in job attainment or self-employment initiatives. The VIP provides state-of-the-art assistive technology and learning interventions that support customer achievement. It also offers entrepreneurs with the wrap-around business services that enhance business success.
  • VIP website
  • Phone: 312-433-3125

Legal Assistance

Illinois Pro Bono
  • Illinois Legal Aid Online’s vision is to extend its role as an information resource to become a system connector: linking potential lower income users to the available online tools and court processes, volunteers to pro bono opportunities and training, legal aid advocates to best practices and to clients.
  • Illinois Pro Bono Website

Legal Assistance Foundation
• For over 40 years, the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago has provided free civil legal assistance to tens of thousands of low-income and elderly individuals in Chicago and suburban Cook County.
• Legal Assistance Foundation Website
• Phone: (312)341-1070

Technologies

Abilities Fund
• The Abilities Fund offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to prepare for business by providing access to a suite of business development tools specifically designed for individuals with disabilities.
• The Abilities Fund Website
• E-mail: info@abilitiesfund.org
• Phone: (888)222-8943
• Resource:
  • Loans for Assistive Technology

Chicago Public Library Maker Lab
• The Maker Lab, Chicago’s first free and publicly accessible maker space, features introductory workshops and open shop for personal projects and collaboration. Not only does it provide open workshop hours with digital design software, 3D printers, laser cutters, milling machines, and vinyl cutters, it also provides free workshops about these services.
• Maker lab website
• E-mail: makerspace@chipublib.org
• Phone: (312) 747-4300

iLoan Program Loans for Assistive Technology
• The iLoan Program provides loans to Illinois residents with disabilities and/or their families or other authorized representatives to purchase assistive technology devices and services and limited home modifications. The iLoan Program also provides loans to Illinois residents with disabilities (18 years and older) to purchase equipment, services, and limited home modifications for self-employment and telework.
• iLoan Program Website
• E-mail: wparbs@iltech.org
• Phone: (217)522-7985
• TTY: (217)522-9966

IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
• DCEO is designed to provide easy, fast access to the information you need. From our business-oriented domain name, to a user-friendly design that helps you navigate quickly, we’ve worked to make illinoisbiz.biz your one-stop tool for economic development information.
• IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Website
VA Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority (ATLFA)

- The Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority offers creative and flexible services to open doors for individuals who might not otherwise be eligible for borrowing.
- Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority
  - E-mail: atlfa@atlfa.org
  - Phone: (804)662-9000

Social Networking

ASHOKA Innovators for the Public: Social Entrepreneur group

- Networking association that provides financial and entrepreneurial assistance to its members. The main resource they provide is a fellowship opportunity that provides fellows a living stipend for three years to allow individuals to focus on entrepreneurial growth (for established entrepreneurs). Also has pay-for membership network.
- Ashoka Innovators for the Public Website
  - E-mail: info@ashoka.org
  - Phone: (703)527-8300

BPlans.com: Up and Running Blog

- This blog post describes attempts to create a global network for entrepreneurs with disabilities and how to get involved.
- Global Network for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Article

Chicago Entrepreneur Meetup Group

- The Chicago Entrepreneur Meetup group seeks to provide all entrepreneurs with the tools and services, training and education, resources, and a positive social network to share ideas, explore opportunities, and provide the support they need along their journey to personal and entrepreneurial success.
- Chicago Entrepreneur Meetup Group Website

DisabilityBiz Membership Website

- DisabilityBiz.org is a subsidiary of Seed Business Network, a nonprofit organization that provides resources to people with disabilities who are interested in starting up their own business and also counseling for continuing businesses. Information in their Business Resource Center pertains to the following areas: business start-up, business planning, business finances, business networking, and business marketing.
- DisabilityBiz.org Membership Website
  - Phone: (949)413-1555

Global Entrepreneurship Week

- Global Entrepreneurship Week is the world’s largest celebration of the innovators and job creators who launch startups that bring ideas to life, drive economic growth and expand human welfare.
- Global Entrepreneurship Week Website
  - E-mail: cgrieco@unleashingideas.org
  - Phone: (202)536-4448
Global Network for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities
• The Global Network for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities is committed to the endeavor of becoming the foremost global resource to which business owners and entrepreneurs as well as potential business owners with disability can turn at any stage of their business journey.
• Global Network for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Website
• Phone: (623)773-2774

