



# 2021

## ANNUAL REPORT

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**IGNITING POSSIBILITIES**  
ONE SMALL BUSINESS AT A TIME!

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# IGNITE!

**W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION**  
PO132772

[WWW.IGNITEAL.ORG](http://WWW.IGNITEAL.ORG)

IGNITE!

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**I G N I T I N G P O S S I B I L I T I E S**  
**2 0 2 1 A N N U A L R E P O R T**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IGNITE! Alabama is a holistic and supportive ecosystem designed to educate and bridge communication gaps between organizations, service providers, and minorities within the State of Alabama, especially African American and Female Business Owners.

Our mission is to ensure that minorities stay informed, have a clear understanding, and receive access to Federal, State, and Local Funding, as well as resources and technical assistance needed to competitively compete, succeed, and excel in their business operation.

The IGNITE! "Doing Business in Alabama" (DBIA) Minority Business Training Pilot Project is a five (5) year program designed to provide solutions to close gaps in economic inequality and barriers to entry experienced by women and minority business owners, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit leaders.

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, in Year I, IGNITE! DBIA realized tremendous success in local partnerships established, fundraising, new tools created, thriving virtual workshops with greater than anticipated participation, and useful lessons learned that assist in furthering goals of the DBIA Project and IGNITE! expansion opportunities for future growth.



**Torin Darling Brazzle,**  
Executive Director and Founder



***Provides solutions to close the gap in economic inequality and barriers to entry experienced by Minority Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and Nonprofit Leaders***

# PARTNERSHIPS

The IGNITE! DBIA Project encourages and supports the development of strategic business partnerships that allow minority small businesses the opportunity to grow their customer base and improve their business. We believe it is also important to form a partnership agreement with an organization whose corporate goals and values augment our own.

In Year 1, IGNITE! garnered support and secured partnerships from the following community partners that assist in furthering goals of the DBIA project and the expansion of other opportunities for future growth:



# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

In Year 1, in addition to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant award, IGNITE! secured an additional total of \$225,399 in cash donations and \$664,612 In-Kind Donations and Support.

Collective total deposited to date \$400,399 (includes the W.K.K.F Year One Disbursement) with a total of \$392,192 spent for program operations. Of that total, \$241,147 was spent with black owned businesses and \$100,195 with non-black owned businesses. Of the \$241,147 spent with black owned businesses; \$167,878 was spent with Alabama based black owned businesses and \$73,268 was spent with black owned businesses outside of the State of Alabama.

Twenty requests for additional funding in the amount of \$2,973,750 have been submitted thus far from banking institutions, corporations, and foundations (Federal, National, and Local.)

<b>IGNITE! Doing Business In Alabama YEAR 1 ANNUAL FINANCING &amp; SPENDING REPORT</b>					
	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Funding for Personnel</b>	14,402	8,720	9,218	18,508	<b>50,849</b>
<b>Funding to Black Owned Businesses</b>	70,832	42,866	79,922	47,526	<b>241,147</b>
• Funding to Alabama Black Owned Businesses	46,405	36,290	54,337	30,845	167,878
• Funding to Black Owned Businesses Outside of the State of Alabama	24,426	6,576	25,585	16,681	73,268
Funding to Non - Black Owned Businesses	<u>22,962</u>	<u>11,248</u>	<u>54,708</u>	<u>11,275</u>	<b><u>100,195</u></b>
Total Spent:	<b>108,196</b>	<b>62,835</b>	<b>143,849</b>	<b>77,310</b>	<b>392,192</b>
Total In-Kind Donations and Support:	-	-	-	-	<b><u>664,612</u></b>
<b>IGNITE! DBIA Year I Grand Total:</b>					<b>\$1,056,804</b>
Total Amount of Grants Requested	-	-	-	-	2,973,750
Total Amount of Grants and Contracts Awarded	200,000	48,500	100,000	37,500	386,000
Total Amount of Donations and Contributions	-	-	-	-	39,399
<b>IGNITE! DBIA Year I Grand Total of Grants, Contracts, and Donations:</b>					<b>\$425,399</b>

