



*Exploring the impact of
voluntary business mentoring
on young entrepreneurs*



Acknowledgements

Longstanding partner Accenture has provided valuable support to grow and strengthen the global network of Youth Business International (YBI). Its Skills to Succeed corporate citizenship initiative aims to equip three million people by 2020 with the skills to get a job or build a business, and over the last two years alone, we have worked together to skill more than 23,400 young people. A key aspect of our partnership is building the capacity of YBI members around the world in core capabilities including mentoring, training and access to finance. This research report, supported by Accenture, will help us to better understand the impact of our voluntary business mentoring approach on young entrepreneurs, and to use the lessons learned to raise standards in this field.

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Who We Are



Youth Business International (YBI) is a global network of 56 expert organisations in 52 countries, helping underserved young entrepreneurs turn their ideas into successful businesses, create jobs and strengthen their communities.



We've helped start

59,071

youth-led
businesses



We've strengthened

36,031

existing
businesses



We've provided

256,700

young people with
entrepreneurship training

Our vision is that youth entrepreneurship is recognised for driving sustainable economic development around the world, creating jobs and strengthening communities. We equip young people with entrepreneurial skills by working with leading organisations in youth entrepreneurship, providing individual mentoring support through trained business mentors, and through specialised entrepreneurship training.

By working together as a network, we maximise our collective impact, enabling our members to scale their operations to deliver effective support to more young entrepreneurs every year.



Between 2017 and 2025 we aim to help one million young entrepreneurs start, strengthen and grow sustainable businesses.



Our partnership with Middlesex University



The research in this report was conducted by Middlesex University, which was commissioned by YBI in 2015. The university is a well-established, thriving institution with campuses and facilities around the world. It is home to the Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research (CEEDR), a leading academic research centre specialising in entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and also the Department of Management, Leadership and Organisations (MLO), which has a group of academics who specialise in mentoring, coaching and leadership development. MLO has a long-established record in mentoring research and practice. Both departments were integral in developing this report.

Foreword

Anita Tiessen
CEO, Youth Business International



Young people are critical to future economic global development. Their ideas and innovations have the potential to help local communities – and beyond – grow and thrive. But with 66 million young people currently unemployed across the world, this potential is not being realised.

Of those that are working, many are trapped in a cycle of poverty that they don't earn enough to escape. At YBI, we believe that empowering young people to succeed in running their own business is part of the solution. Young entrepreneurs create new jobs and shape local economies, and when equipped with entrepreneurship skills they are better able to navigate the challenges of the ever-evolving job market.

We believe that mentoring is a fundamental component of the support given to young entrepreneurs. Our commitment to mentoring sees young entrepreneurs paired with an experienced volunteer business mentor to guide them through the challenging early stages of establishing a business.

YBI has more than 52 members around the world that have together built up a vast body of knowledge on running successful mentoring programmes, aided by our sector-leading methodology and tools, and supported by an incredible community of 14,000 mentors.

YBI commissioned the University of Middlesex to carry out this important longitudinal research to better understand the impact of its voluntary business mentoring approach on young entrepreneurs, and to use the lessons learned to raise standards in this field. It confirms our expectation that for many young entrepreneurs, mentoring is just as important – if not more important – to their success than financial support. More than this, the data demonstrates that YBI's mentoring is addressing substantial barriers to entrepreneurship and is having a significant impact on mentees' personal and professional development.

We hope this work will be a valuable contribution to global learning on this topic and will help shape more impactful mentoring programme design so that in future even greater numbers of underserved young people can successfully develop both their businesses and themselves.



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Executive Summary



Equipping the entrepreneurs of tomorrow

Young entrepreneurs are vital to global economic development. They are helping to shape the economies of the future, to ensure sustainable growth and to guarantee prosperity in both their home countries and further afield. But with millions of unemployed young people around the world, their potential is going unrealised.

Youth Business International (YBI) is a global network of 56 organisations in 52 countries supporting underserved young people to turn their ideas into successful businesses, creating jobs and strengthening communities. Since 2008 YBI has supported over 40 member organisations around the world to start, build or strengthen their mentoring programmes for the benefit of the young people we serve.



This incredible rate of growth of mentoring in the network has ensured we have a rich and diverse range of programmes and experience to draw on. It also means that now is the time to reflect on how far we have come, and what we will need to do to support the next stage of mentoring development.

The value of mentorship

We define voluntary business mentoring as personalised support that helps young entrepreneurs develop their abilities and insights as they start and grow their own business.

Through one-to-one, bespoke support, mentees are able to access skills and resources, develop their leadership abilities and foster professional connections. A good mentoring relationship will also help young people develop confidence and resilience, better equipping them to navigate the challenges of today's rapidly changing job market.

Exploring the impact of voluntary business mentoring

This report summarises the key findings of a two-year longitudinal study, undertaken in partnership with Middlesex University, into the influence of voluntary business mentoring on young entrepreneurs. The research explores young people's business start-ups and development, as well as their personal development and entrepreneurial journeys.

It aims to:

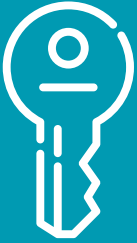
Understand the impact of voluntary business mentoring on mentees, their businesses and their mentors.

Determine recommendations that will help YBI raise standards across its network and continue onwards as a global leader in this field.

The research team distributed 1068 surveys to mentoring programme participants across 42 countries within the YBI network between February and March 2016 (Phase 1) and again as a follow-up between July and October 2017 (Phase 2).

By surveying the same participants 18 months later, the team were able to assess how the mentoring model and mentor-mentee relationships had evolved and improved over time. Eight YBI members from around the world then took part in case study research, outlined in the detailed report.





Key findings

Our findings consistently demonstrate that voluntary business mentoring has an important and beneficial impact on mentees' personal and professional development, and that it is making significant strides in helping young entrepreneurs achieve their goals. The research revealed that:



In **Phase 1**, **60%** of mentees reported that their businesses were growing as a result of the accelerator role that mentoring played. In **Phase 2** this increased to **74%**.



In **Phase 1**, **37%** of mentees said their turnover had increased during their mentoring relationship. In **Phase 2** this increased to **78%**.



Of those that reported an increase in turnover, **54%** of mentees in **Phase 1** attributed this to their mentoring relationship. In **Phase 2** this increased to **65%**.



57% of mentees during **Phase 2** said their business improvements would not have happened at the same speed or scale – or at all – without their mentoring relationship.

