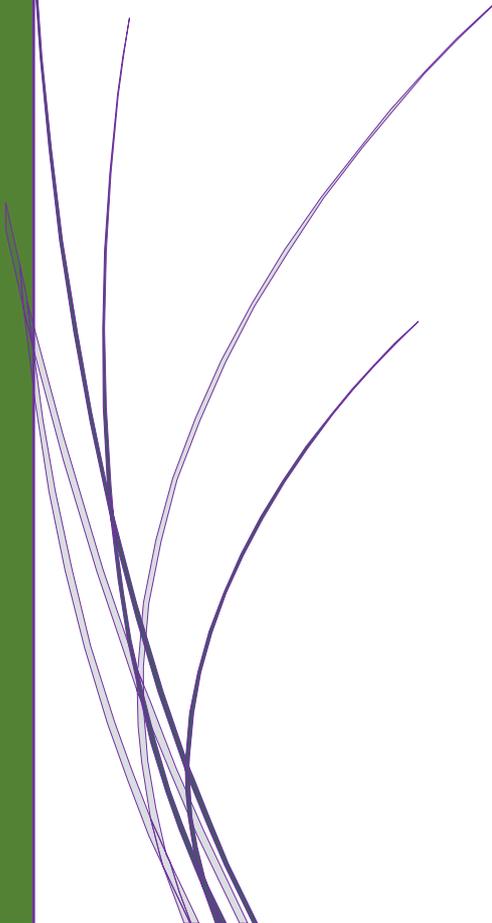


15-05-2013

Mentor Handbook

Supporting mentors with the SESP training material



Maria Helena Antunes
AIDLEARN, LDA, LISBON, PORTUGAL

Mentors Handbook

Maria Helena Antunes¹

Introduction

In the SESP learning programme you will guide and mentor professionals in the social entrepreneurship strategy planning. You will support the learners when they're working on the modules / units and completing the proposed activities.

This handbook contains useful information to assist you working with the training material elaborated within the SESP (Social Entrepreneurship Strategy Planning) project and clarify your role as a mentor as well.

SESP Project

Aim

The general aim of the SESP Project² was "to contribute to the development of Social Entrepreneurship across the EU by transfer of innovative products and processes and exchange of good practice³".

The driving forces for the development of Social Entrepreneurship in participant countries as well as on the European level were identified and found new solutions for the SE sector for sustainable development and job creation by implementing pilot innovative training instruments. Social enterprises are invited to the on-line based learning platform allowing them to cooperate across borders, exchange case studies and communicate.

The SESP project developed innovative learning models and (e-) learning content which are flexible enough to address the specific needs of the Social Entrepreneurship (time and place flexibility), are adoptable and modular (different backgrounds, sectors) and reflect the practical needs of the end users.

The SESP project adapted previous products to address specific Social Entrepreneurship needs in strategic planning. The target group is also approached throughout good practice examples and case studies.

Target Groups

SESP focuses on managers / decision-makers of social enterprises, regardless of the sector to which they belong.

- Primary target group: Managers / owners of social enterprises;
- Secondary target group: Educational institutions, trainers, tutors, coaches, consultants

Partnership

SESP project was developed (1 Oct. 2011 – 30 Sep. 2013) by a European partnership composed by six organisations, as follows: Coordinator - Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency (Bulgaria); Partners: Samaritans (Bulgaria); MERIG (Austria); AidLearn (Portugal); LINK & VIRTUS e.V. (Germany) and VSI SAREATS (Lithuania).

¹ Managing partner of AidLearn, Human Resources Consulting; Ltd.

