

ACCELERATE^{UP}

Growing new and existing businesses

Final Evaluation Report



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at UW-Stout



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Program Overview

The Lundin Foundation is a non-profit organization working in partnership with the Lundin Group of companies to design and implement strategic community investments which enhance employment opportunities and economic resilience of local communities. The Foundation is working in close partnership with Eagle Mine. Eagle Mine is an underground, high-grade nickel and copper mine located in western Marquette County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The mine is expected to produce 365 million pounds of nickel, and 295 million pounds of copper, and trace amounts of other minerals over its estimated nine-year mine life (2014-2023).

Eagle Mine is dedicated to expanding business growth separate from the mine. They partnered with the local community to establish Accelerate UP in Marquette County to address the anticipated decline in the local economy as Eagle's operations approach the 2024 closure. The purpose of the Accelerate UP program is to promote economic and community vitality of local entrepreneurs. It offers free and confidential business coaching by using Enterprise Facilitation™, developed by economist Dr. Ernesto Sirolli. This approach is an innovative grass roots strategy for economic development.

In 2012, supported by Eagle Mine, Accelerate UP entered into a contract with the Sirolli Institute as part of a 30-month guided apprenticeship. The goal was to establish an independent, ongoing certified Enterprise Facilitation program prior to the official launch date. In 2013, the Accelerate UP program was officially launched in Marquette County with an enterprise facilitator and local management board. Alex Kofsky is the current enterprise facilitator. The Accelerate UP program serves entrepreneurs in the Marquette community by offering free and confidential business coaching. The program accepts entrepreneurs in any business sector and at any stage of their business, including creating or expanding a business. As part of the program, entrepreneurs work one-on-one with the facilitator, who connects clients to members of the resource team. The facilitator educates the entrepreneur using the "Universal Management Principles", a concept that teaches each entrepreneur how to establish a successful business and business team. The facilitator tests the personal motivation and skill of the clients and develops the client's capacity to assess their own management strengths and weaknesses. Accelerate UP has worked with an estimated 450 clients to date. The resource team is comprised of local civic leaders, community professionals, and economic development practitioners. Resource team members receive training prior to joining. The resource team provides personal introductions of the facilitator to the community. The team meets monthly to discuss any issues the clients are having, and to explore potential solutions to these issues. The team also monitors the progress of the project through monthly reports from the facilitator on client activities, including the number of new or expanded businesses, and new or retained jobs. Together they work toward a common goal to promote economic and community vitality of local entrepreneurs.

Methodology

The Applied Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stout (ARC Evaluation) was contracted as a third-party to evaluate the impact of the Accelerate UP program to date. ARC Evaluation developed an evaluation plan to collect data in alignment with the following goals and performance indicators:



Business Management Capacity



Self-Identified Changes to Client Businesses



Revenue Growth



Impact on Local Economy



Jobs Created/Employment



Impact on Local and Broader Community



Previous Employment Status of Entrepreneur



Perceptions of the Program from Accelerate UP Clients



Total Capital Invested/Source



Barriers to Business Growth & Job Creation



Business Confidence/Other Intangible Benefits



Program Improvement

To take a deeper dive into the data for one of the performance indicators, please click on the icons above to go to the theme tables associated with the categories referenced.

Data Collection Measures and Response Rates

ARC staff traveled to Marquette Michigan to meet with program participants face-to-face to collect data in addition to collecting survey data. Data collection methods and response rates are detailed below. All data collection instruments are included in Appendix B.

Client Key Informant Interviews

Three groups of current clients participated in key informant interviews during the site visit. There was a total of eleven participants (n = 11). Participants were asked to respond to qualitative questions and participated in the web-based survey for quantitative questions.

Client Survey

Participants who were unable to attend the interviews were surveyed (n = 51) and asked to respond to both quantitative and qualitative questions. Data was collected from using a web-based survey consisting of quantitative and qualitative survey items.

Qualitative survey items were the same for both the web-based survey and the key informant interviews. In total, n = 62 Accelerate UP clients are represented in this survey.

Resource Team Key Informant Interviews

One group of resource team members participated in the key informant interview during the site visit. There was a total of four participants (n = 4).

Resource Team Survey

Data was collected from resource team members of the Accelerate UP program using a web-based survey and telephone survey consisting of qualitative survey items. Qualitative survey items were the same for the web-based, phone, and the key informant interviews.

Participants who were unable to attend the interviews were surveyed and asked to respond to several qualitative questions (n = 10 web-based, n = 13 phone). A total of 23 resource team members completed the survey.

Dashboard Data

Dashboard data was collected from the customer relationship management software Salesforce. Accelerate UP uses this to store and manage customer information.

Interpreting Results

Quantitative Data

Likert scales are used throughout the report where a 5-point scale is noted. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with a given statement using a 5-point scale where 1 = low and 5 = high. Mean scores are used as item response summaries. The Likert scale below details the method with which the mean scores can be interpreted.

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Very Poorly Rated | Poorly Rated | Neutral | Highly Rated | Very Highly Rated |

Qualitative Data

A mixed methodology was used in data collection. ARC Evaluation created processes and procedures for every phase of the key informant interviews. This included training facilitators and note takers, use of recording equipment, what happens before, during and after the interviews, and data analysis. The term “theme” used in this report can be interpreted as comments made by a participant at least two times. Theme tables included in Appendix A are referenced throughout the report detail where comments overlapped and include specific comments as organized by themes identified. The relevance or value of a theme increases the more times it is referenced by participants (referred to frequency on theme tables).

Analysis is broken down further as follows:

Two coders:

1. Independently read all raw data (notes, transcriptions)
2. Independently identify themes in the data
3. Meet to compare their independently identified theme lists and agree upon what themes will be used to form the coding structure
4. Independently code the data into the agreed upon themes
5. Meet to resolve discrepancies between the two independent codes, and ensure inter-rater reliability is 90% or better

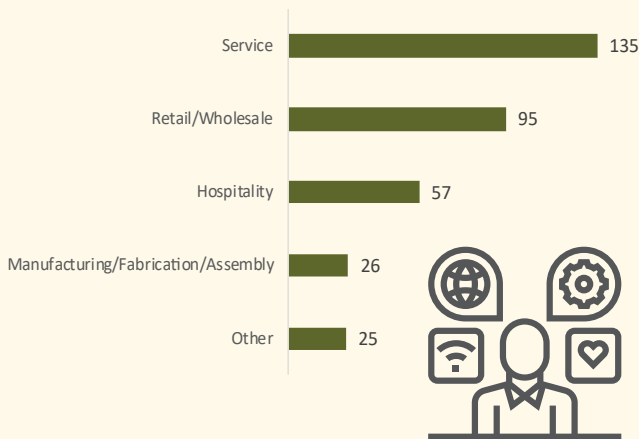
Clients and resource team members were interviewed by ARC staff. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions related to performance indicators. Data from each interview was aggregated and analyzed by multiple researchers.

Dashboard Data

Since 2013, Accelerate UP has assisted 454 clients. Most of these clients start a new business as a result of participating in Accelerate UP (n = 341), however, the remaining clients participate after they have already established their business. Client businesses are primarily for-profit (n = 409). These businesses are equally run by individual male clients (n = 191) and individual female clients (n = 185). Additionally, some of the businesses are run by male/female partnerships (n = 77).

The number of active clients can range from 30-45, averaging about 35 within a 60-day period. Currently, Accelerate UP has 30 clients who have been active within the last 60 days.

Client Industries

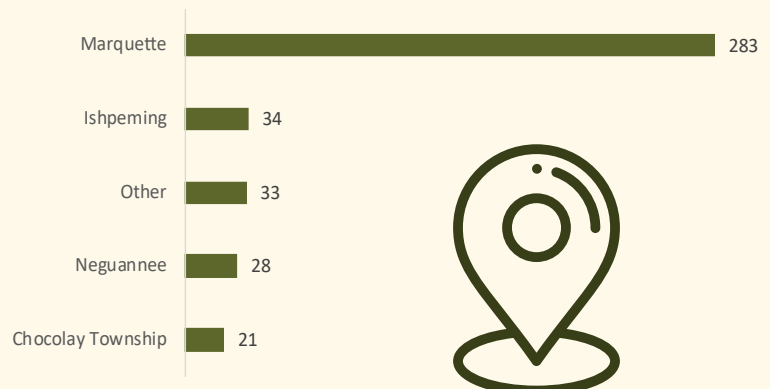


The businesses that Accelerate UP has assisted have invested \$4,598,750 in new capital and have earned \$3,506,000 in total sales. Additionally, with the help of Accelerate UP, clients have created 70 new jobs and retained 16 jobs that would have otherwise been lost.

Accelerate UP clients come from a variety of industries including retail/wholesale, hospitality, manufacturing/fabrication/assembly industries. Other industries represented by Accelerate UP clients but not included in the graph below include logging, construction, advertising, education, real estate, recreation, publishing, art, agriculture/ranching, and health care.

Location of AUP Clients

Most Accelerate UP clients are located in Marquette. Other municipalities represented are Sands Township, Champion, KI Sawyer, Big Bay, Skandia, Gwinn, and Marquette Township.



Results

Client Summary Information

Goal 1

A total of 63 clients provided information related to the business sector they operate in. A 76% majority indicated they are in the sales and service sector. The manufacturing sector accounted for 20% of client responses, and the remaining 4% of clients indicated they operate in the raw materials sector.

Most businesses reported working in sales and services.