The effectiveness of support offered by mentors increased considerably between **Phase 1** and **Phase 2**, indicating that mentoring allows individuals to develop powerful, trusting relationships which facilitate longer term, deeper impacts. Mentees stated their mentors were best able to help them with:



Greater confidence in running a business



Developing an existing business



Improved decision-making



Understanding personal strengths and areas for development



Lessons learned

Mentoring programmes across the network vary significantly, however there are a number of shared principles for effective programmes:

- A clear programme management structure
- An effective mentoring programme manager at the helm
- A well-designed mentor-mentee matching process
- Initial training and preparation to engage in mentoring, for both mentors and mentees
- Proactive, ongoing support for mentees, mentors and programme managers
- Regular reviews to continually evolve the programme
- Shared opportunities and ideas to allow programmes to flourish

There is also evidence of mentors developing and benefiting through the experience, confirmed by their ongoing engagement with volunteer mentoring activities, networks and business activities.

Looking ahead

To achieve our goals, YBI will:



INNOVATE and invigorate our mentoring programmes, keeping them at the cutting edge and keeping mentors engaged, thereby harnessing the full potential of entrepreneurs.



MAXIMISE the scale and reach of our mentoring programmes in order to benefit more young entrepreneurs.



ADVOCATE for the value of mentoring by sharing what our members do best.

Young people across the world deserve the chance to succeed. YBI is building a mentoring movement that harnesses the power of personal connection and professional support to benefit thousands of underserved young entrepreneurs around the world.

Join us as we refine and expand our efforts to achieve an even greater impact on young lives now, and long into the future.

The Youth Business Mentoring Landscape



Over the last 10 years, YBI has helped over 40 member organisations around the world start, build or strengthen mentoring programmes for young entrepreneurs. We work with more than 14,000 mentors who support young, underserved people eager to make their mark in the world of business. Yet despite this clear demand for youth mentoring, research into its impact on entrepreneurship is remarkably scarce. Hence this report. We know voluntary business mentoring works, so it's time to drill down into how and why.

Barriers to entrepreneurship

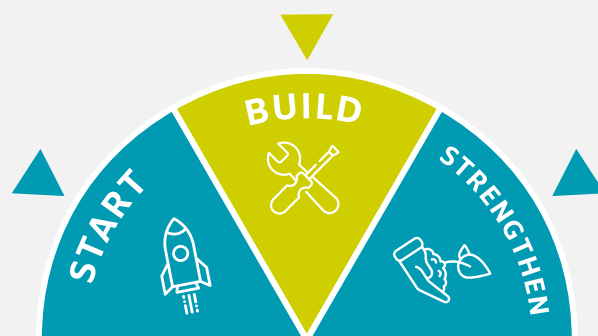
The research that does exist consistently demonstrates that young entrepreneurs face a significant number of disadvantages, including:

- Absence of an entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Lack of supporting infrastructure
- Access to financial capital
- Access to institutional support
- Access to information and professional advice
- Access to education and technical training
- Acquisition of skills
- Self-management including exploratory and exploitative learning
- Access to markets
- Access to networks and alliances
- Access to role models

However, studies show that youth mentoring substantially mitigates these challenges as mentors can support by: i) being positive role models; ii) acting as guides to local ecosystems; iii) raising awareness of relevant opportunities or information; iv) helping to grow or make better use of own networks; v) driving motivation and offering critical support through challenges.

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Helped over **40** member organisations...



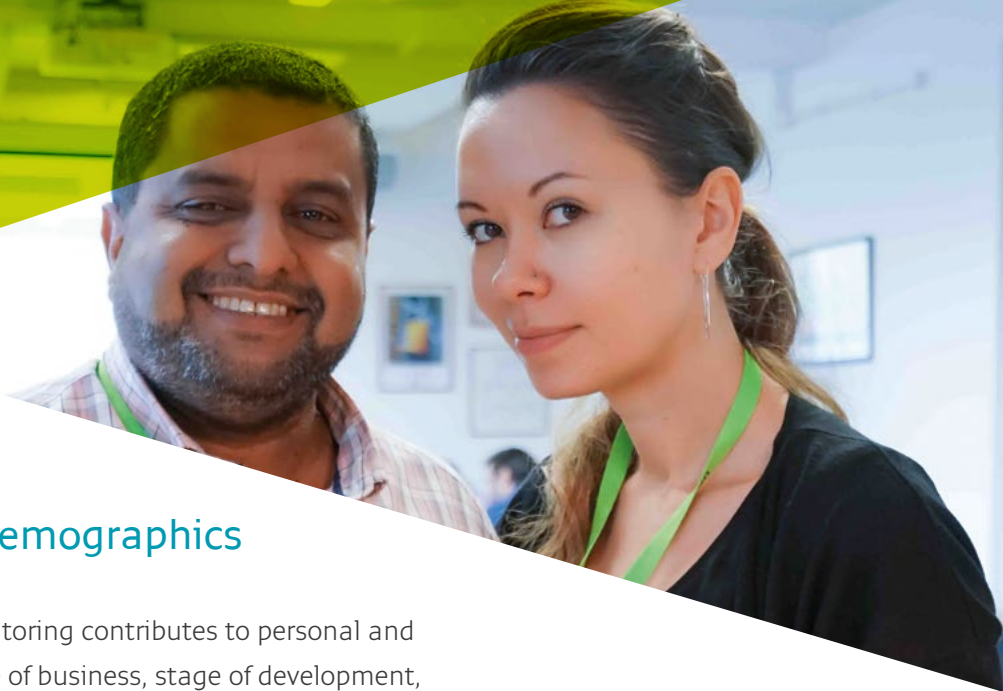
mentoring programmes

Worked with more than...



mentors who support young, underserved people

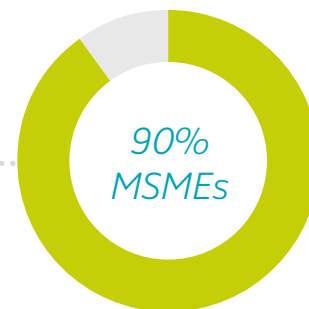
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Entrepreneurship across demographics

Existing research also indicates that mentoring contributes to personal and professional growth regardless of the size of business, stage of development, sector or discipline involved. Some mentees are running micro enterprises from their homes, while others run international businesses with over 50 staff members. Some mentees are just starting out, while others might have been in business for more than 20 years.

This is particularly pertinent as studies indicate that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) comprise 90% of all jobs in developing countries¹. Additionally, during the last 10 years the number of MSMEs has tripled in these regions, compared to high-income countries.



