



BluAct
Starting up the Blue Economy

MANUAL

How to Organise a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition

A GOOD PRACTICE OPERATIONS MANUAL



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional
Development Fund
URBACT III (2014-2020) Programme

 **URBACT**
Driving change for
better cities

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	What is a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition?	8
3.0	Why organise a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition?	9
4.0	How to organise a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition	12
4.1	Appoint the key roles	12
4.2	Agree the competition objectives and develop a draft workplan	12
4.3	Map the Stakeholders and Establish a Strong Governance Structure	14
4.4	Establish prizes (including in kind support)	16
4.5	Agree the competition rules and establish a judging panel	17
4.6	Establish a Website to promote the competition and receive applications online	18
4.7	Launch Marketing campaign	18
4.8	Preparation Training	19
4.9	Organise the Demo Day	20
4.10	Awards Ceremony	20
4.11	Incubation	21
4.12	Ongoing Celebration and Follow-up	21
5.0	Conclusion	22

1.0

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been produced to help and support any organisation looking to organise a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition.

It has been produced by the BLUACT Network, an URBACT Transfer network of 7 European port cities including Piraeus, Mataro, Ostend, Galati, Matosinhos, Burgas and Salerno aiming to share good practices in Blue Economy Entrepreneurship.

The URBACT Programme is a European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programme which aims to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. Urbact is an instrument of EU Cohesion Policy, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the 28 Member States, Norway & Switzerland. URBACT's mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons, and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

The BLUACT NETWORK is one of 25 Transfer Networks funded between 2019-2021 which focus on the adaptation and transfer of established good practices amongst EU cities. These networks are led by cities that have been awarded the URBACT Good Practice label.




The BLUACT NETWORK follows the success of Piraeus' Blue Growth Initiative, an entrepreneurship competition that offers incubation services to local businesses boosting innovation and job creation.

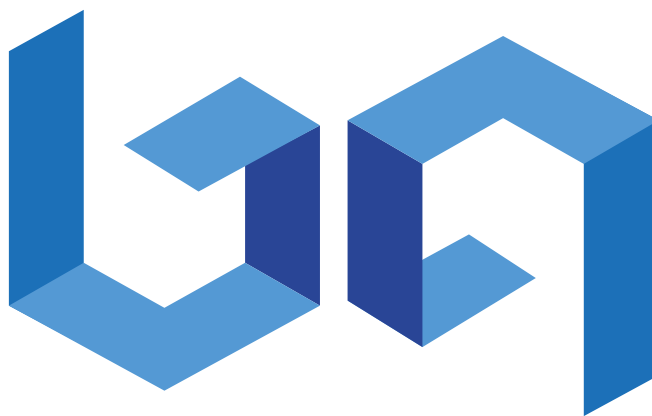
The city of Piraeus established the Blue Growth Initiative in 2014, in order to stimulate the creation of high value, sustainable jobs which were linked to their natural assets and their recognised strengths in the marine and maritime economy.



BluAct

Starting up the Blue Economy

bluact.eu    [bluactnetwork](https://bluactnetwork.org) [#bluact](https://twitter.com/bluact)



The Blue Growth Initiative was the first EU level established innovation competition for the maritime economy (Blue Economy).

The Blue Growth Initiative's vision is to;

- Strengthen the traditional economic activities related to the maritime economy with innovative business ideas.
- Inspire and help young entrepreneurs realize the innovative concepts relating to marine and freshwater resources.
- Create new jobs and promote a new innovative ecosystem, posing the sea in the forefront of economic development.

The Blue Growth Initiative is linked to EU Blue Growth strategy which supports sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors and recognizes the role of maritime contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The aim of this guide is to provide guidance to practitioners and partner organizations from public and private sector organisations on how to run a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition in a simple and straightforward manner.



BluAct

STARTING UP THE BLUE ECONOMY



TRANSFER DIARY



VOX POP



LEARNING LOG

TRANSFER TREASURE BOX



2.0 WHAT IS A BLUE GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION?

A Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition is essentially a specialised Business Plan Competition, seeking to generate new business ideas linked to the Marine and Maritime economy.

As a specialist Business Plan Competition, a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programme is a contest where business plans, submitted by aspiring entrepreneurs, are compared, and judged, according to a set of criteria published prior to the launch of the competition.

Normally, criteria for judging business plans submitted encompass issues such as the uniqueness of the business idea, the management skills of the entrepreneur, the growth potential of the business, the financial sustainability of the business etc.

The overall aim of such competitions is to get aspiring entrepreneurs to explore new business ideas and start-up their own company, which has the potential to generate significant growth and create sustainable employment.

