The Boynton Beach Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation Grant Program

Working Groups on Entrepreneurship for Women Final Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....................................................................................................................................................2
INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................................................................3
METHODOLOGY............................................................................................................................................................3
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ...............................................................................................................................................4
LESSONS LEARNED ........................................................................................................................................................6
APPENDIX A – Copy of 2-Month Summary ...................................................................................................................7
APPENDIX B – Copy of Survey ........................................................................................................................................9
APPENDIX C – Summary of Notes from Event 1 ..........................................................................................................10
APPENDIX C – Summary of Notes from Event 2 ..........................................................................................................13
Appendix D – Power Team Blueprint – 8 Strategies to Manage the Storms of Leadership ........................................16
REFERENCES.................................................................................................................................................................17
INTRODUCTION

Be.Lead.Grow. is honored to have facilitated this process of gaining insight into the needs and concerns of Women Business Owners (WBOs) within the City of Boynton Beach. In partnership with the Department of Economic Development and Strategy, we accomplished a task that provides a framework for what can provide a long-term impact on the business community. This effort revealed that similar to women business owners across the country, female entrepreneurs continue to be ambitious, skilled, and a desire to bring their idea to fruition; however, they continue to face challenges that limit their ability to scale and develop products and provide services at the rate in which they are needed by potential clients and or required for their individual markets. required.

Although limited in resources, these women continue to find refuge in natural support systems and rely on their family and friends to fill the roles generally occupied by staff, colleagues or peer groups within their specified industry. As a result of this effort WBOs were able to verbalize their beliefs related to leadership, business and needs. This report will outline the methodology, summary of findings and suggested next steps.

METHODOLOGY

It remains our belief that data driven decision making is the cornerstone for making sustainable change or having a successful launch. The methodology was based on Be.Lead.Grow.’s H.E.A.L.T.H.Y. model and incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data. Knowing that we could not fully predict the response related to barriers, and/or strengths regarding women entrepreneurial success, we wanted to also leave room for unique additional open-ended responses. Full comments are available upon request.

As noted in the two-month summary report several changes to the methodology were made to the process to account for national trends of data collection related to this topic, as well as the inability to Women Business Owners (WBOs). Due to the allocated budget we were unable to incentivize Women Business Owners (WBOs) for participation beyond the networking mixer. However, those who participants provided rich information for the Department of Economic Development and Strategy to build upon and incorporate it into future efforts.

A simplified survey was developed and provided electronically via SurveyMonkey. A total of seven (7) surveys were completed, and a summary of findings is listed below alongside a summary of findings for the two in-person events which was attended by eight (8) individuals, seven were WBOs. The eighth participant was a male Boynton Beach Business owner who was aware of the request to solely be for women, however he still attended and provided feedback as an ally. It is noted that there were 12 WBOs registered for the October 8th event, and 19 for
the October 12th event. Those who were unable to make it reiterated that these types of events were appreciated and needed and expressed appreciation for the city’s effort to understand their concerns and needs.

Be.Lead.Grow. surveyed Women Business Owners (WBOs) Women Business Owners asking seven (7) questions via survey monkey. After confirming that they were the owner of a business that was at least 51% owned by a woman, and their business was conducted in the City of Boynton Beach, participants were asked 14 questions, some of which allowed for them to provide additional insight via open ended questions.

The questions posed to those in-person and via survey were compiled based on articles and surveys developed by: American Express (Bawden-Davis, 2018); The Small Business Credit Surveys (SBCS); a national collaboration of the 12 Reserve Banks of the Federal Reserve, and System, an article by The Association of Credit and Collection Professionals and other sources noted in the references section. These items were used in order to provide comparison with national trends, issues, proposed and actual solutions.

In addition to the data received from the survey, detailed notes were transcribed and summarized to include overarching themes and individual commentary. Participants could provide additional comments not included in the articles and surveys. This information is also in the Summary of Findings section.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
The following are the results of their survey responses:

- All of the participants agreed that business capital/funding is the primary need of a successful woman owned business

- Six of the seven participants stated that business education, overcoming fear and failures, access to government, work-life balance, and marketing skills are essential to a successful business full-owned by women.

- At least four participants stated balancing responsibilities, online presence, and knowledge of the industry is key to a successful business owned by women.