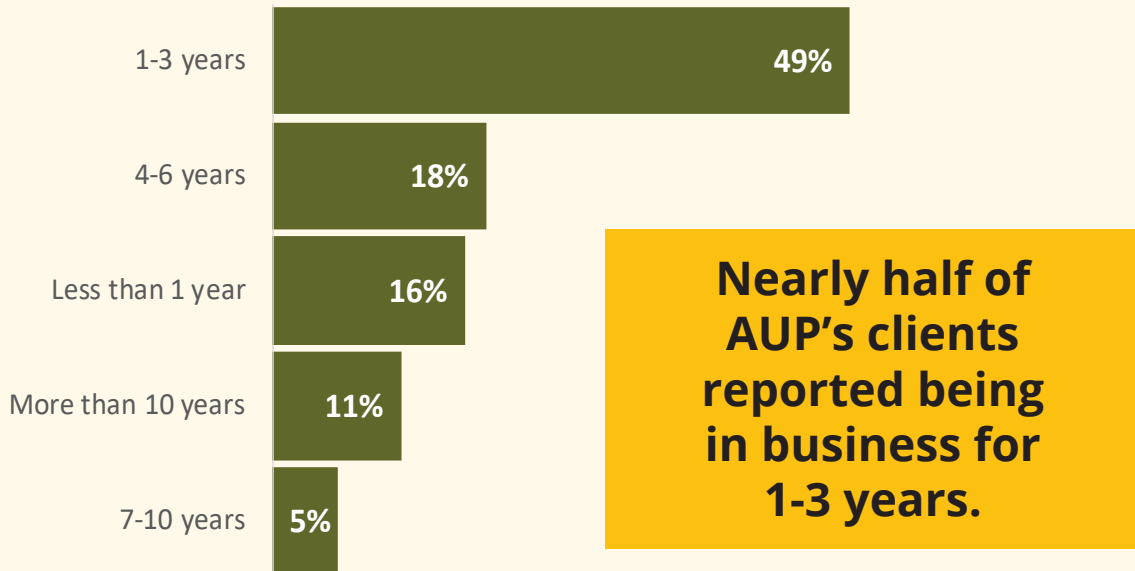


When asked to provide more details about their business, clients indicated that they primarily work in the fields of Art, Education, Media, Sales/Services, Literature, Manufacturing, Health/Wellness, and Events.

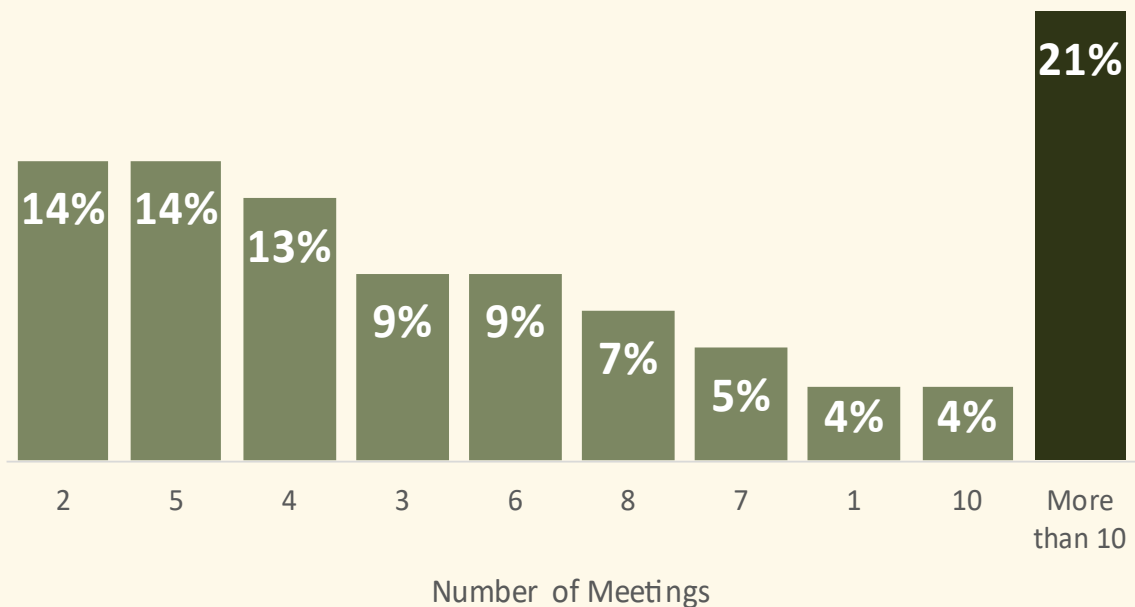


Clients were asked to indicate how many years they have owned their business. The most common response was 1-3 years, which represented nearly half of the respondents (49%). The least common response was 7-10 years, which represented only 5% of the clients.

Additional responses included 4-6 years (18%), less than 1 year (16%), and more than 10 years (11%).



Of those respondents who reported meeting with the facilitator, most (54%) reported having five meetings or less while 21% reported meeting with him more than 10 times; more than any other individual category. These findings indicate that 22% (12/55) of participants account for over 44% of all meetings with the facilitator. Most clients are meeting with the facilitator an average of 7 times.



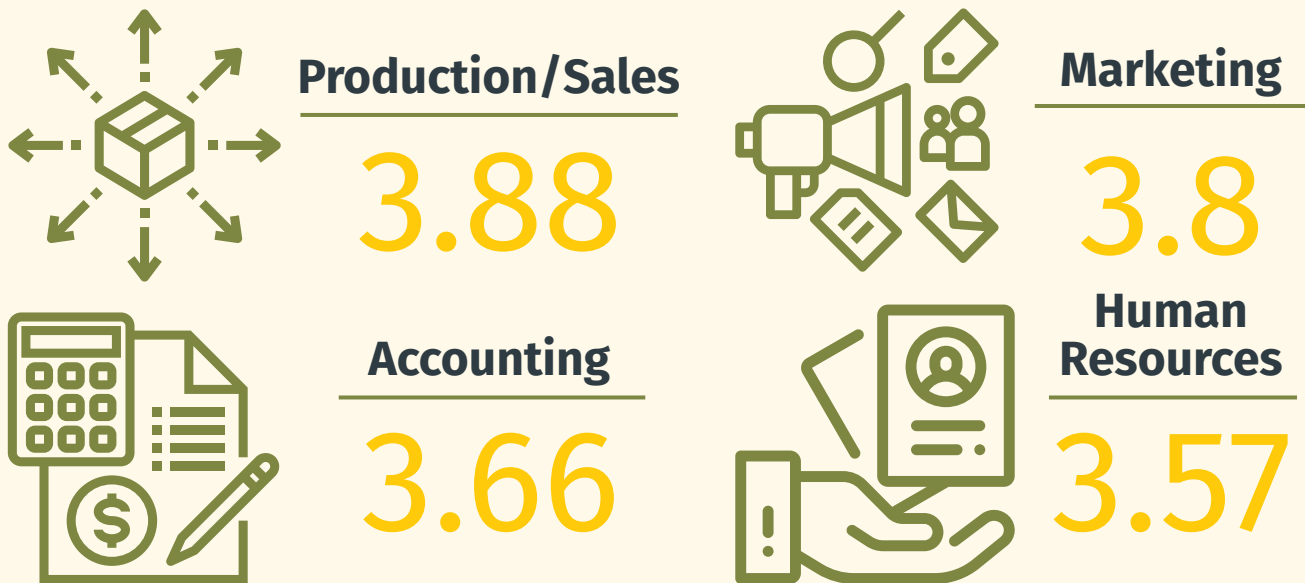
Several data points were used to explore client impact among Accelerate UP program recipients. This included business measurements on management capacity, revenue growth, jobs created, employment retained, business management confidence, and other intangible benefits measurements.



Business Management Capacity

Participants were asked to rate their capacity in businesses management as a result of working with Accelerate UP. Categories focused on marketing, human resources, accounting, and production/sales. Responses ranged from 3.57 to 3.88 on a 5-point scale with 5 being the highest score (strongly agree) and 1 being the lowest (strongly disagree).

Overall, the four categories were equally rated.



A majority of clients cited that Accelerate UP provided them with the business knowledge they needed to be successful. They also stated that when they take advantage of the support offered by Accelerate UP there is an increase in their business knowledge related to networking opportunities, marketing resources and strategies, and financial strategies in seeking funds and using funds.

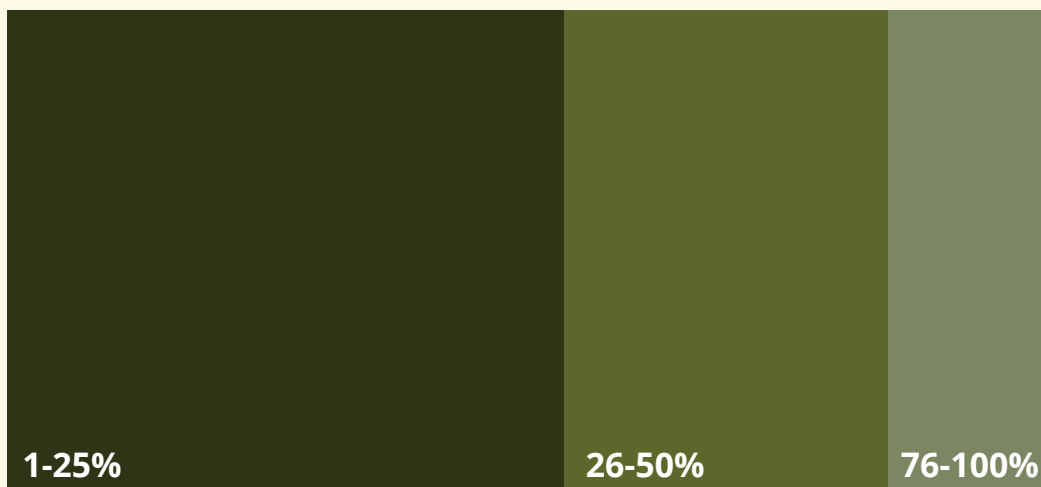


Revenue Growth

Clients were asked to report their estimated increase in personal income. Responses were grouped into quartiles. Of those who responded (n = 13), percentages ranged from 10% to 100% with an average of a 38% increase in income. Most responses (54%) fell into the estimated range of 1-25% increase in income. Thirty-one percent of the clients expected to see an increase in income ranging from 26-50%. The remaining 15% of clients expected to see a 76-100% increase in income. No participant indicated an increase in personal income in the 51-75% range.

