

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
Reach Independence through Self-Employment (RISE) Program
Self-Employment Fact Sheet

Considering Self-Employment? What Can RISE Do for You?

If you are eligible for DORS services and can receive services under the order of selection, you may participate in the **RISE Program** in order to:

- Explore whether self-employment is a realistic vocational option for you.
- Obtain market information to guide selection of business/industry.
- Attend interactive trainings and workshops on business development.
- Develop a comprehensive business plan and explore multiple funding sources.
- Receive an assessment of your business concept/business plan by business experts.
- Determine if DORS assistance can help you maintain an established business.

Worried About Funding?

- DORS will provide **limited funding** of a small business, if necessary, **after** the business plan has been reviewed by the RISE Advisory Committee and approved by DORS.
- DORS funding will not typically exceed \$15,000, and will be specific to goods and/or services according to the approved business plan. Cash assistance will not be provided.
- DORS will not be the primary funder of any small business. Rather, DORS will be part of funding from multiple sources, as explored/obtained by you, the business owner.
- Other funding requirements will be explained by your rehabilitation counselor.

DORS reserves the right to deny approval and funding of a business determined by the Director to be inconsistent with community standards.

What Types of Businesses Are Supported?

DORS can only support businesses which:

- Comply with all relevant state, federal and local laws and regulations; does not involve speculative activities.
- Involve majority ownership and management of the business by an eligible individual served by DORS.
- Organize as “for profit” business entity.
- Operate in an integrated, community work setting, and
- Design to be the major source of income for the individual.

Already have a Business; Interested in Purchasing an Existing Business?

If you have or wish to purchase an established business, RISE staff will conduct a business assessment, including business plan review/development, review of the financial status of the business, and exploration of acquisition options.

How to Get Started?

1. Talk to your rehabilitation counselor about this employment option and its requirements.
2. If interested and approved, your rehabilitation counselor will refer you to the RISE Program.
3. Attend required & recommended RISE courses.

RISE Program Course Descriptions

Exploring Self-Employment Seminar

A four-hour seminar; the primary goal is to provide participants with information about the realities of self-employment and small business ownership. In this seminar, participants will explore their entrepreneurial potential through a self-assessment, explore the differences and commitments associated with working for oneself versus working for someone else, and develop reasonable expectations for self-employment. This is a required course.

Business Plan 101: Business Plan Education Course

An eight-hour course; the goal of the course is to assist participants with drafting a business proposal, which will serve as the foundation of a viable business plan. The comprehensive business plan will include the following elements: cover sheet; executive summary; mission and vision statement; industry; company and its products; market research and analysis; marketing plan; operational plan; management; critical risks and potential problems; community benefits; financial plan; and proposed offerings. This is a required course.

Financial Literacy for Business Owners

An eight-hour course designed to assist participants with understanding the basics of money management for both personal and commercial finances, explore capital resources, and strategies for financial success. The course will explore traditional banking contrasted with non-banking institutions and ensure clients understand the importance of traditional banking endeavors. This is a recommended course.

Computer Applications for Business Owners

A three-day course designed to help participants acquire familiarity with the most common Microsoft Office applications: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Participants will develop general proficiencies that will assist in the establishing and operating a small business. This is a recommended course.

Still Have Questions?

Contact your rehabilitation counselor about self-employment or supported business enterprise.