



Empowering women as managers in the renewable energy sector

The business plan and mentoring component

1 Background

The contribution of women to economic development in APEC economies, like in many other regions in the world, has still not reached its full potential. To make progress, APEC Governments have come up with initiatives to advance the position, role, and contribution of women in APEC economies through improving women's access to finance, education, training, and technology, and promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic engagement. APEC economies are determined to empower women within the fast-growing renewable energy sector in the APEC Region, by supporting the Policy Partnership on Women in the Economy (PPWE) and the Energy Working Group (EWG) with a capacity building programme aiming at providing women with support for skills development to become effective entrepreneurs, employees, decision makers and leaders in the renewable energy sector, and to achieve full engagement of women in clean energy development.

2 The Empowering Women project

Empowering Women as Managers in the Renewable Energy Sector seeks to support women's career development by:

- Increasing their knowledge of renewable energy technologies, markets and policy;
- Enabling them to develop sound, comprehensive and convincing business plans; and
- Facilitating professional exchanges and peer-to-peer mentoring.

The project combines three major components:

- 1) A three-month online training, at the end of which participants will take an online exam;
- 2) The business plan development phase described in greater detail here – it includes a mentoring component; and
- 3) A five-days face-to-face workshop including three days of in-depth training and work group as well as two days during which the final business plans will be pitched to an international evaluation and support committee comprised of government and industry experts to provide real world feedback.

Developed business ideas can be to:

- Start a company at any selected point of the value chain of RE technologies,
- Realise a smaller RE project (grid-connected or offgrid; <\$US 10 Million investment), or
- Realise a large-scale RE project (>\$US 10 Million investment).

3 Purpose and description of the mentoring programme component

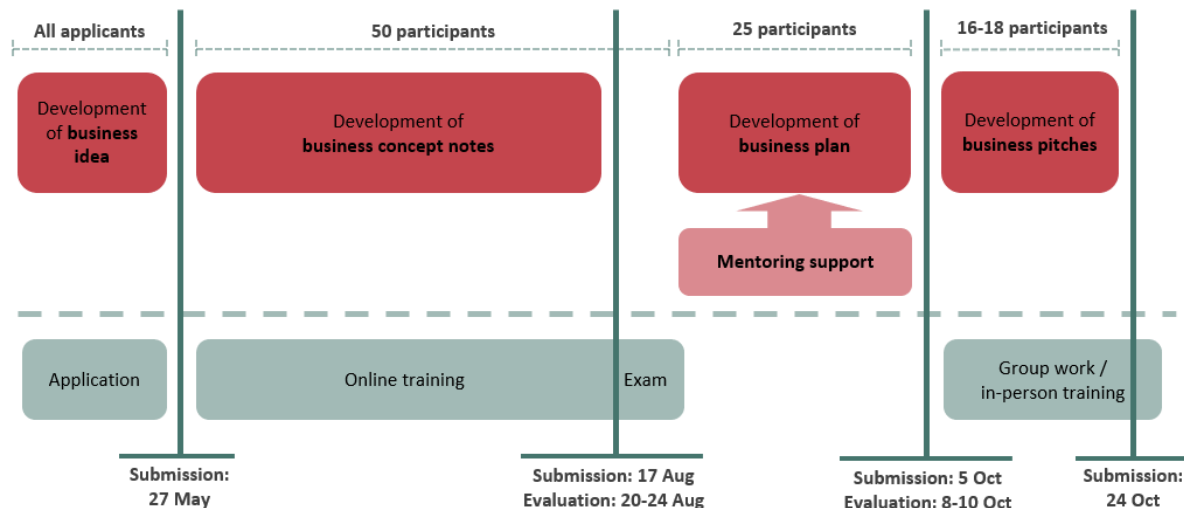
Mentoring can be defined as ‘a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee’s career and personal growth’.¹ This can include peer-to-peer mentoring, where participants are at the same level of seniority but have differing experiences.

