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UNDP - United Nations Development Program



UNIDO - United Nations Industrial Development Organization



Ministry of
Economic Affairs



Ministry for Small
Business and Tourism

INTEGRATED ENTREPREURIAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN SLOVENIA

DP/SVN/95/001-52

THE CERTIFICATE OF SMALL BUSINESS COUNSELLING: STANDARDS, TRAINING AND APPRAISAL

By Antonio Sfiligoj
Seed - Services for Eastern Economic Development S.p.A.
Trieste, Italy

SBDC

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

UNDP - United Nations Development Program



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Marec 1999

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Document aims at strengthening the Small Business Support Network (SBSN) of Slovenia by:

- providing advice on the organisation of the SBSN
- developing criteria for setting standards for advisory and Consultants services,
- designing the normative and methodological procedures for the regional and local support networks established through the Local Business Centres (LBCs) and the Regional Business Centres (RBCs)

In particular, the Document aims at providing detailed standards and including qualifications, experience, evaluation procedures for the inclusion of personnel on the roster of business consultants at various levels.

STANDARDS INCLUDE:

- a) recommendations on the portfolio of standard Consultants' services at the local level, at the regional level and those exceptionally organised by the SBDC
- b) recommendations on standards for consulting organisations for providing general consulting to entrepreneurs or small enterprises,
- c) recommendations on standards for business consultants, i.e. qualifications of business consultants who can be included in the consulting subsidised by the SBSN: educational background, experience in business consulting, specialist training, other requisite qualifications,
- d) regulations for the roster of small business consultants subsidised by SBSN (i.e. regulations for entering and being extended on the roster for various levels)
- e) Establish procedures for appointment of an independent panel to review annually the roster, qualifications, standards, etc. in order to meet market needs,
- f) Establish a monitoring procedure for performance evaluation of business consultants on the roster

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The process of selecting, enlisting and mobilising the internal and external individual and organisational capabilities required for the socio-economic, financial, customer and internal objectives of the SBSN is based upon the strategic goals of the Institutional Partners towards the development of the Small and Medium Sized Enterprise Sector.

Thus the needs of the targeted entrepreneurs and the strategy and the requirements of the Institutional Partners provide the framework to derive tangible objectives, measures for the services, projects and initiatives undertaken at the local level - and for the internal and external personnel.

Standards are based on measures. Objectives and measures must become a "framework for action" that should channel the energies, abilities and specific knowledge held by the people and the consultants involved throughout the organisation.

Front line SBSN staff and external consultants must understand the objectives of the Partners, and the financial and economic consequences of their decisions and actions..

The set of economic, financial and non-economic measures and standards that are preliminary suggested must become part of the information system for employees and external specialists at all levels that the SBSN is building up.

The qualifications and measures proposed are an initial set, to be further refined to stimulate and align individual, local and regional centre initiatives. Every component of the Network should engage to progressively heighten them and to identify entirely new processes for meeting the needs of the entrepreneurs and the objectives and expectations of the Partners and their constituencies.

This UNIDO project should therefore be viewed as the first step of a continuous improvement process aimed to:

1. Clarify, innovate and translate the Partners' and the SBSN vision and strategy
2. Communicate and link strategic objectives and measures to long term targets and annual budgets,
3. Identify, plan, set targets and standards to align strategic initiatives and local development projects
4. Enhance strategic feedback to Government and Institutional Stakeholders, to improve policy and organisational learning.

- the definition of the skills and capabilities required for the most frequent consulting figures (small business counsellor, local development counsellor, finance expert, marketing and export promotion expert, business premises expert, innovation and technology expert)
- the requirement that financial supports be integrated with management consulting and tutoring for the beneficiaries,
- the introduction of a "voucher"¹ system to attract SMEs and individuals to the Network and access business advise at subsidised rates,
- the introduction of an advanced, Internet based, Information System to diffuse information and increase contacts among Centres and consultants,
- the definition of performance monitoring and assessment procedures,
- the adoption of a system for continuous training and competence building

The UNIDO Team has elaborated a systematic approach to develop the effectiveness and capabilities of the Consultants' Network, which is based on the following key elements:

¹Under Voucher system, eligible enterprises or individuals are given a coupon to be spent to buy business advisory services, which are later refunded by State to the individual consultant.

THE SBSN STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME

The entrepreneurial and business advisory services of the Small Business Support Network (SBSN) are delivered to SMEs, individuals and Institutional Partners (e.g., Municipalities, Government Agencies, etc.) by qualified - and certified - external experts who work in conjunction with the staff LBCs-Local Business Centres and the RBCs-Regional Business Centres.

The Certificate in Small Business and Local Development Counselling is a work-based professional development program leading to a qualification which will be accepted within the consulting industry as well as within the banking and financial community.

Consultants must undergo a licensing and performance monitoring process to ensure quality and continuous improvement of their advisory skills.

AIMS

The fundamental aims of the Small Business Support Network are:

1. to help develop a market for private high standard business advice available to Small Enterprises and Entrepreneurs. Better and cheaper business services - including advice, training, banking and finance - lead to more and more competitive and better capitalised enterprises.
2. to develop counselling skills and capabilities in the key areas of Regional and Local Economic Development. Local Development. Enterprise creation and small enterprise development are key aspects of Local Economic and Employment Development.

The Standard Setting and Certification Programme is a key strategic role of the SBDC Small Business Development Centre - and is aimed to:

- mobilise,
- select,
- orient,
- continuously appraise the performance of,
- train

the people who provide business counselling services within the Small Business Support Network.

The Certification Process is key to align the SBSN organisational culture and performance, while providing opportunities for training, upgrading and professional development for Member Counsellors.

TARGETS

The services provided by Counsellors are oriented toward :

a) client entrepreneurs, helping them develop their business potential by:

- understanding their current situation,
- identifying problems and opportunities,
- identifying sources of support (advice, finance, training) available through the Institutional

- Partners of the Small Business Support Network, and
- taking action to move towards an improved level of functioning.

b) local communities and Institutional Partners, helping them to:

- identify the needs and opportunities for entrepreneurial development of the local level,
- deliver their Supporting Programmes (e.g., in the area of enterprise creation, unemployment, innovation, export promotion, etc.) in the most effective way.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) for the entrepreneurs, to provide a higher level of service-quality to the client. Higher quality service will in turn lead to increased success rates of Slovenian businesses, and a stronger base for local economy.
- 2) for the Counsellors, to access the market for subsidised counselling, information and training programmes - financed by various community economic development, government and EU offices - minimising marketing costs while accessing to further training and self development,
- 3) for the SBSN Partners, to develop the synergies among their various supporting programmes: optimising quality of service and access to target clients, and minimising promotional and administrative costs (counsellor training, performance monitoring, programme management, etc.)

The Certification program will enable to:

- a) increase the image and public awareness of the SBSN and of the Small Business Support Programmes of the Partner Organisations: with entrepreneurs, banks and other private partners,
- b) identify and motivate “the right” counsellors,
- c) clarify their role in respect to the small business client and in relation to the wider developments in small business support.
- d) understand the requirements of effective counselling and be able to put this into practice with their clients.
- e) develop specific areas of knowledge and expertise which will enable them to deliver a more comprehensive counselling service.
- f) meet their own learning and development needs
- g) achieve a recognised level of professional competence to meet an industry accepted standard of performance.

MOTIVATING THE CONSULTANTS TO APPLY FOR THE SBSN LICENCE

The main motivations for the consultants to get the SBSN licence are:

- get the opportunity to be involved in the growing Slovenian market for SME services and regional development projects. The Ministry for Small Enterprises and Tourism is introducing a “Voucher System” for entrepreneurial advice and training, whereby the SBDC licence will be a precondition to be included. The size of the market will further considerably increase following the availability

- of the EU Structural Funds and several other SME-supporting programmes.
- lower personal marketing and overhead expenses: clients and consulting projects are brought in to licensed consultants through the promotional activities of the LBCs and RBCs,²
 - be exposed to continuous training and experience building activities, leading to improved skills and thus to more financially rewarding projects. The most important experience sharing groups are: the Network of SME Business Consultants (SSMG) and the Slovenian Business Innovators Network (SPIM).

PROCEDURES, STANDARDS AND NORMS

Developing and Monitoring the Performance of the Centres and of the Consultants

It is a specific requirement of the SBSN that targets of achievement be set down and that these will then be reported on, monitored and evaluated as part of the ongoing work of the SBDC and of the Partners. Self evaluation by the LBCs and RBCs is also an essential method to assist both Centres and External Consultants in focusing on their processes and outcomes.

Rather than being a “mechanism for control”, objectives and measures should become a “framework for action” that should channel the energies, abilities and specific knowledge held by the people and the consultants involved throughout the SBSN organisation.

For example, the requirement to produce evidence about the performance of their client companies, allows to “push” the Centres’ staff and external consultants to follow up the business plans that they prepare for the client entrepreneurs, and to establish close relationships with the client firm, banks, other consultants.

Monitoring procedures approved by the SBDC Board should include the following requirements:

- Need for both process and quantitative indicators;
- Need to link performance indicators to measures across the whole SBSN, and in particular, to measures on Enterprise Creation and Development and infrastructure and environment e.g. enterprises supported, jobs created, private investment activated, etc.
- The agreed Performance Indicators; for RBCs, LBCs and Individual Consultants
- Method of setting targets, within agreed performance indicators related to:
- Benchmarking with “best practices”, expected outputs at the various “development Phase” of the RBC/LBC,
- Specific Partner Program Indicators (e.g. for Innovation, Regional Development Programmes, etc.)
- Monitoring supported by Information Systems and specific training courses for consultants and RBC/LBC personnel

The SBDC will issue a Handbook on Performance Indicators and Targets, on the basis of “best practices”.

²Typical small business consultants may spend up to 40% of their time for marketing and promotional activities, only the remaining 60% is time actually workwd on assignments paid by clients.

Key Outputs Indicator Targets

- Annual targets for LBCs / RBCs will include :
- Numbers of entrepreneurs trained
- Training courses prepared
- Workshops organised
- Business plans prepared
- Projects (with employment) started
- Projects (without employment)
- Projects in the pipeline
- Jobs (actual jobs created and jobs which the Centre has helped to preserve)

The most important objective is to create jobs and to establish more small businesses. Actual Indicator Targets will be referred to the development phase of the LBC.

INTRODUCING THE “BALANCED SCORECARD APPROACH”³

The UNIDO Team proposes to progressively adopt the “Balanced Scorecard Method” of R.S. Kaplan and D. P. Norton, whereby the proposed measures fall in four categories:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. economic/financial performance,2. customer knowledge,3. internal business processes, and4. learning and growth. |
|---|

An initial set of measures based on this method is proposed in the following Table.

³R. S. Kaplan; D. P. Norton - The Balanced Scorecard, Translating Strategy into Action, HBS Press, 1996

Table Example of "Balanced Scorecard" Output Measurement Criteria

OUTPUT MEASUREMENT CRITERIA	OUTPUT MEASUREMENT CRITERIA
<i>ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE</i>	<i>CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE</i>
No. of new jobs	No. of SMEs served
No. of new companies	No. of employees
Value of financing provided	Increase in No. Of companies served
Public funds leverage ? Investment ? Sales Increase ? Tax return	No. of satisfied SMEs
Company Default rate	Time to access financing
No. fast growing SMEs	No. of business plans
Export increase	No. of accepted Business plans
Sqm/value of premises available	Hrs. of training
Occupancy of premises	No. of partnerships
Value of service revenues	No of patents
OUTPUT MEASUREMENT CRITERIA	OUTPUT MEASUREMENT CRITERIA
<i>INTERNAL BUSINESS PROCESS</i>	<i>LEARNING AND GROWTH</i>
Productivity: No. of Projects/Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of Training hrs: • regional experts • local experts • SME specialists • mgmt specialists
Average yr. Revenue for Expert	Development of information assets Hrs / investment
Service Quality	Participation to SBSN Meetings
Staff Retention Licensed Expert Retention LBC staff Retention	Performance Scoring/Rewards
Frequency of Access to Information System	

It is recommended that the SBDC designs and offers to Partners/LBCs and RBCs a computerised reporting system which will enable the ready compilation of data regarding funded information system initiatives and progress on funded Programmes.
Monitoring and assessment of the achievement of agreed targets will form part of the Annual and Mid Term Reviews of the SBSN.

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO DEVELOP THE EFFECTIVENESS AND CAPABILITIES OF THE CONSULTANTS

The entrepreneurial and business advisory services of the SBSN are delivered to Small Enterprises and individuals by licensed external experts who work in conjunction with the LBCs and the RBCs.

The key elements of the systematic approach to develop the effectiveness and capabilities of the Consultants are the following:

The financial supports provided by the SBSN and the Institutional Partners must be integrated with consulting and tutoring for the beneficiaries,

A “voucher”⁴ system is being introduced to encourage Small Enterprises and individuals to get qualified business advise and training at subsidised rates from the SBSN Network,

Consultants must undergo a licensing and performance development and monitoring process to ensure quality and continuous improvement of their consulting skills. To this purpose, the licensing process is based upon clearly set performance monitoring and assessment procedures,

A system for continuous training and competence building is being introduced

An advanced, Internet based, Information System is being developed to diffuse information and sustain the relationship between and among Centres and consultants.

⁴Under Voucher system, eligible enterprises or individuals are given a coupon to be spent to buy business advisory services, which are later refunded by State to the individual consultant.

SERVICE PORTFOLIO, COMPETENCIES AND KNOWLEDGE AREAS

The purpose of the SBSN is to develop SMEs in Slovenia by bundling the entrepreneurs' own financial resources with those of the financial community and those of the Ministry for Small Enterprise and Tourism and of the other Institutional Partners of the SBDC.

The Programmes and objectives of the Institutional Partners greatly benefit from the availability of a well organised system that facilitates the "distribution" of these Programmes to entrepreneurs through private consultants and consulting organisations.

The SBSN - through the LBCs and RBCs - has therefore a stimulating and integrating role bundling together financial support (through banks and direct), business advice, training, offer of premises, opportunities for business development .

Significant gains in efficiency can be obtained through integration of supports from various Partners:

- building a critical mass of services and supports at the local level, thus increasing service visibility as well as the motivation of the external Consultants to engage and "invest" in the Network
- sharing fixed costs among programs (i.e. promotion, administrative structure, premises, etc.)
- sharing knowledge and feedback at the local and national levels

The "Integrating and Facilitating Role" of the SBSN is key to induce a "virtuous cycle" where risk is reduced and investments are made more profitable, thus bringing in additional financial resources, and so on.

The service portfolio required to meet the needs of Small Enterprises and implement the Programmes of the Institutional Partners' comprises the following main Competencies:

1. Local Development (Information, Promotion, "Animation" of Small Enterprises)
2. Start-up and Development Finance
3. Marketing and Export Services
4. Innovation, Technology and Quality
5. Information and Training

Each Competency translates into a set of services to be delivered - to entrepreneurs and Partners (National and Local) - and into a set of "Knowledge Areas" that need be mastered.

The SBSN, when considered as a whole, must possess all the knowledge that is indicated in the following chapters.

At the level of the LBCs and RBCs, each centre should be able to offer to entrepreneurs the specialist skills that are especially required by local SMEs.

It is a precise role of the SBSN to make available throughout Slovenia the knowledge and capabilities which are resident at some specialised Regional or Local Business Centres. Examples of such areas of specialisation may include, for example:

- EU Partner Search (through the EICC- Euro Info Correspondent Centre),
- International Industrial Subcontracting,
- Technology and Innovation (through the Innovation Relay Centre Network),
- Agritourism, etc..

The “Service Portfolio” which is outlined in the following pages is particularly complete, and should be considered as a mid-term goal.

Within this general framework, each RBC/LBC should plan and decide which services should be provided through:

- “internal” staff,
- local certified external consultants,
- local Partner organisations (local Desks of the Chamber of Craft, of the Chamber of Economy, of the Employment Office).

LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Key Competency of the SBSN is to facilitate the development of areas and local communities that are economically weak and threatened from the demographic and social points of view.

The growth of the Small Enterprise sector is very important to ameliorate the local economic and social conditions. The “Local Development” tasks include all activities - promotion, information, training, building of common premises and infrastructure (incubators, enterprise zones, etc.) - which reduce the thresholds to:

- the creation of new enterprises at the local level,
- the improvement of the performance of small enterprises, through better management knowledge, joining up forces among several small enterprises in order to create a critical mass at the local level (e.g., in the tourism sector)
- the employment of individuals that have been out of work for long periods of time,

Function

To assist Local Partner Institutions (Municipalities, Chambers of Crafts, Chambers of Economy, future Regional Development Agencies⁵, local entrepreneurial associations, etc) in the conception, promotion and implementation of local development programs based upon the specific strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats of each area and targeted small business groups.

Customers

Local and national public Institutions. The costs are usually covered from the Municipal budgets at the very beginning of the LBC operations. Subsequently, Local Development Projects are awarded essentially on the basis of national tenders. An important source of projects in this area are the various PHARE Cross Border Programmes, to be substituted in the next years by Regional Development Measures of the EU Structural and Social Funds (Directorate General DG XVI - Regional Development).

1. Knowledge Area: Slovenian SME Institutions

Knowledge of the Slovenian Public Administration, and especially of Institutions and Offices

⁴The creation of Regional Development Agencies is under assessment by the Ministry for Economic Relations and Development - MEOR

(SBDC, Office for Employment, etc.) involved in SME development, at the Central and Local Government Levels and the SME Supporting schemes, i.e. Legislation, Policies, Internal Organisation, Activities, Procedures, Tendering processes, etc..

Key Capabilities

Effective communication with above institutions, and particularly with the Local and National Partners. Counsellors must be able to establish and reinforce personal contacts at various levels within Ministries, Offices and Central Government.

2. Knowledge Area: Local Economy and Institutions

Knowledge and contacts within the local economic and political environment. The RBC/LBC must operate completely detached from political parties. However local consensus is very important especially during the launching stage of the centres. This “Knowledge Area” includes the capability to set up links to Companies, Banks, technical universities, schools of economics, etc, as well as with Public officials charged with economic development and Municipalities.

Key Capabilities

At the launch stage, through clarity of vision and strategy, communicate credibility of the proposed management team and of the core group of external consultants enlisted at the local or regional level. At the operations stage, guarantee effective communication with above partners, to provide attractive feedback information about “Entrepreneurial Success Stories” that have become true through the help of the RBC/LBC and Local Coalition; targets achieved, and technical competence and professionalism demonstrated in effectively developing small businesses and entrepreneurship in the area.

SME Experts must “scout” for entrepreneurs and to facilitate interaction with Banks.

3. Knowledge Area: Regional Development Methods, EU and International SME Programmes

Knowledge to identify new opportunities to develop local SMEs and finance RBC/LBC activities through SME supporting programmes and initiatives applicable in the Region/area and tendered by Slovenian Government, as well as by the EU and international sources (EU PHARE Cross Border Initiative). When Slovenia becomes a full EU member, these methods will be necessary to apply for programmes financed by EU structural Funds.

Key Capabilities

- opportunity and programme identification
- analysis (“ex-ante”) of the local SME situation, and possible growth scenarios
- build the political consensus
- Proposal Preparation/Consortia Organisation: mobilise key professional resources, schedule activities, budget costs, etc
- Awareness Campaign: communicate effectively towards to target groups, stakeholders and the constituency at large and to the general public
- Project Management (see below) and Progress Reporting to financing organisation
- analysis (“ex-post”) of the results

4. Knowledge Area: Project Management

Project Management know-how is key to the success of the SBDC Network services. Specialists could be engaged for the most financially demanding initiatives (e.g. infrastructure). This implies

knowledge of and direct experience with Project Management (e.g. PERT) and Capital Budgeting techniques

Key Capabilities

- Organise Project Financing bringing in additional financial resources (from SMEs and Institutions). Specialist Knowledge is required for major investments: i.e. to build new SME infrastructure: enterprise zones, crafts zones, incubators, etc.
- Project management - produce expected final and interim results and outputs, meeting scheduled time and costs.

5. Knowledge Area: Small Business Animation and Promotion

Animate and promote small business to effectively identify, inform and mobilise SMEs, and entrepreneurs that could benefit from the training and business growth opportunities, services and incentives available from the Stakeholders through the SBDC/RBCs/ LBCs. It implies the increase of the awareness among entrepreneurs of the RBC/LBC services and the improvement of financial resources available for the activities and projects (e.g. increasing SME contributions, finding sponsors such as Banks, Insurance Companies, Large Firms,)

Key Capabilities

- Organise Communication, through Internet, Brochures, Newsletters, “House Organs”/Publications, Press Releases,
- Organise Business Meetings, Seminars, Events (Investment Forums), etc.

SME Premises Set-up and Management Service

The key task is to lease and make available, at low rates and flexible lease conditions, ready-to-use workshops, Craft and Enterprise Zones, Technology Parks and the like to Target Groups. By reducing the start-up investment barrier, entrepreneurs are encouraged to enlarge or create new companies, while company growth is facilitated by liberating internal resources for core business investment (e.g. in machinery, staff, commercial distribution, etc) rather than invest into “bricks and mortar”. Other positive effects for the entrepreneurs are: better company location, image and visibility; proximity to business advice and other RBCs services, establishment of synergies among tenants, smooth exit from the Incubator.

The RBC/LBCs, when premises are made available at no cost by Local Coalitions or other Institutional Partners, benefit from the income obtained by rents which brings about: improved financial stability, economic viability and overall effectiveness. Moreover, through the proximity to tenants, the RBC/LBCs can increase availability of other services (i.e. budgeting, financial control, marketing assistance, etc.)