While 100% stated that business capital/funding is necessary to be a successful business owner, 50% also stated that access to that same capital/funding are barriers to starting and running a business in the City of Boynton Beach, Florida. The participants stated other barriers included; marketing and branding online, access to leadership development trainings, and access to quality professionals in my industry. At least five of seven participants stated access to government, marketing skills, online presence, and knowledge of industry as keys to be a successful business, but they are also barriers these participants face building a successful business.
When asked if women owned businesses have the same opportunities as male owned business 60% of participants stated ‘yes’ while 30% disagreed. When asked questions about pursuing contracts or access to capital the participants were indecisive. Six participants believe they have the confidence and ability to deliver quality products and services, but only one participant believed they can sustain their business beyond 5 years. While three participants surveyed did not believe their business will sustain beyond 5 years.

When asked if my business provides products and services that the City of Boynton Beach is able to purchase/utilize; 70% of participants agreed, and 30% disagreed.

The survey participants demographics include the following: three non-Hispanic Black, two non-Hispanic White, one Hispanic and one Non-Hispanic Asian. Of those surveyed, majority of their industry is professional services and Real Estate. Seven are limited liability owners and the other was a profit corporation owner; all of whom have been running their business for approximately two years. Two participants had an expected revenue of $25k or less and four participants stated that they had an expected revenue of $25K-$100k, and one participant had an expected revenue of $100k- $1 million. No participants identified as having an expected a minimum revenue of one million dollars.

In addition, sessions took place at CoWork Boynton and the responses mirrored were consistent regarding their need and desire for additional supports that are formal and informal. They faced challenges related to capital, working space, access to leadership building trainings based on their industry, while also maintaining a desire to learn from others. Most felt that they were consistently asked to do more, while receiving less. As noted in the Summary of Event 1 – Appendix C,

“The male participant wanted to ensure that women saw the advantages that they held in the workplace as they served in roles that provided them access to information that was of high importance. Knowing “where the money is going,” “what’s being typed” “who are the real partners,” and although in secretarial roles it made them perfect for Director of Operations positions. The conversation then led to understanding the project management skills of mothering inside and outside of the workplace, and in the home. Although it sounds good in theory, these items aren’t accepted on a resume or professional settings to the degree where the glass ceiling was being shattered and equal pay and access were being provided to women, and particularly those who were starting businesses.”

It is requested that an intentional effort be made to review the summaries detailed in both Appendixes.
LESSONS LEARNED

The needs and desires of Women Business Owners (WBOs) from the City of Boynton Beach, were similar to those across the country, however, they noted that some items were unique. Adjusting to weather changes and the variations in experiences utilizing Chamber of Commerce throughout the tri-county, area and other professional organizations, which influenced their experience as business owners. Additional insight into resources, both at cost and free to consumer, would greatly be appreciated and hopefully utilized.

Over 500 business owners were contacted using data received from the State of Florida, Palm Beach County, and Palm Beach County Office of Equal Business Opportunity MWBE Certification databases. The formatting and data retrieval processes were cumbersome. Additional time would allow for technical support to work with administrative teams to relieve some of these errors and redundancies.

A holistic perspective to identify the depth of need and desire from Women Business Owners needs to continue as additional analysis and development of resources is needed. This survey utilized questions from national surveys to allow for comparison, however the opportunity for formal focused groups and additional long-term supports would be beneficial.

This effort was welcomed by all participants; however, we note that had there been more funding for this effort additional processes could have been made to receive additional feedback. Funding could be used to collect data via mail surveys, phone calls and incentives for participants.

Working with the City of Boynton Beach and the Department of Economic Development and Strategy team has been a pleasure. We welcome the opportunity to provide additional feedback and context as needed.
APPENDIX A – Copy of 2-Month Summary

Hi John, I hope this finds you well. Please see below as an update regarding our progress and a few challenges alongside current solutions 😊

Survey Design

• After consulting with a research and development strategist they recommended that we condense the survey as we were not providing financial compensation for time. As submitted, it was believed that we would receive a low response. Therefore, we adjusted the survey and included more Likert Scales and will leave open ended discussion for the in-person meeting.
• We conducted a light literature review and found several national surveys that sought to answer the same questions, so we adjusted our questions to be able to provide comparison to national data. Reports were conducted by the Small Business Administration, American Express and Federal Reserve Bank of New York.
• Once finalized questions will be uploaded in survey monkey and available via paper survey at CoWork Boynton.

