



**LAUNCH PAD**  
Inclusive Business Launch Pad



# Learners' Guide: Inclusive Business Launch Pad Circles

 [iblaunchpad.eu](http://iblaunchpad.eu)

 Inclusive Business LaunchPad



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# Overview

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The Inclusive Business Launchpad (IBL) is an Accelerator Programme for Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs in Micro Businesses promoting equal opportunities, by providing training to underrepresented or disadvantaged entrepreneurs. This includes (but is not limited to) migrants, people with disabilities, lone parents, 50+ individuals and women who are underrepresented within business.

IBL Circles followed on from the IBL training and there were 2 pilot phases delivered in four partner countries, with details shown below:

- Inova Consultancy (United Kingdom)
- Inova Aspire (Netherlands)
- FH Joanneum (FHJ) (Austria)
- Center for Social Innovation – CSI (Cyprus)

After Pilot 1, 95% of participants agreed that they would recommend the Circles to others and after Pilot 2, this increased to 100%. This improvement reflects that partners made changes to the delivery based on the feedback from participants

*“The training was inspiring” IBL participant 2022*

*“The right course at the right time. Empowering, engaging and motivating”  
IBL participant 2022*

*“This program gave us insights into our own abilities and helps us to prioritize and put plans in action” IBL Participant 2023*

## INTRODUCTION FOR PARTICIPANTS

IBL will provide training on how you can accelerate your business through a combination of face-to-face training and peer-support Circles (adapted from Inova Consultancy’s Circles™ methodology).

Circles are offered to entrepreneurs, who meet the identified criteria and are making firm plans to grow and develop their business. It is very likely that you have completed the first phase of the training prior to commencing the IBL Circles, as recruitment for the Circles generally takes place during the final session of your Inclusive Business Launchpad training.

**The aim of the programme is to support you, the entrepreneur with additional training to help your business grow and for you to expand your business ideas further and explore new opportunities for growth.**

The project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission. For more information please visit:

- The IBL website: <https://iblaunchpad.eu/>
- The IBL Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/IBLaunchpad/>

### **WHAT ARE IBL CIRCLES?**

IBL Circles are based on innovative, personal development training methodology established by Inova Consultancy Ltd. Based on action learning, coaching and mentoring techniques, the Circles use self-reflection exercises and tools to help you and your peers to build confidence and self-efficacy and develop a range of soft skills, necessary for building a business.

The IBL Circles will enable you to:

- Improve self-reflection.
- Enhance confidence.
- Develop goal setting techniques.
- Develop soft skills that are important to be successful in business.
- Manage stress, change, conflict etc.
- Increase self-efficacy and assertiveness in a professional capacity.

Check out the video below for further insight into the Circles.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAbwRFRTxeU>

### **CREATION OF THE IBL CIRCLES**

The Inclusive Business Launch Pad Circles have been adapted from the original Inova Consultancy Circles methodology. This was after extensive research by all IBL partner organisations. The research highlighted needs, gaps and challenges of the target group and supported the development of the IBL training and Circles to support business growth and expansion of each microbusiness.

The Inclusive Business Launch Pad Circles are open to anyone completing the “Accelerator Business Launch Pad” training, especially those who have set specific growth goals during the training and will benefit from further support to put these into action..

**IBL is aimed at entrepreneurs of small and microbusinesses from groups who face specific challenges in a post covid business world.**

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Migrants
- Lone parents
- Disabled people
- 50+ people
- Women/ men in non-traditional fields

The research identified the main challenges that the target group face as follows:

1. Networking
2. Lack of cultural and business understanding
3. Lack of accessible training and specific support
4. Heterogeneity of target group
5. Language and communication barriers
6. Lack of technical knowledge or business tools
7. Work-life balance
8. Lack of motivation with online learning

Through the IBL Circles, training and the online learning portal, the above concerns will be addressed, enabling you and your peers to grow and develop confidence and added ability to enhance your chosen business.

**This Learners' guide will present to you, the IBL Circles programme to support your learning. All the facilitators delivering the training to you will be experienced and will have received "Circles" training from Inova Consultancy Ltd.**

### **THE COACHING CIRCLES PHILOSOPHY**

The IBL Circles provides an opportunity for you to build your confidence and soft skills in a safe and secure environment. Our main aim is to help you take positive steps towards growing your business whilst building your self-confidence and resilience.

Self-belief is key to progression as an entrepreneur. The Circles promote your confidence building so you can push your ideas forward and to take practical steps to grow on a personal level and business level.

Some key factors to keep in mind when participating in the Circles:

- **Share:** IBL Circles enables you to share your challenges, problems, issues, or opportunities with your peers.
- **Trust:** IBL Circles provides you with a safe, yet challenging, environment where you will be supported to develop ideas and actions to help you develop personally and professionally.
- **Challenge:** Options for action should be generated and discussed. You will be encouraged to challenge yourself and to step out of your comfort zone.
- **Action planning:** Each participant will be helped to find the next steps forward in furthering their goals.
- **Self-reflection:** Coaching Circles will encourage self-reflection and self-belief.

As well as the above, you will have the opportunity to:

- Meet and network with other entrepreneurs facing similar issues.
- Make new friends/ contacts and expand networks.

## **UNDERPINNING THE PHILOSOPHY OF CIRCLES**

The Circles methodology has been used since 2001 and has a proven track record in supporting personal development in previously targeted groups, including women returning to work after career breaks and young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The methodology has received widespread acknowledgment for its quality materials and innovative content (Inova was recognised in 2008 for the development and successful use of the methodology with women entrepreneurs by SFEDI–Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative).

