

Citi Foundation, TechnoServe connect youth to entrepreneurship

In October 2018, Citi Foundation and TechnoServe launched the Youth Ideas Development (YID) Program, a 12-month youth commercial and social entrepreneurship development program aiming to build a culture of creative and innovative thinking within South African youth.



The program attracted over 100 participants between the ages of 18-30 from previously disadvantaged communities in Johannesburg (Tembisa), Durban (Kwa Mashu) and Cape Town (Harare, Khayelitsha), with the intention to select 90 candidates from the three locations.

The YID program is financially supported by Citibank through the Citi Foundation and implemented by TechnoServe. This is an ongoing partnership that aims to grow entrepreneurship and upskill the youth so that they may play a meaningful role in the economy of the country.

The program also collaborated with government bodies (NYDA, SEDA), municipalities (City of Cape Town, Ekurhuleni Municipality, City of Durban) multiple local businesses, placement agencies and sector-specific organisations to recruit candidates and deliver an impactful program.

The program finalists got the opportunity of earning an income through two streams.

The first stream entailed experiential learning opportunities in a variety of sectors to further the participants' experience in their specific industry and the second stream was enterprise development and incubation where participants would receive support through training and continued mentorship to commercialise a product or service in order to earn an income.

After an intense eight-week masterclass training on creativity, idea mapping, innovative thinking and entrepreneurship, the youth were taught how to effectively pitch their business ideas. This was followed by a pitching competition, where the candidates presented their improved ideas to a panel of judges. Thirty-seven promising young people were shortlisted, 28 of which have received grant funding to start their businesses and nine secured experiential learning placements in host companies related to their business interests.

Program highlights

The program has profoundly impacted the lives of the participants in various ways. One participant is Phumzile Mthembu, a 26-year-old from Tembisa, Johannesburg who owns Ingcweti which manufactures a coconut-based cosmetic range, with a focus on baby skincare.

Through the program, she learnt how to pitch her business and has gone on to win over R100,000 in prize money from pitching competitions and received multiple accolades including a top 10 finish in the 2019 Entrepreneurs Challenge despite her business being only 11 months old.

Speaking on her experiences with YID, Mthembu says, "I believe what they are doing for our businesses is great as entrepreneurship is needed especially now that the youth unemployment rate has increased to 55%. The amazing support we get even after classes are over is just amazing and am begging them not to end this program because it's going to bring a lot of change especially for our township economy."

Through the program's experiential learning intervention, the YID team pursued the placement of promising young entrepreneurs who have exceptional ideas but need more industry exposure.

One such candidate is Thokozani Zwane, who wishes to one day own a renewable energy company. The program was able to secure placement at the South African Alternative Energy Association (SAAEA), which is perfectly placed to offer the candidate the much-needed sector knowledge as he prepares for his future endeavours.

The program would not have achieved these milestones without the Citi Foundation's ongoing commitment to the development of entrepreneurship and job creation in emerging economies around the world.

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