

## Participant Outcomes of the Workshop in Business Opportunities (WIBO) Program

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Workshop in Business Opportunities, or WIBO, is an entrepreneurial training and development program that originated in the Harlem district of New York City in 1966. The 16-week course introduces participants to a variety of concepts essential for the successful operation of a small business. In 1999, the program was brought to Bridgeport, Connecticut by FSW, Inc, one of the leading family service agencies in the state. Since that time, WIBO has graduated 443 students and become an integral part of the services offered at FSW. Its focus on small business development is directly relevant to one of the core mission objectives of FSW: helping clients build pathways to economic self-sufficiency.

As the WIBO program celebrates ten years of assisting budding entrepreneurs in Bridgeport, a study was commissioned to examine outcomes from the past decade of WIBO alumni. This comprehensive study sought to bring together insights and feedback from a wide range of graduates who completed the Bridgeport program. Two undergraduate students at Dartmouth College, through an arrangement with the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center on campus, conducted the study and analyzed the results described here.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. PROCEDURES**

The study of the WIBO program in Bridgeport was conducted by interviewing alumni, asking each of them a series of open- and closed-ended questions divided into three broad sections: background and demographic information about the participant, information about the participant's business, and information about the participant's experiences with the WIBO program.<sup>2</sup> (For a copy of the survey instrument that was administered to all participants, please see Appendix A.) Participants who reported not being active in business were asked an abbreviated set of questions based on the fact that many questions were relevant only to those currently operating in business. The majority of interviews were conducted via telephone, with a few interviews taking place in person, either in the FSW offices or at a location convenient for the participant. Before beginning the interview, each respondent was read a description of the study and their oral consent was obtained to continue with the interview. Participants were made aware of the fact that they were free to pass on any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. In cases where participants decided not to answer a specific question, their responses were omitted from the reported results for that question. Some questions also allowed participants to provide more than one response. (As a result, the number of responses will not always sum to the total number of participants for every question). Following the interview, participants were sent a detailed Informed Consent form (see Appendix B) seeking written permission to include their responses in the final report while ensuring full confidentiality.

An attempt was made to contact every graduate from the inaugural Fall 1999 class through the Spring 2008 class (representing a total of 18 classes) using available telephone numbers (home, work, and/or cell) provided by the program's director. In the

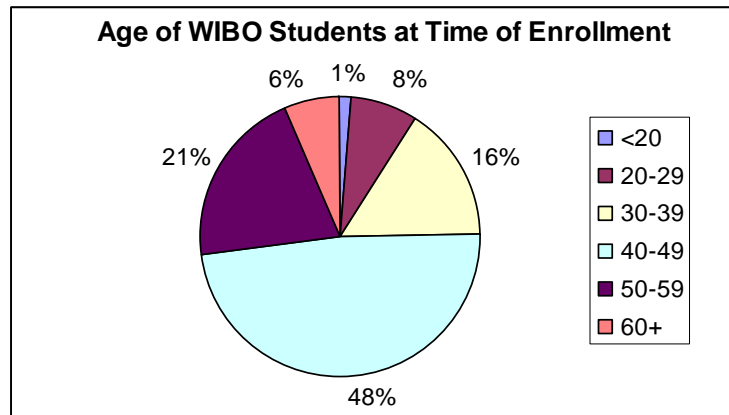
majority of cases, contact information was found to be out of service or no longer accurate. For those who could not be reached at the time of the call, a descriptive message was left detailing the purpose of the study and requesting their response. Out of the 422 graduates from the 18 WIBO classes included in the study,<sup>3</sup> there were a total of 80 participants, representing approximately 19 percent of the overall WIBO alumni population. All interviews were conducted during a 12-week period from February 16 to May 8, 2009. Following the interviews, one of the study investigators coded the responses from open- and closed-ended questions into appropriate categories and compiled the final results.

## 2. RESULTS

### 2.1 Demographic Information

Among the 80 respondents for the WIBO study, 61 were female and 19 were male. The prevalence of female participants (76.25 percent of our sample) is generally consistent with the actual gender division observed among the entire population of WIBO graduates. Furthermore, the median age of participants while they were enrolled in the class was 44 years, ranging from a low of 18 years to a high of 66 years.<sup>4</sup> The largest concentration of respondents fell between the ages of 40-49. (See Figure 1 for a complete breakdown of age groups).