The meaning of mentoring

There are many definitions of mentoring. Historically, it has been classed as a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor, and a younger, inexperienced protégé. Other definitions classify it as the process of overseeing someone else's career development, or helping an individual move from one stage of their professional life to another.

YBI has its own, clear definition of voluntary business mentoring, and applies it at all levels of its work, including this report:

“Voluntary business mentoring is personalised support in helping young entrepreneurs develop their abilities and insights as they start and grow their own business.”

The YBI mentoring approach

Recent doctoral research indicates² that individual mentoring relationships can be quite varied in nature. However, this research highlights the importance of initial training for mentors and ongoing support for mentor development as key to the success of mentoring relationships.

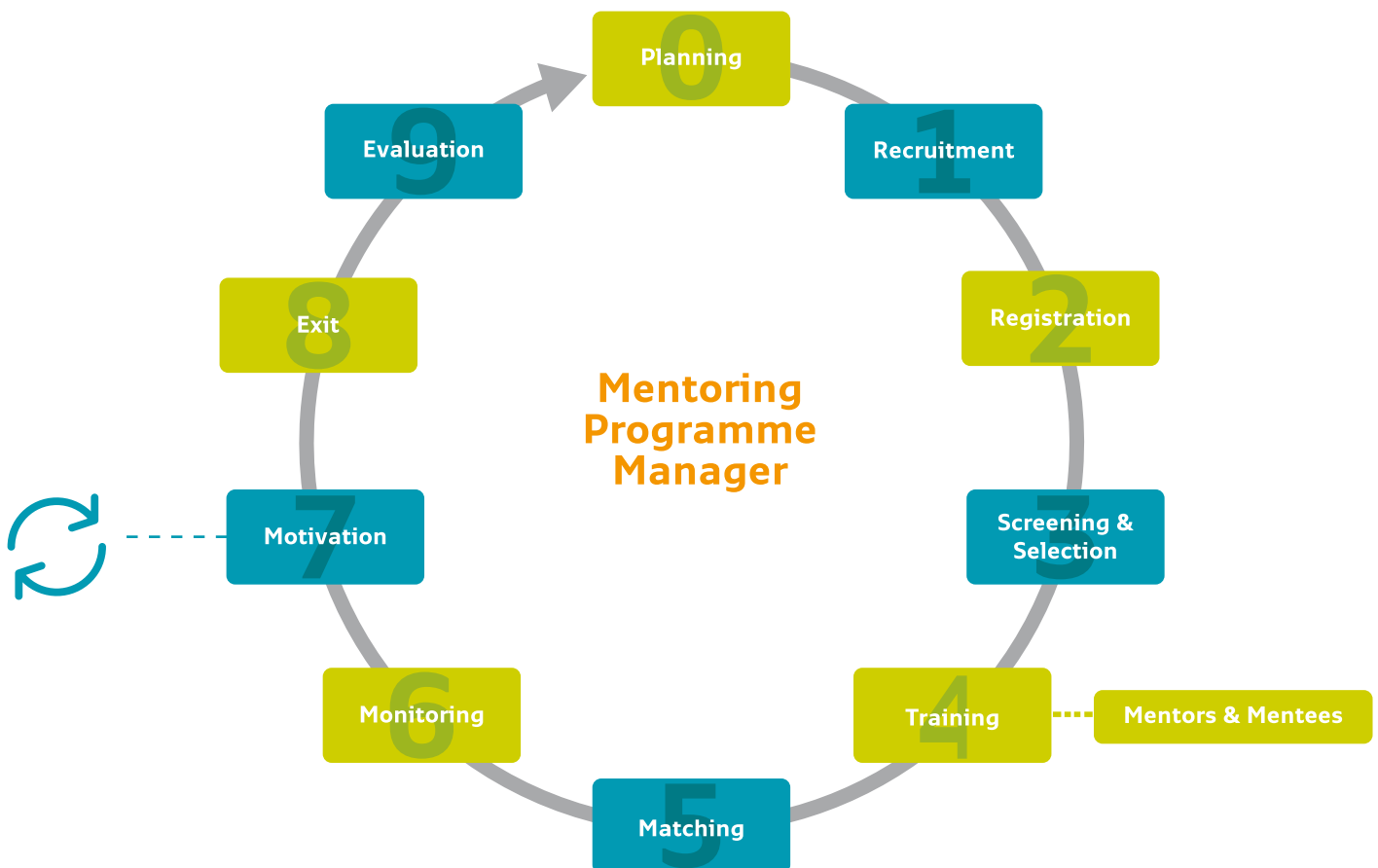
¹ Gender at Work, A Companion to the World Development Report on Jobs (http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/GenderAtWork_web.pdf)

² Westland, P. R. (2016) Insights into the Determinants Towards Building Successful Dyadic Mentoring Relationships (unpublished doctoral thesis)

Building upon this knowledge, and in response to a growing need within our network to meet the challenges experienced in delivering a quality mentoring programme, YBI's approach aims to:

- Help members who are at the start of their mentoring journey.
- Help members who are engaged in restructuring their mentoring programme.
- Provide a baseline to members to review their mentoring programme.

Ten stages to implementing a mentoring programme



Mentoring programme design is regarded as a key component of a successful mentoring programme, therefore the framework has been structured to reflect a typical programme lifecycle, from the planning phase through to the full implementation of a mentoring programme. Organisations will cycle through the process as they roll out their programmes, but its end-to-end structure enables programme managers to choose the most relevant content depending on the stage of the scheme.

However, the framework on its own is not enough to guarantee a successful mentoring programme. This is why our team of professional mentoring consultants work one-on-one with our members through the programme creation process, and why we nurture new and existing partnerships with academic experts, who deliver expertise through a series of workshops and coaching sessions at our annual masterclasses.

It's also why we've invested in this research, which aims to bridge the aforementioned knowledge gaps, while helping us to continue to evolve and improve our approach to voluntary business mentoring. By contributing to good practice and supporting those interested in voluntary business mentoring, we're best positioned to remain leaders in the field.

The Research Approach

This research applied a mixed-method case study approach. Large longitudinal quantitative surveys were combined with smaller-scale qualitative in-depth interviews in order to understand the impact of voluntary business mentoring on mentors, mentees and their businesses within their specific context, including changes over time. The study was implemented in the following stages:



1. Desk study

Firstly, we conducted a desk-based study exploring relevant academic literature and empirical evidence relating to mentoring, entrepreneurship and underserved youth. This initial work informed the development and refining of the overarching methodological framework and data collection instruments.



