

BizATE Training Report

Grantee org. name: Action Through Enterprise (ATE)	Reporting Period: July 2016 to January 2017
Project: BizATE Training Programme	Grant for this period: £3625 (£985 + £2640)
Year of project: Yr1 of CET-partnership on Training Plan	Report date: 23/01/2017

Project Overview

In response to the findings of the CET-funded BizATE Programme Evaluation (January 2016), and with the support of the CET grant (July 2016), ATE is delivering a differentiated, responsive training plan for all ATE-supported Small Business Owners (SBOs) as well as training of local trainers and consultants to deliver the programme. In this poor, rural, neglected part of Ghana, this business skills training works sensitively with SBOs with low levels of literacy and numeracy to provide them with the knowhow and coaching to ensure their businesses grow and survive. The training is designed to significantly increase SBO's capacity to run sustainable and profitable enterprises, enabling them to provide the basics of life for their families.



Activities undertaken in August 2016:

Date	Training	Led by	Delegates
11 Aug	Consultants planning	Chief Executive (Sarah)	ATE staff and 30 Consultants
12 Aug	Evaluating Success Conference	Chief Executive (Sarah) and Operations Manager (Habib)	46 SBOs, supported by ATE staff and Consultants

Training for Small Business Owners (SBOs) – Evaluating Success Conference – Aug 2016

ATE's sixth-monthly Evaluating Success Conference, held in Lawra District in August 2016, was a tremendous day of vibrant learning, honest sharing of knowledge, experiences, and a real focus on encouraging peer support. The training day was facilitated by enthusiastic and well-prepared ATE staff and consultants and attended by 46 SBOs.

The specific objectives for this Evaluating Success Conference were: 1) To gather information on impacts and outcomes of all aspects of the BizATE programme relating to the ability of beneficiaries to run their small businesses, 2) To enhance the effectiveness of the SBO's through training in business skills against the ATE Competency Matrix, 3) Further build the BizATE community spirit and ethos of mutual support. To meet these objectives the agenda included; an overview of the BizATE Programme Evaluation (Jan 2016); Core and Technical skills competency overview; 'Why I have been successful' from fellow SBO Ernest; a small group activity on 'what has been successful?' in groups according to their trade; The importance of planning for the future; a peer support exercise asking what challenges SBOs have faced; Discussion on what SBOs could do differently to improve their business in the next 6 months; Completion of Evaluation of business forms, and a discussion on eligibility for re-grants (an option for those businesses who are working extremely hard and have a proven opportunity to significantly expand if some financial capital is given).

We were extremely proud of our Small Business Owners, Consultants and outstanding staff members and believe that good relationships between them are a key to the success of this training programme.



Sarah and Habib leading discussion (left), SBO's working with a consultant on 'What has been successful? in groups, carpenters (middle), Food sellers working on 'challenges we faced?' Senior Consultant, Karlley working with SBO, Youribaa to complete an evaluation of her business (right).

Activities undertaken in January 2017

Date: 2017	Training	Led by	Delegates
10 Jan	Formal planning and briefing session	BizATE Project Manager (Charles)	Whole staff team (Habib, Ernest, Edith, Ken, Prosper and Sarah)
11 Jan	Staff training: Mentoring & Coaching Workshop	BizATE Project Manager	Whole staff team, plus senior consultant (Karlley).
12 Jan	Train the Trainer Workshop	BizATE Project Manager	Whole staff team
13-14 Jan	Embedding staff learning through visits to SBOs	BizATE Project Manager	Staff in groups
16 Jan	Train the Consultant workshop	BizATE Project Manager	ATE staff team, senior consultant, and the 23 consultants working at the SBO training workshops
17-19 Jan	SBO training workshops (x3)	BizATE Project Manager (Charles) & ATE Operations Manager (Habib)	SBOs (x50) in 3 separate groups: Day 1: Manufacturers Day 2: Sellers Day 3: Trades people
20 Jan	Evaluation workshop	ATE Chief Executive (Sarah)	Session 1: Consultants (x7) Session 2: SBOs (x6) Session 3: Staff (x5)

Summary:

The training has improved upon previous BizATE training in quality and effectiveness due to the investment in extra training of the ATE staff and consultants and breaking the SBO's into 3 separate training groups – this has really benefited the SBO's. ATE staff and consultants gained greater understanding of mentoring and the training content. This leads to enhanced ability to work with, mentor and develop the SBO's (as well as making consultants well placed to run a small business themselves), to more effectively meet the objectives of the workshops and therefore the overall objectives of the BizATE programme. Smaller sized, differentiated groups by trade type allowed for 1:1 Consultant to SBO support, so SBO's benefitted from greater understanding of the training, and more effective peer idea-sharing. This investment in the business training has only been possible due to the support of CET and the increased focus delivered by the application process.



Staff training in SBO Mentoring and Coaching

This staff training was designed to maximise the effectiveness of the BizATE 1:1 visits to SBO's through improved mentoring and coaching. Through the process there were some real 'light bulb moments' for the delegates. The interactive and participative style of the training is new to the team as rote learning (command and tell) is very much the culture in the Upper West. Personal development and thinking was therefore a clear agenda for this training plan and progress was apparent throughout the workshop.

The training covered all four purposes of the monthly visits¹, with specific focus on the last two; mentoring, and solving problems and identifying opportunities.

Key themes of the training were the importance of the visits and of being more effective and ambitious in identifying business opportunities, which ATE will invest in making happen against the right plan. Additional themes of learning were the importance of the monthly visits in reinforcing the SBO training and that ATE staff/representatives must understand and be able to talk about the competency matrix to do so and to have credibility as mentors and coaches.