**Figure 1.**



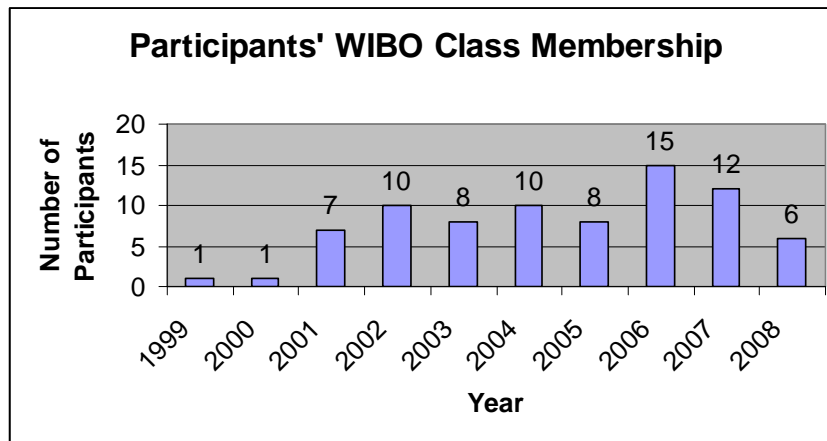
Respondents had on average two children and nearly half reported being married, while slightly more than a third reported being single, with the rest either divorced, separated, or widowed. In terms of educational attainment, 12.5 percent of respondents reported having a high school diploma or below, 32.5 percent reported some college education, 11.25 percent reported having an associate's or a vocational degree, 32.5 percent reported having a bachelor's degree, and 11.25 percent mentioned having an advanced degree beyond the bachelor's level. The geographical range of respondents was considerable, encompassing much of the Greater Bridgeport and surrounding areas. While 47.5 percent reported living in Bridgeport and another 17.5 percent reported living in neighboring

Stratford, a few reported living as far as Greenwich to the southwest, New Haven to the northeast, and Danbury to the northwest.

Nearly half of respondents initially learned about the WIBO program through a former graduate, while 22.5 percent reported seeing it advertised in the local newspaper. Interestingly, 8.75 percent of respondents were referred to the program through the host institution, FSW. Most had never considered enrolling in a different entrepreneurial development program, although 20 percent did mention looking into other programs, most notably SCORE and the Women’s Business Development Center.

Finally, the sample of 80 participants included individuals from across the spectrum of WIBO classes over the past decade. While more of the respondents tended to be concentrated within the last five class years from 2004 to 2008, almost 35 percent came from one of the earlier classes between 1999 and 2003, including at least one participant from each year (see Figure 2 for a breakdown of class membership among respondents).

Figure 2.



## 2.2 Business Outcomes

The second section of the WIBO interview attempted to measure participants’ business outcomes. At the time that they first entered the WIBO program, 47.5 percent respondents claimed that they were not in business while 52.5 percent stated that they were already in business. Of those previously in business, 52.4 percent reported starting their business within a year before taking WIBO, 23.8 percent reported already being in business between two and five years, and 23.8 percent reported that they had already been in business for more than five years. Furthermore, among the 42 respondents previously in business, 50 percent stated that they have since expanded their business operations. Of the 38 respondents who were not in business at the time they started WIBO, 63.2 percent have since started in business. Of these, 16.7 percent mentioned starting their business during class, 58.3 percent mentioned starting within a year of graduating from WIBO, and 25 percent mentioned starting more than one year later.