**\$1,056,804**

Year 1 – Annual IGNITE! DBIA Minority Business Training Pilot Project Expenses

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

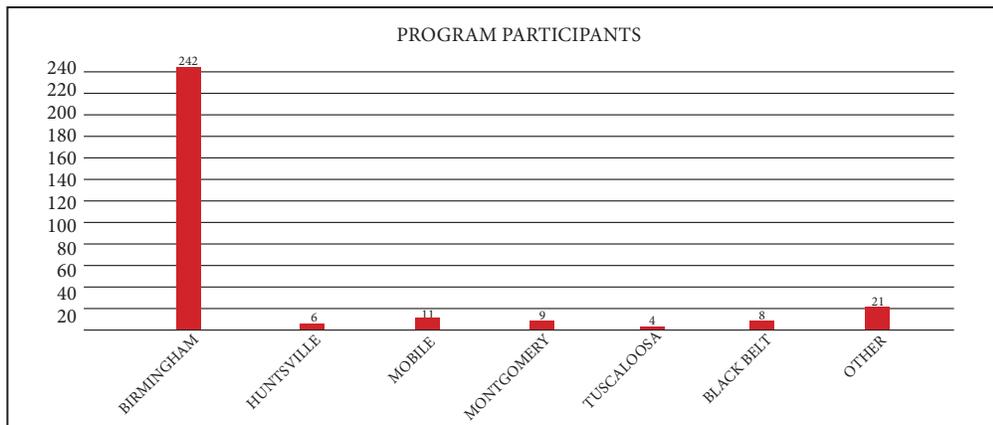
**1. Alabama’s 1st Minority Small Business Clearing House**

Utilizing a custom designed Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, IGNITE! thoroughly assesses needs, develop “Individualized Business Action Plans,” and then most importantly, quickly direct minority Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and/or Nonprofit Leaders to the “appropriate” partner agency best equipped to provide technical assistance relevant to their current and most pressing need.

**2. Secured \$225,399 in local grants, sponsorships, and individual donations**

**3. Secured \$664,612 in In-Kind Donations and Support**

**4. Onboarded 301 Program Participants**



**5. Established the Alabama Enterprise Development Consortium (AEDC) Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**

Supportive ecosystem comprised of thirty-nine (39) business, financial, legal, mental health, and/or other technical assistance providers that serve Minority Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and Nonprofits; especially Black, Hispanic, and Women.

**6. Facilitated 128 Workshops with over 33,000 views**

- 40 – Educational (19,604 Views)
- 21 – Motivational (4,033 Views)
- 25 – Technical Assistance (4,695 Views)
- 42 – Informational Outreach (4,749 Views)

**7. Promoted local CDFI’s resulting in \$3,118,477 Loans to Program Participants and other Small Minority Owned Businesses throughout the State of Alabama**

**8. Ninety-four (94) Program Participants awarded new contracts**

**9. Provided technical assistance resulting in a total of \$169,619 of Grants Awarded to Program Participants**

**10. Counting US!**

Statewide Census of Alabama Minority Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and Nonprofit Leaders

# WORKSHOPS

During Year 1, IGNITE! DBIA conducted a total of 128 educational, technical assistance, informational and outreach Workshops with approximately 33,081 views/contacts.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and the Covid-19 Delta Variant surge, most Workshops detailed in the following chart were conducted virtually. However, there was one (1) outreach Workshop conducted in person with the highest level of care. Volunteers were required to wear masks, gloves, and social distance.

Type of Workshop	Number of Workshops	Number of Views/Contacts
Educational	40	19,604
Motivational	21	4,033
Technical Assistance	25	4,695
Informational and Outreach	42	4,749
Total	128	33,081

It is important to note that as the year progressed, more intentional focus on the needs of Program Participants actively engaged in the project increased. With this increased focus, Program Participants’ views of some Workshops varied depending on the focused area(s) needed.

*“IGNITE! and the Doing Business in Alabama Minority Business Training Pilot Project is essential to Alabama’s economic and business ecosystem. This initiative is intentionally designed to connect minority entrepreneurs, business owners, and social conscious organizations to resources that lead to growth and sustainability. For Alabama to actualize the economic growth it envisions, it needs entrepreneurs, businesses owners, and social conscious organizations to grow and thrive.”*

**Isaac McCoy, Dean**  
 Stillman College  
 School of Business, Entrepreneurship,  
 and Computational & Information Sciences



# NEW TOOLS CREATED

Having the right tools is imperative to the growth and success of any business in reaching and completing the mission, vision and goals of the organization. The right tools allow employees, staff, volunteers, partners and contractors to know what is expected of them, what's required to complete their task efficiently and provide needed direction, instruction and information for effective communication, and to facilitate company business processes. During Year I, the following tools/ documents were created:

- **Counting US! Resource Directory**  
Statewide Resource Directory to help Minority Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and Nonprofit Leaders
- **DBIA Coach Agreement**  
Program Participant Confidentiality, Rules, Responsibilities, and Expectations
- **DBIA Program Participant Agreement**  
Program Participant Confidentiality, Rules, Responsibilities, and Expectations
- **Employment Contract**
- **Forensic Financial Analysis Intake Form**  
Assessment Tool to identify DBIA Program Participants strengths and deficiencies
- **Independent Contractor Agreement**  
DBIA Independent Contractor agreement to include Confidentiality, Rules, Responsibilities, and Expectations.
- **Individualized Business Action Plan Checklist**  
Quick reference guide of "bare basics" needed to effectively and competitively "Do Business in Alabama"
- **Nondisclosure Agreement**  
Confidentiality Agreement signed by IGNITE! Board, Advisory Council, Coalition Members, Staff, and Volunteers to protect DBIA Program Participant privacy and data.
- **Qualtrics Participant Survey**
- **Volunteer Agreement**  
Volunteer Rules, Responsibilities, and Expectations as it relates to confidentiality and service.
- **White Glove Customer Experience Training Manual**  
This tool was created to foster a culture of excellence, respect, support, and accountability among staff, contract workers, program participants and volunteers.