Data Collection

• Accessing data at all levels was not as easy as expected. At the state level, information is provided on an individual basis but their process for extracting data from their system exceeds my technical expertise or ability at this moment. I submitted a public information request and received a response to do the process that I already attempted so I am waiting on their response to see if said information will be available. The state does not utilize a gender designation so all businesses would have to be contacted and would then unsubscribe from our email effort.
• The contact information for those women owned businesses in Boynton Beach that are certified through the State MWBE certification process have been received.
• The contact information for those women owned businesses in Boynton Beach that are certified through the County MWBE certification process have been received.
• The contact information for all businesses that are registered as doing business in Boynton Beach (520+) have been received from Palm Beach County.
• All data is being “cleaned” to identify who is able to receive email notification. Those without this will be listed as potential participants in future efforts as funding is not allocated in the budget to contact via mail or telephone. Duplicate entries, and government entities are being removed from the list.
• A virtual list is being created through the email list provider AWeber, and persons are able to easily unsubscribe from the process should they not desire to participate, or they are not a woman owned business.
• Information for vendors registered with the City of Boynton Beach is not available via the website. Should you have a method to access this information that would be greatly appreciated!

In-Person Event

• Our original date of August 22 is going to be pushed back to allow for more time to get the greatest participation.
• We have received a sponsorship of a FREE month membership to CoWork Boynton that we will raffle off at the event
• A sponsored and targeted ad will be used to contact those persons who live in the identified zip codes, city limits within City of Boynton Beach.
• A final date will be provided once data is confirmed, received and available for us to begin contacting business owners.

On-Line Event
• Date pending receipt of business owner data, and finalization of the report.
• The platform Zoom will be used, and an overview of findings will be summarized and included in the final report.

Thanks again for the opportunity and should you have any additional questions please let me know. 😊

Peace, Love and HEALTHY Leadership to You,
Dr. AMS

Angela M. Shuttlesworth, MSW, PhD
Founder & CEO of Be.Lead.Grow.

www.BeLeadGrow.com
APPENDIX B – Copy of Survey
APPENDIX C – Summary of Notes from Event 1

During in-person event #2, held on October 12, 2019 from 3 PM – 6 PM at CoWork Boynton, participants were guided in an exploratory discussion to identify the strengths, challenges and desires of their Women Owned Businesses. A summary of responses from attendees are provided below.

The initial discussion began by discussing a variation in success and challenges being specific to each industry. As represented by the gentleman who came to the event, knowing that it was marketed and designed solely for women, it was noted that men have no problem using their voice, while women sometimes feel silenced by others or silence themselves based on the environment. Although not planned for him, he fully participated; however, the facilitator made sure that his voice was second to the women who were present. That was demonstrated by first asking women if they wanted him to stay at the event and letting them know that at any point, they could request for him to leave. That was not needed as he was respectful and provided great feedback from the position of what he’s witnessed as a male business owner, ally of women and manager within various businesses over time.

Aware of male difference privilege being a layered discussion, specific examples were provided on why variations may exist. An example that was discussed was during times of maternity and or family leave, men receive 12 – 15 months of advantage of knowing the operations of having an advantage of time in the office and building relationships. Women would return to the office, possibly adjusting to post-partum symptoms and challenges, with little time to “catch up,” influencing their opportunities for promotion. It was also noted that although men take this leave it was perceived to not be at the same rate (much lower) as women.

Thereafter, the advantage points of women were noted as well. Although some would see administrative assistant roles as inferior, it was noted that women were the glue to making businesses run effectively and were the “backbone of male leadership.” It was viewed that “even if there is access it is intimidating,” as the participant went on to discuss her perception of the challenges faced with minority, veteran, and wounded veterans. She felt that there was a “long list of things you have to do for very little money.”

To overcome such boundaries attendees noted that they relied strongly on organizations, throughout the tri-county area (Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties), and Central Florida. They were involved in Chamber of Commerce and other formal organizations that were geared towards strategy and support in their individual industries. As they discussed barriers, they noted that discrimination that discrimination wasn’t received solely from men, as trust from
other women was lacking. They realized that women sought validation from others and although there was the mindset that a man did things to “earn his keep,” gender equality was a layered conversation alongside layers of struggle.

To cope with this meditating every morning, relying on support from men as the male voice is important, and finding and using a tribe were mentioned. When not different types of friend and purposes of those relationships there was a strong presence of not being connected to women that were able to understand their experience, thus they had to adjust to accommodate the norms of their social circles which then became another struggle.