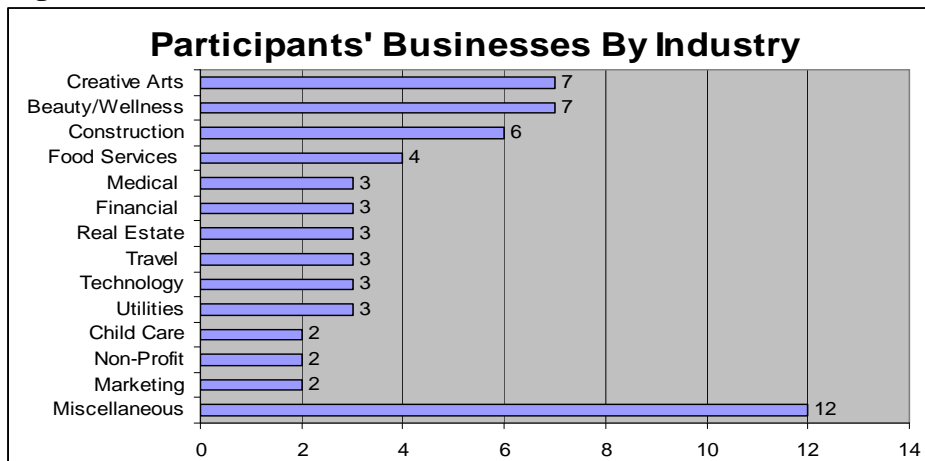
Regardless of their business status at the beginning of the WIBO program, 75 percent of respondents report that they are currently operating a business while 25 percent report that they are not currently in business. Each respondent can further be subdivided into one of four broad categories:

- 1) **45** percent of respondents were initially in business before WIBO and have since continued in business,
- 2) **30** percent of respondents were not in business before WIBO and have since started (and are presently) in business
- 3) **7.5** percent of respondents were initially in business before WIBO but have since discontinued their business, and
- 4) **17.5** percent of respondents were not in business before WIBO and have not since started in business.

It is especially interesting to note that 30 percent of respondents report that they were not in business at the time they enrolled in WIBO, but have since started and are currently in business. While it may be difficult to attribute these positive outcomes directly to the WIBO program in a formal sense, this statistic does provide one measure of success for WIBO graduates. Among the graduates who articulated that they were not currently operating a business, common explanations included personal or family health concerns, bleak economic conditions, lack of start-up capital, and prohibitive business expenses. Several did express plans to launch their businesses in the near future. Although seemingly atypical of the survey responses, one graduate did confide that she felt discouraged from pursuing her business concept by what she perceived to be a lack of support and encouragement from those affiliated with the program.

In terms of geography, the location of the businesses in the study mirrored the diversity found in participants' hometowns. In fact, 80 percent of the currently operating businesses are located in the respondent's hometown, while the rest are either located in a different town or operate predominantly online. Participants' businesses were also spread across a wide array of industries, a fact which is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.**



Seventy percent of the active business owners in the sample reported having no other employees, while 30 percent had at least one part-time or full-time employee. Among the 60 active business owners, more than half (57 percent) reported having an additional source of income in the form of a wage job, while the remaining 43 percent did not hold another job outside of their business.

One area of particular interest in the study involved the financial outcomes of WIBO graduates who are currently in business. Reported annual income ranges among WIBO alumni currently in business are presented in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4.**

<b>ANNUAL INCOME RANGE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>
< \$10,000	3
\$10,000-\$19,999	3
\$20,000-\$29,999	6
\$30,000-\$49,999	20
\$50,000-\$64,999	13
\$65,000-\$84,999	6
\$85,000-\$100,000	3
> \$100,000	4
No Response	2