Estimated Increase in Personal Income \$

Of those who responded, percentages ranged from 10% to 100% with an average of a 38% increase in income.



78%
of clients
reported
an increase
in revenue.



Clients were asked to report their estimated increase in revenue for their business. Of the 54 respondents, over half indicated there had been a change in revenue since working with Accelerate UP. Of the 36 respondents who acknowledged a change in revenue since working with Accelerate UP, **78% indicated there had been an increase in revenue.**

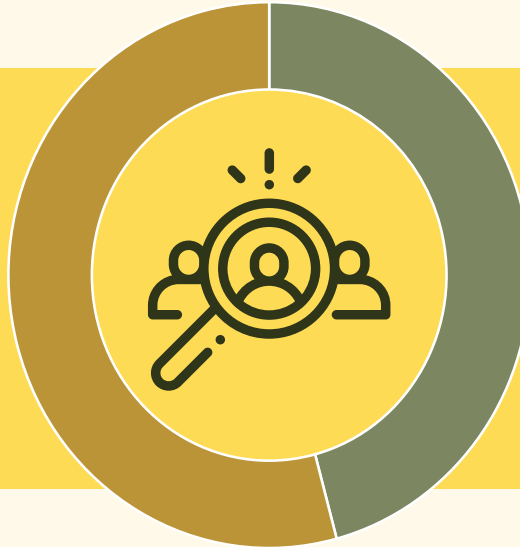
Of those who reported an increase, the average increase was 31%.



Jobs Created/Employment

Clients were asked to indicate if there had been an increase in jobs and report the number of jobs that have been created within their business while working with Accelerate UP. Of the 30 respondents, about half (46%) reported there had been an increase in jobs.

On average, there were 6 jobs created at each site (n = 13).

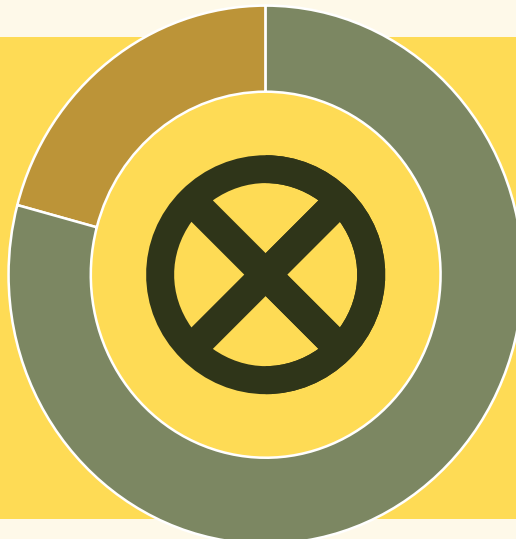


46%
of clients
reported
an increase
in available
jobs.

Employees Retained

Clients were asked to indicate what type of impact Accelerate UP has had on retention rates. Clients indicated having either an increase in retention or no change--with most individuals (38/48 or 79%) indicating no change. No individuals indicated decreased retention as a result of Accelerate UP. The remaining 21% of the clients indicated an increase in retention, and most of them indicated that there was at least one job retained.

79%
of clients
reported no
change in
retention as
a result of
AUP.



Participants reported that 13 employees have been retained since working with Accelerate UP.



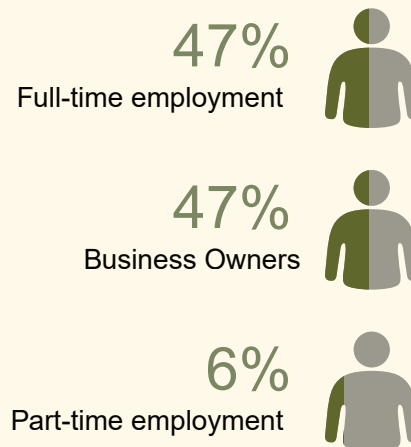
Previous Employment Status of Entrepreneur

Participants were asked about their primary employment status prior to working with Accelerate UP.

Of the eight options, only three categories were chosen by respondents. The three categories include full-time employment, part-time employment, and business owners. Full-time employment and business owners represented the majority of respondents, both having 47% of the total respondents. Part-time employment was only represented by 6% of the respondents.

The breakdown is displayed on the right.

Previous Employment Status



Total Capital Invested/Source

Forty-five clients were asked to report the amount of capital invested into their business and the source of the capital. Of the 45 respondents, the top response, self-invested capital, accounted for 62% of the total capital. Loans represented 28% of the total capital invested. Friends, family, grants, and other sources of invested capital constituted the additional 10% of the total capital (Grant 1.28%, Friends 1.15%, Other 1.03%). Investors were not indicated as a source of capital by any of the respondents. Six people provided inadequate feedback of "0" for each source and were excluded from data analysis.





Business Confidence/Other Intangible Benefits

Business confidence and other intangible benefits consist of subjective attitudes and perceptions that can't be expressed in dollar terms. These constructs were measured by gaining the clients perception in the following four areas:

Competitive Edge

Clients were asked if they feel they have a competitive edge over peers and the business community as a result of working with the program.

- Most respondents agreed that connecting with Accelerate UP helped them develop a competitive edge over other start-up businesses. Specifically, respondents found that Accelerate UP provided them with the business knowledge they needed to be successful.
- While no respondents indicated that Accelerate UP had not given them a competitive edge over others, two respondents noted that Accelerate UP somewhat gave them an edge.
- It is noteworthy that only one respondent felt that they had a competitive edge prior to encountering Accelerate UP.

Confident Seeking Advice

Clients were asked if they feel confident that they know where to go to seek business advice when faced with a challenging issue.

- All clients indicated that they are confident in seeking business advice.
- Clients reported that when seeking advice, they go to Alex or their Professional Contacts.
- Additionally, clients stated that having No Cost associated with the Accelerate UP program encourages them to seek advice.

“Absolutely. It’s step by step...”



Confidence in Long-Term Strategies & Goals

The majority of clients indicated that they are confident identifying successful long-term strategies to achieve goals in their business. Specifically, they stated that Goal Setting is helpful in increasing this confidence.

- Most respondents felt confident in their ability to develop strategies to set goals and structure their business. This confidence is fostered by the step by step process utilized by Accelerate UP and their focus on solving individual issues.
- The strategies to set financial goals and make decisions on employee incentives increased confidence in respondent.
- Two respondents expressed that the strategies and goals set for their business have not had enough time to present results, making them feel unsure if they have confidence in their decisions.



Sustainability Beyond Accelerate UP/Eagle Mine

Resource Team members were asked how Accelerate UP provided participants with the tools they need to sustain growth beyond the scope of Accelerate UP/Eagle Mine. Resource Team members reported that creating connections, providing support, and increasing business knowledge encourage sustainability.

- Half of respondents reported that Accelerate UP helped businesses create networks, connect with their target markets, and experts to encourage sustainability.
- Many respondents reported that Accelerate UP provided the general support needed to be successful. This included being a sounding board to business owners and providing encouragement.
- It is noteworthy that one respondent cited that Accelerate UP set business owners up for success by educating them on best processes, practices, and networks.



Self-Identified Changes to Client Businesses

Goal 2

Top Three Client Business Improvements as a result of working with Accelerate UP:

Increased Business Knowledge

Increased business knowledge was the number one theme. Specifically, Alex often helped clients increase their knowledge about networking, marketing, and finances.

“So much of starting a business is just learning how the local small business scene functions and having somebody to talk over that with and validate ideas against has been invaluable.”

“He assisted me in brainstorming marketing, targeting an audience, arranging my practice Fb page, and more. He was very positive and helpful.”

Alex

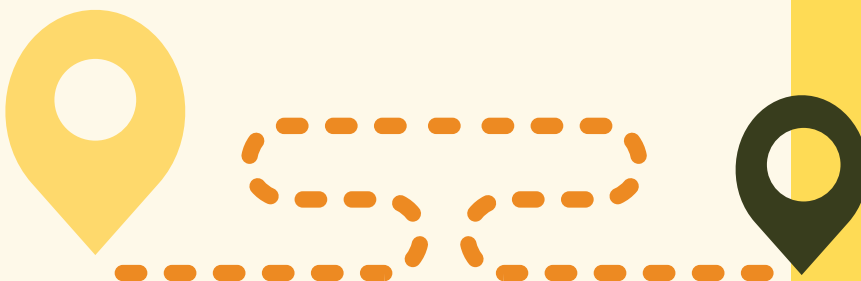
Alex was the second theme identified. Client’s frequently cited examples of Alex being the reason they for their success.

“Alex is an incredibly clear thinker. He cuts to the meat of the matter and gets to work. He is a real resource. Thanks for letting me borrow him!”

Networking

Networking was the third theme. The program has been very helpful because of connecting clients to good information and ideas. One respondent noted that they were connected to the right people and resources to keep moving forward with the project.

“He is great at connecting me with the right people and resources to keep moving forward with my project.”



Impact on Local Business Community and Broader Community

Goals 3&4



Impact on Local Economy

Resource team members were asked to identify the ways that Accelerate UP has impacted the local economy.

- Team members most often cited that Accelerate UP had bettered the local economy by positively supporting local businesses through their presence and assistance.
 - Participants also reported that Accelerate UP's assistance to businesses has increased income to the area providing a positive financial impact on the local economy.
 - In addition, the local economy has been impacted by an increase in jobs being added to the area through the assistance of Accelerate UP.

