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# A Nonprofit Model in a For-Profit World: A Closer Look at Sheltered Workshops and Sustainability as an Employee Run Business

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**A Nonprofit Model in a For-Profit World:  
A Closer Look at Sheltered Workshops and  
Sustainability as an Employee Run Business**

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**Abstract**

Historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Despite improvements such forms of discrimination continue to be a serious social problem. On October 11, 2011, the Department of Justice began an investigation into several state's systems of providing vocational services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This action came about due to several states being out of compliance around Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability for all services, programs and activities provided to the public by state and local governments. Given recent federal policy changes and directives the State of Massachusetts has created a plan developed by leaders consisting of representatives of the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADPP), The Arc of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to increase opportunities for integrated employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). The intention of this plan is to phase out group employment settings otherwise known as sheltered workshops.

*Keywords:* Sheltered Workshops, Department of Developmental Services, American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Department of Justice, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

### **Executive Summary**

Valley Bookcases is a sheltered workshop of Valley Educational Associates (VEA), a nonprofit organization that has served individuals with disabilities for over 25 years. This project is commissioned to create a marketing strategy accompanied with media materials to develop Valley Bookcases a sheltered workshop into a self-sustaining employee run business.

Our research draws attention to the fact that federal and state funding will not exist, while Valley Bookcases solely relied on funding from the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Since the state aid will be eliminated on June 30, 2016, a viable marketing plan and fundraising campaign is urgently needed for Valley bookcases to continue operations. We did background research on the sheltered workshop model, and marketing methods. From this research we began to explore a marketing strategy that will fit the specific needs of Valley Bookcases, we researched framework for nonprofit marketing from electronic journals, and then we created the practical methodology through learning best practices from commercial sources such as textbooks and style guides.

Steps taken in the research process involved site visits to Valley Bookcases, email correspondence, weekly conference calls and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. Face to face interviews took place with Joseph Realbuto, Vice President of ASPIRE! and Kate Dasilva, Executive Director and Michael Barrett, Program Coordinator of VEA. During the interviews, we discussed how to implement changes proposed by the State of Massachusetts and learned how the ASPIRE! has successfully transitioned their sheltered workshops to adopt state-approved models.

We found that funding and resources are the largest barriers for VEA. The technical assistance from the state is limited and the Board of Directors of VEA have never been asked to

participate in fundraising for the agency. The agency disclosed that at the present time they have begun to provide training to the Board on effective fundraising strategies through a private consulting company. During the research, we found that VEA is facing more barriers in this transitional period than anticipated. In accordance with VEA's goal of developing a self-sustaining model, we created a marketing & re-branding plan for VEA to increase the sales of their products.

Based on the results of our research, the purpose of our marketing plan is to convert Valley Bookcases to an employee run business while still keeping with their mission of helping individuals with disabilities. Media strategies within our market plan are aimed to attract active and energetic consumers who are socially conscious and tend to buy on impulse. The media plan is focused mainly on an independent website for Valley Bookcases along with a tri-fold brochure, monthly newsletter, social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, retail cards and a new logo. Besides offering information on the organization, the new website also contains an online order form, product information, links to e-newsletters, Facebook and Twitter, and contact methods to attract potential customers and stimulate their desire to buy. We designed the brochure to increase brand recognition and promote services and products of Valley Bookcases to nearby markets. The newsletters offers four main information including promotions, special discounts, upcoming events, and new products. In order to keep frequent contact with customers, we recommend Valley Bookcases to update newsletters monthly on website and send them to subscribed customers through e-mails.

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**Chapter I Introduction**

The focus of our research project is to provide Valley Educational Associates (VEA) technical assistance to evolve their goal of transitioning Valley Bookcases a sheltered workshop into a self-sustaining viable business. This will be done through the creation of a marketing plan complete with accompanying media materials. As of July 1, 2016 the federal and state governments will no longer provide funding for sheltered workshops in Massachusetts. For this reason it is important for VEA to start a fundraising campaign and initiate a proactive approach to marketing their agency. The development of a marketing plan is imperative to continue operations at Valley Bookcases.

Since 1982 VEA has relied solely on funding from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to fund their sheltered workshop entitled Valley Bookcases. As of June 30, 2016 state funding for this type of program has been eliminated. The Department of Developmental Services is transitioning to serve their clients vocational needs through a Community Based Day System (CBDS). For this reason VEA must evolve their sheltered workshop into a viable business model that is self-sustaining. Our goal for this project is to assist VEA with this task by taking a two-part research approach. First, we will conduct an investigation of the current environment of the sheltered workshop model. Second, we will research general marketing theory and an assimilation of industry techniques specific to both the nonprofit sector and commercial sector. By applying the latter research on marketing theory with the specific state of the sheltered workshop model, we will be able to offer suggestions to support VEA's specific goal. We will also use this research to influence the creation of the tools necessary to implement said strategy, including media influenced by principles of communication design and advertising

theory, as well as a budget to demonstrate the financial requirements necessary to implement and sustain the strategy.

Marketing is the most effective way for any nonprofit organization to build loyalty within its target audience by opening the lines of communication and adding value to the services they provide. Marketing is not something that should be implemented randomly as the mood strikes, nor should it be eliminated when times are tough. No matter the size of the nonprofit, nor how extensive its budget, they need to clearly and consistently share their vision within the community to gain credibility and enhance their reputation. This in turn will provide more opportunities to strengthen donor relations and build new ones. Valley Bookcases has demonstrated that they offer a quality product that is desirable to customers. However, this has not been enough to generate the necessary revenue to sustain the business or to build their reputation as a provider of quality products.

Typical marketing strategies are not universally applicable to both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Marketing attempts for nonprofits should focus on fundraising and the accumulation of donors and volunteers. Valley Bookcases, however, occupies a unique segment of the nonprofit sector. Its main goal is to make the workshop self-sustaining through sales of its bookcases, and this resembles a for-profit entity where the main focus is the financial bottom line. This means a marketing strategy geared towards the for-profit sector would be most effective to help VEA reach this goal. An effective marketing plan for VEA will provide them insight and guidance they need to stand out from your competitors. To do this VAE will need to take a step back for a moment and conduct an organizational self-assessment, set goals and strategy that will provide insight and determine the unique value, craft a message, choose marketing tools, define a budget timeline and identify resources.

**Background***Valley Educational Associates*

Valley Educational Associates, Inc. was established in 1982 as a nonprofit agency that provides vocational training and employment services to adults with disabilities (VEA website, 2016). The agency began with an eight-person workshop and today it serves over 90 individuals in three separate sheltered workshops and various community-based jobs throughout Western Massachusetts (VEA website, 2016). VEA's mission is to provide dignified, meaningful employment for developmentally disabled adults, while providing outstanding quality and service to their valued customers. Many adults with developmental disabilities are unable to work in competitive jobs, but have the desire and ability to work and contribute to their communities.

Today, VEA operates three work/training facilities throughout Western Massachusetts and serves over 90 individuals with disabilities. Individuals are trained and supported to perform paid jobs within the local community as well as in the workshops at VEA. Valley Educational Associates provides three types of employment services. These employment services include job search assistance and training, job coaching and sheltered workshops. VEA also provides professional services such as vocational rehabilitation, psychological assessment, counseling, career assessment and resume writing. In addition, VEA employs Ph.D. and Master level Licensed Psychologists who work closely with program staff and participants to develop individualized goals and strategies to improve appropriate work behavior while reducing the behaviors that may interfere with successful employment.

Through our research it was discovered that Valley Bookcases does not have a donor base and has never held fundraising campaign within the community. Without a marketing

strategy and fundraising campaign there is a high probability that Valley Bookcases could cease operation by the end of the fiscal year unless additional funds through private sources are secured. This is devastating to VEA, due to the fact that Valley Bookcases has been in existence for twenty-five years (VEA website, 2016). The woodworking shop is equipped with modern power tools of the variety used in local furniture shops. Valley Bookcases has over 25 years' experience designing and manufacturing custom bookcases and offers its employees on the job training and counseling (VEA website, 2016). When the shop is operating in max production capacity, employees work 6 hours per day, 30 hours per week and are trained how to use power tools and properly assemble the finished product. By building bookcases VAE employees gain valuable work and life experience. During the tour of the workshop it was evident that employees take pride in their work, and complete their tasks with precision and skill. Since most employees would have difficulty working in a competitive environment, Valley Bookcases provides them with a sense of purpose and quality of life that otherwise may be difficult to achieve. Valley Bookcases offers its employees an alternative to outside employment, and provides an environment that is tailored to the client's needs along with providing opportunities to foster prosocial behavior.

Sheltered workshops such as Valley Bookcases provide a safe environment for adults to work, interact with their peers, and provide a sense of accomplishment. Individuals who choose to work in sheltered workshops appear happy and fulfilled amongst their peers. Valley Bookcases and sheltered workshops differ from for-profit industries because their primary concern is the well-being of the worker instead of profits or products produced. The environment at Valley Bookcases work is designed to meet the needs of the employee rather than requiring the employee to adapt to the work environment.

*Sheltered Workshops*

Sheltered workshops were created because workers with intellectual disabilities needed support, training, and direction that was not available through direct employment (J. Gardner Armsby, 2014). The workshops sheltered workers from the demands of a competitive work environment and protected them from possible emotional and physical abuses of direct employment (J. Gardner Armsby, 2014). The United States has a long history with Sheltered Workshops dating back to the Perkins Institution for the Blind (Massachusetts) in 1840 and the Pennsylvania Home for Working Men (Philadelphia) in 1874. These workshops provided vocational training and work opportunities to persons with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. Sheltered workshops were intended to meet the needs of special education that was not provided in the public schools. Between 1948 and 1976, the number of sheltered workshops in the U.S. increased from 85 to almost 3,000 (US Department of Labor 1979). As of 2011 the number of adults employed in sheltered workshops was an estimated 52,759 (J. Gardner Armsby, 2014).

A sheltered workshop offers a work environment where individuals with a variety of disabilities are employed and provided additional supports to help them achieve identified goals while developing work and socialization skills. This form of vocational employment is used as the first stage of rehabilitating and preparing the individual for direct employment (Black, 1992). The advantages of sheltered workshops are that they can offer protective services for people who have serious problems early in the treatment process, and can continue offering services to people who may take a long time to acquire abilities to survive in more open settings (Black, 1992). Research has shown that individuals with developmental disabilities are simply not ready to jump from being unemployed to competitive employment in one leap (Black, 1992). For this reason Valley Bookcases and other sheltered workshops have proven effective to provide

employment services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Sheltered workshops employ individuals with a disability that is severe enough to make employment unlikely in a competitive work environment. These workshops offer clients a chance to learn job skills and earn a wage in an environment geared towards their needs. Activities in the workshops tend to be adaptable for a variety of skill sets to learn and perform. Often they involve repetitive tasks such as assembling, packing, and woodworking. (Black, 1992). People who attend workshops produce an average of 50%-70% of what is expected from workers without disabilities (Whitehead, 1979).

The decades after World War II brought about a large push to support the expansion of sheltered workshops based on the assumption that employees had disabilities that were too challenging for to adapt in a traditional work environment. Lacing an individual in a workshop proved to be a simpler process than securing them a job in an open labor market. However, in more recent years sheltered workshops have come under a lot of scrutiny. In the last two decades the movement towards integrated employment has flourished and sheltered workshops are becoming a thing of the past. The first effort to undermine sheltered workshops began in 1990, with the passage Disabilities Act (ADA). This law provided a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The ADA of 1990 specifically targets the elimination of discrimination, including segregation, and ensuring that individuals with disabilities are not prohibited (J. Gardner Armsby, 2014). In addition, the Supreme Court's 1999 *Olmstead v. L.C.* case made clear that, under the ADA, state and local governments must eliminate the unnecessary segregation of people with disabilities and ensure that they receive services, such as those offered as part of social protection programs, in the most integrated setting possible

Sheltered workshops are viewed as being dead-end jobs for individuals rather than stepping-stones into competitive employment. Critics argue that these workshops should be replaced by employment in an open labor market. (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990). There has also been criticism around the lack of social and employment skills provided within a sheltered workshop model. Research is now showing us that integrated employment not only increases social tolerance for individuals with disabilities but also increases their opportunity to engage with peers who are not disabled and encourages them to participate more fully in the community (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990). Jiranek & Kirby administered a survey to young adults with developmental disabilities and found that individuals with an intellectual disability working in a competitive work environment had a better sense of well-being than those employed in sheltered workshops. Furthermore, self-esteem in a competitive work environment was higher than in sheltered workshops (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990).

Scholars and government officials argue that sheltered workshops should be replaced by employment in the open labor market (Van Gelder, Nichols, & Tummino, 2013). In Massachusetts the Patrick Administration began the initiative to close sheltered workshops and provide supported employment opportunities in integrated settings. (Van Gelder, Nichols, & Tummino, 2013). The Department of Developmental Services pledged to close sheltered workshops by June 30, 2015. The plan of the State of Massachusetts is to transition the participants of sheltered workshops into supportive employment Community-Based Day Supports (CBDS) (Van Gelder, Nichols, & Tummino, 2013). The CBDS participants would earn wages equal to minimum wage or higher. Massachusetts is taking a proactive approach in closing sheltered workshops due to the legal proceedings in Oregon and Rhode Island. The United States Departments of Justice and Labor and other plaintiffs have found segregated work



environments, specifically sheltered workshops, violate both the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Supreme Court's ruling in the Olmstead inclusion case. (Van Gelder, Nichols, & Tummino, 2013)

#### *Advantages of Sheltered Workshops*

The advantage of sheltered employment is that it can provide a protective work environment for employees who have serious mental illness and/or developmental and intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, it can continue to serve employees who may take a long time to acquire skills to adjust to more open and integrated work environments (Black, 1992). These workshops are very helpful to clients that are being introduced to new treatments which have the potential for side effects that may alter their state of reasoning. (Black, 1992). Moreover, many employees are simply not ready to jump from being unemployed to competitive employment in one leap and this is where sheltered workshops can assist them to gain the necessary skills they need to thrive in an integrated employment setting.

#### *Disadvantages of Sheltered Workshops*

The main concerns about sheltered workshops revolve around working conditions, limited transition into open employment and non-compliance with federal and employment standards (Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., Rogan, P. 2007). Although sheltered workshops engage in production and operate as nonprofits, workers with disabilities in sheltered workshops do not receive the same level of protection standards available to workers in the open labor market (Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., Rogan, P. 2007). Furthermore, research shows that part of the problem of sheltered workshops is that they are operating as for profit businesses and are not tending to employee needs. As shown in the legal proceedings in Oregon and Rhode Island, sheltered workshops were exploiting workers and violating labor laws (Migliore, A.,

Mank, D., Grossi, T., Rogan, P. 2007). Both court cases demonstrated to the public that individuals working in these environments were not offered benefits and in some cases earning below minimum wage and do not receive health benefits. (Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., Rogan, P. 2007). Furthermore, these workshops are viewed as being a dead-end for individuals rather than stepping-stones into competitive employment.

Another concern with these workshops is the lack of rehabilitation. The ultimate goal of these employees is to transition from a workshop setting and enter the workforce. Instead of being rehabilitated, evidence shows that these employees spend their entire life in these workshops (Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., Rogan, P. 2007). Sheltered workshops are not rehabilitating workers so they may enter integrated employment. Another reason for the low transition rate is that work in sheltered workshops is not challenging and, therefore, people with disabilities do not acquire the required skills needed in the open labor market (Migliore, A., Mank, D., Grossi, T., Rogan, P. 2007).