The Local Municipalities receive in turn: a reduction of environmental problems (pollution and noise emissions, traffic congestion), revitalisation of abandoned industrial sites and areas, etc.

TYPE OF PREMISE INFRASTRUCTURE	TARGET GROUPS
Incubators and Technology Parks	New entrepreneurs
Crafts zones	Craftsmen and Small businesses
Enterprise and Industrial zones	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
Technology Parks	Innovative Entrepreneurs / SMEs

Premise-related activities are co-financed, besides by entrepreneurs, by stakeholders, including: Municipalities, Ministry for Economic Affairs, Development Corporation, Private Developers, Banks and Insurance Companies.

Key Capabilities

To support Local and Regional Institutions in the process of planning, financing, promoting and managing logistic infrastructure, as to allow for organic and environmentally friendly development of SMEs premises.

- **Feasibility Analysis:**
Policy and Legislative measures; Authorisation procedures intended to “free up” the market for industrial premises; Business plan including: development strategy based on area’s SWOT analysis; Project financing; Expected relationship between wealth created / costs incurred; Interface with Ministry for Territorial Planning; Zoning Activation of “ Fund Raising” at local, national levels.
- **Design:**
Definition of a clear and sustainable management and responsibility structure; Suitable organisation forms (no profit, consortia, etc.); Determining location and design of premises, leading to good occupancy levels; Project Financing Methods and Financial Techniques:
- **Construction and pilot phase:**
Buying land/tendering infrastructure construction; Monitoring construction works; Authorising start-ups; Selling premises; Cost and project management; Identification of key first tenants; Promotion towards Target Group Tenant SME (e.g. according to enterprise zone sector specialisation) at national and international level:
- **Start-up:**
Reach good premises occupancy with target Group tenant firms; Organise maintenance services and utility services; Improve common infrastructures (e.g. waste management, transport, communications, etc.).
- **Full operation:**
Manage a cost effective and quality relationship with tenants; Invoicing; Tenant turnover; Planning of tenant exit into larger premises; Expand/promote attraction of new firms; Deploy information technology, databases, and systems to optimise zone occupancy; Develop opportunities to deliver new advanced business services.
- **Network Specialist skills required:** Zoning and Territorial Planning; Project Financing; Premises (Incubator, Enterprise zone) Management; International Foreign Direct Investment Promotion.

Foreign Direct Investment Promotion Service

The promotion of Foreign Direct Investment is undertaken by central government Agencies and the Chamber of Economy with the support of the EICC. Local Support services are however necessary in order to:

1. assist Local Partners in the conception, promotion and implementation of local development programs based upon the specific strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats of each area and targeted small business groups.
2. assist interested companies to set up business (“green field” or joint-venture) in the area.

Co-financing for such activities and projects is made available by various local/national public Institutions.

Knowledge Areas

Assessment of international attractiveness, competitive positioning of the area, specific industry knowledge, Slovenian legislation, trade unions, labour office, international company law, methods and tools available through international organisations, including UNIDO, engaged in promotion of foreign direct investments.

Key Capabilities

- market abroad a specific area (e.g. an Enterprise zone) or a specific Company/Business Investment Opportunity: databases, promotion material, liaisons with foreign consultants and banks, etc.
- act as a “one-stop-shop” for entrepreneurs: facilitate all the procedures problems faced by foreign investors (locate premises and target companies, access to government incentives, company set-up/acquisition, staff and personnel recruitment; permissions and building concessions, environmental issues, etc.).
- assist the formation of joint ventures with foreign partners, making use of the PHARE JOP Programme. This refers to the stages of business planning, company set-up (support include legal, logistic, taxation, etc.), training of local human resources during the start-up stage.

START-UP AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

The basic financing problem of SMEs and new entrepreneurs stems from the fact that a proportionally large increase in capital base is required to respond to a given absolute increase in demand, but their ability to command loan and equity finance is limited.

The goal is to effectively select investment ventures and actively manage the Support Finance schemes so that the risk of default is minimised and maximum leverage (amount of private resources mobilised by public funds) achieved.

“Start-up and Development Finance” services attract additional private capital and lower the investment threshold and the risks involved in new and/or rapidly growing ventures.

The “Start-up and Development Finance” Competency is crucial for the accomplishment of the SBSN mission, in that it:

- benefits the entrepreneurs, leveraging additional financial resources
- stimulates new learning skills within the banking and financial system - exposing the bankers to the opportunity to improve project assessment and risk management skills,
- is the main factor currently attracting entrepreneurs to the Network.

The availability of such supports is critical therefore also in order to sell other services (business planning, training, marketing, budgeting etc.).

The Services within this Competency lead to organise the delivery of (or facilitated access to) financial supports to SMEs - e.g. in the form of loan guarantees, credit schemes, and - in the future - seed and venture capital.

Funds are integrated with business advice, services (e.g. budgeting, financial control) and training improving the chances of success of new ventures and investments and to leverage additional financial resources. This “integration” function for specific SME target sectors (e.g. tool-making, shoemaking, agri-tourism, etc.) is often performed by SME Programmes undertaken on a regional or local basis.

Customers

- a) Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses: new and potential entrepreneurs; expanding businesses; start-ups launched within established companies (entrepreneurial ventures)

As a consequence of the services performed by the SBSN Network, the available public Funds (guarantees, soft loans, seed capital, incentives to R&D, etc..) activate larger, and safer private investments - thus having a “leverage” effect - at a cost which is much lower than what they would incur should they proceed by themselves. The management costs of the Start-up finance services should thus be co-financed by:

- b) Institutional Stakeholders: Employment Office; Municipal Funds; Regional Funds; Small Business Fund; Technology Fund; Development Corporation.
- c) Private Finance: Commercial and Savings Banks, venture capital companies.

Key Specialists required:

- Guarantee Scheme Specialist (support to RBCs staff in venture risk assessment)
- Business Planning Specialists
- Venture Financing - Bank Liaison Specialist
- Venture Capital Specialist
- Company Law Specialist
- Taxation and Accounting Specialist

Business Planning and Tutoring

Business Planning and Tutoring services are needed to provide a framework - to the entrepreneur and his team, as well as to external financing partners (including Institutional Funds, Banks) - which allows to decide whether the potential venture has good chances to succeed, and whether it is worth investing into.

Business plans are essentially models that show that the entrepreneurial team has gone through and understood the key drivers of the venture’s success or failure. Financial projections for new companies,

especially excessively detailed ones very often prove wrong: an entrepreneurial venture faces far too many unknowns to predict returns.

In as much as lending decisions are becoming more centralised (one of the significant changes in today's lending environment), standard formats for the Business Plan should be negotiated between the SBSN, the Small Business Fund and Banks.

The adoption of this "Standard" should result in faster, cheaper and more effective lending decisions.

As important as the Business Plan itself are the ways that are put into place by the SBSN and the external consultants to reduce the uncertainty and management risk and change.

This is where the "integrated approach" of the RBC/LBC comes into its own, making available training (especially for microcredit schemes), budgeting and control services (for major investments), availability of low cost advice, premises and other facilities at a variable cost basis.

Tutoring, i.e. "follow up" services once credit/guarantee has been delivered, is available under the scheme for self-entrepreneurs financed by the Office for Employment. Typically this is provided by external Small Business Consultants.

The Consultants' s key qualification is that he/she has "real-world" experience. Consultants must have specific industry and business management expertise and should receive specialised training in counselling skills. They should have good credibility with the banking community, and should be scored on the basis of the successfulness of the ventures for which they engage in the business planning and tutoring exercise.

1. Knowledge Area: Banking and Ties to Local Finance

- Bank strategy and priority market targets i.e. the desire and capacity to work with small firms. RBC/LBC should promote within Banks the attitude to consider new and early stage ventures as the seeds of much larger future accounts, rather than merely bad risk. The Consultants must therefore be familiar with: Information desired by banks (format of the business plan and financial ratios, financial statements from prior years (when available), list of aged receivable and payables, etc..). The ratios of the borrower's venture will be compared to averages for competing firms. Finally the details of fixed assets and any liens on receivables, inventory, or fixed assets.
- Lending criteria: covenants, personal guarantees, etc.
- Lending decisions: centralised lending decisions substituting the individual officer's lending authority for loans to small companies mandate deeper analysis of the business plan, cash flow drivers and dissipaters, competitive environment, and cushion for loan recovery given the firm's game plan and financial structure.
- Loan restrictions
- Approaches to loan withdrawal

Capabilities

On the basis of the above Knowledge and of the advantages offered in terms of promotion, risk reduction, leverage of bank financial resources, reductions of loan management costs that are achieved through the co-operation between Banks and RBC/LBC, the latter should negotiate favourable interest

rates, loan conditions and lower fees for SMEs.

Consultants should contribute to improve Business Plan acceptance through their own credibility and ties with Local Banks. Furthermore, they should provide budgeting and control services that improve the knowledge about the performance progress of the venture

2. Knowledge Area: Specific Entrepreneurial Activities and Industry Sectors

The Consultant assisting the preparation of the Business Plan and the subsequent tutoring activities should possess good knowledge of the most frequent Entrepreneurial activities proposed - e.g. various crafts, personal services - or about Industry Sectors (e.g. woodworking, tool-making, electronic assembly, etc) that show a high concentration of activities in the area. The latter should as much as possible derive from “real world” practical management experience. An important subset of these includes Small Farm Management, Agritourism and Tourism.

Capabilities

To cost effectively contribute to the competitive positioning and success of new ventures.

3. Knowledge Area: Business Planning Techniques

- Preliminary Screening - distinguishing at “first contact “ the proponents, proposals and business ideas that are worth further scrutiny.
- Understand and Assess the Business model prepared (by the entrepreneur himself, with the help of external consultants - according to a Standard SBSN Format and software), and assess the four interdependent factors that are critical to every venture: People (quality, track record and knowledge of the specific market), Market Opportunity, Context, Risk and Reward .
- Training: if the business plan is intended to raise capital, it is very important for the team to write the plan itself. Lenders and investors attach great importance to the quality of the management team and to their complete understanding of the business they are preparing to enter. Thus lenders want to be sure that they are going to invest in a team and a leader, rather than in a consultant .
- Orienting: indicate qualified Small Business Consultants with real-world experience relevant to the venture under assessment - making use of the SBSN Information System which should score consultants on the basis of the accomplishments of the client companies.
- Supporting: help arrange for the entrepreneurs suitable public and private Financial Supports
- Tutor the Venture and Monitor the performance: assist the firms to grow and foster their relationship with financial institutions. Make this information available throughout the SBSN Network.

Familiarity with Mutual Guarantee Schemes (MGS)/ Soft Loans

The main function of MGS/Soft Loans is to enable SMEs, by means of common action, to provide acceptable levels of collateral to banks.

In general, banks rely more on collateral and personal securities, whereas MGS concentrate on:

- their general experience in risk assessment,
- spreading the risk over more parties,
- risk transformation. By this is meant that MGS assess applications on the basis of different criteria compared to traditional Banks
- improving the negotiation position. MGS act as “countervailing powers” in negotiations with financial institutions by the synergy resulting from the joint action of SMEs.
- adding to their own intervention other forms of available Government support.

Four Regional Business Centres - in Kranj, Maribor, Murska Sobota, Zagorje - have been charged with running Pilot Mutual Guarantee Schemes for Small Businesses. If successful with MGS, the Regional Business Centres could be encouraged to deliver alternatives to traditional bank loan finance by means of financial engineering techniques: Seed Capital, interest rate subventions, specific forms of equipment and leasing.

Key Capabilities

- Specific Knowledge about lending proposal evaluation, risk rating, risk distribution.
- Knowledge of particular industries (including tourism, agribusiness) which are relevant in the local economy.
- Ability to “manage” the risk, making use of budgeting and control services that can be made available through RBC and external specialist consultants.
- Access to foreign Technical Assistance during the start-up phase of the Mutual Guarantee Scheme.

RBCs should get ready to build a critical mass of financial resources, and thus their MGS Funds at National level and with EU schemes that are currently available from the European Investment Bank (when Slovenia will become an EU Member Country).

Familiarity with Seed and Venture Capital

A key to the development of SME's in Slovenia is the presence of a climate favourable to risk-investing at the earliest stages of company life (seed capital).

Because of the high risks involved, Seed Capital is very often supported by Public Schemes. Following the EU experience with the “Seed Capital Scheme”, RBCs should ready to support this function.

Venture Capital is usually conducted on a fully private basis. Some Venture Capital Funds have been established in Central and Eastern Europe with the participation of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (e.g. the “Horizonte Fund” in Slovenia). Seed Capital and Venture Capital should be viewed as two logically subsequent forms of risk financing, Venture Capital being the natural “exit” for the most successful “Seed Capital” ventures.

Improving the equity base through Seed Capital, produces the following benefits:

- improved financial structure for the firm, lower level of debt, lower interest rates, etc
- access to a network of skilled professionals associated to the seed/venture capitalist, who are committed to share from the company success.

Key Capabilities

The success of Risk Capital projects is closely linked to the capability of the Risk Capitalist to correctly evaluate the potential and the risk involved in the investment - and be able to contribute with high level management know-how - besides fresh equity.

- Possess real world management experience of all critical company functions. Besides, especially Venture Capital requires a deep and International level knowledge of specific high-growth industries where the investment banker intends to specialise. This knowledge is essential to produce a capital gain profit, when exiting and selling shares to larger firms, interested to invest.
- Set-up efficient financial budgeting and management information system to monitor the venture.

Budgeting and Control

Skills in Budgeting and Financial Control allow to:

- Train entrepreneurs to the disciplined use of techniques that are crucial for company performance, reduce risk to government sponsored organisations (MGS, Seed Capital, subsidised loans etc.) that assess applications on the basis of riskier criteria compared to traditional Banks,
- Routinely meet with the entrepreneur, taking the opportunity to sell additional business development services provided by the RBC/LBC and the Consultants' Network;
- Follow up the business planning activity.

Key Capabilities : Business Planning, Budgeting, Industrial costing, investment appraisal, management information systems.

Taxation and Accounting

RBC/LBCs should be able to refer entrepreneurs to specialist in this areas.

External Capability: use of external specialist assistance is recommended.

Company Law (Slovenian/EU)

RBCs and LBCs staff should demonstrate good working knowledge of Slovenian Company Law, in order to understand issues at hand and orient entrepreneurs towards external consulting organisations.

MARKETING AND EXPORT

Given the small size of the internal market, Slovenian SMEs are more dependent from export than in most other EU countries.

The export pattern of SMEs is quite different from that of large enterprises. While large enterprises operate on world-wide markets, SMEs international orientation is mainly directed towards neighbouring countries and regions.

The process of Slovenia's association to the EU has allowed SMEs and entrepreneurs to diversify out of the collapsed traditional socialist markets, and enter new EU ones - acting directly or, more often, with new small business partners.

Many barriers for an efficient cross-border trade have been partially or totally abolished. Nevertheless, the road to export is normally still dotted with obstacles, which are mainly related to the steps that are necessary before the realisation of export.

The main bottlenecks are:

- lack of information about market opportunities and information channels;
- lack of financial means to enter new markets;
- trade barriers like: custom control, insurance, currencies and compliance to product and quality standards and norms requirements.

Marketing is generally recognised as a Knowledge Area which is especially critical to SME growth, but which is currently inadequately mastered at company level, and still badly covered by Slovenian Consultants.

In particular, the SBSN Network, improving the professional skills available at the EICC, should contribute to make accessible the following Marketing services at reasonable cost for entrepreneurs:

- orientation on market and marketing issues
- advice on product suitability
- information on local competition
- advice on marketing methods/distribution channels
- lists of contacts

Geographical Market scope is a key determinant of the effort involved, and of the degree of specialisation, quality and cost of the services offered and of consultants required.

Customers : target group SMEs and entrepreneurs, either as single SMEs or groups of SMEs (clusters), which are advised by the RBC/LBC on a “multi-client” basis.

Internal Competence: the EICC should specialise in assisting entrepreneurs, through RBC/LBCs and small business experts, in their quest for secondary source on international markets.

External Competence: specialist skills needed to design and assist the implementation of a marketing strategy on the basis of measurement of market potentials, market share analysis, determination of market characteristics, sales analysis, distribution channel studies.

EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRE - EICC

The RBCs, LBCs and the EICC must operate as a closely integrated system, conducting the following main activities throughout Slovenia:

Functions

- General information for enterprises on Community policies and programmes directly affecting them, including targeted and swift transmission on a regular basis;
- Feedback. provide information to the Commission on regional conditions and local economic circumstances, resulting from the contacts of the EIC and other agencies in the local economy;
- Training of the SBSN and local centres’ staff and consultants. The EU EIC Network seminars that are excellent opportunities for. growth of the SBSN internal and external resources;
- Assistance and advice to enterprises to promote greater involvement in the EU programmes:

Already, many EU programmes are accessible to Slovenian SMEs and to the consultants/consulting organisations which are enlisted in the SBSN programmes.

The most relevant EU programmes for Slovene’s small businesses include:

- VANS (Value Added Network Services) An Information retrieval system used by EICCs, BC-NET (see above under Chamber of Economy);
- BIC-Business Innovation Centres (DGXVI - Regional Development): supports creation and development of innovative companies, through the BICs which operate as “local partner structures which detect, select and support innovative SMEs”. The SBSN is an “associate member” of the EBN - European BIC Network; however none of the current Centres of the SBSN Network (some also offer Incubators) has achieved the status of “Full Member”.
- PHARE-JOPP (DGI - External Relations): supports joint-ventures between companies from the

- EU and Central and Eastern Europe
- EUROPARTENARIAT (DG XVI) : organises meetings among EU and Central and Eastern European SMEs
- The Vth Framework Programme on Research and Innovation (DG XII and DGXIII), CRAFT (Action 2 specifically supports co-operation with EEC Countries. The CRAFT Programme is expressly targeted to SMEs).

External SME experts should acquire a good knowledge of the EICC services in order to effectively use them with their client SMEs.

Marketing Research and Advice

Marketing research is the systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company. One of the major tasks is to measure the size of the overall market and its geographical breakdowns and forecast future sales and profits.

Marketing research is an indispensable ingredient of the modern marketing concept, in that companies can serve their markets well only by researching needs and wants, locations, buying practices of customers - as well as the competitive position of the firm with respect to the products and services that are intended to be offered.

Two broad categories of Projects and Customers can be defined:

- 1) local/regional, for the very small start-ups - mainly personal services, small trade, etc.
- 2) international markets: given the small size of the internal Slovenian market, most firms need to develop export capabilities very early in their company life.

Key Capabilities

According to the size and degree of complexity of the venture, the assistance provided refers to the following main types of consulting projects:

- preliminary market assessment and marketing orientation,
- in-depth analysis and definition of a detailed marketing plan,
- implementation, follow-up and tutoring.

Modern marketing practice calls for dividing the market into major market segments, evaluating them, selecting and targeting deciding on the company's positioning on each market. Market segmentation - the task of breaking the total market into segments that share common properties can be done in a number of ways.

Marketers should be aware of the techniques available for measuring market potential and future demand. A typical project involves the collection of intelligence from:

- secondary sources i.e. gathering the information that already exists somewhere, having been collected for another purpose.
- These include: Internet, company profit and loss statements, company profiles and databases, government and EU publications, article publications, analysis from trade associations and syndicated service research firms, export and international studies.
- primary sources: these consist of original information for the specific purpose at hand, using telephone, mail or personal surveys.

- Research projects involving primary sources are generally too expensive for single small businesses, and are thus undertaken only by most advanced medium sized firms or on a multiclient basis.

Partner Search Service

Function

To speed up company growth helping entrepreneurs set up co-operations and, eventually, strategic alliances with firms abroad. Firms can specify the products and markets in which they are interested which is then matched with available information. Alternatively, firms can access on line databases supplied by the EICC, acting as an Export Marketing Information Centre.

The SBSN Network, together with the Chamber of Economy and its local Offices, should play an active role in providing information and counselling for exporting SMEs, also helping them access financial supports available (e.g. from the Slovenian Trade Promotion Agency) .

Key Capabilities and Competencies

- Analyse company needs (commercial, technological, financial, etc.), to structure the requests for partnership in order to diffuse them throughout the SBSN/EICC Network - in Slovenia and abroad, also making use of the services of the EICC and of the Chamber of Economy (BRE).
- Promote the participation of local SMEs to specialised fairs and exhibitions abroad (e.g. Europartenariat, Subcontracting Fairs, etc.).
- Organise structured meetings among entrepreneurs from cross-border regions
- Assist Foreign and Local Partners to set up joint ventures, making use of the PHARE JOPP Programme. This refers to the stages of business planning, company set-up (support include legal, logistic, taxation, etc.), training of local human resources during the start-up stage.

The RBC/LBC should :

- Possess all skills required to utilise the EICC Network and co-operate with the Chamber of Economy, and namely with their BRE Service.
- Consider to become local counterparts to foreign consultants to implement joint venture projects for the PHARE JOPP Programme.

Small Business Expert /Export Development Advisers should:

- Co-operate closely with the Chamber of Economy;
- Contribute to help new and inexperienced exporters at all stages.
- Help undertake in-depth international partner searches in specific Industry and markets.

Business Communication and Promotion

Function

To improve the level and quality of simple business communication material of client firms: company presentation documents, overhead presentations, internet sites, brochures, etc.

Key Capabilities

- To logically structure the text and prepare basic company presentation material, making use of computer graphics programs. To assist the relationship between entrepreneurs and advertising/printing firms (including companies specialised in the preparation of Internet Sites).
- Preparation of company profile documents - in Slovene, English and other languages.

Internal Capability : the RBC/LBC should possess these skills at least for their own use. They should be able to orient especially technology based entrepreneurs, who do not find it difficult the necessary experience at local advertising agencies.