“It is a significant support resource to those who have a business idea, are contemplating starting, or are in business and struggling. It is providing a trusted set of supports”.

“The local economy has been impacted in a positive way, with new businesses, sales, income, and a positive climate that small businesses can thrive”.

- A few respondents were unsure about the impact on the economy due to the youth of the program.





Impact on Local and Broader Communities

Resource team members were asked to discuss Accelerate UP's impact on the local community.

- Half of respondents reported that Accelerate UP has impacted the local community through helping businesses grow and develop which in turn creates jobs and increases revenue to the area.

“A significant number of small businesses have been started with assistance from Accelerate UP.”

- A quarter reported being present and offering ongoing support such as cash mobs and business education had an impact. A large factor to community involvement is cash mobs, where local businesses get together and advertise and connect with other small businesses and community members to shop small.

“It has helped educate, advocate, and help promote small and new businesses in our community to be known.”

- A third of respondents reported that Accelerate UP helps businesses develop through creating connections and networks that provide resources.

“Alex and AUP connect entrepreneurs with key resources that they may never otherwise had been exposed to.”

Resource team members were asked to identify Accelerate UP's impact on communities beyond Marquette.

- A majority of respondents reported yes that it has impacted communities beyond Marquette. Resource team members saw the impact on the surrounding communities both directly through assistance and providing goods and services and indirectly through bettering the economy and creating new jobs. A third of respondents that identified an impact cited Accelerate UP betters the surrounding community by sharing best practices and helping other businesses grow.
- A third of respondents were unsure of the impact beyond Marquette.



Perceptions of the Program from Accelerate UP Clients

Goal 5

Most Valuable Aspect of Accelerate UP

Clients were asked to discuss the one thing they value most about Accelerate UP. Most clients reported the support offered by Accelerate UP was most valuable for the planning process and helping conceptualize their business. In addition, they indicated that Alex's knowledge and ability to direct respondents in the correct direction to fulfill their needs. A third of clients highly valued Accelerate UP being a free service as they would not have had access to support otherwise. Others cited the ability to network as what they valued most.

What Accelerate UP Did Well

Clients discussed what they felt Accelerate UP did well in serving them as a client. Clients indicated that Accelerate UP did a great job supporting businesses. Specifically, clients indicated Accelerate UP did a great job providing business knowledge, networking connections, and marketing help. Additionally, clients indicated that Alex did a great job serving them as a client. All respondents highly valued the support they received from Accelerate UP. They were grateful for their growth in business knowledge which assisted them in approaching banks, understanding the aspects of their business plan, and determining what business type to file under. Clients also appreciated the great support given by Alex in the areas of goal setting, individual feedback, and offering his network to their business. The network offered through Accelerate UP was also a specific service that clients reported as a great aspect of the program. A few expressed the marketing service offered.

“AUP has supported me in every way I have asked from business writing to grant writing to networking and introducing me to other resources”

Resource Team Familiarity

When discussing the resource team familiarity, client responses varied widely with some being very familiar and others being not at all familiar. Clients (almost half) who were aware of the resource team either interacted with them or knew they worked with Alex to facilitate their needs. About a quarter of client responses indicated that they were unaware of the resource team. A third of respondents reported being somewhat familiar with the resource.

Overall, clients did not have a consistent understanding of what the role of the resource team was in the program.

Resource Team Suggestions

Clients discussed if they have received suggestions, ideas, or business connections from the Accelerate UP resource team and if they found it valuable and/or useful.

- Most clients indicated that they have received suggestions from the resource team and found them useful.
- Many clients had not received suggestions from the resource team.
- A few clients were unsure if they have received suggestions from the resource team. Some respondents reported that they may have received feedback from the Resource team, but they were unsure if the advice was from them and if it had an impact on their business or not.

Additional Comments

Clients were asked if they had any additional comments about the Accelerate UP program. During this question, clients shared praise for Alex.

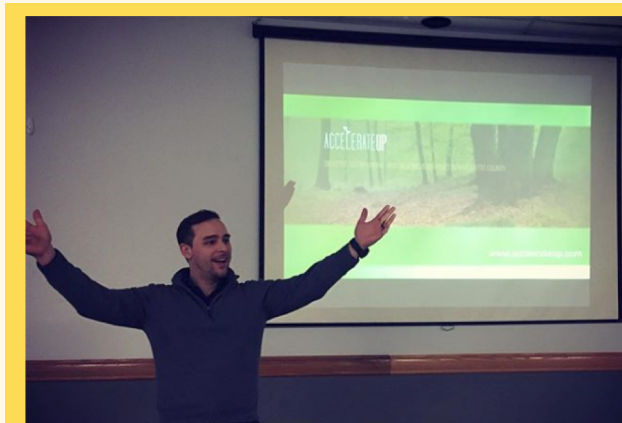
The ONLY theme identified for this question was praise for Alex. Clients wanted to bring attention to the helpfulness of Alex, as they felt he was critical to the effectiveness of the program.

Responses to this question included:

“I am very thankful for working with Alex, and it had helped me so much.”

“I couldn’t have done it without him!!!”

“Give Alex a raise!”





Barriers to Business Growth & Job Creation

Goal 6

Clients were asked to discuss the greatest challenges their business has faced in achieving goals and desired growth.

Clients indicated that their greatest challenges to growth were:



Financial Resources



Identifying Target Market



Business Knowledge



Time



Qualified Employees



Networking



Changing Technology

The most commonly cited barrier to business growth was financial. Clients felt they did not have enough money to expand the many different avenues of their business. Marketing was the second most frequently mentioned barrier to growth. Respondents had issues identifying and reaching target markets. A lack of a business knowledge also acted as a huge barrier to business growth, as business owners with little knowledge of business found themselves more cautious and less confident in taking advantage of growth opportunities. They also felt that each stage of the growth process took them a long time due to a learning curve. Not having enough time to dedicate to the business was also a prominent idea. Other comments that came up included not having enough skilled workers available for hire, not having the right professional contacts, and not understanding the newest and most up-to-date technology.

It can be noted here that all of the challenges are somewhat connected to one another. Many business owners did not have enough time to dedicate to growing their business and learning more about their business because they were forced to work other jobs while starting their own business to ensure cash flow to fund the new business.

Employment Barriers

Clients were asked to identify the most significant barriers or facilitators that businesses face in creating jobs in the Upper Peninsula.

Clients cited the following Employment Barriers:



Business Knowledge



Time



Marketing



Financial Resources



Geographic Location

The most commonly identified barriers to creating jobs in the Upper Peninsula was a lack of business knowledge. Participants were hesitant to employ others when they felt that they didn't have enough business knowledge to predict the future of their business. Participants cited a lack of finances as the second largest barrier to employing others. They also mentioned that the geographic location of their business hindered them from finding employable candidates. Many of the desirable potential employees wanted to move to other locations. Other comments included not having enough time or adequate marketing to expand the business and create a need for employees.



Program Improvement

Resource Team Satisfaction

Participants were asked to describe their favorite part about being on the resource team. Members stated that their favorite part was helping others, having the status of being involved with the resource team which gave them access to information, collaborative problem solving as a group with the community of business owners, and simply making connections.

- Most respondents said that their favorite part of being on the resource team was the opportunity to help others and give back to the community. Participants explained how being able to make an impact on these small businesses and seeing them grow is their favorite part.
- Other members of the resource team really enjoyed the privilege that accompanied being a part of the team. They were privy to information about new and upcoming businesses, as well as seeing and understanding new business struggles and challenges.

- Respondents also mentioned that their favorite part was the ability to problem solve in a rewarding context.
- A few respondents said they enjoyed networking and connecting with others.

“I just really enjoyed feeling part of a secret society almost and the group that’s in the know of certain things that other people weren’t a part of... I always felt it was cool to be part of something that feels fulfilling.”

“I think just the people, talking with them, getting together and being a part of the community.”

“The satisfaction from meeting someone who never thought they could start a business, to giving them connections, and then seeing their business at Cash Mob events gives them a feeling of making an impact.”



Participants were asked to describe their least favorite part about being on the resource team.

- A majority of respondents said finding times that worked for all resources team members and clients proved to be difficult.
- Most resource team members wanted to see the effect of their assistance on their client’s success.
- A few members were unable to identify anything unenjoyable.

Getting Involved

Resource team members were asked to discuss how they could get more involved with Accelerate UP.

Most respondents believed that growing the program could encourage more involvement from team members. Of those who suggested additions to the program, the majority suggested specific ideas for new committees or assistance programs. Others suggested expanding the organization to new locations.

- Some respondents noted that people could get more involved by attending meetings with more regularity. Of those respondents a few felt that it was important to recognize what they learned from meetings and the need to keep things confidential is a barrier.
- Respondents also thought increasing the number of cash mob events would lead to an increase in the amount of involvement.
- Others felt that they were already at their maximum capacity for involvement.
- A few cited they could promote Accelerate UP and its services on their own time.

Key Support Area

Resource team members identified a specific area of support Accelerate UP should consider in order to help the local business community. Team members cited the following key areas:

- providing financial assistance to new business owners monetarily or through education
- increasing the networking potential by collaborating with similar agencies
- improving processes of how they provide access to services
- spreading awareness of their available services with entrepreneurs and local officials in order to broaden their reach

“...work to bring a strategic private grant fund for small companies for startup cash...”

“Possibly teaming up with the local Chamber groups to help promote certain initiatives, like the Mob event, or get them involved in a working committee. Utilize their communication channels for promoting Accelerate UP events or what they do.”

Recommending Accelerate UP

Clients were asked if they have recommended Accelerate UP to anyone you know and why they did. The majority of clients indicated that they had recommended Accelerate UP, and specifically Alex, to other individuals.

