IO3 - IN-CUBA Methodology

Business incubator Toolkit: methodology, based on co-production, to develop accessible business incubator services for people with intellectual disability.

Main output of IN-CUBA is a methodology based on co-production that supports the development of ideas and projects to transform them into enterprises (considered in its widest meaning). This methodology is divided in 5 steps

1. enabling, empowering (triggering potential)

Prior to initiating the process, it is important to provide relevant information regarding entrepreneurship, and discuss co-productively what means to be entrepreneur. The objective is to provide people with disabilities with information and perspectives able to widen their perspective and increase their self-confidence, proposing a new angle for their self-development where they can see themselves as potential entrepreneurs. The discussion should fuel ideas and give participants time to start imagining, allowing potential candidates to emerge.

Potential candidates are in principles young-adults/adults with a fair level of autonomy.

A good tool to proceed is via co-productive focus groups (annex 1) involving users, their families, educators, experts in entrepreneurship and employment.

What competences for the educators?

All along the process, educators and supporting staff should be driven by change-oriented motivations, co-productive work, transformation of the status quo, the ability to see solutions without ignoring possible obstacles, passion for social change, organizational skills.

Characteristics:

- Knows well to people;

- Support, does not star;

- Empathizes with the group;

- Help the group to mature and grow, solve doubts, orient, guide;

- Favours autonomy and offers different points of view.

They must encourage people in the group to:

- Ease communication;

- Acquire more personal and social autonomy;

- Increase their chances of speaking and deciding for themselves;

- Listen to each other, share experiences and relate to one another;

- Improve self-knowledge and accept their limitations and, at the same time, discover their capacities.

2. Collecting, generating and developing ideas

Once set the ground and helped potential candidate to emerge, it is time to support the generation of ideas.

- who has ideas and would like to give it a try?
- how do we create a "can-do" culture?
- how do we listen and validate individual aspirations, enthusiasms, hopes at every level (from the day-to-day decisions to the larger 'project')?
- How to unlock the potential?
- who can help us out or give us technical support?
- what skills do we have, as individual and together as a group?
- what other skills should we look for?

We should bear in mind that it is not always easy to identify and give a meaning to an idea or a talent to be developed. An idea is the result of several thoughts and different points of view. Thus, it's important:

- To work in small groups, in order to reach a greater level of engagement co-productively.
- To provide a point of view, a perspective: a vision of the future, a path that can be followed; to enhance our resources, what we have done until now, to highlight results and see possible failures as falls from which we can learn and stand up again.
- To use techniques that can deploy and bring out knowledge, skills, motivations and personal desires: an interactive game can be a good choice.

It is fundamental to start from simple things that belong to daily experience. Produce ideas starting from what you do: make it available to others and try to get the same contribution from them – according to their features and their resources, in a co-productive approach. The involvement of other subjects makes it possible to reach different points of view and several ideas, but also to stress possible limits, in line with a constructive criticism perspective. It is also important to involve relevant people for the users that can support them also at an emotional level. Any idea is valuable. In this phase, it is important to bring ideas by using games/group activities that can enhance individual skills and create a colourful

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collaboration with a clear social connotation. You will emphasize both group results and personal results (personal growth).

How? What tools can we use?

- Use a co-productive approach so every participant can provide relevant contributions;
- Use images, objects, drawings, and everything that can be relevant in a person's life.
- Identify the project purposes, starting from sharing the contents that came to light and writing down a clear and definite project by using the Easy-to-Read guidelines.
- Start from what you are already doing or what you have already experienced in the past but try to highlight what can be done/modified as well.
- Identify the next steps: improve/modify/change your own experience, etc.

It may be helpful to proceed with a collective interactive game to experiment with the concept of enterprise. The one we propose it is called "the store of ideas" and it has been successfully used by our Italian partners. All you need is a comfortable meeting room, some colourful post-it, a board, some seeds and vases, and 2-3 motivated educators to animate the group.

1. using post-it, everyone writes three things he/she knows how to do: to cook, to sew, to dance, to use the PC, etc.;

2. the post-it are then attached to a big board called "the store of ideas";

3. Participants are then organised in small groups;

4. Each group then decides the type of business they want to set-up and are asked to choose in the "store of ideas" the skills or abilities needed for their project;

5. Each group then give their company a name;

6. Each group elects a representative who presents the company in the plenary receiving in exchange a seed to put in a jar with earth: the seed of the idea.

