



Innovation Spotlight: Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream

BEN & JERRY'S

Tent's Innovation Spotlight series features companies that are leveraging their core business operations to integrate refugees around the world in new, exciting ways. We hope it inspires your company to consider new ways to support refugees.

This spotlight may be most useful to global brands with an interest in supporting aspiring refugee entrepreneurs.

The project in a nutshell



Ben & Jerry's Ice Academy

The Ice Academy, a program co-developed by ice cream activists Ben & Jerry's in partnership with The Entrepreneurial Refugee Network, provides aspiring refugee entrepreneurs with business training and part-time employment. The 14-week entrepreneurship training program aims to help participants develop a business idea and turn it into reality.

The program is made up of weekly workshops, skills training, community events, and one-on-one mentoring. The Ice Academy also provides participants with part-time work during the course of the program so they have an income and the time to pursue their

business ideas. This part-time work at Ben & Jerry's "scooping sites" (as well as in other hospitality jobs provided by Ice Academy partner companies like Sodexo, Hilton, and WeWork) also enhances participants' employment prospects by building their experience in their host country's labor market. Since 2017, the Ice Academy has supported nearly 200 refugees in the UK, France, and the Netherlands. The program also organically creates and fosters a network of Ice Academy alumni and collaborators that lasts beyond the 14-week program, accelerating the integration of refugees into their host communities.

The Innovation



Combining entrepreneurship training with employment

The Ice Academy is innovative because it aims to improve prospects for both employment and self-employment, merging entrepreneurship training with a temporary

work placement. The program recognizes both the potential for refugees to build their own livelihoods, and the need for a stable income while developing a business idea.

The Results



The Ice Academy started in 2017 with just 8 participants in London; by the end of 2020, 191 people had participated in the Ice Academy, with an 86% graduation rate. The program had a positive impact on the employment prospects for graduates. From 2017 to 2019 (pre-pandemic), the employment rate among participants before the program was 34% - after graduation, the employment rate was 82%. Twelve months after graduation, 55% of graduates earned an income from their business.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ice Academy adapted its training programs to an online format, connecting cohorts across countries. Unfortunately, the ensuing economic crisis significantly diminished seasonal work opportunities in the hospitality sector, and the Ice Academy was unable to

offer employment placements as part of its 2020 program. Despite the pandemic's impact on employment, two out of three graduates in 2020 progressed to running their business part-time or full-time, 100% of graduates said participating in the program improved their business, and 98% said it made them a better entrepreneur.

Ben & Jerry's is committed to expanding the program. In 2021, the Ice Academy will focus on strengthening its work placement offering and diversifying the types of jobs available, as well as launching the Academy in a fourth European city. In 2022, the entrepreneurship class will expand to 100 participants. These growth plans align with the Ice Academy's commitment to support 400 refugee entrepreneurs by 2022.

What made the project a success?



The Ice Academy combines temporary employment with entrepreneurship training. This two-track approach provides participants with a training program inspired by start-up incubators (but adapted for the needs of refugees) as well as work experience to help refugees grow as employees.

The combination of employment and entrepreneurship training lowers risks for participants, by allowing them to generate an income and get work experience while they build out their business ideas. This combination not only ensures that participants are more likely to find and keep employment, but that they are set up to succeed through their own enterprise.

Ice Academy participants have the opportunity to test and adapt their business ideas to meet local market needs, and draw from the experience of alumni entrepreneurs. Each entrepreneur is paired up with a business professional who serves as a

mentor throughout the Academy. The training program starts much earlier in the business cycle than a typical start-up accelerator - offering future founders guidance in the nascent stages of developing an idea as the participants learn about the host community's business environment, and accompanying the entrepreneur through the problem-solving, prototyping and pitching phases.

Another successful element of the Ice Academy is its partnership model. The program leverages Ben & Jerry's global platform while partnering with NGOs like TERN in the UK, DELITELABS in the Netherlands, and PLACE in France to provide technical expertise. The Ice Academy also works with like-minded companies like Sodexo, Hilton, and WeWork that support the program by offering temporary work placements to its participants in diverse industries and roles, which help align their skills with their desired career or business plan.

NEXT STEPS

To develop a similar project - or brainstorm about other ways your company can work with refugees - reach out to the Tent team at info@tent.org!



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