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CREASSE

PRACTICAL HANDBOOK ON "HOW TO GUIDE COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL FACILITATOR"

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENT MENTORING AND COACHING ACTIVITIES

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Brief Summary

This module will equip learners with the practical skills and knowledge necessary to implement mentoring and coaching activities specifically tailored for social and solidarity entrepreneurs. Upon completion, participants will be adept at identifying the unique challenges and opportunities faced by individuals and organizations, and they will learn to deliver mentoring programs. Furthermore, the module will delve into effective coaching exercises, enabling learners to understand how to guide entrepreneurs in problem-solving, strategic planning, and personal growth.

Module Objectives

The specific learning outcomes of this module include:

- **Build Capacity for Scaling and Replicating Impact:** To assist entrepreneurs in developing strategies for expanding their reach and impact, ensuring the long-term sustainability and growth of their initiatives.

- **Facilitate Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:** To provide a structured approach for identifying challenges, exploring solutions, and making informed decisions that align with their social mission.
- **Cultivate a Peer-Learning Environment:** To create spaces where entrepreneurs can share experiences, learn from each other's successes and failures, and build a sense of collective support.
- **Promote Personal Growth and Well-being:** To provide entrepreneurs with support for managing stress, balancing work and personal life, and developing self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

Checklist

- This is a checklist for facilitators preparing themselves to study and implement this learning module.
- - Understand the **mentor's role** (guidance, support, knowledge sharing) versus a **coach's role** (facilitating self-discovery, challenging assumptions, fostering accountability).
- - Understand the **key stages of a mentoring relationship** (initiation, cultivation, closure), active listening techniques and effective feedback delivery.
- Understand the **purpose and mechanics** of mentoring and coaching planned activities (e.g., role-plays, group discussions, case study analyses, practical exercises).
- Know how to **explain instructions**, set up scenarios, manage group dynamics, and facilitate debriefings for each activity.

- Understand that SSE initiatives face **specific challenges and opportunities**
- To know **some specific examples of successful SSE mentoring** or coaching interventions that were overcome with guidance.
- To be able to confirm classroom setup, technology requirements (projector, internet, collaboration tools if online), and any necessary breaks or timing adjustments.

Learning Content

Why mentoring and coaching in SSE enterprises?
Entrepreneurship is a challenging and often lonely journey. Mentoring and coaching sessions are both very important for entrepreneurs across the board, but they hold particular significance for those within the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).

Mentoring is a process of personal and professional development where a more experienced person, called mentor, guides and supports less experienced people, called mentees, in their growth. It is based on a relationship of trust and mutual learning, where the mentors share their knowledge, skills and experience to help the mentees develop their potential.

Coaching is a process of personalized accompaniment that seeks to help people achieve their goals, both personally and professionally. A coach, who is a professional who facilitates this process, uses various tools and techniques to help the clients identify their goals, overcome obstacles, and develop new skills.

Mentors and coaches can provide an external viewpoint, helping to identify blind spots, challenge assumptions, and **offer alternative solutions or strategies.**

In fact, both mentoring and coaching help entrepreneurs hone critical skills beyond their core product or service expertise. This includes leadership, communication, negotiation, financial management, strategic planning, and problem-solving.

The main difference between coaching and mentoring lies in their focus and duration. Coaching focuses on the development of specific skills to achieve specific short-term goals, whereas mentoring involves long-term support, based on the mentor's experience and knowledge, for the mentee's personal and professional growth.

In our specific case, SSE enterprises face a unique set of challenges and complexities that make mentoring and coaching even more vital! SSE enterprises are collective initiatives, so they must handle participatory decisions, conflicts management and collective work organization because teamwork is one of the cores of this kind of formula.

How can coaches and mentors support SSE entrepreneurs?
SSE entrepreneurs must navigate the delicate balance between **achieving financial sustainability and maximizing their social and environmental impact**. Mentors and coaches with experience in this specific area can help them integrate these goals, develop robust business models that prioritize both, and avoid mission drift.