External Capability: Small Business Experts and Specialised Advertising Firms (especially needed to prepare printed brochures, etc.)

International Subcontracting

Industrial subcontracting and out-sourcing are modern and efficient ways to organise industrial production. The various linkages that SMEs can establish among themselves and with large Enterprises, within Slovenia and abroad, are essential factors for their growth and competitiveness.

The organisation of these linkages is especially important for Slovenian SMEs as they often possess quality manufacturing capacity, which is under-utilised because only few of the products destined to the previous internal Yugoslavian and socialist markets can compete internationally.

To grow, Slovenian SMEs should take advantage of their proximity to highly industrialised regions in Italy, Austria, Germany, to market there their often world-class manufacturing skills.

Unfortunately, Slovenian SMEs are not equipped to promote such collaboration and thus deserve special attention and assistance in this area.

New forms of industrial subcontracting, called “industrial partnerships”, are based on the complementary between the large contracting and assembling enterprises and the various specialised subcontractors and suppliers, and on the necessity of involving them from the very early stages of the production cycle (design, testing and prototype).

Moreover, SMEs frequently co-operate closely with each other in order to complement their activities within the production cycle, by entering into production associations or clusters and increasingly, through networking arrangements. These new forms tend to become more stable, more lasting with a more equitable distribution of responsibilities (risks and profits) between the various partners.

SMEs, particularly in the prevailing context of global sourcing, are most in need of support services given their limited expertise in the matter of foreign markets and their generally higher risk-aversion compared to large transnational corporations. Institutional support mechanisms are thus needed that will help them to acquire the necessary information on, and access to, upgraded technology, sources of finance, new markets, foreign licences etc. and to establish long-term industrial co-operation agreements.

Function

Subcontracting and Partnership Exchanges (SPX) are technical information, promotion and match making centres for industrial subcontracting and partnership between main-contractors, suppliers and subcontractors, aiming at the optimal utilisation (the most complete, rational and productive) of the manufacturing capacities of the affiliated industries.

The Exchanges are not only meeting points and instruments of regulation between the supply and the demand of industrial subcontracting orders, but also as instruments of assistance to both partners, and particularly the small and medium supplier or subcontracting enterprises.

The SPXs act as well as clearing-houses for industrial subcontracting and partnership enquiries and opportunities. They have a number of core functions, including the following:

- The collection, analysis, storage and organisation for rapid retrieval of information and data on the existing production capacities and capabilities of industries, especially SMEs.

- The identification of subcontracting, supply and partnership inquiries or offers from large foreign or domestic buyers and main-contractors and their dissemination to potential subcontractors/suppliers/partners.
- Assistance to potential subcontractors/suppliers/partners in organising clusters and associations and in negotiating agreements with main-contractors, which could be their own Governments.
- Development of Internet/WWW sites to support access to Subcontracting services.

Key Capabilities

In addition, SPXs when attached to RBCs, act as centres of multidisciplinary assistance and information for subcontractors and suppliers, in fields such as:

- Technical support (product design, technology, equipment, innovation);
- Quality management, standards and certification;
- Marketing strategies and analysis (including participation in international fairs and business promotion forums);
- Access to credit, financial facilities and incentives;
- Management (rehabilitation, financial management, stock control);
- Legal advice (legal contracts, codes of conduct, reconciliation or settlement of disputes);
- Human resource management (training).

Internal Capability: SPXs should be organised as specialised functions attached to one (or two) Slovenian RBCs, acting as non-profit industrial associations run by qualified entrepreneurs. It should be remarked that the Business Support Centre of Kranj has been exposed in 1993-1994 to pilot training and technical assistance.

External Capability: UNIDO provides technical assistance for establishing and operating "Subcontracting and Partnership Exchanges" (SPXs). To this end, it assists in setting up a roster of subcontractors, suppliers and main-contractors. Furthermore, UNIDO recommends legal statutes and standard terms of reference for the establishment of autonomous Subcontracting and Partnership Exchanges under Boards of Directors (or Management Boards).

Specialised consultants provide multidisciplinary assistance and information, namely covering the following Knowledge Areas:

- Technical Support
- Quality Management
- Legal advice

INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND QUALITY

The most important motor for growth in today's economies is the ability to innovate, i.e. the capability to bring new products and services to the global marketplace. Innovation is thus the process which leads from the idea of new products or new processes to their successful commercialisation. These new products or processes could be radical but are often simple improvements on what already exists.

Studies into the innovative practices within OECD member countries show that:

- innovative firms grow faster and are more profitable than non-innovative firms.
- SMEs are twice as efficient as large firms to bring new products to the market.
- there is indication that there is no relation between the size of the firm and the quality of innovation: many radical innovations and technological breakthroughs are coming from SMEs.

<p>It is the task of the SBSN Network to contribute to Innovation-supporting goal of the Ministry of Science and Technology - which is among the founding Partners of the Network.</p>
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The mission to promote innovation by facilitating the diffusion of new technologies and research results fits very well with the activities and services of the RBCs and LBCs, which support the creation and growth of innovative firms.

Obvious advantages thus derive from the service and cost synergies that the SBSN Network is able to offer, bringing together all the supporting know-how covering technology, business organisation skills and finance, to meet the particular needs of companies, whether they are new start-ups or established businesses.

In particular, three Centres are already heavily engaged in the support of technology-based firms: the BSC-Business Support Centre Kranj; the Technology Park Ljubljana, the Stajerski Technology Park at Maribor. The three Centres have been established with the direct support and involvement of the Technology Fund (now being transferred to the Slovenian Development Corporation).

The main barriers related to the diffusion of innovation SMEs are:

- persuasiveness of today's innovations, a critical company skill is to integrate a wide range of technologies, which can not be mastered within a single small firm, but need be brought in (transferred) from outside;
- high capital costs,
- high R&D investment,
- patenting,
- costs of scanning technology,
- complex technology adoption and learning processes

In order to lower the above barriers to SME innovation, several government-supported organisations have been set-up in all industrialised countries, most of them operating through a network of regional technology supporting centres.

Namely, across the EU, 52 Innovation Relay Centres have been set-up by Directorate General XIII/D3 "Telecommunications, Information Industries and Exploitation of Research", with the mission to advise especially small businesses - on technology and innovation.

Each Relay Centre is an independent office backed by funding from the European Union's Innovation Programme.

INNOVATION RELAY CENTRE SERVICE

Function

To promote SME Innovation : the primary goal of all Innovation Relay Centres (IRC) is to create an exchange of information between SMEs and research organisations across Europe.

To support Regional Development: in addition to reacting to requests from SMEs, the Relay Centre staff also plays an active role in the local business community. Their task is to examine the specific needs of your region's industrial community and propose services to help local organisations compete more effectively in export markets.

Customers/Target Groups

- Research Organisations - these are one of the sources of scientific and technological know how to be transferred.
- Medium sized (100-250 employees) and Large Companies - these are potential client of innovations developed by entrepreneurs and research organisations

Key Capabilities

a) Identify suitable technologies to match technology needs

Advice in innovation, technology transfer and exploitation of research results.

Advice is addressed to SMEs, and to research organisations in order to actively disseminate information and promote exploitation of research results and technology transfer in correspondence with the needs of industry.

- Strategic Technology Monitoring
This refers to mapping the technology needs that are of special economic relevance to the region (including "medium tech" ones, e.g. wood processing, materials, tool-making, agriculture, etc.) - on a "multi-client" basis. This service is also delivered to single SMEs: helping them evaluate their specific competitive environment (technology assessment, patents, standards and norms, etc.) to identify opportunities and threats, thus orienting R&D strategy.
- Partner Searches and Match Making
Distribute details of innovative products, processes and technologies through the EU network of Relay Centres. In particular, IRC seek to develop industrial and technological partnerships in the region and with research centres.
- Intellectual Property / Patents support: Priority search, innovation protection, accessible technologies, licensing agreements, etc..
- Technical norms, standards and export documentation, within EU and main industrialised countries. This includes, in particular, environmentally safe products.
- Technical, scientific, technological/manufacturing and economic assistance.
Making use of a Network of engineers specialised in various technological fields, who are able to understand the technological and economical issues at hand, and intervene as "Design Counsellors" - at the product design stage, and as "Technology Counsellors" - to provide manufacturing processes know-how (production, inventory and logistics organisation, total quality management, etc.)
- Organising training sessions and seminars on new technologies, legislation or market developments. Typical topics include: Total Quality Management, Value Management,

patent and intellectual property rights, environmental responsibility; and presentations on new technologies, etc.

- b) Assist on exploitation and advice on the EU Research and Technology programmes.
- c) Provide information about the possibilities of financial support for promoting exploitation of results and technology transfer. Assist potential participants in designing a project proposal.

Such support is available from the Ministry of Science and Technology and from EU Framework Programme Actions which Slovenian firms and research organisations can already benefit from.

The SBSN Network should closely connect to the activities of the new Innovation Relay Centre for Slovenia. In this scheme the RBCs would act as local agencies, with the most technologically advanced of them (e.g. the BSC, the Technology Park Ljubljana, the Stajerski Technology Park) operating as centres of excellence for specific scientific know how and technologies relevant to their region.

To perform this function, the RBCs should demonstrate:

- in-depth knowledge of the technology needs of local industry - especially Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.
- capability for advising organisations on technology transfer, innovation and related business questions,
- ability to develop services that meet the specific needs of the industrial fabric in their region,
- in-depth knowledge of the European Union Research and Technology Programmes

Internal Capability: specialized RBC should be staffed by professionals with experience in engineering, technology, and business.

External Capability: a Network of external technology, quality, process manufacturing, etc experts should be assembled.

These include:

- Technology Counsellors: people of wide business and technological experience, working alongside the Personal Business Advisers to ensure that companies get the best practical and sustained help in any technology and innovation area. To accomplish this, Innovation and Technology Counsellors will help with access to appropriate local sources of innovation support and national centres of excellence.
- Design Counsellors: who seek to raise awareness of the important role that design plays in the development of new products and to encourage companies to access the wealth of design talent and expertise available locally, nationally and internationally.

TRAINING SERVICE

Training services are key enabling factors for the ventures success, as they :

- encourage company creation, by diffusing a climate favourable to entrepreneurship and self-employment
- increase the awareness about the SBSN Network, the services and supports provided, the role of the Stakeholders - thus promoting the RBC/LBC services.
- decrease entrepreneurial risk, making available qualified know-how - thus improving the chances of success

- create opportunities for business exchanges among entrepreneurs
- increase internal skills and efficiency of Small Businesses: training and reskilling of qualified professional resources.

Customers/Target groups

- Beneficiaries of co-financing from SBSN Partners' support schemes, i.e. potential entrepreneurs, unemployed, Entrepreneurs, small business staff
- Internal and SBSN
- Medium and Large Sized Company Staff
- Private sponsors co-financing

Key Capabilities

- To effectively organise the delivery - through the Consultants' Network and Partner Training Organisations - of formal training courses and seminars.

Following the self-employment scheme adopted by the Office for Employment, Training is an essential component of the Tutoring that is delivered to new entrepreneurs.

Activities include: identification of trainees and of training needs, preparation of training courses, involvement of Network Consultants/Training Partner Organisations/External Experts, organisation of training session, reporting to financing organisations and sponsors.

Typical RBC/LBC training courses and seminars include the following:

- ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- BUSINESS PLANNING, START-UP FINANCE
- MARKET DEVELOPMENT
- EICC INFORMATION SUPPORTS
- SUBCONTRACTING
- INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND QUALITY
- INFORMATION SUPPORTS FORM EICC
- REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT METHODS
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SPECIAL SECTORS: AGRITOURISM, AGRICULTURE,....

INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES

Function: Enable Internal Business Processes.

The Information System should be viewed as strategic to the SBSN Network, playing a key role in:

- sharing knowledge about the programmes and activities of the RBC/LBC, Partners and banks
- sharing knowledge about SME customers, and each customer's total relationship with the SBSN
- sharing the roster of external consultants, consulting organisations, and track record.
Each external consultant should get a SCORE analysis of performance and achievements, especially in the financial area (Number of business plans financed by Banks, amounts approved, failure rate of companies, etc).
- sharing internal and external professional competencies
- sharing expertise in cross RBC/LBC projects,
- setting targets, measuring performance for the Network services described in the previous paragraphs: frequency of use of services, degree of satisfaction, cycle time ...

- providing feedback on effectiveness of the Programmes launched through the SBSN Network to employees, Consultants and Partners.
- Through feedback the RBC/LBC staff and SBSN can be expected to sustain improvement programs where they systematically eliminate defects and drive excess cost, time and waste out of the system.

Function: Market/Enable Services through the Internet

The Internet allows high levels of interactivity; developments in telecommunications and computer technologies hold the promise of new and better interactive tools to:

- deliver the SBSN Network services, and
- link the SBSN Network to the external consultants and Partners.

Furthermore, the Internet could transform the way the SBSN image is constructed and communicated to customers.

Function : Operational Level.

RBC /LBC staff need be “computer literate”, i.e. be able to perform:
word processing (Electronic Publishing, at RBC)

- spreadsheet design
- use of databases: intra-company and external
- prepare computerised presentations (projects/company presentations, etc)
- manage intra-network messaging service, e-mail

Internal Capability : Key personnel at RBCs/LBCs, should possess the knowledge required to operate the Information System since it plays a critical function within the SBSN Network internal procedures.

External Capability: Systems specialist skills, relating to:

- System Design and Development
- System Selection and Installation
- Internet/Intranet Design and Development
- Information consulting

CERTIFICATE FOR BUSINESS COUNSELLORS

INTRODUCTION

The requirement to strategically upgrade the SBSN, enabling it to serve more demanding small enterprise groups (e.g. fast growing and innovative firms) requires that counselling and training assistance skills also develop over the next years. The Certification Process is key to align the SBSN organisational culture and performance, while providing opportunities for training, upgrading and professional development for Member Counsellors.

The Certificate in Small Business Counselling is a work-based professional development program leading to a qualification which will be accepted by entrepreneurs, partners and banks within the industry.

The Certification Process is the instrument to diffuse and strengthen organisational culture and the successful operation of the Network. The Certificate offers to SBSN members a considerable opportunity for self-development, rise in professional performance and self fulfilment.

The services provided by Counsellors are oriented toward helping client entrepreneurs develop their business potential by:

- understanding their current situation,
- identifying problems and opportunities,
- identifying sources of support (advice, finance, training) available through the Institutional Partners of the Small Business Support Network,
- taking action to move towards an improved level of functioning.

WHO IS THE PROGRAM FOR?

The qualifications are particularly suitable for those who:

- already have some business counselling experience (or experience in the small business support field),
- are committed to a career in business counselling,
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

Target counsellors may be full-time or part-time business counsellors and may be working independently or in organisations such as:

- LDCs - Local Small Business Development Centres
- RDCs - Regional Development Centres and Regional Funds
- Business Innovation Centres, Technology Parks
- Technology Transfer and Innovation Promotion Agencies
- Regional Development and/or Zoning Authorities
- Local Authority Economic Commissions
- Local and National Employment Offices
- Chambers of Crafts
- Chambers of Economy
- Management Consulting firms
- Lending organisations

BENEFITS OF THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME

- For the entrepreneurs, to provide a higher level of service-quality to the client. Higher quality service will in turn lead to increased success rates of Slovenian businesses, and a stronger base for local economy.
- For the Counsellors, to access the market for subsidised counselling, information and training programmes - financed by various community economic development, government and EU offices - minimising marketing costs while accessing to further training and self development,
- For the SBSN Partners, to develop the synergies among their various supporting programmes: optimising quality of service and access to target clients, and minimising promotional and administrative costs (counsellor training, performance monitoring, programme management, etc.).

The Certification program will enable to:

- increase the image and public awareness of the SBSN and of the Small Business Support Programmes of the Partner Organisations: with entrepreneurs, banks and other private partners;
- identify and motivate “the right” counsellors;
- clarify their role in respect to the small business client and in relation to the wider developments in small business support;
- understand the requirements of effective counselling and be able to put it into practice with clients;
- develop specific areas of knowledge and expertise which will enable them to deliver a more comprehensive counselling service;
- meet their own learning and development needs;
- achieve a recognised level of professional competence to meet an industry accepted standard of performance.

OBJECTIVES

The Certification Process objectives are to:

1. specify the role of the consultants with respect to client entrepreneurs,
2. manage a System of VOUCHERS⁶ to promote consulting and training services,
3. assure quality and value for the SBSN clients: the entrepreneurs, the banks, the Partners,
3. foster the growth of a competitive market offer for private consulting for Small Business,
5. recognise and motivate consulting performance,
6. increase the image and public awareness of the Partners and of the SBSN.

MAIN STEPS OF THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The success of the SBSN with entrepreneurs and Banks - and hence its acceptance by the Institutional Partners - is determined by the professional quality of the staff and of the External Consultants who are linked to the RBCs, the LBCs - and to the SBDC itself.

The main stages of the consultant and employee selection process are schematised below.

⁶VOUCHERS are distributed by the ministry of small Enterprises/SBDC and other Partners - namely the National Employment Office to subsidise consulting and training services for eligible enterprises and individuals

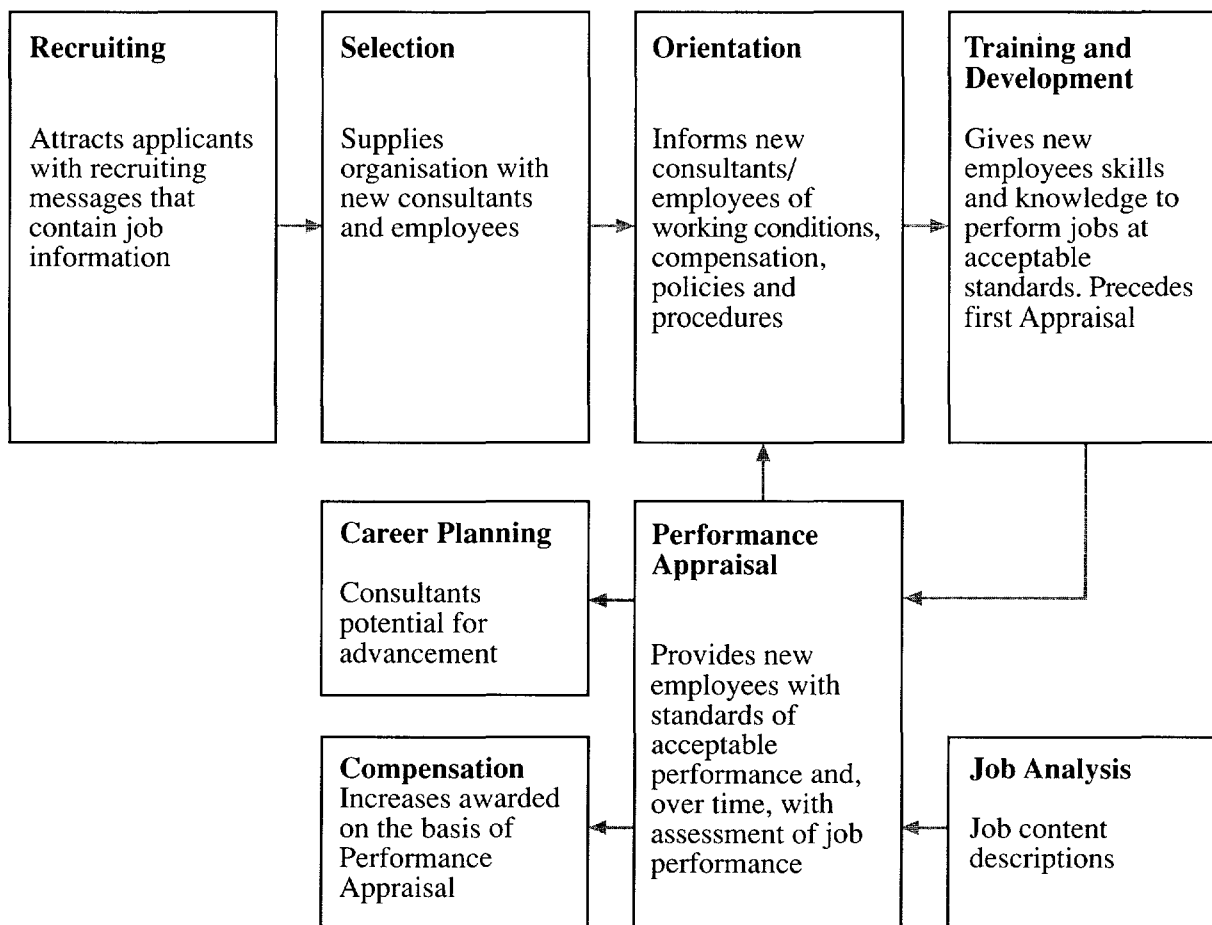


Figure 1 Main Steps of Counsellors' Selection Process - (A.Gibb - Durham University Business School)

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES - CAREER PATH

Four membership categories recognise different levels of business experience, counselling experience and professional development. All members are expected to adhere to the Institute's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

1. Member - Expert

These are people who have received the Certificate in Small Business Counselling by completing the accreditation program or who have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the Small Business Development Centre and who meet its standards. Members must possess at least two years experience in small business support and have conducted at least 50 counselling sessions. To maintain full membership status, members must participate in at least 20 hours of professional development per year.

2. Associate Member - individuals in the process of becoming certified.

3. Senior Expert

This is the highest level of membership for Counsellors who have at least five years of counselling or small business support experience and have strengthened their qualifications through continuous professional development activities.

4. Affiliate Member

These are non-counselling professionals who are involved in the management and administration of business information and support services but do not necessarily undertake business counselling.