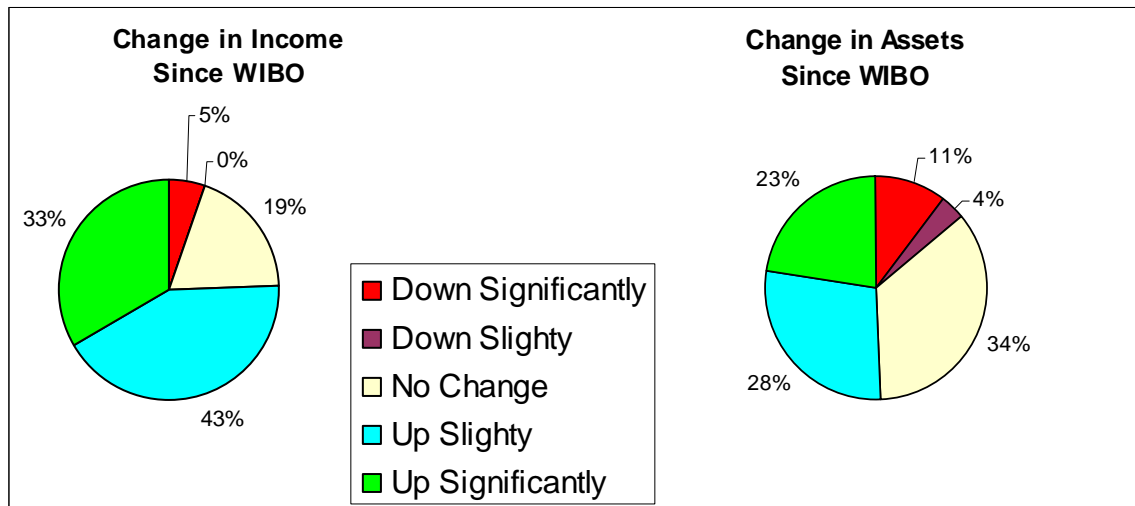
According to the data collected, the median income of active business owners in the study fell in the range of \$30,000-\$50,000, with a considerable number falling into an annual income range of \$50,000-\$65,000. Since reported annual income includes non-business sources of income, participants were also asked to estimate the proportion of their income specifically derived from their business in order to develop a more accurate understanding of their business-related income. As evidenced in Figure 5, active business owners in the study were relatively split between those whose businesses represent the primary (or sole) source of income and those whose businesses are a marginal or supplementary source of income. As mentioned previously, a slight majority of the active business owners also worked at another job, thereby allowing them access to multiple income streams. Several also mentioned alternative income sources, such as alimony or public assistance.

**Figure 5.**

<b>PERCENT OF INCOME DERIVED FROM BUSINESS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>
0%-19%	14
20%-39%	15
40%-59%	6
60%-79%	4
80%-100%	19
No Response	2

Furthermore, an attempt was made to understand the financial position of current business owners over time by inquiring about their income and asset levels before and after the WIBO program. These results can be seen in Figure 6. The majority of respondents indicated that their financial situation had improved in the time that has passed since WIBO, with a large majority reporting a positive change in income and a slight majority reporting a positive change in total assets. Some respondents mentioned that the decline in the value of their investments (including financial and real estate) accounted for the decrease in their total assets.

Figure 6.



When asked about the ultimate goal for their business, nearly half mentioned a desire to expand (including growth in operations, client base, and/or employees). Other common goals include being financially stable and profitable, transitioning to be a full-time entrepreneur, acquiring new business facilities, being able to survive in business, and having the means to support family. In terms of what participants foresaw as the next step for their business, many mentioned increasing marketing and advertising efforts, achieving legal recognition, licensing, or accreditation, hiring staff, and receiving a boost in financial capital, among other responses.

Participants also indicated that they faced a range of obstacles in operating their businesses. Two-thirds of the 60 active business owners surveyed cited insufficient financial resources and lack of access to capital as a primary obstacle. Marketing was a challenge for a quarter of the business owners, and management was an issue for 18.3 percent of them. In addition to these response choices, 13.3 percent of participants explicitly cited current economic conditions as a challenge, and multiple participants saw client acquisition/retention and time scarcity as further challenges. In describing their plans to overcome these difficulties, the most common responses included investing in employees, targeting the marketing approach, continuing professional training and education, increasing clientele, adjusting pricing strategies, and hosting professional events or presentations.



### 2.3 Characterizing the WIBO Experience

In the final section of the interview, current business owners were asked to reflect on how their experience in the WIBO program has impacted them, personally and/or professionally. Participants were first asked to give their definition of business success. Responses ranged from the professional to the personal to the financial, and a sample of the most popular responses can be seen in Figure 7 below (participants were able to give more than one characteristic of business success, so the sum of responses exceeds the 60 entrepreneurs in the sample).

**Figure 7.**

<b>DEFINITION OF BUSINESS SUCCESS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>
Profitable operations	15
Financial stability, comfortable lifestyle	14
Personal fulfillment and passion in work	14
Living up to client expectations	9
Building positive reputation/recognition	7
Setting and achieving well-organized goals	7
Sustainable business able to “run itself”	6
Consistency, hard work	5
Gaining personal freedom and independence	4
Growth and expansion	4

According to their own definition of business success, 65 percent of the active entrepreneurs consider themselves successful while the other 35 percent feel that they are not yet successful or are still working towards success. Among those who consider themselves successful in business, some of the most frequently mentioned keys to success include good client service, perseverance, sincerity and respect, marketing efforts, being open to advice, and having a passion for the work.