2. Global programme manager survey

Next, a global survey was distributed to the voluntary business mentoring programme managers of all network members (n=42).³ The survey comprised questions on the profiles of the organisation, programme managers, mentors and mentees, as well as mentoring activities and entrepreneurial outcomes.



3. Case studies

Eight member institutions were then selected as case studies. The case study countries covered a diverse range of geographical regions, income levels, voluntary business mentoring delivery models and stages of programme evolution.⁴

³ All survey instruments were piloted with selected members before full roll-out.

⁴ Case studies were conducted for members from the following countries: Argentina, Chile, India, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Spain and Uganda.



4. Mentor-mentee survey for eight case study members

For all members participating in the case studies, an online self-completion survey was conducted with mentors and mentees (n=1654 across both Phase 1 and Phase 2). The survey aimed to generate standardised profiling of mentors and mentees, as well as measuring the inputs and outputs of voluntary business mentoring.



5. Qualitative interviews

Following the survey, 272 in-depth semi-structured interviews (across Phase 1 and Phase 2) were conducted with mentees, mentors and key stakeholders in order to understand how voluntary business mentoring approaches take place and how they lead to particular outcomes, such as entrepreneurial success.



6. Follow-up data collection

Approximately 10 months later, a second round of surveys with programme managers was conducted, as well as follow-up surveys and in-depth interviews with mentees, mentors and key stakeholders. The longitudinal perspective provided insight into the development and evolution of voluntary business mentoring models and mentor-mentee relationships, including what works in the medium- and longer-term. It also enabled YBI to develop recommendations to continue to support and develop the network members.



7. Data analysis

The qualitative and quantitative data were first analysed separately, and then triangulated to build a holistic understanding of how voluntary business mentoring supports young entrepreneurs to start and develop their business. Through cross-case analysis, we could identify similarities and differences in the way network members approach voluntary business mentoring, as well as the results and impact of their practice.



8. Limitations

High variation of response rates across the eight countries, partly due to restricted internet access of mentors and mentees, represents one limitation of this research. However, this study did not aim to claim representativeness of results within, or between countries. Rather, it is an exploration within a large sample of whether voluntary business mentoring makes a demonstrable difference to the programme participants (mentees, mentors and their businesses), and how this change was brought about.

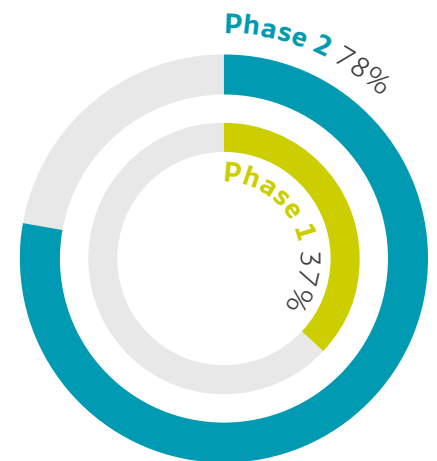
Key Findings



Our research created a global picture of the voluntary business mentoring landscape. By bringing together data from organisations around the world, we can identify areas of strength, and better evaluate features that require attention. However, as these results demonstrate, voluntary business mentoring is consistently addressing barriers to entrepreneurship and is making a tangible impact on mentees' professional development across the board.

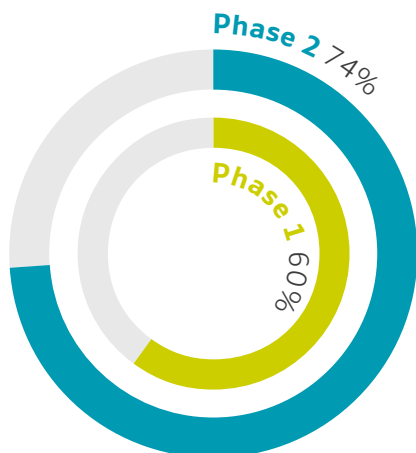
Mentoring is increasing small business turnover

The proportion of mentees reporting an increase in business turnover nearly doubled between Phase 1 and Phase 2, with the majority of entrepreneurs attributing this to their mentoring programmes. This demonstrates the tangible impact voluntary business mentoring makes on community economies.



Example

In 2013, a mentee from India's Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust was given a loan of \$15,000. Three years later, with the help of his mentor, he had turned it into a construction business with an annual turnover of \$4.2 million.



Mentoring drives business creation

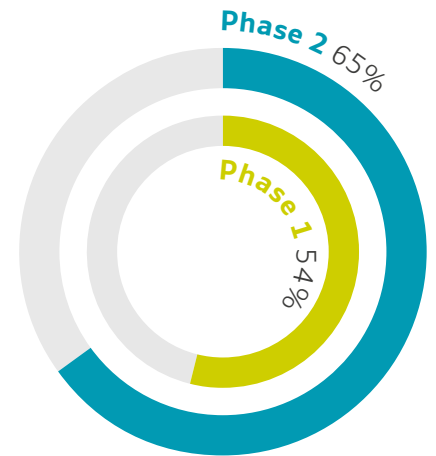
By Phase 2, mentees were more likely to have started a business, established trading or were ready to grow, compared to Phase 1, indicating that their mentoring relationship was acting as a driving force behind development.

Example

Enterprise Uganda was responsible for one mentor-mentee relationship which saw an informal motorcycle repair operation evolve into an established vehicle restoration business over the course of the programme.

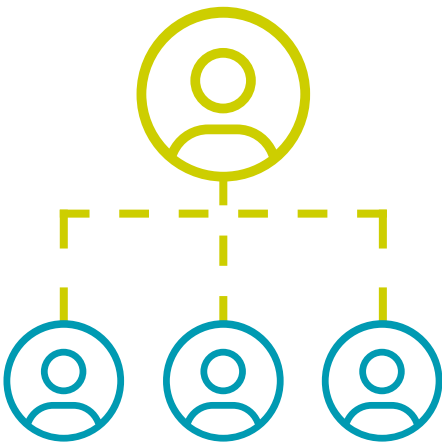
Relationship matches are successful

The proportion of mentors and mentees that felt the matching process was either 'very effective' or 'extremely effective' increased between Phase 1 and Phase 2, indicating that relationships strengthen across the mentoring period.



Example

One mentor from Youth Business Poland said that it can take time to develop a trusting partnership, but the benefits of doing so are significant. Her mentee was ready to open her own business after the pair had put some work into confidence building.