Three main qualification levels are identified:

<p style="text-align: center;">ASSOCIATE Have undergone specific training for required knowledge areas This level is required to deliver information and to engage into simple counselling tasks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXPERT Have already matured specific consulting experience This Qualification Level is required for LBC managers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SENIOR EXPERT This Qualification Level is required for RBC and SBDC managers</p>

A career path structure for business consultants may lead, for example:

- from counselling for start-ups and unemployed individuals (typical LBC service)
- to “growth” counselling (delivered at RBCs and LBCs)
- to counselling supervision, (delivered at RBCs)
- to counsellor training and agency management (delivered at SBDC and RBCs)

In the Job Profiles, effort has been made to start a differentiation of the depth and breadth of skills and knowledge required to the various counselling figures.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE CONSULTING PROFILES

The JOB Profiles for the above defined Consulting are defined in the following main points:

1. Specific Counselling Role
2. Organisational Context Under Which Counselling Is Performed
3. Professional Background and Counselling Skills Required
(for Senior Experts, Experts and Associates):
 - Experience Requirements
 - Training Requirements
 - Formal Education Requirements
 - Language Skills
 - Professional Behaviours And Counselling Skills
4. Duties
5. Tasks To Be Performed
6. Professional Knowledge Areas Required
7. Networks Of Contacts And Relationships

MANAGEMENT OF THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS: THE SBDC HUMAN RESOURCES FUNCTION

The Process is operationally managed by Human Resource Function of the SBDC - Small Business Development Centre, which is charged with the tasks to:

- mobilise,
 - select,
 - orient,
 - continuously appraise the performance of,
 - train
- the people who provide business counselling services within the Small Business Support Network.

This critical SBDC Function will be staffed by at least 1 senior Expert, specialised in Human Resource Management.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

The Committee is set up by the Small Business Development Centre with the task to award the Certificate in Small Business Counselling and admission to the Small Business Support Network as a Member. The Committee will be nominated every three years.

Committee Composition

The Committee will be composed by experienced representative professionals, numbering between 7 and 11, who are highly regarded in their respective fields, nominated by the Institutional Partners of the SBDC.

The Committee members has representatives of:

- a) The Ministry for Small Enterprises
- b) The Institutional Partners
- c) Recognised Experts in the Consulting Profession
- d) Associations representing organisations that have a vested interest in the performance of the Small Business Consultants. Associations will contribute to the definition and selection of specific Consulting Profiles, such as:
 - Certificate of Financial Expert: The Banking Association of Slovenia,
 - Certificate of Marketing and Export Expert: The Consultants' Association of Slovenia
 - Certificate of Innovation Expert: SPIM: The Network for Innovation Consultants
 - Certificate of Local Development Counsellor: The Ministry for Economic Relations and Development
 -

Duties

The Duties of the Professional Standard and Qualification Committee include:

- to develop industry and Partner recognition of the Counsellor Certificate, by increasing the operating capability and growth potential of the Small Business Support Network to provide the desired services and supports to Entrepreneurs.

- to report SBSN progress and effectiveness back to Institutional Partners, as to ensure adequate financing.

Tasks

The task of the Committee is to supervise the Certification Process and in particular to:

- Approval and upgrading of Certification Process,
- Approval of Ethics Code and Code of Conduct,
- Approve the definition of the Job Profiles,
- Supervise the organisation of the Training and Development activities,
- Selection of Expert Initial Qualification Assessors,
- Approval and Upgrading of Initial Assessment Procedure,
- Approval of Training and Orientation Activities,
- Approve Selection Process,
- Approve Performance Appraisal Procedures,
- Approval and Upgrading of Scorecard Consultant Performance Assessment,
- admit (cancel) Members from the Roster of the SBSN.

The underlying Certificate Criteria and Standards should therefore also be adjourned and move upwards with time.

THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

Counsellors submit a portfolio of evidence to the Professional Standards and Certification Committee at the SBDC. Two basic levels are considered: Initial Appraisal and Performance Appraisal.

In terms of approach, the Appraisal process is:

- output and work-related (the Balanced Scorecard Approach)
- competency-based
- locally managed through a network of Local and Regional Business Centres,
- primarily self-directed with support from peers and mentors ,
- based on personalised learning plans

The program approach should emphasises application and experimental learning, rather than the theoretical acquisition, of knowledge.

As a result of this focus on application, applicants are required to demonstrate that they are competent in the performance of the various skills outlined in the Job Profiles outlined in the following Chapter.

The program should include the following main components:

1. Initial Qualifications and referenced experience, assessment

Applicants will be required to complete a self-assessment of their specific knowledge areas and skill levels at the commencement of the program.

Local Business Centres / Regional Business Centres will check the experience references provided by applicants.

Interviews aimed to evaluate competency in each of the core skills to the level indicated on the

JOB PROFILES will be conducted before expert assessors - i.e. practising counsellors with recognised expertise in the field.

It should be noted that the pre-assessment is not a mechanism to exempt learners from certain modules. Rather, this should lead to develop a personalised training plan based on an assessment of prior knowledge and experience. As learners complete the various modules within their personalised training plans, further performance assessments will be arranged (point. 3).

Initial Qualifications will confirmed by an Accreditation Committee.

2. Orientation Seminar and Workshop.

Orientation will provide a discussion of: the SBSN strategy and organisation and information systems, outline of the skills required, expected results, retribution and benefits, code of conduct, performance/Scorecard methods, contract forms, etc.

3. On-going assessment and improvement of skills and performance.

To this purpose, a series of specialised seminar modules (delivered through accredited organisations, such as the GEA College) will be provided, including:

- local economic and employment development,
- small business finance
- small business marketing and export support
- small business innovation and technology transfer
- small business common premises management

Workshops present an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues and to ensure that one is up to date in the latest developments in their field.

Self-directed learning materials focused on enhancing a learner's knowledge and skills in a range of business counselling competencies.

This self-assessment will be reviewed by the LBC/RBC Manager prior to the development of the individual learning plan.

4. Counselling and small business workshops, intended to:

- facilitate learning,
- practice the application of skills in counselling situations
- promote networking with peer counsellors.

5. Accreditation

In order to obtain Member certification the Applicant must:

- demonstrate competency in each of the core skills to the level indicated on the **JOB PROFILE**.
- have at least two years experience in small business counselling;
- complete the requirements of their personalised training plan;

When the program requirements are fulfilled, Applicants will submit a portfolio of evidence to the Professional Standards and Certification Committee of the Small Business Development Centre who will award a Certificate in Small Business Counselling and admission as a Member.

Initial Appraisal

In order to obtain certification the applicant must demonstrate competency in each of the core skills to the level indicated on the specific Job Profile

This is based on the following appraisal steps:

- Assessment of Referenced Experience in Specialist Domain
- e.g., for “Expert Qualification Level”:
- have at least two years experience in small business counselling;
- provide evidence of at least 20 counselling projects/names of clients;
- Questionnaires, checking specific level of Knowledge Area
- Interviews, assessing counselling and personal skills

Performance Appraisal⁷

As in most jobs, that the bulk of the learning for counsellors takes place on the job.

Performance Appraisal provides new employees and consultants with standards of acceptable performance and - over time- with assessments of job performance.

Appraisal is necessary:

- for feedback to consultants and employees for improving performance
- To align organisational culture, motivate and change behaviour
- To provide data for making personnel/consultant decisions involving compensation, promotion, and termination.

Ongoing assessment (including self-assessment) is oriented towards the evaluation of the outputs from the counselling process as identified by the Monitoring /SCORECARD approach.

The approach proposed is to follow up the performance of firms / individuals that have been counselled by simple measures such as the number of start-ups in relation to number of inquiries of those interested in going into business, measuring employment, turnover, etc. at some time after the counselling. This approach also pushes the consultants to keep in touch with their clients, for example extending their service beyond business planning stage and into arranging credits with banks, setting up budgeting and financial controls, etc. Performance Appraisal leads therefore to tutoring.

The data for performance appraisal for external consultants is gathered and organised by LBCs, under the supervision of the RBCs and the SBDC.

Independent assessment of evaluations must be regularly under taken by SBDC and the Partners by means of inquiries conducted by external auditors.

⁷See “Monitoring of SBSN Performance”.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BUSINESS COUNSELLORS

REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR AND COUNSELLING SKILLS, COMPULSORY FOR ALL CONSULTANTS

The following personal behaviour and counselling skills are required for all SBSN Consultants:

A. Professional Behaviours/Code Of Ethics

- Demonstrate confidentiality
- Demonstrate professionalism
- Demonstrate positive attitude towards Small Business

B. Upgrade Professional Knowledge

- Maintain currency in profession
- Develop the role of the small business counsellor, LBC/RBC Network and Stakeholders
- Develop knowledge of role of entrepreneurship/economic growth

C. Interpersonal Skills/Abilities

- Communicate
- Public Speaking
- Demonstrate empathy
- Listening
- Interpret and apply written communications
- Interpret and apply verbal communications
- Deal with resistance and manage conflict
- Negotiate

D. Effective Client Counselling

- Empower the client
- Apply interviewing techniques
- Assist client to conduct situational analysis
- Assist client to develop Action plan
- Recognise need to refer client to Specialist Consultants
- Support Selection of Specialist Consultant
- Identify learning needs and opportunities
- Counsel client in presenting proposals/applications
- Transfer business information and techniques to client

E. Client Assessment Skills

- Assist client in self assessment
- Assess business knowledge
- Assess financial & human resource

F. Diagnostic & Problem-Solving Skills

- Demonstrate problem-solving approaches
- Recognise stages of business development process and Implications

- Perform site observation visits
- Diagnose client's business problems
- Address emerging opportunities and potential problems

G. Personal Skills

- Communicate in writing
- Manage time
- Manage information
- Demonstrate leadership/facilitation techniques
- Maintain currency in technology

L. Development of Networks and Relationships

- Maintain Awareness of local socio-economic climate
- Develop and maintain inventory of resources
- Develop and maintain network of expertise and support
- Source financing
- Develop awareness of knowledge of government and legal regulations
- Develop networking and brokering skills
- Advocate for client

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLOR

THE COUNSELLING ROLE

The Local Development Counsellor is a generalist consulting figure whose role is to support Local Economic and Employment Development through the growth of Small Business.

Counselling is organised across Slovenia through Local Business Development Centres (LBCs) and Regional Business Centres (RBCs). Besides providing Small Entrepreneurs with orientation, information on available support programmes on entrepreneurship, local and regional development Centres also provide support to local communities for the design, financing and implementation of local economic development projects. These projects are financed by local communities and usually co-financed by the SBDC and Partner Organisations (especially by the Institute for Employment/Ministry for Labour Relations), the Ministry for Economic Relations and Development, the Ministry for Agriculture. They include the following tasks:

- economy animation, small business promotion and clustering projects. These are aimed at improving the local offer in small business activities that are typical of the area as well as in the tourism, agritourism, agriculture. Activities include: information dissemination, training, market research, promotion and advertising, business planning, tutoring, establishment of common infrastructure (information support centres, guarantee funds, etc.)
- organisation of "Public Works Projects" for the long-term unemployed, or difficult to employ personnel
- creation and management of entrepreneurial, craft or industrial zones,
- creation and management of business incubators,
- management of "Small Business Funds" set-up and financed by local communities

The Counsellor has two types of “clients”:

- the entrepreneurs, i.e. actual established small enterprises or potential entrepreneurs.
- and
- the institutions - i.e. local authorities and Small Business Network Partners, which are committed to help the growth of entrepreneurship through financial and counselling services as well as through information supports.

The Local Economic and Employment Development role implies a distinction between Counselling and straightforward Consultancy: the Counsellor is concerned with the ultimate ability of the entrepreneur to implement and manage the associated change, and thus create new wealth and employment.

WHO MAY QUALIFY

Organisational Context

Two main types of relationships to the Small Business Network are foreseen:

- employees / managers of LBC or RBCs
- external Small Business Counsellors, under framework contract with LBC/RBC

Local Development and Small Business Counsellors (subsequently indicated simply as “Counsellor”) operate from within an organisational context aimed to support the local economy through:

- the creation of new enterprises,
- the development of existing businesses,
- the preservation of jobs threatened by company restructuring,
- the involvement of jobless personnel into public works

Local Development Counsellors may be full-time or part-time, and may be working at:

Recognized/formal small business support agencies:

- Local Business Centre, Regional Business Centres, Regional Development Funds
- Economic Commissions at Municipalities and Local Authorities, involved in small business support as part of their broader activities,
- Chambers of Crafts,
- Local and National Employment Government Offices,
- Chambers of Economy,
- Business Support Centres, Incubators, Technology Parks, Innovation Agencies and Agencies helping technology based businesses,
- Agencies specializing in rural or urban development,
- Zoning Authorities,
- Consultancy Practices,
- Providers of training or education for small business.

Professional Background

According to the personal professional track record experience and training, three main Counselling Levels are being proposed:

- a. **Senior Expert, may also qualify as RBCs or LBC Manager**
- b. **Expert**, the reference standard
- c. **Associate**

The required qualifications are schematically indicated in Tab.1

The following requirements, unless otherwise, refer to “Expert” level.

A. Experience (“Expert”)

- have at least two (2) years experience in local economic development/small business counselling (or experience in the small business support field),
- have conducted, or have taken active part into, and are able to produce references for, at least 20 counselling projects in the area of Local Development, Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

B. Training (“Expert”)

- have completed the training and accreditation program in:
 - the Regional Economic and Employment Development Module issued by SBDC recognized training organizations,
 - Small Business Counselling

or

- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBDC, eg:
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Local and Regional Development Projects undertaken under the EU PHARE Programme, thus acquiring skills relevant to the knowledge areas required
 - have been trained in Local Economic Development

C. Formal Education (“Expert”)

- have an University Degree in Economics,
- have other University Degrees (e.g., Social Sciences, Engineering, etc), complemented by courses or practical knowledge in Local Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, Small Business Finance
- have completed the training and accreditation program in Local Development and Small Business Counselling issued by accredited training organizations or
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBDC, eg:
- have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring relevant skills
- are members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

Language Skills

- basic knowledge of English language
- (desired) working knowledge of languages spoken in neighbouring Countries: German, Italian, Hungarian, Croatian.

Personal Motivation

- are committed to a career in local development and small business counselling, and
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

DUTIES

The “Local Development Counsellor” is a professional figure, whose services are oriented toward:

- helping institutional clients - Municipalities and Local / Regional Authorities, other Network Partners - to identify, design, finance, get co-financing (from State, UE and other organisations) and successfully implement projects aimed at improving the local economy through new and better business infrastructures, small business services and “clustering” projects⁸.
- helping entrepreneurs - private clients: existing small business owners or potential entrepreneurs - understand their current situation, identify problems and opportunities, and take action to move towards an improved level of functioning, making full and optimal use of the public supports available, in the form of financial subsidies, training and counselling programmes, premises, etc.

A. Support Projects for Local Economic and Employment Development

- Identify, prepare the tender proposals and documentation, and implement Projects (Small Business Infrastructure/Premises, Spin-Off and Clustering in Tourism/Farming/Manufacturing, etc., Specialised Service Centres, Public Works, etc.) aimed to increase or preserve local employment.

B. Management of Common Enterprise Premises: Incubators, Enterprise Zones and Technology Parks (Entrepreneurial Premises Specialist)

- Plan and support the construction and amelioration of Small Business Infrastructure: Incubators, Crafts and Enterprise Zones, Technology Parks, etc..

C. Help Start New Businesses

- Stimulate entrepreneurship through the promotion of the services of the LBC/RBC, of the Network and Partners towards the target groups (unemployed, potential entrepreneurs, small firms, etc.).

Two main classes of promotion can be identified:

- passive / non targeted
- proactive and targeted: is directed to specific target groups (e.g. toolmaking, shoemaking, textiles, etc)

⁸Clustering Projects are aimed at improving the entrepreneurial performance of groups of enterprises - eg in tourism, farming, manufacturing, etc - integrating services such as market

- Support start-up business at every stage including information, advice, training and counselling, finding incubation premises, accessing public supports (Funds, Subsidized Consulting)

D. Develop Existing Businesses

- Organise counselling, tutoring and training as provided by external experts
Orient towards available public or private sources of finances,
- Organise access to markets and partners,

E. Support LBC, RBC and Network Development, Performance Monitoring

- Plan the growth of an Effective and Financially Viable Local / Regional Business Centre
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of performance and visibility of the LBCs and of the Network within the local community,

Engage in the “Learning and Growth” programme of meetings, seminars and training organised by the Network to augment performance and service quality through better professional knowledge, improved counselling skills, and the adoption of supporting information systems and tools.

TASKS

A. Foster Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth

- Help create a diffused entrepreneurial culture, raising interest towards small enterprise and self-employment through public awareness campaigns aimed at the general public, towards schools, the financial community, large enterprises, etc.
- Increase the awareness among entrepreneurs of the RBC/LBC services: this implies active use of Media Communication (newspaper articles, radio and tv), advertising, Fairs/ Exhibitions, Seminars - mailings, telephone calls, etc..
- Locally promote, channel and help implement various Entrepreneurial and SME supporting projects undertaken by the SBDC and Network Partners (National Employment Office, Ministry of Science and Technology, etc.) at regional and local level, interacting with entrepreneurs and providing feedback on results,
- Lobby for LBC support with local authorities, entrepreneurs and opinion makers
- Increase the financial resources available for Small Businesses and for the activities and projects of the LBC/RBC ; e.g. finding sponsors - Banks, Insurance Companies, Large Firms,

B. Provide Information and Advice to Entrepreneurs

- Provide fast, reliable and comprehensive information for every kind of small business enquiry and impartially organise and monitor the professional advice from Specialist Advisors.
- Utilise the EICC and the Small Business Network Information System, as well as local sources of information - including local offices of the Chamber of Crafts and regional offices of the Chamber of Economy, the local employment offices, etc.

C. Support Local/Regional Entrepreneurial Development

- Support local Institutions at drawing and implementing a Strategy - projects, initiatives, infrastructural investments - for Local / Regional SME Development,
- Identify Funding Sources for projects, including international co-operation programmes (e.g.

PHARE Cross-Border, Ecos-Ouverture, etc.),

- Activate local financial and professional resources for the support of small business.
- Project manage, expense report
- Report achievements

D. Manage Specialist Consultants (Senior Experts, LBC/RBC Managers)

Organise, advise, report performance and achievements of counselling projects delivered by Specialist Counsellors in the following areas:

- Small Business Finance
- Export and Marketing
- Innovation, Technology and Quality
- Human Resources Development for owners, managers and employees
- Legislation and regulation commercial, employment and financial law
- IT & Computers

Consultants Management duties include:

- Assess Consultants Qualifications
- Prepare contracts
- Assign Projects
- Monitor Performance
- Report Performance to RBC/SBDC

E. Increase Financial Supports for Entrepreneurs

- Contribute to Set-up and Management of Local Funds (Municipal, Regional, etc.)
- Negotiate umbrella agreements with Banks, Funds, Finance Specialists leading to favourable terms for Entrepreneurs,

F. Manage Public Works Employment Projects

Organise opportunities for Public Works within Municipalities and other no-profit local institutions, Encourage the development of public work initiatives through self-employment, the creation of co-operatives (e.g. for the care of elderly citizens, etc.): promote Business Ideas and entrepreneurship among participants, organise vocational training, etc.

G. Contribute to the Growth of Small Business Network

- Contribute to preparation and acceptance of LBC/RBC Business Plan and budget by SBDC and Local Stakeholders,
- Scorecard Report : organise collection of key elements of entrepreneurial achievements to the SBDC (increase in: turnover, employment, exports),
- Budget reporting to SBDC and Local Stakeholders,
- Feedback information on satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions; Contribute to SME need identification, design of new services, legislative distortions and inefficiencies to be corrected,
- Contribute to improvement of the efficiency of Small Business Network internal processes,
- Take active part to meetings, seminars organised by LBC and Network,
- Engage in a self-development training programmes aimed to augment performance through better knowledge and counselling skills.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AREAS

A. Local Economic and Employment Development

- Proposal writing, Local Economic and Employment Project Methods, Sources of financing, EU Commission approaches (PHARE, Structural Funds DG XVI, etc.)
- Familiarity with Partners' Entrepreneurship Programmes , SME and Innovation, Export Promotion: Characteristics, Availability, Information Desired / Tendering Requirements, Procedures
- Location Planning (incubators, enterprise zones, technology parks)
- Public Infrastructure Planning
- Project Financing (basic elements of)
- Project Management

B. Communications and Media Management

- Communicate Project Opportunities and LBC/RBC Services to Entrepreneurs
- Build Institutional and Political Establishment Consensus around LBC/RBC

C. Sources of Financing

- Familiarity with Public Financial Supports (Municipal Funds, Micro-credits, Mutual Guarantee Schemes, etc.): Characteristics, Availability, Information Desired / Tendering Requirements, Procedures, Officer's authority.

D. Euro Info Centre, Market Analysis, Local Trade & Industry Sectors

- Understanding of the Competitive Structure (key actors, success factors, access to market information, competition and organisational issues..) of local trades and industries, for example: crafts, building industry, Agriculture (Small Farm Management), Agri-tourism and Tourism. small trade, etc..
- Use of Euro Info Correspondent Centre Services to conduct market analysis
- Interpret and facilitate marketing research
- Assist client in marketing strategies

E. Business Planning

- Develop a business plan
- Assist client in identification of opportunities
- Evaluate and apply strategic planning

F. Budgeting

- Prepare and Monitor Project Budgets for LBC, RBC services and activities.
- Report Budget to SBDC and Partners.

G. Scorecard Reporting

- Fill Scorecard Reports for RBC/SBDC and assist/monitor Specialists and External Consultants.