The interviewer then asked for business owners to recall the aspects of the WIBO program that proved to be most useful for them. A summary of those responses is presented in Figure 8.

**Figure 8.**

<b>USEFUL ASPECTS OF WIBO</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</b>
Financial calculations (i.e. break-even analysis, profit & loss)	23
Marketing	20
Business plan development	15
Self-confidence	12
Price-setting	8
Guest speakers	8
Networking and building contacts	7

Roundtable discussion/homework review format	5
Budgeting	4
Understanding the nature of the product/service sold	4

As Figure 8 makes clear, WIBO graduates indicated that they benefited from developing a combination of hard skills and soft skills. Many felt that specific lessons, particularly on business finances, marketing and pricing, were an extremely useful introduction to technical business concepts (demonstrating the acquisition of hard skills). Others commented on the importance of building self-esteem in the class and having access to a valuable network of peer business owners, some examples of soft skills that they emerged from the program with. While respondents expressed nearly universal satisfaction with the WIBO curriculum, there were some recommendations for additional topics to be addressed. The most popular suggestions included learning the QuickBooks accounting software program and obtaining access to financial resources and loans. Other possibilities included mentorship/apprenticeship arrangements, dealing with the IRS and business taxes, handling legal issues and lawsuits, grant writing, advanced computer skills, having more WIBO alumni as guest speakers, and developing sections of a business plan throughout the 16-week program.

When asked how the training they received from WIBO has impacted the success of their business, participants had a range of positive comments, highlighted by the following sample of testimonials:

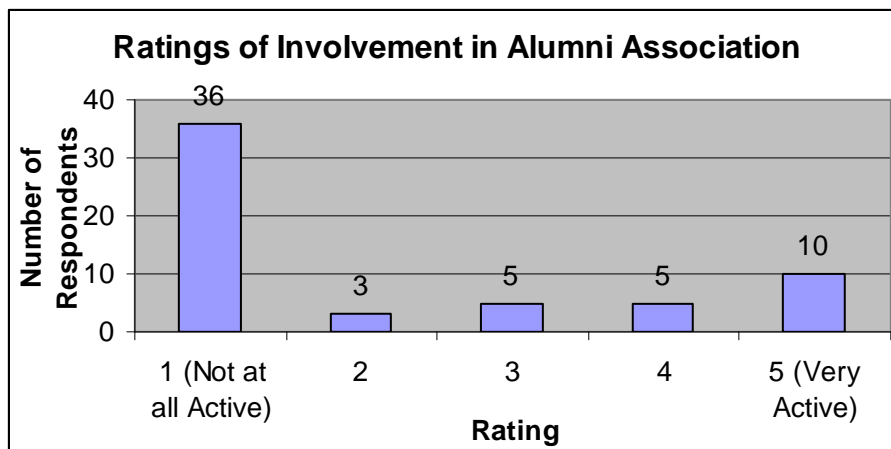
- Turned an expensive hobby into a profitable business
- Inspired me to continue and equipped me with the skill set to make it possible to be an entrepreneur
- Gave me the nudge to stop settling as an employee
- Got me out of a personal slump and gave me the confidence to go forward
- Gave me encouragement and motivated me to really want to succeed
- Wouldn't have gotten nearly as far as I am now without WIBO
- The ins and outs of the business world were engrained into me by WIBO

Respondents also pointed to concrete examples of how they applied lessons from WIBO to their business, such as placing advertisements in the local newspaper, increasing marketing efforts, keeping track of business finances more carefully, realizing the need for a website, and developing better business cards. Many mentioned that the program helped boost their confidence, independence, and/or professionalism, while several stated that they continue to reread and reuse their workbook and refer back to their business plan. Of the 60 active entrepreneurs interviewed, only 6.7 percent explicitly stated that the program had minimal or no impact on their business operations.