JJ's List
• JJ's List is a website where people with people disabilities can receive support and rate disabled operated business and services. The list was founded based on a commitment to help improve the long-term economic and social futures of people with all disabilities.
• JJ's List Website
• E-mail: info@jjslist.com
• Phone: (847)869-0000

Job Accommodation Network YouTube Channel
• The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.
• JAN YouTube Channel Website
• E-mail: jan@askjan.org
• Phone: (800)526-7234
• TTY: (877)781-9403

Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship
• The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship's mission is to provide programs that inspire young people from low-income communities to stay in school, to recognize business opportunities and to plan for successful futures.
• Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship Website

Schwab Foundation for Social Impact
• International Networking and financial support foundation to connect social entrepreneurs, and provide support for community development. Network of social entrepreneurs that are provided mentorship and financial support.
• Schwab Foundation for Social Impact Website
• E-mail: info@schwabfound.org

UIC Social Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Facebook Page
• The purpose of this page is to serve as a resource through which entrepreneurs with disabilities can connect, discuss, and strengthen their social network.
• Social Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Facebook Page
Financial Resources and Information

Abilities Fund
- The Abilities Fund offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to prepare for business by providing access to a suite of business development tools specifically designed for individuals with disabilities.
- The Abilities Fund Website
- E-mail: info@abilitiesfund.org
- Phone: (888)222-8943

Disability.gov
- Disability.gov is a federal government website that provides an interactive, community-driven information network of disability-related programs, services, laws and benefits. Through the site, Americans with disabilities, their families, Veterans, educators, employers and many others are connected to thousands of resources from federal, state and local government agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations. New resources are added daily across 10 main subject areas – benefits, civil rights, community life, education, emergency preparedness, employment, health, housing, technology and transportation.
- Disability.gov Website

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. It is also illegal to discriminate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Website
- E-mail: maria.flores@eeoc.gov
- Phone: (414)297-3594
- Resource:

IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
- DCEO is designed to provide easy, fast access to the information you need. From our business-oriented domain name, to a user-friendly design that helps you navigate quickly, we’ve worked to make illinoisbiz.biz your one-stop tool for economic development information.
- IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Website
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- The Internal Revenue Service is the government agency responsible for tax collection and tax law enforcement.
- Internal Revenue Service Website
- Phone: (800)829-4933
- TDD: (800)829-4059
- Resources:
  - Small Business Forms and Publications
  - Self-Employed Individuals Tax Center
  - Small Business and Self-Employed Tax Center

ODEP: Business Sense
- Created as a resource for small business owners and entrepreneurs, Business Sense provides an inside track for all employers on the latest information related to disability employment. Subscribe today to receive your monthly measure of Business Sense.
- ODEP: Business Sense Website
- Resource:
  - Creating Opportunities Through Entrepreneurship

Loan Programs

Accion Chicago
- ACCION Chicago is an alternative lending organization dedicated to providing credit and other business services to small business owners who do not have access to traditional sources of financing. By encouraging the economic self-reliance of micro-entrepreneurs throughout the Chicagoland area, ACCION Chicago strives to help businesses and communities grow.
- Accion Chicago Website
- E-mail: info@accionchicago.org
- Phone: (312)275-3000

DCEO: Minority, Veteran, Women, And Disabled Participation Loan Program (MVWD/PLP)
- The MVWD/PLP program can provide Illinois small businesses that are 51 percent owned and managed by persons who are minorities, veterans, women, or disabled, with loans up to loans up to $100,000 or 50% of the total project.
- DCEO: Illinois Participation Loan Program Website

Empire State Development Bridge to Success Loan Program
- Empire State Development (ESD) will expand access to short-term Loans for New York State Certified Minority and Women-Owned firms doing business with New York State. Loans would typically be from $75,000-$200,000, but other loan amounts could be entertained.
- Bridget to Success Loan Website

Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago
ICNC helps companies access both public and private resources, including finding and securing grant or loan money, accessing government services, and troubleshooting.

- Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago Website
- E-mail: info@industrialcouncil.com
- Phone: (312)421-3941

The ARC of Louisiana Micro-Enterprise Business Loans
- This project enables individuals with disabilities and the elderly to start small businesses. Through self-employment, participants are given the opportunity to utilize their talents and creativity in creating a small business. This project offers financial assistance in the form of a small interest-free loan of up to $1,000 per person.
- Micro-Enterprise Business Loan Website

Van City: Advice and Business Loans for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (ABLED)
- The ABLED program provides loans to eligible people with disabilities to encourage opportunities for self-employment among those illustrating the capacity to operate their own businesses. VanCity works with entrepreneurs to find business planning resources, identify training needs and resources, locate other business counseling during the loan duration. VanCity also provides adaptive technology resources to facilitate the application process.
- VanCity: ABLED Website
- Phone: (604)709-6965
- TDD: (604)871-5408

Asset Development

Assets for Independence Resource Center
- Assets for Independence (AFI) enables community-based nonprofits and government agencies to implement and demonstrate an assets-based approach for giving low-income families a hand up out of poverty. AFI projects help participants save earned income in special-purpose, matched savings accounts called Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).
- Assets for Independence Resource Center Website
- E-mail: info@idaresources.org
- Phone: (866)778-6037
- Resource:
  - Understanding Asset Development for Individuals with Disabilities

Illinois Asset Building Group
- The Illinois Asset Building Group is a diverse statewide coalition invested in building the stability and strength of Illinois communities through increased asset ownership and asset protection. We believe that every person deserves the opportunity to save and build wealth across their lifetime. Through our advocacy efforts, we are
committed to addressing the growing racial wealth gap and creating safe opportunities for Illinois families to save for their future and the future of their children.

- Illinois Asset Building Group Website
- E-mail: lmullany@heartlandalliance.org
- Phone: (312)870-4939

**National Disability Institute (NDI)**

- Through the power of collaboration with federal agencies, major corporations, financial institutions and nonprofit organizations, NDI has brought new attention to the possibilities of economic empowerment that has changed thinking and behavior at an individual and systems level.
- National Disability Institute: Inclusive Credit Unions Website
- Phone: (202)296-2040

**Technical Assistance Project: Asset Development Training Series**

- The Asset Development series was designed to help Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) increase awareness of the many available Asset Development strategies and resources that exist to promote and support increased self-sufficiency and financial stability among individuals with low-incomes, including individuals with disabilities. The first ten 30-Second Trainings in the Asset Development series are geared towards individuals with disabilities and provide information on basic financial literacy. Trainings eleven through twenty of the series provide more advanced information on resources that can be shared with One-Stop Career Center Staff, Direct Service Providers and other Disability Partners, as well as individuals with disabilities.
- Disability Program Navigator Website

**Grant Opportunities**

**Alaska Microenterprise Program**

- The Micro Enterprise Fund strives to increase access to Micro Enterprise and self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who are Alaska Mental Health Trust Beneficiaries. Grant funds may be used for costs associated with starting a new business, expanding a current business or acquiring an existing business.
- Alaska Microenterprise Program Website
- Phone: (907) 321-4643
- Email: BizWorksAK@gmail.com

**BusinessUSA**

- Business USA is a collaborative one-stop shop for everything related to business in the USA.
- BusinessUSA Access Financing Website

**CDBG Microenterprise Grant Program**

- The CDBG Microenterprise Grant Program is a grant program to assist small businesses. This grant was awarded to Fulton County and is being administered by
the Fulton County Center for Regional Growth. Small businesses can receive grants of up to $25,000 to assist with startup or expansion costs which create jobs.

- [CDBG Microenterprise Grant Website](#)

**Disability and Entrepreneurship: Models of Success**

- The purpose of the D.E.M.O.S. (Disability and Entrepreneurship: Models of Success) initiative is to foster new entrepreneurial endeavors that are first and foremost successful business models, and that also create work environments, workforces, products, and services that are fully inclusive and available to people of all abilities; with an emphasis on inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. D.E.M.O.S. grants will support the development of new entrepreneurial endeavors that fully incorporate principles of Universal Design in their business models.

- [D.E.M.O.S. Website](#)

**IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)**

- DCEO is designed to provide easy, fast access to the information you need. From our business-oriented domain name, to a user-friendly design that helps you navigate quickly, we've worked to make illinoisbiz.biz your one-stop tool for economic development information.