H. Human Resource Organization

- Assist client in developing internal human resources profiles.

I. Company Law, Accounting and Taxation (basic elements of)

- Slovenian Company Law
- Accounting Practice
- Tax System and Policy

NETWORKS OF CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Networks of personal contacts and accreditation with main local economic players and institutions are very important for the Counsellors' Activities, in that they contribute to "prescribe" new entrepreneurs to buyers and partners, thus facilitating the process of enterprise growth during the earliest stages.

Contacts and Relationships should include:

- Partners: Municipalities, Employment Office, Chamber of Crafts, Chamber of Economy, and Entrepreneurs' Association
- Local Economy: opinion makers, investors, managers at main enterprises
- Financial Community: Banks, Municipal/Regional and Government Funds
- Small Business Network: Staff at LBCs, RBCs, Counsellors' Group
- Key Government Offices

THE SMALL BUSINESS COUNSELLOR

THE COUNSELLING ROLE

Counselling is organised across Slovenia through Local Business Development Centres (LBCs) and Regional Business Centres (RBCs). The Small Business Counsellor is a generalist consulting figure whose role is to support Local Economic and Employment Development through the growth of Small Business.

The Counsellor has two types of "clients":

1. the entrepreneurs, i.e. actual established small enterprises or potential entrepreneurs;
2. the institutions - i.e. local authorities and Small Business Network Partners, which are committed to help the growth of entrepreneurship through financial and counselling services as well as through information supports .

The Local Economic and Employment Development role implies a distinction between Counselling and straightforward Consulting: the Counsellor is concerned with the ultimate ability of the entrepreneur to implement and manage the associated change, and thus create new wealth and employment.

Thus, the counsellor can be said to be working "through the client" and "with the client" - to develop local employment and economy - as opposed to "for the client".⁹

The small firm, be it at an embryo stage or growing, is not a simple scaled-down version of a large company. In the small company the manager's job is built around the company: the company is the man. Organisation development, therefore, equals management development based on individual strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes.

⁹Alan Gibb - Durham University Business School

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Table SEQ Table ٤* ARABIC 1 Local Business Development Expert - Initial Qualifications Assessment

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Expert Manager LBC	Senior Expert Manager RBC	Associate Expert	External Small Business Counsellor
BACKGROUND				
Experience	2 yrs/20proj	4yrs/30 proj	1 yr	n.a.
Training: Counselling	Full/Equiv.	Full/Equiv.	Orient.+	Full
Specific Training: Local Development	Full/Equiv.	Full/Equiv.	Orientation	Full/Equiv.
Formal Education	University	University	Higher	University
PORFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE				
Local Economy Development	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
Communication&Media	xxx	xxx	xxx	xx
Sources Financing, Private	xx	xxx	xx	x
Market Analysis, Trade & Industry Sectors, Euro Info C	xx	xx	xx	x
Business Planning	xx	xxx	xx	x
Budgeting	xx	xx	x	x
Human Resources	xx	xxx	x	xx
Company Law, Accounting and Taxation	x	xx	x	x
Scorecard Reporting	xxx	xxx	x	x
NETWORKS OF CONTACTS				
Stakeholders	xxx	xxx	xx	x
Local Economy	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
Financial Community	x	xx	x	xx
Small Business Network	xx	xxx	xx	x
Key Government Offices	xx	xxx	x	x
PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS				
Code Of Ethics	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Counselling Skills	xx	xxx	xx	x
IT & COMPUTING				
Basic Computing Literacy	xx	xx	xx	xx
EICC/SBDC Info System	xx	xx	xx	x
Financial Software	xx	xx	x	x

The implications of small size for management resource and style and the considerable influences of owner management dictates the approaches that might be most successfully used.

The role of the counsellor is that of encouraging company and management learning (while professional consulting is primarily devoted to overcoming company problems). This basic difference has major implications for the style and approach to counselling discussed below.

WHO MAY QUALIFY

Organisational Context

Two main types of relationships to the Small Business Network are foreseen:

1. Employees / managers of LBC or RBCs
2. External Small Business Counsellors, under framework contract with LBC/RBC

Local Development and Small Business Counsellors (subsequently indicated simply as “Counsellor”) operate from within an organisational context aimed to support the local economy through:

- the creation of new enterprises,
- the development of existing businesses,
- the preservation of jobs threatened by company restructuring,
- the involvement of jobless personnel into public works
- Business Counsellors may be full-time or part-time, and may be working at:
- Recognised/formal small business support agencies:
- Local Business Centre, Regional Business Centres, Regional Development Funds
- Economic Commissions at Municipalities and Local Authorities, involved in small business support as part of their broader activities,
- Chambers of Crafts,
- Local and National Employment Government Offices,
- Chambers of Economy,
- Business Support Centres, Incubators, Technology Parks, Innovation Agencies and Agencies helping technology based businesses,
- Agencies specialising in rural or urban development,
- Zoning Authorities,
- Consulting Practices,
- Management accounting firms ,
- Lending organisations,
- Providers of training or education for small business.

Professional Background

According to the personal professional track record experience and training, three main Counselling Levels are being proposed:

- a. Senior Expert, may also qualify as RBCs or LBC Manager
- b. Expert, the reference standard
- c. Associate

The required qualifications are schematically indicated in Tab. LBCPROF.2

The following requirements, unless otherwise, refer to “Expert” level.

A. Experience (“Expert”)

- have at least two (2) years experience in small business counselling (or experience in the small business support field),
- have conducted, or have taken active part into, and are able to produce references for, at least 20 counselling projects in the area of Local Development, Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

B. Training (“Expert”)

- have completed the training and accreditation program in: Small Business Counselling, the Regional Economic and Employment Development Module issued by SBSN recognised training organisations,
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
- have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects relevant to undertaken by PHARE, thus acquiring skills relevant to the knowledge areas required
- have been trained in Regional Economic Development

C. Formal Education (“Expert”)

- have an University Degree in Economics,
- have other University Degrees (e.g. Engineering, Social Sciences, etc) , complemented by courses or practical knowledge in Small Business Finance
- have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and Local Development issued by accredited training organisations , or
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g:
- have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring relevant skills
- are members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

D. Language Skills

- good knowledge of English language (compulsory)
- (desired) working knowledge of languages spoken in neighbouring Countries: German, Italian, Croatian, Hungarian

E. Personal Motivation

- are committed to a career in business counselling, and
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

DUTIES

The “ Counsellor” is a professional figure, whose services are oriented toward:

- helping entrepreneurs - private clients: existing small business owners or potential entrepreneurs - understand their current situation;
- identify problems and opportunities, and take action to move towards an improved level of

functioning, making full and optimal use of the public supports available, in the form of financial subsidies, training and counselling programmes, premises, etc.

- helping institutional clients - Municipalities and Local / Regional Authorities “ to identify and launch local enterprise development projects.

A. Help Start New Businesses

Stimulate entrepreneurship through the promotion of the services of the LBC/RBC, of the Network and Partners towards the target groups (unemployed, potential entrepreneurs, small firms, etc.).

Two main classes of promotion can be identified:

1. passive / non targeted
2. proactive and targeted: is directed to specific target groups and clusters

Support start-up business at every stage including information, advice, training and counselling, finding incubation premises, accessing public supports (Funds, Subsidised Consulting)

B. Develop Existing Businesses

- Sources of finances,
- Access to markets and partners,
- Counselling, tutoring and training.

C. Support Corporate Spin-Offs (Senior Experts)

Intervene in company restructuring projects, co-ordinating with Specialist Consultants (areas: Company Restructuring, Finance Specialists, Human Resource Specialists) and Institutions (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Slovenian Development Corporation, Office for Employment, etc.) to minimise lay-offs and optimise employee outplacement through creation of new enterprises, involvement in local economic and employment development projects, etc..

D. Plan and manage Common Enterprise Premises and Small Business infrastructures:

- Incubators;
- Enterprise Zones;
- Technology Parks (Entrepreneurial Premises Specialist)

E. Support Projects for Local Economic and Employment Development

Identify, prepare the tender proposals and documentation, and implement Projects (Small Business Infrastructure/Premises, Spin-Off and Clustering in Tourism/Farming/Manufacturing, etc., Specialised Service Centres, Public Works, etc.) aimed to increase or preserve local employment.

F. Support LBC, RBC and Network Development, Performance Monitoring

- Plan the growth of an Effective and Financially Viable Local Business Centre
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of performance and visibility of the LBCs and of the Network within the local community,
- Engage in the “Learning and Growth” programme of meetings, seminars and training organised

by the Network to augment performance and service quality through better professional knowledge, improved counselling skills, and the adoption of supporting information systems and tools.

TASKS

A. Foster Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth

- Help create a diffused entrepreneurial culture, raising interest towards small enterprise and self-employment through public awareness campaigns aimed at the general public, towards schools, the financial community, large enterprises, etc.;
- Increase the awareness among entrepreneurs of the RBC/LBC services: this implies active use of Media Communication (newspapers, radio and television), advertising, fairs, seminars, mailing, etc.;
- Locally promote, channel and help implement various entrepreneurial and SME supporting projects undertaken by the SBSN and other Network partners (National Employment Office, Ministry of Science and Technology, etc.) at regional and local level, interacting with entrepreneurs and providing feedback on results;
- Lobby for LBC support with local authorities, entrepreneurs and opinion makers;
- Increase financial resources available for Small Businesses and for LBC/RBC activities and projects, by finding for example sponsors like banks, insurance companies, large firms etc.;

B. Provide Information and Advice to Entrepreneurs

- Provide fast, reliable and comprehensive information for every kind of small business enquiry and impartially organise and monitor the professional advice from Specialist Advisors
- Utilise the EICC and the Small Business Network Information System as well as local sources of information - including local offices of the Chamber of Crafts and regional offices of the Chamber of Economy, the local employment offices, etc..

C. Support Local/Regional Entrepreneurial Development

- Support local institutions at drawing and implementing a Strategy - projects, initiatives, infrastructural investments, for local/regional SME Development;
- Identify Funding Sources for projects, including international co-operation programmes (e.g. Phare Cross-Border, Ecos-Ouverture);
- Activate local financial and professional resources for the support of Small Business;
- Project management and expense reports;
- Report achievements.

D. Increase Financial Supports for Entrepreneurs

- Contribute to set-up and manage local funds (municipal, regional, etc.);
- Negotiate umbrella agreements with banks, funds, finance specialists leading to favourable terms for entrepreneurs.

E. Manage Public Works Employment Projects

- Organise opportunities for public works within Municipalities and other non-profit local institutions;
- Encourage the development of public works initiatives through self-employment, the creation of co-operative (e.g. for the care of elderly people etc.);

- Promote Business Ideas and Entrepreneurship among participants;
- Organise vocational training

F. Contribute to the Growth of Small Business Network

- Contribute to the preparation and acceptance of BLC/RBC Business Plan and budget by SBSN and Local Stakeholders;
- Scorecard Reports - Organise the collection of key elements of entrepreneurial achievements to the SBSN (increase in turnover, employment, exports, etc.);
- Budget reporting to SBSN and Local Stakeholders;
- Feedback information on satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions
- Contribute to SME need identification, design of new services, legislative distortions etc. to be corrected ;
- Improve the efficiency of the Small Business Network internal processes;
- Take active part in meetings, seminars organised by LBC and the Network;
- Engage in self-development training programmes for higher performance through better knowledge and counselling skills.

G. Manage Specialist Consultants (Senior Experts, LBC/RBC Managers)

- Organise, advice, report performances and achievements of counselling projects delivered by Specialist Counsellors in the following areas:
- Small Business Finance
- Export and Marketing
- Innovation, Technology and Quality
- Human resource development for owners, managers and employees;
- Commercial, Employment and Financial Law Legislation and Regulation;
- IT & Computers

Management duties include:

- Assess Consultants' qualifications;
- Prepare contracts;
- Assign Projects;
- Monitor Performance
- Report Performance to RBC/SBSN

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AREAS

A. Local Economic and Employment Development

- Proposal writing, Local Economic and Employment Project Methods, Sources of financing, EU Commission approaches (PHARE, Structural Funds, DGXVI, etc.);
- Familiarity with Partners' Entrepreneurship Programmes, SME and Innovation, Export promotion (characteristics, availability, tendering requirements, procedures, etc.);
- Location planning (incubators, enterprise zones, technology parks, etc.)
- Public Infrastructure Planning;
- Basic elements of Project Financing;
- Project Management.

B. Communications and Media Management

- Communicate Project Opportunities and LBC/RBC Services to Entrepreneurs;
- Build Institutional and Political Establishment Consensus around LBC/RBC.

C. Sources of Financing

- Familiarity with Public Financial Supports (Municipal Funds, Microcredits;
- Mutual Guarantee Schemes, etc.): Characteristics, Availability, Information Desired / Tendering Requirements, Procedures, Officer's authority.

D. Market Analysis, Local Trade & Industry Sectors, Euro Info Centre

- Understanding of the Competitive Structure (key actors, success factors, access to market information, competition and organisational issues..) of local trades and industries, for example: crafts, building industry, Agriculture (Small Farm Management), Agri-tourism and Tourism , small trade, etc..
- Use of Euro Info Correspondent Centre Services to conduct market analysis
- Interpret and facilitate marketing research
- Assist client in marketing strategies

E. Business Planning

- Develop a business plan
- Assist client in identification of opportunities
- Evaluate and apply strategic planning

F. Budgeting

- Prepare and Monitor Project Budgets for LBC, RBC services and activities.
- Report Budget to SBSN and Partners.

G. Scorecard Reporting

- Fill Scorecard Reports for RBC/SBSN
- Assist/monitor Specialists and External Consultants.

H. Human Resource Organisation

- Assist client in developing internal human resources profiles.

I. Company Law, Accounting and Taxation (basic elements of)

- Slovenian Company Law
- Accounting Practice
- Tax System and Policy

NETWORKS OF CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Networks of personal contacts and accredits with main local economic players and institutions are very important for the Counsellors' Activities, in that they contribute to "prescribe" new entrepreneurs to buyers and partners, thus facilitating the process of enterprise growth during the earliest stages.

- Contacts and Relationships should include:
- Partners: Municipalities, Employment Office, Chamber of Crafts, Chamber of Economy, Entrepreneurs' Association;
- Local Economy: opinion makers, investors, managers at main enterprises;
- Financial Community: Banks, Municipal/Regional and Government Funds
- Small Business Network: Staff at LBCs, RBCs, Counsellors' Group;
- Key Government Offices:

KNOWLEDGE OF IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES

A. Basic Computing Literacy

- Word Processing, Spreadsheets
- Internet Use
- Databases,
- Computer-based Presentations

B. EICC/SBSN Information System

- Euro Info Correspondence Centres
- Network Information System and Databases (in process of being developed)

C. Financial Management Software

- Standardised Business Planning Software

START-UP AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE EXPERT

SMALL BUSINESS FINANCE COUNSELLING ROLE

“Start-up and Development Finance” services are intended to foster the investment and entrepreneurial culture through the attraction of private capital.

The Services of the Start-up and Development Finance Expert lead to organise the delivery of (or facilitated access to) financial supports to SMEs - e.g. in the form of loan guarantees, credit schemes, seed and venture capital.

Counselling usually is not limited to the financial area, as it is bundled with general business advice, services (e.g. budgeting, financial control) and training to improve the chances of success and to leverage additional financial resources.

5.3.1.1. WHO MAY QUALIFY

Organisational Context

Start-up and Development Finance Expert Counsellors (subsequently indicated simply as “Finance Counsellor”) operate - either under some form of consulting contract or as employees - from within an organisational context aimed to support the local economy through:

- the creation of new enterprises,
- the development of existing businesses,
- the preservation of jobs threatened by company restructuring,
- the involvement of jobless personnel into public works

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Table 2 - Small Business Development Expert - Initial Qualifications Assessment

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Expert Manager LBC	Senior Expert Manager RBC	Associate Expert	External Expert FINANCE	External Expert MARKETING
BACKGROUND					
Experience (No. of years/No. of Projects)	2yrs/30proj	4yrs/50 proj	1 yr/10 proj	2 years / 30 Projects	2 years / 30 Projects
Training: Counselling	Full	Full	Orientation	Full or Equivalent	Full or Equivalent
Specific Training: Finance	Full	Full	Basic	Full or Equivalent	Full or Equivalent
Formal Education	University	University	University.	University	University
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE					
Local Economy Development	xx	xxx	xx	xx	xx
Communication & Media	xx	xxx	xxx	x	xxx
Sources Financing, Private	xx	xxx	xx	xxx	x
Market Analysis, Trade & Industry Sectors, Euro Info C	xx	xxx	xx	xx	xxx
Business Planning	xx	xxx	xx	xxx	xx
Budgeting	x	xx	x	xxx	x
Human Resources				x	x
Company Law, Accounting and Taxation	x	xxx	x	xx	x
Scorecard Reporting	xx	xxx	x	xx	xx
NETWORKS OF CONTACTS					
Partners and Stakeholders	xx	xxx	xx	x	
Local Economy	x	xxx	xx	x	xx
Financial Community				xxx	
Small Business Network	x	xxx	xx	xx	xx
Key Government Offices	x	xxx	x	x	x
PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS					
Code Of Ethics	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Counselling Skills	x	xxx	xx	xxx	xxx
IT & COMPUTING					
Basic Computing Literacy	xx	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
EICC/SBSN Info System	xx	xxx	xx	x	xxx
Financial Software	x	xx	x	xx	

Qualification Levels:

Note: xxx = very good / proficiency

xx = good

x = basic knowledge

Finance Counsellors may be full-time or part-time, and may be working as:

- Staff of Recognised/formal small business support agencies:
- Local Business Centre, Regional Business Centres, Regional Development Funds
- Staff of Economic Commissions at Municipalities and Local Authorities, involved in small business support as part of their broader activities,
- Local and National Employment Government offices
- Staff of Business Support Centres, Business Innovation Centres, Incubators, Technology Parks, Innovation Agencies and Agencies helping technology based businesses,
- Consulting Practices,
- Management accounting firms ,
- Lending organisations,
- Chambers of Crafts,
- Chambers of Economy,
- Local and National Employment government offices,
- Agencies specialising in rural or urban development,
- Providers of training or education for small business.

Professional Background

According to the personal professional track record experience and training, three main Counselling Levels are being proposed.

1. Senior Expert (may qualify as RBCs or LBC Manager)
 - Areas of specialisation for Senior Experts include RBC/LBC services:
 - Guarantee Scheme Expert
 - Bank Liaison Expert - SME Finance
 - Venture Capital Expert
2. Expert
 - Business Planning Expert
3. Associate

The required qualifications are schematically indicated in Table 3.

The following requirements, unless otherwise, refer to “Expert” level.

A. Experience (“Expert”)

- have at least two (2) years experience in small business finance counselling (or experience in the small business support field), or banking;
- have conducted, or have taken active part into, and are able to produce references for, at least 20 counselling projects in the area of Small Business Finance and Entrepreneurship.

B. Training (“Expert”)

- have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and the Finance Module issued by SBSN recognised training organisations ,
- or
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects relevant to undertaken by PHARE, thus acquiring skills relevant to the knowledge areas required
 - have been trained in Entrepreneurial Finance

Formal Education (“Expert”)

- have an University Degree in Economics,
- have other University Degrees (e.g. Engineering, Social Sciences, etc) , complemented by courses or practical knowledge in Finance
- have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and Finance issued by accredited training organisations
- or
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
- have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring skills relevant to Finance Area
- are members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

Language Skills

- Good working knowledge of Financial English: written and oral communication
- Knowledge of Additional Key Market Language - e.g. German, Italian, Croatian - desired

Personal Motivation

- are committed to a career in business counselling, and
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

DUTIES

The Finance Counsellor is a professional figure, working for (as employee or as contracted external consultant) Small Business Supporting Organisations (LBCs, RBCs, Chambers of Crafts, etc), whose services are oriented toward:

- helping entrepreneurs - private clients: existing small business owners or potential entrepreneurs - understand their current situation, identify problems and opportunities, and take action to move towards an improved level of functioning, making full and optimal use of the public supports available, in the form of financial subsidies, training and counselling programmes, premises, etc.
- Expert Finance Consultants helping institutional clients - Municipalities and Local / regional Authorities, other Network Stakeholders - to finance, get co-financing (from State, UE and other

organisations) and successfully implement projects aimed at improving the local economy through new and better business infrastructures, small business services and “clustering” projects¹⁰.

- Counselling is organised across Slovenia through Local Business Development Centres and Regional Business Centres. RBCs are responsible for the monitoring of the Finance Counsellor’s and LBC service performance and achievements (employment, economic, service quality, financial).

A. Help Start New Businesses

- Screen Entrepreneurs and Business Ideas
- Prepare business plans;
- Help new entrepreneurs negotiate financial deals with banks and private financial organisations, as well as to Municipal and Regional Funds, Guarantee Funds, other Public Lending Organisations;
- Negotiate favourable interest rates, loan conditions and lower fees for SMEs
- Contribute to Business Plan acceptance also through own credibility and ties with Banks.
- Introduce budgeting and control services thus monitoring progress of the venture

B. Develop Existing Businesses

- Prepare business plans
- Identify sources of finance
- Negotiate favourable interest rates, loan conditions and lower fees for SMEs
- Contribute to Business Plan acceptance also through own credibility and ties with Banks.
- Introduce budgeting and control services thus monitoring progress of the venture
- Help access to markets and partners,
- Provide general business counselling, tutoring and training.

C. Spin-Offs (Senior Experts)

- Intervene in company restructuring projects, as Finance Expert Consultants to optimise employee outplacement through creation of new enterprises.