Unlike traditional training courses, you are encouraged to find your own answers to the challenges you are facing. This knowledge is often already present; Circles help participants uncover this knowledge through sharing and learning from each other. The concept of Circles is built on the process of learning as a journey which requires you to reflect, explore and reveal what you need to know. Some knowledge is already within and needs to be brought forward, and the shared knowledge and learning from others can be valuable.

A Circle is not about advice giving and this should be avoided. Your facilitator will support you to instead focus on using questions to help individuals in your group to reveal their own insights. This could be through group discussions, completion of exercises and/or guided questioning from peers in the group.

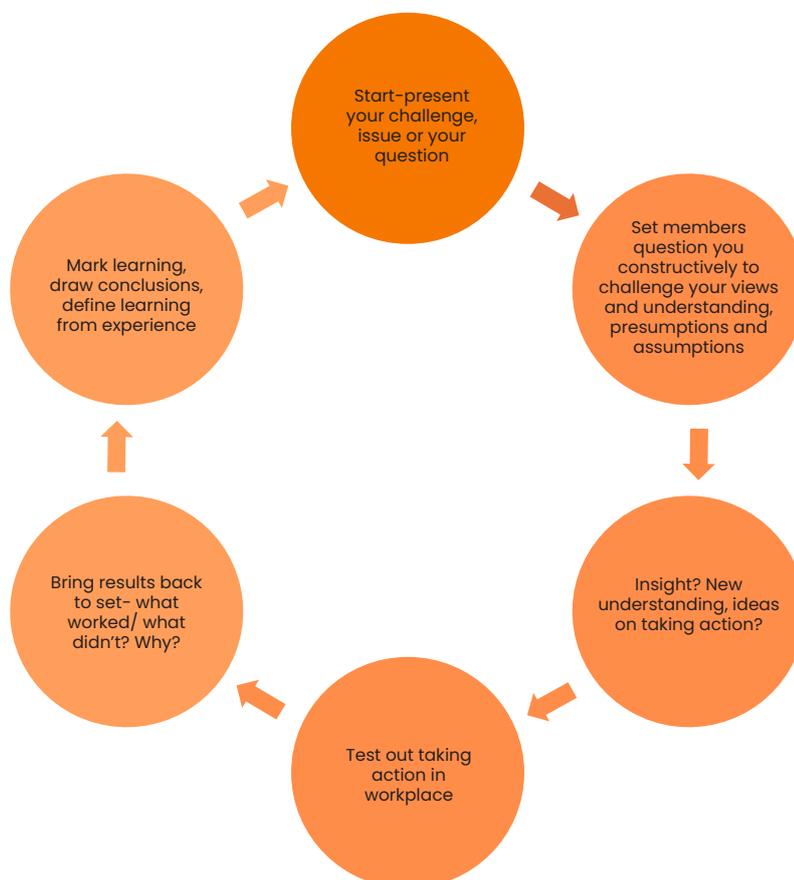
For example, through guided questioning sections within IBL Circles, you and your peers will take it in turns to talk about your business challenge, problem or opportunity and the other group members offer questions. The facilitator will give each participant an allocated time slot.

The questioning is about discovery, trying to understand more fully any underlying issues which would be fruitful for you to explore further. Similarly, when completing exercises regarding self-development or self-reflection, you will be encouraged to question your responses and to support other group members in questioning why they responded to an exercise in a certain way. This process strengthens the development of self-reflection.

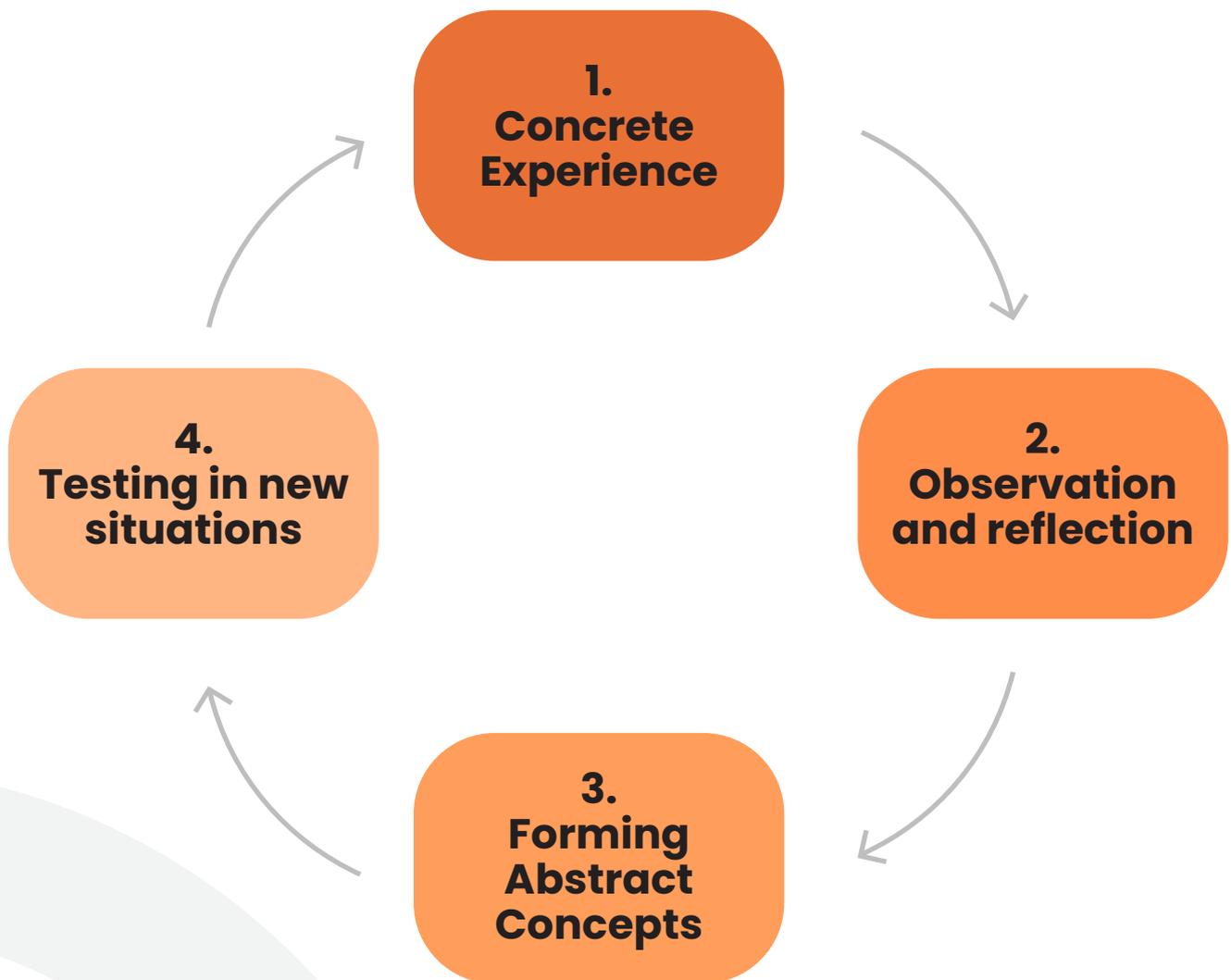
**Remember:** The focus is on questioning rather than advice giving.