#### *Sheltered Workshops in Recent Years*

In more recent years President Obama's Administration and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have become directly involved in class-action lawsuits against sheltered workshops. The federal government alleges that states are violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by not providing supported employment services, and instead keeping individuals isolated in sheltered workshops (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). The DOJ believes that sheltered workshops are using Section 214(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act to employ workers at wages as low as twenty-two cents, thirty-eight cents, and forty-one cents per hour (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). These wages are nearly thirty-three times lower than the federal minimum wage (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). The DOJ also believes that sheltered workshops and nonprofits are exploiting workers, by arguing

that these individuals do not produce the same quality and quantity of work that a non-handicapped employee would (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). These workshops have negative prejudices and stereotypes of disabled workers and their value in the workplace (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). In response to pressure from the DOJ and lawsuits, states like Rhode Island, Oregon, New York and Massachusetts are joining forces with state and community resources such as the Department of Labor and various disability advocacy groups, to phase out sheltered workshops and transition disabled employees into a more integrated setting. These states believe that terminating the funding of sheltered workshops is a critical first step in repealing the subminimum wage program and stop workshops from abusing the waiver to subsidize their businesses.

*United States v. Rhode Island and City of Providence*

On June 13, 2013, the United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court against the State of Rhode Island and City of Providence (Case No. CA14-175, 2013). The Department of Justice alleged that the defendants unnecessarily segregated 90 individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) in sheltered workshops. It was also alleged that adult day programs failed to provide adequate programs that would support positions in integrated settings that paid at least the minimum wage (Case No. CA14-175, 2013). Additionally, students were given little choice but to participate in Birch's in-school sheltered workshop, often in spite of their preference. Birch students who earned wages were typically paid between 50 cents and \$2 per hour, no matter what job functions they performed or how productive they were in the performance of that function (Case No. CA14-175, 2013).

On June 13, 2013, the United States and the defendants entered into an eight-year interim settlement agreement (Case No. CA14-175, 2013). The City of Providence agreed it will cease providing a sheltered workshop as part of its services for students and the state agreed it will not fund nor place any more individuals with I/DD in specified adult sheltered workshops and segregated day programs (Case No. CA14-175, 2013). The state agreed to provide supported integrated employment services, placements and integrated day services to each individual in the segregated workshops. The state and city of Providence agreed to presume that all individuals are capable of working in integrated employment settings. They also agree to provide all individuals integrated work settings rather than sheltered workshops.

*Lane v. Brown (formerly Lane v. Kitzhaber)*

On September 8, 2015, the United States entered into a settlement agreement with the State of Oregon to defend the civil rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who are unnecessarily segregated in sheltered workshops (Case No. 12-CV-00138, 2012). The settlement agreement with Oregon resolves a class action lawsuit by private plaintiffs in May 2013. The lawsuit alleged that the State's employment service system over-relied on segregated sheltered workshops to the exclusion of integrated alternatives, such as supported employment services, and placed individuals, including youth, at risk of entering sheltered workshops (Case No. 12-CV-00138, 2012). As a result of the proposed settlement, 1,115 working-age individuals with I/DD who are currently being served in segregated sheltered workshops will have the opportunity to work in real jobs and receive competitive wages (Case No. 12-CV-00138, 2012). Oregon also promised to reduce its reliance on sheltered workshops and implement policies and capacity-building strategies to improve the employment system to increase access to competitive integrated employment and the opportunity for people with I/DD

to work the maximum number of hours consistent with their abilities and preferences (Case No. 12-CV-00138, 2012).

### *Conclusion*

For years, sheltered workshops have been viewed as a valuable option for employing individuals with disabilities. And now an uncertain future lies ahead for thousands of employees with special needs in Massachusetts. New federal ruling and state regulations are changing funding for sheltered work centers and forcing them to close. The recent court ruling encourage states to use funds to take workers out of the workshops and place them in jobs in a community setting instead. But many sheltered workshop advocates are afraid those community jobs will be hard to obtain or provide a safe environment. Not all community jobs can accommodate the complex needs of some clients which in turn would leave them without employment. In the case of Valley Bookcases they have been operating for 25 years a now without alternate funding they are going to close their doors. The 25 employees they currently manage will be without work starting July 1, 2016.

Realistically, there is question over how many integrated jobs really exist for people with developmental disabilities. Both sheltered workshops and family members of employees have legitimate questions for which the government has no answers. Some of the questions we have for our state legislature are:

1. Will the additional funding being sought by the governor, the Arc of Massachusetts and the Association of Developmentally Disabled Providers (ADPP) be used to provide meaningful work activities and skills to disabled persons after their sheltered workshop programs have been closed?

2. Will agencies that switch from sheltered workshops to supported employment programs have to dismiss a certain number of developmentally disabled participants from paying jobs and replace them with non-disabled individuals so that the new programs would then be fully “integrated,” i.e., not have too many disabled people or too few non-disabled people working in them?
3. What is the acceptable number of disabled people in one setting before it is considered a segregated workplace?
4. What is the minimum required number of non-disabled persons in a given workplace, which employs disabled people?

Agencies like VEA are puzzled and left to wonder what will happen to employees if their workshop closes. There seems to be a lack of guidance on these issues from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or the federal government, which is phasing out sheltered workshops on a nationwide scale.

### **Nonprofit Sector and Marketing Strategy**

The nonprofit sector has grown tremendously over the last few years, and with that growth the need for marketing and strategic planning has increased (Michael R. Maude, 1997). Increased competition has forced a significant reduction in government funding and as a result an increased dependence for nonprofits to rely on private donors, corporations, and other foundations (Michael R. Maude, 1997). It's essential for nonprofit organizations to reach out to potential clients and donors with information about available programs and services. No matter how great the need is for the services a nonprofit provides, marketing is necessary in order to ensure that those in need of assistance learn about the organization and find out how to become

involved (Michael R. Maude, 1997). Marketing tactics also help differentiate one nonprofit from another that is offering similar services.

In our case, without donors and a new marketing strategy there is a high probability that Valley Bookcases could cease operation by the end of the fiscal year unless additional funding streams are secured. This will prove devastating to the employees, because Valley Bookcases has been in existence for twenty-five years.

#### *Issues with the current marketing strategy in Valley Bookcases*

There are several reasons why VAE may be unsuccessful in its lack of marketing or public relations efforts. One of the most common barriers is a low advertising budget (Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote and Morganti, 2012). A low budget usually means that the message of the Valley Bookcases has little reach and impact. Another barrier is creating an effective message and using the appropriate funding. Sometimes nonprofits are reluctant to use funds on advertising due to a belief that the public would view allocation of those resources negatively (Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote and Morganti, 2012). Lastly, VAE do not have a formal written and approved marketing plan. Instead VAE uses informal notes that never officially pass through senior leadership. VAE has done little outreach to brand themselves in the community. Branding should not be overlooked because great brands reinforce the nonprofit's reputation, and its more likely that supporters will remain loyal (Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote and Morganti, 2012). Branding for nonprofits is more than just your logo or name, instead it's telling your story to an audience and showing why the organization matters. It's about the experience and perception your audience has of your organization online, in-person, and on paper.

## Developing a Strategic Marketing Plan

To write an effective marketing plan VEA will need to perform an organization self-assessment, set goals and strategy that will provide insight and determine its unique value, craft a message, choose marketing tools, define a budget timeline and identify resources (Network for Good 2016). Even organizations that already have a marketing plan in place should periodically go through this exercise to ensure that they are remaining relevant and current with their target market (Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote and Morganti, 2012).

### *Performing an Organizational Self-Assessment*

The first step in a marketing plan is to assess the current state of marketing at the organization (Network for Good 2016). The self-assessment allows nonprofits to discover what's actually occurring within the nonprofit.

In order to get a clear self-assessment the nonprofit must:

1. Determine the constituents. In order to do that the nonprofit must ask questions like: Who comprises the donor base? Are there people you want to target? What local officials are you hoping will embrace certain policies? (Network for Good 2016).
2. Create a list of everyone your organization comes into contact with: people who visit organization's, supporters that have attended fundraisers and donors. (Network for Good 2016).
3. Think about how you treat your clients. (Network for Good 2016).
4. Map out what you have been saying to donors. What's your tagline? Does the nonprofit have a mission and vision statement? (Network for Good 2016).
5. Determine which communication channels to use to reach donors and clients and how often? (Network for Good 2016).
  - a. Organizational website



- b. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and so on)
- c. Paid advertising (print or online ads)
- d. Communications (newsletter, e-newsletter, direct mail)
- e. Special events
- f. Brochures

A self-assessment reviews all strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the nonprofit market. The SWOT analysis provides insight and helps set goals for the organization. It also recognizes the unique attributes, identifies the target market, and helps to determine if the programs and services you offer are still relevant.

### *Set Goals and Strategies*

Goals are well-defined, statements that give you clarity, direction and focus (Network for Good 2016). It is important for nonprofits to define what they need to do to achieve their vision in realistic terms (Network for Good 2016). A common approach to developing nonprofit goals is to use the formula for the five characteristics of S.M.A.R.T.

1. Specific – What exactly are you trying to accomplish?
2. Measurable – How do you know if you are successful?
3. Attainable – Is this realistic based on the resources you have?
4. Relevant – Will this goal help you reach your vision
5. Timely – What is the deadline for this effort?

### *Engage your Audience*

At this point, you need to engage your audience to pay attention to your message (Network for Good 2016).

These are a few points that will engage your constituents with your messaging:

1. Be flexible. If something does not work change it (Network for Good 2016).
2. Make it clear where the donations go to and show accountability to your donors (Network for Good 2016).
3. Test different versions of marketing outreach (Network for Good 2016).
4. Have your supporters spread the word about your organization (Network for Good 2016).
5. Ask your donors for their feedback and opinions on a regular basis (Network for Good 2016).
6. Offer real-life glimpses into the life of your organization. (Network for Good 2016).

*Determine Your Unique Value*

What is the foundation of your fundraising message and nonprofit outreach? What makes your nonprofit the only one of its kind? Break it down with: Who (are your constituents), What (is your issue area), Where (are your constituents located), When (do they need you), Why (are you important), and How (are you different)? (Network for Good 2016).

*Craft Your Message*

Now you know where you'd like to go. How do you get there? Appeal to your audience's values. Look at your website and brochure. Do you talk about your mission, your great staff, your awards, your programs? (Network for Good 2016).

*Choose Your Tools*

Online Marketing

1. Website
2. Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)
3. Paid advertising
4. Public relations placements on websites/blogs

5. Special events / Online donation page
6. Email outreach (e-newsletter, fundraising appeals)

#### Offline Marketing

1. Printed materials (brochures)
2. Direct mail
3. Newsletter
4. Public relations placements (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines)

#### Define Your Budget and Timeline

##### *Create a Budget*

After determining the type of outreach, decide how much money you'll need for producing marketing materials, email and offline outreach expenses, as well as paid media such as advertising or search engine marketing (Network for Good 2016).

##### *Conclusion*

Successful fundraising is founded on making a strong case for your nonprofit. When an organization's marketing strategies are clear and focused, its fundraising dollars increase substantially. In the subsequent sections we will make recommendations and offer best practices so VEA can develop a donor base and raise the necessary funds to keep Valley Bookcases operational.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What kind of marketing strategy can we design to self-sustain Valley Bookcases?
2. What is the history and current environment of the sheltered workshop model?
3. What are the general best practices for marketing design, and how can these be adapted to fit the specific needs of a sheltered workshop.

#### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem in our society that historically we've allowed individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to remain in segregated work environments that provide earnings below the minimum wage. Despite improvements such forms of discrimination continue to be a serious social problem. This problem has negatively impacted individuals with disabilities because they are not offered the wages, benefits and social interactions provided through competitive employment. Our team was asked to look at the current issue of the elimination of funding for sheltered workshops in Massachusetts and how VEA could transition Valley Bookcases from a sheltered workshop to an employee run business in hope to remedy this situation.

**Assumptions**

The research states that sheltered workshops provide limited potential for an individual to gain the social and vocational skills needed to seek gainful employment within the workforce. It is for this reason along with cost implications that the State of Massachusetts is seeking to close sheltered workshops and replace them with Community Based Day Services (CBDS). Up until this time VEA has relied solely on funding from the Department of Developmental Disabilities to fund their sheltered workshop entitled Valley Bookcases. State funding will dissipate therefore VAE has to fundraise and build a donor base. Marketing is the most effective way for VAE to build loyalty within its target audience by opening the lines of communication and adding value to the services they provide. The overall goal of this research project is to enhance VEA's presence within the community and attract donors.

**Purpose of the Capstone Project and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this project is to provide Valley Educational Associates (VEA) technical assistance to evolve their goal of transitioning Valley Bookcases a sheltered workshop into a

self-sustaining viable business. This will be done through the creation of a marketing plan complete with accompanying media materials. It is very important that VEA starts a fundraising campaign and initiate a proactive approach to marketing their agency. The development of a marketing plan is imperative to continue operations at Valley Bookcases.

### **Subsequent Sections**

In this section we provided the introduction to the paper, some background information on VEA, Valley Bookcases, and sheltered workshops. We also provided an overview of the efforts the federal and state governments are taking in closing sheltered workshops. Lastly we went into great deal to list the necessary steps VEA will have to follow to create and implement an effective marketing plan. In the subsequent sections of this paper we will provide Trends in Literature, Research design and approach, results and reflections, discussion, summary and reflections.

### **Definition of Terms**

**VEA** – Valley Educational Associates, Inc. is a non-profit 501C3 designated corporation providing work experience and training to the developmentally disabled.

**Valley Bookcases** – A subsection of VEA that provides on-site vocational training and paid employment offered to individuals in the areas of woodworking and janitorial skills. Individuals are trained in the use of hand and power tools while manufacturing unfinished pine bookcases.

**CBDS** – Community Based Day Systems is employment for people with disabilities in integrated employment. In Massachusetts the Patrick Administration began the initiative to close sheltered workshops and provide supported employment in integrated settings. The statewide plan is to transition the participants of sheltered workshops into a Community-Based Day Services setting. The CBDS participants would be earning wages equal to minimum wage or higher.

**Integrated employment** – Integrated employment refers to jobs held by people with the most significant disabilities in typical workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not persons with disabilities. In these jobs, the individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work.

**I/DD or ID** – Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities or Intellectual Disability (ID) means significantly sub-average intellectual functioning with an intelligence (IQ) of 70 and under as measured by a qualified professional, along with a lack of daily living skills (adaptive behavior) such as, but not limited to, communicating, grooming, dressing, safety and social skills, that show up prior to 18 years of age.

**DDS** – Department of Developmental Services of Massachusetts is state agency dedicated to creating, in partnership with others, innovative and genuine opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to participate fully and meaningfully in, and contribute to, their communities as valued members.

**ADPP** – Association of Developmental Disabled Providers is nonprofit organization. ADPP's mission is to promote and ensure strength of community-based providers so provider members can be successful in improving quality, access and value of services in the community. ADPP is committed to enhancing political, financial, and educational health of member organizations that serve people with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities and acquired brain injuries.

**Arc of Massachusetts** – This is nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. They accomplish this through advocacy of supports and services based in the community. Through advocacy and collaboration with others, The Arc of Massachusetts has helped to establish and maintain significant legislation and funding on both the state and federal levels.

**Sheltered Workshops** – Sheltered Workshops provide a controlled work environment and a program designed toward enabling individuals with disabilities to progress toward normal living and to develop, as far as possible, his or her capacity, performance and relationship with other persons. Sheltered Workshops, provide work experiences sufficiently diverse to accommodate the needs of each enrolled individual with a disability.

**ADA Act of 1990** – The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services.

**Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead v. L.C. case** – Olmstead v. L.C. is a United States Supreme Court case regarding discrimination against people with mental disabilities. The Supreme Court held that under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with mental disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions.