Mentors have a variety of roles

Mentors take on a variety of identities during the programme. Mentees were more likely to view their mentors as consultants and advisors in the initial stages of their programme, and over time see them more as a friend. Mentors initially viewed themselves as coaches, and later, as listeners.

Example

One mentee from Youth Business Spain said that her mentor made her feel more secure and confident in making decisions (a coaching role), that she valued his opinion (advisor) and would discuss solutions to problems when they arose (consultant and listener).

Initial expectations are consistently met or exceeded

The level of initial programme satisfaction among mentees and mentors increased significantly between Phases 1 and 2. Growth in this area over this period illustrates the benefits of ongoing feedback and monitoring, and reflects the importance of continued development of the skills of a mentor over time.

Example

A mentee in Russia, who increased their revenue threefold during the programme, rated their experience as "10 out of 10". A mentor from the same organisation, Youth Business Russia, said their involvement in the scheme had been a valuable experience that positively impacted their own work.



Mentoring support is substantial and effective

The effectiveness of support received by mentees improved considerably between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Improved management skills and assistance in developing an existing business were two particular stand-out areas.

Example

Chile's Acción Emprendedora oversaw a partnership between a mentor and an existing small business owner. The mentee said that over the course of the programme, she learned vital business and leadership skills which helped her expand her company into a new premises.

Improved
management
skills



Assistance in
developing an
existing business



Overall levels of satisfaction are high

General sentiment toward the programme increased for mentors between Phase 1 and Phase 2, and increased considerably for mentees over the same period, indicating that voluntary business mentoring is fulfilling its objective to deliver value and meaningful help to the young entrepreneurs that need it.

Example

One mentee from Argentina's Fundación Impulsar organisation has had such a beneficial experience that she goes out of her way to showcase the programme to others, and is now considering pursuing a path as a mentor herself.

Mentors also benefit

There is consistent evidence of mentors developing and benefiting through the experience, confirmed by their ongoing engagement with volunteer mentoring activities, networks and business activities.

Example

Accountant and mentor Bategeta, who works with Enterprise Uganda, says the experience has given him a fresh perspective on the world.

"Being a mentor has helped my communication and listening skills, as well as my capacity for self-reflection," he says. "And it's expanded my business knowledge."



Case Study: Argentina



Marcelo Dutra



Cintia Chantada

Fundación Impulsar's mentoring programme in Argentina was run successfully for many years by a mentoring coordinator who evolved into a role of trainer, helping to build robust mentoring programmes for other YBI members in the region. Over a five-year period, Fundación Impulsar had between 50 and 99 mentor-mentee relationships in action at any one time. Induction training was offered as standard, with mentors having access to ongoing training as well as their own supervisors.

- After completion of the one-year programme, nearly half of all mentees had a relationship with a business contact they met through the scheme, and over two thirds were still using business support tools provided through the scheme.
- More than half of mentees said their mentors had fully met or exceeded the expectations.
- Two thirds of mentors and mentees were either fairly satisfied or very satisfied with their mentoring relationship.
- Sales turnover increased for two fifths of respondents.

Universo Bellotas

Universo Bellotas is a children's entertainment company with the core belief that art, sustainability and creativity should define the brand at all times. So it was important to entrepreneur Cintia Chantada that she and her mentor were on the same page when it came to developing the business. And it's developed substantially since it was established in 2014, growing from a small group of friends to six full-time employees, plus a host of subcontractors.

"My mentor Marcelo truly helped me a lot, and at all levels," says Cintia, who credits Marcelo for helping her hone her leadership skills and better get to grips with the financial aspects of her business.

"My experience was so beneficial that I showcase the mentoring programme whenever I can."

In fact, Cintia has taken on something of a mentoring role herself. Thanks to her business expansion into new markets such as children's eco-fairs, she's met a number of new creative entrepreneurs that she's informally taken under her wing.



Marggiana Moreno

Acción Emprendedora's voluntary business mentoring programme in Chile is still in its infancy, operating since 2015. But despite its short lifespan, our research indicates that it's already having a significant impact on young entrepreneurs and their businesses. Furthermore, it's working hard to facilitate best practice. During Phase 1 of data collection, mentoring relationships were subject to infrequent review. Phase 2 revealed that monitoring now takes place on a monthly basis.

- Two thirds of mentors and mentees felt the matching process was 'very effective' while nearly half of mentees said it was 'extremely effective'.
- Almost all mentors and mentees were still in contact with one another once the year-long programme had ended.
- Nearly half of all mentees said the programme completely met their expectations, while one fifth said it exceeded them.
- More than three quarters of mentees considered the impact of the mentoring programme to be at least 'very important'. Over one quarter said it was 'extremely important'.
- Nearly half of respondents reported an increase in turnover while on the programme, all of which said it was at least 'somewhat' due to their mentoring relationship.

Bamboleo

Bamboleo is a Latin music dance academy run by Marggiana Moreno. Established in 2010, the business has grown steadily to offer a full range of dance classes. However Marggiana wanted to take the next step and expand. She was one of the first people to benefit from Acción Emprendedora's implementation of YBI's mentoring programme. It helped her secure funding and she was able to buy new premises in a very affluent part of Chile's capital Santiago.

Her mentor, Raúl Desmadryl, helped Marggiana bolster her managerial skills, giving her the confidence to pursue bigger and better things for Bamboleo.

"I learned to be the boss, and what being a boss really means and involves," she says.



Case Study: Russia



Alexander Prosekin



Dmitry Boychenko

Youth Business Russia (YBR) operates as a programme of International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF Russia) and is led by Boris Tkachenko, who has done a great deal to champion the voluntary business mentoring cause. In addition to setting up mentoring clubs in four regions throughout the country, Boris has conducted numerous international mentoring workshops and events. His commitment, and the efforts of the team's regional co-ordinators, is evident in the results consistently delivered by YBR.

- 80% of mentees said they felt the matching process was effective, with 100% of mentors agreeing.
- 42% of mentees recognised that the scale and speed of their business development would not have been achieved without their mentors' support.
- Over half of all mentees said they were 'fairly satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their mentoring relationship, while all mentors agreed.
- Nearly half of mentees said the mentoring programme fully met their expectations.

Led9 Mobile Bar

Led9 is a mobile cocktail bar run by Dmitry Boychenko in Vladivostok, Russia. Established in 2014, the business offers unique tailored cocktails for each customer.

Dmitry commented on his mentor's insightful outlook on current affairs and comprehensive business nous. *"Thanks to him my business has become more sustainable,"* he says.

