



TX VRC Resource Tools

5. Business Concept Development: What Might Self-Employment Look Like For Me?

At this point, you have helped the customer learn what it means to be self-employed, understand how self-employment might work for them, and think through needed support. You have jointly developed an initial Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with a broad occupational goal authorizing services that will support exploration of self-employment as an option to achieve that goal. This tool will assist you with the next step: Defining a Clear Business Concept.

VR-1801 Customer Profile and Self-Employment Exploration

The VR-1801 Customer Profile and Self-Employment Exploration assists with business concept development. This form collects information on customers that will drive the business concept development including:

- education/experience
- preferences and interests
- assets & abilities
- potential products and services
- potential business ideas
- potential business team members
- customer career goals
- considerations for success

Here's an example: Alice, a new VR Customer has expressed interest in self-employment because she feels it will accommodate her disability by providing flexibility to schedule around good and bad days. She enjoys sewing and has experience as a seamstress. She tells you that she has always wanted to start a business offering tailoring, repairs, & fittings. She can visualize having a shop of her own in the mid-size city she lives in.

Business concept development is about exploring and narrowing the business idea.

You have referred Alice to work with a CBTAC provider to explore self-employment. Alice and the CBTAC work through the VR-1801 Customer Profile and Self-Employment Exploration form (see Alice summary, attached).

Brainstorming Business Concepts

This is where the business team comes in! Gather the team and jointly develop or review the information on the customer's interests, skills, conditions for success and potential support needs. Then, engage the business team members to help brainstorm:

- Potential Products and Services
- Potential Business Ideas

You want to encourage the business team to share ideas without judging. Gather the ideas and come back to review how each of those ideas "fit" the prospective business owner.

The example on the next page shows some of the products and services that were proposed. These are evaluated in terms of Alice's interests, conditions and support needs and used to form specific business concepts. The option of providing tailoring and repair services out of a drycleaning business or laundromat (a business within a business) seems particularly attractive as it potentially could address Alice's support needs. Alice is excited about this possibility and wants to explore it further!

There is the possibility that more than one interesting business concept comes from this brainstorming session. If so, allow for some initial research to gather enough information to make an informed choice.

Business concept development should provide the VRC with a clear picture of the product(s)/service(s) the business proposes to provide, and strategies for marketing those products and services. A clear business concept provides a starting point to begin market research in the business feasibility phase. The VRC can now move forward with authorizing the Business Feasibility Study which will gather information pertinent to this specific business concept. Know that as business feasibility proceeds, what is learned may lead to a different and even better business concept!

Summary of Customer Profile and Self-Employment Exploration (Example)

Name: Alice

<p>Preferences & Interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using creative talents • Working with her hands • Sewing • Creating products • Art (painting) • Designing clothing 	<p>Assets & Abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled seamstress • Fitting, tailoring, repair work • Enjoys helping people • Has parents who are willing to help and would like to see her succeed.
<p>Conditions for Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet work environment with little distraction. • Flexible schedule • Would like to make an additional \$1000/month, initially, supplementing her SSDI benefits. Long-term would like to go off SSA benefits. 	<p>Support Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing • Customer interaction • Money handling/financial tracking

Potential Products and Services

Ideas	Interests & skills?	Conditions?	Support Needs?
Provide clothing alteration and repair services	✓	✓	?
Create and sell specific sewn products (e.g., quilts, baby blankets & accessories, computer bags)	✓	✓	?
Teach sewing classes at a local community college and/or perhaps fabric stores.	✓	?	?
Contract with local theaters and schools to design and create costumes.	✓	?	?

After weighing each of these with Alice's preferences, the team recognizes that for Alice, a successful business will require consideration of her support needs. Based on this, two business ideas emerge.

Potential Business Ideas

1. Providing repairs within a drycleaning business or laundromat (business within a business)
2. Create sewn products and sell them online and/or at craft fairs.

Alice likes the idea of a business within a business, as it could provide some support around the business tasks that give her anxiety (bookkeeping, marketing, etc.). A second idea that interests her is creating and selling sewn products at craft fairs. The team decides to do some initial research on both to see if either or both of them could produce the income that Alice is seeking.