



An Evaluation of BPN in Kyrgyzstan &  
Rwanda to Inform Learning and Innovation  
*Executive Summary*

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## Executive Summary

Business Professionals Network (BPN), having honed its experience over 20 years, has an established presence in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Rwanda. The organization provides business development services to livelihood-sustaining and dynamic enterprises. This research focused on Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda to understand what works well and what could be improved in the way BPN markets, recruits, and delivers its programming, as well as how it manages its local operations.

BPN offers a four-year program to entrepreneurs who are willing to write a business plan, manage their finances, and have an open mind to learning and making changes to their business. The program is grounded in the values of running a professional business and consists of “Four Pillars” (business education, coaching, loans, and a business owners’ association) to help the entrepreneur and his or her business grow. The business education has been consistently delivered in both markets and has been instrumental in helping an entrepreneur address basic business, marketing, finance and human resource challenges and opportunities. Coaching is an underutilized offer that is being more actively pushed in Rwanda. The loan offer is market dependent and will continue to be. The business association has great potential to continue to build a community that is supportive of BPN’s work.

Entrepreneurs that are currently involved in the program or have graduated are enthusiastic about what they are learning, the coaching they are receiving, and the growth they are achieving. Most have hired more staff and have seen a doubling or tripling of revenues. They are enthusiastic about BPN and happy to give credit to the BPN staff for helping them to see a path forward to overcoming obstacles and pursuing opportunities. Most identify key changes in their businesses of better financial management, more focused product and service offerings, running flatter organizations, and having a greater focus on understanding and servicing the customer.

BPN, despite its nonprofit status, is a commercially-minded organization, charging entrepreneurs what is considered a fair price for participation in the program. Entrepreneurs that have graduated remarked that they received value that surpassed the cost of participating in the program. They are willing to continue to pay for services including additional courses, sending more staff to courses, and paying a membership fee for the association.

In order to strengthen BPN’s delivery, Country Directors should ideally be on site and coordinated by a Head of Operations. The Country Directors should be able to conduct the basic seminars independently and also receive the necessary financial resources to anchor the program well and professionally in the market, including administrative support. Today, there is a tendency to overload and too little administrative support. A new management structure would therefore be necessary and the development of relationships and exchange/interaction between employees in the countries should be encouraged. BPN should increasingly practice what their experts teach in the seminars (e.g. focus on customer needs, clear goals in a business plan, etc.).

BPN’s marketing, public relations and social media have not been priority areas. As such, BPN might be missing opportunities to reach entrepreneurs, share its success, and find partners and funders. This is an area that needs to be invested in for the future. The organization has a track record and learning to share with local markets and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. BPN is a strong program. More people need to know about what they are doing, more entrepreneurs need to partake, and more people need to know of the organization’s future plans to have greater impact.