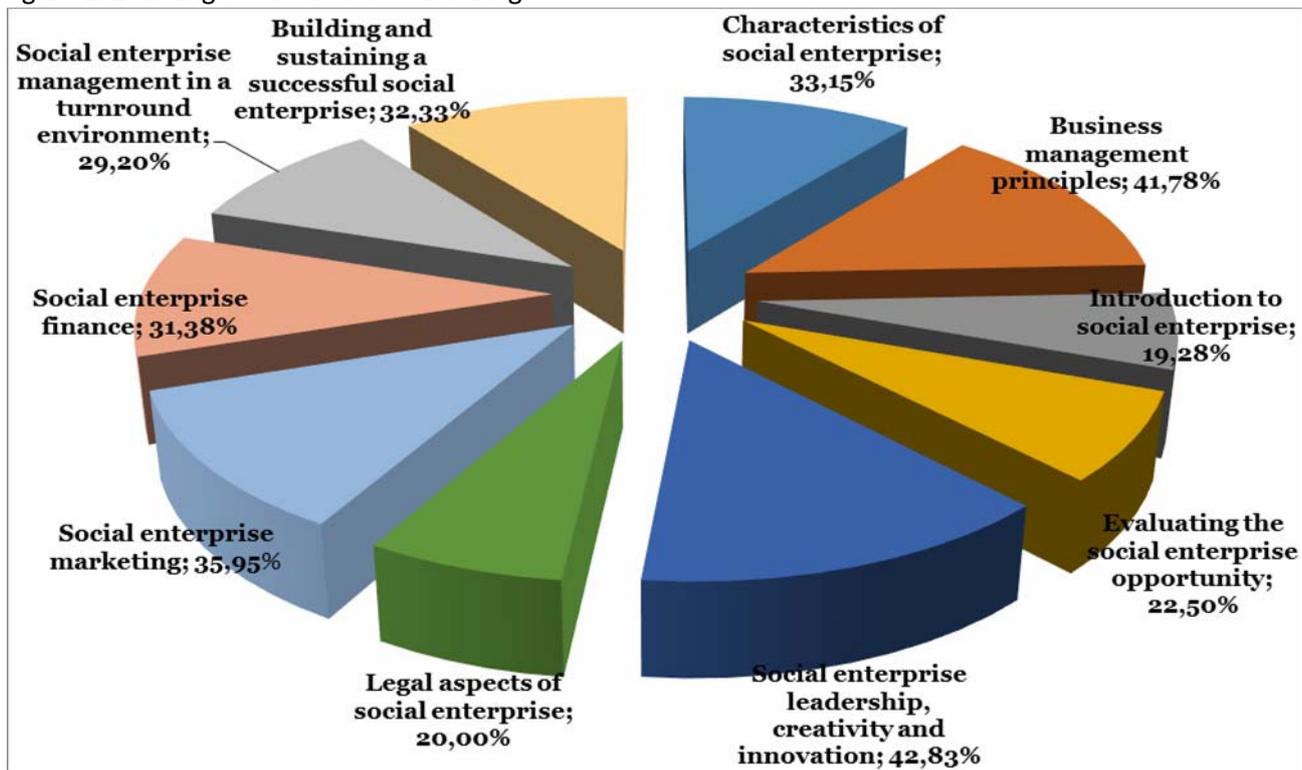
² See SESP Project website at <http://sesp-project.eu/en/>

³ SESP Project is a Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project, based on the Strategy Train Project (for further information see: <http://www.merig.org/strategy/en/>)

The SESP Learning Model

SESP course supports learners to strengthen their business management capacity and according to identified learning needs (see Figure 1, in SESP WP2 Research)

Figure 1: Learning needs % of the SE managers



General Course Structure

The key elements of the course are: online and on-site components, asynchronous communication, individual and collaborative learning scenarios, expert facilitation and andragogical approach, community learning and virtual study groups.

SESP course uses a blended solution, combining the process of self-based learning with online support, face to face sessions (in seminars) and on-site mentoring. SESP modular structure makes possible that each of the modules can be included in individual learning pathways according to the identified learning needs.

Mentors/Pedagogical Team

You/the training team should have expertise on distance tutoring, face to face training and advising/consulting on the field of social enterprise management and strategy. Preferably it is desirable that just one person (mentor) plays the three different roles that should be performed (according to the moment and nature of the learning process). The roles are: tutoring (at distance), training (face to face) and advising/consulting (on-site).

The SESP Learning Pathways

The SESP course is composed by three different paths, which are integrated in a holistic training concept. The three paths include:

The Mentoring Path

The mentor as a trainer meet learners (5/6 managers) at four seminars, to: complement the other elements of the course; support learners who may be at different stages; easily adapt learning to the needs of the learners; provide “practical” experience; to know/discuss social enterprises cases and success stories. The roles are: animate seminars, clearing up doubts on SESP training development, interchanging experiences and facilitate the case studies discussion, invite company’s representatives with success stories in the strategic management.