D. Support LBC, RBC and Network Development

- Engage in the “Learning and Growth” programme of meetings, seminars and training organised by the Network to augment performance and service quality through better professional knowledge, improved counselling skills, and the adoption of supporting information systems and tools.
- Scorecard Reporting
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of performance and visibility of the LBCs and of the Network within the local community.

TASKS

Contribute to Increase Financial Supports for Entrepreneurs

- Structure and Help Prepare Business Plans for the entrepreneurs
- Help Entrepreneur obtain Funds from Private Banks and available Public Sources

¹⁰Clustering Projects are aimed at improving the entrepreneurial performance of groups of enterprises - eg in tourism, farming, manufacturing, etc - integrating services such as market

- Contribute to Set-up and Manage Local Funds (Municipal, Regional, etc.)
- Contribute to negotiate umbrella agreements with Banks, Funds, Finance Experts leading to favourable terms for Entrepreneurs,
- Help increase the financial resources available for Small Businesses and for the activities and projects of the LBC/RBC ; e.g. finding sponsors - Banks, Insurance Companies, Large Firms,

B. Provide Information and Advice to Entrepreneurs

- Under an “umbrella contact” with LBC/RBC, provide a number of free hours of “orientation” counselling to entrepreneurs on every kind of small business finance enquiry.

C. Tutor Entrepreneurs and Monitor their Achievements

- Scorecard Report : meet regularly with clients and collect key elements of entrepreneurial achievements and report to the LBC/RBC (increase in: turnover, employment, exports),
- Provide Feedback information on satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions
- Contribute to need identification, design of new services, legislative distortions etc. to be corrected
- Take active part to meetings, seminars organised by LBC and Network,
- Engage in a self development training programme aimed at higher performance through amelioration of knowledge and counselling skills.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AREAS

A. Financial Analysis

- Conduct financial Analysis
- Assist client in financial analysis
- Identify types and sources of financing
- Recognise need for a record keeping/accounting system

B. Sources of Public Financing,

- Familiarity with Public Financial Supports (Municipal Funds, Soft-Loans, Microcredits, Mutual Guarantee Schemes, etc.):
- Characteristics,
- Availability,
- Information Desired / Tendering Requirements,
- Procedures, criteria for lending proposal evaluation, risk rating, risk distribution ,
- Officer’s authority,
- Training and tutoring requirements.

C. Sources of Private Financing

Knowledge and personal contacts at local level are necessary to get acquainted with the following issues of interest to main local Banking partners and Financial Institutions:

- Bank strategy and priority market targets
- Information desired by Banks, i.e. format of business plan, financial ratios, statements, list of aged receivables and payables, etc.
- Lending criteria: covenants, personal guarantees, etc.

- Lending decisions
- Loan restrictions
- Approaches to loan withdrawal

D. Mutual Guarantee Scheme Set- up and Management (Senior Expert)

- Specific Training and Practical Knowledge about Promotion and Management of Mutual Guarantee Schemes (as operated by Regional Development Funds), namely criteria for lending proposal evaluation, risk rating, training and tutoring requirements

E. Microcredit Schemes Set-up and Management (Senior Expert)

- Specific Training and Practical Knowledge about Promotion and Management of Micro-Credit Schemes, namely:
- Criteria for lending proposal evaluation, risk rating, training and tutoring requirements

F. Seed and Venture Capital Set-up and Management (Senior Expert)

- Real world management experience of all critical company functions
- Deep and international level knowledge of specific high-growth industries, Venture Capital organisations (Slovenian and international) where the investment finance Expert intends to specialise.
- Efficient financial budgeting and management information system to monitor progress of the venture.

G. Market Analysis, Euro Info Centre, Local Trade & Industry Sectors

- Understanding of the Competitive Structure of local trades and industries, for example: crafts, building industry, Agriculture (Small Farm Management), Agritourism and Tourism, small trade, etc..
- Use of Euro Info Correspondent Centre Services to conduct market analysis
- Interpret and facilitate marketing research
- Assist client in marketing strategies

H. Business Planning

- Develop a business plan
- Assist client in identification of opportunities
- Evaluate and apply strategic planning

I. Budgeting and Control (Senior Expert)

The Budgeting and Control Service is fundamental to “manage” the risk, and to enable the effective monitoring of the venture and investment progress.

- Industrial costing
- Investment appraisal
- Management information systems

J. Company Law, Accounting and Taxation (knowledge of)

- Slovenian Company Law
- Accounting Practice
- Tax System and Policy

K. Scorecard Reporting

- Meet with the client to discuss and analyse the performance of the venture with respect to what was planned (this is an opportunity to sell additional tutoring services from the Counsellor or from the Network)
- Fill Scorecard Reports for RBC/SBSN, with respect to:
 - feedback information on satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions to LBC and Network services
 - company and personal improvement (need for training services to be organised on a shared cost basis by the LBC and the Network)
 - legislative distortions and inefficiencies to be corrected
 - key elements of company performance, increase in: turnover, employment, exports - when allowed by the entrepreneur.

NETWORKS OF CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Networks of personal contacts and accredits with main local economic players and institutions are very important for the Finance Counsellors' Activities, in that they contribute to "prescribe" new entrepreneurs to bankers and financial partners, thus facilitating the process of enterprise growth during the earliest stages.

Contacts and Relationships should include:

- Financial Community: Banks, Municipal/Regional and Government Funds
- Local Economy: opinion makers, investors, managers at main enterprises
- Key Central Government Offices

KNOWLEDGE OF IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES

A. Basic Computing Literacy

- Word Processing, Spreadsheets
- Internet Use
- Databases,
- Computer-based Presentations

B. Financial Management Software

- Standardised Business Planning Software
- Integrated Financial Management and Planning Packages

C. EICC/SBSN Information System

- Euro Info Correspondence Centres
- Network Information System and Databases (in process of being developed)

Table 3 - Start-up and Development Finance Expert - Initial Qualifications Assessment

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Expert Manager LBC	Senior Expert Manager RBC	Expert	Senior Expert
BACKGROUND				
Experience	2 yrs/30proj	4yrs/50 proj	2 yr/ 30 proj	4 years / 50 proj.
Training: Counselling	Full or Equivalent	Full	Full or Equivalent	Full
Specific Training: Finance	Full or Equivalent	Full	Full or Equivalent	Full
Formal Education	University	University	University.	University
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE				
Financial Analysis	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Sources of Financing, Public	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Sources Financing, Private	xxx	xxx	xx	xxx
Mutual Guarantee Scheme Mgmt	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
Microcredit Scheme Mgmt	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
Seed and Venture Capital	x	xx	x	xxx
Market Analysis, Euro Info Trade & Industry Sectors,	xxx	xx	xx	xx
Business Planning	xx	xxx	x	x
Budgeting and Control	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Company Law, Accounting and Taxation	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Scorecard Reporting	xxx	xxx	xx	xxx
NETWORKS OF CONTACTS				
Financial Community	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Local Economy, Investors	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Small Business Network	xx	xxx	x	xx
PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS				
Professional Behav./Code Of Ethics	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Counselling Skills	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES				
Basic Computing Literacy	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
EICC/SBSN Info System	xxx	xxx	xx	x
Financial Management Software	xx	xx	xxx	xxx

Qualification Levels:

Note: xxx = very good / proficiency

xx = good

x = basic knowledge

MARKETING AND EXPORT COUNSELLOR

THE EXPORT AND MARKETING SUPPORT ROLE

Counselling is organised across Slovenia through Local Business Development Centres and Regional Business Centres. RBCs are responsible for the monitoring of the Counsellor's and LBC service performance and achievements (employment, economic, service quality, financial).

Given the very small size of the internal Slovenian market, Small Enterprises are more dependent from export than in most other countries.

The role of the Marketing and Export Expert (subsequently indicated as "Marketing Expert") is to support Small Business to overcome the main obstacles, i.e.:

- Lack of international marketing skills: market analysis, competition assessment, product definition, pricing strategies, partner search, distribution management, advertising, etc.;
- Trade barriers like: custom control, insurance, currencies and compliance to product and quality standards and norms requirements;
- Lack of financial means to enter new markets.

The Euro Info Centre, as well as the Slovenian Chamber of Economy, is a key Network resource for this type of Consulting figure.

Marketing experts need specialise by "industry" (e.g. tourism, software, furniture, building and construction, plastic moulding, etc.) and by geographical markets (e.g. Germany, Italy, U.S., etc). Good marketing skills are very difficult to find, marketing experts should therefore be considered as resources for the whole SBSN.

Marketing. Marketing research is an indispensable ingredient of the modern marketing concept, in that companies can serve their markets well only by researching needs and wants, locations, buying practices of customers - as well as the competitive position of the firm with respect to the products and services that are intended to be offered.

This Competency is especially critical to SME growth. Specialist skills are required to design and assist the implementation of marketing strategies on the basis of measurement of market potentials, market share analysis, determination of market characteristics, sales analysis, distribution channel studies.

The counselling activities are intends to support:

- Single SMEs or
- Groups of SMEs (clusters), which are organised by the RBC on a "multi-client" basis with the help of the LBC/RBC or the SBSN (for industry segments which are relevant to the whole of Slovenia).

WHO MAY QUALIFY

Organisational Context

Marketing Counsellors operate from within an organisational context aimed to support the local economy through:

- the creation of new enterprises,
- the development of existing businesses,
- the preservation of jobs threatened by company restructuring

Two main types of relationships to the Small Business Network are foreseen:

1. employees / managers of LBC or RBCs
2. external Small Business Counsellors, including Self-employed, under framework contract with LBC/RBC and/or directly with the SBSN

Marketing Counsellors may be full-time or part-time, and may be working as:

- Staff of recognised/formal small business support agencies:
- Local Business Centre, Regional Business Centres, Regional Development Funds
- Chambers of Economy,
- Staff of Economic Commissions at Municipalities and Local Authorities, involved in small business support as part of their broader activities,
- Business Support Centres, Incubators, Technology Parks, Innovation Agencies and Agencies helping technology based businesses,
- Chambers of Crafts,
- Consulting Practices,
- Management consulting firms,
- Marketing and Export Managers at Larger Firms
- Providers of training or education for small business.

Professional Background

According to the personal professional track record experience and training, three main Counselling Levels are being proposed:

1. Senior Expert, may also qualify as RBCs or LBC Manager
2. Expert, the reference standard
3. Associate

The required qualifications are schematically indicated in Table 4.

The following requirements, unless otherwise, refer to “Expert” level.

A. Experience (“Expert”)

- Have at least two (2) years experience in Marketing and Export Promotion counselling, possibly working for small business clients;
- Have conducted, or have taken active part into, and are able to produce references for, at least 20 counselling projects in the area of Marketing and Export Promotion.

B. Training (“Expert”)

- Have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and the Marketing and Export Promotion Module issued by SBSN recognised training organisations
- Market and export training organised by the EICC

- Have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
- have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects relevant to undertaken by PHARE, thus acquiring skills relevant to the knowledge areas required
- have been trained in marketing and export promotion

C. Formal Education

- Have an University Degree in Economics,
- Have other University Degrees (e.g. Engineering, Social Sciences, etc) , complemented by courses or practical knowledge in Marketing and Export Promotion
- Have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and Marketing and Export Promotion issued by accredited training organisations

or

- Have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
- have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring relevant skills ;
- are members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

Language Skills

- Must: English : excellent business writing capabilities,
- Desired: Working Knowledge of German, and/or : Italian, Hungarian, Serbian-Croatian

Personal Motivation

- are committed to a career in business counselling, and
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

DUTIES

The “ Marketing Counsellor” is a professional figure whose services are oriented toward:

- Helping entrepreneurs - private clients: existing small business owners or potential entrepreneurs - understand their current situation, identify and assess market opportunities in Slovenia and abroad, and take action to improve sales and profitability, making full and optimal use of the business and professional and information resources available within the Small Business Support Network, as well as of public supports available, in the form of financial subsidies, training and counselling programmes, premises, etc.
- Helping institutional clients - RBC/LBC and the SBSN and their Stakeholders - to assess international and national markets for projects aimed at improving the export capabilities of Slovenian industry segments within and multi-client/”clustering” projects.

A. Help Start New Businesses

The Marketing Counsellor should support the Small Business Network and the Euro Info Centre to provide the following Market Development services at reasonable cost for entrepreneurs:

- Screen Entrepreneurs and Business Ideas
- Prepare business plans
- Advice on product suitability
- Information on local competition
- Advice on marketing methods/distribution channels
- Provide lists of local contacts

Geographical Market scope is a key determinant of the effort involved and of the degree of specialisation, quality and cost of the services offered and of consultants required.

B. Develop Existing Businesses

- Assess market potential
- Design and implement marketing strategies
- Organise sales and distribution channels
- Counsel on promotion and marketing campaigns.
- Counselling, tutoring and training.

C. Support Corporate Spin-Offs (Senior Experts)

- Intervene (reference activities listed in B. above) in company restructuring projects, co-ordinating with Specialist Consultants (areas: Company Restructuring, Finance Specialists, Human Resource Specialists).

D. Support Projects for Local Economic and Employment Development

- Assess market conditions and support promotional efforts related to Local Employment and Economic Development Projects (Small Business Infrastructure/Premises, Spin-Off and Clustering in Tourism/Farming/Manufacturing, etc., Specialised Service Centres, Public Works, etc.).

E. Support LBC, RBC and Network Development, Performance Monitoring

- Engage in the “Learning and Growth” programme of meetings, seminars and training organised by the Network to augment performance and service quality through better professional knowledge, improved counselling skills, and the adoption of supporting information systems and tools.
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of performance and visibility of the LBCs and of the Network within the local community.

TASKS

A. Provide Preliminary Information and Advice to Entrepreneurs

- Provide preliminary market assessment and marketing orientation
- Utilise the EICC and the Small Business Network Information System, as well as local sources of information - the local offices of the Chamber of Crafts and the regional offices of the Chamber of Economy, the local employment offices, etc..

B. Local and International Market Analysis

Two broad categories of Counselling Projects can be defined:

1. local/regional markets: for the self employed and very small start-ups - mainly personal services, small trade, etc.
2. international markets: most Slovenian firms need to export very early in their company life

Tasks to be performed include:

- market and competition segmentation and quantification
- advice on product suitability,
- assessment of compliance to EU, US and other standards and norms
- information on competitions and potential partners
- definition of a detailed marketing plan: product characteristics, price, distribution channels, promotion

B. Partner Search

Identify Slovenian and Foreign Business Partners (distributors, agents, suppliers, etc.) through the effective use of:

- the EICC
- the BRE / Chamber of Economy partner search support
- PHARE/JOPP
- Internet
- secondary sources: gathering information that already exists somewhere, having been collected for another purpose.

D. Export and Operational Marketing Advice

- Operational assistance to participation to international fairs and exhibitions
- Assessment of legislative /fiscal obligations
- Preparation of promotional material
- Organisation of promotional campaign
- Selection of distributors, contractual agreements
- Export finance and banking
- Management of sales force and distribution,
- On-going monitoring of market and competition

E. FDI - Foreign Direct Investment Assistance

- Assist foreign counterparts and consultants to implement joint venture projects within the PHARE JOPP Programme.

F. Contribute to Small Business Network Growth

- Scorecard Report : Feedback information Report of key elements of entrepreneurial achievements to the LBC/RBC (increase in the turnover, employment, exports of small business clients), satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions
- Take active part in meetings, seminars organised by LBC and Network,
- Engage in a self development training programme aimed to augment performance through

amelioration of knowledge and counselling skills.

- Contribute to need identification, design of new services, legislative distortions and inefficiencies to be corrected,
- Contribute to improvement of the Small Business Network internal processes

5.4.1.4. PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AREAS

A. Partner Search - Use of EICC, BRE etc. Services

- Analyse company needs (commercial, technological, financial, etc.), to structure the requests for partnership in order to diffuse them throughout the SBSN/EICC Network - in Slovenia and abroad, also making use of the services of the EICC and of the Chamber of Economy (BRE).
- Assist to the participation of SMEs to specialised fairs and exhibitions abroad (e.g. Europartenariat, Subcontracting Fairs, etc.).
- Organise structured meetings among entrepreneurs from cross-border regions
- Assist Foreign and Local Partners to set up joint ventures, making use of the PHARE JOPP Programme.

This refers to the stages of business planning, company set-up (support include legal, logistic, taxation, etc.), training of local human resources during the start-up stage.

B. Marketing and Market Analysis Methods

- Use of Secondary Sources: Internet, company profit and loss statements, company profiles and databases, government and EU publications, article publications, analysis from trade associations and syndicated service research firms, export and international studies
- Use of Primary Sources (senior experts): original information for the specific purpose at hand, using telephone, mail or personal surveys.
- Research projects involving primary sources are generally too expensive for single small businesses, and are thus undertaken only by most advanced medium sized firms or on a multi-client basis.
- Modern marketing practice: market segmentation, competitive structure, evaluation, selection and targeting deciding on the company's positioning on each market.
- Scenario Development Techniques: Market, Technology, Competition

C. Export Finance and Insurance

- Understanding of financial instruments and export finance terminology
- Export Insurance methods
- Offer Preparation

D. Local Economy / Specific Trades and International Markets

Understanding of the Competitive Structure (key actors, success factors, access to market information, competition and organisational issues..) of local trades and industries.

- Small crafts;
- Building industry;
- Agriculture (Small Farm Management), Agritourism and Tourism, Small trade, etc..

Senior Experts contribute with their practical knowledge of the organisation and structure of specific

industries (e.g. metalworking, woodworking, electrical, electronics, software... tourism) and market behaviour and requirements in specific countries (Germany, Austria, Italy, etc.).

E. Market and Business Planning , Budgeting

- Develop a business and marketing plan
- Assist client in identification of opportunities
- Evaluate and apply strategic planning
- Budget Sales, Distribution and Promotional investments

F. Public Supports, Sources of Financing

- Knowledge of resources and capabilities available from the EICC, Chamber of Economy (and namely with their BRE Service) the Slovenian Trade Promotion Agency.
- Knowledge of Public Financial Supports (Municipal Funds, Microcredits, Mutual Guarantee Schemes, etc.): Information Desired / Tendering Requirements, Procedures.

G. Business Communications and Media Management

- Support the design of promotional material (brochures, Internet sites, Fair/Exhibition arrangements)
- Support preparation of Company Presentations: Multimedia, Company Profiles, Annual Reports
- Media management: press releases, advertisement
- Effective business writing

H. Human Resource Organisation

- Assist client in selecting and developing internal sales and marketing human resources

I. Company Law

- Basic elements of Slovenian Company Law

J. Scorecard Reporting

- Fill Scorecard Reports for RBC/SBSN and assist/monitor Specialists and External Consultants.

NETWORKS OF CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Marketing Counsellor must be at ease on foreign markets: finding information, selecting partners and suppliers, addressing main legislative issues.

A network of personal contacts and relationships is indispensable to speed up international development of client firms.

Contacts should include:

- Buyers, distributors, suppliers of market information, trade associations, etc.
- Local Economy Networks of personal contacts and accredits with main local economic players in order to contribute to “prescribe” new entrepreneurs to buyers and partners, thus facilitating enterprise growth.

Working relationships should include:

- Chamber of Economy, central and local Offices
- Chamber of Crafts
- Entrepreneurs' Association
- Managers at main enterprises
- Small Business Network: Staff at LBCs, RBCs, Marketing Counsellors' Group
- Financial Community: Banks, Municipal/Regional and Government Funds
- Key Central Government Offices

KNOWLEDGE OF IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES

A. Basic Computing Literacy

- Word Processing,
- Computer-based Presentations
- Internet Use
- Spreadsheets
- Databases

B. EICC/SBSN Information System

- Euro Info Correspondence Centres
- Network Information System and Databases (in process of being developed)

C. Financial Management Software

- Standardised Business Planning Software

INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY , SUBCONTRACTING EXPERTS

THE INNOVATION COUNSELLING ROLE

The role of the Innovation and Technology Expert is to support the creation and growth of innovative firms and promote innovation by facilitating the diffusion of new technologies and research results from national and international R&D establishment to Industry.

Innovation Counselling is organised across Slovenia through Innovation Relay Centres (part of the EU IRC Network), Regional Business Centres and Local Business Development Centres (acting as "promoters"). RBCs are responsible for the monitoring of the Innovation Counsellor's performance and achievements (innovation development, licences, employment, economic).

- Promote SME Innovation A primary goal is to create an exchange of information between entrepreneurs, SMEs and research organisations and inventors/"innovators" across Slovenia and Europe.
- Support Regional Development. In addition to reacting to requests from SMEs, the Innovation Expert also plays an active role in the local business community. Their task is to examine the specific needs of the RBC's region's industrial community and propose services to help local organisations compete more effectively in export markets.