**DOJ** – The United States Department of Justice (DOJ), also known as the Justice Department, is a federal executive department of the U.S. government, responsible for the enforcement of the law and administration of justice in the United States.

**S.W.O.T** – Is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A SWOT Analysis involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective.

## **Chapter II Literature Review**

### **Introduction to Literature Review**

Valley Bookcases has been in existence for twenty-five years and provides employment opportunities to Developmentally Disabled Adults in Western Massachusetts. The agency has had success serving challenging clients who have typically not thrived in other environments. Throughout the last twenty years sheltered workshops have been under scrutiny and questioned if they are the most effective way to provide supportive employment for Developmentally Disabled Adults. The research states that this type of model provides limited potential for an individual to gain the social and vocational skills needed to seek gainful employment within the workforce. It is for this reason along with cost implications that the State of Massachusetts is seeking to close sheltered workshops and replace them with Community Based Day Services (CBDS).

Up until this time the agency relied solely on funding from the Department of Developmental Disabilities to fund their sheltered workshop entitled “Valley Bookcases.” Marketing is the most effective way for any nonprofit organization to build loyalty within its target audience by opening the lines of communication and adding value to the services they provide. The overall goal of this research project is to enhance VEA’s presence within the community. Up until present date VEA has relied solely on state contracts to fund the operation of their sheltered workshops.

Our team will provide Valley Educational Associates (VEA) with a marketing strategy and recommendations that will support their efforts to incorporate their sheltered workshop

“Valley Bookcases” into a viable business. Our goal to evolve Valley Bookcases into a self-sustaining viable business model through the creation of a marketing strategy complete with accompanying media materials. This task will be supported by a two-part research approach.

First, we will conduct an investigation of the current environment of the sheltered workshop model. Second, we will research general marketing theory and an assimilation of industry techniques specific to both the nonprofit sector and general commercial sector. By applying the latter research on marketing theory with the specific state of the sheltered workshop model, we will be able to offer suggestions to support VEA’s specific goal. We will also use this research to influence the creation of the tools necessary to implement said strategy, including media influenced by principles of communication design and advertising theory, as well as a budget to demonstrate the financial requirements necessary to implement and sustain the strategy.

### **Literature Review Components**

As previously stated, our research is composed of two parts: background research on the sheltered workshop model, and practical research on marketing methods. The former research was conducted through various electronic journals and libraries. The second part covers a range of sources. We used electronic journals to formulate a framework for nonprofit marketing, then moved to commercial sources for the practical methodology. The commercial sources, such as textbooks and style guides, offer best practices on design principles, the creation of digital content, and general advertising methodologies.

### **Investigation: Theories, Models and Research Studies**

Employment defines who we are, it gives us a way to explore our interests, a means of earning money, and a way to be a part of a community. Yet too often, people with intellectual



disabilities are not given this opportunity. In 2014, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 17.1 percent of persons with a disability were employed (US Department of Labor 2014).

The objective of sheltered workshops is to provide fulfillment, job satisfaction and training on an ongoing basis. Through the sheltered workshop model VEA offers economic independence and self-sufficiency to people with disabilities.

Sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities have a long history in the United States dating back to the Perkins Institution for the Blind in 1840 and the Pennsylvania Home for Working Men in Philadelphia in 1874 (Wallin 1967). In the article, *Sheltered workshops for older adolescent and adult mental retardates*, Wallin outlined the objectives of sheltered workshops to include the development of vocational competence; training for competitive employment; academic remediation; treating personality maladjustments; and providing appropriate job placement and follow-up. (Wallin 1967).

From 1960 through the 1980s, there was a vast majority of literature and best practices on sheltered workshops. Articles such as Nelson's (1965) "Industrial Operation of the Sheltered Workshop" and Whitehead's (1976) "Planning and Organizing a Sheltered Workshop for Mentally Retarded Persons," described how to organize and run an efficient, effective workshop operation. Sheltered workshops were intended to meet the needs for special education that public schools did not provide, and at the same time provide vocational training and work opportunities to marginalized persons with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.

According to the article, *A kind word for sheltered work*, sheltered employment is used as the first stage of the rehabilitation process. For example, workshops "can offer protective services for people who have serious problems early in the treatment process, and can continue to offer services to people who may take a long time to acquire abilities to survive in more open

settings" (Black, 1992). Many workers are simply not ready to jump from being unemployed to competitive employment in one leap this is where Valley Bookcases and other sheltered workshops are very effective (Black, 1992). For those individuals whose disabilities are severe enough to make imminent employment unlikely in a supported or competitive situation, Valley Bookcases offers individuals a chance to learn job skills and earn wages. People who attend workshops produce an average 50%-70% of what is expected from workers without disabilities (Whitehead, 1979). Activities in workshops tend to be developmentally appropriate and involve repetitive tasks such as assembling, packing, woodworking, and manufacturing (Black, 1992). The workshop environment differs from the typical workplace because it's designed with the needs of the employee rather than employees adapting to the work environment (Black, 1992).

In the 1970's there was a large push to support the expansion of workshops. This was based on the assumption that individuals who had disabilities were unable to perform certain tasks and traditional employers would be unable to hire them. Placing individuals in workshops was much easier than finding them jobs in an open labor market. However, in more recent years sheltered workshops have come under a lot of scrutiny. The critical component of workshops is related to the meaning attached to "sheltered". Rather than provide normalization, it was intended to shelter the individual from normal frustrations, problems, and risks while allowing him to experience an attenuated form of normal task requirements on the job (e.g., paychecks, time clocks, work hours, supervision, production schedules). In the article *Current workshop practices: Strengths and weaknesses*, Mallas, reviewing workshop practices, observed that the image of the workshop, both from within and without, was negative, a place where society relegates its unwanted cast-off goods and people (Mallas 1976).

In the last two decades the movement towards integrated employment has flourished. Sheltered workshops have been stereotyped as being dead-ends for individuals rather than stepping-stones into competitive employment (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990). The lack of social and work skill development has also been criticized. Research is now showing us that integrated employment not only increases social tolerance for individuals with disabilities but also increases their opportunity to engage with peers who are not disabled and encourages them to participate more fully in the community (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990). Furthermore, studies conducted by Greenleigh Associates (1975) indicated that workshops are seriously limited by: (a) the absence of adequate varieties and quantities of work; (b) the predominance of low-challenge assembly work; (c) the absence of modern tools and machines upon which to train workers; (d) a limited number of skilled and competent staff; (e) funding mechanisms which encourage continued service to clients but not outside employment (Greenleigh Associates 1975).

The main concerns raised about sheltered workshops were: lack of success in providing rehabilitation for employees so they may enter regular labor and lack of compliance with federal regulations. The lack of rehabilitation is a serious concern, because the ultimate goal of these employees is to begin in a workshop setting and eventually enter the workforce (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990). Instead of being rehabilitated evidence shows that these employees spend their entire life working in segregated workshops. As individuals move into integrated employment they benefit from increases in wages, work hours and access to health insurance and other employee benefits reducing their reliance on public financial assistance (Jiranek & Kirby, 1990).

The second concern which was raised by the Department of Justice is that by using Section 214(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, nonprofits employ workers at wages as low as twenty-two cents, thirty-eight cents, and forty-one cents per hour (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). These wages are nearly thirty-three times lower than the federal minimum wage (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). The DOJ also believes that sheltered workshops and nonprofits are exploiting workers, by arguing that these individuals do not produce the same quality and quantity of work that a non-handicapped employee would (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). These workshops have negative prejudices and stereotypes of disabled workers and their value in the workplace (Guilfoyle, Jillian, 2015). Plaintiffs along with the DOJ have brought upon state like Oregon and Rhode Island class action lawsuits.

In Massachusetts the Patrick Administration began the initiative to close sheltered workshops and provide supported employment in integrated settings. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) pledged to close sheltered workshops by June 30, 2015. The statewide plan is to transition the participants of sheltered workshops into a Community-Based Day Services (CBDS) setting. The CBDS participants would be earning wages equal to minimum wage or higher.

In response to this changing employment landscape, the three Massachusetts agencies (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts) have formulated a plan to increase integrated employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. Central to the design is the strong held belief that individuals served, the businesses employing them and the community at large benefit when adults with ID are contributing members of their communities.

This blueprint outlines the steps that will be taken in MA to increase integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The state says there will

be no new admissions to sheltered work as of January 1, 2014 and also stated the intent to end all sheltered workshop services in 2015 (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013). In response to pressure from the DOJ and class action lawsuits, Massachusetts is joining forces with state and community resources, to phase out sheltered workshops and transition disabled employees into a more integrated setting. The Mass. administration believes that terminating the funding of sheltered workshops is a critical first step in repealing the subminimum wage program and stop workshops from abusing state grants to subsidize their businesses.

The key milestones in the plan include:

- Close the “front door” to sheltered workshops as of January 1, 2014 by halting any new referrals to this service (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Close sheltered workshops by June 30, 2015 (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Transition participants in sheltered workshop programs during fiscal year 2015 to one of the following options: integrated individual or group employment at minimum wage or higher and/or Community-Based Day Services (CBDS). DDS remains committed to providing individuals needed day services in a manner that maintains stability for families and residential providers during non-work hours (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Continue to transition individuals from CBDS to integrated work opportunities that pay minimum wage or higher based on person-centered career plans (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Gradually phase out group employment settings that pay less than minimum wage (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).

The components of this initiative also include:

- Extensive training opportunities for staff (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Supporting organizational change via management consultation/business planning efforts (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Expanding an employment collaborative model to better coordinate identification of job opportunities within the business community (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Providing technical assistance on vocational assessment and person-centered career planning to provider staff and DDS service coordinators (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).
- Supporting a series of regional forums for individuals and families (DDS, ADDP & The Arc of Massachusetts Nov. 2013).

### **State of Non-Profit Marketing**

While marketing is usually the focal point of a successful business, its importance to the nonprofit sector is often underemphasized. *Developing a Marketing Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations: An Exploratory Study* uses a combination of interviews and surveys to create a methodology of marketing strategies designed specifically for the nonprofit sector (Pope, 2009). The main difference in the strategies is that the for-profit sector is motivated by the bottom line, whereas the nonprofit will have the need for attracting volunteers and donors. Their findings also highlight some of the marketing aspects that are typically absent in the nonprofit sector, as well as some of the sources of these shortcomings, mainly lack of funding and expertise. The average

nonprofit will typically need improvement in its use of online marketing and brand recognition.

### **Methods for Investigating the Research Topic**

The next research phase will be investigating for-profit marketing methods, such as campaign design, and elements of visual and digital communication design to influence the creation of the marketing plan. We will use electronic journals to formulate a framework for nonprofit marketing, then will move to commercial sources for the practical methodology. The commercial sources, such as textbooks and style guides, offer best practices on design principles, the creation of digital content, and general advertising methodologies.

### **Conclusion**

Based on our research federal or state funding will no longer exist and that is why it is a priority for VEA to begin a fundraising campaign and initiate a proactive approach to marketing. The ultimate goal is to have Valley Bookcases be a self-sustaining operation. VEA relies on solely on state aid which is set to be eliminated on June 30, 2016. The development of a marketing plan and fundraising campaign is imperative to continue operations at Valley Bookcases. Typical marketing strategies are not universally applicable to both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. Non-profit attempts should focus on fundraising and the accumulation of donors and volunteers. Valley Bookcases, however, occupies a unique segment of the nonprofit sector. Its main goal is to make the workshop self-sustaining through sales of its bookshelves, and this resembles a for-profit entity whose main focus is the financial bottom line. This means the use of a marketing strategy geared toward the for-profit sector will be most effective in reaching VEA's goal.

## Chapter III Methods

### Research Design and Approach

Our research consisted of a combination of phone interviews, site visits, email correspondence and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. A SWOT Analysis was conducted to determine the best approach to transition the sheltered workshop Valley Bookcases into a viable employee run business. The SWOT consisted of twenty questions sent electronically via email to Executive Director Kate Dasilva and Program Coordinator Michael Barrett.

### Sample Questions:

1. Please identify your current strengths and weaknesses as an agency
2. What would you consider to be the threats and opportunities VEA is facing as an agency?
3. How much revenue will need to be raised to continue operating Valley Bookcases for the next 3-5 years?
4. Has VEA conducted any marketing research? If so to what extent?

On April 19, 2016 a phone interview to discuss the transition of the closing of sheltered workshops and the Community Based Day Supports (CBDS) model was held with Kevin McDonough of the Department of Developmental Services Arlington Area Office on April 19th 2016. During this phone call the goals of creation of CBDS programs were discussed along with the initial funding required to meet the goals.

The team took part in weekly conference calls with VEA on the following dates March 7th, 16th and 23rd as well as April 6th, 13th and 20th 2016. The focus of these calls was to discuss the results of the SWOT and how VEA could benefit from a Capstone Project. Based on



the results of the SWOT and conversations with VEA it was determined that a Marketing Plan would be the most logical starting point to begin to build a brand name for Valley Bookcases.

On March 30, 2016 a site visit was conducted at both the Valley Bookcases Workshop in South Deerfield, MA and ASPIRE! a program of Seven Hills in Worcester, MA. On this date in person meetings were held with Joseph Realbuto, Vice President of ASPIRE! and Kate Dasilva, Executive Director of Vea and Michael Barrett Program Coordinator of Valley Bookcases. Each of the areas of research are broken down.

### **ASPIRE! An Affiliate of Seven Hills**

Seven Hills developed the ASPIRE! model in 2012, to better support individuals with disabilities and other significant life challenges. The model has restructured the way that day habilitation, workforce readiness, and employment services are typically offered by promoting personal choice in areas such as workforce readiness, employment, woodworking, ceramics, music, technology and health and wellness. These areas will allow the client to broaden their potential and reach new goals.

ASPIRE! also has several partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, Tufts Dental School and MCPHS University who provide a wide array of specialists on-site to teach, learn, and socialize with participants. A fully operational Dental Center and Vision Center is open to participants and the general public. All services are person-centered and promote integration by allowing each person to optimize his or her personal, social, and vocational competency to live successfully within the community.

During the site visit we learned that the focus of ASPIRE! is to provide clients with an opportunity to develop soft skills to be successful in the workplace. These skills include being able to place belongings in designated areas, demonstrate good hygiene and integrate socially

with others. Seven Hills provides and promotes experiences in Expressive Arts Therapy to help clients develop the soft skills required in work environments.

Once a client has demonstrated these skills a Rehabilitation Counselor provides a formal assessment for work readiness. If a client is ready for work they are enrolled in a six week CareerSource program entitled Up & Out. The Up & Out program is specific to individuals who have demonstrated the knowledge, skills and abilities to gain and maintain successful employment.

### **Department of Developmental Services**

The Department of Developmental Services has implemented a number of important initiatives over the past several years to transition individuals from sheltered workshops and provide them with opportunities to work in the community. Major initiatives have included the following:

1. Informing providers of Center-Based Work Services and the Department's commitment to develop alternatives to "sheltered workshop" services.
2. Issuing an Employment First Policy in 2010 that has established integrated individual employment as the preferred option for adults with intellectual disabilities (ID).
3. Established and implemented on July 1, 2013 new standard rates for employment services. As a result, these new rates have incentivized employment services and outcomes

An important catalyst for these changes is the expressed preference of advocates and families to provide individuals with competitive employment opportunities to earn fair wages, benefits and work in an inclusive environment. The movement towards Community Based Day Supports (CBDS) is presently still in development and strives to achieve the following goals:

1. Potentially move individuals toward employment if they have the desire to do so.
2. Provide opportunities for social interaction by working in community settings.
3. On a national level the landscape is changing due to increased attention to employment opportunities and outcomes for individuals.

