

PROJECT STATUS REPORT

01/01/2021 - 06/30/2021

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY

Operation number: SU-T1095

Suboperation number: ATN/ME-16310-SU

Project Name: Employment in the Creative Industries

Purpose: To catalyze employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth in nontradit

Country admin:

SURINAME

Country beneficiary:

Suriname

Group:

C

SubGroup:

Executing Agency: The Back Lot Foundation

Team Leader: VASHTIED

Score Image:

Total Score: 2.636

Project cycle:

Report Date: 2021-07-01

Approval Date: 2017-08-24

Signature Date: 2017-10-26

First Disbursement Date: 2018-01-19

Original Execution End Date: 2020-10-26

Current Execution End Date: 2020-10-26

Original Last Disbursement Date: 2021-04-26

Last Current Disbursement Date: 2022-04-26

SECTION 2: PERFORMANCE

Project's performance summary since the beginning

Creative Skills Development CREATIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT Youth training The Back Lot started in January 2018 with the project "Employment in the Creative Industries". The project aims to develop an innovative approach to support employment and grow the creative technology-based businesses in Suriname by building the basic skills of youth. The objective was to develop a creative economic hub called "the Creative HotSpot"(HotSpot). The Hotspot offers a blend of technical training in film and multimedia skills, early stage entrepreneurial support and the economic transformation of Paramaribo's city center through an ongoing program of creative and cultural training, business support and events. For housing of the HotSpot, The Back Lot and IDB HUD discussed possibilities to use historic government buildings renovated by the project Paramaribo Urban Rehabilitation Program (PURP). In July 2018 The Back Lot rented a training facility with office space in the historic City center of Paramaribo because no PURP buildings were available at that time. A second facility for entrepreneurship spaces was later rented. The buildings were smaller than the project plans projected, therefor less trainings could be provided. Nevertheless, the outfitting of the HotSpot concluded in 2 creative learning environments. The aim of the 'Youth Basic Skills Development' component is to provide youth with the necessary skills needed for jobs responding to the demands of the creative economy and to stimulate thinking about new business activities by supporting youth with business ideas so that they can develop viable startups. In this context, The Back Lot started The Back Lot Academy (TBLA), an education institute on 1 January 2019. The first 3 courses responded to the demand of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) for creative industries. They are one-year practice-oriented courses in Multimedia audiovisual production, Management of social media architecture and Commercial and technical production of creative and cultural events. These courses are housed in The Back Lot Academy at Heerenstraat in the historic city center of Paramaribo. Admission requirements are 21 years and older with at least a Mulo education of 18 years and older with at least a secondary education background. On request of UNICEF there was a special edition to the one-year program Cultural Event Management, designed for students aged 16-19 who dropped out of middle or high school. The one year programs were later supplemented with workshops and masterclasses. Incubator Development On 30 September 2020 as part of the 'Youth Basic Skills Development' component, The Back Lot launched Kickstart, a business incubator. Kickstart was developed and established to stimulate entrepreneurship among youth in Suriname thereby contributing to social economic growth. More specifically, Kickstart's goal is to inspire and support young entrepreneurs to start and grow a business in the creative and innovative industries in an incubator setting. Cultural events In October 2019 The Back Lot organized the Heerenstraat Festival for the first time. A multi-disciplinary festival focusing on Film, Food, Art and Culture. The location was the 'Heerenstraat', in the historic city center of Paramaribo. 17,000 visitors have visited the festival. The festival must become an annual event to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there was no edition in 2020 nor will there be one in 2021. The Back Lot now focusses on Heerenstraat Festival 2022.

Supervision Team Leader comments

The program has significantly contributed to cultural revitalization of Paramaribo's historic district but the country's severe economic downturn (almost 1000% devaluation of local currency in a 9 month period) , extreme restrictions on mobility and congregation due to the COVID 19 pandemic for example have slowed progress over the past 18 months