As an indication of the business networking benefits offered by the WIBO program, 57 percent of the current business owners interviewed (34 out of 60) indicated that they had done business with at least one other WIBO graduate, whether from their own cohort or from another class. Fully three-quarters of the current business owners claim to have maintained a relationship with the program, whether by serving as roundtable discussion leaders, presenting as guest speakers, participating in alumni meetings, or simply staying in contact with peers and/or the program director.

In measuring how active WIBO entrepreneurs are with the Alumni Association<sup>5</sup>, participants were asked to rate their involvement on a scale from 1 (not at all active) to 5 (very active member). The responses are reported in Figure 9. According to the figure, the majority of respondents characterized themselves as inactive in the Alumni Association, while a smaller number indicated that they were “very active” members. Not surprisingly, many of the inactive alumni cited time conflicts and constraints as a primary reason for their lack of participation in the Alumni Association.

Figure 9.



While perceptions about the value of the Alumni Association were generally positive among both active and inactive WIBO graduates, there was a sizable group of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of the Association. Some of them believe that Association meetings are not sufficiently geared toward business development, or were concerned that it no longer provides a compelling hook to attract membership. One participant expressed the sentiment that the Association seemed to have lost its fundamental reasons for being. Another felt that the Association could be offering much more to attract interest and attention from potential members.

To address the ideal role of the Alumni Association for WIBO graduates, respondents gave feedback on the types of programming they would most like to attend from a selection of options. Many indicated a desire for one-on-one, individualized meetings with mentors or budget/financial counselors. Other popular choices included conferences for further training and networking events. Respondents were also asked about their own ideas for post-graduation programs, and their suggestions included the following:

- A mini version of WIBO as a refresher course
- A post-graduate WIBO course to cover advanced topics
- Forums or roundtable discussions with moderators, such as dealing with economic downturns as a business owner
- An updated directory of WIBO-related businesses, yellow pages style
- Expos and job fairs held off-site
- Collaboration with the WIBO program in New York
- Community outreach efforts
- Booklet of WIBO graduates willing to share their expertise as mentors
- Learning about asset protection and healthcare and retirement planning
- Matching businesses with WIBO graduates who can supply their needs
- Invite seasoned business leaders to visit the workplace of WIBO graduates in the same industry and bounce ideas/offer tips
- Conference call or online group to accommodate those who cannot attend Alumni Association meetings
- An annual WIBO cookout

In terms of finding time for WIBO alumni events, respondents predictably had varied schedules, with 68.3 percent indicating that weeknights were convenient for them, 35 percent indicating that weekend daytimes were convenient, and 10 percent indicating that weekend evenings were convenient (respondents were permitted to select more than one option).

Finally, to conclude the interview, participants were given the opportunity to share any other comments that they wished to add. Many expressed their appreciation for the WIBO program, with one respondent commenting that WIBO has been a blessing and another stating that she is happy to be part of the WIBO family. Several also mentioned that they have since referred others to the WIBO program.

### **3. LIMITATIONS/FURTHER RESEARCH**

All results obtained from the survey are self-reported, including disclosures of personal financial situations. This fact should be kept in mind when interpreting the results presented here, given that responses cannot be independently verified. Moreover, the results obtained in this study should not be construed as a concrete measure of WIBO's effect on participant outcomes. Without a formal controlled experiment, it is impossible to ascertain the true extent to which participation in the WIBO program can be directly attributable to the outcomes of WIBO graduates. Since such an experimental design would require an appropriate comparison group outside of WIBO alumni, it would be

logistically impractical in this instance. This study instead relies upon largely anecdotal evidence, while fully recognizing the limitations of such an approach.