Dmitry's mentor, Alexander Prosekin, has also benefited from the relationship, noting that *"the opportunity to help a beginner is already a valuable experience. After analysing the mentee's performance I started analysing my own work more meticulously."*

Another mentee called their mentoring relationship a "partnership" and rated it 10 out of 10. Thanks to the support of his mentor, he has been able to double his number of employees, more than double the number of clients, and increase revenue threefold.



Case Study: India



Tusshar Munoat & Employees

India's mentoring programme is very well established, managed centrally by Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust (BYST) and delivered across eight regions throughout the country. Here, we've seen some of our longest-running mentoring relationships. Most last around two years, with some mentors and mentees staying in informal contact for up to six years. There are hundreds of relationships active at any one time, and both mentors and mentees receive inductions and ongoing training throughout the programme. The efforts of the mentors have a significant impact, with many mentees growing their businesses into multimillion dollar operations under their guidance.

- More than 80% of mentees said the programme helped them successfully diversify into new markets.
- Nearly two thirds of mentees said the success of their business was 'completely' or 'to a large extent' due to support from their mentors.
- During Phase 1, mentees praised the programme for boosting their self-esteem (79%), improving their confidence in running a business (76%) and bolstering their financial management skills (70%). In Phase 2, these figures were significantly higher. More than 90% of mentees said their mentor helped them 'significantly' or 'completely'.
- During Phase 2, more than four fifths of respondents said their business turnover had increased during their time on the programme – 10% more than Phase 1.

Rutu Enterprises

BYST's mentoring work has had a very significant impact. Tusshar Munoat received a loan of \$15,000 through the trust in 2013, and by 2017 had turned it into a construction business with a turnover of \$4.2 million. He attributes this rapid growth to his mentor: *"What I have achieved in three years would have taken me 10 years without him."*

"Tusshar has grown faster than any other entrepreneur in the history of BYST. With his hard work, impeccable integrity, commitment and determination he is destined to be one of the top businessmen in India." – Mr. Sunil Malkani, Tusshar's mentor.

Another mentee started a manufacturing firm in 2011 and was given a loan of \$2,200. By 2018 he'd opened seven further branches around India, with an estimated annual turnover of up to \$21.6 million. *"The most important support you receive is the confidence,"* he says. *"Moral support is very important and necessary for a new entrepreneur."*

Such are the entrepreneurial successes of BYST that the organisation recently started the High Flyer Club, a platform that showcases top performing mentees and their mentors. Many of the club's featured entrepreneurs are then headhunted as mentors themselves, passing on the knowledge and expertise they themselves benefited from during the programme.





Case Study: Poland



Maciej Grzegorzółka



Patrycja Miałkowska

Poland's volunteer business mentoring initiative has seen various iterations in its six-year history, but is now well established as Youth Business Poland, and in 2014 received YBI organisation accreditation. Both mentees and mentors benefit from training, with mentors getting some of the most comprehensive across our network – more than six hours for induction alone. This has resulted in extremely strong, mutually-beneficial mentor relationships, which put a strong focus on personal, as well as professional, development.

- 67% of mentees said that improvements to their businesses would not have happened at the same scale or speed without mentorship.
- Mentees' understanding of their personal strengths and development has improved considerably, from 42% in Phase 1 to 75% in Phase 2.
- In Phase 1, 60% of mentors felt the programme had a positive impact on mentees' personal development. In Phase 2 this was 78%.
- Nearly three quarters of mentees said their mentors had helped them create new jobs within their businesses.
- Leadership skills among mentees has improved substantially. In Phase 1, 24% reported improved decision-making and 19% reported improved management skills, rising to 67% for both in Phase 2.

Artizmo Dental Lab

Artizmo Dental Lab is a dental clinic set up by Patrycja Miałkowska. Using her experience of working in a similar clinic, Patrycja developed a new way to create dental implants in a faster and more accurate way than the methods available on the market.

Patrycja Miałkowska says her mentoring programme was "the most effective year of [her] life", and credits the scheme for the success she's seen in her dental business. With encouragement from her mentor, Maciej Grzegorzółka, Patrycja had the confidence to rent a premises and equipment, and has been running her own laboratory for nearly a year.

"I try to develop from month to month," she says.

Maciej says that much of the mentoring relationship with Patrycja involved moral support and confidence building.

"First we had to decide whether she was ready to be a boss and have her own company. As soon as she decided she was, I helped her get the business off the ground. It's a great success, and I'm very happy."





Sandra Esparcia Gómez & Pablo Alarcon Soler

Spain's mentoring programme, run by Youth Business Spain (YBS), is a well-established scheme with a focus on existing experience. The vast majority of mentors involved in the programme have run their own business at some point in their lives, while nearly half currently run their own business. Others have reached senior managerial roles across a variety of sectors. There are more than 100 mentoring relationships active at any one point, with many extending informally beyond the programme duration. Almost everyone, mentors and mentees alike, receives induction and ongoing training, which is valued highly by all participants.

- Over 80% of mentors and two thirds of mentees agreed that their induction training was 'very useful'.
- Over half of all mentors and mentees said the programme fully met their expectations.
- Nearly all mentors and mentees were at least 'satisfied' with the quality of their mentoring relationship, while two thirds of mentors and more than half of mentees were 'completely satisfied'.
- One in 10 mentees said improvements to their business would not have been possible without the support of their mentor, while half said they would have experienced smaller or slower improvements without them.
- Three quarters of mentees said the programme had a positive effect on their business.

Online Traductores

Online Traductores is a translation company that offers expert translation services for all types of texts by qualified native-speaking professionals.

Sandra says her mentor Pablo gave her the confidence to make key business decisions, enabling her to move her translation business to a larger premises and hire her first employee. *"You feel much more secure and confident at making decisions when you can get a second opinion from someone with the experience that Pablo has,"* she says.

In the year since she began her mentoring relationship with Pablo, Sandra has seen her business turnover grow "considerably". And thanks to her new employee, she's now able to dedicate her time to more strategic tasks that will help her business grow further. *"The level of personalisation is particularly valuable,"* she says.

"It's a great help to have an expert on hand to discuss solutions to problems as and when they appear."



Case Study: Sweden



Elisabet Sannas



Liv Sandberg

NyföretagarCentrum Sverige is a long-established programme specialising in start-up assistance for entrepreneurs of all ages. The organisation takes a very structured approach to mentoring, with quarterly reviews, mentor supervisors and a particular focus on gathering programme exit data, which offers important insight into the voluntary business mentoring journey. The programme makes mentor-mentee matches based on specific skills, rather than industry sectors, and often hosts kick-off events to bring together prospective pairings.

