

ENTREPRENEURSHIP BOOT CAMP

Especially Designed to Address the Needs of 50+ Age Group

Introduction

This project is being conducted by Ms Oli Sengupta, Graduate Fellow in Social Innovation, working with the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation (3ci) at the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University. 3ci is also the host organization of the Local Employability Access Program ([LEAP](#)) to which this project is linked.

Background

During the current economic recession, unemployment rates in Canada are at an all time high. Thousands of workers in the 50+ age group have been laid off from jobs that they have held for their entire careers. Furthermore, the pension crisis that has accompanied the long and hard recession has made early retirement impossible for these people. A substantial number of these older unemployed workers are now unable to find work and are left with no means of making a living. Entrepreneurship can be a viable alternative and a possible second career option for this group of people. A well designed course in entrepreneurship could offer people, willing to consider an alternative second career, the insights and knowledge that they need to pursue *entrepreneurship* as a means to earning a livelihood.

Objectives of the Boot Camp

The preliminary results of a needs assessment on this target group indicate that it would benefit from a short, intensive workshop-style program taking them through their first steps in entrepreneurship. The workshop or *boot camp* would enable participants to:

- get immediate feedback on their business propositions
- develop business concepts into draft business plans
- seek out potential partners for their business team
- establish links with small business sponsors and agencies
- ensure that their business plans address the requirements of funding agencies
- engage with mentors to support and guide the development of their business venture
- learn from the experiences of successful entrepreneurs

It is intended that each Boot Camp would be a 2-3 day intensive workshop held at a convenient location in the National Capital and surrounding regions. It would be a government sponsored program intended for the specific identified target group, and hence offered at no cost to participants for the course, although a nominal fee to cover local administration can be considered.

Project Status

The needs assessment phase of this project is nearing completion (see below). Interviews have been conducted with potential participants, key informants as well as experts; purposive sampling, theoretical sampling and conversation analysis techniques have been used to establish the first line of evidence on their needs. Focus group discussions have also been held to get an understanding of the needs, as a second line of evidence.

An outline for the Boot Camp is now being put together, and the current activity is to discuss the proposed workshop outline with stakeholders to get their feedback and input. Once the design of the Boot Camp has been completed, there will be a further round of consultations with key stakeholders to get their feedback and endorsement.

Needs Assessment of Target Group

This research is being conducted in accordance with the *Grounded Theory Method* (Glaser & Strauss 1967), 'Quantitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures & Techniques' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method was selected since it allowed for the research to begin with no preconceived ideas or theories in mind. This method allows for a scientific and creative approach, allowing the research study to guide the emergence of the theory from the data that is collected.

The Boot Camp will be designed to address the needs of the target group, who are recently unemployed workers in the 50+ age group. The needs of the target group are being established by a systematic needs assessment process, using :

- One-one qualitative interviews
- Focus group sessions
- Feedback from stakeholders

A summary report from this research will be made available to stakeholders once it is completed.