The mentor as a tutor: Attendance at distance the pedagogical of a unique learner, providing general support, making regular contacts, giving feedback; incentive a virtual support group, integrating all learners. The roles are: clarification of expectations, stimulation of learner’s motivation, learner’s attendance and supervision, animation of the forum online, advising, adapting, discussing the learning modules, giving feedback, assessment.

Finally, the mentoring includes activities which are based on direct advising and consulting. These activities include only the mentor and the learner in private on site meetings at the SE location. The focus of these activities is direct consulting work, tailored exactly for the respective SE. Additionally to providing support and feedback on a one basis throughout SESP course the mentor will be available for the definition of the learning contract (based on the diagnostic tool) and for the provision of assistance to the SE during the formulation of their specific strategy.

The Individual Path

This path concentrates on individual learning using the SESP platform <http://cms.sesp-project.eu/> and corresponding support material. It includes 7 modules (11 units) and the diagnostic tool of the SESP course. The individual path is where most of the information and theoretic background and learning material can be found. The content of these modules provided on the platform allows for self-paced learning, which can be done by the learners whenever they have time available. The material is presented in a very concise way, focusing on explaining the more central concepts of social entrepreneurship and facilitate by a mentoring support.

Each module will tackle one specific area of social entrepreneurship management, as strategy, human resources, marketing, leadership, creativity and innovation and green policy for SEs.

The Group Path

This path includes peer group activities. The formation of these groups is a very central element in SESP training. Peer groups should be quite small to allow for intensive mentor support and for in-depth knowledge exchange. The path includes four face to face seminar units, where the participants can work on their knowledge but also (perhaps even more importantly) on their strategy plans for the each Social Enterprises they are working on. The group will also exchange contacts and should support and call upon each other. The peer group support will also be facilitated through the exchange of ideas and corresponding feedback. In this way the social enterprise managers can learn from each other and synergies in social enterprise’ strategy development process can be optimally used.

These three paths together form the curriculum of SESP training course and will be based in the following principles: to improve the readiness and qualifications to help the managers of SEs in order to strengthen their business management capacity and according to identified learning needs; combining the process of self-based learning with online support, face to face sessions (in seminars) and on-site mentoring; and

conceiving the modules in a way that it can preview an individual learning pathways according to the identified learning needs.

Main Components



Introduction phase

The introduction phase is a part of the learning pathway. In a first step, the participants will be informed about the programme and will receive introduction material about SESP; then they will be asked to use the diagnostic tool and discuss its results with you, the mentor, so as the main issues affecting the SE performance. You will use the information gathered to develop a learning contract/action plan. In the introduction phase there will be also a seminar (group meeting), for introducing the peer group to each other and introducing the training team as well. During this first meeting, the e-learning platform as well as the course material will also be introduced to the participants.

Diagnostic tool

The diagnostic tool consists of a number of items, which are used to specify which elements of SESP course are complying with the issues identified by each individual participant. Each of these items will consist of three statements; each is connected to a specific learning content of SESP course. Depending on the answers, an automatic list will be generated suggesting which topics should be in the focus of attention of the participant.

Also the proposed alternatives (answers) to the questions are randomly presented. This type of form is to be filled out by checking exact one of the choices in a list.

After completing the **Diagnostic Tool**, learner immediately will see his/her own score by unit and corresponding recommendation, as follows:

- A – You don’t need to make the unit
- B – We advise you to make the unit

C – We strongly advise you to make the unit

The learner can get information about his/ her score (A, B or C) and the modules recommended to do. Learner, supported on the score, can decide, with mentor, to request dispensation for one of multiple modules.

As a result of using this diagnostic tool, learner and mentor can determine which modules should be worked on. During the first contact with the mentor it's very important that learner states his/her experience in the field of social entrepreneurship and the motivation for starting with the learning course (or specific modules). This is because learner can also choose not working through some of the modules. Thus, learner determines the individual learning pathway in consultation with the mentor.