The male participant wanted to ensure that women saw the advantages that they held in the workplace as they served in roles that provided them access to information that was of high importance. Knowing “where the money is going,” “what’s being typed” “who are the real partners,” and although in secretarial roles it made them perfect for Director of Operations positions. The conversation then led to understanding the project management skills of mothering inside and outside of the workplace, and in the home. Although it sounds good in theory, these items aren’t accepted on a resume or professional settings to the degree where the glass ceiling was being shattered and equal pay and access were being provided to women, and particularly those who were starting businesses.

To accommodate this overwhelming reality, the Women Business Owners (WBOs) noted that they had to make their own room for growth. They relied strongly on multiple streams of income as they needed to minimize the fear of not being able to do more - and do it well; however, which translated to not relying on one income or person to do things and making sure that their homes wouldn’t suffer financially. To do so they needed to stay motivated and noted that they created their own community as formal ones did not exist. In said communities they asked for help from similar businesses and kept in mind that there was more than enough to go around. They did not see their counterparts as competition but allies.

Although making these relationships and building community it was not consistent, as they found themselves doing a lot of work at home which was noted as being draining. In addition to needing formal locations that were economically reasonable, other than a coffee shop, they noted there were basic needs that would make their business run more efficiently. These Women Business Owners (WBOs) noted the need for online systems to be able to professionally engage with clients. Using a referral-based process for leads they noted that their network would only take them but so far, so they needed to do cold calls. Simultaneously their best advertising was satisfied customers so they reiterated that testimonials and clients becoming a part of that referral process would allow them to flourish in new ways. To do so, there was an additional cost of including clients in this process so additional monies for birthday cards, flowers if a family member passes away and holiday parties were necessary but taxing. It required them to keep
close personal relationships with their clients, that were not expected of men, taking away from their time and cutting into their time for productivity, thus minimizing their efficiency.

Noting the importance of balancing energy and providing quality products and services they noted the influence of changing markets and politics on their work. Thereafter, it was intentional to have a higher quality of clients versus solely focusing on a large quantity of clients. Similarly, quality relationships in their personality were valued as well. Whether married, dating or single, Women Business Owners (WBOs) desired for their spouses to understand the variance in their competitive nature. One noted the struggle of getting their partner to understand that similar to them being competitive in sports, they needed to understand their competitive spirit to win in business as well.
APPENDIX C – Summary of Notes from Event 2

The second in-person event took place on October 12, 2019 from 3PM to 6PM at CoWork Boynton. After noting similar trends in discussion, Dr. Angela M. Shuttlesworth guided the participants in a discussion using the Power Team Blueprint: 8 Power-FULL Strategies to Manage the Storms of Leadership. Six of the strategies focused on specific roles and persons that leaders should have as a part of their formal and informal teams. When entrepreneurs did not have these persons in their lives, they were instructed to identify the characteristics and/or type of people that they would like to fill said roles.

A summary of responses from attendees are provided below and organized by the recommended titles and characteristics below:

1. Strategist – Powerful supporter who is able to assist you, using their expertise in managing and overcoming complex scenarios.
   - When identifying characteristics of who could fulfil this role in their lives, they said it was important to have someone who understood their experience and provided a sense of calm, as they were “easy (to talk to) and had a chill” temperament. Simultaneously, they also noted that it was important for the Strategist to challenge them and be mindful of their desire to be comfortable with the information that is given. A requirement for being viewed as an effective strategist was being able to simplify the process and help broaden their perspective. The age of the strategist was noted as an important factor. Both younger and more seasoned voices are important to include.
   - Coach – Powerful supporter who exposes you to new knowledge while simultaneously uncovering the genius that is within you, waiting to be revealed.
     - This role was met with excitement by the attendees as they joyously shared how coaches have influenced their journeys. They mentioned being guided into business areas that they had not previously considered because their coaches saw things in them that they did not see in themselves. These new areas resulted in new streams of revenue and allowed them to tap into skills that they assumed they would have to neglect as business owners, and or they didn’t feel. Life and leadership are not always peaches and cream. Knowing that, how do we deal with the stress and turmoil that comes our way, while still leading effectively? Leaders need innovative strategies and reminders of how to lead when life and leadership “sucks”. It was believed that these skills were where they needed to focus their efforts to make money. This role was filled by formal positions in their companies by family, friends, and former bosses who now served as mentors and business partners. In response to current bosses and business partners, it was mentioned that coaching was also tied to accountability as it was ??expected?? for them to produce. Friends were relied on in this role because they knew the owners personally and professionally and would respond truthfully and frankly to difficult questions.
3. Cheerleader – Powerful supporter who provides the voice of empowerment that you need to feel prepared and worthy of greatness.