Legal proceedings in Oregon and Rhode Island by the United States Department of Justice and Labor have found sheltered workshops in violation of both the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Supreme Court's ruling in the Olmstead inclusion case. Important changes in federal policy and legal actions have had a direct bearing on the options for employment and day services provided to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has taken a proactive approach to expand integrated community based employment services.

### **Valley Educational Associates (VEA)**

Valley Educational Associates (VEA) is a Massachusetts licensed provider of human services who has successfully provided supports to the developmentally disabled since 1982. VEA takes pride in their ability to ensure that their clients are successful through data tracking via an analysis system that measure outcomes. Valley Bookcases a sheltered employment program of VEA has been in operation for over twenty-five years. The agency is proud of its ability to retain long term highly trained staff who have achieved clinical success with some of the most challenging individuals in our state.

Approximately 95% of VEA's funding comes from state contracts through the Department of Developmental Services. It is their goal to reduce this percentage to 87% over the next three years. The agency itself has relied predominantly on state funding to meet their budgetary obligations. No fundraising or private grant solicitation has previously been attempted.

The agency completed its first successful fundraising campaign in 2015. The success of the 5k road race indicated that the community's' indeed has commitment to VEA and the services it provides.

Opportunities for marketing are limited due to resources not being allocated within the budget. At present time Valley Bookcases has yearly marketing budget of \$250.00. Resources although they are identified in their Strategic Plan

### **Problem Specification**

On June 30, 2016 the State of Massachusetts will eliminate funding for sheltered workshops through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This is a year later than the proposed statewide plan of closing sheltered workshops by June 30, 2015. At this time agencies are expected to transition their clients from sheltered workshops to one of the following options: Integrated individual or group employment that pays minimum wage or higher and/or Community Based Day Supports (CBDS). These transitions will be person-centered based on career plans that are specific to each individual.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis**

It was determined through the SWOT Analysis that VEA is presently faced with many internal and external factors that may have a potential impact on Valley Bookcases. Internal factors include both strengths and weaknesses. One internal factor influencing the agency is the reliance on state funding to meet budgetary requirements. The elimination of funding for sheltered workshops will have an impact on the programming VEA can offer to clients. As program requirements change so will the need for staffing. Overall, VEA takes pride in the fact that they have several long term, highly trained staff and a progressive management team.

However, recruiting and retaining new staff has been a challenge. Along with the challenge of retaining staff are limitations on products sold. This in part due to the narrow skill base of the clients served. This poses a challenge for VEA to introduce new products that are suitable for all to produce. In turn the customer base they can attract is small.

The location of the workshop is on a road that appears to be less traveled road also may present as a weakness when VEA takes steps to convert Valley Bookcases. The workshop however is in the vicinity of several colleges and businesses indicates a strength in terms of marketing.

External factors include opportunities and threats which are often influenced by outside forces. Whether an external factor is linked to an opportunity or a threat it is vital to examine and take note of each one. The change in requirements for employment models is a trend that is currently happening within the field of Developmental Disabilities. It is the intention of VEA to seek out and capitalize on subcontract work that other agencies may no longer have the capacity to provide. By the same token due to agencies losing contracts there is an increased demand for private grants from foundations. This has created a very competitive environment for nonprofits in Western Massachusetts.

Include the lack of fundraising on behalf of VEA The lack of donations and grants from private foundations is also a

### **Identification and Definition of the Variables**

Historically, Valley Educational Associates (VEA) has relied solely on state funding and has not sought private funds through sources such as grants and fundraising. The elimination of state funding for sheltered workshops has placed a strain on the agency to make the transition to an employee run business.

### **Setting and Sample**

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was conducted via email correspondence with Michael Barrett and Kate Dasilva. VEA was asked to identify what they conceive as strengths and opportunities as well their threats and weaknesses that the agency is facing. Phone interviews were conducted as well as site visits to Valley Bookcases and ASPiRE! A CBDS program.

### **Eligibility Criteria for Services**

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) provides services to adult clients who are 18 years of age and older, domiciled in the Commonwealth and have a significantly sub-average intellectual functioning as determined by an intelligence test score ( IQ) of approximately 70 or below. DDS is committed to the importance of having a job in society and the many benefits gained by individuals and businesses when adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities work in their communities.

### **Execution process**

Findings from the SWOT determined the following factors:

1. VEA is currently not in a financial or programmatic position to transition Valley Bookcases to an employee run business by July 1, 2016.
2. Opportunities exist to expand and grow VEA and more specifically Valley Bookcases within the community.

### **Analysis**

Based on our research it can be assumed that at as an agency VEA is not in a financial position to effectively carry out the transition of converting Valley Bookcases from a sheltered workshop to an employee run business without the use of private resources. Meeting Federal

Labor Laws may also pose a challenge in order for Valley Bookcases to be converted to an employee run business.

## **Chapter IV Results and Reflection**

### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem in our society that historically we've allowed individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to remain in segregated work environments that provide earnings below the minimum wage. Despite improvements such forms of discrimination continue to be a serious social problem. This problem has negatively impacted individuals with disabilities because they are not offered the wages, benefits and social interactions provided through competitive employment. Our team was asked to look at the current issue of the elimination of funding for sheltered workshops in Massachusetts and how VEA could transition Valley Bookcases from a sheltered workshop to an employee run business in hope to remedy this situation.

### **Process**

The beginning stages of our research began with looking at the current state of the sheltered workshop and reasons that funding for this type of vocational employment will end on June 30, 2016. Online publications and journal articles were utilized to help us understand the history of the sheltered workshop model and how it came about as a means of vocational employment for developmentally disabled adults.

A SWOT Analysis provided insight to help the team identify internal and external key factors that provided the team with insight into the current climate of VEA. The results of the SWOT indicated both internal and external factors that may greatly have an impact on VEA

transitioning Valley Bookcases into an employee run business. At this time background research was conducted on the sheltered workshop as well as marketing for nonprofit agencies.

Once the key factors were identified we began to research and explore marketing strategies that would fit the needs expressed by VEA. Additionally, although VEA has direct goals and a clear vision the task of facilitating this transition by June 30, 2016 may be a challenge.

On-site visits to both ASPIRE! and Valley Bookcases proved to be an integral part of our learning experience. Each site provided us insight into how sheltered workshops operate as well as how other agencies have transitioned their workshops to Community Based Day Support (CBDS) programs with the end goal of competitive employment.

The Creation of marketing and media materials were designed to reflect the needs of Valley Bookcases based on the results from the SWOT and observations during the site visit. A website, tri-fold brochure, 4x8 retailer card and newsletter template were crafted with a new name and logo to offer a newly designed look to the quality products sold by VEA.

Challenges we faced in the research is the demographic location of VEA. The agency is located in South Deerfield which is approximately 90 minutes from Clark University. For this reason our team was unable to conduct a site visit until the end of March. During this site visit we gained valuable insight as to how the workshop operates and the quality product they sell.

### **Summary Findings**

The results of the SWOT Analysis indicated that VEA is presently faced with many internal and external factors that may have a potential impact on Valley Bookcases. Internal factors include both strengths and weaknesses. One internal factor influencing the agency is the reliance on state funding to meet budgetary requirements. The elimination of funding for



sheltered workshops will have an impact on the programming VEA can offer to clients. As program requirements change so will the need for staffing.

Overall, VEA takes pride in the fact that they have several long term, highly trained staff and a progressive management team. However, recruiting and retaining new staff and rising healthcare costs has been identified as weaknesses. Furthermore, the clients served by the agency typically have a narrow skill set and are limited to the projects they can work on.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem in our society that historically we've allowed individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to remain in segregated work environments that provide earnings below the minimum wage. Despite improvements such forms of discrimination continue to be a serious social problem. This problem has negatively impacted individuals with disabilities because they are not offered the wages, benefits and social interactions provided through competitive employment. Our team was asked to look at the current issue of the elimination of funding for sheltered workshops in Massachusetts and how VEA could transition Valley Bookcases from a sheltered workshop to an employee run business in hope to remedy this situation.

### **Process**

The beginning stages of our research began with looking at the current state of the sheltered workshop and reasons that funding for this type of vocational employment will end on June 30, 2016. Online publications and journal articles were utilized to help us understand the history of the sheltered workshop model and how it came about as a means of vocational employment for developmentally disabled adults.

A SWOT Analysis provided insight to help the team identify internal and external key factors that provided the team with insight into the current climate of VEA. The results of the SWOT indicated both internal and external factors that may greatly have an impact on VEA transitioning Valley Bookcases into an employee run business. At this time background research was conducted on the sheltered workshop model as well as marketing strategies for nonprofit agencies.

Once the key factors were identified we began to research and explore marketing strategies that would fit the needs expressed by VEA. Additionally, although VEA has direct goals and a clear vision the task of facilitating this transition by June 30, 2016 may pose a challenge mainly in the area of available funds.

On-site visits to both ASPIRE! and Valley Bookcases proved to be an integral part of our learning experience. VEA is often faced with barriers when it comes to introducing new products that are suitable for all their clients to produce. This is due in part to the narrow skill set of the clients they serve. In recent years Valley Bookcases has experienced turnover with its recurring customer base and attracting new customers to purchase the bookcases has been a challenge. New customers may be enticed if additional products are sold along with the bookcases.

The location of the workshop is on a road that appears to be less traveled on. It's important for VEA to gain visibility in the community to prepare for when it becomes time for VEA takes steps to convert Valley Bookcases to an employee run business. For this reason it is imperative that an aggressive outreach and marketing campaign takes place to begin to educate the community of their services. The location of several nearby colleges such as UMASS Amherst, Smith College, Amherst College, Hampshire College and Mount Holyoke College indicate that there is a potential customer base to market their product to.

External factors include opportunities and threats which are often influenced by outside forces. Whether an external factor is linked to an opportunity or a threat it is vital to examine and take note of each one. The change in requirements for employment models is a trend that is currently happening within the field of Developmental Disabilities. It is the intention of VEA to seek out and capitalize on subcontract work that other agencies may no longer have the capacity to provide. By the same token due to the fact that agencies are losing contracts there is an increased demand for private grants from foundations. This has created a very competitive environment for nonprofits in Western Massachusetts. Historically, fundraising efforts have not been attempted and VEA has relied solely on state funding through contracts. The agency is still green in getting their feet wet in this area.

The primary approach to marketing for VEA should be in the appeal to local businesses to carry stock of the product—this would involve the development of materials VEA could use to approach various businesses. The second approach should be to create awareness of the product directly to the consumer. This is a niche product that the target audience is not likely to seek out on their own, so the marketing approach needs be targeted to the customer directly.

Currently, the VEA website combines information that is intended for both customers and for people seeking information about the agency itself. A major initial step would be the creation of a website that is dedicated to potential customers. The site should contain information on the organization geared toward purchasing the product as well as an online order form, product information, and contact methods.

Having a presence on Social Media as well as creating new media materials such as a brochure and newsletter will help keep startup costs at a reasonable cost to the agency. At this

point and time it would be advantageous for VEA more specifically Valley Bookcases to begin to strategize their outreach efforts within the community. **Table 1**

*Total Number of Individuals Participating in Sheltered Workshops Statewide*

<b>Full-Time Participants</b>	<b>Part-Time Participants</b>
1251	1357
<b>Total Participants (Full &amp; Part Time)</b>	<b>2608</b>

Source (Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers and The Arc of Massachusetts (November 2013))

Table 1 breaks down the number of individuals participating in sheltered workshops full-time and part-time. It is important to note that the individuals participating part-time may also be receiving a combination of other employment/CBDS services.

Table 2 indicates the amount of funding required through FY'18 to invest in the phasing out of sheltered workshops and removing the concern of sub-minimum wage payments. It is expected that the majority of the 2,608 individuals participating in sheltered workshop services will initially move to CBDS programs, providing them an opportunity to explore work-related options. (Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers and The Arc of Massachusetts (November 2013)).

**Table 2**

*Cost Projections to Facilitate Transition to Group Supported Employment Programs*

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Funding Amount</b>
FY '15	\$11.1 million
FY '16	\$6.3 million

FY '17	\$ 8.3 million
FY '18	\$1.0 million
<b>Total</b>	\$26.7 million*

\* Important Note: The net cost to the state would only be approximately \$13 million dollars due to waiver reimbursement/federal participation for these services at almost 50%.

Source (Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers and The Arc of Massachusetts (November 2013))

Although the state originally proposed \$11.1 million in funding for FY'15 in actuality the funding was appropriated at \$3.0 million. The allocated funding was approximately \$2 million less than the state net cost of \$5.55 million after federal reimbursement. This certainly pushed back the original timeline to close sheltered workshops from June 30, 2015 to June 30, 2016.

Additional resources are needed to build upon this initiative and at present time it is uncertain if the Department of Developmental Services will be fully funded to meet the requirements of this mandate. The Department of Developmental Services is committed to providing training and technical assistance to agencies as well as support to the clients and their families around these changes.

**Analysis**

The research findings suggest that there is still work needed to be done at the state and federal levels to reach the fiscal requirements to carry this initiative from start to finish. The State of Massachusetts is presently working towards the change in employment models for adults receiving services through the Department of Developmental Services. For this reason in order for Valley Bookcases to begin new programming initiatives they will need to seek private funding sources.

## **Conclusion & Salient Issues**

At the initial onset of this project our group was unaware of the lawsuits that eventually led to the decision to close sheltered workshops in Massachusetts.

It was discovered during our research that the Department of Developmental Services has been inadequately funded to effectively carry out the statewide proposed plan to close workshops and transition clients to community based employment. In FY15 \$11.1 million was proposed in the State Budget to fund the transition towards a Community Based Day Supports (CBDS) Model. In actuality, only \$3.0 million was funded in the line item (Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers and The Arc of Massachusetts (November 2013)). This line item was and continues to be grossly underfunded to provide technical assistance and resources to agencies in the process of closing and converting workshops. For this reason the timeline was extended from June 30, 2015 to June 30, 2016.

Valley Educational Associates also falls under the catchment area of the Holyoke/Chicopee, Franklin/Hampshire and Springfield Department of Developmental Services Area Offices. During our site visit staff at VEA discussed how each area office seems to have a different interpretation and variation of how to conduct and implement the changes proposed by the State of Massachusetts. It is apparent that technical assistance from the state is limited. Although DDS states agencies have their full support the message is unclear as to how VEA can best implement these changes to support the clients they serve.

There is also a local business who is a direct competitor within minutes of Valley Bookcases. Andy's and the Oak Shoppe has been in operation for 35 years and specializes in selling finished and unfinished pine oak bookcases and furniture. Some of their products are

identical to what Valley Bookcases can offer. In past years the company was not interested in partnering up with Valley Bookcases.

Presently, VEA has an annual budget of \$250.00 for marketing and advertising specifically for Valley Bookcases. It was disclosed further on in our research that VEA has been working with Rainmaker a private consulting group from Holyoke, MA. Although the exact function of the consulting group is unclear, the agency stated that at present time they are providing training to the Board of Directors on effective fundraising strategies. This is the first time in the history of the agency that the Board of Directors has been asked active approach to fundraising has been asked of the Board of Directors.

In conclusion, VEA faces many more obstacles to convert Valley Bookcases into an employee run business than originally anticipated at the start of the project. Funding and resources are the largest barriers VEA is facing to be carry out this initiative. A greater focus needs to be placed on community outreach so when it becomes time to begin a fundraising and marketing campaign the community will be more knowledgeable of the agency and the services it provides.

### **Reflection on the research**

The research on the history of sheltered workshops proved to be eye opening in regards to the ethical issues individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have faced in the workplace. An interesting factor was that there was not a lot of current empirical research around the topic of sheltered workshops exists. A majority of the research dates back ten plus years. This indicates that the topic of sheltered workshops along with the pros and cons of this model have been researched for many years before this initiative of closing them was mandated. The fact that it took so many years to uncover the unethical treatment undergone by some individuals in

workshop environments is certainly concerning. If not for the two lawsuits the situation may have continued to go unnoticed.