Like any Business Plan Competition, a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programme is more than a simple one-off call for entries but is more of an ongoing process, which involves awareness raising, capacity

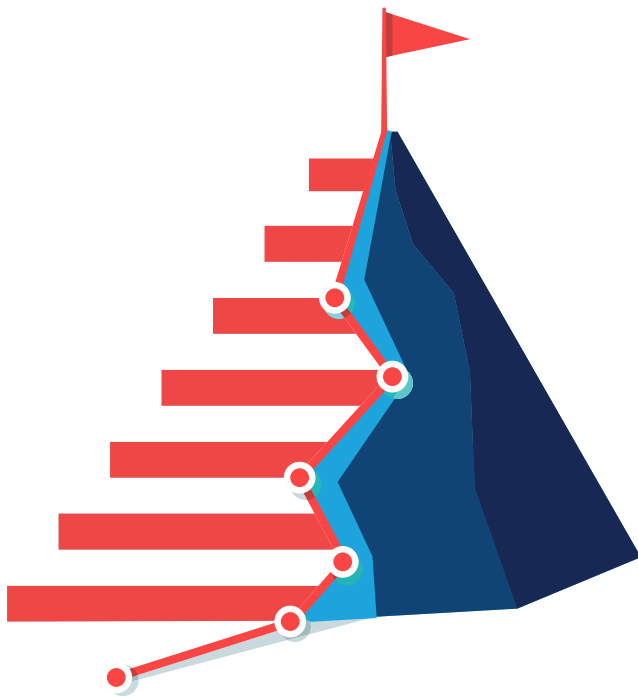
building of stakeholders, the training of entrepreneurs, the organisation of an incubation process etc. The primary aim of this process is to create a strong entrepreneurial eco-system, capable of supporting applicants to create sustainable businesses. Because of this, they rely on a partnership approach in the city in which they are being delivered.

In this way, the organiser of a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programme needs to act more like a curator of a Festival, organising various inputs, producing the schedule, gaining sponsors, scheduling different events etc.

Key to Piraeus' success has been the establishment of a strong partnership structure for organising the Blue Growth Initiative – a partnership they refer to as the 'Marine-scape'. This Marine-scape draws together all the key parties that are committed to supporting the growth of the Blue Economy in the city – whether Port Authorities, Universities, Businesses, Public Sector Bodies etc.

These bodies can play a variety of roles in the entrepreneurial eco-system – from championing the cause, to providing venues or prizes, to acting as mentors to applicants, through to delivering direct support services.

In this way, a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition is a whole system solution to a particular problem – of how to foster and stimulate new, value adding businesses in the marine and maritime economy.



3.0

WHY ORGANISE A BLUE GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION?

The main reasons for organising a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programme are simple – to generate high value businesses and jobs in a key sector of the economy in which a city has a particular strength (the marine and maritime sector). However, there are also secondary benefits, including;

- Cluster Development amongst the Marine and Maritime Sector: The formation of a strong cluster, or network, of marine and maritime businesses to support the renewal of the sector in a particular city;
- Strengthening the Entrepreneurial Eco-system: Stimulating the creation of a stronger blue growth entrepreneurship ecosystem;
- Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Start-up Market: Strengthen market linkages between different actors in the start-up ecosystem;
- Championing Entrepreneurship: Showcasing entrepreneurship as a viable career vocation for a range of potential stakeholders;
- Strengthening the Marine & Maritime Economy: To promote a specific type of entrepreneurship, linked to natural assets of the area;
- Capacity Building: To build the capacity of local partner organisations to improve the support on offer to aspiring entrepreneurs; and
- Knowledge Transfer: Between early stage entrepreneurs and more established businesses in the sector. Whilst the primary goals are all about job and business creation, these secondary benefits alone are worthy enough reasons for promoting a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition.

Piraeus was a city facing common problems with other European cities in the field of unemployment, education, urban poverty, social exclusion, environmental issues. Among the city's challenges were issues like the digital economy – with the smart city vision being a cross-cutting theme in Piraeus development agenda. As a port city, Piraeus had a wide number of dynamic activities in the maritime sector. So, the Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) constitutes a significant effort to tackle the existing problems by contributing to the development of jobs, thereafter to the growth of city, the urban poverty, the simulation of business community, the promotion of innovation and ICT, the sustainable development and the improvement of skills.

Among others, the BGI offers innovation and business strategies applied to the Blue Economy, acceleration of knowledge transfer to companies, access to new production and technological processes, strengthening of cooperation in the fields of research, education and practice, creating channels for exchanging knowledge, improvement of skills and knowledge in Blue Economy, creation of jobs, and the continuous development of the marine and maritime sector.