- More than half of mentees said the programme was 'very important' to their business development, with one in five considering it 'extremely important'.
- Over half of mentees said improved confidence in running their business was the main benefit of mentoring.
- 80% of mentees said they experienced some form of additional benefit from the mentoring programme.
- More than half the mentees said their businesses saw increased sales turnover during the mentoring relationship.
- Mentors also benefit from the programme. Half said it met or exceeded their expectations.

Cake Art

With a unique artistic view, Liv Sandberg set up Cake Art, a company focused on creating sophisticated and elegant cakes with a twist. Liv's cakes have been shown all over the world and published in newspapers, books, blogs and in international magazines.

At the beginning of the mentoring programme, Cake Art was a fledgling startup. Now, it's a flourishing retail bakery, trading from a new premises and taking on trainee staff. Liv has ADHD, and says she benefited significantly from the personalised guidance she received from her mentor: *"It definitely increased my confidence and business organisational skills."*

Her mentor, Elisabet Sannas, has also found value in the programme and says she will consider further mentoring in the future.

"I learned a lot from the process," she says. "Mentoring helped to improve my teaching skills, which I can apply to other areas of my professional life."



Case Study: Uganda



Moses Onono



Thomas Oloya

Uganda's mentoring scheme, run by Enterprise Uganda, focuses largely on building upon existing skills. Many of the mentees, aged between 25 and 35, were already highly qualified at the beginning of the mentoring relationship – 82% were already involved in a trading business. Mentoring here is therefore designed to help entrepreneurs take their business to the next level. As such, both mentors and mentees receive considerable induction and ongoing training, and the organisation collects exit and post-exit data to ensure the programme is meeting the needs of the entrepreneurs it serves.

- Over 86% of mentees said they were either 'fairly satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the programme.
- Mentor-mentee relationships are established on trust, with 80% of mentees saying they were based largely on shared responsibility.
- The majority of mentees said the programme had a beneficial impact on the scale and speed of improvements made to their businesses.
- More than 70% of mentees saw business turnover increase during their mentoring relationship.

Oasis Island Gulu

Oasis Island Gulu was founded when Thomas Oloya saw a gap in the market for a local fish farm. Since its creation in 2013, the farm has expanded to include sport fishing, boat rides and even a beach.

Thomas works in the Gulu district of northern Uganda. Thanks to his mentoring relationship, what started as one fish pond and two staff in 2013 has now grown into 20 staff working across five ponds and several associated agricultural businesses. Thomas is now developing his site into an international tourist venture.

The role of volunteer mentoring has traditionally been restricted in Uganda, but those that do it consistently report finding value and satisfaction in the process. Accountant and mentor Moses says the experience has given him a fresh perspective on the world. *"Being a mentor has helped my communication and listening skills, as well as my capacity for self-reflection,"* he says. *"And it's expanded my business knowledge."*

Lessons Learned



Our research set out to explore what works, where and why, in voluntary business mentoring. But our investigation yielded more than raw data. By speaking to our partners, mentors and mentees we uncovered important on-the-ground insight into the way voluntary business mentoring is experienced by people at all points across the programme. It is, after all, the people involved that make voluntary business mentoring the success it is, so we welcome the opportunity to learn from their journeys.

Mentoring serves as a business accelerator

Young entrepreneurs consistently report that their businesses wouldn't make the progress they do, at the speed they do, without mentoring support. In Poland, this was the case for 67% of mentees, while in Spain, one in 10 said their successes wouldn't have been possible at all without the programme. The value of voluntary business mentoring as a catalysing incubation space cannot be underestimated.

Training is highly valued by all parties

Programmes where mentors, or both mentors and mentees, received a formal induction and ongoing training reported very positive outcomes. In Poland, for example, mentors receive an initial six hours of induction training – nearly 75% of mentees on the scheme said their mentors helped them create new jobs within their business. In Uganda, both mentors and mentees receive substantial training, with 70% of mentees stating their business turnover increased during the programme. In Spain, the vast majority of mentors and mentees agreed that induction training is 'very useful'.



A good relationship match is key to success

Programmes that put extra focus on mentor-mentee matching reported many successes. Sweden, for example, takes a skills-based approach to pairing, with 80% of mentees saying they experienced some kind of additional benefit from their mentoring relationship. Feedback across the board suggests there's a lack of industry-specific mentors, but meeting this need can prove fruitful, as evidenced by Poland's case study.

Mentoring relationships are long lasting

Many mentoring programmes last for 12 months, but evidence consistently shows that mentors and mentees stay in touch long after the scheme has formally ended. In Spain, pairs are staying in contact for up to three years – in India it's as long as six years. This demonstrates the long term, far-reaching benefits of voluntary business mentoring on both the mentors and mentees involved, as well as the wider business community.

Personal development is equally important

While mentoring is largely focused on professional business development, many mentees (and indeed mentors) have highlighted the personal benefits that voluntary business mentoring brings. In India, 79% of mentees praised the programme for boosting their self-esteem, while in Poland, mentees citing the programme's development of their personal strengths leapt from 42% in Phase 1 to 75% in Phase 2. For young entrepreneurs, it seems that developing confidence and self-esteem is just as important as learning 'hard' business skills.

There are many opportunities for expansion

Several programmes have made strides in expanding their reach. Youth Business Russia has set up three mentoring councils throughout the country, while India's programme – which operates from eight separate regions – has developed its scheme to include a 'High Flyers Club', showcasing voluntary business mentoring success stories. There's plenty of potential for growth. However, it must be approached carefully. Spain's recent expansion has resulted in a communication gap between the central Youth Business Spain office and its partners.





Today's mentees are tomorrow's mentors

Having a great mentor inspires mentees to become mentors. This was evident in India – where a number of shining mentees have gone on to become official programme mentors – and elsewhere, in a less formal context. Argentina's case study, for example, tells the story of a creative mentee who has taken a number of new entrepreneurs under her wing. A nurturing voluntary business mentoring space that helps mentees realise their full potential will ensure programmes can draw on mentoring talent long into the future.

Voluntary business mentoring is resilient in the face of adversity

There can be many obstacles in sustaining and developing voluntary business mentoring programmes, from funding challenges and social misgivings, to expansion complications and working in increasingly competitive markets. Yet, as demonstrated in our research, programmes not only survive these hurdles, they thrive. Thanks to forward-thinking partnerships and many committed individuals, voluntary business mentoring is continually evolving and adapting to the challenges of operating in the modern world, with consistently demonstrable results.

