CO::LAB

- a guide on how to start an entrepreneurial project and come from idea to action
CO:LAB was a three-year project about entrepreneurship for young people with refugee backgrounds. The project was implemented and developed in a partnership between DRC Danish Refugee Council and Foreningen Roskilde Festival between 2018 and 2020.

**Contents**

The project consisted of professional workshops on entrepreneurship, mentorships by voluntary business professionals for all the participants, and the building of partnerships between other organizations and municipalities.

**Results**

CO:LAB was a big success, and overall 36 entrepreneurs with refugee backgrounds completed the project. Of these, 23 succeeded in starting their own business because of the aid they received from the CO:LAB project. 65% succeeded in starting their own business, and 95% were in jobs or taking an education at the end of the project. You can read more about how you can succeed in helping refugees and others into becoming entrepreneurs in this e-book.
INDHOLDSFORTEGNELSE

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CO:LAB
Introduction to the E-BOOK

This e-book aims to help anyone who wants to embark on an entrepreneurial journey. It can be used by volunteers, employees of NGOs, municipalities, community centers and the like anywhere in the world.

The e-book is created as a manual that you can use to look things up in. You can choose to use the concept as a whole or just some elements - depending on what you need.

In summary, the e-book contains everything you need to start an entrepreneurial process:

- How do you get started
- What is the purpose of an entrepreneurial project
- Partnerships and cooperation
- What activities can you start
- Recruitment of participants and volunteers
- Workshops and themes
- Documentation and evaluation

The concept has been tested in both Denmark and Turkey and has therefore been adapted to different cultural contexts. The target group is primarily young refugees from the Middle East between the ages of 18 and 30, but can also be used for other target groups if you adapt it.

You can also add the applicable rules in the labor market in the country you want to start the project in.

Background for the e-book

DRC - The Danish Refugee Council has, with funding from Foreningen Roskilde Festival completed the entrepreneurial project CO:LAB in the time period between 2018-2020. CO:LAB has worked with young refugees in Denmark and Turkey with backgrounds from the Middle East - primarily being from Syria, Iran and Iraq.
How to get started

DRC - The Danish Refugee Council’s International Department and Integration Department in Denmark have good experiences with entrepreneurial projects with professional workshops, where participants are given relevant knowledge in entrepreneurship and labor market rules.

In addition, we have had good experiences with the use of volunteers who strengthen refugees’ own ideas and goals, through the role as mentors. In CO:LAB, we have experience recruiting volunteers with relevant work experience who serve as business mentors for the young entrepreneurs.

Presenters for the professional workshops and voluntary business mentors must be recruited. And then, of course, participants have to be recruited.

Recruitment of the participants can be done by advertising on social media, facilitating inspirational workshops or by getting help from the volunteers to spread the message in their own networks. Municipalities or community centers can also be involved in recruitment.

It is a good idea to arrange so that the workshops are facilitated in the evening, so that participants can take care of language school, education, work or the like during the day.
The purpose of an entrepreneurial project

Many people with refugee backgrounds from the Middle East have been entrepreneurs in their home countries. They come from a culture where entrepreneurship is a big part of the way you support yourself and your family.

The aim of the project has therefore been to help young refugees bring this entrepreneurial spirit into an entrepreneurial project and become an integral part of society - be it in Denmark, a neighbouring country of origin, their home country or another place.

The purpose is to teach young people some entrepreneurial methods that can be used all over the world, and at the same time help young people to enter social communities with other young people, both with and without refugee backgrounds.

Entrepreneurship in refugee camps or community centers around the world can be a prerequisite for refugees to earn a living and maintain a decent standard of living.
Partnerships and collaboration

The local communities in both the national and international efforts are important partners in the project. The voluntary business mentors must have local roots, so that they can introduce the young refugees to local partners and places to seek advice and guidance.

Furthermore, in connection with the project, it is advantageous to make an overview of local initiatives that could possibly support the effort and be referred to as needed.

In this way, you can make best use of existing offers and enter strategic partnerships with partners locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

In CO:LAB, we have had success with continuously gaining experience from external partners who can be involved in the project. The external partners function both as suppliers and coaching partners for example as educators, experts or in other roles.
Activities

The activities in CO:LAB are a combination of recruiting participants and volunteer business mentors, organizing workshops and matching participants and volunteer business mentors.

The project is developed together with the target group and based on their needs. The learning and knowledge element has a central focus, which means that the project is continuously adapted and tested in new formats within the given framework.

Recruitment of participants and volunteer mentors

The target group for the activities in CO:LAB have been young refugees from the Middle East or Africa who need support in establishing micro and small businesses. It is intended that these efforts will benefit young refugees between the ages of 18-30 in both refugee camps, community centers, asylum centers, when they have been granted a residence permit in a third country, or return to their home country.
The activities can also be used for other target audiences like for example, recipients of cash beneficiaries, unemployment benefit recipients, refugees, refugees who have received family reunification, young students or the like.

In Denmark, the recruitment of participants and business mentor volunteers for the project has primarily been done through the Danish Refugee Council’s volunteer network with a total of 8,000 volunteers, who contact almost 29,000 refugees each year. The participants and volunteers have gained knowledge about the project via email, postings on social media as well as through presentations by the Danish Refugee Council’s voluntary coordinators and regional staff consultants.