The advantages of the Self-Assessment Tool:

- Previous findings state that adults prefer to define for themselves what and when to learn, what skills and knowledge they need to strengthen and when they need to accomplish it.
- learners can adjust their study approach – and by extra effort – prevent loss of time (thanks to the prompt and regular feedback);
- mentors may adjust the educational learning process on the basis of the interim measurements, by examining how effective their support provided is and whether additional measures are required;
- mentors can adjust by difference in study pace or level of learning. This may be necessary when there is substantial and generic level differences between learners.

Learning contract

This component of SESP is optional leaving to the learner to decide if he/she needs one. The diagnostic tool will be used as the basis of the learning contract. The learning contract demonstrates the willingness of parties, the mentor and the learner, to reach certain goals, including training on the topics that match the results from the diagnostic tool. The contract is then agreed by both parties. SESP provides an automatically generated template (from the diagnostic tool), which can be developed in more detail by the mentor and the participants if they wish to do so. During the orientation period the individual learning contract will be designed for each participant.

The training modules

The modules provide knowledge about management for social entrepreneurship, analysis, formulation and implementation of strategies, marketing, human resources management, leadership, creativity and innovation and social green business. The online training solution is organized in 7 modules with a varying number of units each (11 units in total). The contents of units is very concise, presenting the basic principles involved using demonstrations and examples and providing all necessary explanations and sheets to integrate the newly gained knowledge in the development of SE's strategy. To complete the all units available online, the learner needs between 20 to 40 hours (including examples and practical exercises). All learning content is presented on the e-learning platform.

SESP Content

Unit one is an introduction to the SESP project. It also explains in details the three different learning paths that will be available for the target group as well as the SESP Components which will facilitate all users of the Learning platform.

Unit two reviews the concept of Social Economy in Europe in general and looks more in details into specifics of Social Entrepreneurship. It introduce some of the key points that need to be considered when a company

starts. At the end, learner is able to elaborate a proper analysis of a social orientated company using instruments introduced along the unit.

In Unit three are reviewed the most important details of Social Enterprises Management. Both External and Internal Environment for a company are explained along with key instruments for planning and organisational process. Some of the most important analysis methods are shown in depth.

Unit four analyses concepts and the scope of business strategy including scenario building and options on how to shape and assess strategy implementation. A number of the general strategies which a firm may adopt is reviewed. It discuss the concept of Business Development and the main strategies and the potential ways to its successful achievement.

Unit five gives an overview on social marketing and the recommended steps to take to its effectiveness development at social enterprise level.

Unit six presents the concept of Human Resources Management applying it to Small Enterprises and also to Social Enterprises. It emphasizes the advantages of Human Resources Management in SME and in SE.

Unit seven presents the concept of Learning Needs Diagnosis and advocates the planning and development of a learning strategy to ensure that competencies at social enterprises remain updated and adapted.

Unit eight is concern with the right balance between development and possibilities, in determining the important rules for their effectiveness that can work in a complex and changing environment. Briefly is presented how the organisational culture determines the degree to creative decisions encouragement and maintenance.

Unit nine underlines the relevance of the business green practices and supports the importance of sustaining a green strategy. It explains the essentials of the green business and demonstrate the methods for effective implementation of a green strategy.

Unit ten shows how strategies and plans turn into individual actions and are necessary to produce better business performance. It demonstrates methods for effective implementation of a corporate strategy and details a process-based approach. It link performance factors with strategic initiatives and with policies designed to develop and optimise the SME.

The final Unit 11 focus on the most important aspects of quality control and quality assurance. It show how evaluation, monitoring and feedback cycles can be employed towards the continuous improvement of the social company.

Management Strategic Plan and Implementation

After the last module the mentor and the learner are meeting again to finalize the strategy and the implementation plan. Each social manager will develop a strategic plan for his/her enterprise taking into consideration the actual needs of business development and the topics worked out in the SESP course. This work will be supported by the mentor namely during the on-site support and consulting. For instance, one social manager can work manly in a social green policy for his/her social enterprise, defining and implementing specific measures for a more sustainable business while another one is working on marketing, taken as the area where is more urgent to intervene and define a clear policy.