Developing mentors is important

This research highlights not only the importance of initial training for mentors but also that ongoing support for mentor development is key to the success of mentoring relationships. Currently, we support the initial training through the use of shared training materials and approaches, and are working on evolving ongoing developmental support for mentors.

Evaluation is key but hard to do

One of the most noteworthy initiatives already coming out of this research project is the creation of a mentoring research and evaluation toolkit, accompanied by an online webinar series. This was developed by the research team specifically to support the ongoing evaluation of voluntary business mentoring programmes. It is hoped that this will address one of the most significant challenges while at the same time providing capability support and professional development to the mentoring programme managers in the YBI network.

Next Steps



This research project has provided valuable insight into many facets of voluntary business mentoring. As evidenced by our key findings and case studies, there is great variation between programmes across the network.

However, all organisations share a number of principles for effective voluntary business mentoring programmes:

- Clear programme management structure.
- Well-designed mentor-mentee matching process.
- Initial training/preparation to engage in mentoring – for both mentors and mentees.
- Ongoing support for mentees and mentors.
- Regular review to continually evolve the programme.

An overarching takeaway from the research is that programme success depends on a committed and competent mentoring programme manager – the individual whose role it is to oversee voluntary business mentoring within their organisation.

The organisation may choose to involve several staff in the mentoring programme, but it is essential to establish a main point of contact who has the capacity and authority to project manage the overall scheme. A good programme manager is a strong indicator that the programme delivers quality.

These individuals require ongoing support and development, and should be given opportunities and ideas that will allow their programmes to thrive. Without this assistance, programmes are unable to achieve sustainable growth.



Beyond the research

Our goals are to:



INVIGORATE by engaging and developing mentors, harnessing the potential of entrepreneurs and keeping programmes at the forefront of thought leadership.



GROW the external profile of mentoring at YBI by continuing to share our expertise and to attract more members, funders and mentors.



MAXIMISE the scale and reach of our mentoring programmes in order to benefit more young entrepreneurs.

We aim to achieve these by:

- Providing continued opportunities for innovation, such as the Sky's the Limit online platform, now being piloted across the network.
- Establishing a YBI global network standard for mentor quality.
- Attending external events to showcase the success of our work.
- Engaging expert mentoring practitioners within our online community, encouraging them to share ideas and approaches.
- Pushing for the creation of more regional working groups of mentoring practitioners.
- Supporting members to run development days that build on the capability of participants and celebrate programme success.

YBI is building a flourishing mentoring movement that harnesses the power of personal connection and professional support to benefit thousands of underserved young entrepreneurs around the world.

Our work within the ever-growing voluntary business mentoring landscape has a far-reaching, tangible effect on young lives, and it is our ambition that our continued efforts will have an even greater influence in the coming years.

“
As substantiated in this research, it is through our mentoring programmes across the network that we are offering essential non-financial support. Join us as we give young people the chance to succeed.
”

Our Members



Argentina

Fundación Impulsar is a non-profit organisation created in 1999, with the aim of transforming ideas into businesses through training, financial support and mentoring to young entrepreneurs without access to formal credit or training to create and manage their own businesses.



Chile

ONG Acción Emprendedora is a not-for-profit organisation, born in 2002 to support people in the development of their businesses through entrepreneurship. Our aspiration is to contribute to the reduction of inequality in Chile, facilitating opportunities for those who do not have access to university education or support to carry out their business projects. Through our work we seek to generate entrepreneurs and owners of small consolidated companies, with the capacity to grow and generate jobs, improving their living and environmental conditions.



Russia

Youth Business Russia (YBR) is a programme run by the autonomous non-commercial organisation Resource Centre International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF Russia), supporting young entrepreneurs to start businesses in 11 regions in Russia. Providing comprehensive support to young people wishing to start their own business, the key components of the programme include training and advice on business launch and development, access to start-up capital and mentoring support.



India

The Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust (BYST), a non-profit organisation, was set up in 1992 primarily to help disadvantaged young people in India to develop business ideas into viable enterprises with the guidance and support of a mentor. For over 20 years BYST has helped young people in Delhi, Rural Haryana, Chennai, Rural Chennai, Pune, Hyderabad, Rural Maharashtra and Assam.



Poland

Youth Business Poland is a mentoring-training program which aims to provide complex and effective support to young people so that they can set up and develop companies and create new places for work. Youth Business Poland is organized by Fundacja Inkubator Technologiczny (Technological Incubator Foundation). More than 800 beginner entrepreneurs have benefited from mentors' support in YBP since 2007.



Spain

Youth Business Spain (YBS) is a private, independent, not-for-profit foundation that supports young entrepreneurs to start, consolidate and grow their self-employment projects, as a quality alternative to unemployment. YBS is a network of 11 well-established local delivery partners (NGOs) in 12 Spanish regions that join resources and efforts to provide training, access to finance and mentoring to young entrepreneurs, especially to underserved young people. It promotes cooperation between local delivery partners, private companies (JPMorgan, Endesa, Citi, Accenture, Hogan Lovells, EY), public administrations (Spanish Government) and volunteers through knowledge sharing, best practices exchange, national partnerships, funding opportunities and technology.



Sweden

NyföretagarCentrum Sverige/Swedish Jobs & Society is a nonprofit organisation aiming to help new entrepreneurs to start new viable businesses. Since 1986 it is the largest and leading organisation providing individual start-up information, counselling, training and mentoring to approx 16,000 people annually all over Sweden, helping some 7,000 to actually start a business. Every year between 550 and 600 entrepreneurs are provided with a voluntary mentor for 12 months. NyföretagarCentrum also arranges fairs and events to stimulate entrepreneurship and there are special programmes for supporting migrants/ refugees and young entrepreneurs who want to start a business.



Uganda

Enterprise Uganda is a YBI member with Empretec Centre in Uganda, which promotes development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as the main vehicle for expanding production, providing sustainable jobs and enhancing economic growth. Enterprise Uganda's entrepreneurship and business development services delivery philosophy is based on United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s Empretec Programme Model, which is designed as one-stop programme providing an integrated and comprehensive range of business support services for MSMEs and corporate organisations using a hands-on approach. Enterprise Uganda has a particular focus on youth-led business and has developed customised start-up training tools for young entrepreneurs such as the Business Entrepreneurship Start-up Tool (BEST) which have been complemented with mentoring based on the YBI mentoring methodology.



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