The main barriers related to the diffusion of innovation to SMEs, which need the Counsellor's support are:

- capability to integrate a wide range of technologies, which can not be mastered within a single small firm, but need be brought in (transferred) from outside;

Table 4 - Export and Marketing Expert - Initial Qualifications Assessment

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Expert LBC	Senior Expert RBC	Expert	Senior Expert
BACKGROUND				
Experience	2 yrs/30proj	4yrs/50 proj	2 yr/ 30 proj	4 years / 50 proj.
Training: Counselling	Full or Equivalent	Full or Equivalent	Equivalent	Full
Specific Training: Marketing	Full or Equivalent	Full	Full or Equivalent	Full
Formal Education	University	University	University.	University
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE				
Use of EICC and SBSN Info System	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Partner Search	x	xx	xx	xxx
Marketing and Analysis Methods	x	xxx	xx	xxx
Export Finance and Insurance	xx	xx	xx	xxx
Local Economy/Specific Trades	xx	xx	xx	xxx
Specific Trades / International Markets	x	xxx	xx	xxx
Market and Business Planning	x	xx	xx	xxx
Human Resource Organisation	xx	xxx	x	x
Public Supports, Sources of Financing	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Business Communications	xx	xx	xx	xxx
Company Law	x	xx	x	xxx
Scorecard Reporting	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
NETWORKS OF CONTACTS				
International Contacts	xx	xx	xx	xxx
Local Economy	xxx	xxx	xx	xxx
Small Business Network	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Key Government Offices	x	xxx	x	xx
PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS				
Code Of Ethics	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Counselling Skills	xx	xx	xx	xxx
IT & COMPUTING				
Basic Computing Literacy	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
EICC/SBSN Info System	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
Financial Software	x	xx	x	xx

Qualification Levels:

Note: xxx = very good / proficiency

xx = good

x = basic knowledge

- capability to select the “right” technologies
- capability to assess investment requirements
- need to share with other international partners the high R&D investment,
- ensure intellectual property protection through patenting,
- scanning technology to evaluate competitors, partners, technological scenarios
- find buyers and partners for subcontracting activities
- adopt high manufacturing quality standards (ISO 9000 certification)
- set-up licensing agreements,
- speed up the complex technology adoption and learning processes

WHO MAY QUALIFY

Organisational Context

Innovation and Technology Expert Counsellors (subsequently indicated simply as “Innovation Counsellor”) operate - either under some form of consulting contract or as employees - from within an organisational context aimed to support the local economy through:

- the creation of new enterprises,
- the development of existing businesses,
- the preservation of jobs threatened by company restructuring,

Innovation Counsellors may be full-time or part-time, and may be working as:

- Staff of recognised/formal small business support agencies:
- Local Business Centre, Regional Business Centres
- Staff of Business Support Centres, Business Innovation Centres, Incubators, Technology Parks, innovation Agencies and Agencies helping technology based businesses,
- Agencies specialising in Innovation development,
- Research Centres (e.g. the Institute Jozef Stefan)
- Technical Faculties at Universities
- R&D or Technology Experts at Major Companies
- Engineering Firms
- Consulting Practices,
- Providers of training or technological education for small business.

Professional Background

According to the personal professional track record experience and training, three main counselling specialisations are being proposed:

1. Technology Counsellors

Technology Counsellors have a wide technological and business experience. They work alongside the Small Business Counsellors to ensure that companies get the best practical and sustained help in any technology and innovation area. To accomplish this, Innovation and Technology Counsellors will help with access to appropriate local sources of innovation support and national centres of excellence.

2. Design Counsellors

Design Counsellors raise awareness of the important role that design plays in the development of new

products and encourage companies to access the wealth of design talent and expertise available locally, nationally throughout Slovenia and internationally, especially in Europe.

3. Industrial Subcontracting Experts

Subcontracting Experts seek to optimise the utilisation of existing manufacturing capacity, by helping local suppliers SMEs establish subcontracting partnerships with international buyers.

Subcontracting and Partnership Exchanges (SPX) are technical information, promotion and match making centres for industrial subcontracting and partnership between main-contractors, suppliers and subcontractors, aiming at the optimal utilisation (the most complete, rational and productive) of the manufacturing capacities of the affiliated industries.

The required qualifications for the above positions are schematically indicated in Table 5.

A. Experience

The knowledge required by these Consulting figures is very high in technological and business counselling terms.

In general, Experience should be assessed by a Commission of experts examining the candidates knowledge, performance and references described in TAB. 5.

Besides the highly specialised skills required in their specific technological areas, Counsellors should:

- have at least two (2) years experience in small business Innovation counselling (or experience in the small business support field), or engineering;
- have conducted, or have taken active part into, and are able to produce references for, at least 20 counselling projects in the area of Small Business Innovation.

B. Training

- Have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and the Technology Module issued by SBSN recognised training organisations (e.g. GEA College, Ljubljana),

or

- Have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects relevant to undertaken by PHARE, thus acquiring skills relevant to the knowledge areas required
 - have been trained in Technology Transfer and Innovation

C. Formal Education (“Expert”)

- Have an University Degree in Engineering, Physics or other Scientific Discipline,
- Have complemented scientific knowledge by courses or practical knowledge in Technology Transfer, Innovation,
- Have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling issued by accredited training organisations (e.g. the GEA College in Ljubljana)

or

- Have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring skills relevant to Innovation Area
 - be members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

D. Language Skills

- Excellent working knowledge of Technical / Scientific English: written and oral communication
- Knowledge of Additional Key Market Language - e.g. German, Italian, Croatian - strongly desired for International Subcontracting Experts

E. Personal Motivation

- are committed to a career in business counselling;
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

DUTIES

The Innovation Counsellor is a professional figure, working for (as employee or as contracted external consultant) Small Business Supporting Organisations (LBCs, RBCs, Chambers of Crafts, etc), whose services are oriented toward:

- Helping entrepreneurs - private SME clients: existing small business owners or potential entrepreneurs - understand their current situation, identify technological problems and opportunities, and take action to move towards an improved level of functioning, making full and optimal use of the Innovation Networks and other public supports available within Slovenia and the EU.
- Helping Expert Innovation Consultants helping institutional clients and SMEs to successfully implement projects aimed at improving the local economy through the technological innovation of small business sectors and “clustering” projects¹¹, making use of shared design, shared R&D facilities, etc..

A. Develop Existing Businesses

- Assess Technological and Innovation Needs
- Integrate Business Strategy and Technology Strategy, prioritise technology investment decisions, draft business plans
- Identify sources of innovation,
- Help access to partners,
- Provide general innovation counselling, tutoring and training.

B. Help Start New Businesses

- Screen Entrepreneurs and Business Ideas
- Assess technological competitiveness, merit and sustainability of proposed innovations
- Help new entrepreneurs establish technological partners with local buyers (e.g. in the case of

¹¹Clustering Projects are aimed at improving the entrepreneurial performance of groups of enterprises - eg in tourism, farming, manufacturing, etc - integrating services such as market

- process automation, engineering services, etc.)
- Help negotiate financial deals with banks and private financial organisations, as well as to Municipal and Regional Funds, Guarantee Funds, other Public Lending Organisations

C. Spin-Offs (Senior Experts)

- Intervene in company restructuring projects, as Innovation Expert Consultants to identify viable businesses leading to creation of new enterprises.

D. Support LBC, RBC and Network Development

- Engage in the “Learning and Growth” programme of meetings, seminars and training organised by the Network to augment performance and service quality through better professional knowledge, improved counselling skills, and the adoption of supporting information systems and tools.
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of performance and visibility of the LBCs and of the Network within the local community

TASKS

A. Identify technology needs and suitable technologies to match

- Under an “umbrella contact” with LBC/RBC, provide a number of free hours of “orientation” counselling to entrepreneurs on every kind of small business Innovation enquiry.
- Single Company Advice in innovation, technology transfer and exploitation of research results.
- Advice is addressed to SMEs, and to research organisations in order to actively disseminate information and promote exploitation of research results and technology transfer in correspondence with the needs of industry.
- Making use of a Network of engineers specialised in various technological fields, who are able to understand the technological and economical issues at hand, and intervene as:
 - “Design Counsellors” - at the product design stage, and as
 - “Technology Counsellors” - to provide manufacturing processes know-how (production, inventory and logistics organisation, total quality management, etc.)
 - “Industrial Subcontracting Experts” - these professionals possess technology counsellor and marketing skills
- Selection of Manufacturing Technology through technical-economic assessment, value analysis, integration of business planning and technology strategy
- Structure and Help Prepare Business Plans for the entrepreneurs
- Multi-client Advice: Sector/Regional Strategic Technology Monitoring

This refers to mapping the technology needs that are of special economic relevance to sectors of economic relevance to the region (including “medium tech” ones, e.g.: wood processing, materials, tool-making, agriculture, etc.) - on a “multi-client” basis.

This service is also delivered to single SMEs: helping them evaluate their specific competitive environment (technology assessment, patents, standards and norms, etc.) to identify opportunities and threats, thus orienting the R&D strategy.

B. Partner Searches and Match Making

Distribute details of innovative products, processes and technologies through the Slovenian Small

Business Network, as well as through the EU network of Innovation Relay Centres.

In particular, the Counsellor should seek to develop industrial and technological partnerships in the region, with research centres and among RBCs.

C. Industrial Subcontracting (Industrial Subcontracting Expert)

Set up and manage Subcontracting and Partnership Exchanges (SPX). SPX are technical information, promotion and match making centres for industrial subcontracting and partnership between main-contractors, suppliers and subcontractors, aiming at the optimal utilisation (the most complete, rational and productive) of the manufacturing capacities of the affiliated industries.

Related Tasks include:

- The collection, analysis, storage and organisation for rapid retrieval of information and data on the existing production capacities and capabilities of industries, especially SMEs.
- The identification of subcontracting, supply and partnership inquiries or offers from large foreign or domestic buyers and main-contractors and their dissemination to potential subcontractors/suppliers/partners.
- Assistance to potential subcontractors/suppliers/partners in organising production clusters and associations and in negotiating agreements with main-contractors, which could be their own Governments.
- Development of Internet/WWW sites to support access to Subcontracting services

D. Intellectual Property / Patents support.

- General counselling
- Priority search, innovation protection,
- Scanning for accessible technologies,
- Support negotiation of licensing agreements

E. Technical Norms

- Assistance to upgrade product characteristics to meet EU (and US) technical norms, safety and environmental standards and export documentation, within EU and main industrialised countries.

F. Innovation Training

- Organise training and seminars on:
- New technologies,
- Specific market and industry developments
- Value Management
- Technology and R&D management
- Patent and intellectual property rights
- Total Quality Management
- Innovation Policy and legislation
- Environmental responsibility

G. Facilitate participation to EU Research and Technology programmes.

- Provide information about financial supports available from Ministry of Science and EU for promoting exploitation of results and technology transfer. Slovenian firms and research organisations may already qualify for EU Framework Programme Actions.
- Assist potential participants in designing a project proposal.

H. Contribute to Small Business Network Growth

- Scorecard Report : collect key elements of entrepreneurial achievements and report to the LBC/RBC (increase in: turnover, employment, exports);
- Feedback information on satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions;
- Contribute to need identification, design of new services, legislative distortions and inefficiencies to be corrected;
- Take active part to meetings, seminars organised by LBC and Network;
- Engage in a self development training programme aimed to augment performance through amelioration of knowledge and counselling skills.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AREAS

A. Advances in Specific Technology Areas

According to engineering specialisation, industry specific technologies include one or more of the following:

- Environment,
- Software,
- Electronics,
- Telecommunications,
- Electrical,
- Advanced Optics,
- Metalworking,
- Chemistry,
- Biotechnology,
- Plastics,
- Composite materials,
- Advanced materials,
- Woodworking,
- Construction

B. Design Processes

- Value Analysis
- Parallel Engineering
- CAD/CAE Technologies
- Industrial Design
- Design to Assembly
- Prototype qualification

C. Manufacturing Processes

- Manufacturing and Process Automation Engineering (Industry Specific)
- Investment Assessment
- Location Analysis
- Layout Analysis
- Environmental Impact Analysis
- Human Resource Organisation and Training
- Computer Integrated Manufacturing: Design, Process, Inventory, Logistics Management
- Automated quality control
- Packaging

- Internal and External Logistics (Inbound/Outbound)
- Quality Assurance, Total Quality Systems, ISO 9000 Standards

D. Industrial Subcontracting (Subcontracting Expert)

- Technical support (product design, technology, equipment, innovation);
- Quality management, standards and certification;
- Marketing strategies and analysis (including participation in international fairs and business promotion forums);
- Access to credit, financial facilities and incentives;
- Management (rehabilitation, financial management, stock control);
- Legal advice (legal contracts, codes of conduct, reconciliation or settlement of disputes);
- Human resource management (training).

E. Partnership Development: Innovation Relay Centre, Euro Info Centre

- Knowledge of Operating of Innovation Relay Centre,
- Euro Info Correspondent Centre Services to conduct partner search and market analysis
- Interpret and facilitate marketing research
- Assist client in marketing strategies

F. Business Planning

- Develop a business plan
- Assist client in identification of opportunities
- Evaluate and apply strategic planning

G. Budgeting and Industrial Costing

- Industrial costing
- Investment appraisal
- Management information systems

H. Scorecard Reporting

- Fill Scorecard Reports for RBC/SBSN

NETWORKS OF CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Networks of personal contacts and accredits with main Slovenian Research institutions and Larger Companies are very important for the Innovation Counsellors' Activities, in that they contribute to facilitate the technology transfer and diffusion process and to "prescribe" the innovations and the engineering capabilities of new entrepreneurs to early stage buyers.

Contacts and Relationships should include:

- Contract R&D Establishments, in Slovenia and abroad
- Innovative and performing Medium Sized and Large Companies
- Local Economy: opinion makers, investors, managers at main enterprises
- Key Central Government Offices

IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES

A. Basic Computing Literacy

- Word Processing, Spreadsheets
- Internet Use
- Databases,
- Computer-based Presentations

B. Specific Engineering and Manufacturing Software

- Design Automation CAD/CAE
- Specialised Codes
- Process Automation /CIM

C. EICC/SBSN Information System

- Euro Info Correspondence Centres
- Network Information System and Databases (in process of being developed)

D. Financial Management Software

- Standardised Business Planning Software

COMMON PREMISES EXPERTS

THE COMMON PREMISES EXPERTS' ROLE

The Small Business Common Premises Experts usually are Small Business/Local Development Counsellors, who have additional professional skills related to the efficient provision and management of common business premises.

Common premises, offered at convenient terms (cost, interest rates, flexible lease conditions) to entrepreneurs are the basic form of business supporting infrastructure.

Business Premises may be distinguished into three main categories:

1. Local Business Premises: Incubators, Small Crafts Zones
2. Regional Business Premises: Incubators, Enterprise Zones for Small and Medium-Sized Firms
3. Special Business Premises: BICs, Technology Parks, Technology Transfer Centres

The role of the Small Business Common Premises Experts is to organise and manage common premises in order to:

- facilitate enterprise creation and expansion through the provision of good business premises at competitive rates and conditions.

Table 5 - Innovation, Technology, Subcontracting Experts - Initial Qualifications Assessment

QUALIFICATION	Technology Counsellor	Design Counsellor	Subcontracting Expert
BACKGROUND			
Experience	xxx	xxx	xxx
Training: Counselling	xxx	xxx	xxx
Specific Training: Innovation, Design, Manufacturing, Quality, Subcontracting	xxx	xxx	xxx
Formal Education	University	University	University
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE			
Advances in Specific Technology Areas	xxx	xxx	xx
Design Processes	xx	xxx	xx
Manufacturing Processes	xxx	xx	xxx
Industrial Subcontracting	xx	xx	xxx
Partnership Development: IRC, EICC, CORDIS, UNIDO	xxx	xxx	xxx
Business Planning	xx	xx	xx
Budgeting and Industrial Costing	xx	xx	xx
Scorecard Reporting	xxx	xxx	xxx
NETWORKS OF CONTACTS			
Contract R&D Establishments	xxx	xxx	xx
Innovative Medium Sized Enterprises	xxx	xxx	xxx
Small Business Network	xxx	xxx	xxx
PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS			
Professional Behav./Code Of Ethics	xxx	xxx	xxx
Counselling Skills	xxx	xxx	xxx
IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES			
Basic Computing Literacy	xxx	xxx	xxx
EICC/SBSN Info System	xx	xx	xxx
Engineering Software	xx	xxx	x
Manufacturing Software	xxx	xx	xx

Qualification Levels:

Note: xxx = very good / proficiency

xx = good

x = basic knowledge

The availability of Common Premises lowers business risks and investment outlay, allowing firms to use funds for acquisition of key equipment, or market development rather than to buy buildings. Furthermore, ready-to-use workshops enable shorter lead time for start-up set-up time; improve environmental impact and decrease environmental protection costs,

- improve financial stability, economic viability and overall effectiveness of the Centres, through income generated through rents and through business counselling and information services delivered to tenants.

WHO MAY QUALIFY

Organisational Context

Two main types of relationships to the Small Business Network are foreseen:

1. employees / managers of LBC or RBCs
2. external Experts, under framework contract with LBC/RBC

Small Business Common Premises Expert (subsequently referred to as “Premise Expert”) operate from within an organisational context aimed to support the local economy through:

- the creation of new enterprises;
- the development of existing businesses;
- the preservation of jobs threatened by company restructuring;
- the involvement of jobless personnel into public works.

Premise Experts may be full-time or part-time, and may be working at:

- Business Support Centres, Incubators, Technology Parks, Innovation Agencies and Agencies helping technology based businesses;
- Recognised/formal small business support agencies (Local Business Centre, Regional Business Centres, Regional Development Funds, Agencies specialising in rural or urban development);
- Economic Commissions at Municipalities and Local Authorities;
- Chambers of Crafts;
- Zoning Authorities;
- Chambers of Economy;
- Local and National Employment Government Offices;
- Engineering and Consulting companies

Professional Background

According to the personal professional track record experience and training, three main Counselling Levels are being proposed:

1. Incubator Manager, may also qualify as LBC Manager
 - Counselling Skills are strongly desired, since the Incubator has to be considered not as an end per se but as functional to the objective of establishing a better counselling relationship with tenants due to physical proximity. Furthermore, revenues from premise lease will not usually suffice to fully cover Incubator personnel costs.

2. BIC / Technopark Manager, may also qualify as RBC Manager
Counselling Skills are indispensable, since the premises of the BIC/Technopark are just a tool to establish a better counselling relationship with tenants due to physical proximity. Furthermore, revenues from premise lease will not usually suffice to fully cover BIC personnel costs.
3. Enterprise Zone Manager

Professional activities of this professional figure are totally absorbed in the management of physical infrastructure, strong small business counselling Skills - although desired - are not considered necessary.

The required qualifications are schematically indicated in Table 6.

A. Premise Construction and Management Experience

- Have acquired hands on experience in the management of business premises logistics facilities.

B. Small Business Counselling Experience

- Have at least two (2) years experience in small business counselling (or experience in the small business support field),
- Have conducted, or have taken active part into, and are able to produce references for, at least 20 counselling projects in the area of Local Development, Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

C. Training

- Have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and the Regional Economic and Employment Development and the Common Premises Management Modules issued by SBSN recognised training organisations

or

- Have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects relevant to undertaken by PHARE, thus acquiring skills relevant to the knowledge areas required;
 - have been trained in Regional Economic Development

D. Formal Education

Incubator / BIC - Technopark Manager:

- have an University Degree in Economics,
- have other University Degrees (e.g. Engineering, Social Sciences, etc), complemented by courses or practical knowledge in Small Business Finance
- have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and Local Development issued by accredited training organisations
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring relevant skills
 - be members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

Crafts Zone / Premises Expert

- have an University Degree in Architecture or Engineering, or Higher Technical Degree related to the Construction Industry
- have completed the training and accreditation program in Small Business Counselling and Local Development issued by accredited training organisations , or
- have equivalent qualifications as assessed by the SBSN, e.g.:
 - have successfully taken part as Slovenian consultants or trainees to Projects undertaken by PHARE, acquiring relevant skills
 - be members of the Association of Management Consulting of Slovenia or equivalent

E. Language Skills

- Good knowledge of English language (mandatory for BIC Manager)
- Working knowledge of languages spoken in neighbouring Countries: German, Italian, Croatian, Hungarian (desired for BIC Manager)

E. Personal Motivation

- are committed to a career in business counselling;
- require formal accreditation of their professional competence.

DUTIES

Besides providing the Counselling Services listed for the Small Business Counsellor, the “Premise Expert” is a professional figure, whose services are oriented toward:

- Helping entrepreneurs identify, locate and lease (when available) suitable business premises (i.e. ready to use workshops, equipped and infrastructured business areas) As firms develop and need larger premises, the “Premise Expert” should also contribute to identify areas for further development.
- Helping Institutional Partners (Municipalities, Enterprise Zone Consortia) to:
 - a) to assess the feasibility to invest into the creation and development of business zones;
 - b) project manage / supervise the construction / building rehabilitation process;
 - c) promote the premises towards target entrepreneurs, as to reach optimal occupancy;
 - d) cost effectively manage and develop the premise infrastructure.

A. Set-up and Management of Common Enterprise Premises: Incubators, Enterprise Zones and Technology Parks (Entrepreneurial Premises Expert)

The Premise Expert tasks include the following:

- Assess market conditions, i.e. the existence of sufficient entrepreneurial potential as to reach a good premise occupancy and thus economically viable operation;
- Organise project financing, identifying public and private donors;
- Organise financial and other subsidies (when available) for tenants: favourable building and equipment lease/rent, credit guarantees, micro-credit schemes, seed capital, etc.;
- Organise premise management structure;
- Plan and provide business input to design premise characteristics (building and workshop size, location, typology, basic infrastructure, special equipment/waste treatment/sanitation needs)

- according to requirements of specific local target groups (e.g.: crafts, high-tech companies, etc.);
- Supervise construction process;
- Organise and undertake promotion towards targeted entrepreneurs;
- Select tenants on the basis of business viability, compatibility with LBC statute and with other tenants' activities, etc.;
- Manage Common Premises Infrastructure: organise human resources required to provide basic services, manage payments, etc.;
- Contribute to the smooth transition of tenants to larger premises, e.g. plan for the continuous amelioration and growth of available space, etc..

B. Help Start New Businesses

- Stimulate entrepreneurship through the promotion of the Incubation Premises towards target entrepreneurs (small firms, self employed, unemployed).
- Support start-up business at every stage, counselling and providing information to entrepreneurs, organise training and external counselling, helping access public supports (Funds, Subsidised Consulting)

C. Develop Existing Businesses

- Help small business grow making available suitable and well located Business Premises for small firms, crafts at competitive cost conditions.
- Provide and organise counselling services related to:
 - sources of finances,
 - access to markets and partners,
 - counselling, tutoring and training.