In addition, recruitment has been made through DFUNK - the Danish Refugee Council’s youth organisation - and through other relevant organizations, and municipalities. In the international areas, recruitment has primarily been done through the Danish Refugee Council’s network in refugee camps and community centers, as well as contacting other relevant partners in the field.
Organisation of workshops

The project consists of professional workshops in which participants are prepared for how to start their own business, in wherever location they are in. The methods are generic and can be used anywhere in the world. However, they will be context dependent as the conditions for starting your own business are different depending on where you are in the world. As a starting point, the course consists of four workshops, but it can be adjusted as needed.

There will always be variations in the rules of the labor market in the different countries, but themes such as budget, communication and idea development, presentation and pitch will be relevant to all. The workshops also serve a social function where a network is created for both the participants and the business mentor volunteers. It is therefore important that time is set aside for a joint meal and/or to talk together. It is the facilitator who sets the framework for dialogue across participants and volunteers.
Organisation of workshops - continued

Donations of startup capital as well as donations of production funds based on financial sustainability and potential for job creation into the project can be taken into consideration.

Networking events, sales fairs and internet platforms can also be taken into consideration to make contact between contractors and (local) market stakeholders.

In addition, a panel of experts may be taken into consideration with potential investors for whom the new entrepreneurs can present their ideas to and gain professional and financial savings from.
Matching participants and volunteer mentors

The voluntary effort is a core element of the project. The voluntary business mentors in Denmark are self-employed, or are students studying, for example, innovation and entrepreneurship. They therefore have a professional background with relevance to the project. For example, the business mentor volunteers may be former project participants, who themselves have refugee backgrounds and have been successful in starting their own business.

In this way, they can act as role models for new project participants and help them start their business, as well as create a social network with other volunteers and participants in the project. Collaboration with private companies can be made to provide voluntary business mentors. For example, the consulting and auditing firm Ernst and Young has contributed to CO:LAB project with both teachers and volunteer business mentors pro bono.
THE WORKSHOP THEMES ARE:

WORKSHOP #1...............................13
Introduction to starting your own business - what does it take, and how does one go from idea to reality?

WORKSHOP #2.........................14
How do you go from idea to product? Introduction to idea development, analysis of needs and target group - including market analysis.

WORKSHOP #3.........................15
Communication, sales and marketing. Introduction to social media, logo, market and competitors.

WORKSHOP #4.........................16
Presentation and economics.
Workshop #1

- Introduction to starting your own business - what does it take, and how does one go from idea to reality?
- Introduction to entrepreneurial methods - including legal advice, advice on opportunities and challenges in the local labor market.

Material for workshop #1

- Types of entrepreneurship
- Action Plan
- Business model Canvas

Download teaching material here
Workshop #2

- How do you go from idea to product?
- Introduction to idea development.

Material for workshop #2

- How do I go from idea to product?
- Introduction to idea development
- Start-up the business plan
- Mindset
- Network

Download teaching material here
Workshop #3

- Communication, sales and marketing.
- Introduction to social media, logo, market and competitors.

Material for workshop #3

- Where, how and with what can I sell my product?
- Introduction til prototyping, market and competitors

Download teaching material here
Material for workshop #4

The material is with examples from Denmark. Please find examples of legislation and rules for starting a company in your own country.

**Download teaching material here**
Documentation and evaluation

The Danish Refugee Council has conducted documentation and evaluation of the activities in CO:LAB.

Attendance is recorded at every workshop. Participants and volunteers fill out questionnaires after each workshop, and they are continuously involved in the development of the project by identifying their needs in relation to themes and guidance. Furthermore, it is measured by how many of the attendees who subsequently start their own business, get into other employment, or are on their way to it.

The evaluations show that 98% of participants were satisfied, or very satisfied, with the content of the workshops. And up to 65% of the participants from the four teams have succeeded in starting their own business.

The participants have reflected and said:

› COLAB helped me in gaining a lot of valuable knowledge about how to open and develop your own business in Denmark, as well as many important connections
› Thank you. It has been useful for getting an overview for what should I keep in mind when developing my plan and start a business
› Thank you so much for the help!
› I hope that it will be a long course
› Everything is good!
› It is a good idea that it will happen in many cities, not just the big cities
The project has supported the following Sustainable Development Goals, which are included as an active part of the project and used as part of the evaluation process:

**SDG 4.4:** On quality and education, we facilitate a total of four high-quality workshops to equip the young people with relevant entrepreneurship skills.

**SDG 8.3:** Creating decent jobs and economic growth through entrepreneurship, and in this way, fighting poverty.

**SDG 10.2:** About gender equality regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, etc. The aim is to have an equal number of men and women in the project.

**SDG 12.2:** Sustainability in relation to optimal utilization of resources by using less paper, obtaining environmentally friendly materials, and ensuring that catering (food and drinks) is thought to be sustainable, in the sense that it is healthy and nutritious, and that it is preferably purchased from socio-economic enterprises with, for example, refugees employed.

**SDG 17.17:** About partnerships. Public, private and civil society partnerships are encouraged.
Contact info

- if you want to know more...
- would like to have us out for a presentation...
- want help in starting an entrepreneurial project...

Then contact:

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