



## Teaching Entrepreneurs with Disabilities How to Build Financial Security

Synergies Work, Inc. is an Atlanta-based organization that empowers people with disabilities to become financially independent by building sustainable businesses. The nonprofit teams with mentors, investors and corporate and government partners, including the FDIC, to support the entrepreneurial journey of individuals with disabilities. Synergies Work uses the FDIC's Money Smart financial education curriculum to help people with disabilities save money, plan for the future and become financially independent.

In May 2017, the FDIC and Synergies Work held a Money Smart training session for vocational rehabilitation, behavioral health and community services professionals, as well as individuals with disabilities and their families. During the training, FDIC Community Affairs Specialist Elaine Hunter discussed key topics in the FDIC's Money Smart Computer-Based Instruction (CBI) program, including credit, checking accounts, scams, credit scores and setting financial goals. A local attorney also discussed the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, which allows people with disabilities and their families to open tax-advantaged savings accounts. (To learn more about the ABLE Act, see an [article](#) in the Fall 2017 issue of FDIC Consumer News.)

To learn more about the ABLE Act, see an upcoming article in the Fall 2017 issue of FDIC Consumer News.

And in August 2017, Synergies Work joined with Georgia Microboards Association, a nonprofit organization based in Decatur that provides training and technical support for people with disabilities, to conduct a one-day Money Smart seminar on how to start or run a small business. More than 50 people attended, primarily individuals with disabilities and guardians of people with disabilities. Hunter taught key lessons from the Money Smart for Small Business curriculum, such as taxation and organizational structures. She also focused on credit and savings concepts from Money Smart for Adults.

Inspired by these two training sessions, Money Smart News offers the following tips for financial educators teaching individuals with disabilities and their families:

**Encourage people with disabilities to save as much money as they can so they can address their most important needs.** "Make the best use of your money by prioritizing it," Hunter told attendees.

Aarti Sahgal, the founder of Synergies Work, added: "Look at [the training] as a tool to fight poverty. If you have employment and you don't know about saving money, how can you budget? How can you plan for the future?"

**Tailor the training to each person's goals and needs.** Sahgal said his organization taps into participants' talents to "expand their vision of what is possible and enable them to contribute to their communities."

Individuals who attended the training also wanted to "learn about various aspects of owning their own business, including taxation, effects on federal benefits and organizational structures," Hunter said.

**Expand your audience.** Consider who may benefit from the training you are planning. For example, in addition to financial educators and potential entrepreneurs with disabilities, attendees at the two Money Smart training sessions included representatives of state agencies and business owners who have disabilities.

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