The two models below (Action Learning Process and Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle) are useful to further explain the purpose and process of Circles.

**FIGURE 1: ACTION LEARNING PROCESS**



**FIGURE 2: KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE (1975)**



The Action Learning Cycle and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle are useful tools for you to use during your own Circles as they will help you to understand how to reflect on your experiences and to set yourself new action points for moving your business forward. Your facilitator will support you to use them successfully.

### THINK, ACT, REFLECT

The three principles of action learning are Think, Act and Reflect. These stages are highlighted in the table below, with some questions that are likely to come up during the Circle sessions.

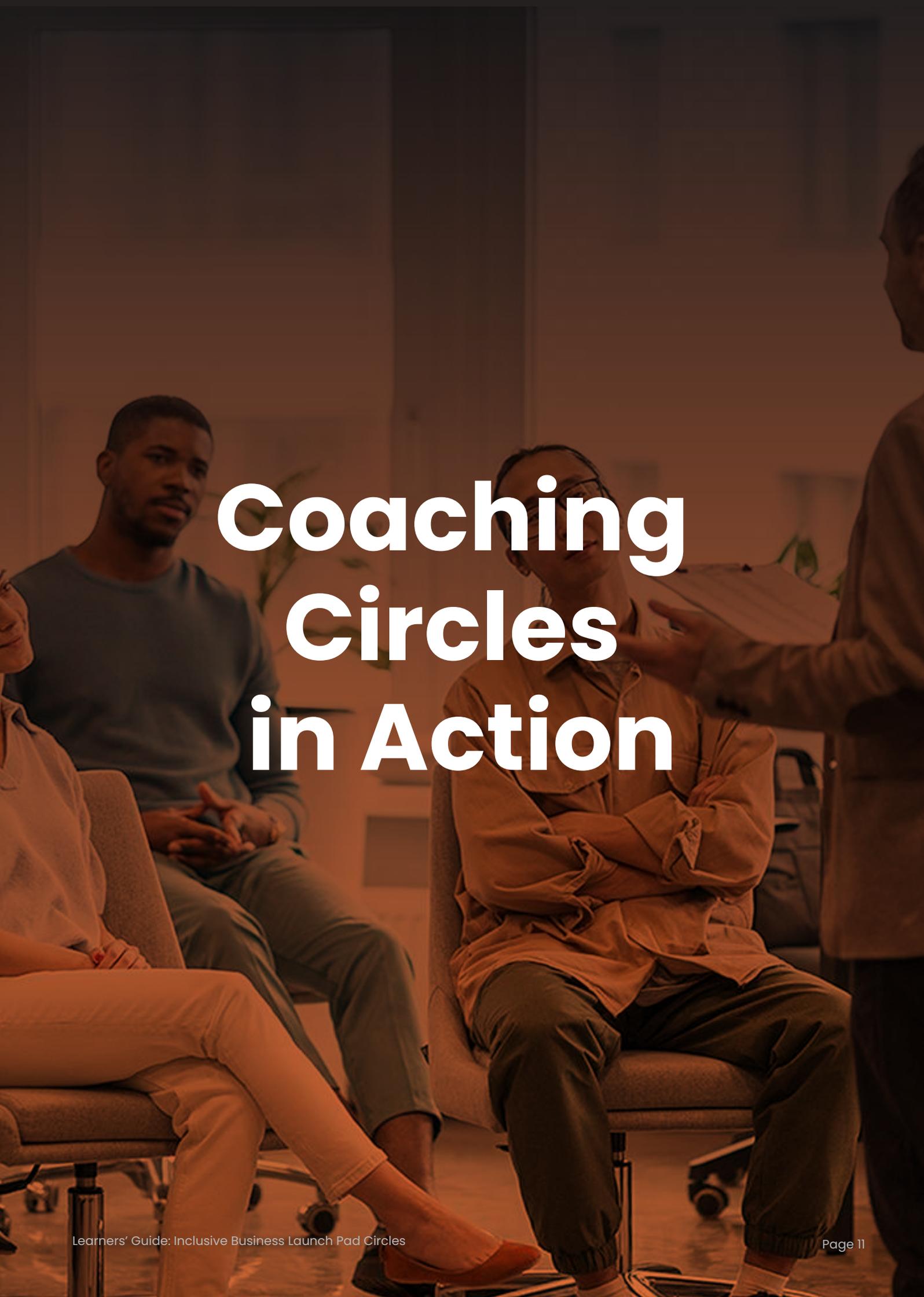
|                       |  |   |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| <p><b>THINK</b></p>   | <p>The action of doing is in order. to turn thoughts into action. It helps to underpin change.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's your idea, topic or subject?</li> <li>• What's your opportunity?</li> <li>• What's your concern?</li> <li>• What's a priority for you?</li> <li>• What questions have you had about your situation?</li> <li>• What initial ideas are in your mind that you want to explore?</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>ACT</b></p>     | <p>The ways in which you will take action outside of the Circle session; how will you do this?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you put a plan in place?</li> <li>• What are you going to do?</li> <li>• Have you implemented an experimental variable?</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>REFLECT</b></p> | <p>You should reflect on the outcomes of your action.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has changed?</li> <li>• What happened?</li> <li>• What went well?</li> <li>• What are your concerns?</li> <li>• Are there any new opportunities?</li> <li>• How will you adapt your plan in the future?</li> <li>• What questions have you been asked about your situation?</li> </ul>    |