Train the Trainer Workshop

This key development in the training plan was designed to develop the skills of the local trainers so that they can deliver ATE training courses independently of international trainers by January 2018.

Developing an effective method of training the SBO's is a demanding area of learning for the Ghana team primarily due to traditional Ghanaian education methods but is vital if the training is to lead to SBO behaviour change. Good progress was made in terms of personal development – the role play was particularly effective and insightful for the delegates – and they gave very positive feedback.

The training focussed on developing overall understanding, appreciation and practice of the trainer role in the Lawra BizATE context, and developing full understanding of the training content and how to deliver specific BizATE training modules. The training covered the purpose of training; the learning model of insight, integration and application; what trainers have to do; and the “training cycle”.

Train the consultant workshop

The workshop successfully met its objective to increase the consultant's skills and understanding of their role ready for the SBO Training Workshops. Training areas were 1) Mentoring and coaching skills, 2) Familiarisation with the content of the following SBO training workshops, 3) Practicing delivery of key elements of role in the workshops.

SBO Training Workshops

SBOs were invited to attend in 3 separate groups based on business type (Day 1: Manufacturers, Day 2: Sellers, Day 3: Trades people) with the objective to equip SBO's with the knowhow to create and sustain significant income generation through; Developing a fuller understanding of how to run a small business in Lawra District, Learning and practicing the key skills and tasks required to do so, and Developing practical action plans to implement the key skills and tasks.

SBOs were taken through training areas on understanding of small business management in the Lawra context, and the selling and marketing areas of the ATE SBO Competency Matrix, by using ATE staff understanding, the CET-funded Evaluation Report outputs 2016, and the ATE Competency Survey for 2015 and July 2016.

The planned themes of the SBO workshops were: 1) stemming from the conclusions of the July 2016 survey (which shows that SBOs believe that they all work hard but ATE analysis shows that a lot of businesses make small profits and are not growing) SBO's must work “smarter” not harder, 2) What is required to run a business in the Lawra District and what are the key skills required?, 3) How do I match up against the requirements and where do I need to improve? 4) Focus on customer understanding, selling and marketing (as the most common challenge is how to sell more), 5) Creating a practical 6-month action plan for my business on what will make a real difference.

Evaluation Workshop

Summary of feedback from separate groups of Consultants, SBOs and Staff:

- Consultants rated the Consultant training very highly as they could see its impact in their interactions with SBOs in the SBO workshops. They felt the training materials had more depth, and they felt better equipped in their understanding to interpret and explain well.

¹ **The four purposes of the monthly visits to SBOs:** 1) Ensuring that the SBO is keeping to the terms of their contract with ATE, 2) Completing financial record sheets and discussing progress and challenges, 3) Providing mentoring, encouragement and motivation for the SBO, and 4) Providing business acumen, helping find solutions to business problems and helping to identify business opportunities

- ATE is capitalising on building up better consultants. Ongoing engagement has built high levels of confidence and contribution.
- Splitting the SBOs into 3 small groups really worked. Having one consultant to one SBO made a powerful improvement; it allowed more time to explain and explore, SBOs were more open.
- SBOs being in groups by type of trade improved sharing of ideas: “I learnt new ideas to help grow the business. The small group was less crowded; we had confidence to speak out.” (SBO)
- The consultants felt the workshop plan was simpler and the role-play made it more concrete.
- SBOs said the consultants really broke things down so they could understand everything: “Sometimes in the large group talking I don’t really understand fully, the consultant sorts that out. He explained over and over until I got it.” “I am literate so don’t need a consultant really, but it still adds so much value as the discussion helps me really explore.”
- Staff said they learnt so much about coaching and mentoring – it boosted their confidence. They all knew the content, not just the facilitators, and were able to move around the SBO workshop using their new skills and understanding to provide support.
- Suggestions from SBOs for next time were to keep giving them the same consultants, keep giving new ideas and new high-level content, keep reinforcing the interesting work and including practical demonstrations and role-play.
- Staff felt that a perfect seed has been sown to ensure that SBOs are better equipped to manage their businesses.

Issues emerging/suggestions:

- Questions need to be written with/by local people so they hit the right objective and avoid becoming repetitive once translated into Dagaare.
- Improve selection of consultants by developing criteria (eg. comprehension/translation skills)
- We lose trained consultants (engaged on an ad-hoc basis) to their other jobs/stable employment
- SBO training could benefit from further differentiation – in Group 2 the number was high, illiteracy was high, and the SBOs had different levels of understanding.
- Many SBOs will need follow-up support on their action plans. As an incentive, ATE may link completion of their action plans with eligibility for re-grants to grow their business.
- We should limit the training time to 3 years and stop inviting those who are no longer into their businesses/have collapsed - we could do an assessment at the Action Plan Support visit.

Financial Report

- Total budgeted project cost: £985 (July 2016) and £4,905 (Jan 2017)
- Amount from CET: £3625
- Actual spend: Table to follow very shortly.

Monitoring and Impact

- We achieved what we set out to achieve in this time period and are extremely excited by the immediate impacts and positive response to the improvements made to the training programme.
- Evaluation of the training programme is measured through the post-training evaluation workshop sessions with staff, consultants and SBOs rating aspects of the training; the quality and content of monitoring forms completed by staff on monthly mentoring visits with SBOs; and the next Evaluating Success Conference are all utilised for reflection, evaluation and future planning.
- The ATE SBO Competency Matrix is used to measure improvements in SBO business management through supported self-evaluations and reporting on monthly SBO profits provides a clear quantitative measure by which to track progress and success.
- The wider outcomes of the project are that the training has become more effective, with more effective mentoring from staff, working towards greater ownership by local trainers, primarily to ensure greater management of small businesses by SBOs and reduction in poverty in Lawra District.