    Depositing a seed in the earth effectively evokes the (abstract) concept of incubation, of an idea that needs to be protected and nourished in order to make it grow.

7. All the jars are then collected and will be preserved to check in a little while what will be grown out of those seeds.

3. Idea Development: from idea to practice

Having identified ideas and potential projects, it is now time to undertake the path make them real.

It is important to put the idea or the project into a long-term perspective and try to plan the next steps accordingly.

The ability to work together, develop ideas, listen to others, make and receive critics in a positive manner represent important skills that should be a common trait to the idea development. Some relevant questions at this stage:

- how to explore ideas further?
- how to test out some ideas?
- how to think about feasibility (build on the can-do culture)
- how to begin to develop a plan?

It may be useful to look at other projects or ideas that have already been developed and that can inspire or help our project, even just as a possible inspirational path. Experiment, try, try again, be ready to give up an idea if it doesn't work and keep the pros that could let grow/improve the people that worked at that idea (understand why it hasn't worked: personal growth is due to re-elaborated abandoned paths, too). The ones who have reached this stage have enough motivation and a small but relevant experience and knowledge to deploy. They could put the idea into effect by testing it. Accept differentiation in the process: every single person has his/her own timing and results.

It is important to make sure that the project(s) are realistic (depending on the human resources, materials, of knowledge and economics) and sufficiently innovative. Having social value and an impact on the community may further foster the motivation of the users involved.

At this stage, you can already involve experts (coach, a business incubator) to help you refine the idea and give you tips to make it real.
An important tool is the Business Model Canvas (BSM) in its adapted version.

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Model CANVAS

Project ....

The Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a user-friendly strategic management start-up template for developing new or documenting existing business models (See Annex 2). It is a visual chart composed of different blocks describing a firm's or product's value proposition, infrastructure, customers, and finances. It helps you understand a business model in a straightforward, structured way, also illustrating potential trade-offs.

The BMC was developed by Alex Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur, and co-created with an array of 470 practitioners from around the world. It offers a simple, visual, one-page canvas on which we can design, innovate and dialogue about our business models. Thanks to the experience of our partners we developed an adapted version, improved in terms of easy to read and understand.

CANVAS BLOCKS[1]

1. Value Proposition (proposal, product/service): what are your products and services? What is the job you get done for your customers?
2. Customers segment: identify the segments that provide the most revenue.
3. Customers relationship: how do you reach them and how do you maintain the relationship?
4. Channels (distribution): how do you communicate with your customer? How do you deliver the value proposition?
5. Revenue Stream:
6. Key activities: what do you do to run and maintain your business model?
7. Key resources: people, knowledge, means, and money you need to make your project real.
8. Key Partners: all the partners you need to make your project real and running (not suppliers).
9. Cost structure: the costs you need to consider looking at activities and resources.
10. Social and environmental impact: the set of actions you would like to undertake in the social and environmental fields

4. **Stabilisation**

After having started the process towards the realisation of the idea, it is time to focus on the setting-up of a clear and effective organization in which everyone has a task in line with his/her resources/skills and the product that should be developed.

- making the initiative real: what actor(s) and organisation(s) should be involved?
- What is the timeframe?
- identifying and overcoming "barriers"

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[1] More information on each block in Annex 2.

- keep the outcome under control (but being aware that some outcomes may not be planned for)
- Proceed in stages/processes: In a "one step at a time" approach, you should tackle one stage at a time and then move forward.
- Ensure that everyone is following the process and has a clear comprehension of the goals.
- Involvement of experts: coach, mentor, incubator: At this stage, the involvement of experts is highly recommended to help you further refine the idea and give you tips to make it operational, providing further support in the project development and realization. It is essential to get an external and neutral viewpoint, which can enrich our experience.

The project should become reality, therefore, it is important to appreciate also the external elements that may affect your initiatives: legal context, fiscal rule, organisational models. This bring you to the need to understand the contexts and the rules and try to transform/adapt them by giving everyone the possibility to work with their own timings.

Determination and willingness to go further should be cultivated and stimulated. Overcoming frustration, being ready to non-expected results that are nevertheless valuable, being open to changes ….

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5. Feasibility, Impact, Evaluation

It is important to make sure the development of the project does not impact negatively the life project of the user involved. Therefore, an impact analysis is required.

This should be followed by an evaluation of the implementation of the entrepreneurial project to determine its effectiveness and success and eventually what needs to be improved.