D. Support Projects for Local Economic and Employment Development

- Identify, prepare the tender proposals and documentation, and implement Projects, namely involving Small Business Infrastructure/Premises, aimed to increase and preserve local employment.

E. LBC, RBC and Network Development, Performance Monitoring

- Plan the growth of an Effective and Financially Viable Local Business Centre
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of performance and visibility of the LBCs and of the Network within the local community,
- Engage in the "Learning and Growth" programme of meetings, seminars and training organised by the Network to augment performance and service quality through better professional knowledge, improved counselling skills, and the adoption of supporting information systems and tools.

SMALL BUSINESS PREMISES SPECIALIST'S TASKS

A. Feasibility Analysis

- Policy and Legislative measures, authorisation procedures intended to "free up" the market for industrial premises,
- business plan including: development strategy based on area's SWOT analysis, project financing, expected relationship between (wealth created) /(costs incurred);

- interface with Ministry for Territorial Planning and Zoning
- Activation of “ Fund Raising” at the local level and national level

B. Design

- Definition of a clear and sustainable management and responsibility structure, suitable organisation forms (no profit, consortia, etc.),
- Determining location and design of premises, leading to good occupancy levels
- Project Financing Methods and Financial Techniques

C. Construction and pilot phase:

- Buying land/tendering infrastructure construction/ Monitoring construction works/ authorising start-ups/ selling premises/cost and project management, identification of key first tenants,
- Promotion towards Target Group Tenant SME (e.g. according to enterprise zone sector specialisation) at the national and international level,

D. Premises Start-up phase

- Reach good premises occupancy with target Group tenant firms;
- Organise maintenance services;
- Organise utility services;
- Improve common infrastructure (e.g. waste management, transport, communications,...)

E. Full operation phase

Management involves two broad areas: basic and advanced services.

- Manage a cost effective and quality relationship with tenants; invoicing; tenant turnover; planning of Tenant exit into larger premises./ expand/promote attraction of new firms...
- Deploy information technology, databases, and systems to optimise zone occupancy at the national level
- Develop opportunities to deliver new advanced business services

SMALL BUSINESS COUNSELLING TASKS

A. Promote Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth

- Help create a diffused entrepreneurial culture, raising interest towards small enterprise and self-employment through public awareness campaigns aimed at the general public, towards schools, the financial community, large enterprises, etc.
- Increase the awareness among entrepreneurs about the RBC/LBC services and the availability of Premises: this implies active use of Media Communication (newspapers, radio, etc), advertising, Fairs/ Exhibitions, Seminars - mailings, telephone calls, etc..
- Locally promote, channel and help implement various Entrepreneurial and SME supporting projects undertaken by the SBSN and Network Partners (National Employment Office, Ministry of Science and Technology, etc.) at regional and local level, interacting with entrepreneurs and providing feedback on results.
- Lobby for LBC support with local authorities, entrepreneurs and opinion makers.
- Increase the financial resources available for Small Businesses and for the activities and projects of the LBC/RBC ; e.g. finding sponsors - Banks, Insurance Companies, Large Firms,

B. Provide Information and Advice to Entrepreneurs

- Provide fast, reliable and comprehensive information for every kind of small business enquiry and impartially organise and monitor the professional advice from Expert Advisors.
- Utilise the EICC and the Small Business Network Information System, as well as local sources of information - including local offices of the Chamber of Crafts and regional offices of the Chamber of Economy, the local employment offices, etc.

C. Manage Common Entrepreneurial Premises Set-up and Development

- Assess entrepreneurial market conditions, i.e. the existence of sufficient entrepreneurial potential as to reach good premise occupancy and thus economically viable operation.
- Organise project financing, mobilising public and private donors and partners
- Organise premise management structure,
- Plan and provide business input to design premise characteristics (building and workshop size, location, typology, basic infrastructure, special equipment/waste treatment/sanitation needs) according to requirements of specific local target groups (e.g. crafts, high-tech companies, etc.),
- Supervise construction process
- Organise and undertake promotion towards targeted entrepreneurs,
- Select tenants on the basis of business viability, compatibility with LBC statute and with other tenants' activities, etc.,
- Manage Common Premises Infrastructure: organise human resources required to provide basic services, Manage payments, etc.
- Contribute to the smooth transition of tenants to larger premises, e.g. plan for the continuous amelioration and growth of available space, etc..
- Support local Institutions at drawing and implementing a Strategy - projects, initiatives, infrastructural investments - for Local / Regional SME Development,
- Identify Funding Sources for projects, including international co-operation programmes (e.g. PHARE Cross-Border, Ecos-Ouverture, etc.),
- Activate local financial and professional resources for the support of small business.
- Project manage, expense report
- Report achievements

D. Increase Financial Supports for Entrepreneurs

- Organise financial subsidies (when available) for tenants, such as: favourable building and equipment lease/rent, credit guarantees, micro-credit schemes, seed capital, etc.,. Availability of financial supports for tenants considerably increases attraction of tenants. Proximity to tenants allows to devise very effective special financial instruments, such as equipment lease, which are otherwise impossible to apply.
- Negotiate umbrella agreements with Banks, Funds, Finance Experts leading to favourable terms for Entrepreneurs.

E. Contribute to Growth of Small Business Network

- Contribute to preparation and acceptance of LBC/RBC Business Plan and budget by SBSN and Local Partners;
- Scorecard Report : organise collection of key elements of entrepreneurial achievements to the SBSN (increase in: turnover, employment, exports);
- Budget reporting to SBSN and Local Partners;
- Feedback information on satisfaction and suggestions for improvement or additions; Contribute to SME need identification, design of new services, legislative distortions and inefficiencies to be corrected;

- Contribute to improvement of the efficiency of Small Business Network internal processes;
- Take active part to meetings, seminars organised by LBC and Network;
- Engage in a self development training programmes aimed to augment performance through better knowledge and counselling skills.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AREAS

A. Local Economic and Employment Development

- Regional Development Methods, EU Commission approaches (PHARE, Structural Funds, European BIC Network, DGXVI, DGXII, .)

B. Common Premises Planning, Construction and Management

- Location Planning (incubators, enterprise zones, technology parks), EU Commission approaches (PHARE, Structural Funds, European BIC Network, DGXVI, DGXII, .)
- Business Premises Infrastructure Planning, Local Economic and Employment Project Methods, Sources of financing,
- Familiarity with Partners' Entrepreneurship Programmes, SME and Innovation, Export Promotion: Characteristics, Availability, Information Desired / Tendering Requirements, Procedures
- Public Infrastructure Planning
- Project Financing

C. Building Project Management

- Definition of Location Choices and architectural design solutions and specifications
- Management of Legal and Zoning Permit Issues
- Tendering processes
- Monitoring of Construction Work and Expenditures
- Building Acceptance

D. Slovenian Legislation and Administrative Procedures: Urban and Territory Zoning, Company Law, Accounting and Taxation

- Zoning and Territory Planning
- Slovenian Company Law
- Related Tax System and Policy

E. Communications and Media Management

- Communicate Project Opportunities and LBC/RBC Services to Entrepreneurs
- Build Institutional and Political Establishment Consensus around LBC/RBC

F. Sources of Financing

- Familiarity with Public Financial Supports (Municipal Funds, Micro-credits, Mutual Guarantee Schemes, etc.)

G. Business Planning

- Develop a business plan
- Assist client in identification of opportunities
- Evaluate and apply strategic planning

H. Budgeting

- Prepare and Monitor Project Budgets for LBC, RBC services and activities.
- Report Budget to SBSN and Partners.

I. Scorecard Reporting

- Fill Scorecard Reports for RBC/SBSN and assist/monitor Experts and External Consultants.

J. Market Analysis, Local Trade & Industry Sectors, Euro Info Centre

- Use of Euro Info Correspondent Centre Services to conduct market analysis
- Interpret and facilitate marketing research
- Assist client in marketing strategies

K. Human Resource Organisation

- Assist client in developing internal human resources profiles.

NETWORKS OF CONTACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Networks of personal contacts and accredits with main local economic players and institutions are very important for the Counsellors' Activities, in that they contribute to "prescribe" new entrepreneurs to buyers and partners, thus facilitating the process of enterprise growth during the earliest stages.

Contacts and Relationships should include:

- Partners: Municipalities, Employment Office, Chamber of Crafts, Chamber of Economy, Entrepreneurs' Association
- Local Economy: opinion makers, investors, managers at main enterprises
- Financial Community: Banks, Municipal/Regional and Government Funds
- Small Business Network: Staff at LBCs, RBCs, Counsellors' Group
- Key Government Offices

KNOWLEDGE OF IT & COMPUTING RESOURCES

A. Basic Computing Literacy

- Word Processing, Spreadsheets
- Internet Use
- Databases,
- Computer-based Presentations

B. Project Management Software

C. EICC/SBSN Information System

- Euro Info Correspondence Centres
- Network Information System and Databases (in process of being developed)

D. Financial Management Software

- Standardised Business Planning Software

Table 6 - Common Premises Expert - Initial Qualifications Assessment

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	Incubator Manager (LBC)	Technology Park Manager (RBC)	Crafts Zone Manager	External Premise Expert
BACKGROUND				
Premises Experience	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Counselling Experience	xx	xxx	x	-
Training: Counselling	xx	xxx	xx	x
Specific Training: Premises	xx	xx	xxx	xxx
Formal Education	University	University	Higher	Higher
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE				
Local Economy Development	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Common Premises Mgmt	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Building Project Mgmt	x	xx	xx	xxx
Zoning and Company Laws	xx	xx	xxx	xxx
Communication & Media	xxx	xxx	xxx	x
Sources Financing, Private	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Business Planning	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Budgeting	xx	xxx	xx	xxx
Scorecard Reporting	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Market Analysis	xx	xx	x	xx
Human Resources	xx	xx	x	x
NETWORKS OF CONTACTS				
Partners	xxx	xxx	xxx	xx
Local Economy	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Financial Community	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Small Business Network	xxx	xxx	xx	xx
Key Government Offices	xx	xxx	xx	xx
PERSONAL BEHAVIOURS				
Code Of Ethics	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Counselling Skills	xxx	xxx	xx	x
IT & COMPUTING				
Basic Computing Literacy	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Project Management SW	x	xx	xx	xxx
EICC/SBSN Info System	x	xx	xxx	-
Financial Software	xx	xx	xx	xx

Qualification Levels:

Note: xxx = very good / proficiency xx = good x = basic knowledge

CODE OF ETHICS - DRAFT

Small Business Counsellors are dedicated to providing competent and ethical service in the field of small business counselling. They strive to provide professional counselling to their clients and are dedicated to the delivery of the highest professional standards in their activities as counsellors. They have a responsibility to:

- hold the affairs of their clients in the strictest of confidence;
- strive continuously to improve their professional skills;
- advance the professional standards of the SBDC;
- uphold the honour and dignity of the SBDC;
- abide by the principles laid out in the Code of Ethics and comply with all by-laws, regulations, resolution, and rules of professional conduct of the SBDC;
- maintain high standards of professional conduct.

OBJECTIVITY

A member will act in the best interests of the client, providing professional services with integrity and objectivity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

A member is duty bound to keep in confidence the affairs of any colleague, client or organisation, and shall not disclose confidential information obtained in the course of professional activities. Nor shall a member, in any way, exploit information obtained in the course of their duties, to their personal advantage.

COMPETENCE

Members will demonstrate a commitment to the quality of their advice, assistance, and resulting products through sufficient planning, review, and controls.

A member shall reach a mutual understanding with the client as to the objective of the assignment, the scope of the assignment, the workplan, and the costs (when applicable).

Small business counsellors and members of the Small Business Support Network will gain sufficient detail from a new client to gain an understanding of the perceived problem, the objectives to be achieved, the scope of assistance needed, and the possible benefits that may accrue to the client.

A member will ensure that sufficient relevant information is evaluated in developing conclusions and recommendations. Solutions should be realistic and practical, clearly understood by the clients, and capable of being implemented by the client.

A member will accept only those assignments which the member has the knowledge and skills to perform. Assignments beyond the scope of the counsellor's expertise will be referred to network members who are more qualified to provide assistance.

RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHER MEMBERS

A member shall treat all other members with the respect and consideration due between professional colleagues.

A member will endeavour to continuously raise the standards of the profession by sharing new methodologies which contribute to the understanding of better ways to manage small businesses or to counsel them. This contribution may be through information to peers as well as to the public.

A member who has been requested to review (or critically assess) the work of another member shall inform that member before undertaking that work.

A member shall contribute back to the profession by assisting the professional development of other members.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

A member shall inform a client of any interests, relationships, or circumstances which may impair or may be seen to impair their professional judgement or objectivity. In cases where impartiality is seen not to exist, the member will refer the client to another business counsellor.

A member will not provide to any client proprietary information learned from previous clients without first obtaining the consent of the previous clients, nor, knowingly, without permission, use the copyright materials and proprietary data, procedures, materials, or techniques that others have developed but not released for public use.

A member will not accept any reward from individuals or organisations for recommending the equipment, supplies, or services of such individuals or organisations, nor take personal, financial or other material advantage of information resulting from their professional relationship with clients.

A member shall be liable for suspension or expulsion from membership where that member has behaved in a manner unbecoming to the profession, as judged by the Board of the SBDC.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is (a) to prevent the actions of any “agent” of the Small Business Development Centre Network from constituting a conflict of interest, (b) to provide a system for agents of Small Business Development Centre Network to question and to receive a definitive answer as to the existence of a conflict of interest.

2. Definitions

Conflict of Interest - a situation in which regard for a private interest or gain leads or has the potential to lead to a disregard of the needs of the Small Business Development Centre or the rights of its clients.

Clients - a business and/or individual or legal entity with which the Small Business Development Centre has entered into a contract, written or verbal, to provide any or all of the Small Business Development Centres' available services.

Small Business Development Centre Services - include, but are not limited to, Small Business Development Centre related counselling; training; research of materials for a client; referrals to other agencies; provision of printed copies, or magnetic media information; or other services that the Small Business Development Centre may commonly and routinely perform for its clients.

Agent of the Small Business Development Centre - any person currently employed by or on behalf of the Small Business Development Centre for counselling, training or other services. This may include Local and Regional Business Centre staff, paid consultants and volunteers.

Gift - real property, or tangible and intangible personal property of material value which is provided directly or in trust for the benefit of the recipient. Included in this definition are the similar terms included in paragraph 3 below.

3. Standards of Conduct

A) Relations with Present and Former Clients

No agent of the Small Business Development Centre Network:

- Shall solicit or accept, or appear to solicit or accept, any gift or loan, reward, promise of future employment, favour or service from any former or current client;
- Shall solicit or accept, or give the appearance thereof, any compensation or another monetary remuneration for counselling related services provided a client while acting as an agent of the Small Business Development Centres;
- Shall recommend to a client the purchase of goods and/or services from a firm which the agent has a material or financial interest;
- Shall accept fees, commissions, gifts or other favours from third parties who have supplied goods and/or services to Small Business Development Centre clients;
- Shall solicit the private engagement of his or her services by a client at any time during the term of the client's relationship with the Small Business Development Centre;
- Shall release information about any client's relationship with the Small Business Development Centre, nor any information about the business or personal matters of any client to any person or agency outside the Small Business Development Centre Network without written permission of the client; and shall invest monies, personal services or property in the business of current client of the Small Business Development Centre.

B) Agreements

To assure compliance with the above standards, the agent of the Small Business Development Centre agrees to:

- Provide, upon request, a statement of financial interest in any and all business entities with which the agent has such interest; and
- Sign, upon request, an agreement to abide by the policies contained herein.

4. Penalties and Grievances

Generally, penalties for violation of any of these policies may include, but not be limited to reprimand, suspension of employment and/or termination of contract.

The determination of conditions required to constitute a conflict of interest situation will be made by the individual Local/Regional Business Centre Manager based upon this policy and applicable State policies and regulations.

Each Centre Director will require each agent of his Centre to read and to certify his understanding of and agreement to abide by the requirements of this policy. Then, a copy of the Agreement to Abide by

the Conflict of Interest Policies should be signed by each employee and consultants currently employed and under contract at the time of their association with the program. Copies of this Agreement will be maintained in the Small Business Development Centres' files for a period of three years termination.

5. Evaluation

Proficiency in professional conduct will be evaluated by all of the following Methods:

Correctly answering 100% of the questions, discussing the implications and importance of these issues in the Ethics Examination.

Signing all required documents.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. Introduction

The Small Business Development Centre (SBDC), a governmental agency, and the is organised to provide economic development activities for small businesses through the Small Business Development Network. To this end, the SBDC:

Promotes high standards of conduct,

Communicates those standards to the public, and

Accredits as Certified Small Business Consultants individuals of demonstrated competence who have agreed to uphold the SBDC's standards as a continuing condition of individual certification.

2. Purpose

This Code of Professional Conduct acknowledges assumption by the Certified Small Business Consultant of the obligation of self-discipline above and beyond the requirements of law. It notifies the public that the CSBC will maintain a high level of professionalism and ethics, and requires that CSBC's accept the obligation to conduct themselves in a way that is beneficial to society.

The SBDC enforces the Code of Professional Conduct by receiving and investigating all complaints of violations and by taking disciplinary action, including revocation of certification, against any individual if personally found to be guilty of Code violation.

It is the desire for the confidence and the respect of the profession and of society that should motivate the individual to maintain the highest possible professional and ethical conduct.

Members strive to provide professional counselling to their clients and are dedicated to the delivery of the highest professional standards in their counselling and client activities. In doing so, they will adhere to a code of professional conduct to guide their clients, peers, and professional relationships.

The reliance of owners and managers of small businesses, and Local Authorities, on the advice of SBDC Certified Small Business Consultants imposes on the profession an obligation to maintain high standards of integrity and competence. Therefore, Consultants have basic responsibilities to:

Hold the affairs of their clients in strict confidence,

Strive continuously to improve their professional skills,

Advance the professional standards of the SBDC/SBSN,

Uphold the honour and dignity of the SBDC/SBSN, and

Maintain high standards of personal conduct.

In recognition of the public interest as well as the Certified Small Business Consultants' obligation to the profession, they must agree in writing to comply with the following articles of professional responsibility.

(DRAFT)

Articles of Professional Responsibility¹²

1. Professional Behaviour and Attitude

Certified Small Business Consultants will maintain a wholly professional behaviour and attitude toward those they serve, including other members of the SBDC, clients, and the general public at large.

2. Professional Contribution

Certified Small Business Consultants must recognise their responsibilities to the public interest and to their own professional development by contributing to the understanding of better ways to manage small businesses. This contribution may be through the development and dissemination of information to peers as well as the public.

3. Inside Information

Certified Small Business Consultants will not take personal, financial, or other advantage of material or inside information resulting from their professional relationship with clients. They will not provide to others material or information which might take such advantage of clients.

4. Avoiding Impropriety

Certified Small Business Consultants will strive to avoid not only improprieties, but also the appearance of improprieties.

5. Conflict of Interest

Certified Small Business Consultants will strive continuously to advance and protect the professional standards of the Small Business Development Centres.

6. Professional Standards

Certified Small Business Consultants will strive continuously to advance and protect the professional standards of the Small Business Development Centres.

7. Supporting the Code of Professional Conduct

Certified Small Business Consultants will support this Code by reporting rules violations according to their Centre Manager.

8. Understanding of Client Needs

Certified Small Business Consultants will first confer with a new client in sufficient detail and gather sufficient facts to gain an understanding of the perceived problem, the objectives to be achieved, the scope of assistance needed, and the possible benefits that may accrue to the clients.

9. Proprietary Information

Certified Small Business Consultants will not provide to a client proprietary information learned from previous clients without first obtaining the consent of the previous clients.

¹²Source: Small Business Development Centre Network, the Institute for Small Business Counselling

10. Client Confidentiality

Certified Small Business Consultants will hold as strictly confidential the identity of a client, as well as all information concerning the affairs of a client gathered during the course of a professional engagement. The only exception occurs when the client has released, in writing, such information for public use.

11. Impartiality

Certified Small Business Consultants ensure advice to clients is based on impartial consideration of all pertinent facts and opinions.

12. Outside Influences

Certified Small Business Consultants will inform their clients immediately of any special relationships circumstances or interests that might influence, or give the appearance of influencing, their judgement or impair their objectivity. The Certified Small Business Consultant will offer to withdraw from the client relationship and refer the client to another Certified Small Business Consultant.

13. Recommendations

Certified Small Business Consultants will ensure that sufficient relevant information is evaluated in developing conclusions and recommendations. Solutions should be realistic and practical, clearly understood by the clients, and capable of being implemented by the client.

14. Quality Assurance

Certified Small Business Consultants will demonstrate a commitment to the quality of their advice, assistance and resulting products through sufficient planning, reviews and controls.

15. Sharing Knowledge

Certified Small Business Consultants recognise their responsibility to the profession to share with their colleagues the general body of knowledge and approaches they use in serving clients.

16. Propriety Material and Techniques

Certified Small Business Consultants will not knowingly, without permission, use copyright material and proprietary data, procedures, materials, or techniques that others have developed but have not released for public use.

17. Dress Code

Certified Small Business Consultants are expected to dress in appropriate business attire appropriate to the client's needs.

18. Timeliness

Certified Small Business Consultants do not keep clients waiting. It is extremely important to be on time and be ready to begin. In the event of an emergency, the client is to be contacted immediately. In addition, all reports are to be filed in a timely manner.