It's important to note that with the statewide plan to close sheltered workshops the necessary funding to move forward with this plan remains questionable. The Department of Developmental Services is committed to providing support as agencies undergo

The team divided the research and tasks up by strengths. Each section of the project was completed by a team member who indicated a strength or interest in the topic as follows:

1. Mitchell Perry: Website, Media Design & Presentation
2. Bing Jang: Media Design, Background Information,& Presentation
3. Nikolin Vangjeli: Preliminary Background Research, Analysis of problem
4. Laura Ducharme: Research, Correspondence, Content Editing

An issue we encountered during the project was the geographic location of the agency to the vicinity of Clark. VEA is approximately 90 minutes from Clark University. For this reason the coordination of efforts to plan a site visit presented as a challenge due to other obligatory commitments of the team.. For this reason the weekly conference calls were essential to be able to effectively communicate with the staff at VEA. Although the conference calls met the intended purpose our professional relationship may have been stronger had the location of the agency be a bit closer to Clark University.

## **Chapter V Discussion, Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion**

### **Recommendations for Practice**

#### *Why the study was done*

This study was done as a consultancy project requested by Valley Educational Associates (VEA).. The State of Massachusetts officially announced their decision to eliminate funding for sheltered workshops effective on June 30, 2016. The VEA currently operates one such



workshop under the name of Valley Bookcases, who employs developmentally disabled adults to build unfinished bookcases and develop vocational skill sets. With the impending lack of financial support from the State, the VEA is seeking alternative methods of funding to keep the woodshop running, primarily in the form of self-sustaining sales.

#### *How the Study Was Done*

Our first step was to research the history of the sheltered workshop model and the current state of non-profit marketing. We narrowed the focus of data collection through a series of interviews conducted with VEA via conference call and email. We gained additional insight by visiting ASPIRE!, a program operated by the Seven Hills Foundation that has successfully transition their sheltered workshops to adopt state-approved models.

#### *Recommendations for Action*

Our study resulted in two main directions of recommended action. First is the development of traditional nonprofit methods of funding, and also the adoption of current best-practices in the field. The second direction aligns with the VEA's goal of creating a self-sustaining employee run business for Valley Bookcases. As the first step toward this goal, we recommend the implementation of a marketing & rebranding plan to promote the sale of their product. This is in line with our research into the current state of nonprofit marketing which stresses the importance for nonprofits to adopt marketing strategies typical of the for-profit sector.

The implementation of such a plan is vital if the VEA wishes for the product to sustain itself through sales, and should be implemented immediately. While this sustainability is the desire of the client, it's likely that other measures will have to be taken due to the lack of current customer base, limitation of product diversity, and limited amount of time and financial resources.

### **Adoption of Best-Practices**

The following suggestions are based on our research and our contact at the ASPIRE! program:

- Encourage Andy's to partner up with VEA to integrate handicapped and non-handicapped workers. The state wants this to happen as well as DDS clients who have expressed to be a part of another company's product.
- Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) provides technical assistance free of charge to develop new opportunities to sheltered workshops
- Look into MassHealth to inquire about setting up Day Habilitation Services
- Look into opportunities to provide training programs with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)
- The hiring of dedicated grant writing & development staff to create additional funding streams for the woodshop and VEA in general
- GRANTSPACE is an online foundation database. VEA can access this database free of charge at the Springfield City Library in Springfield, MA

### **Implementation of Marketing Plan**

#### *Background of Valley Bookcases*

The original description of Valley Bookcases is as follows: "Valley Bookcases has been building bookcases for over 25 years. All of our bookcases are unfinished and finely crafted from white pine. The shelves are glued and fitted into each bookcase without the use of screws and/or nails. Each bookcase has a luan back that is inset and nailed on. There are 24 standard sizes, ranging in height from 16 inches tall up to 82 inches tall. Standard widths are 24 inches wide or 36 inches wide. Our standard depths are 9 inches or 11 inches deep. We can also build custom sizes."

### *Competition*

Valley Bookcases' main competition is Andy's & The Oak Shoppe:

Andy's & The Oak Shoppe offers quality-made finished and unfinished furniture, including a wide range of tables, chairs, bed frames, armoires, dressers, bookcases, cupboards, cabinets, hutches, entertainment centers, desks, rockers, and more. Andy's specializes in pieces made from cherry, maple, birch, parawood, and pine; The Oak Shoppe sells furniture of oak and ash. Both sections also sell comfortable upholstered gliders, recliners, sofas, and chairs; and an eclectic mix of accent pieces and gifts, including framed prints by local artists, clocks, baskets, lamps, chandeliers, and Polish pottery.

### *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)*

#### **Strengths**

- The bookcases come in a variety of sizes and can be custom ordered
- The bookcases are “finely crafted”

#### **Weaknesses**

- Valley Bookcases has a very limited product selection (only unfinished bookcases)
- The shop has little-to-no brand recognition
- The products are not stocked in any stores
- There is no base of repeat customers or recurring orders
- There is currently no way to order the product online, nor are there any visual depictions of the product

#### **Opportunities**

- There is a strong charitable component behind the product: the shop offers vocational training to its employees, and purchase of the product lends support to these efforts. The organization's competition is a for-profit business that does not stand behind a moral cause.

#### **Threats**

- Andy's offers both the same product at competitive prices and a variety of other products
- Andy's is family owned and has been in business 5 years longer than Valley Bookcases

*Key Communication issue to be solved*

Valley Bookcases' primary advantage is its charitable mission. By purchasing these bookcases over similarly priced products, customers are supporting efforts to provide employment and training services to developmentally disabled adults. A major issue, however, is that there little awareness of both the organization and of its mission. The key communication issue to be solved through the marketing campaign should be to develop a brand identity for the product that conveys the mission of the organization, thus creating a motivation to purchase the product and an advantage over the competition.

### **Introduction**

Valley Bookcases' is striving toward self-sufficiency through product sales. Currently, they have no recurring orders and inventory is not held in any retail establishments. The goal of this marketing strategy is to develop a brand for the product that conveys the mission of the organization, to increase product awareness, and to ultimately create a customer base of individuals and retail establishments.

### **Target Audience**

#### *The Consumer*

The main advantage of the bookcases lies in the mission of the VEA. Therefore, the target consumer will likely purchase the product based on moral principle rather than price or name-brand. This consumer will be socially conscious, falling under the Cross Consumer Cultural Categorization of "reformer." This consumer is concerned with the moral value of a product rather than its social status or flashy marketing. In terms of design, they prefer something simple and straightforward, yet in good taste. This consumer will often fall in the demographic of a comfortable income, educated, and is typically middle aged.

### *Retail Spaces*

Valley Bookcases' should seek to display their products into retail spaces that cater to the above consumer profile. These types of spaces will most likely be small or locally owned businesses or farmer's markets. There are approximately thirty-two farmer's markets within the vicinity of VEA.

### **Media Strategy & Objectives**

The primary approach to marketing should be in the appeal of local business to carry stock of the product—this would involve the development of materials VEA could use to approach various businesses. The second approach should be to create awareness of the product directly to the consumer. This is a niche product that the target audience is not likely to seek out on their own, so the marketing approach needs to be direct and targeted.

### **Message Strategy**

The main strategy of the marketing campaign will take the form of rebranding. The goal of the new brand will be to improve potential recognition, and to convey the mission of the organization. This brand composed of design elements and copy, will be uniform across all media platforms. As the program has stated in their goals, they wish to improve their product line. **Our first suggestion is to change the group name to “Valley Woodworks,” so that it’s flexible enough to encompass both the current product line and any additional ones in the future.\***

**\*This suggestion was not accepted by the client at this time**

*Copy*

The copy needs to perform 2 tasks: describe the product, and the cause supported by the product's purchase. This copy will be mostly uniform across all platforms, unless tailored for a specific audience.

***Valley Woodworks***

***Crafted with Quality—Created with Purpose***

***Our Product:*** *Our bookcases are finely crafted by our participants from white pine. The shelves are glued and fitted into each bookcase without the use of screws or nails. The bookcase has a luan back that is inset and nailed on, and is sanded & ready for finishing by the customer.*

*We also take orders for custom cabinets at unbeatable prices!*

***Our Mission:*** *Our custom-made bookcases are crafted with more than just quality—they're crafted with purpose. For over 25 years, Valley Woodworks has offered paid job opportunities and vocational training to the developmentally disabled. The purchase of our finely-made furniture supports our initiative to give our participants the skills they need to enter into competitive employment opportunities.*

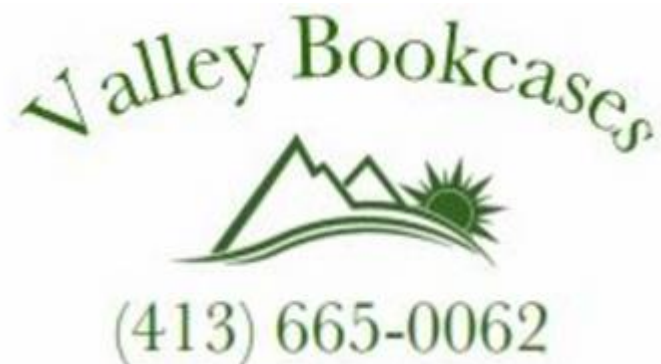
**Design & Rebranding**

*Logo*

The media design will be based on the foundation of an updated logo.

**Strengths of previous logo:**

- attractive graphic

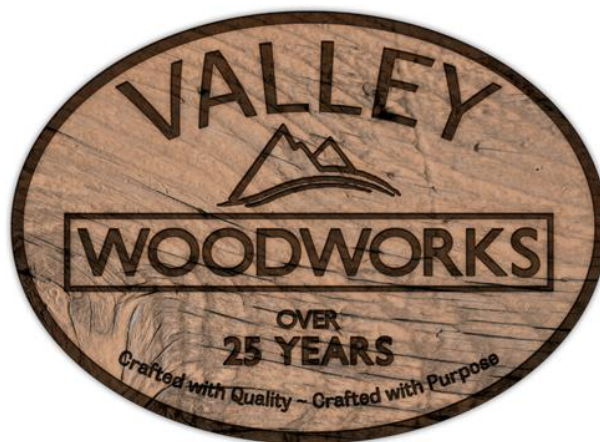


- uniform color
- relevant information

**Weaknesses of previous logo:**

- not presented in standard web or print quality
- not uniform across web and physical platforms (different logo on building)
- doesn't represent products sold

The new logo will seek to keep the strengths of the old, while offering a fresh approach:



The logo retains elements from the old one: the arced “valley,” and most of the valley graphic. The vectors are superimposed over the wood pattern to relate to the product line, with the added component of the new tag line: “Crafted with Quality—Created with Purpose.” The tagline refers to the relationship between the product and the mission of the organization.

*Retail Card & Product Tag*

The product tag is designed to be attached to the bookcase in a retail setting. It has basic contact information, the logo, and the “Our Mission” & “Our Product” paragraphs targeted toward the consumer. The purpose of including these materials is to capture the interest of the

socially conscious consumer demographic identified in the key consumer insights section. The tag should attach the idea of supporting a cause to the purchase.

The retail card can be used as tool for approaching potential retailers to sell the product. It includes the same information as the product tag, but with an updated pricing table. (See appendix G)

*There are a number of unfinished furniture stores in Massachusetts with which Valley could partner*

- Andy's & The Oak, North Deerfield, MA
- Unfinished Business, Hanover, MA
- Bostonwood, Watertown, MA
- J C Woodworking Unfinished Furniture, Northfield, MA

*Trifold Brochure*

The first thing that we would recommend is to put more information of bookcases. Instead of putting a picture of Valley Bookcases' building, we show the new logo on the cover of the brochure in order to increase the brand recognition. Customers don't care how big the building is and the way the company has grown. The only thing they care about is whether or not the products meet their needs. Therefore, rather than wasting space to sell products and convince customers to buy them, we add pictures of workshop and products inside the brochure to show customers the variety of bookcases size and how those bookcases are finely crafted. In addition, most customers won't read the brochure front-to-back, but they will look at visual elements and easy-to-read lists. Inside the brochure, there is a general products introduction to customers and a concise price graphic of products. We add more information of regular bookcases size and front that VEA is able to customize various products to satisfy customers' needs. To make it easy for



customers to respond, the contact information such as the address of Valley Bookcases, phone number, e-mail and website are easily found under the price list. To emphasize the feature of Valley Bookcases, we introduce the clinical support, employment service and other services in brochure.

### *E-newsletters*

E-newsletters is a great way to have frequent contact with nearby markets. These forms of communication are excellent to provide news, updates, new opportunities, and calendars of events. In addition, it is an inexpensive way to directly promote products and events to customers. The new website offers an E-newsletter for anyone who wants to subscribe. Before subscribing to our newsletter, customers will see sentences on the website that we are not using customer's name to market other things or selling their name to other entities. The E-newsletter is offers four main information including promotions, special discounts, upcoming events, and new products. We want to show more people doing things and keep our customers informed of the new products. In case some buyers will want to book immediately, we include a phone number in an obvious place in the newsletter. Also, people can click through to the new website or Facebook right from within the newsletter. Considering shorter newsletters will be more efficient, we advised the Valley Bookcases to send newsletters monthly.

### **Website**

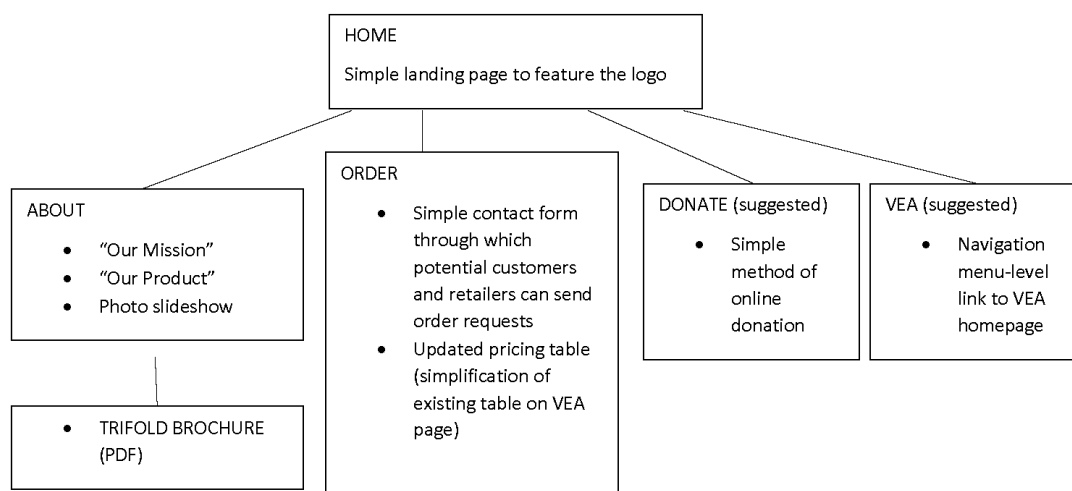
Aside from the logo, the website is the area most in need of improvement. The current site is a page off of the VEA's main website. While it contains the relevant information, it's not directed specifically at the consumer, and as such does not have intentionality behind the design. Considering the key consumer insights from the target demographic, there should be a simple,

refined design aesthetic that communicates the cause behind the product in a straightforward manner.