Finally, a social impact evaluation can help to check the social effects of the entrepreneurial project and integrate the overall evaluation.

a) Quality of Life evaluation
- how the project fits in the user's life project
- how can we get a measure of the person's current quality of life?
- what other key people / agencies will be important to engage in supporting this initiative?
- what are the key messages that we will need to develop together to gain the support of others?

In terms of Quality of Life evaluation (QoL) any 'intervention, service, policies' designed for people with intellectual disability should be designed within a QoL framework. The quality of life should be assessed with the help of a specific tool that takes into account the interests and the level of satisfaction with certain areas of life, in addition to the opportunity and the possibility to take active part to in decisional processes. In broad terms, a QoL framework should identify the degree to which individuals attribute importance to various areas of their lives, and the degree to which they perceive satisfaction. This should be carried out done with a view to increasing overall life satisfaction in the life areas that are deemed to be most important. In doing so, global QoL will be increased.

Giving the opportunity to carry out a work project, if considered important for the person, could have an effect on different areas and aspects of life of each user involved (e.g. personal identity development, psychological being, sense of community inclusion, autonomy, sense of belonging, opportunities for growth, etc.). Therefore, the QoL approach should be seen as an effort to mobilize and

revalue resources that can support a person (and the holistic systems that they represent) to embark on or to continue developing personal skills over their life-span improvement.

Another issue in QoL assessment is whether it should be performed through the self or proxy perspective. There is some agreement that the best way to assess QoL in people with intellectual disability is the use of a comprehensive system that includes self and proxy (such as a family caregiver or a healthcare professional) assessments (*Verdugo, Schalock, Keith, & Stancliffe, 2005*).

Assessment:

Two evaluations should be conducted in order to detect, as reported in literature, the possible impact of work/ entrepreneurship on the whole QoL and on the different areas and aspects of life of each user involved:

- 1st (T0) before the start of the pilot action/during the evaluation of the potential candidates (by proxy and self).

- 2nd (T1) at the end of the project (to be defined more precisely) by proxy and self.

Tool:

(QoL-IP) Quality of Life Instrument Package, which has been released by the Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto (*Brown, Renwick, & Raphael, 1997*).

Adaptation:

The tool will be translated and adapted into each partner's language.

The Italian adaptation of the QoL- IP is already available: the BASIQ-BAtteria di Strumenti per l'Indagine della Qualità di Vita (*Bertelli et al., 2011*).

b) Entrepreneurship evaluation

It is helpful to know people that already experienced similar paths, since you can better understand how to develop your ideas and to define possible changes. The relationship with the surrounding community and stakeholders that can support your idea is definitely important: therefore, the setting-up of a network is essential.

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People should be encouraged with proper rewards/bonuses (depending on the specific case: monetary measures are not necessarily the best option; everyone has something important that he/she wants to reach). Reward every single step. Respect other people's times. Foster a peer-collaboration.

Satisfaction can be evaluated in terms of interest and effort that can be preserved over time, as well as in terms of ability to face dissatisfaction and setbacks.

b) Social Impact evaluation (AMPANS)

The objective of this activity is to verify whether the entrepreneurial project has contributed to generating changes in society, that is, if it has contributed in its transformation.

The value of social impact is the result of:

- actions carried out, which provide us with quantitative data (objective indicators): Impact on people, on the community, on the organisation / entities, on the environment;
- the emotional value generated by the project in the agents involved (perception/subjective indicators).

AMPANS

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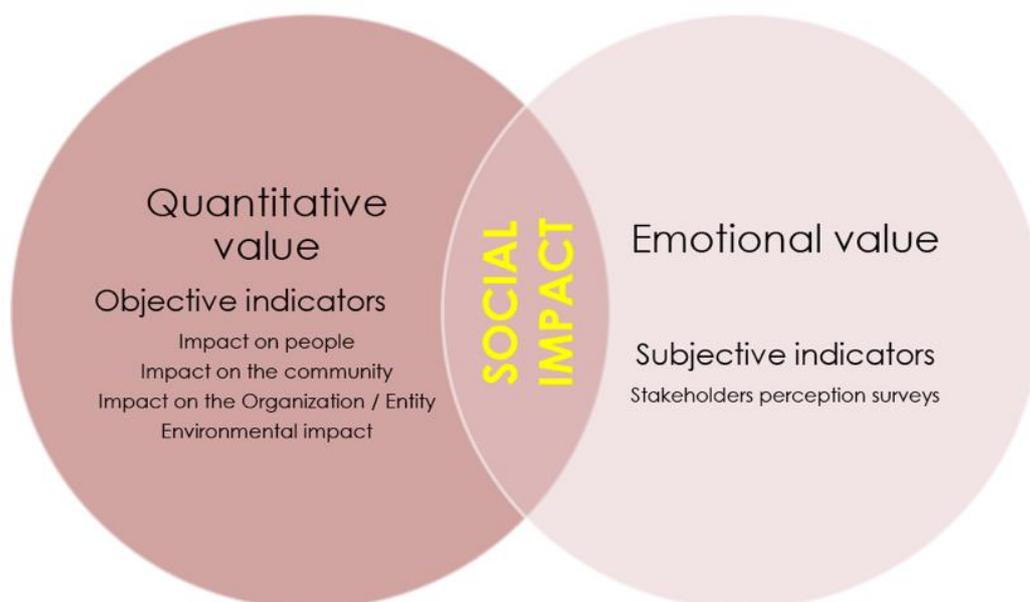
ANNEX 1

