

ACOA

Interview Discussion Guide – FINAL

Introduction *(Introduce self)*

I'd like to begin by thanking you for taking the time to help us with our research study. Our discussion should take about 30 minutes. As I mentioned in my call, the objective of our discussion today is to determine how services to young entrepreneurs can be enhanced. I will be focussing on your knowledge and experience with providing support and assistance to young entrepreneurs and learning what could make the process easier and more effective. For the purposes of our discussion, a young entrepreneur is considered a person between the age of 15 and 29 who is interested in starting or expanding his/her business.

I'd like to audio tape our discussion so I don't have to take a lot of notes. I will be the only person who will listen to the tape, and it will only be used to help me write my report on the findings from this study. As soon as I am finished with my report, the tape will be destroyed.

Our discussion today is confidential in nature. No one will be advised of your specific comments. Rather, your comments will be combined with the comments from others that I interview, to protect everyone's identity that is taking part in this study.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Programs for Young Entrepreneurs

I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about programs for young entrepreneurs, in general.

- What is your view on the development of programs for young entrepreneurs?
 - Is there a need for such programs? Why do you feel that way?
 - Are there sufficient programs in place?
 - (If not) What type of programs **are** lacking? What needs to be put in place?
- What is your organisation's involvement with young entrepreneurs? What, if anything, is your organisation doing for young entrepreneurs?
- Within your organisation, what level of priority is given to **programs for young entrepreneurs**?
 - How, if at all, has this changed in recent years?
- Looking ahead, how do you think your organisation's role in regards to young entrepreneurs might change? Why?
- How long have you been dealing with young entrepreneurs?
 - Have you noticed any changes in today's young entrepreneurs? If so, in what ways? Probe specifically for changes in: education, technological capabilities, participation in entrepreneurship programs, awareness of entrepreneur programs, curriculum, etc.
 - What do you think has caused these changes?

Young Entrepreneurs – Information Needs

I would now like to discuss the **information needs** of young people who are considering beginning their own business.

- What type of information do young entrepreneurs look for when beginning their own business? (Probe: developing business plans, marketing, human resources, registering company, initial financing, accounting principles, legal matters, general management practices, etc.)
 - What type of information do they need most?
- Is the information they are looking for available?
 - If not, what is lacking? (Probe: for specific topics lacking, as above)
 - Is the information accessible? Do they know about it? **Are they accessing the information?**
 - Based on your experience, is there a need to better promote the services available?
 - If so: What mediums should be used? (Probe: TV commercials, advertisements, seminars, courses, student newspapers, or training programs?)
 - What types of communication mediums are best accepted by this group?
 - Are they using the information that is available? If no: Why not?

Steps in Building a Business

I would like to discuss the steps you've seen young people take when starting their own business.

- What steps do you see young entrepreneurs taking in initiating and developing their own business? (Basically, what process do they go through?)
- What are the greatest challenges they face when building their business? (Probe: building management capacity, strategic partnering, financial management, accessing capital, finding proper facilities/infrastructure, funding R&D, human resource management, marketing expertise, market access, developing a business plan, etc.)
- How do they overcome these challenges?
- What would you consider to be the most critical factors for growing their business?

Financial Assistance:

- What types of financial programs are available to young entrepreneurs?
- What gaps exist in the overall process of young entrepreneurs accessing and securing financing today?
- Any comments on the requirements of these programs?
- Are there sufficient financial programs to meet the need?
 - IF NO: What areas are lacking?
 - IF YES: Do you think these programs are used to their full capacity?
 - IF NOT: What is preventing young people from participating in available financial assistance programs?
- Are there differences in how young entrepreneurs develop their businesses? (Probe for differences between males and females; Francophones and Anglophones; urban and rural)
- How, if at all, do young entrepreneurs differ from older entrepreneurs (30+)?
- If you were designing the ideal system to help young entrepreneurs get their business started, what things would you include? Why?

Young Entrepreneurs – A Profile

I would now like to learn more about the young entrepreneurs that have contacted your department, agency or organization.

- Approximately what percentage of your clients is aged 29 or younger? Has this percentage changed in recent years? If yes, how has it changed? What has contributed to this change?
- Do you anticipate that the percentage of clients in this age group will change in the coming years? How so?
- Would you say there are more male or female young entrepreneurs? Has that changed? (If so, Why do you think *it's* changed?)
- What types of businesses are young entrepreneurs starting up? How, if at all, have the types of businesses pursued changed in recent years? What do you think will happen in the future?
- What size of companies are young people starting? (In terms of both employees and sales)
- What level of investment is generally required *by young entrepreneurs* for start-up?

Looking Forward

To finish up, I'd like you to think about the various programs and services that are available to young entrepreneurs, many of which you have mentioned.

- Overall, what gaps currently exist in ensuring young entrepreneurs' success?
- How do you think programs and services available today could be further enhanced to better meet young entrepreneurs' needs?
- What else might be required?

THANK AND CLOSE