This methodology is effective because it places you, the learner at the centre of the situation:

- It works in real time, with live issues that are of importance to the individual.
- It integrates any theoretical learning with real experience.
- It is about action and implementation, rather than purely hypothetical scenarios.

For more explanation, here are a few useful videos about the above models:

- What is Action Learning? - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAJ0z\\_IdZXE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAJ0z_IdZXE)
- The 3-minute Kolb - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObQ2DheGOKA>
- Experiential learning: how we learn naturally  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF63HHVbpQ8>



# Coaching Circles in Action

## AIM OF THE CIRCLES

Each IBL Circle will have a combination of group discussion with equal allocated time for everyone to air key issues relating to their business, self-reflection, goal setting and peer support. Your facilitator will have experience in action learning and will guide you through the process.

Circles sessions are learner-led and learner-focused. However, although nondirective, your facilitator may use a more directive approach when appropriate e.g., when an individual might be about to undertake risky or damaging actions which can be foreseen or if the group is lacking confidence to an extent where discussion is difficult to instigate without facilitator intervention. The size of the group may also dictate the level of direction required.

At the beginning of the first session, group rules are set for you and your peers, to feel comfortable in the group, especially when discussing sensitive or personal topics.

The following is generally expected from you and your peers during the Circles process:

- Exploration of what may cause a particular condition or consequence; reviewing decisions or actions and reveal how this has led to the current situation. Could problems have been avoided? What are the implications if a similar situation occurs in the future? What have you learnt from this situation?
- Examining your own thinking that led you to believe something or act in a certain way. Is a decision built on fair assumptions? Have assumptions been tested?
- We can also learn from mistakes. Argyris (1993) suggests that **learning occurs whenever errors are detected and corrected.**
- The facilitation should be future, and solution, focused. It is useful to assist you and your peers in predicting possible outcomes. Have you taken everything into account? What is the backup or contingency plan? Have you considered all the options in a situation?

- Your facilitator will encourage you and your peers to commit to goals and action plans, report on your own progress, redefine goals and review outcomes. Setting flippant and unspecific goals will not aid your development or ability to move forward with your challenge.
- Your facilitator may occasionally have to intervene to protect someone's time, to keep issues on track when challenges are causing distress, when someone is perhaps using power inappropriately or behaving in a way that frustrates or blocks the group's learning. Participants might wish to experiment in the Circle (with the agreement and support of their peers) and obtain feedback. Perhaps a member would like to be more assertive or test out their latest product or develop the confidence to disagree with people.
- You and your peers will be encouraged to explore your own creativity, to work outside comfort zones and to maximise opportunities.
- **Contracting:** Circle members will be given an agreement relating to roles and responsibilities for you all to get the most out of the process in a climate which is conducive to learning.

Agreements need to be revisited frequently and ground rules need restating at the start of each session.

## **CIRCLES: INFORMATION**

Each session of the Circles will be learner led and learner focused. Your facilitator will oversee each Circle to ensure that you and your peers receive support which best matches your needs. Generally, there is a format for each session which is outlined below:

## **Circles: A Step-by-Step Guide for You**

### **CIRCLE 1**

**Introductions** – Your facilitator will start with introducing themselves, the project, the Circles methodology and the process. You will introduce yourself and your peers will also do introductions. Your facilitator will introduce the first activity, which is usually an icebreaker to help you to get to know your peers. These are often fun activities.

**Administration** – Signing learning agreements as required and attendance lists. Ground rules will be discussed and set.

**Soft skills assessment** – You will be asked to complete a soft skills assessment form at the start of the first session. This will be stored safely by your facilitator until the final session when you will complete this activity again to compare your scoring and personal soft skills development.

**Questioning** – Your facilitator will explain the differences between advice giving and questioning, how to use questions, etc. and how this will positively affect working relationships.

**Discussion round** – You will be allocated approximately 15 minutes to express your issue/challenge/opportunity that you are facing at this time. Your peers will ask you questions and prompt discussion for you to reflect on. You will offer support to your peers when it is their turn in the Circle.