- Most respondents reported they would since the services helped their business by offering an outside perspective on their planning and providing honest feedback.
- Some participants recommend Alex's services specifically due to his impact on their business and the connection he builds with clients throughout the process.
- Very few respondents have not recommended Accelerate UP to others, but one respondent reported that they would if they knew someone wanted to start their own business.

“I would wholeheartedly recommend AUP and specifically Alex to anyone wanting to start or grow a business!”



Limitations

There are limitations that should be considered. The evaluators of this report chose to include this information about limitations as an opportunity to inform future research and /or evaluation related to Accelerate UP.

One limitation that was faced was recruiting for the clients and resource team. Every effort was made to schedule as many clients and resource team members during the interview session. Unfortunately, a small number of participants were able to attend the onsite interviews. This limited the amount of face-to-face data collected; therefore, an electronic survey was administered to supplement the face-to-face data. An incentive was offered during the middle of data collection because survey response was low.

Due to the low response rates cited above, the originally planned local business survey was not administered. This survey was intended to capture perceptions of Accelerate UP impact on the local community. Instead, resources were shifted to extending the data collection timeframe for the client and resource team surveys.

The logo features a large, dark olive-green shape that resembles a stylized mountain or a large letter 'A'. A diagonal band of a lighter, golden-brown color runs from the top-left corner towards the bottom-right, crossing the green shape. In the top-right corner, there is a solid, smaller golden-brown square.

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Understanding Theme Tables

Themes and sub-themes are listed in the first two columns. Themes are categories that many respondents identified in their responses. The themes (and the comments that fit within the themes) were identified and agreed upon by two researchers. Frequencies in the table are reflective of the number of comments that fall under each theme. They do not represent the number of respondents that referenced a theme. Therefore, it is possible to have higher frequencies than total respondents. Percent coverage is reflective of how representative a theme is within the context of all responses. As such, a theme with low frequency and high coverage could exist if there are few comments included in this theme, but they are very detailed.

Accelerate UP Qualitative Responses



Business Management Capacity

First, Accelerate UP clients were asked to tell us a little bit about themselves and their business. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 1. Clients had businesses in *Art, Education, Media, Sales/Services, Literature, Manufacturing, Health/Wellness, and Events* sectors.

Table 1: Clients - Business Information

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|------------------|-----------|--|---|
| Art | 2 (3%) | Has a business in the art sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...art. • ...art as well. |
| Education | 1 (21%) | Has a business in the education sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I am the owner of Grovar Daycare and Preschool in Harvey, um, where we started with 20 kids and now we're in the upwards of 70... |
| Media | 1 (21%) | Has a business in the media sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I own Carlson media. Started two years ago. It's a digital marketing agency. Operates primarily in Marquette county, but also UP-wide. |
| Sales & Services | 1 (15%) | Has a business in the sales and services sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I own Bearmount Lodge, MJ Charters – it's ag, tourism, and sport fishing here in the Marquette area. |
| Literature | 1 (14%) | Has a business in the literature sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Author but also the owner of superior book productions, which is a book editing company. |
| Manufacturing | 1 (6%) | Has a business in the manufacturing sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Red'z Bulgogi BBQ Sauce manufacturing. |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------|---|--|
| Health & Wellness | 1 (4%) | Has a business in the health and wellness sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Health/wellness business. |
| Events | 1 (1%) | Has a business in the event sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Events. |



Confidence / Other Intangible Benefits

Clients were asked if they feel they have a competitive edge over peers and the business community as a result of working with Accelerate UP. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 2. Most clients indicated they had a competitive edge over their peers and the business community due to their increased *Business Knowledge*; however, other clients felt that they only *Somewhat* had a competitive edge over their peers and the business community.

Table 2: Clients - Competitive Edge

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|--|--|
| Yes | | 10 (66%) | Feels that they have a competitive edge over their peers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As startups, yes, absolutely. Any startup I know I send there. • I do. • ...as far as competitive advantage, I'd say yes. |
| | Business Knowledge | 8 (63%) | Specifically, their increased business knowledge has been helpful in giving them a competitive edge. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I just wasn't really clear how to go about marketing... I think just, uh, through talking to Alex I have gotten a lot more clarification about how I can go about doing that. • ...yeah, working with Accelerate UP has had us have the upper hand in just channeling who to meet with, how to go about doing stuff. • Absolutely. As a startup he knows everything you need to start... |
| Somewhat | | 2 (9%) | Feels that they have somewhat of a competitive edge over their peers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... I think for business and marketing majors or people who have already ran big businesses maybe they have an upper hand, in some way, because they've done it before. But, for us small businesses just starting... you need to channel through to get what you need. |

- I don't know that I would say that I think it's given me a competitive edge. I I kinda feel like I already had a competitive edge.

Clients were asked if they feel confident in knowing where to go to seek business advice when faced with a challenging issue. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 3. All clients indicated that they are confident in seeking business advice. Clients reported that when seeking advice, they go to *Alex* or their *Professional Contacts*. Additionally, clients stated that having *No Cost* associated with the AUP program encourages them to seek advice.

Table 3: Clients - Confidence Seeking Advice

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------|--|--|
| Yes | | 17 (97%) | Feels confident that they know where to go to seek business advice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So, it would be very easy for me to go back to him and ask him if I wasn't comfortable with something that was going on or if I needed more help on something. • ...I know he provided me with a lot of resources in terms of like certain books to read and certain um connecting me with certain people to talk to and then they also have the resource board at uh Accelerate UP... • I would probably just seek advice from people out of the area who are more to new my field... |
| | Alex | 7 (82%) | Specifically, they go to Alex when they need business advice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I go to Alex. I go straight to Alex. I'm like "Alex! I gotta... we gotta talk." Straight to him. • I go to Alex. • ...Alex has been great in providing resources... |
| | Professional Contacts | 3 (7%) | Specifically, they use their professional contacts when they need business advice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I guess I have a few mentors that other business owners friends that have provided...insight... • Immense amount of resources and networking capabilities that he has is just enormous. • ...I know that Alex has given me a lot of different people to communicate with... |

| | | | |
|---------|---------|--|---|
| No Cost | 2 (17%) | Specifically, having no cost associated with the AUP program encourages them to seek advice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fact that there wasn't a cost was really what made me say yes... • ...I spent a lot of money with them over the years doing team training and activities like that. I'm real positive with Alex, that whole concept "they're going to take all my money," no Alex doesn't come across like that... |
|---------|---------|--|---|

Clients were asked about confidence in their ability to identify successful long-term strategies to achieve goals within their business. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 4. Most clients indicated that they are confident identifying successful long-term strategies to achieve goals in their business. Specifically, they stated that *Goal Setting* is helpful in increasing this confidence. However, other clients weren't as sure in their confidence in identifying successful long-term strategies to achieve goals in their business.

Table 4: Clients - Confidence in Long-Term Strategies & Goals

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------|--------------|-----------|---|--|
| Yes | | 8 (77%) | Confident in ability to identify successful long-term strategies and achieve goals in their business. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absolutely. It's step by step... • Yeah...when I started I really-- we had a lot of holes in the business and...just patch those up... • And then I think it allowed us to track better people in the company to participate...in intrinsic function of strategies and tactics, ...it came about benefiting the company directly...it turned into results. |
| | Goal Setting | 3 (66%) | Specifically, goal setting is helpful in increasing this confidence. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...we'll probably talk about more this year in terms of setting financial goals and figuring out how to market it... • ...the goal, we talked about strategies, tactics, and then actual tasks where we ended up, you know, each of us have four or five tasks to do before the next meeting and then going to do that... • Other goals...employee benefits and payroll and navigating that in terms of uh like structuring that, providing, you know, the right incentives for employees... |

| | | | |
|-------|--------|---|--|
| Maybe | 2 (8%) | Unsure about ability to identify successful long-term strategies and achieve goals in their business. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well, this this is very new for me, um. I'll only be in it for a year. We're doing okay. But I know that it takes time to build up, so that you have that revenue so that you have your clientele... I'm working on it. |
|-------|--------|---|--|

Resource Team members were asked how has AUP provided participants with the tools they need to sustain growth beyond the scope of AUP/Eagle Mine. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 5. Resource Team members reported that *Creating Connections, Providing Support, and Increasing Business Knowledge* will help encourage sustainability after AUP/Eagle Mine.

Table 5: Resource Team - Sustainability Beyond AUP/Eagle Mine

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|----------------------|-----------|--|--|
| Creating Connections | 11 (36%) | AUP helped businesses create networks and connect with their target markets. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referring participants to other similar businesses or organizations that can help them in areas of challenge. AUP has connected customers with local resources and expertise... ...trying to encourage networking and getting people comfortable with talking to other people and seeking out advice from other entrepreneurs... |
| Providing Support | 9 (51%) | AUP provided the general support needed to be successful. This included being a sounding board to business owners and providing encouragement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alex has helped many start-ups with the tools necessary to be successful. ...I think we have given enough assistance to some people who are going to be very profitable themselves. Because of the nature of AUP, organizations that startups have been introduced to and processes they will have been exposed to, such as financials, etc., will help them as they continue beyond the assistance provided by AUP. |
| Other | | Other Comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...the curriculum Alex uses using the leadership, sales marketing, finance, and... product services... |



Self-Identified Changes to Client Businesses

Clients were asked about ways AUP supported their business. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 6. Clients indicated that the primary way AUP supported their business was through increased business knowledge. Specifically, *Alex* often helped business increase their knowledge about *Networking*, *Marketing*, and *Finances*. Additionally, some clients indicated that they *Haven't Taken Advantage of AUP*.