Guidelines for co-productive focus groups

To develop the IO3, focus groups will be established in each country to discuss entrepreneurship and the support that is needed to enable the development and setting up of one enterprise.

It is important to bear in mind that, in the context of the IN-CUBA project, the concept of enterprise has a broad interpretation, referring to the action of starting a new project or undertaking, or developing an idea, even when it does not result in the creation of a business (commercial or social). All entrepreneurial activities are considered, whether or not they be for profit, or whether they have a commercial or social aim.

You are free to organise the focus groups in the most suitable way according to your situation however you may wish to consider organising them in several sessions to better enable service users and family members to process information. The following points should be considered during the co-productive focus groups:

1. What is understood by "enterprise" and "entrepreneur"? Explain the concept of project in its wider possible meaning

2. What is understood by an "incubator"?

3. What "good ideas" and / or interests do you have?

4. What entrepreneurial project would you like to develop?

5. What would be required to start such a project?

6. What things might get in the way or may it difficult?

7. What help and resources do you think you will need?

8. What would be the benefit to you of being an entrepreneur?

9. What would you want from a structure that supports the development of entrepreneurial projects (incubator)?

10. Identify a project to take forward (it will be tested in the pilot actions) - why do you think this is a good project?

11. How can you start to put the project into practice?

Some methodological points

- **Information on inclusive co-productive focus groups** may be found in the results of the project Enable www.co-production.eu. For example, in the guide on "How we design inclusive learning situations for a co-productive approach" (See file enclosed)

- Have a look at the 6 pillars of the **co-productive approach** (assets, capabilities of each participant, blurring roles, mutuality, professionals as catalysts, networking) and the 4 **steps** in co-production (design/plan, decide, carry out and evaluate together).

- **Composition of co-productive focus groups**: to have a view from different angles and to gather a range of experience and skills, it is good to have people from different disciplines or domains who can enrich the research. Bear in mind that these may not always be the most "obvious" people or those usually involved in supporting the lives of the service users - be creative and exploratory in your thinking - ask around in your communities and networks. A focus-group should not be too large (6-8 fix members, but this is not a rule). You can also invite other people or experts occasionally. You can also split up the group for specific tasks. Example: 3 people will do a specific task until next time, 3 others take care of another task…

- **Involve the participants on an equal basis:** each one has ideas, experience and competences. Find out together the assets of the participants in the focus group; distribute tasks together respecting the interests and abilities of each one.

- **Clarify everyone's roles in the group:** who is the coordinator, writer, and timekeeper; who keeps the participants informed between meeting. You could consider the use of role cards to make this clear during meetings.

- **Designate one person as facilitator** to explain and support participants with Intellectual Disability in language that is easily understood, to help them participate in group discussion, to visualise and interpret difficult concepts or

decision. This person should not be the same as the moderator of the focus group.

- **Use easy to understand and easy to read language**

  More information is available here: https://easy-to-read.eu/european-standards/

- **Organise the meeting clearly:** topics/agenda on the flipchart, presence list, red-green-yellow cards for stop-vote-ask to speak…

- **Use interactive methods for working on topics; change the working methods throughout the meeting:** do not only discuss around a table; mover around, make tandems (professional participant and participant with ID), use crafts, use video-clips to see and discuss, …

- **Allow short breaks during the meeting**

- **Make a short written or visual report as a reminder** containing also photos of flipchart drawings and writings and of other manual activities carried out during the meetings.