**Activities** – Apart from the discussion round, your facilitator may ask you to engage in key activities to support a particular topic or development area. Your facilitator will explain these to you and give clear instructions.

**Action points** – You and your peers will be supported to set action points based on what has been discussed. Ensure that any goals are SMART (see annex information on SMART goals).

**Evaluating** – At the end of the Circles session, you and your peers will be asked to complete an evaluation form.

**Note: It is important for you to reflect as soon as possible after each Circle as this will be useful for you achieving your goals.**

## Reflection (Circle 1)

## **CIRCLE 2**

**Administration** – Reminder of ground rules and the Circles format.

**Review SMART goals from session 1.** Have you worked on the goals you set yourself and if so, how did it go? When it is your turn in the discussion round you will be able to elaborate on your progress and any new challenges you have faced.

**Discussion round** – Again you will be allocated approximately 15 minutes to express your issue/challenge/opportunity that you are facing at this time. Your peers will ask you questions and prompt discussion for you to reflect on. You will offer support to your peers when it is their turn in the Circle.

**Activities** – You may also complete additional activities as directed by your facilitator. Your facilitator will explain these to you and give clear instructions.

**Evaluating** – Ensure you complete your evaluation form for this session.

**Administration** – You will be given a reminder for the next session and any other administrative issues will be addressed. This may include checking email addresses, phone numbers etc to encourage networking amongst the group.

**Note: It is important for you to reflect as soon as possible after each Circle as this will be useful for you achieving your goals.**

## Reflection (Circle 2)

## **CIRCLE 3**

**Administration** – reiteration of ground rules.

**Review the SMART goals set from the previous sessions.** Have you worked on the goals you set yourself at the last session and if so, how did it go? When it is your turn in the discussion round you will be able to elaborate on your progress and any new challenges you have faced.

**Discussion round** – You will be allocated approximately 15 minutes to express your issue/challenge/opportunity that you are at this time. Your peers will ask you questions and prompt discussion for you to reflect on. You will offer support to your peers when it is their turn in the Circle.

**Activities** – You may complete additional activities as directed by your facilitator. Your facilitator will explain these to you and give clear instructions.

**Evaluating** – Ensure you complete your evaluation form for this session.

**Administration** – You may be given details of other training or organisations that can help you with your business, post the Circles training. Any other administrative issues will be addressed. This may include checking email addresses, phone numbers etc to encourage networking amongst the group. You will also explore with your facilitator and peers' different ways to continue networking and you may decide to create an IBL Circles WhatsApp group to stay in contact with each other.

**Soft skills assessment** (if this is the final session)– You will complete a soft skills assessment form again before being given the first assessment to compare results and see if any developments have been made.

**Evaluating** – Final evaluation form to be filled in by all participants.

**Note: It is important for you to reflect as soon as possible after each Circle as this will be useful for you achieving your goals.**

## Reflection (Circle 3)

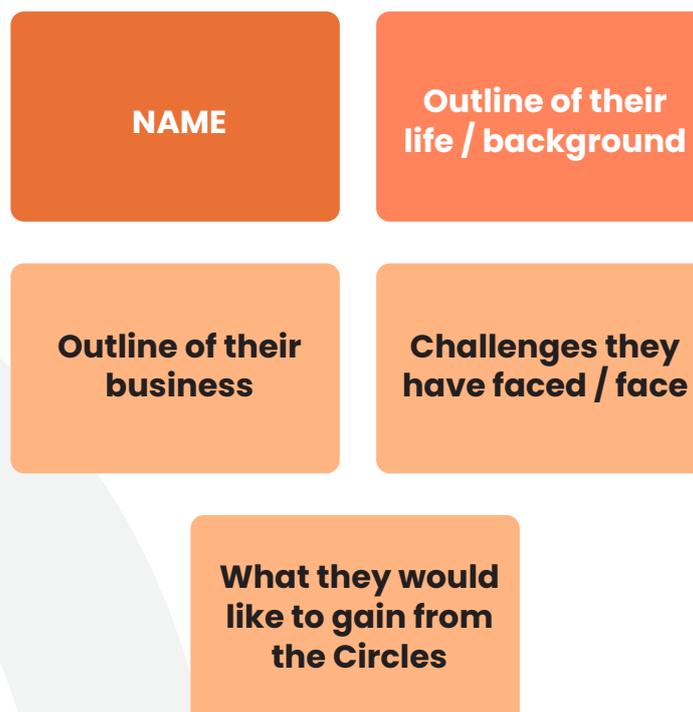
## CONTRACTING AND ADMINISTRATION

**Learning agreement:** At the start of session 1, you will be asked to sign a Learning Agreement. This is a social contract which enables the facilitator and participant to have equal rights and power during the sessions. By setting out the mutual expectations of each party, everyone gains information about the training relationship and the accountability and responsibilities of each party. Your facilitator will scan and copy your signed learning agreement so that you can take a copy for your own records.

**Attendance list:** At the start of each session, you will be asked to sign an attendance list. This is essential for facilitators to evidence participants' attendance to the sessions (for funding requirements). If the Circles are online, the facilitator will advise how the circles will be evidenced. This may include taking a "screenshot" to show that the Circle is taking place. It is important for us to collate evidence as part of our contract.