- [IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Website](#)

**Kaufmann Foundation Grants**

- The Kaufman Foundation works in partnership with organizations that share their vision and passion for education, entrepreneurship, and the Kansas City community. They fund entrepreneurship programs and activities located across the country and/or in Kansas City.

- [Kaufmann Foundation Grants](#)

**Life's Plan Inc. Micro Enterprise Grants**

- Life’s Plan is a non-profit organization that provides Trustee services for people with disabilities and their families. Grants of up to $2,000 for an Adults with disabilities living in Illinois for micro-industry business that allows adults to earn wages.

- [Life’s Plan Inc.](#)
- Email: lifesplangrants@raygraham.org

**Maine Micro-Enterprise Assistance Grant Program**

- The Micro-Enterprise Assistance Grant Program (MEA) provides grant funds to assist in innovative solutions to problems faced by micro-enterprise businesses and for business facade improvements. MEA programs are limited to a grant total of $150,000. The maximum grant or loan amount to individual businesses is $50,000.

- [Micro-Enterprise Assistance Grant Program](#)

**Merchant Negotiators Small Business Grant**

- Merchant Negotiators has created an annual Small Business Grant, which offers $2,500 to deserving entrepreneurs from underrepresented entrepreneurial communities, is particularly needed.

- [Merchant Negotiators Website](#)
Nebraska Microenterprise Development Fund Enhancement
• The purpose of the Nebraska Microenterprise Development Fund Enhancement is to assure that micro businesses realize the full potential to create jobs, enhance entrepreneurial skills and activities, and increase low-income households' capacity to become self-sufficient; and to facilitate the development of a permanent, statewide infrastructure of microlending support organizations.
• Nebraska Microenterprise Development Fund Enhancement Website

Program for Investment in Micro-Entrepreneurs (PRIME)
• The SBA's Program for Investment in Micro-Entrepreneurs (PRIME) provides assistance to various organizations. These organizations help low-income entrepreneurs who lack sufficient training and education to gain access to capital to establish and expand their small businesses.
• PRIME Website

Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program
• The USDA's Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program provide microloans for microenterprise startups and growth through a Rural Microloan Revolving Fund and provides training and technical assistance to microloan borrowers and micro entrepreneurs
• Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program Website

The Rural Illinois Customized Employment Sustainability Project (RICES)
• The Rural Illinois Customized Employment Sustainability Project (RICES) builds lasting capacity by creating capacity for using community resources, cooperative relationships, and inventive service delivery through the stabilization of both wage and self-employment in communities.
• RICES Website

Awards, Competitions, & Fellowships

Anne Hopkins Scholarship (University of Illinois at Chicago)
• In honor of the memory of Anne Hopkins, the University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Disability and Human Development is pleased to offer the 1st Annual Anne Hopkins Scholarship. The purpose of the scholarship is to support educational opportunities for graduate students interested in any of the following topics: Disability and Sex, Relationships and Dating; Social Model of Disability; and Social Entrepreneurship.
• Anne Hopkins Scholarship
• Email: dhd@uic.edu
• Phone: (312)413-1647
• TTY: (312)413-0453

ASHOKA Innovators for the Public: Social Entrepreneur group
• Networking association that provides financial and entrepreneurial assistance to its members. The main resource they provide is a fellowship opportunity that provides
fellows a living stipend for three years to allow individuals to focus on entrepreneurial growth (for established entrepreneurs). Also has pay-for membership network.

- Ashoka Innovators for the Public Website
- E-mail: info@ashoka.org
- Phone: (703)527-8300

**Chicago Innovation Awards**
- Chicago Innovation Awards seeks to make Chicago a recognized hub of innovation by strengthening its economic future and building the spirit of innovation throughout the community.
- Chicago Innovation Awards Website
- Phone: (312)988-1516

**Concept2Venture Challenge (University of Illinois at Chicago)**
- In the Concept2Venture Challenge anyone in the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) community can learn how to take their idea (concept) and turn it into a business (venture). The C2V Challenge culminates in a competition where you present your plan to a panel of distinguished judges to win prizes.
- Concept2Venture website
- Phone: (312)988-1516