Unlike traditional businesses, SSE ventures often rely on a mix of funding sources, including grants, impact investments, and community-based financing. **Mentors and coaches can guide them in understanding and accessing these diverse financial streams, helping them articulate their social value to impact investors.**

The legal and regulatory landscape for SSE enterprises can be intricate and vary significantly across regions. **Specialized mentors can provide guidance on legal structures (cooperatives, mutuals, etc.) and compliance.**

Furthermore, scaling an SSE enterprise often means **scaling impact, not just profit**. Mentors can guide entrepreneurs in developing strategies for expanding their reach while maintaining their core values and social mission, potentially through replication, franchising, or collaborative models. **Mentors and coaches can support in developing resilience, navigating ethical dilemmas, and fostering a culture of integrity and transparency within their organizations.**

SSE entrepreneurs operate in a unique space where their mission, values, and business model are intrinsically linked. **Coaching and mentoring can provide the tailored support needed to succeed** not just as businesses, but as powerful agents of positive social and environmental change.

Some keys aspect for a successful mentoring and coaching process are:

- Establishment of effective communication between the mentors and the mentees and common agreement on expectations

- Organisation and planning according to the objectives set in the beginning
- Accompanying, listening and acting with closeness and professionalism
- Encouraging analysis and action
- Identifying and proposing areas for improvement.

Examples

Activity Example: "The Sustainable Funding Challenge"
The following example integrates practical group discussion and role-play to directly address a critical business acumen challenge (namely, funding access) for SSE entrepreneurs providing also a safe space for practice and feedback.

Let's imagine a group of SSE entrepreneurs, some running a community garden project, some a circular economy textile workshop, and a third a social enterprise café. This session aims to help entrepreneurs diversify their funding and better articulate their financial needs and social value.

1. Icebreaker & Setting the Stage (10 min):
Technique: Quick "check-in" asking each entrepreneur to share one current funding challenge they're facing.
Facilitator Role: Listen actively, identify common themes, and acknowledge shared struggles. Briefly frame the session's objective: to explore diverse funding avenues.

2. Group Discussion: "Unpacking Funding Streams" (30 min):
Technique: Structured brainstorming and experience sharing.
Topic: "What are the typical funding sources for our types of enterprises?" (Initial brainstorming).
"Who here has successfully accessed non-grant funding (e.g., crowdfunding, community shares, impact investment, ethical loans, revenue-generating activities)?"
Facilitator Role: Facilitate the discussion, ensuring everyone contributes. Introduce new funding models relevant to SSE (e.g., patient capital, blended finance). Challenge assumptions and encourage deeper thinking about financial sustainability. Use a whiteboard or flip chart to capture key ideas and funding types.

3. Role-Play: "Pitching for Impact Investment" (30 min):
Technique: Paired role-play with constructive feedback.
Scenario: One entrepreneur plays an SSE founder seeking impact investment for scaling, while the other plays an "impact investor" asking probing questions.
Instructions:
Round 1 (15 min): Each pair gets 5 minutes for the "pitch" and 10 minutes for investor questions. Focus on how well the entrepreneur articulates their social impact alongside their financial model.
Switch Roles (15 min): The "investor" becomes the "entrepreneur" and vice versa.
Debrief (15 min): Bring the whole group back.

Facilitator Role: Before Role-Play: Provide a brief checklist for a compelling impact investment pitch (e.g., problem, solution, impact metrics, team, financial ask, exit strategy). Emphasize that impact investors seek both return on investment AND return on impact.

During Role-Play: Circulate among pairs, offering quiet suggestions or clarification.

After Role-Play: Lead a group debrief asking:

- "What did you find most challenging about pitching to an impact investor?"
- "What were the most effective questions the 'investor' asked?"
- "How did you articulate your social impact in financial terms, or vice-versa?"

4. Action Planning & Peer Accountability (15 min):

Technique: Individual reflection and commitment.

Activity: Each entrepreneur identifies 1-2 concrete actions they will take in the next month to explore a new funding source or refine their pitch.

Facilitator Role: Encourage specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. Facilitate a brief "accountability buddy" pairing where entrepreneurs share their action steps with one another.

Activity example: The Cocreation exercise for SSE enterprises

The co-creation activities are aimed at fostering collaboration amongst peers, leverage the diverse expertise of the target group, and enhance learning by involving multiple stakeholders in the development of innovative and practical solutions for SSE entrepreneurship.

These activities will encourage shared ownership and creativity and will empower participants to get technical insights. The key aspects of co-creation exercises include:

Collaboration: Co-creation involves active collaboration among peers and various stakeholders throughout the design process.

Inclusivity: Co-creation aims to involve diverse perspectives.

Iterative Process: Co-design often involves an iterative approach, with multiple rounds of feedback and refinement. Participants provide feedback, which informs further iterations of the design.

Shared Ownership: All participants share ownership of the outcome.