- In discussing how these women were supported by male versus female cheerleaders, they felt that men responded by action and money without as much care for the details. Women on the other hand cheered with words and emotional support. Positive reinforcement was another significant way that they felt empowered. Across the board this role was held by informal relationships - family members, friends, partners/spouses. These relationships served as a safe space where she could access capital and wisdom without judgement or an expectation of having to return their investment. Once mentioned, everyone agreed the role of mothering and nurturing and how it related to their empowerment.

4. Nurturer- Powerful supporter who provides a safe space for you to fall apart and lovingly helps put you back together without shame.

- The reliance on formal supports, and particularly therapists, was stronger in this area. Having someone that was able to accommodate their cultural needs and considerations was tied to them being understood and supported. Family members with a counseling expertise were relied on, alongside family members who had what they believed to be characteristics of someone in the counseling field: patience, great listening skills, confidentiality, someone who has time and makes time for you, and warm spirit. It was emphasized that the more they succeeded; the more confidentiality was important to them as they didn’t want their information shared with others. Lastly a deep discussion regarding what was viewed as “normal” took place. They differentiated between what was normal to you as an individual what was normal to America as a whole. What was normal to 3-5 people in your personal world/circle and understanding that influenced how the Nurturer would provide feedback and options for them to consider in their time of need.

5. Lover – Powerful supporter who provides an unwavering constant presence of safety, stability and sound affirmation serving as your anchor.

- This role was not provided consistently and greatly impacted their ability to lead as business owners. Because this role was inconsistent, it is important for them to serve in this role for themselves. This does not negate the desire for someone to play this role. The idea of constant presence meant different things for different people, based on personality and need in the moment. The discussion of seeking this type of support was compared to a widely known quote by the actor and philanthropist Will Smith. He said to his wife Jada Pinket-Smith, “It is not my job to make you happy.” This reiterated the need for this type of support to begin within, while also being able to verbalize their needs to others. The source 5 Love Languages was discussed while also saying that their desires varied in their expectations for the individuals based on the relationship. Although they perceived themselves as serving in this role for “a lot of people,” it was a
challenge to have people who could anchor their ever-moving progress, needs and desires as business owners.

Peer – Powerful supporter who serves as a mirror and a listening/understanding ear. Peers are willing to share and receive resources as they’re on a similarly BIG journey.

- This role was strongly needed and relied upon for all participants. In speaking of their colleague, one attendee stated, “I eat through her mouth, and she eats through mine,” to describe how interconnected their success was. Although there were similarities regarding how they defined a peer, it was also noted that this varied by industry. Suppliers and distributors served in this role in understanding the level of stress that they endured, and the urgency of having access to what they need. As it related to service providers in their field, they mentioned being able to discuss the changes in the marketplace and similar struggles with staff and client management. Similar to comments above in other areas, they mentioned although they could identify times where this support was there, they also noted feeling lonely at times. In these moments their productivity and cash flow can be negatively influenced.

A clear sense of trust was built during this discussion and these women entrepreneurs were also able to speak to the solutions that they desired. As it related to resources a few items that were ongoing needs currently and as they built their business were: a place to conduct operations from (e.g. a coworking space of office building), and an incubator that would provide an address to receive mail that is not their home, and phones. As mentioned in the previous section, connection was a common theme and need during all events and interviews. More networking events and for professional development were suggested/recommended. It was stated that, “we don’t know everything, but someone knows something.” These business owners knew there was a lack of events specific to women, however accessing the information or having the capital to attend local or events in neighboring counties could mediate the problem.

Understanding the culture of Florida, adjusting to the seasons and how to manage capital during high and low seasons continued to be a concern and need for participants, noting the different impact based on industry. Lastly, the requirements for startups related to completing official documentation and capital needed to bring ideas to fruition were major needs. Lastly, the need to be and feel prepared, as they remained hopeful for their “big boom” in getting exposure for their products and/or services was discussed well.
Appendix D – Power Team Blueprint – 8 Strategies to Manage the Storms of Leadership

This document was utilized during in-person event number two. Dr. Angela M. Shuttlesworth, of Be.Lead.Grow. facilitated a discussion that was guided by the Power Team Blueprint. A summary of this conversation is noted in Appendix C.
REFERENCES