With the intention of promoting the product and with the target demographic in mind, the key considerations for an updated website are:

- Simple but tasteful design aesthetic
- Method of online ordering
- Efficient communication of cause to support purchase
- Efficient communication of product description

### *Site Map*



### *Site Creation*

Our site deliverable to the client was created in Adobe Muse. The program allows for custom web design without requiring any knowledge of coding language. Adobe supplies a number of helpful tutorials for getting started in Muse:

<http://resources.muse.adobe.com/collections/tutorials>

*Site Upload*

There are a number of affordable hosting options. Godaddy.com, for example, allows for cheap and relatively simple hosting.

The domain name Valleybookcases.org is available for free with a hosting plan, which runs at \$4.49 per/month when purchased for 24 months in bulk. This results in a one-time purchase cost of \$108.12 for two years of hosting. Since our consultancy group created the site via an HTML editor, no web-editor is required.

Click the “Web Hosting” link and click “Launch” under the domain name of your hosting account. You will see the Hosting Control Center, which allows you to view and edit **files** on the **Go Daddy** hosting server. Click “FTP **File** Manager” in the Tools section of the Control Panel. Simply upload the folder containing the html and linked files.

**Social Media**

The primary social media suggestion would be to initiate a Facebook ad campaign to promote a Facebook page dedicated to Valley Woodworks. Facebook campaign are relatively inexpensive, typically have a high return, and can be easily tailored to target a specific demographic. This targeting can range from gender, age, geographic location, interests, and purchasing behaviors. The campaign can also target multiple groups simultaneously: one group can focus on individual consumers, and another could focus on potential retailers (like small business owners).

Another benefit to using a Facebook ad campaign is the ease with which return can be tracked. The ad sets can be optimized for clicks to website, web conversions, or page likes, and these numbers are recorded along with an average price-per-action (this number is an average

because the rate is calculated based on a bidding system with competing ad sets of a similar nature). It's easy to create two separate ad sets with different optimization settings for a certain period of time in order to determine which method is most cost efficient and/or effective. Cost efficiency is key to Valley as the annual marketing budget is low.

**Conclusion & Lessons Learned**

Our government views sheltered workshops as discriminatory and wants to integrate individuals with disabilities into competitive employment that pays at least minimum wage. Defenders of this viewpoint feel that not everyone with a disability can work in the traditional workforce. Sheltered Workshops have provided individuals with disabilities a means to optimize their potential by learning new skills. The question at large is whether sheltered workshops were the best way to do that.

The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice took the States of Rhode Island and Oregon to court for the unethical treatment of individuals working in sheltered workshops. The results of these lawsuits have resulted in a complete overhaul of the sheltered workshop system with a nationwide plan to phase them out completely. In the State of Massachusetts the timeframe to cease workshop operations is June 30, 2016.

While the implementation of a marketing plan is the first step toward self-sufficiency, Valley Bookcases has major obstacles to overcome before they will likely see a direct effect from marketing efforts. Creating a revenue stream to keep a business afloat through sales is a task that requires extensive business knowledge and initial funds for implementation—Valley Bookcases presents a deficit in both staffing and resources necessary to meet these basic

requirements. Steps to obtain additional funding to support the goals is a necessary step, though it's one that also faces major opposition. While programs like ASPiRE! have demonstrated that progressive reform tactics can convert the sheltered workshop model into one that meets current best practices and standards to receive state funding. In this regard VEA has been more or less apathetic to change as a catalyst for new endeavors. Even with multiple years of warning from the state regarding the changes in standards for funding, Valley Bookcase has not taken the steps to either update their model or adopt any standard development strategies to raise funds. Their proposed solution to sustain the program through sales is one that would be extremely difficult for any such program, and would require a base of expertise and resources that are simply unavailable.

This project is perhaps most useful when viewed as a case study for the state of nonprofit management. It is crucial for the success of an organization to remain up to date with best practices in their field, and also to avoid reliance on a single source of funding. As demonstrated with Valley Bookcases, even state funding that appears to be salient can be eliminated. It is important for nonprofits to consider the adoption of business models traditional to the for-profit sector, at least in part. Ideally, Valley Bookcases could have successfully operated had it updated its program to continue state funding, maintained consistent efforts for development (such as fundraising and grant writing), and operated with the mindset of a for-profit business with efforts toward marketing and a consideration of market demand in terms of updating their product line toward the needs of the local consumer.

Throughout this project it was evident that VEA has a genuine interest in keeping the Valley Bookcases legacy alive. With careful thought and planning this may be possible to be and we encourage them to utilize the marketing materials to make this happen. It was a pleasure working with VEA and we wish the agency all the best in their endeavors moving forward.

### *Lessons Learned and Recommendations*

In this project we encountered several issues when interacting with the client. The first issue was communication and site visits. We would reach out to the client through email and it would take days for them to respond. Furthermore VEA was not in the vicinity of Clark University so we could not just show up at their door. VEA is approximately 90 minutes from Clark University. For this reason the coordination of efforts to plan a site visit presented a challenge. However as a team we felt that communication is the most important factor of successful project management. Therefore we requested that the client join us in weekly conference calls. The conference calls were essential to be able to effectively communicate with the staff at VEA. Although the conference calls met the intended purpose, our professional relationship may have been stronger had the location of the agency been a bit closer to Clark University. Our recommendation to the COPACE office is to select clients that are in the proximity of Central Massachusetts.

Another issue we encountered was changing the scope after the client signed off on the project. After our first conference call VEA informed us that they hired a private consultant to help with fundraising and grant writing. Rather than duplicate the consultant's work we reached an agreement with the client to cut the fundraising and grant writing portion and focus on marketing. This would mean that we'd re-approach the project from the perspective of marketing

theory, and the final deliverable would be the marketing plan, and sample materials. This issue goes back to the lack of communication.

Lasly, when we were assigned this project we were not told by the COPACE office or VEA that Massachusetts is planning to close all sheltered workshops. From our research we have found that sheltered workshops were very successful in early 1980's but in the last twenty years they have been under scrutiny and questioned if they are the most effective way to provide supportive employment for Developmentally Disabled adults. The research states that sheltered workshops provide limited potential for an individual to gain the social and vocational skills needed to seek gainful employment within the workforce. It is for this reason along with cost implications that the State of Massachusetts is seeking to close sheltered workshops and replace them with Community Based Day Services (CBDS). After discovering this we are very uncertain of our successes in saving Valley Bookcases. If the state is trying to limit the number of sheltered workshops it will be near impossible to convince donors for help.

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## Appendix A Project Data Sheet

### Sponsors

Valley Educational Associates

### Project Objectives

Our team will provide Valley Educational Association a market analysis and recommendations for a marketing plan. Marketing is not something that should be implemented randomly as the mood strikes, nor should it be eliminated when times are tough. Marketing is the most effective way for any nonprofit organization to build loyalty within its targeted audience, opening lines of communication and adding value.

Furthermore our overall goal is makes VEA's presence known in the community. No matter what the size of nonprofits, nor how extensive its budget, nonprofits that clearly and consistently share their vision with the community, enjoy these added benefits:

- They gain credibility while building loyalty
- They can more easily distinguish their organization's purpose from other nonprofits
- They enhance their reputation as leaders in the nonprofit community
- They build membership / gain volunteers more quickly
- They have more opportunities to strengthen existing donor relations and build new ones

We will provide an analysis by following these steps:

1. Perform an Organization Self-Assessment
  - a. Determine VEA's current audience
  - b. Evaluate current materials and tools
2. Set Goals and Strategy
  - a. Set objectives and goals
  - b. Outline VEA's strategy and tactics
3. Determine the Unique Value
  - a. Understand what differentiates VEA
  - b. Find VEA's brand's sweet spot
4. Craft a Message
  - a. Engage (and inspire) VEA's audience
  - b. Craft a call to action
5. Choose Tools
  - a. Determine online and offline tactics (donate button plus email outreach)
  - b. Consider social networking
6. Define Budget, Timeline, and Resources
  - a. Outline budget for each marketing activity
  - b. Create a marketing calendar
  - c. Assign responsibilities

## Project Outcomes

The ultimate goal is to assist VEA toward self-sufficiency. VEA relies on state aid which will dry up and without a donor base and a marketing plan they risk closing the woodworking section. We will help VEA reach out to its donors and draft a fundraising plan that will help them become self-sufficient.

At the conclusion of this project our goal is to provide VEA answers to the following questions:

1. What services does VEA provide? How are they grounded in their mission?
2. Who are the intended consumers and sponsors? How well do they know the specific needs and interests of each group?
3. What characteristics of VEA consumers and sponsors are most relevant to the design and delivery of their programs or services?
4. What are the sources of income? What steps are necessary to secure, diversify, and sustain support from each of them?
5. What factors are relevant to VEA's decisions on pricing?
6. What are the best ways to communicate with VEA constituencies and keep them informed about services?
7. Are VEA constituencies satisfied with what they are getting from their engagement with this organization?
8. What steps should VEA take to improve our programs, enlarge their engagement with donors and costumers?

## Scope

### In-Scope

1. Perform an Organization Self-Assessment
  - Assess the current state of marketing at VEA.
  - Take a step back and discover what's actually occurring—or not occurring—at VEA.
  - Determine VEA's constituents.
  - Who else is there? Who comprises VEA's donor base? Do they have volunteers who regularly come in?
2. Set Goals and Strategies
  - A properly organized nonprofit marketing plan supports itself like a pyramid.
  - For each goal, there are objectives, every objective has strategies, and each strategy has tactics.
    - Goals
    - Objectives
    - Strategies
    - Tactics
    - Target Audiences and Desired Actions
3. Determine Your Unique Value
  - What's important to your costumers?
  - What does your organization do best?
  - What are you doing that no one else is?
4. Define Your Channels of marketing

- Craft Your Message
- Which communication channels do you use and how often?
- Now you know where you'd like to go. How do you get there? Appeal to your audience's values.

#### 5. Choose Tools

##### Online

- Website
- Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)
- Paid advertising (banner ads)
- Public relations placements on websites/blogs
- Special events pages
- Online donation page
- Email outreach (e-newsletter, advocacy alerts, fundraising appeals)

##### Offline

- Printed collateral (brochures, annual reports)
- Direct mail
- Newsletter
- Paid advertising (outdoor, print)
- Public relations placements (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines)
- Phone bank
- Special events

#### 1. Set Your Budget

- After determining the type of outreach, decide how much money you'll need for producing marketing materials, email and offline outreach expenses, as well as paid media such as advertising or search engine marketing.

### **Out-of-Scope:**

#### 2. Measure and Track Results

- A marketing plan that sits on the shelf is not particularly useful. VEA should regularly review results to verify that your goals have been met or to determine if new strategies are in order.
- How will VEA measure success? Consider website analytics, e-newsletter subscriptions, and number of volunteers signed up. These metrics will be defined by what you want to accomplish.

### **Deliverables:**

#### **Marketing Plan**

- **Market research & analysis**
  - Construction of market plan framework
  - Target demographics
  - Research & analysis of local competition
- **Marketing plan & suggestions**
  - Suggested list of marketing platforms

- Schedule for implementation
- Creation of marketing budget
- **Marketing materials**
  - Social media pages
  - Website
  - Print & online ads
  - Mailers
  - Email newsletters
- **Fundraising Suggestions**
  - Grants research
  - Written grant proposal(s)
  - Grant deadline calendar

**Milestones/Time-frame:**

#	Milestones	When
1	Approved project from Capstone Advisor	Jan
2	Initial email exchanges	Jan
3	Definition of client requirements	Jan
4	Data sheet completed	2/18
5	Data Sheet sign off by Client	2/20
6	Research market plan framework	3/1
7	Research grants database	3/1
8	Research target market	3/1
9	Design marketing materials	4/1
10	Complete marketing plan & suggestions	4/1

11	Write grant proposals	4/1
12	Peer Evaluations	4/27
13	Final Capstone Report	4/21
14	Finish final presentation	4/21
15	Capstone Defense Presentation	4/27
16	Lessons Learned Document	4/21

**Assumptions/Dependencies:**

It can be assumed that the Department of Developmental Services will eliminate funding for sheltered workshops across the Commonwealth on June 30, 2016. There is a high probability that “Valley Bookcases” could cease operation by the end of the fiscal year unless additional funding streams are secured. Valley Bookcases has been in existence for twenty-five years and has relied solely on funding from the Department of Developmental Services to support its operating costs.

**Risks:**

Negative Risk-Future funding cuts pose a high risk to the existing “Valley Bookcases” enterprise at VEA. There is a high probability that “Valley Bookcases” could cease operation at the end of the fiscal year.

Positive Risk-The elimination of funding will provide agencies such as VEA opportunities to expand upon existing traditional models of sheltered workshops to integrate both disabled and non-disabled adults. This model presents an opportunity for

VEA to manufacture projects that accommodate a variety of skill sets therefore expanding revenue opportunities.

**Project Measures of Success:**

- Schedule:
  - On time
  - Within 2 weeks
  - More than 2 weeks
- Scope:
  - All scope items fulfilled
  - all in-scope items fulfilled

- For example: Did we make a full and accurate analysis on VEA? How did we achieve the goals?
- How many new customers did we inspired? Does the unique value matches the marketing plan?
- in-scope items are missing
- Costs:
  - Cost targets and budget met
  - Budget and targets met within 80%
  - off greater than y%
- VEA Satisfaction:

To avoid the situation that the VEA might not be able to articulate exactly what they want, we should figure out what they're looking for in order to make sure they're happy with the end results. We should track the sponsor's satisfaction, ask them to rate it on a scale of 1 to 10 every week or so, and analyze and review our findings. For instance, if our team make a plan the client loves, but the client wasn't happy with the process, we failed. We should avoid this situation by seeking constant feedback.

- Quality of the Work:
  - Does the final deliverable match the original vision?
  - Sales results
  - Does our marketing plan fits clearly into the operational environment?
  - Does the risk management success?
- Team Leadership:
  - Performance Appraisals
  - Effectiveness of communication/cooperation between team members

**Staffing /Resources**

- Project Lead: Mitchell Perry
- Advisor: Mary Piecewicz
- Core project members: Mitchell Perry, Laura Ducharme, Niko Vangjeli & Bing Jiang

Client: Valley Educational Association

Contact: Michael Barrett

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Changes to the Data Sheet on 03/10/2016**

After our first conference call VEA informed us that they have hired a private consultant to help with fundraising and grant writing. Rather than duplicate the consultant's work we reached an agreement with the client to cut the fundraising suggestions portion and focus on marketing. This would mean that we'd re-approach the project from the perspective of marketing theory, and the final deliverable would be the marketing plan, and sample materials.