# LESSONS LEARNED

IGNITE! appreciates the opportunity to serve Minority Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and Nonprofit Leaders “Doing Business in Alabama.”

As we close year one, the biggest lesson learned are that:

1. Success Advocates (*Customer Service Team*) need to be the first line of defense, NOT Financial Coaches.
2. Not all contractors are qualified to be coaches no matter how long they have been in business, or the credentials they possess.
3. Understandably coach skill sets and personalities vary, so careful attention needs to be placed in making good matches between coaches and DBIA participants.
4. Alabama minorities not only need assistance with gaining *Access to Capital* but more importantly, need help overcoming a *Mindset Deficit* and *Business Culture Deficiency* perpetuated by COVID-19, residual effects of Cultural and Systemic Racism, as well as a stigma of seeking Mental Health and Emotional Wellness Services.

Due to these discoveries, here in year one, our team immediately made vital changes needed to equip Program Participants with support, Individualized Business Action Plan Checklist, and consistent contact and encouragement from Success Advocates needed to overcome emotional instability and challenges as it relates to handling change, disappointment, and/or failure.

*“Torin and her team with IGNITE! Alabama have a pulse on what it is like to be a minority business owner in Alabama and have crafted a network of support for these businesses. She and her team have a passion and skill for helping minority-owned businesses move forward confidently with their businesses. They are a dynamic partner in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Alabama and I love working with her team!”*

**Katherine Zobre, Business Consultant**  
Alabama SBDC Network-  
The University of Alabama



## NEXT STEPS

As we move into Year 2 of the IGNITE! Doing Business in Alabama Minority Business Training Pilot Project, we will:

1. Continue to
  - a. **Increase outreach and impact** in the Black Belt and other strategic cities throughout the State
  - b. **Conduct Forensic Financial Analysis**
  - c. **Develop Individualized Business Action Plans (IBAPs)**
  - d. **Coordinate and Facilitate Workshops**
  - e. **Build a “customer centric” culture** through:
    - Regular messages of encouragement to staff members and volunteers.
    - IGNITE! DBIA Success Advocate Team members check in with Program Participants weekly (*via call, email, and/or SMS text messages*) to provide support and guidance in any situation that participants may be facing.
    - Program Participant Incentives (*Small Gifts, Cash Awards, etc.*)
2. **Hire adequate Staff needed to facilitate programming**
3. Work with AEDC member agencies to **develop and implement a robust Mental Health and Emotional Wellness program** vitally needed to help Program Participants navigate the vicissitudes of life.
4. Work with AEDC member agencies to **Create a Financial Roadmap** that will serve as a quick reference guide for Program Participants understand the financial institution best equipped to meet their immediate need / situation.
5. In partnership with Dr. Lou Marino, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management at The University of Alabama, we will continue to **conduct the Counting US! Census**, with the addition of specific surveys, and focus groups.
6. **Recruit “Igniting Possibilities” Corporate Partners** to interview select Program Participants and give them the opportunity to compete for various contracts.

## WHO ARE WE?

IGNITE! Alabama is a holistic and supportive ecosystem designed to educate and bridge communication gaps between organizations, service providers, and minorities within the State of Alabama, especially African American and Female Business Owners.

Utilizing a custom designed Salesforce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, IGNITE! thoroughly assesses needs, develop "Individualized Business Action Plans," and then most importantly, quickly direct minority Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and/or Nonprofit Leaders to the "appropriate" partner agency best equipped to provide technical assistance relevant to their current and most pressing need.

"IGNITE! and the Doing Business in Alabama Minority Business Training Pilot Project is essential to Alabama's economic and business ecosystem...."

**Isaac McCoy, Dean**

Stillman College School of Business, Entrepreneurship, and Computational & Information Sciences

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

### 3+ MILLION DOLLARS



Loans to Minority Owned Businesses serviced by Coalition Members

### 94 CONTRACTS



New Contracts Awarded to Small Black Business Owners

### \$169,619.48



Grants Awarded to Small Black Business Owners and Nonprofits

### 39 SERVICE PROVIDERS



Ecosystem members that provide business, financial, legal, mental health, resources, and/or other technical assistance

## 301

### PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Minority Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, and Nonprofit Leaders completed the Forensic Financial Analysis and received an Individualized Business Action Plan (IBAP) Checklist.

## 128

### PROGRAMS

Consistent programming to ensure minorities stay informed, have a clear understanding, receive access to funding, resources, and technical assistance needed to competitively compete, succeed, and excel!

## <33,000

### VIRTUAL VIEWS

Minorities provided vital education, information, motivation, resources, and technical assistance.

## A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2020/2021 SPONSORS!:



W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