**Open Doors: UIC Fellowship & Intern Program**
- Open Doors Organization has established fellowships and intern programs with the University of Illinois at Chicago whereby graduate students from the University’s Department of Disability and Human Development receive a stipend from ODO through the University for tuition, books, and housing in return for their work at Open Doors.
- Open Doors Organization Website
- Phone: (773)388-8839

**Schwab Foundation for Social Impact**
- International Networking and financial support foundation to connect social entrepreneurs, and provide support for community development. Network of social entrepreneurs that are provided mentorship and financial support.
- Schwab Foundation for Social Impact Website
- E-mail: info@schwabfound.org
- Resource:
  - Online Application

**Youth Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition**
- The Youth Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition is an international contest launched by The Goi Peace Foundation, Stiftung Entrepreneurship (Berlin), and UNESCO. The competition provides a global platform for young entrepreneurs who aspire to create positive change in their communities.
- Youth Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition Website
Federal Resources

Chamber of Commerce for Persons with Disabilities
• The Chamber of Commerce for Persons with Disabilities seeks to promote the business interests of businesses run by persons with disabilities and/or their direct caregivers and to place businesses run by persons with disabilities on a level playing field with businesses run by others.
• Chamber of Commerce for Persons with Disabilities Website
• E-mail: info@disabilitychamber.org

Disability.gov
• Disability.gov is a federal government website that provides an interactive, community-driven information network of disability-related programs, services, laws and benefits. Through the site, Americans with disabilities, their families, Veterans, educators, employers and many others are connected to thousands of resources from federal, state and local government agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations. New resources are added daily across 10 main subject areas: benefits, civil rights, community life, education, emergency preparedness, employment, health, housing, technology and transportation.
• Disability.gov Website

Disabled Businesspersons Association (DBA)
• The Disabled Businesspersons Association is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to assisting enterprising individuals with disabilities maximize their potential in the business world, and work with vocational rehabilitation, government, and business to encourage the participation and enhance the performance of the disabled in the workforce.
• Disabled Businesspersons Association Website
• E-mail: info@disabledbusiness.com
• Phone: (619)594-9905

Department of Labor: Education & Training Administration (ETA)
• The Disabilities Program develops and implements workforce disability policy and program initiatives to address structural, programmatic, and systemic employment challenges of persons with disabilities and multiple challenges to employment. ETA administers the Disability Employment Initiative to improve the education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of persons with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits.
• US Department of Labor Disability Program Website
• E-mail: ETAPagemaster@dol.gov
• Phone: (877)872-5627
Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

- The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.

- JAN Entrepreneurship Website
- E-mail: jan@askjan.org
- Phone: (800)526-7234
- TTY: (877)781-9403
- Resources:
  - JAN's Entrepreneurship Series: Developing Your Business Plan
  - JAN's Entrepreneurship Series: Starting a Non-Profit Organization
  - JAN's Entrepreneurship Series: Resources to Assist Veterans to Start a Small Business
  - JAN's Fact Sheet Series: Self-Employment for Artists with Disabilities

National Association for the Self Employed (NASE)

- The NASE provides day-to-day support, including direct access to experts, benefits, and consolidated buying power that traditionally had been available only to large corporations. Today the NASE represents hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs and micro-businesses, and is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan association of its kind in the United States.

- National Association for the Self-Employed Website
- Phone: (800)649-6273

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

- ODEP fosters, promotes, and develops the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States. It tries to improve working conditions and advances opportunities for profitable employment, and assures work-related benefits and rights.

- ODEP Employment & Entrepreneurship Website
- E-mail: odep@dol.gov
- Phone: (866)633-7365

Small Business Association (SBA)

- The U.S. Small Business Administration has delivered millions of loans, loan guarantees, contracts, counseling sessions and other forms of assistance to small businesses.