As this study took place around the tenth anniversary of the WIBO program in Bridgeport, much useful information has been collected from an entire decade of WIBO experiences. However, as the number of WIBO graduates continues to grow with each succeeding future cohort, further research would prove highly instructive. This initial study lays the groundwork for a more systematic analysis of WIBO experiences, with the potential to expand participation to future graduating classes in order to more consistently track the progress of alumni and to solicit their opinions and feedback in an ever-evolving effort to improve the program. In conducting future interviews, perhaps the survey instrument could be modified to include separate sets of questions for those active in business and those not active in business, in order to reach a deeper understanding about the divergent paths of WIBO graduates. Also, some current questions might be revised or new ones added (such as explicitly asking respondents whether they have continued to use the WIBO workbook, whether they have completed a formal business plan, and/or whether they have referred others to WIBO). It is hoped that as future graduates participate in the ongoing study, the data collected will become increasingly representative and will offer useful evaluations for the WIBO program going forward.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Over the past decade, the WIBO program has provided instruction and support to ambitious entrepreneurs eager to make business success a reality. Several hundred students have completed the Bridgeport program since the fall of 1999, and the purpose of this study was to gather data from WIBO graduates along three core dimensions: 1) background and demographic characteristics, 2) business and financial outcomes, and 3) experiences with the WIBO program. Although participants differed in such personal characteristics as age and educational attainment, they shared a common desire to achieve success as thriving entrepreneurs. While results from the study must necessarily be interpreted with caution, respondents largely identified themselves as active in business, with generally optimistic expectations for the future. Many consider themselves to be successful in business, according to their varied definitions of success. Respondents also expressed overwhelmingly positive sentiments about the impact that WIBO has had, describing how they acquired a mixture of technical skills for operating a business and soft skills such as interpersonal communication and networking. In fact, a clear majority of respondents claim to have maintained some form of relationship with the program and/or their peers, signifying the additional benefit of WIBO as a network for social and business contacts. While many also reported that the WIBO Alumni Association is a valuable organization, others indicated that they would like to see the Association become more productive, offering a range of suggestions that could increase the Association's appeal to potential members. Based on the extensive feedback received from participants in the study, the WIBO program in Bridgeport seems to have aided many entrepreneurs with developing their business ventures, in turn allowing them to become valuable contributors to the vitality of the local economy. Future research will

undoubtedly prove to be worthwhile in further measuring the personal and financial impact of the program.

## APPENDIX A. SURVEY QUESTIONS

*The first section includes questions about you.*

Participant Gender: (A) Male (B) Female

Participant Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: (A) Married (B) Divorced (C) Widowed (D) Separated  
(E) Single

Children: (A) None (B) 1 (C) 2 (D) 3 (E) 4+

Level of Education: (A) Some high school  
(B) High School diploma / GED  
(C) Some college  
(D) Associate's degree  
(E) Bachelor's degree  
(F) Master's degree  
(G) Professional degree (example: MD, DDS, JD)  
(H) Doctoral degree (example: PhD, EdD)

Town of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

How long ago did you participate in the WIBO program? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about WIBO? (A) Newspaper  
(B) Radio station  
(C) Bulletin board  
(D) WIBO Graduate  
(E) Other organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
(F) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you consider enrolling in any other entrepreneurial development programs?  
(A) Yes: \_\_\_\_\_  
(B) No

*This section asks for information about your business.*

Which level best describes your business when you enrolled in the WIBO Bridgeport program?  
(A) Not in business  
(B) Start-up (1 year or less)  
(C) On-going (2-5 years)  
(D) Established (5 or more years)

If you were already operating a business at the time of enrollment, have you since expanded it?  
(A) Yes  
(B) No

If you did not own a business at the time of enrollment, have you since started one?  
(A) Yes  
(B) No

How long after your participation in WIBO did you start your business? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently operating a business? (A) Yes (B) No

If so, in what town is your business located? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of business do you operate? (A) Agriculture  
(B) Food Services  
(C) Child Care  
(D) Medical Services  
(E) Retail  
(F) Utilities Sales/Service  
(G) Personal Care/Cosmetics  
(H) Services, other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)  
(I) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have employees? (A) Yes: # full time: \_\_\_\_\_ # part time: \_\_\_\_\_  
(B) No

How many of your employees are family members? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently hold a wage job? (A) Yes (B) No

What percentage of your income is from your business? (A) Zero (B) 25% (C) 50%  
(D) 75% (E) 100%

Please stop me when I reach your annual income range:

- (A) Less than \$10,000
- (B) 10,000-20,000
- (C) 20,000-30,000
- (D) 30,000-50,000
- (E) 50,000-65,000
- (F) 65,000-75,000
- (G) 75,000-85,000
- (H) 85,000-100,000
- (I) \$100,000 +

In the time that has passed since WIBO, how has your income changed?