Example: "The Mission vs. Margin challenge"

This exercise provides a concise, visual method for an SSE entrepreneur **to understand and balance financial sustainability with social impact.** It's ideal for a one-on-one mentoring session or a small group with a shared challenge.

Scenario

Sam, who runs a social enterprise café employing at-risk youth, faces a common dilemma: maintaining affordable prices for community access (social impact) versus generating sufficient profit to invest in training and cover operational costs (financial sustainability).

The steps

Setting the Stage: The mentor introduces the challenge of balancing mission and margin. The entrepreneur, Sam, briefly explains their current struggle, articulating how maintaining low prices for social benefit impacts their financial viability.

Mapping Current Position: The entrepreneur draws a simple **2x2 matrix.** The horizontal axis is labeled "Financial Margin" (Low to High), and the vertical axis is labeled "Social Impact" (Low to High). The entrepreneur then places a dot on the matrix representing their **current average business activity**, likely falling in the "Low Margin, High Impact" quadrant.

Brainstorming and Mapping Alternatives: The mentor prompts the entrepreneur to brainstorm alternative products, services, or pricing strategies. For each idea, the entrepreneur can place a new dot on the matrix, estimating its potential position based on its expected financial margin and social impact.

Three Examples:
Premium Catering Services for Businesses: Higher Margin, High Impact (provides structured training and income for youth).

Office Coffee Delivery Subscription (Socially Priced): High Margin, High Impact (businesses pay more due to social mission).

Branded Merchandise (e.g., T-shirts): Lower Impact, High Margin (stabilizes finances, but less direct social service).

Analysis and Insight Generation: The facilitator guides the entrepreneur to analyze the completed matrix. The visual representation highlights that operating solely in the "low margin, high impact" quadrant isn't the only path. It clarifies opportunities to explore offerings that fall into the **"High Margin, High Impact" quadrant**, demonstrating that profit and purpose can be mutually reinforcing.

The entrepreneur gains insight into strategically diversifying activities to achieve overall balance, rather than perpetual compromise.

Commitment to Action: The entrepreneur identifies 1-2 concrete, actionable steps based on the insights gained. For instance, Sam might commit to drafting a proposal for corporate catering services or exploring a subscription model, specifically highlighting how these higher-margin activities directly support his social mission.

Final Checklist

After the completion of this module, you should be able to:

- reflect on their **role as facilitators** – to empower, guide, and create a safe learning space, rather than just lecture.
- foster a collaborative atmosphere and remain adaptable to the group's needs throughout the module.
- understand when to adopt a mentoring approach (sharing experience, direct guidance) versus a coaching approach (facilitating self-discovery, non-directive questioning) specifically within the context of SSE challenges and opportunities.
- facilitate discussions that help entrepreneurs articulate their **"return on impact" as clearly as their "return on investment."**
- guide interactive sessions and structured group discussions that effectively address **entrepreneurial challenges** (e.g., pitching, problem-solving, strategic planning) for SSE founders.

- effectively lead group discussions, ensure equitable participation, mediate disagreements, and cultivate a **supportive environment** where entrepreneurs learn effectively from each other's experiences and perspectives.
- **deliver feedback** that is specific, actionable, and encouraging, particularly in sensitive scenarios like role-plays, enabling entrepreneurs to identify areas for improvement
- adapt activities based on the specific needs, energy, and **emerging challenges of the participating SSE entrepreneurs.**

Reflection Exercise

To encourage critical engagement after the study and the implementation of this module, you can ask participants the following questions:

1. When you consider the challenges faced by Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entrepreneurs, what's one or the areas where the **mentor or coach session** can effectively have an impact?

1. Before this module, what was your biggest assumption about supporting entrepreneurs in balancing their social mission with financial sustainability? Has that perspective shifted and, if so, how?

1. Beyond specific techniques or exercises, what's the most crucial **mindset or approach** you think is important to truly empower SSE entrepreneurs?

Additional Resources and Further Reading

- **The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE). Finding a social enterprise mentor.**

Retrieved from: Finding a social enterprise mentor

- **FasterCapital. The Importance of Mentorship in Social Entrepreneurship.**

Retrieved from: The Importance Of Mentorship In Social Entrepreneurship - FasterCapital

- **Association for Coaching. Coaching for social change.**

Retrieved from: Association for Coaching

- **International Labour Organization (ILO). Social and Solidarity Economy.**

Retrieved from: Social and Solidarity Economy | International Labour Organization

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project number: 2024-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000256807.