- SBA People With Disabilities Website
- E-mail: answerdesk@sba.gov
- Phone: (800)827-5722

Social Enterprise Alliance (SEA)
• The Social Enterprise Alliance is the leading membership organization in North America for social enterprises, service providers, nonprofit organizations, corporations, and venture capitalists that is actively building the field of social enterprise through networking opportunities, educational forums, strategic partnerships, and impact legislation. Our members are passionate about changing their communities, and we are passionate about providing them with the tools they need to continue their good work.
  • Social Enterprise Alliance Website
  • E-mail: support@se-alliance.org
  • Phone: (202)758-0194

START-UP USA
• Self-Employment Technical Assistance, Resources, & Training (START-UP / USA) provides technical assistance and disseminates resources nationally to individuals interested in pursuing self-employment.
  • START-UP USA Website
  • Phone: (804)828-1851
  • TTY: (804)828-2494
  • Resources:
    • Self-Employment Q and A: Information on Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities

US Business Leadership Network (USBLN)
• The US Business Leadership Network is the national disability organization that serves as the collective voice of over 60 Business Leadership Network affiliates across North America, representing over 5,000 employers. The USBLN helps build workplaces, marketplaces, and supply chains where people with disabilities are respected for their talents, while supporting the development and expansion of its BLN affiliates. The USBLN recognizes and supports best practices in the employment and advancement of people with disabilities; the preparedness for work of youth and students with disabilities; marketing to consumers with disabilities; and contracting with vendors with disabilities through the development and certification of disability-owned businesses.
  • US Business Leadership Network Website
  • E-mail: info@usbin.org
  • Phone: (800)706-2710
  • Resources:
    • Certification for Disability-Owned Businesses

US Department of Veteran Affairs
• The US Department of Veteran Affairs provides veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned and does so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship.
  • US Department of VA- Veteran Entrepreneur Portal Website
  • Phone: (800)826-1000
Work Incentive Planning & Assistance Projects
• The goal of the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program is to better enable SSA’s beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work.
• Social Security Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Website
• E-mail: support@chooseworkttw.net
• Phone: (866)968-7842
• TTY: (866)833-2967
• Resources:
  • WIPA Brochure for Illinois
  • SSA: The Work Site

State Resources

IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
• DCEO is designed to provide easy, fast access to the information you need. From our business-oriented domain name, to a user-friendly design that helps you navigate quickly, we’ve worked to make illinoisbiz.biz your one-stop tool for economic development information.
• IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Website
• Departments:
  • Illinois Bureau of Workforce Development
    • The Office identifies youth, adults and dislocated workers who are eligible for assistance under the Workforce Investment Act, assesses their employability skills and provides training as appropriate for identified sectors of growing employment demand. The Office also provides follow-up services leading to employment retention in high-wage and high-skilled jobs.
    • Illinois Bureau of Workforce Development Website
  • Illinois Small Business Development Centers (SBDC’s)
    • Illinois SBDC’s located throughout the state provide information, confidential business guidance, training and other resources to early stage and existing small businesses. They are targeted towards new and existing small businesses and provide the following services: one-on-one counseling; assistance with management, business plans and marketing; financial services; training.
    • Illinois Small Business Development Centers Website
  • Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC)
    • Illinois PTAC's provide one-on-one counseling, technical information, marketing assistance and training to existing businesses that are interested in selling their products and/or services to local, state, or federal government agencies. They are targeted towards companies interested in selling products to government agencies and provide the following services: one-on-one counseling; technical information; marketing assistance; training.
    • Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Centers Website
  • Illinois International Trade Centers (ITC)
Illinois ITC’s provide information, counseling and training to existing, new-to-export companies interested in pursuing international trade opportunities. They are targeted to new-to-export companies interested in pursuing international trade opportunities and provide the following services: information; counseling; training.

- Illinois International Trade Centers Website

Illinois Manufacturing Extension Centers (MEC)

- The Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Illinois’ mission is to continually improve the competitiveness of small and mid-sized Illinois manufacturers. The centers and affiliated support organizations help manufacturers with productivity, technology modernization, and enhanced business practices. They are targeted to manufacturing companies and offer the following services: assessment to improve performance; benchmarking; project manager to ensure satisfaction.
- Illinois Manufacturing Extension Centers Website

Illinois Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP)

- Located in the nonregulatory agency, this program provides free confidential information and services to help small businesses understand their environmental obligations. They are targeted to businesses required to comply with state and federal air pollution regulations and provide the following services: workshops, on-site visits, Clean Air Clips, consultant directory, Environmental Resources.
- Illinois Small Business Environmental Assistance Program Website

Illinois Finance Authority (IFA)