Project's performance summary in the last 6 months

Semi-Annual Report Kickstart by TBL 1st half of 2021 This progress report presents the progress of the incubator in the 1st half of 2021. The key activities and highlights in the reporting period included: Reporting 1) Preparation of the 2nd semi-annual report over 2020; 2) Processing the evaluation results of the bootcamp and preparation of the Evaluation Report Bootcamp 2020. Registration Incubator Program 3) Developing a registration form and guiding registration for the Incubator Program; 4) Preparation and signing of a Commitment Letter in which the aspiring entrepreneur commits him/herself to optimal participation within the incubator; 5) Guiding the Floor Manager in closing individual financial Agreements with the startups regarding the participation fee of US\$ 750, -; 6) Conducting motivational meetings with the selected candidates, when it turned out that the majority had decided not to participate in the incubator program, including looking for solutions to secure their participation. Implementation Incubator Program 7) Finalizing preparation Phase 1 and planning the workshops and coaching sessions; 8) Approaching coaches and making appointments for coaching sessions phase 1, including finding a suitable model that guarantees a smooth course of the program; 9) Organizing meetings for a proper coordination among trainer and coaches. This was necessary since the trainer was not available for coaching. The coaches' job was to guide and support the aspiring entrepreneurs in their home assignments, provided by the trainer. Although the coaches were senior experts in their field, the coaching did not run entirely flawless. This was partly because they were not quite familiar with the lean startup approach, Minimum Viable Product, and hypothesis/assumption testing. Ideally, the coaches should also have attended the training workshops for the coaching to run smoothly. However, this was not feasible, not only due to the limitation in the availability of the coaches, but also due to budgetary constraints. To overcome this in the future, it is recommended to organize a train the trainers course, which should also be mandatory for the coaches, to familiarize them with the training material. This problem was prevented during the implementation of phase 2 of the incubator program by having the trainer also provide for the coaching. However, this also had its challenges since the trainer/coach could easily become overloaded, especially when these activities were combined with a full-time and demanding job as was the case with Reema Akloe. This should be taken into account for retaining our trainers and coaches; 10) Planning and start Phase 1 Business Model - 3rd week January 2020. Eleven aspiring entrepreneurs were registered to participate in the program. In the first week 5 cancelled their participation, and we had 6 committed to participate in the program. Most heard reason for not participating was challenging time schedules due to their financial situation; 11) Identifying and attracting a second qualified trainers for replacing the main trainer, Miguel Eersel, in his absence during several weeks, conducting negotiations regarding the conditions, and organizing meetings for mutual coordination between both trainers. It appeared to be challenging for identifying qualified trainers for phase 1, since a very limited number of trainers appear to be familiar with the lean startup approach. Negotiations with 2 trainers, familiar with this approach, were initiated but ended after no agreement could be reached on the conditions. One trainer was unwilling to be deployed for less than US\$50 per hour, while the other was only willing to be deployed for a discounted rate of 30 Euro (1/3 of his normal fee of 90 Euro), if the reduction (60 Euro) was booked as a debt that would become due, if Kickstart would become profitable in the future. This proposal was discussed but rejected by TBL management. Increasing the number of trainers is therefore necessary. This can be provided through a train the trainer course. Evaluation of the existing module is also recommended. PUM and RVO are prepared to assist in this. Our existing trainers, Miguel Eersel, Frank Soe-A-Ngie, and Reema Akloe have responded positively on our request for knowledge sharing with new trainers; 12) Attracting trainers, coaches and guest speakers to provide additional topics within the incubator program that were not directly related to the main subjects (business model and business plan). Part of the discussions included making further agreements about the content, planning and compensation. It turned out not to be easy to agree on a non-commercial rate or to find senior experts willing to volunteer. For an adequate preparation, information regarding the program, participating startups and their business ideas, was shared with trainers, coaches, and guest speakers. A total of 5 additional workshops/coaching sessions were provided, including Corporate So

Supervision Team Leader comments

The project is on track and The Back Lot has adapted as required to meet significant challenges arising including (i) impact of severe economic downturn on student ability to pay (ii) availability of trainers for incubators and (iii) COVID 19 restrictions which have had a significant impact as transition to on line models is not feasible given high cost and limited connectivity of students/beneficiaries

SECTION 3: INDICATORS AND MILESTONES

C1 : Building an Enabling Framework		Weight 30%		Qualification Satisfactory	
	Indicators	Baseline	Planned	Achieved	Status
I1	Number of public and private partnerships engaged in the delivery of the model	3	12 (2020-12-26)	9 (2021-01-30)	Delayed
I2	Number of public and private partnerships to provide employment opportunities	0	40 (2020-12-26)	12 (2021-01-30)	Delayed
C2 : Skills Development		Weight 40%		Qualification Satisfactory	
	Indicators	Baseline	Planned	Achieved	Status
I1	Youth trained who complete training in soft skills, junior media technician, cultural events producer and social media architect	0	400 (2020-12-26)	77 (2021-01-30)	Delayed
I2	Percentage of youth provided with labor intermediation support	0	290 (2020-12-26)	58 (2021-01-30)	Delayed
I3	Number of youth trained in entrepreneurship (legal & financing advice, coaching, mentoring)	0	30 (2020-12-26)	25 (2021-01-30)	Delayed
I4	Number of youth receiving support in business development and pitching in ideathons	0	100 (2020-12-26)	25 (2021-01-30)	Delayed

C3 : Strategic Communication**Weight 30%****Qualification Satisfactory**

	Indicators	Baseline	Planned	Achieved	Status
I1	TBL new business model	0	1 (2019-10-24)		Delayed
I2	Communication tools (media campaign: videos, social media, adds)	0	4 (2017-10-26)	100 (2020-11-11)	Finished
I3	Story telling case study	0	1 (2020-10-24)		In progress