- Plan the **time to prepare the participants** with intellectual disability between the focus groups (repeat, go into more depth on some aspects...).

- Visit other entrepreneurs, have a look at **good practice examples** around your topic or/and use pictures and videos to inspect and discuss existing examples around the topic that you have chosen.

- **Invite people to interview** participants on their experience during the focus group.

ANNEX 2

Adapted Business Model Canvas

The Business Model Canvas (BSC) is a user-friendly strategic management start-up template for developing new or documenting existing business models. It is a visual chart composed of different blocks describing a firm's or product's value proposition, infrastructure, customers, and finances. It helps you understand a business model in a straightforward, structured way, also illustrating potential trade-offs.

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6. Key activities: what do you do to run and maintain your business model?
7. Key resources: people, knowledge, means, and money you need to make your project real.
8. Key Partners: all the partners you need to make your project real and running (not suppliers).
9. Cost structure: the costs you need to consider looking at activities and resources.

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10. **Social and environmental impact:** the set of actions you would like to undertake in the social and environmental fields

Model CANVAS
Project ....

Brief explanation of each section of the canvas[2]

1. Value Proposition (proposal, product/service): The products and services that the enterprise would like to offer and that create value for specific customer segments. Social enterprises tend to have a double value propositions: the impact value proposition (the social value it seeks to deliver) and the commercial value proposition (the goods and services it produces and sells).

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[2] The explanation of the blocks is inspired by the document of *Ingrid Burkett Knode* **Using the Business Model Canvas or social enterprise design** available here

What do I want to do and why? What do I need to give? What can I solve? What impact can my proposal have? What value am I generating and what makes me different? How do I create or contribute social value?

2. Customer segment: The different groups of people or organisations an enterprise aims to reach with its products or services.

It is important to differentiate between end user and client, and to avoid the "3F" circle: Family, Friends, and Fools and go ask outside this circle if your proposal is of interest.

Social enterprises may face a double segment: product/service oriented - impact oriented

For whom are we creating value - and what kind of value are we creating for them?

- Who are our commercial customers and why will they continue to enjoy our products or services? Who are our impact customers and what value are they seeking from us (and how much are they willing to pay for this)? How important is the connection between our products/services and the impact to our customers? Are they prepared to pay more for the impact?

3. Customer relationships: The types of relationships an enterprise establishes with specific customer segments, which can be of different type: close, exclusive, empathetic, customized, standardized, automated / self-service, communities, collective creation...

What kind of relationship do we envisage with our clients? Are they or could they be interested in the social impact? How can we ensure that they get intrigued and in fall love with our products/services too?

4. Distribution channel: the channel that an enterprise uses to communicate with and reach its customer segments to deliver a value proposition.

How to get my product/service to the customers (in each segment / type)? It is all about determining how we want to communicate with clients, reach them and

deliver them the product/service, and earn their loyalty. You need to identify the best communication, distribution, sale and after sale channels, and if these channels will be unique or not, direct or indirect.

5. Revenue Stream: the income an enterprise generates from each customer segment (subtracting costs from revenues to create earnings). They represent the way in which the company generates revenues.

Revenue collection can be direct or indirect, in a single payment or in multiple ones, foreseen discounts, bonuses, etc.

6. Key activities: it refers to the things and activities that must done to deliver value to your customers, ensuring commercial and social value. To supply the product/service, it is necessary to develop a series of key activities (production processes, marketing, etc.). Activities that you would not outsource as they represent the essence of your proposal.

7. Key resources: the most important elements (assets and resources) required to make an enterprise work: physical resources (Facilities, infrastructure, vehicles…), intellectual resources (know-how, brand, contacts…), human resources (associates, staff, clients…), financial resources (cash, lines of credit, access to finance).

8. Key partners: the network of suppliers, allies, and partners that make the enterprise work.

These alliances are necessary as they complement the entrepreneur's capacities and help optimise the proposal. A co-productive approach is envisaged.

What partnerships are critical to helping us achieve our commercial objectives? What partnerships can help us deliver, strengthen or scale our impact objectives?

9. Cost structure: All the costs necessary to operate an enterprise and deliver the product/service: those you need to take account for delivering your product or service, as well as those involved in delivering an impact.

Social and environmental impact: If appropriate, please describe the set of actions you would like to undertake in the social and environmental fields to go beyond what is established by the legislation, and which are based on the good corporate governance, corporate and labour responsibility, impact on the environment and external action.