- The mission of the IFA is to foster economic development to public and private institutions that create and retain jobs and improve the quality of life in Illinois by providing access to capital. The IFA is a self-financed, state authority principally engaged in issuing taxable and tax-exempt bonds, making loans, and investing capital for businesses, non-profit corporations, and local government units statewide.
- Illinois Finance Authority Website
  - Phone: (800)717-6066
  - TTY: (800)526-0844
  - Resource
    - Illinois business regulations

WIOA Works Illinois

- WIOA Works is an online resource to assist business and industry leaders, policy makers, community organizations and workforce professionals in achieving success under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- WIOA Works Website
  - TTY: (800)785-6055

Local Resources

Business Enterprises Owned by People with Disabilities (BEPD) Program
• The Business Enterprises Owned by People with Disabilities Program is a certification aimed at stimulating the utilization of small businesses owned and operated by persons with disabilities. Certification enables you to pursue bid opportunities to do business with the City of Chicago.

• **Business Enterprises Owned by People with Disabilities (BEPD) Program Website**
  • Phone: (312)744-4900
  • TTY: (312)744-2949

**Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center**

• CEC is an affiliate of the Chicagoland chamber of commerce that works with high-growth potential entrepreneurs in the early growth period of their startup. It provides advisory services and networking to assist with financing and sales.

• **Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center Website**
  • E-mail: info@chicagolandrec.org

**Chicago Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)**

• The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) works to meet the diverse needs of the more than 600,000 individuals with disabilities who live and work in Chicago. MOPD’s goal is to make Chicago the most accessible city in the nation.

• **Chicago Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Website**
  • Phone: (312)744-7050
  • TTY: (312)744-4964
  • Resource:
    • Business Enterprises Owned by People with Disabilities (BEPD) Initiative

**Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce**

• The Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce is a premier business leadership organization providing cutting edge value added services to all members of the regional business community. Benefits of membership in the Chamber include great opportunities to network and create an awareness of your business name, product or service. By getting involved in Chamber activities and committees you will have the opportunity to meet and work with area business leaders on issues impacting not only your business, but also the region.

• **Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce Website**
  • Phone: (708)957-6950

**DisabilityWorks**

• DisabilityWorks, an initiative from the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the City of Chicago, is designed to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities throughout Illinois.

• **DisabilityWorks Website**

**Self-Employment Resources Network (SERN)**

• The Self Employment Resources Network began as a Task Force on Self Employment. Its current members represent state agencies, private vocational rehabilitation agencies, small businesses, parents, and advocacy groups with people having any
disability. SERN seeks to locate self-employment resources, translate those resources into user-friendly terms, facilitate networking opportunities, and to identify best practice procedures for interested persons with disabilities wanting to be self-employed.

- SERN Website
- E-mail: sernonline@gmail.com
- Phone: (773)427-5200

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Chicago

- SCORE Chicago provides free business counseling, management consulting, and low cost workshops. We advise on how to get a business loan and offer other resources like templates for a business plan. SCORE counselors can help the entrepreneur start a business or a small business owner grow and prosper. The organization has more than 25 locations in the Chicago area.
- SCORE Chicago Website
- Phone: (312)353-7724
Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute, Northwestern University

- The Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) is at the center of a large and growing movement that considers local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development. Building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions, asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.
- Asset-Based Community Development Institute Website
- E-mail: abcd@northwestern.edu
- Phone: (847)491-8711

Coleman Entrepreneurship Center at DePaul University

- DePaul’s Coleman Entrepreneurship Center is a partner to the university’s nationally ranked academic entrepreneurship program in the Driehaus College of Business. The Center serves as an entrepreneurial hub for DePaul students, faculty and alumni, as well as the broader Chicago business community.
- Coleman Entrepreneurship Website
- Phone: (312)362-8000

National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship

- National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) is a non-profit organization for educators, entrepreneurs, and distinguished business development professionals to provide quality programs and services in entrepreneurship education and serve as advocates for “entrepreneurship movement.”
- National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship Website
- Phone: (413)306-3131

Network Impact

- Net Impact is a leading nonprofit that empowers a new generation to use their careers to drive transformational change in the workplace and the world. At the heart of our community are over 40,000 student and professional leaders from over 300 volunteer-led chapters across the globe working for a sustainable future. Together, we make a net impact that transforms our lives, our organizations, and the world.
- Network Impact Website
- Phone: (415)495-4230
- Resources:
  - Chicago Net Impact Chapter
  - Net Impact: Learning & Resources
Stevie Hopkins: 3E Love