## Appendix B Responsibility Matrix and Project Plan

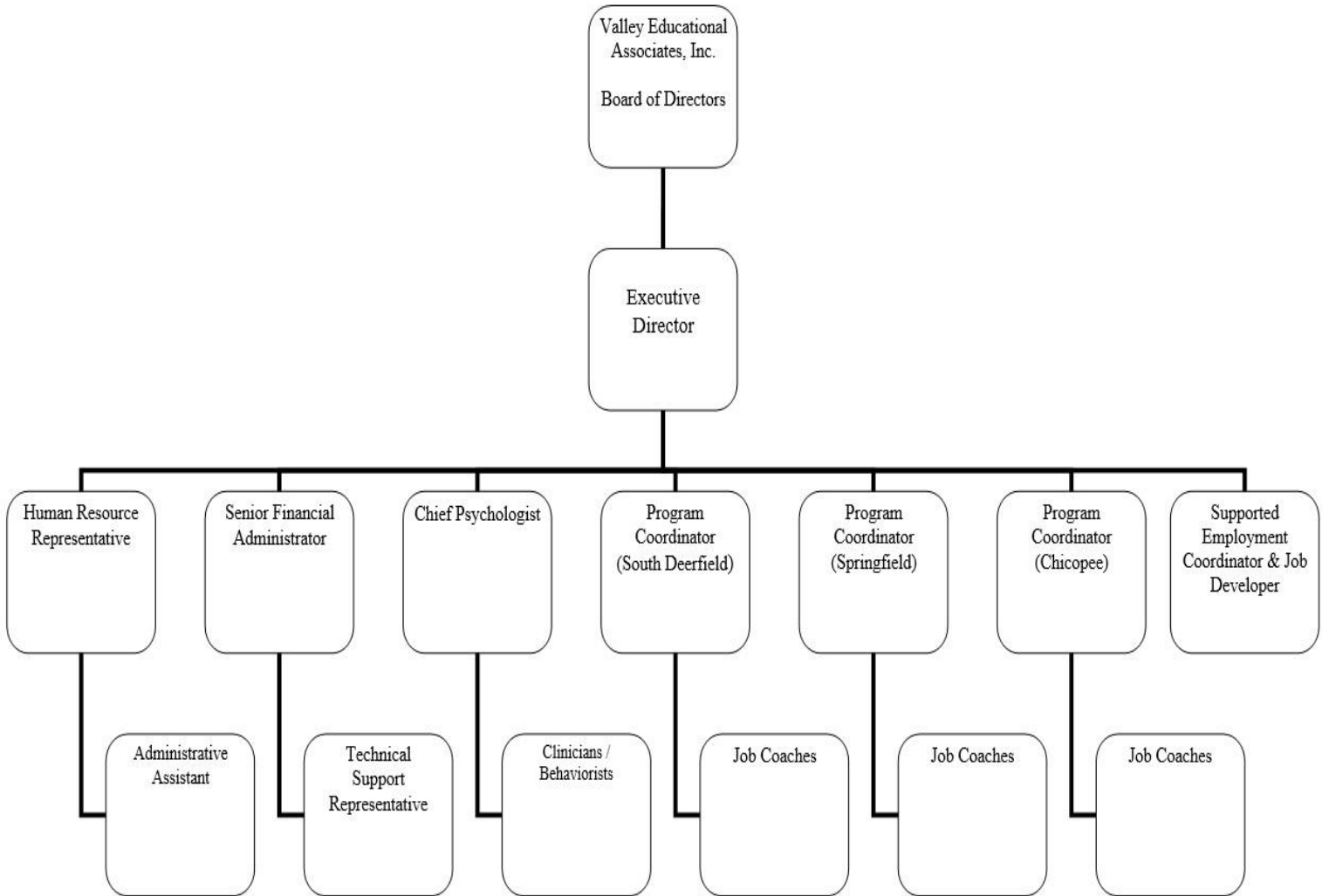
## Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RAM) for Team Project Deliverables:

A = Accountable

<b>Date Due</b>	<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Laura</b>	<b>Niko</b>	<b>Mitchell</b>	<b>Bing</b>
	<b>Task/Deliverable</b>				
02/05	Introductory Email	A	A	A	A
02/18	Introductory Conference Call	A	A	A	A
02/18	Define Scope of Project	A	A	A	A
02/18	Approved Project from VEA	A	A	A	A
02/18	Data Sheet Signed off by Client	A	A	A	A
02/26	Perform an Organization Self-Assessment		A		
02/26	Understand what differentiates VEA		A		
03/01	Set objectives and goals		A		
03/01	Outline VEA's strategy and tactics		A		
03/01	Research Marketing Plan Framework		A		
03/01	Research Grants/Foundations on Guidestar	A			
03/18	Write Grant Proposal	A			
03/01	Research Grant(s)	A			
03/01	Create a list of possible donors/ sponsors	A			
03/01	Market Research		A		

03/26	<b>Design marketing plan</b>				
03/26	<b>Design marketing materials</b>				
04/04	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Online</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)</li> <li>• Public relations placements on websites/blogs</li> <li>• Online donation page</li> <li>• Email outreach (e-newsletter, advocacy alerts, fundraising appeals)</li> </ul>			A	A
04/04	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Offline</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printed collateral (brochures, annual reports)</li> <li>• Direct mail</li> <li>• Newsletter</li> <li>• Paid advertising (outdoor, print)</li> <li>• Special events</li> </ul>			A	A
04/04	<b>Implement marketing Plan</b>	A	A	A	A
04/15	<b>Complete Marketing Plan and Recommendations</b>	A	A	A	A
04/04	<b>Outline budget for each marketing activity</b>	A	A	A	A
04/25	<b>Draft CAPSTONE Report</b>	A	A	A	A
04/25	<b>Draft Final Presentation</b>	A	A	A	A
04/25	<b>Turn in and Present Final CAPSTONE</b>	A	A	A	A
04/26	<b>Lessons Learned Document</b>				

Appendix C Valley Educational Associates, Inc. Organizational Flow Chart (2015)



Appendix D VEA Strategic Plan

A rectangular box with a thin border. On the left side, there is a vertical bar with a dark blue top half and a light blue bottom half. The text "VEA Strategic Planning" is centered in the box.

## VEA Strategic Planning

A rectangular box with a thin border, containing the date "3/1/2015".

3/1/2015

### Mission Statement:

*VEA's specialized professionals strive to improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities.*

### Value Statements:

*1. VEA is a Massachusetts licensed provider of human services who has successfully provided supports to the developmentally disabled since 1982.*

*2. VEA has developed data tracking and analysis systems that aid in ensuring that the clinical supports and interventions employed are successful.*



## Strengths, Weaknesses

### Strengths:

1. In-depth and continual internal budgetary analysis
2. Technically advanced clinical staff and sophisticated program evaluation
3. Long term, highly trained staff
4. Achieved highest level of Licensure and Certification for over 20 years
5. Clinical success with some of the State's most challenging individuals
6. Energetic and progressive management team

### Weaknesses:

1. Reliance on State funding
2. Current physical layouts are not suitable for expansion
3. Current VEA client population has very narrow skill base
4. Difficulty recruiting new staff



## Opportunities, Threats

### Opportunities:

1. Cultivate and utilize improvement ideas from staff
2. Other agencies have lost subcontract work. Is new work still available? Can we take it?
3. VEA is developing its' CBDS program with the aid of a recreational therapist.
4. Reaching out for more fundraising, grants, donations (5K run, golf tournament, etc.)
5. Widening the skill base of clients
6. Grow VEA by increasing client count and revenue
7. Marketing and educating the community about VEA
8. Start a for-profit business

### Threats:

1. Grant money is becoming scarce due to increased competition.
2. VEA is reliant on state funding.
3. Many of VEA's clients are on medications and the regulations are shifting all the time.
4. Minimum wage increase.
5. Rising cost of health insurance.



## Business Growth Plan

1. Develop an “Idea System”
2. Reduce reliance on state funding/diversify funding sources

### “Action Items” to achieve the Plan-

1. Increase fundraising activity
2. Develop a “for-profit” business
3. Develop our own CBDS program
4. Seek out referrals from other agencies, schools, etc.

The next steps are...

1. Deliverables – what do we want to get out of it? For example, changing our funding source ratio.
2. Time Frame
3. Responsible people
4. Set metrics for progress – Targets to Improve (TTI)



## Plan Period Objectives

### **Year One Objectives**

Implement Agency Wide Idea System

Change VEA's Funding Ratio from 95% State / 5% Other to 93% State / 7% Other

### **Year Two Objective**

Agency Wide Idea System – Sustaining

Change VEA's Funding Ratio from 93% State / 7% Other to 90% State / 10% Other

### **Year Three Objective**

Agency Wide Idea System – Leverage for Continuous Improvement

Change VEA's Funding Ratio from 90% State / 10% Other to 87% State / 13% Other



## **Appendix E Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis**

### **1. Please identify your current strengths and weaknesses as an agency-**

#### **Strengths**

- a. In-depth and continual internal budgetary analysis
- b. Technically advanced clinical staff and sophisticated program evaluation
- c. Long term, highly trained staff
- d. Achieved highest level of licensure and certification for over 20 years
- e. Clinical success with some of the State's most challenging individuals
- f. Energetic and progressive management team

#### **Valley Bookcases specific**

- a. 25 plus years of building bookcases
- b. Most equipment and jigs are already in place
- c. Location within the Pioneer Valley, near to many Colleges

#### **Weaknesses**

- a. Reliance on State funding
- b. Current VEA population has a very narrow skill base
- c. Difficulty recruiting new staff

#### **Valley Bookcases specific**

- a. Limited resources for sales and marketing
- b. Regular customers reduced in number

### **2. What is the current Vision and Mission statement of VEA?**

Mission Statement: VEA's professionals strive to improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities.



**3. What would you consider to be the threats and opportunities VEA is facing as an agency?**

Opportunities

- a. Cultivate and utilize improvement ideas from staff- idea system
- b. Capture other sub-contract work lost by other agencies
- c. Further development of CBDS programs
- d. Reaching out for more fundraising, grants, donations
- e. Widening the skill base of the Individuals
- f. Grow VEA by increasing Individuals supported and revenue
- g. Marketing and educating the community about VEA
- h. Start a for-profit business

Threats

- a. Grant money is becoming scarce due to increased competition.
- b. VEA is reliant on state funding
- c. Many of VEA's Individuals are on medications and the regulations are shifting all the time.
- d. Minimum wage increase
- e. Rising cost of health insurance.

**4. What plans does DDS have to replace the Sheltered Workshop model (if any)?**

DDS plans to have agencies increase the number of Individuals supported in other settings such as Supported Employment and CBDS programs.

**5. Are you aware of any foundations or non profits locally that could provide financial assistance or seed money?**

No.

**6. Are there opportunities for collaboration with local colleges, agencies or businesses?**

Yes, there are many colleges in the area. We have held some “tag sales” of our bookcases at UMass in Amherst. There may be some opportunities through local farmers markets, and Gateway City Arts in Holyoke.

**7. To be self-sustaining can the woodworking business be funded by a mixture of both donations via fundraising and product sales?**

Yes

**8. Are we able to view Valley Bookcases financial and profit/loss statements?**

Yes, we have only one set of financial statements, and we have teased out the relevant information regarding Valley Bookcases, not including staff salaries. \* How many years back would you like to see?

**9. Does the woodworking group have clients with recurring orders? If so, what is the scale of these orders?**

Valley Bookcases does not currently have recurring orders. We have some repeat customers, who will order more on an annual basis. We had one customer who was recurring up until we raised our prices to better compete with the local market.

**10. How much revenue will need to be raised to continue operating Valley Bookcases for the next 3-5 years?**

Adding a couple of staff’s salaries into the equation, we would need to generate approximately \$135,000+ per year.

**11. What does VEA see as the “big picture” for this marketing plan?**

To increase sales, not only to the general public, but also to other retailers who could sell our product from their businesses. Creating a business which could not only justify hiring people to do the woodworking, but make it a necessity. Allowing for an integrated setting for our Individuals.

**12. Do you currently have an Office of Development?**

No.

**13. How much money is budgeted to spend on marketing and fundraising?**

There is currently \$250.00 in the annual budget for advertising for South Deerfield. Otherwise, there are no other funds for marketing or fundraising directly related to Valley Bookcases.

**14. Will paid staff or volunteers carry out the outreach/fundraising responsibilities for VEA?**

This would probably fall on both, but the bulk would fall on paid staff.

**15. Do you know your target audience? Any classification? What type of customer is VEA looking to attract?**

Traditionally the target audience was college students and young people looking to furnish their dorm or apartment cheaply with an un-finished bookcase for their text books. We also have targeted people looking to purchase an unfinished item cheaper, so that they may proceed to finish it themselves. (do it yourselves). We may also target those people looking to help out our agency/population by making a purchase with us, rather than another company.

**16. Does VEA presently have any existing marketing materials (graphics, logos, website, etc.)?**

Valley Bookcases has had their own logo for about 20 years. VEA also has a logo. Valley Bookcases has some 3-fold flyers for advertising. Currently there is a link from the main VEA

website which connects to a pricelist for Valley Bookcases and some general information about Valley Bookcases.

**17. What is your donor retention rate?**

There are not enough current donors to have a rate.

**18. Can donors claim a tax deduction for their gifts? Is there a simple way? How many of your current donors contribute regularly?**

Yes, donors could claim a tax deduction for their gifts. There is not currently a system in place for a simple way to do it. Our current donors are mostly connected to the 5K road race which was just run for the first time this past November. It is hoped that those same donors will contribute again this year for it. The proceeds for that, went to VEA. We have not had a fundraiser specifically for Valley Bookcases, or any regular donors.

**19. Has VEA completed any marketing research? If so to what extent?**

Within the past year, a local furniture shop was checked out as they also sell un-finished bookcases. At that time, our prices were adjusted to be more comparable to theirs.

**20. Who do you identify as your competitors? Is the competition fierce? Do you have any analysis of your competitors?**

Our main competition is the furniture shop mentioned in the previous question. Andy's and the Oak Shop. There was no formal analysis, just a price comparison. Andy's offers much more than just un-finished bookcases, and they advertise regularly in all forms of media. Our only other competition might be regular woodworking shops, as we have been known to make some custom cabinets. We are probably much cheaper than a regular woodworking shop for those.


Appendix F Finances

<b>Valley Educational Associates, Inc.</b>						
<b>Valley Bookcases Finances</b>						
<b>FY14</b>			<b>FY15</b>			
<b>Income:</b>				<b>Income:</b>		
Amherst Books	\$ 923.14			Grendel Books	\$ 795.98	
Bookcases-taxa	\$2,321.54			Bookcases-taxa	\$ 3,656	
Grey Matter	\$ 171.66					
Rodney's	\$1,617.66					
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$5,034.00</b>		<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$4,452.96</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>				<b>Expenses:</b>		
<b>Staff Salaries</b>						
Consumer Salar	\$32,767.9			Consumer Salar	\$18,239.89	
FICA/Medicare-	\$2,423.21			FICA/Medicare-	\$1,384.49	
Workers Comp-	\$638.50			Workers Comp-	\$ 328.55	
SUTA/MAHealth	\$ 676.44			SUTA/MAHealth	310.20	
Utilities - SD	\$6,060.48			Utilities - SD	\$7,671.35	
Rep/Maint-SD	\$ 920.28			Rep/Maint-SD	\$ 671.04	
Rent - SD	\$28,578.0			Rent - SD	\$29,032.00	
Program Supplie	\$3,000.00			Program Supplie	\$ 4,246.00	

<b>Telephone</b>	<b>\$3,099.30</b>			<b>Telephone</b>	<b>\$ 2,866.04</b>	
<b>Office Supplies</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>			<b>Office Supplies</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$79,164.15</b>		<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$66,749.56</b>
<b>Profit/Loss</b>		<b>\$74,130.15</b>		<b>Profit/Loss</b>		<b>\$62,296.60</b>

Appendix G Marketing Materials

Retail Card



**OUR MISSION**

Our custom-made bookcases are crafted with more than just quality—they're crafted with purpose. For over 25 years, Valley Woodworks has offered paid job opportunities and vocational training to the developmentally disabled. The purchase of our finely-made furniture supports our initiative to give our participants the skills they need to enter the workforce.

**OUR PRODUCT**

Our bookcases are finely crafted by our participants from white pine. The shelves are glued and fitted into each bookcase without the use of screws or nails. The bookcase has a luan back that is inset and nailed on, and is sanded & ready for finishing by you or the customer.

We also take orders for custom cabinets at unbeatable prices!

