

The project also offers core business and “soft skills” training, intensive case management, access to capital, linking clients with mentors, securing job contracts, and referring client to other community resources. The overall project goal of *LeadSafe* is to create 55 jobs for low-income people in Central Vermont, through self-employment, with an average wage of \$12.50 in the first year of operation and access to quality health care and childcare. For questions or more information about this study, please contact Michele Cranwell Schmidt, Evaluation Coordinator, at (802) 656-0256 or Michele.Schmidt@uvm.edu.

Evaluation Methodology

The Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont is the evaluator of the *LeadSafe* Initiative. The evaluation includes a process and outcome component, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods of staff focus groups and interviews, and client focus groups, in-depth interviews and follow-up telephone surveys. For the first client follow-up survey a total of 10 clients or 40% responded. A total of 52 clients completed the second round of surveys in FYII for a response rate of 25%. Finally, Table 1 shows that 63 clients completed the surveys conducted in FY III for a response rate of 25%. A total of 85 clients completed at least one survey, of which thirty persons completed more than on survey.

Table 1. Client Outcome for *LeadSafe* Six Month Follow-up Survey

Outcome	N	%
Total	250	100%
Completed	63	25%
No answer	34	14%
Refused	18	7%
Wrong Number/Disconnected	135	54%

Client Characteristics

- € 100% (85) were at or below poverty level
- € Range of annual household income at intake: \$0-\$27,000, average \$8,800
- € 73% (60) have relied on some form of public assistance at one point in their life
- € 51% (41) were receiving food stamps at intake
- € Age range: 23-74, Average 43 years (at survey)
- € 37% (30) male; 63% (52) female
- € 80% (65) Caucasian, 20% (20) of ethnic background
- € 62% (51) have children in household, range of 1 to 7 children and median of 3
- € 40% (32) have a high school education/GED or less
- € 65% (51) of clients were in the planning stage at intake and 35% (27) entered with an established business

Project Implementation

Participant Recruitment

The *LeadSafe* staff recruited JOLI eligible participants by working with other social service and state agencies, posting fliers and advertising through newspapers and brochures, event fliers, and word of mouth. Based on self-reported data, main sources of client referrals were from family members and friends, CVCAC staff, brochures or a flier, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Vermont Department of Employment and Training. Types of clients who participated in the lead safety training include: registered childcare providers, painters and contractors, consultants, and house cleaners. Other major types of client businesses are those in the service and retail sectors.

Project Partners

The primary partner of the *LeadSafe* grant was the Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB). VHCB played a role in training, advertising, and as a referral source. The VHCB was a very successful partner by providing the EMP and Basic Lead Abatement Contractor Training. Other project partners who provided a sources of referral include the Department of PATH and DET, Northern New England Tradeswomen, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Project staff communicated with project partners through emails, telephone, meetings, presentations, and by sending them fliers.

Client Accomplishments and Outcomes

Business Stage at Intake and Survey

At the time of the initial contact with the *LeadSafe* Program:

- € 65% (51) were in the planning stage of their business
- € 35% (27) had an existing business

At the time of the final follow-up survey for all clients who participated:

- € 13% (10) had decided to not pursue a business
- € 31% (24) remained in the planning stage
- € **36% (28) had a start-up or stable business**
- € 14% (11) were in the process of expanding or had expanded through additional financing
- € 6% (5) had closed or sold their business

Business Start-up and Retention Rate

- € Of the 52 businesses in the planning stage at intake, **31% (16) had started a business** by the time of the survey, 48% (25) were still planning their business and 21% (11) decided to not pursue their business.
- € Of the 25 established businesses at intake, **100% (25) were retained** by the time of the survey.

Business Contracts

Sixteen percent (5) of clients indicated that MBDP helped them to secure business contracts. Three people indicated that they received one contract, one person received six contracts and one person received twenty contracts. Two people reported that the value of these contracts were \$1,200 and \$6,000.

- € Using the assumption that 1 full time job is equivalent to 40 hours a week, a total of 37 FTE self-employed jobs were created by respondents and 18 FTE employees were hired. This is a total of **55 FTE jobs created overall.**

Main skills and knowledge gained

- € 49% (33) writing a business plan
- € 21% (14) steps to start a business
- € 15% (10) problem solving skills
- € 13% (9) financial management
- € 13% (9) marketing and sales

Main changes in attitude because of services

- € 40% (27) were more motivated and encouraged
- € 30% (20) reported an increase in self-esteem

Client Feedback

Main areas that worked well for clients

- € 34% (23) supportive staff
- € 28% (19) knowledgeable staff
- € 27% (18) positive and affirming staff
- € 22% (15) gave direction/steps to take
- € 21% (14) one-on-one attention

Main areas that did not work well for clients

- € 48% (32) indicated “nothing”
- € 8% (5) of clients did not access funding/needed more funding
- € 6% (4) reported that personal life/issues got in the way
- € 6% (4) felt the training was too general/basic

Overall satisfaction with services

- € Scale 0-10 with 0 being 0% satisfied and 10 being 100% satisfied: Range: 0-10; Average: 7
- € 84% reported that MBDP services met their expectations

Overall satisfaction with one-on-one counseling and technical assistance

- € Scale 0-10 with 0 being 0% satisfied and 10 being 100% satisfied: Range:0-10; Average: 8
- € 76% reported that working with MBDP business counselors aided in the success of their business
- € 74% reported working with MBDP business counselors aided in their business development
- € 68% reported that MBDP business counselors provided the necessary on-going support for their business development.