## INTRODUCING SELF TO OTHERS.

Each participant should be given **2-3 minutes** to introduce themselves. It is important that you become confident in presenting and introducing yourself and your business concisely. See below some prompts for disclosing key information about yourself:



## INTRODUCING THE CIRCLES METHODOLOGY

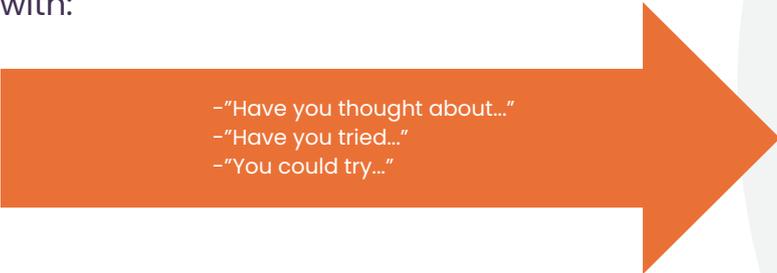
Your facilitator will introduce the Circles methodology and the aims of the sessions. You should make sure that you understand the following aspects of the Circles:

- The background to the Inclusive Business Launch Pad Circles methodology.
- An explanation of how the methodology works. i.e., that the Circles provide a facilitated space for you and your peers to complete activities, share discussions and have a dedicated time slot to present issues, challenges, or opportunities.
- There are generally three sessions (a fourth may be optional for further support). 3-4 hours per session (when done face-to-face; 2.5-3 hours may be adequate if done online). An experienced facilitator is always present. Allocated time slots for each participant to speak are generally 10-15 minutes depending on the group size.
- Setting SMART goals: You may not manage to achieve everything that you set out to achieve during the sessions (self-awareness and knowing your own limits forms a big part of the learning), but you will be encouraged to review and reflect on difficulties, learn from them, and find ways forward or new goals for action.
- The questioning technique will be used throughout the Circle sessions (see information below).

## THE QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE

The **presenter** is the person speaking about their issues/challenges/opportunities during their given time slot and they should be encouraged to specify to the group what they currently need help with.

'Advice giving' can be unhelpful when it directs the participant to a particular way of thinking or answer. **Using questioning** instead helps to empower the presenter and supports them in finding their own solutions. Look out for and avoid sentences starting with:



- "Have you thought about..."  
- "Have you tried..."  
- "You could try..."

Some statements may be focused on a questioner's experience when the focus should be on the presenter. For example:



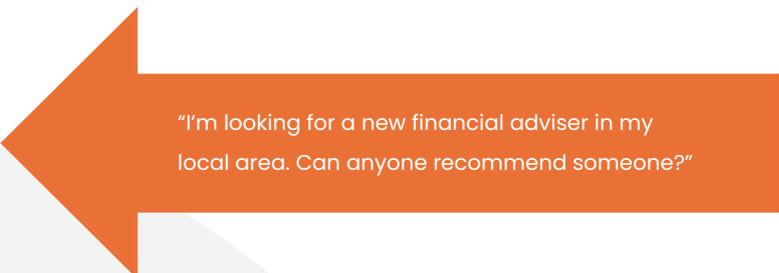
-“When I started my business I used to...”  
-“When I worked at X, I always found...”

Offering advice in this way removes the focus from the presenter and can be detrimental to personal learning. Always avoid unhelpful comments such as:



“If I were in your situation I'd...”

Occasionally, some types of advice (when specifically asked for) can be helpful. For example, a presenter may ask for advice about possible contacts or networks.



“I'm looking for a new financial adviser in my local area. Can anyone recommend someone?”

You will be expected to make your own judgement before taking the word of one of your peers or your facilitator. For example, you may want to look for reviews or do your own research.

**Remember** – The Circle is not a substitute for professional advice. Sometimes learning from others can provide a useful shortcut.

Asking questions, rather than giving advice, will prompt you to think in depth about your situation and how you can achieve your goals. By asking questions, you encourage your peers to reflect upon their own actions and the possible next steps. This aims to provide participants with the skills to reflect upon their goals and actions in the future.

## **GROUND RULES AND EXPECTATIONS**

Ground rules are set at the very beginning, in the first Circle session. It is important that your facilitator addresses your expectations of the sessions and supports decisions on the following aspects:

- **Challenges** – what level of challenge are you comfortable with?
- **Self-regulation** – how much guidance/ level of intervention will you expect from your facilitator?
- **Timekeeping** – How would your group like to keep time? Independently or with time warnings from the facilitator?
- **Feedback** – what is your preferred form of feedback: group or individual? (You may see that your facilitator takes notes of each participant's response to this question). Your facilitator is skilled in delivery of the Circles and may use different feedback methods depending on your needs and the needs within the group.

## **EXAMPLE OF GROUND RULES**

- Confidentiality and respecting intellectual property.
- Attendance and commitment
- Use of time
- Questioning and levels of challenge
- Respect
- Feedback
- Communication style
- Different types of 'helping'– what helps and what hinders?

In addition, your facilitator will discuss the following:

**Confidentiality** – This is of great importance for you and your peers to foster a safe environment where you all feel comfortable speaking about your business challenges.

**Responsibility** – it is important that you take responsibility for your own learning path, goals and for asking for extra help if you need it.

**Homework** – you are expected to work on your SMART goals in between sessions. Sometimes, the facilitator may set ‘homework’ to support the next session.

**Awareness** – a key aim of the Circles is to increase your self-awareness and understanding of others.

**Attendance** – You must attend at least 2 out of the 3 sessions to benefit from the programme.

## **DISCUSSION “CIRCLES”**

The first stage of the Circles is the **Checking In** which aims to see how each participant is feeling with regards their business and where they are at currently.

*What has been on your mind recently/today?*

*Is there anything you would like to talk about?*

*What would you like to focus on?*

*What progress has been made since the last session? (Applicable for sessions two and three).*

Your facilitator will begin with introductory discussions about participants emotions, general thoughts and feelings, current needs, and expectations of the session. Then the facilitator will lead your group into discussion time slots, during which you and your peers each have 10-20 minutes to present an issue or challenge, to be discussed in the given timeframe. This will give each one of you more insight and different perspectives on the topic.