Table 6: Clients - AUP Support

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|--|---|
| Increased Business Knowledge | | 89 (94%) | AUP has supported business by increasing business knowledge. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So much of starting a business is just learning how the local small business scene functions and having somebody to talk over that with and validate ideas against has been invaluable. • Business plan guidance. marketing guidance. guidance in seeking financing. making connections for us with others who can help, especially in planning and projections. • He assisted me in brainstorming marketing, targeting an audience, arranging my practice Fb page, and more. He was very positive and helpful. |
| | Alex | 21 (46%) | Specifically, Alex has been very helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex brings a lot of connection to resources and people, which is extremely valuable, but even beyond that one of the best ways he has supported my business is just being able to sit down and "talk shop." • Every way Alex is a amazing young full of energy hard working man!!!! He helps out everyone beyond expectations!!! • Alex is absolutely wonderful. He taught me how to expand my thinking. I appreciate his optimism and forward thinking. He has more faith in me than I do! |
| | Networking | 12 (10%) | Specifically, the networking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Connecting us to people and resources who could help us... |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--------|--|--|
| | | | has been very helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering good information, ideas, and networking. He is great at connecting me with the right people and resources to keep moving forward with my project. |
| | Marketing | 7 (2%) | Specifically, knowledge of marketing has increased. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUP helped me define my target market. Alex also assisted in early marketing strategies with the business. Feedback on Marketing Resources. |
| | Finances | 4 (4%) | Specifically, knowledge of finances has increased. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance in seeking financing. Helped us to re-focus on our mission in determining fundraising & marketing activities to best utilize the time of our tiny staff and raise the most revenue. ...connected me with with a really good accountant here in town...she was also fundamental in helping us kind of navigate taxes for business. |
| Haven't Taken Advantage of AUP | | 3 (1%) | Have not taken advantage of the support provided by AUP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I haven't met with alex in a long time - he was a friendly face who offered to go to the bank with me when I started but I really haven't taken much advantage of AUP. None AUP is an excellent resource in the community. I had little interactions with them but I'd recommend them to anyone! |



Impact on Local Economy

Resource Team members were asked how Accelerate has UP impacted the local economy. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 7. Resource Team members stated that the *Positive Support* offered through increased *Financial* support, *Jobs*, and *Alex* have impacted the economy. Other Resource Team members stated that it's *Too Soon to Know* if AUP will impact the economy. They also mentioned that it might be valuable to make *Future Evaluation Plans* to track the impact of the AUP program.

Table 7: Resource Team – Local Economy Impact

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|---|---|
| Positive Support | | 23 (69%) | The economy was bettered by the presence and assistance of AUP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant support resource to those who have a business idea, are contemplating starting, or are in business and struggling. It is providing a trusted set of supports. • ...it has helped some small businesses get up and running or help some existing businesses by providing some resource options for those business owners willing to listen or wanting help. • AUP helps people who have an idea but don't know where to turn first and potentially don't have the organizational skills or confidence to take the more traditional route to starting a business. |
| | Financial | 5 (12%) | AUP assistance to businesses has increased income to the area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AUP has helped existing and start-up businesses grow which adds tax revenue and jobs to the area. • The local economy has been impacted in a positive way, with new businesses, sales, income, and a positive climate that small businesses can thrive. |
| | Jobs | 3 (3%) | The economy was increased by more jobs being added to the area through the assistance of AUP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...the one job everybody helps create, turns into 20 jobs when it is still one job. • AUP has helped existing and start-up businesses grow which adds tax revenue and jobs to the area. |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------|---|--|
| Too Soon to Know | 5 (11%) | Respondents were unsure about impacts on the economy due to the youth of the program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I think it can have a significant impact over the next 5 years. • ...I think it's a little early in the system... I just have the sense that we are moving in the right direction. |
| Importance of Alex | 2 (10%) | The consultant, Alex, was one of the main reasons the AUP was so successful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...Alex sort of turned the program around... I have seen a huge difference... |
| Other | | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...How to frame future thinking or anything that we're tracking at this point... maybe it would be much easier to review how we're impacting different folks... |



Impact on Local and Broader Communities

Resource Team members were asked how Accelerate UP has impacted the local community. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 8. Resource team members reported that AUP impacts the local community by developing businesses through *Increased Support* and *Increased Access to Resources*.

Table 8: Resource Team – Local Community Impact

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|--|---|
| Business Development | | 24 (90%) | AUP impacts the local community through helping businesses grow and develop. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...How this group of people that is just volunteering their time this altruistic that really cares about seeing small business succeed... • A significant number of small businesses have been started with assistance from AUP... • I have heard many folks in our community say they would have never started their business without the help from AUP. |
| | Increased Support | 16 (52%) | AUP helps businesses develop | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has helped educate, advocate, and help promote small, new businesses in our community to be known. |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|--|--|---|
| | | | through being present and offering ongoing and personal support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AUP has served as a hub for connecting people that would likely not have otherwise met. • Also has created a supportive environment for small businesses through cash mobs. |
| Increased Access to Resources | 7 (24%) | | AUP helps businesses develop through creating connections and networks that provide resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex and AUP connect entrepreneurs with key resources that they may never otherwise had been exposed to. • ...Accelerate UP has been very accessible so some people who are thinking about doing something there is a person to go to there is someone to talk to... • The referrals to other service agencies have helped... businesses... |

Resource Team members were asked if they thought Accelerate UP has had an impact on communities beyond the Marquette area, and why or why not. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 9. Many Resource Team members believed that AUP impacts communities beyond the Marquette area through *Sharing Best Practices*, *Distribution* lines, and *Increasing Tourism*. Other Resource Team members were *Unsure* if AUP impacts communities beyond Marquette. Moreover, other Resource Team members did not believe that AUP impacts communities beyond Marquette.

Table 9: Resource Team - Impact Beyond Marquette

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------|-----------|-----------|--|---|
| Yes | | 13 (59%) | Resource team members saw the impact of AUP on the surrounding communities both directly through assistance and providing goods and services and indirectly through bettering the economy and creating new jobs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AUP is a KEY Player in Marquette County and if one were to ask most local economic development agencies throughout the UP they would know who Alex and AUP is. It is important to note that the impact made in Marquette county does have a positive affect on the other surrounding counties... • I think... we probably have a bigger impact than we realize. • A little bit. AUP has helped some customers on the west end and in Gwinn. |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------|---|---|
| Sharing Best Practices | 6 (33%) | AUP betters the surrounding community by spreading their education to others and helping other businesses grow. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes there is a impact... AUP shows communities that there are more possibilities than they might have realized. • Yes. Through connections and reaching out to other businesses that have succeeded for best practices and connections. • It's primary impact has been in Marquette. However it is also showing a way for corporations of resource impacting businesses to devise a means of aiding the long term health and vitality of their adopted community. |
| Distribution | 4 (11%) | AUP affects the surrounding community directly by distributing goods and services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guy that makes the flower...thats.. he stores them. • The sauce lady too the Korean barbeque sauce ... that's another one. • I know of a client that distributes to outside Marquette county. Barrel bean... |
| Increasing Tourism | 1 (9%) | AUP betters the surrounding community through an increase in tourism resulting in a better local economy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I cant say accelerate UP is a direct cause of that but we've worked with some of the business that would contribute to making Marquette county more attractive tourist destination. |
| Unsure | 7 (15%) | Respondents were unsure if AUP provided benefit the surrounding communities due to the youth of AUP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know. • Yes in a small way, but I think the positive impact that AUP is having on Marquette County's economic growth will have a much large impact in the future. • I think it would be very hard to measure an impact outside of Marquette... Because it doesn't necessarily market itself, AUP doesn't take advantage of the successes it has had and thus the word hasn't likely gotten very far beyond the borders of Marquette. |

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|---|
| Other | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't think so - I haven't seen any impact of it in the Munising/Alger County area. |
|-------|-----------------|---|



Perceptions of the Program from Accelerate UP Clients

Clients were asked what they value most about AUP, and why. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 10. Clients reported that the *Support*, access to *Alex*, *No Cost*, *Networking*, and *Economic Growth* are the most valuable aspects of AUP.

Table 10: Clients - Most Valuable Aspect of AUP

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|------------|-----------|--|---|
| Support | 24 (21%) | The most valuable aspect of AUP was the support offered. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The...advice/structure that made planning our business possible. The outside professional input...That is how Alex and Lance helped. The support and the confidentiality. |
| Alex | 20 (45%) | The most valuable aspect of AUP was Alex. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alex is an incredibly clear thinker. He cuts to the meat of the matter and gets to work. He is a real resource. Thanks for letting me borrow him. Alex was the only one solidly in our corner. Alex helped me develop the confidence I needed to start my business. |
| No Cost | 8 (9%) | The most valuable aspect of AUP was that it is a free service. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That it's a free service to support small businesses. I really loved that it's a free service. Every spot in town wants to charge to help a business out. Free solid help was invaluable. The free part. None of us have any money to start. |
| Networking | 6 (4%) | The most valuable aspect of AUP was the networking. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The connections and advice/structure that made planning our business possible. ...I enjoyed the networking. The networking has been the most important thing. |

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|--|
| Other | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I love local economic growth and i see AUP helping that with other businesses. |
|-------|-----------------|--|

Clients were asked to discuss what they felt Accelerate UP did well in serving them as a client. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 11. Clients indicated that Accelerate UP did a great job supporting businesses. Specifically, clients indicated Accelerate UP did a great job providing *Business Knowledge*, *Networking* connections, and *Marketing* help. Additionally, clients indicated that *Alex* did a great job serving them as a client.