As part of their application process, women who apply to the Empowering Women program send in a summary of their business idea. Women accepted to the program advance this idea alongside their online trainings to produce business concept notes of up to 5 pages. Presupposing they have successfully finished the training and online exam, these concept notes will serve as the basis for the selection of participants who will then go to the next phase, during which they will advance their concept notes to become full-fledged business plans. Selected women will be mentored by individuals with extensive experience in the renewable sector on how to develop a viable business plan for a company or project.

The organizer will prepare outlines and guidelines for all major deliverables, including the business concept notes, the business plans and the business pitches (including powerpoint presentation slides).

An online session will introduce participants to the business plan component in detail including the provided material, requested deliverables, evaluation criteria, and logistics.

Figure 1. Overview of the main components of the curriculum and submission dates for major deliverables which serve as qualifiers to proceed to the next stage



Twenty-five women will be selected based on the quality of their business concept notes, following a clear and transparent set of criteria:

- General strength of business rationale (25%)
- Clarity of business model and strategy (25%)
- Business viability (profitability and financing potential) (25%)
- Design and quality of concept note (25%)

¹ <https://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/sconul-mentoring>

4 Objectives

The mentorship programme aims to support women in advancing both the technical and financial sections of their business plans. The programme will strengthen key skills of the participants in organising ideas, developing comprehensive strategies, messaging towards different target audiences, relationship building, project planning, proposal writing and financial planning.

The mentors shall therefore help the mentees identify and achieve business development and personal growth goals that support business objectives such as:

- Developing a strong and targeted definition of the business idea, market potential, client groups, competition, business environment
- Defining key messages and unique selling points (USPs)
- Assessing the economic feasibility of the business idea
- Conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the business idea
- Structuring the business' management and operations
- Outlining the steps and timelines for the business plan realisation
- Expanding the network of / broadening the knowledge of potential partners and supporters
- Strengthening the understanding of investor/ financier expectations for business plans

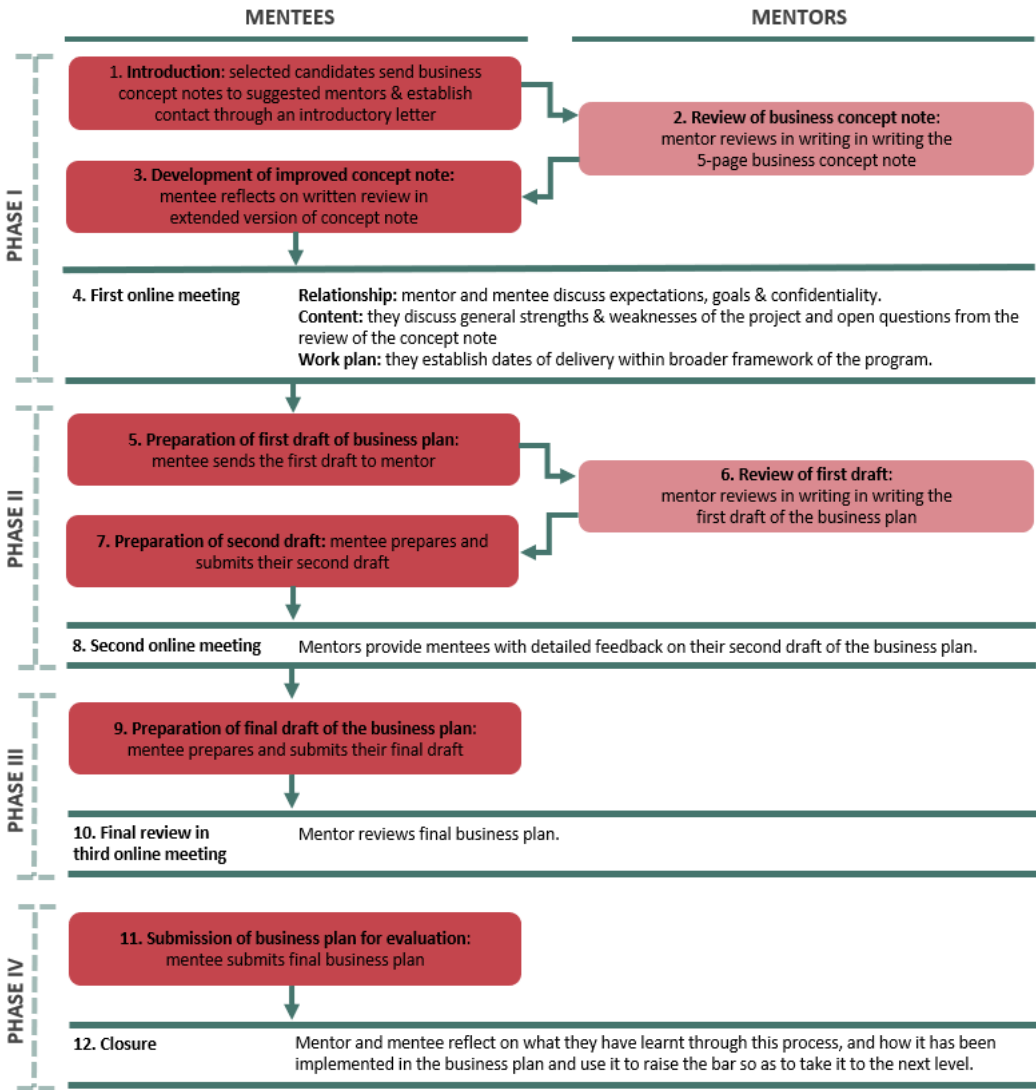
5 How will the mentoring be done?