Your facilitator may offer prompts if you or any of your peers are struggling to decide on a topic to talk about. Prompts could be given such as the ones below:

- What is the key issue, challenge, or opportunity that you would like to focus on for your business?
- Why would you like to focus on this today?
- How did it become an issue or challenge for you?
- How important is this topic to you? (On a scale from 1-10)

Each participant will have a turn at being the presenter.

As presenter, you should provide enough details for all Circle members to gain a broad understanding of the issue/challenge you are currently facing.

During your time slot, you may wish the other members of the Circle to question you specifically on a key issue, to help you gain clarity on the issue being discussed. This questioning should lead to further discussions and revelations for you.

Your facilitator will oversee this process – to ensure that Circle members stick to questions and avoid advice (gentle reminders are often required!), probe further, when necessary, to gain more information and maximise learning for you and your peers. The facilitator will act as a guide as you find solutions to the issues raised which may feed into your action plan.

**The aim of the Circles is to explore issues and challenges in depth to find solutions!**

**Note:**

- You may be asked to complete icebreakers and other activities to support your learning and understanding. This also supports you and your peers to feel more comfortable around one another. Your facilitator will choose the activities, depending on the needs of the group and the ones chosen will help with the issues or challenges raised.
- Remember: during the first session, you must complete the soft skills assessment form and return it to your facilitator for safe keeping until the final session.

After the Circle session ends, there will be a brief closing discussion to identify what each participant will take from this session. You will be asked to reflect on what you have learnt about yourself and the impact that the session has had on you. Before you leave the session, your facilitator may want to ensure the following has been completed:

- Session evaluation forms
- Next session- details of the time and date of next session
- Goals- remind participants of their SMART goals and encourage them to work on them in between sessions.

### **FOURTH CIRCLE**

A fourth Circle session is sometimes offered, or it is encouraged with you and your peers allocating someone from the group to act as facilitator. This does not work for all groups, but it does allow for Circles to continue beyond the formal facilitation period and encourages the ongoing benefits that Circles can offer.

### **THE FINAL CIRCLE:**

There are a few additional activities needed to close the final session as follows:

1. A discussion about your experiences and overall lessons learnt from the IBL Coaching Circles.
2. You may be given the opportunity to arrange a continued learning plan, including meet ups with other participants after these sessions have finished.
3. You will be encouraged to continue working on your SMART goals.
4. You will be signposted to other ways to engage with the project, such as through the website, Facebook page or the E-Learning Programme.
5. You will complete the final evaluation forms as this is essential for improving the Inclusive Business Launch Pad Circles and wider project.
6. Certificates will be handed out to all participants who have attended two or more sessions.

## **HOMEWORK**

After each session, ensure you are clear about any homework, tasks, or goals that you have agreed to work on. Reflect as soon as possible after the session as this will support your learning.

- What have you learnt about yourself and your business challenge, problem, or issue?
- Have you learnt anything from others in the group?
- What were the most useful questions?
- What impact did the questions from your peers have?

This helps participants to have time to reflect on the outcomes of the session prior to completing the evaluation forms. Evaluation forms should be completed at the end of each session.



# The Virtual Learning Process

## ONLINE CIRCLES

The IBL Circles can take place both online and face-to-face. The previous chapter relates to face-to-face training sessions, and sometimes these are adapted accordingly to suit online delivery. This chapter will provide further information on how to engage as a learner in the Circles online, as there are some adaptations that have been made to ensure online Circles can be equally successful.

Certainly, during the Covid-19 situation a great deal of work took place to ensure online Circles could be adapted and delivered whilst still following the guidelines for face-to-face delivery.

Here are some other ideas to ensure you get the best out of your online Circles experience. You will be guided to post and read messages.

- You will be encouraged to understand the expectations and norms for respectful interaction, as well as knowing how to follow directions for carrying out the associated tasks and activities (both online and offline). This may simply relate to checking IT connections, understanding of using the “chat” option online or agreeing to have screenshots taken to evidence attendance and perhaps having cameras on for improved interaction.
- Your facilitator will use a variety of strategies to help you and your peers to expand your knowledge based on your own situations, needs, interests, and abilities, such as:
  - Asking you to elaborate upon, justify, or support ideas, especially if there are conflicting views or multiple perspectives.
  - Pointing out ways in which one person’s comment links to or builds upon another’s: encouraging the connection of ideas, thus moving the communication from individual ideas to a group understanding.
- You will be encouraged to reflect on what you have learned and what impact this information has on your beliefs and behaviour.

## WHATSAPP

It can be helpful to set up a WhatsApp group or similar platform for you and your peers to ask questions. The facilitator can send reminders, links, and other information via this group.

## ORGANISATION AND LOGISTICS

Prior to the session, your facilitator will make a note of your geographical location and any differences in time zones to effectively schedule the Circles. Please also check yourself to ensure the time and duration of the Circles will be appropriate for you.

Your facilitator will advise which virtual platform will be used for the Circles. Please ensure you have this ready on your laptop or computer.

Be proactive with your own learning to ensure you have the correct date, time etc and understand what resources you may need before logging on to the Circles.

It is also good practice to try to ensure any external noises can be eliminated to avoid disrupting the Circles and the discussions.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A facilitator may introduce you to a range of new technological advances to enhance the training. This can include Mentimeter and Jamboards or other new resources. Your tutor will always explain how to use them before commencing. In addition, facilitators will often prepare a PowerPoint for each Circle delivery to enhance the training.