- (A) Decreased significantly
- (B) Decreased slightly
- (C) It has not changed
- (D) Increased slightly
- (E) Increased significantly

How has your net worth (total assets) changed since your participation in the WIBO program?

- (A) Decreased significantly
- (B) Decreased slightly
- (C) It has not changed
- (D) Increased slightly
- (E) Increased significantly

What is your ultimate goal for your business? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



What do you perceive to be the next step for your business? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What types of obstacles, if any, do you confront most frequently while operating your business?  
(A) Marketing  
(B) Management  
(C) Financial/Capital  
(D) Client retention  
(E) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you plan to overcome these issues? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***The final section asks about your experience with the WIBO program.***

How would you define business success? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself successful according to this definition? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is it that you've done that has made you successful? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What aspects of the WIBO curriculum related to philosophies, practices, and strategies proved most useful to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What topics that were not included in the program would have been helpful to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How has your WIBO training impacted the success of your business? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you do business with other WIBO businesses? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you maintained a relationship of any kind with the WIBO program since graduation?  
(A) Yes : \_\_\_\_\_  
(B) No, because: \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale from 1 to 5, how active are you in the Alumni Association?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
(Not at all active)                      (Somewhat active)                      (Very active member)

On a scale from 1 to 5, how valuable do you believe the Alumni Association is to WIBO graduates?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
(Not at all valuable)                      (Somewhat valuable)                      (Important resource)

What type of post-graduation programming would you most likely attend?

- (A) Conferences for further training
- (B) Lunch or dinner discussions
- (C) Networking events
- (D) Lectures from local business leaders
- (E) One-on-one meetings with mentors, budget counselors, etc.

When is the most convenient time for alumni meetings and activities?

- (A) Week days
- (B) Week nights
- (C) Weekend days
- (D) Weekend nights
- (E) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any other comments that you'd like to add? \_\_\_\_\_

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***Additional/Anecdotal Notes:***

**APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Research Title:** Workshops in Business Opportunities (WIBO) Bridgeport Participant Outcomes Study

**Investigator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose of the Study:** This study aims to evaluate the success of the WIBO Bridgeport program in the last ten years as well as gain alumni insights to develop a post-graduation, continuing education and mentorship program.

**Procedures:** A survey will be administered in an in-person or phone interview that contains mostly multiple choice questions pertaining to you, your business, and your experience with WIBO.

**Benefits:** There is no immediate benefit to your participation in the study; however, as a WIBO alumna/us, any post-graduation programming developed as a result of this study could benefit you and your business greatly. By participating in the project, you can help shape this programming to be as useful as possible.

**Risks:** There are no known risks associated with participating in this project. There are no right or wrong answers to the survey questions and you are not being evaluated for your performance in any way.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research without any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in this study, you can at any time and for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences.

**Confidentiality:** All of the information provided in this interview will be kept confidential. The questions are formatted in such a way that does not disclose personal information that can be associated with an individual. For this reason, as much honesty and accuracy as possible are encouraged in order to service WIBO and its participants, past present and future, to the fullest.

I have fully explained to \_\_\_\_\_ the purpose of this study and any risks involved. I will answer any questions to the best of my ability and inform the participant of any changes in the procedure of the project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Consent:** I have been satisfactorily informed of the nature of this study and any associated benefits and risks. I give my permission for participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> The WIBO study was made possible through a collaboration between FSW, the Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College, and the Smith Richardson Foundation. Many thanks to Brian Langdon and Kevin Ginyard at FSW for their wisdom and guidance in the study process.

<sup>2</sup> The investigators would like to express profound gratitude to all of the study participants for providing their generous time and constructive input during the interviews.

<sup>3</sup> Members of the most recent graduating class, that of Fall 2008, were intentionally excluded from this study because they had just graduated during the month that interviews began. Therefore, an insufficient amount of time had passed post-graduation to accurately assess the outcomes for that class.

<sup>4</sup> The calculation of age at the time of enrollment is an estimate based on subtracting the year that the respondent participated in WIBO from the current year (2009), and subtracting that number from the respondent's current age.

<sup>5</sup> All WIBO graduates are eligible to become members of the WIBO Alumni Association, which meets once a month and offers graduates a way to remain connected with the WIBO program.