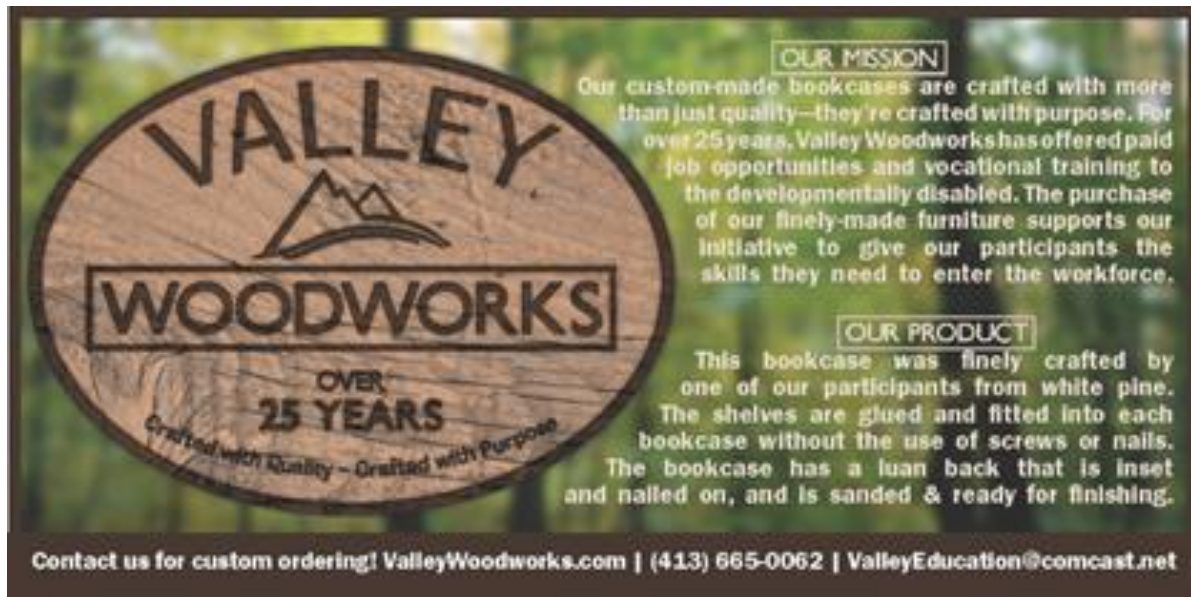
**BOOKCASE PRICES**

# of Shelves	Height	18" Wide		24" Wide		36" Wide	
		9" Deep	11" Deep	9" Deep	11" Deep	9" Deep	11" Deep
1	16"	\$50	\$55	\$70	\$75	\$90	\$95
2	29"	\$60	\$70	\$85	\$95	\$110	\$120
3	42"	\$70	\$85	\$100	\$115	\$130	\$145
4	55"	\$80	\$100	\$115	\$135	\$150	\$170
5	68"	\$90	\$115	\$130	\$155	\$170	\$195
6	82"	\$100	\$130	\$145	\$175	\$190	\$220

ValleyWoodworks.org | valleyeducational@comcast.net  
 Contact Mike or Amanda at 413-665-0062

Merchandising Label



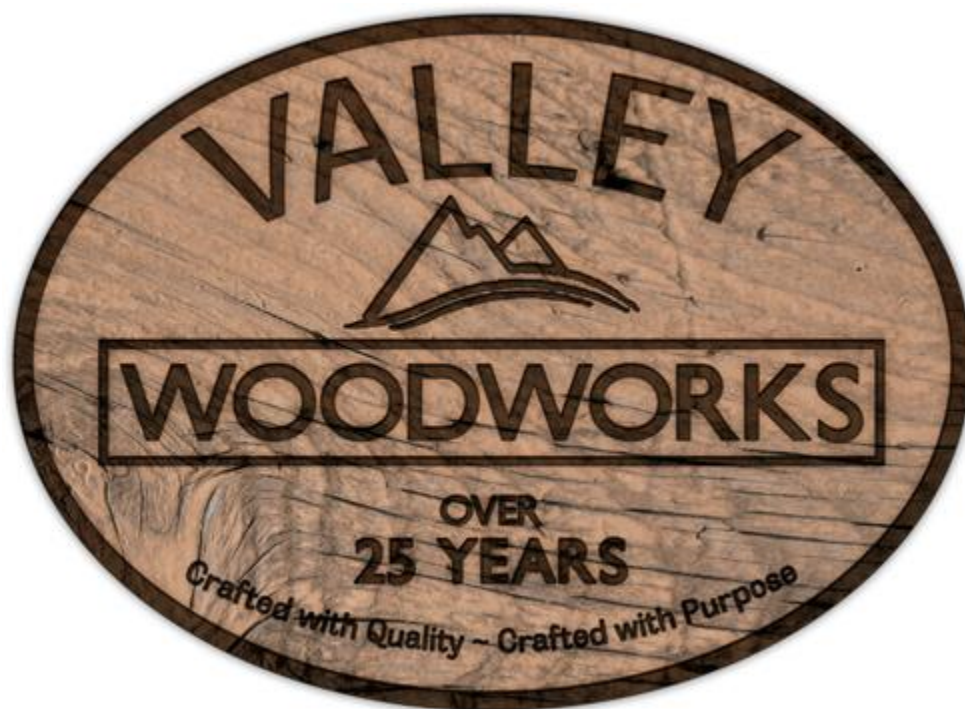


**OUR MISSION**  
Our custom-made bookcases are crafted with more than just quality—they're crafted with purpose. For over 25 years, Valley Woodworks has offered paid job opportunities and vocational training to the developmentally disabled. The purchase of our finely-made furniture supports our initiative to give our participants the skills they need to enter the workforce.

**OUR PRODUCT**  
This bookcase was finely crafted by one of our participants from white pine. The shelves are glued and fitted into each bookcase without the use of screws or nails. The bookcase has a luan back that is inset and nailed on, and is sanded & ready for finishing.

Contact us for custom ordering! [ValleyWoodworks.com](http://ValleyWoodworks.com) | (413) 665-0062 | [ValleyEducation@comcast.net](mailto:ValleyEducation@comcast.net)

*Logo*



*E-Newsletter*



# VALLEY BOOKCASES NEWS

Valley Bookcase Newsletter

VOL. 1, ISSUE 1

4.26.2016

## Top News



[New Website!](#)



First Annual 5K Run



New Products



Join Us on Facebook!

### Our New Website Has Launched!



It's with great excitement that we unveil our new website to you. Our website features an updated, clean design and intuitive, easy to use menu options. Our website serves as a way for our members and potential members to research our services, order our products, or view the latest news and events.

Our site offers links to our social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. We continually update these sites with new information on upcoming events, new products and latest news.

Come visit our new website!

### Upcoming Event—Cider Run!



On November 7, 2015 VEA was proud to host our first annual 5K Cider Run at the Ashley Reservoir in Holyoke, MA. The Cider Run was a big success for Valley Educational Associates, Inc.! We had donations from over 50 area businesses and registrations from over 130 participants! We aimed high as an agency, and we were able to surpass our event goals for the first year.

The amount of support was way more than we expected and we can only hope that it will grow in this year! This year, the event will still feature a 5K run or the 2 mile walk, a short Fun Run for children 12 and under, as well as awesome raffle prizes and apple cider.

[Read More](#) about it!

### New Products



### Join Us on Facebook



If you haven't liked us on Facebook, you've missed new product announcements, insider access to behind-the-scenes activities at Valley Bookcases, projects and more! Find us here.

Valley Bookcases

[Valleyeducation@comcast.net](mailto:Valleyeducation@comcast.net)

54C Whately Road, South Deerfield, MA 01370

Contact Mike or Amanda at (413) 665-0062

**Other Services**

**Supported Employment**

Paid job opportunities at local businesses provided with full-time job coach supports within individual / small group placements. Currently there are placements at Hillside Plastics, the Hampshire Mall, Kamins Management Co., Hadley Village Barn Shops, Staples of Hadley & Greenfield, Samson Manufacturing, Vets Memorial of Sunderland and Brookside Condos.



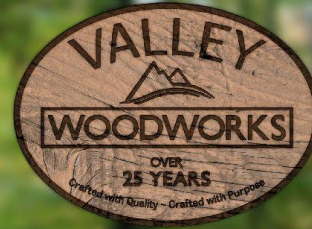
Our services can benefit individuals, families, employers and others. For the individual with disabilities, We offers the opportunity for individuals to experience a wide array of work options. These options include work in: community-based supported employment, agency owned businesses and program -based sheltered workshops.

PLACE STAMP HERE

Valley Woodworks  
45654C Whately Road  
South Deerfield, MA 01373

**Valley Woodworks**

<http://valleyeducational.org/>



**Crafting Value for More Than 25 years!**

**Real Work for Real Pay!**

**Let's Discover OUR SERVICES**



**About us**

Valley Woodworks is one of the three production sites of Valley Educational Associates, Inc (VEA). VEA is a non-profit 501C3 designated corporation providing work, experienced training to the developmentally disabled.

Individuals of Valley Woodworks are trained and supported to perform paid jobs within the local community as well as in our own work centers. The individuals served by VEA perform real work and are paid real wages. Commercial references upon request.

The individuals served by VEA perform REAL WORK and are paid REAL WAGES.

**Clinical Support**

Valley Woodworks has the support of two Ph.D level Licensed Psychologists who work closely with program staff and participants to develop individualized goals and strategies to improve appropriate work behavior while reducing those behaviors that interfere with success on the job.

**Our Products**

Our bookcases are finely crafted by our participants from white pine. The shelves are glued and fitted into each bookcase without the use of screws or nails. The bookcase has a luan back that is inset and nailed on, and is sanded & ready for finishing by you or the customer.

**We also take orders for custom cabinets at unbeatable prices!**



Bookcase Price							
# of Shelves	Height	18" Wide		24" Wide		36" Wide	
		9" Deep	11" Deep	9" Deep	11" Deep	9" Deep	11" Deep
1	16"	\$50	\$55	\$70	\$75	\$90	\$95
2	29"	\$60	\$70	\$85	\$95	\$110	\$120
3	42"	\$70	\$85	\$100	\$115	\$130	\$145
4	55"	\$80	\$100	\$115	\$135	\$150	\$170
5	68"	\$90	\$115	\$130	\$155	\$170	\$195
6	82"	\$100	\$130	\$145	\$175	\$190	\$220



**Contact Us**

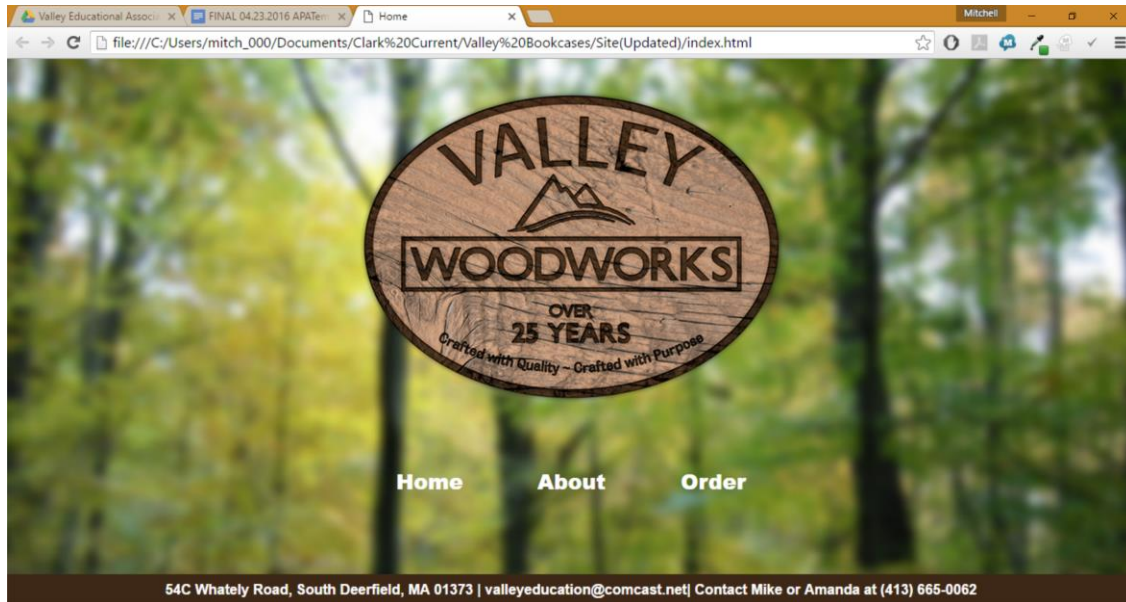
**Valley Woodworks**  
54C Whately Road  
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[valleyeducational@comcast.net](mailto:valleyeducational@comcast.net)  
Visit us on the web:  
<http://valleyeducational.org/>

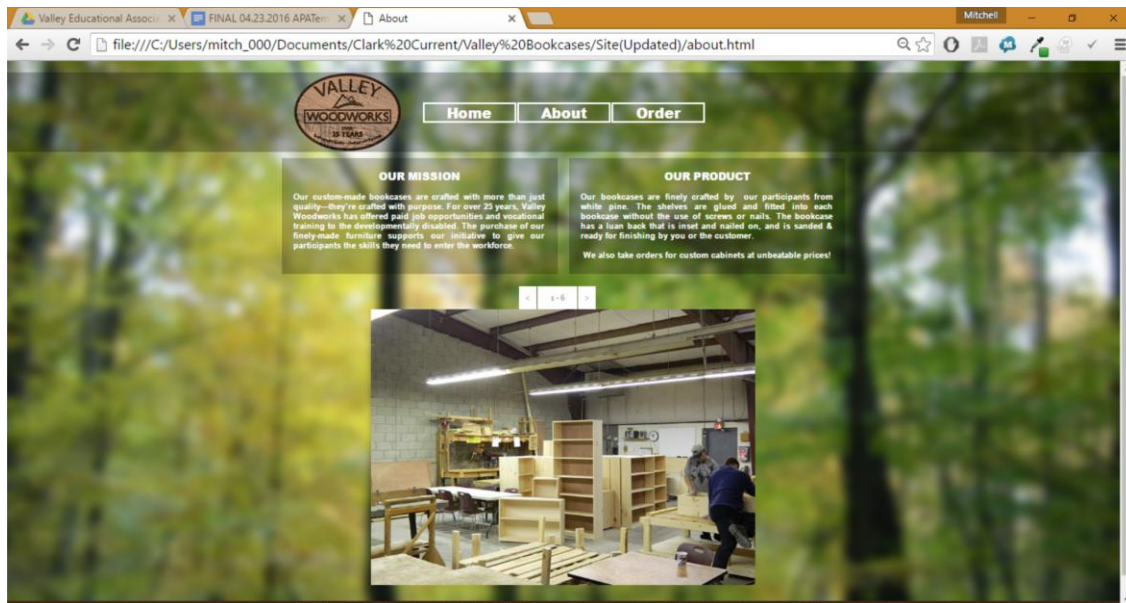


Website

Homepage



About



Order

**VALLEY WOODWORKS**  
Over 25 YEARS

[Home](#) [About](#) [Order](#)

# of Shelves	Height	18" Wide	
		9" Deep	11" Deep
1	16"	\$90	\$95
2	29"	\$90	\$95
3	42"	\$90	\$95
4	55"	\$90	\$100
5	68"	\$90	\$110
6	82"	\$100	\$130

# of Shelves	Height	24" Wide	
		9" Deep	11" Deep
1	16"	\$70	\$75
2	29"	\$85	\$95
3	42"	\$100	\$115
4	55"	\$115	\$135
5	68"	\$130	\$155
6	82"	\$145	\$175

# of Shelves	Height	36" Wide	
		9" Deep	11" Deep
1	16"	\$90	\$95
2	29"	\$110	\$120
3	42"	\$130	\$145
4	55"	\$150	\$170
5	68"	\$170	\$195
6	82"	\$190	\$220

**Name:**

**Email:**

**Company:**

**Phone Number:**

**Message:**

**Appendix H Presentation**