The links for the online evaluations and the soft skills forms will be shared in the online chat. On some occasions these links may be sent to you via email, so it is important to share your up-to-date contact details with the facilitator during the Circles training. Information is collated to ensure we can continue to improve the programme and to evidence that the Circles have taken place.

**Please Note:** Online training can feel less personal for some people. You can counterbalance this by increasing your knowledge on how to create an environment where you feel free to express yourself. The technology being used, technical skills required, internet connection speed and the bandwidth used by the Virtual platform must be considered. If you are not comfortable with this way of learning, due to lack of experience of online programmes, then this could impact what you get from the programme.

An organisation may choose to use ZOOM to hold the Circles. You will be sent the link and the password to access the circle about one week before the first Circle. It is important to ensure you are free to engage as if you are multitasking, you may not get the full benefit of the Circles. In addition, ensure that you have a good internet connection and that you can access sound, camera etc.

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Whether face to face or online Circles you will need a range of resources. Your facilitator will share links with you during the sessions. Sometimes these are sent to you via email before each session but generally they are shared via Chat on the day of the session. It is also important that you have pen and paper with you to make notes of the tools used during the session.

Your facilitator may use a PowerPoint presentation to support your learning and your understanding of the process. Often key slides will be shared with you via a link or separately via email and your facilitator will advise you of this.

Just like a face to face Circles session, you may be given homework. Ensure you are clear about any tasks, or goals that you have agreed to work on. Reflect as soon as possible after the session as this will support your learning.

- What have you learnt about yourself and your business challenge, problem, or issue?
- Have you learnt anything from others in the group?
- What were the most useful questions?
- What impact did the questions from your peers have?

This helps participants to have time to reflect on the outcomes of the session prior to completing the evaluation forms. Evaluation forms should be completed at the end of each session.

## DOCUMENTATION

In the following pages, you will find the Learning Agreement form, the Soft Skills Assessment form and the evaluation forms as mentioned during this document.

**Please note:** If you are doing the Circles online, your facilitator will provide you with electronic links to the documents that you need so that they can be completed online.

A hand in a dark suit jacket and tie is pointing at a laptop keyboard. A semi-transparent document with text and a bar chart is overlaid on the scene. The entire image has a warm, orange-brown color cast.

# Learning Agreement Form

**(ORGANISATION'S NAME)**

Our commitments:

- Place you in a coaching circle.
- Monitor your coaching circle and ensure that you meet at least 3 times.
- Provide you with support throughout the duration of these sessions.

Your commitments:

You agree to...

- Attend and actively participate in all meetings with your circle.
- Notify [organisation name] and your mentor if you are unable to attend a meeting.
- Complete all necessary paperwork- e.g., Evaluation forms after each session.

Confidentiality:

- I agree that I will not disclose I will not disclose any confidential information that I may be privy to in the Circle to any outside party, without the prior consent of [organisation name] and group participants involved.
- Please note, failing to comply with your commitments will be treated seriously by [organisation name] who has the right to remove you from the programme because of noncompliance.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## INCLUSIVE BUSINESS LAUNCHPAD CIRCLES: SOFT SKILLS ASSESSMENT FORM

To be completed prior to the first session and after the final session of the Circles.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please evaluate yourself at this present time (1= poor 5= excellent)

| SOFT SKILLS   | SCORE |
|---|-------|
| Networking skills                                   |       |
| Self-efficacy                                       |       |
| Leadership skills                                   |       |
| Problem solving skills                              |       |
| Stress management                                   |       |
| Goal setting  |       |
| Communication skills                                |       |
| Critical thinking and reasoning                     |       |
| Understanding my values                             |       |
| Identifying my future goals and how to achieve them |       |
| Creative thinking                                   |       |
| Teamwork  |       |
| Confidence  |       |



## INCLUSIVE BUSINESS LAUNCHPAD CIRCLES: SESSION EVALUATION FORM

**To be completed by the facilitator:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle No: \_\_\_\_\_

Session No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you! Please return this to your facilitator**

Your comments may be included (anonymously) in future promotional/marketing material for the Inclusive Business Launch Pad project. If you are not happy for your comments/quotes to be used for these purposes, please tick this box

**To be completed by participants:**

1. What were your expectations for today's Circle and have they been fulfilled?
2. What are the 3 main things you will take away from today's session?
3. What was the best part of the Inclusive Business Launchpad Circles for you so far?
4. Please add any further comments:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you! Please return this to your facilitator**

Your comments may be included (anonymously) in future promotional/marketing material for the Inclusive Business Launch Pad project. If you are not happy for your comments/quotes to be used for these purposes, please tick this box

## INCLUSIVE BUSINESS LAUNCHPAD CIRCLES: FINAL EVALUATION FORM

### To be completed by a facilitator:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Session No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please rate the following aspects of the Inclusive Business Launchpad Circles:  
(1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree)
2. How have the Inclusive Business Launchpad Circles helped you think about your career and business progression?
3. Any further comments?

| STATEMENT   | RATING |
|---|--------|
| The Circles were useful for my soft skill development and goal setting.                 |        |
| I have a clear idea on my next steps following the sessions.                            |        |
| The Circles were useful for peer support, networking and helped to boost my confidence. |        |
| I would recommend the Inclusive Business Launchpad Circles to a friend.                 |        |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Thank you! Please return this to your facilitator

Your comments may be included (anonymously) in future promotional/marketing material for the Inclusive Business Launch Pad project. If you are not happy for your comments/quotes to be used for these purposes, please tick this box