Stevie Hopkins is a serial entrepreneur who after many ventures finally found his life's work in 3E Love. Calling on his experiences in the financial industry, music business, and web startups, Stevie was able to turn his sister Annie’s dreams into a reality. He has worked tirelessly to spread the symbol across the globe. The experiences he has had traveling thousands of miles, meeting people all over the country and speaking to groups telling his story, has changed his life forever.

3E Love, LLC. is a social entrepreneurial experiment to change the perception of disability. The company was started by siblings Annie & Stevie Hopkins in 2007 with the intent of promoting their unique symbol and social model of disability. The company's trademarked International Symbol of Acceptance (wheelchair heart logo) is the drive behind it’s social mission to provide the tools for others to embrace diversity, educate society, and empower each other to love life. What was once just a small Chicago disability pride clothing brand is now an international movement of acceptance. People with disabilities are everywhere, and thousands of t-shirts and other items later, so is the 3E Love message.
Bridget & Nancy Brown: Butterflies for Change

Bridget Brown is a successful young woman who captures the attention of everyone she meets with her vitality and confidence. Bridget was the first person with Down Syndrome to be included in her school district. She is a national public speaker and shares tools and strategies she used to be successfully included. She also is a person centered planning coach and works with young adults with disabilities to help them find their own voice. In addition to her workshops and keynote speaking engagements, Bridget also works as part of a grant through the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. She helps young adults with disabilities learn how to present at their own IEP meetings, set goals, and speak with self determination.

Nancy Brown often presents nationally with her daughter. They specialize in coaching participants in person centered planning, transition, and adaptations and accommodations in inclusive classrooms. Nancy believes that all students should have access to the general education curriculum. Nancy has had over 30 years of experience working with individuals with disabilities.

Butterflies for Change offers a variety of workshops and training programs for parents and educators. Their services include keynote speeches, workshops and one-on-one counseling and representation tailored to specific audiences. Participants will learn how Nancy and Bridget’s journey developed and leave with a toolkit of strategies and tools that will assist families, school personnel, and communities on their own journeys into full and inclusive lives.
Brian Martin: Hardback YoYo

When Brian was 18 years old, with graduation just around the corner, he was in need of a job. So his family and friends gathered to form a team of support and together launched a customized business that would create a product of interest not only to Brian but many others. Brian’s passion for books and keeping the earth a great place inspired him to create an eco-friendly business springing old books into a new purpose. Brian has a form of Autism called Asperger’s Syndrome and a customized job is the best way for him to accentuate my strengths.

Hardback YoYo makes writing journals and other items from discarded media. Brian has been running the business for over 4 years now. Hardback YoYo’s product list is also growing. Their items can be found in retail stores and at local fairs, conventions and expos, all year-round. Hardback Yoyo is named after one of Brian’s email addresses and his love of the yoyo’s ability to always spring back.
Keri Obrist: MORE Access Solutions

Before starting MORE Access Solutions, Kerry Obrist worked for nearly 20 years providing direct service, program development and support to people with disabilities both professionally and as a volunteer. Much of Kerry’s expertise comes from living with a disability herself. Like most, she acquired her disability as an adult. This experience impacted her life in profound ways, affording her the unique perspective of a citizen, family member, customer, employee, and business owner with a disability. Kerry specializes in working with businesses across industries on a variety of disability-related issues including: customer service training, assessing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, improving physical accessibility, barrier removal, and the identification and implementation of workplace accommodations. Her creative problem-solving finds cost-effective solutions that meet business needs.

MORE Access Solutions is a for-profit leader in consulting and customer service training for businesses seeking creative and proactive solutions for their disability-related needs. They support diversity and inclusion initiatives by helping clients integrate people with disabilities into their workplace, marketplace, and supply chains. MORE Access Solutions helps businesses profit from the buying power, diverse skill sets and unique perspectives people with disabilities offer. Committed to expanding corporate diversity to include people with disabilities, they look to improve overall access to mainstream products, services, activities, and venues for all.