Table 11: Clients - What Accelerate UP Did Well

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|---------|--------------------|-----------|--|---|
| Support | | 58 (94%) | AUP did a great job providing support for businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUP has supported me in every way I have asked from business writing to grant writing to networking and introducing me to other resources. Everything. They helped us to see our strengths and to capitalize on them. |
| | Business Knowledge | 8 (30%) | Specifically, the business knowledge provided was helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching us for how to approach banks. His help in getting us into a LLC. AUP helped me understand parts of my accounting that I struggled with, helped me write a business plan. |
| | Alex | 8 (21%) | Specifically, Alex was helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being patient with me and explaining everything clearly so I can learn. I always feel encouraged and never feel like I am being talked down too (rare as a young person trying to open a business!) Finally Alex showed me a path to achieve my goals. Yes!! I am so thankful!! Alex and his network of people to help solve problems. Alex has a sound board to help me figure out my goals. |
| | Networking | 6 (17%) | Specifically, the networking provided was helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making connections and pointing me to the right resources or contacts. Knowing people from helping others. ...offered communications with professionals in the industry I wanted to explore. |

| | | | |
|-----------|--------|---|---|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting us to bankers and small business experts to get funding and projections. |
| Marketing | 4 (6%) | Specifically, the marketing knowledge provided was helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping to promote our business once it opened. • Promoting avenues for marketing. • Advertising and help with questions I had!!! |

Clients were asked if they were familiar with the AUP Resource Team. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 12. Many clients were aware (or somewhat aware) of the AUP Resource Team; however, there were also many clients who were not aware of the AUP Resource Team.

Table 12: Clients - Resource Team Familiarity

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|----------|-----------|---|---|
| Yes | 16 (28%) | Is aware of the AUP Resource Team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Yes • Yes, I've never met with them but Alex has bounced questions off of them on our behalf. |
| No | 12 (18%) | Is not aware of the AUP Resource Team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not that I know of. • We have not used them. Only Alex. • No I am not. |
| Somewhat | 7 (35%) | Is somewhat aware of the AUP Resource Team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not fully. • Somewhat. • A few members. |

AUP clients were asked if they have received suggestions, ideas or business connections from the AUP Resource Team. If yes, did they find them valuable and/or useful. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 13. Many clients indicated that they have received suggestions from the Resource Team and found them useful; however other clients were unsure if they have received suggestions from the Resource Team. Additionally, other clients had not received suggestions from the Resource Team.

Table 13: Clients - Resource Team Suggestions

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------|-----------|--|---|
| Yes | 19 (58%) | Received suggestions from the Resource Team and found them useful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, for sure. • Yes, yes, and yes. • Yes, we had an invaluable conversation with someone on the resource team along with Alex. I'll never forget the time and advice he gave us. |

| | | | |
|-------|----------|---|--|
| No | 10 (11%) | Did not receive suggestions from the Resource Team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. Not as of yet seeing as we are still in the early phases of business planning. No, I didn't but I'm sure I would. |
| Maybe | 4 (15%) | Unsure if they had received suggestions from the Resource Team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maybe. I recall that Alex discussed a few of my hurdles with members of the resources team, but I'm not sure if I received any specific solutions. Some suggestions with some value. |

Clients were asked if they had any additional comments about the Accelerate UP program. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 14. During this question, clients shared *Praise for Alex*.

Table 14: Clients - Additional Comments

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-----------------|-----------|---|---|
| Praise for Alex | 4 (38%) | Alex was a key factor of the AUP program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am very thankful for working with Alex, and it had helped me so much. I couldn't have done it without him!!! Give Alex a raise! |



Barriers to Business Growth & Job Creation

Clients were asked what are the most significant barriers or facilitators that businesses face in creating jobs in the Upper Peninsula. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 15. Clients cited that lacking *Business Knowledge*, *Financial* resources, adequate *Marketing*, *Time*, *Infrastructure*, and qualified *Employees* were all barriers. Additionally, clients reported the *Geographic Location* of the Upper Peninsula is barrier.

Table 15: Clients - Employment Barriers

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|--|--|
| Business Knowledge | | 17 (12%) | A significant barrier that businesses face in creating jobs in UP is lacking business knowledge. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a service business, narrowing my scope and not becoming too generalized has been the hardest hurdle. The impact of zoning and codes are hard to understand and predict the effect of our business. |

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| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... knowledge of the right tracks to take or the right business paperwork to fill out. |
| | Networking | 2 (2%) | Specifically, finding professional contact was difficult. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... finding the right professional service providers. • ... struggling with finding the right mentors/resources... |
| | Financial | 14 (11%) | A significant barrier that businesses face in creating jobs in UP is lacking financial resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income generation, high city taxes, accounting, and finance management. • Securing financing. • Fund raising. |
| | Marketing | 14 (5%) | A significant barrier that businesses face in creating jobs in UP is creating adequate marketing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding and reaching potential customers. • Advertising. • Marketing. |
| | Geographic Location | 6 (58%) | A significant barrier that businesses face in creating jobs in UP is the remote geographic location. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I definitely think geography is a big deal. • Location sourcing. • ...it's just the geography and the area... I think a lot of people who want move away feel that it's isolated here and, you know, certain industries there's just not a lot of jobs available. |
| | Time | 5 (2%) | A significant barrier that businesses face in creating jobs in UP is the limited amount of time in the day. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to do it all! • Managing time. • Feeling strapped for both time and cash. |
| | Other | | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More focus on infrastructure and also that focuses on technology. • Qualified people. And then also retaining those people. |

Clients were asked what the greatest challenges are that their business has faced in achieving goals and maintaining desired growth. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 16. Clients indicated that their greatest challenges to growth were *Financial resources, Marketing, Business Knowledge, Time, qualified Employees, Networking, and changing Technology.*

Table 16: Clients - Growth Challenges

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|--------------------|-----------|--|---|
| Financial | 12 (20%) | The greatest challenge has been finances. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...finance. • ...capital. • Cash flow. |
| Marketing | 10 (13%) | The greatest challenge has been marketing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branching into commercial markets and getting larger scale projects. • Our biggest challenge was just getting the word out that we were a new store open and also getting the word out that the two owners now had their own store. • Exposure... |
| Business Knowledge | 8 (38%) | The greatest challenge has been lacking business knowledge. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At each stage of growth comes a whole new learning experience. I think that's been the biggest challenge is learning how to handle each new level of success. • Changes in governmental policies. • Under estimating my own value as a lead professional in my industry kept me from charging what I really needed to charge to stay in business. |
| Time | 7 (11%) | The greatest challenge has been time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough time in the day to do the work needing to be done. • Time management. • ...balancing time commitment. |
| Employees | 2 (1%) | The greatest challenge has been finding qualified employees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing. • Hiring skilled workers. |
| Other | | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...getting connected to the right people, which Alex has been extremely helpful at doing. • Technology changes, changes in how people use media. |



Program Improvement

Resource Team members were asked what their favorite part of being on the Resource Team is. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 17. Resource Team members stated that their favorite part of being on the Resource Team was *Helping Others*, having the status of the Resource Team which gave them *Access to Information*, and *Problem Solving*.

Table 17: Resource Team - Favorite Part of Resource Team

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|--|-----------|-----------|---|---|
| Helping Others | | 16 (42%) | Favorite part of the Resource Team was helping others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To me it's just feeling like you're doing something, you're helping other people out. Helping others and making a difference. Trying to figure out ways to help entrepreneurs. |
| Resource Team Status and Access to Information | | 7 (30%) | Favorite part of the Resource Team was having access to information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I enjoy hearing about the businesses and the owners' successes and struggles. It's always surprising to learn about each business and some of the neat things they are doing. I just really enjoyed feeling part of a secret society almost and the group that's in the know of certain things that other people weren't a part of... I always felt it was cool to be part of something that feels fulfilling |
| Collaborative Problem Solving | | 7 (30%) | Favorite part of the Resource Team was problem solving. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I enjoy problem solving and putting resources with people that need them. This provides that opportunity. |
| Making Connections | | 3 (4%) | Favorite part of the Resource Team was networking and connecting with others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I had a lot of fun...networking with others from the community. I think just the people, talking with them, getting together and being a part of the community. I really enjoy sitting down with the clients. |

Table 18: Resource Team - Least Favorite Part of Resource Team

Resource Team members were asked “What is your least favorite part of being on the Resource Team? How can this be remedied?” Responses to this question are displayed in 18. Resource Team members reported that their least favorite part of being on the Resource Team was *Scheduling* based, the *Lack of Follow-up* done with businesses after interaction, *Nothing* at all, the *Forced Teambuilding*, and watching others *Giving Bad Advice* to business owners.

Table 18: Resource Team - Least Favorite Part of Resource Team

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------------------|-----------|---|--|
| Scheduling | 8 (27%) | Finding times that worked for all resources team member and clients proved to be difficult. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish our Mob's weren't on the weekends. I really enjoy these, but weekends are tough for me to attend them. • Never an ideal time to accommodate everyone. • ...the fact that there is only one resource team meeting can sometimes be frustrating... if there could be multiple meetings or some way they could get an email follow... that allows us to keep those resource members that missed a meeting engaged... |
| Lack of Follow-up | 7 (42%) | Resource team members wanted to see the effect of their assistance on their client's success. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I would like to know about the people you only see once. • ...I think they do not perceive the value but more often we give them a lot of resources and then they are good to go or maybe it is too much all at once or I don't know. • I need training or policies to better understand confidentiality of our customers vs. reaching out and encouraging them. |
| Nothing | 2 (6%) | There was nothing identified by resource members as being unenjoyable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not really anything...It is a great effort and fits well in this community. • I can't think of anything. |

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| Other | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex’s ice breaking, he does anything that can get us free to start talking. • Having to listen to people who only know one area of business attempt to 'help' some of the participants. I fear that their ignorance could hurt the participant more than help at times. |
|-------|-----------------|---|

Resource Team members were asked how else Resource Team Members could get involved with Accelerate UP. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 19. Resource Team members reported that more members could get involved with Accelerate UP through *Program Growth* (e.g., *Organizational Restructuring, New Locations*), attending *Meetings* and *Cash Mobs* and *Promoting AUP* in their personal lives. However, some members reported that they are already at *Maximum Possible Involvement*.