	Milestones	Planned Value	Achieved Value	Due Date	Achieved Date	Status
	Conditions Prior	8	8	2018-04-26	2018-04-26	Achieved
	Media and social architect technicians' curriculum completed	2	3	2018-09-09	2018-08-30	Achieved
	Facilitators hired for 3 training programs	3	3	2018-10-26	2018-10-22	Achieved
	50 Youth Trained	50	57	2019-04-27	2019-12-06	Achieved
	First intake of entrepreneurs in incubator	1	1	2019-10-27	2020-04-28	Achieved
	Business Plan for sustainability of the Creative Hub completed and approved by T	1	1	2020-06-30	2020-04-28	Achieved
	Sourcing of seed capital for the business incubator	1	1	2020-12-15	2021-06-10	Achieved
	Launch of Incubator	1	1	2020-09-30	2020-09-29	Achieved
	Sustainability Plan	1	1	2021-02-26	2021-07-22	Achieved
	Design of case study	1	0	2021-12-15		Pending

Critical facts that have affected project's performance

- Lack of resources for the counterpart
- Purchase difficulties

Others, Which?

COVID 19 restrictions and the economic downturn in Suriname following the devaluations over the past year (100%) have slowed project progress

SECTION 4: RISKS

	Impact Area	Severity	Prob.	Date	Responsible	Mitigation action
Delays in building rehabilitation - building that will house the hot spot could COVID 19 Health restrictions delay / slow project progress	Building an Enabling Framework	(2) Low	Low 40%	2020-02-14	Project Coordinator	This risk will be mitigated in part by initiating the training activities in the premises currently occupied by TBL. The incubator and the studio will be set up at a later stage; therefore, any temporary delays in the readiness of the building will not have an immediate impact on project execution.
Project financing for counterpart and continuity	Building an Enabling Framework	(3) Medium	Medium 60%	2020-02-14	Executing Agency	Transition to an on line delivery system leveraging the Back Lot's experience in film and videography
The country's economic situation does not improve in the short run, negatively i	Intermediary Outcome	(4) High	High 80%	2020-02-14	Project Coordinator	The key mitigation of this risk is the programming of specific activities and resources in the proposed project to manage and coordinate the various activities/partners throughout the life of the intervention allowing TBL to ensure that these critical partners, resources and activities are coordinated and synchronized.
						Although not an ideal situation, this risk will be mitigated by leveraging commercial channels in the Netherlands. In addition, funds for seed capital will be raised through sponsors and crowdfunding efforts for the start-ups housed in the incubator.

TOTAL RISKS QUANTITY: 4**IN EFFECT RISKS: 2****NOT IN EFFECT RISKS: 2****MITIGATED RISKS: 0**

SECTION 5: SUSTAINABILITY

Indicate likelihood of project sustainability after project completion: LP

Justification:

The economic situation in Suriname has made fundraising for continuity very challenging despite success realized and interest of targeted beneficiaries

Aspects that put the project sustainability at risk

Factor	Comments
1. Lack of commitment from the executing agency to continue or expand the project's services and/or activities	
2. Lack of cost recovery mechanisms or external financing sources (government, donors and/or private sector) to continue the activities of the project once IDB Lab resources are expended	Suriname has experienced a steep devaluation and economic downturn

Actions related to sustainability which have been implemented in the project:

Kickstart Business Incubator - Sustainability Plan and Seed Capital A proposal was prepared for requesting PUM-advice for developing a sustainable business model in the Surinamese context, i.e. a continuous influx of financial resources and startups, a program that responds to the need in Suriname, taking into account promising sectors (oil, agriculture, tourism, ICT), and attracting seed capital for starters. PUM was also asked to provide a train the trainers course. The proposal was approved and the advice mission is now being implemented. Results: • Stage 1 of the incubator program is implemented. 4 (of 5) aspirant entrepreneurs completed this stage by developing and testing their business model as well as pitching it for the management of TBL. • Stage 2 of the incubator program is in execution. It is expected that 4 (of 4) aspirant entrepreneurs will successfully develop their business plan and pitch their businesses within 3 to 4 weeks. • RVO has approved € 24.848 seed capital for the Incubator. This means that TBL may submit bills up to this previously mentioned amount to the Dutch embassy for payment of technical assistance to the startups. • PUM has approved a request for assistance in developing a sustainable business model and revenue model for the incubator, attracting seed capital, and providing a train de trainers course, including evaluation of the current program. • Besides PUM, also RVO has approved the request support in finding a sustainable business model and attracting seed capital for startups. In principle, this request has already been approved. Formal approval will follow after developing a detailed plan in collaboration with the embassy and RVO. The Back Lot Academy - Sustainability Plan TBLA's technical courses have made a good impression at the Ministry of Education in Suriname. On July 19, a delegation from TBL was invited by the minister for a meeting to consider a structure for integrating TBLA's courses into the regular education of Suriname, at Middle school level. Becoming this direction with the Creative stream, or MULO-D. On August 28, a delegation from TBL was invited by the Grafisch Lyceum Rotterdam and the Belgian Artevelde College to consider together how to apply for funding from a Belgian fund so that the TBLA courses can be continued. May also be supplemented with other creative training courses.

SECTION 6: PRACTICAL LESSONS

[There were no lessons learned reported during this period]