The mentoring process will be on a one-on-one basis during which the mentors shall provide input on the technical and financial elements of material submitted by the mentee. The following overview suggests the process for interaction between the mentor and the mentee.

The programme mentors are a diverse group of senior experts who have been selected based on their rich professional experience in the renewable energy sector. They are expected to drive the learning and development of selected project participants in their area of interest. The mentor, standing in as a facilitator, shall support the fine tuning of business goals and skills through a series of time-limited, confidential, one-on-one conversations and feedback sessions with their assigned mentees, so as to come up with a technically and financially viable business plan.

To inform this process, guidelines for the preparation of a business concept note and full development of a business plan will be provided. These materials, together with the outline of the workflow process below, are highly recommended to be used by the mentor and the mentee. However, a degree of flexibility is accepted to support varying individual mentoring needs across specific learning goals, preferences, and learning styles.

Figure 2. Suggested process in the mentoring program



6 Key dates

The mentoring process is intended to last five weeks. It will commence on September 3, 2018 and run until October 5th, 2018. Prior to this, an overlapping period in which women are expected to develop their plans alongside their online training and the selection of viable business ideas according to the following plan:

Activity	Date/deadline
<i>DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS CONCEPT NOTES</i>	
Virtual introductory session to business plan development	4 July
Development of 5-page business concept note	4 July – 17 August
Submission of business concept notes	17 August
Selection of candidates for business plan development stage	20 – 24 August
<i>DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS PLANS</i>	
Teaming up of mentors with participants	27 – 31 August
Virtual introductory session to mentoring component	30 August 2018
Development of 12-15 pages business plans (including active mentoring)	03 September – 5 October
Submission of the final business plan	5 October 2018
Selection of candidates for participation in the face-to-face training and business plan pitching workshop	8-10 October 2018
<i>DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS PITCHES</i>	
Preparation of business pitches	10 – 24 October 2018
Submission of business pitch ppts (and supportive material)	24 October
Final business proposal pitches during face-to-face meetings during Singapore International Energy Week	29 October – 3 November

7 Outcome

At the end of the mentoring process, the participants should have developed a convincing business proposal to be submitted to the evaluation and support committee. The committee will select up to 16-18 well-developed business plans for the next stage of the project, which will include the face-to-face training and pitching of the business ideas.