Table 19: Resource Team - Resource Team Involvement

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----------|---|--|
| Program Growth | | 13 (48%) | More involvement with AUP could be encouraged by growing the program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could be asked for financial contributions to help start the trek away from 100% Eagle/Lundin support. • More intentionally visit customers, especially those that could use encouragement...maybe develop a system to organize this to make sure all active customers receive a visit. • Well it could be testing mentorships. You know volunteers who retired or something who do want to stay engaged and be involved, maybe, their experiences would fit with someone |
| | Organizational Restructuring | 6 (28%) | Specifically, restructuring AUP would provide Resource Team members more chances to get involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As AUP grows it would be great to see them offer Resource Team specific areas where they would have a small group of members just designated to handle record keeping... the number of participants is growing, AUP may need more resource members in the future. • Create different committees that offer certain strengths or expertise that Alex could consult with or have |

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| | | | <p>a participant sit down with us to help mentor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...it does seem our the resource team could be better utilized if there was somebody that was just dedicated to a couple hours a month just to better manage the resource the team... |
| | New Locations | 2 (2%) | <p>Specifically, new locations would provide Resource Team members more chances to get involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well if Accelerate UP had another 200,000 and was growing would it want to grow territorially. • If you want to come over towards Alger County, that'd be great! |
| Meetings | | 8 (27%) | <p>Resource Team members could get more involved by attending meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend meetings. • Other Resource Teams members could help with their consistent attendance. • Committees. |
| | Confidentiality Barrier | 4 (15%) | <p>However, the need to keep things confidential is a barrier.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel the excitement in the meetings, but since everything is confidential so I can't tell my friends that they would be great resource members... • ...maybe just asking them if they want a hundred percent kept confidential or not. • I don't know if there is anything we can do outside the current mission due to confidentiality. |
| Cash Mobs | | 6 (8%) | <p>Resource Team members could get more involved by attending Cash Mobs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash mob! • Support the Cash Mob. • I know one way is cash mobs, going out and celebrating businesses. |
| Already at Maximum Possible Involvement | | 6 (6%) | <p>Resource Team members are already providing the appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm pretty well involved already. • I'm already on the board so that already got me involved with everything. |

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| | | amount of involvement for their schedules. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think more time, right, but...it's unrealistic, I think it is good balance right now. |
| Promote AUP | 3 (5%) | Resource Team members could promote AUP and its services on their own time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would say promote the organization and its services. Perhaps more exposure in the community on letting people know about AUP. More public information. ...just going into their business and buying things from them and tell them you work for AUP leave positive reviews on Facebook. |

Resource Team members were asked what key area of support should AUP consider in order to help the local business community. Responses to this question are displayed in Table 20. Resource Team members reported that, in order to help the local business community, AUP should consider providing more *Financial* education and monetary support, *Collaborating with Similar Agencies*, *Improving or changing Processes*, *Spreading Awareness of AUP*, and *Using Technology*.

Table 20: Resource Team - Community Support

| Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|--|---|
| Financial | 6 (25%) | Financial assistance to new business owners monetarily or through education would be beneficial. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think if there was a pool of money to help with process mapping, financial analysis and HR policies for start-ups that would be helpful. It would be good if we could provide financial programs that could help. Maybe work to bring a strategic private grant fund for small companies for start up cash... |
| Collaborating with Similar Agencies | 4 (20%) | Increasing the networking potential within AUP should be considered. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibly teaming up with the local Chamber groups to help promote certain initiatives, like the Mob event, or get them involved in a working committee. Utilize their communication channels for promoting Acc. UP events or what they do. |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think close coordination with other similar deals in the area where you can sort of help each other... |
| Improving Processes | 4 (25%) | Respondents believed that the process to providing access to AUP services were important to continue considering. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build its strategy for sustainability as it has proven to be a good resource. • Being that low key, easily accessible connector to assistance that gives people who have an idea a place to go where they won't feel out of place. • ...an intake before the first meeting... so that you know what you are going into... |
| Spreading Awareness | 3 (16%) | AUP should focus on creating and spreading their availability and focus in order to broaden the number of businesses they can reach. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think they are well focused now but reaching out to more people is an area that needs focus. There are a lot of business that could use the services, but they need to know about them. • Businesses can turn into something... and it's important for them to know that. • I think they already do this but just getting in touch with local officials and businesses through their connections. Creating connections. Networking is key. |
| Other | | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can see webinars and seminars for people... that could just be on your website to help people be prepared for... starting a business |

AUP clients were asked “Have you recommended AUP to anyone you know? If so, why?” Responses to this question are displayed in Table 21. The majority of clients indicated that they had recommended AUP, and specifically *Alex*, to other individuals. Other clients indicated that they haven’t recommended AUP yet but would. Finally, very few clients indicated that they had not recommended AUP.

Table 5: Clients - Recommended AUP

| Theme | Sub-Theme | Frequency | Definition | Examples |
|-------|-----------|-----------|------------------|---|
| Yes | | 46 (93%) | Have recommended | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes I have, It’s helpful. • Yes, they are a resource for people starting businesses. |

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| | | | AUP to other individuals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. Sometimes it's helpful to get that outside perspective on things. Your friends and relatives don't always tell you the truth. |
| Alex | 12 (26%) | Specifically, have recommended Alex to other individuals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would recommend AUP to anyone I respected enough to share Alex with... • I would wholeheartedly recommend AUP and specifically Alex to anyone wanting to start or grow a business! • Alex has a lot of enthusiasm. You can tell he believes in the service AUP is offering to the community. | |
| No | 3 (<1%) | Have not recommended AUP to other individuals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have not. • No. • No. | |
| Other | | Other comments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have not recommended AUP to the best of my knowledge, but would do so absolutely to someone starting up a business. | |

Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments

Client Business Web-based Survey

Demographic Questions

1. In what sector does your business operate?
 - Raw Materials (1), Manufacturing (2), Sales and Services (3)
2. How long have you owned your own business?
 - Less than 1 year (1), 1-3 years (2), 4-6 years (3), 7-10 years (4), More than 10 years (5)
3. Prior to your involvement with AUP, what was your PRIMARY activity?
 - Full-time employment (1), Part-time employment (2), College (full-time) (3), College (part-time) (4), Self-employed (owned my own business) (5), Military service (6), Volunteer activity (e.g., Peace Corps) (7), Seeking employment (8)

Perceived Confidence: Please rate the degree to which you agree to the following statements. (1 – Strongly Disagree, 3 – Neither agree nor disagree, 5 – Strongly Agree)

1. I know where to go to seek business advice when faced with a challenging issue
2. I feel confident in my ability to identify successful, long-term strategies to achieve goals within my business
3. I am confident that my business will serve the community beyond the AUP program
4. I feel that I have a competitive edge over my peers in the business community

Business management Capacity: Please rate the degree to which you agree to the following statements. (1 – Strongly Disagree, 3 – Neither agree nor disagree, 5 – Strongly Agree)

1. As a result of working with AUP my organizations capacity to manage tasks related to Marketing has increased
2. As a result of working with AUP my organizations capacity to manage tasks related to Human Resources has increased
3. As a result of working with AUP my organizations capacity to manage tasks related to Accounting has increased
4. As a result of working with AUP my organizations capacity to manage tasks related to Production/Sales has increased

Open-ended Questions

5. Have you had an increase in personal income as a result of working with AUP?
 - Yes (1), No (2), Not Applicable (3)

1. Keeping in mind that your response is voluntary and will be kept confidential, could you estimate the increase in percentage in income?
2. Has your business experienced an increase in revenue as a result of working with AUP?
3. Keeping in mind that your response is voluntary and will be kept confidential, could you estimate the increase in percentage in revenue?
4. Has your business experienced an increase in the number of available jobs as a results of working with AUP?
5. Please estimate the number of jobs created.
6. What impact has working with AUP had on retention within your organization?
7. Please estimate the number of positions retained as a result of working with AUP.
8. What are the most significant facilitators/barriers your business has faced in creating jobs in the UP?
9. In what specific ways has AUP supported your business?
10. Do you feel confident that you know where to go to seek business advice when faced with a challenging issue?
11. Do you feel confident in my ability to identify successful, long-term strategies to achieve goals within my business?
12. Do you feel that you have a competitive edge over my peers in the business community as a result of working with AUP?
13. What is the one thing you value most about AUP? Why?

Client Focus Group Prompts

Open-ended Questions

1. What are the most significant facilitators/barriers your business has faced in creating jobs in the UP?
2. In what specific ways has AUP supported your business?
3. Do you feel confident that you know where to go to seek business advice when faced with a challenging issue?
4. Do you feel confident in my ability to identify successful, long-term strategies to achieve goals within my business?
5. Do you feel that you have a competitive edge over my peers in the business community as a result of working with AUP?

6. What is the one thing you value most about AUP? Why?

Resource Team Focus Group Prompts

Open-ended Questions

1. How has AUP impacted the local economy (jobs, income, economic impact)? Can you describe a specific example?
2. How has AUP impacted the local community (types of business/products/services available)? Can you describe a specific example?
3. Do you think AUP has had an impact on communities beyond the Marquette area? Why/why not?
4. How has AUP provided participants with the tools they need to sustain growth beyond the scope of AUP/Eagle Mine? (enduring AUP impact)
5. Describe your involvement with Accelerate UP.
6. How else could you and other Resource Team Members get involved with Accelerate UP?
7. What is your favorite part of being part of the Resource Team?
8. What is your least favorite part of being on the Resource Team? How can this be remedied?
9. What key area of support should AUP consider in order to help the local business community?