BG is linked to EU Blue Growth strategy which supports sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors and recognizes the role of maritime contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In the Greek Partnership Agreement the significant potential of the Blue Economy in Greece is highlighted for the exploitation of which it is necessary the development of enterprises in the wider region of Piraeus, where the entire maritime sector will be settled in order to convert it into a competitive pole for the international navigation. In Attica's Region Smart Specialization Strategy and Attica's Regional Operational Plan Blue Economy is identified as one of the 3 privileged areas of specialization which contributes to the enhancement of the innovation activity in the Region. The Integrated Urban Intervention Plan of the Municipality of Piraeus and the Municipality's Integrated Territorial Investment aims to deploy entrepreneurship and the support of start-ups for the promotion of innovation in Blue Economy and the development of the city as an international business centre with activities in the Blue Economy.



P
I
R
A
E
U
S

4.0

HOW TO ORGANISE A BLUE GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION

Having looked at some of the reasons why a city might want to organise a Blue Growth Competition, we shall now turn our attention to how to organise one. In reality, the process is quite simple, but does need to be well managed. This guide seeks to break the process down into a series of simple, understandable steps, for others to replicate, with potential adaptations (the nature of the local circumstance will require some adaptations to the processes set out in this guide).



4.1 Appoint the key roles

The first step in the process of organising a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition is to put in place the management team that will be responsible for organising it. Two particular roles are important to get right, namely the role of the Competition Co-ordinator and the Chair of the Governing Body, or Advisory Board.

Ideally, the Chair of the Advisory Board should be;

- Well-connected in the Marine and Maritime Sector;
- Politically astute;
- Capable of facilitating complex, multi-stakeholder partnerships

Similarly, the Competition Co-ordinator should be;

- A commercially focussed project manager;
- Well organised;
- A driven self-starter;

Working together, these two members of the organising team are chiefly responsible for organising a well-run competition. The Chair of the Advisory Board will be responsible for ensuring the overall governance of the competition is well run, and stakeholders are all pulling in the same direction. Similarly, the Competition Co-ordinator will be responsible for working with partners to oversee the day-to-day implementation of the competition.

The steps they will need to take to organise the competition are set out in the following sections of this guide.



4.2 Map the Stakeholders and Establish a Strong Governance Structure

Once the organising team is in place, the next step in the development of a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition is to establish a strong governance structure for overseeing the competition delivery. This governance structure, or Advisory Board (you can call it what you like), should bring a group of influential people together, who are capable of working together to support and oversee the delivery of the competition.

This Advisory Board should comprise the ‘good and the great’ of the local Marine and Maritime Sector - influential dignitaries, potential sponsors and key delivery partners - who come together to organise the competition. Members of this Advisory Board play an important set of different roles, including;

- Guiding the strategic direction of the competition
- Acting as Business Champion’s, promoting the competition widely
- Co-ordinating the competition delivery and delivery resources
- Acting as judges, in the competition itself

Prior to formulating the Advisory Board, it is important to map the key stakeholders locally and develop a target list of potential members of the Advisory Board. Stakeholders can be prioritised according to their influence and importance, using a standard Stakeholder Prioritisation Matrix, like the one set out overleaf.

Ideally, a good Advisory Board will be made up of high influence and high importance people, although you may choose to broaden your search to include high importance/low influence and low importance/high influence people if they bring missing skillsets to the Board (like delivery expertise, for example).

Target groups to try and encourage to join the Advisory Board include;

- Maritime/Marine Businesses and/or Cluster Organisations
- Potential Sponsors
- Media Partners
- Incubation Providers, Coaches and Mentors
- Finance Providers
- Competition judges
- Key Representatives from Local/Regional Government

Ideally, the Advisory Board should predominantly be made up of people with some direct experience of entrepreneurship, although it is more important to get the mix of partners and stakeholders right to ensure you have representation from all of the above groups. We have already stressed how important it is to select the right Chairperson for the Advisory Board, as they will play a key part in guiding the future direction of the competition.

Stakeholder importance / influence matrix		
Level of Importance	High importance / Low influence	High importance / High influence
	Low importance / Low influence	Low importance / High influence
	Level of Influence	



4.3 Agree the competition objectives and develop a draft workplan

Once you have established the Advisory Board for the competition, it's vital to work with this group to agree the overall objectives of the programme and draft a workplan.

As far as the objectives are concerned, this should include a combination of strategic objectives (such as job creation or new business created) together with a list of more tactical, shorter-term objectives, such as;

- Number of items of promotional literature to be produced;
- Number of events to be organised;
- Number of Business Plans you aspire to receive;
- Number of mentors and coaches required;
- Overall budget to be made available for different elements of the competition etc.

As far as the workplan is concerned, this could be documented in a GANTT diagram, showing the individual phases and timing of the different elements of the programme or using a ONE PAGE PROJECT PLAN CANVAS, like the one shown overleaf.

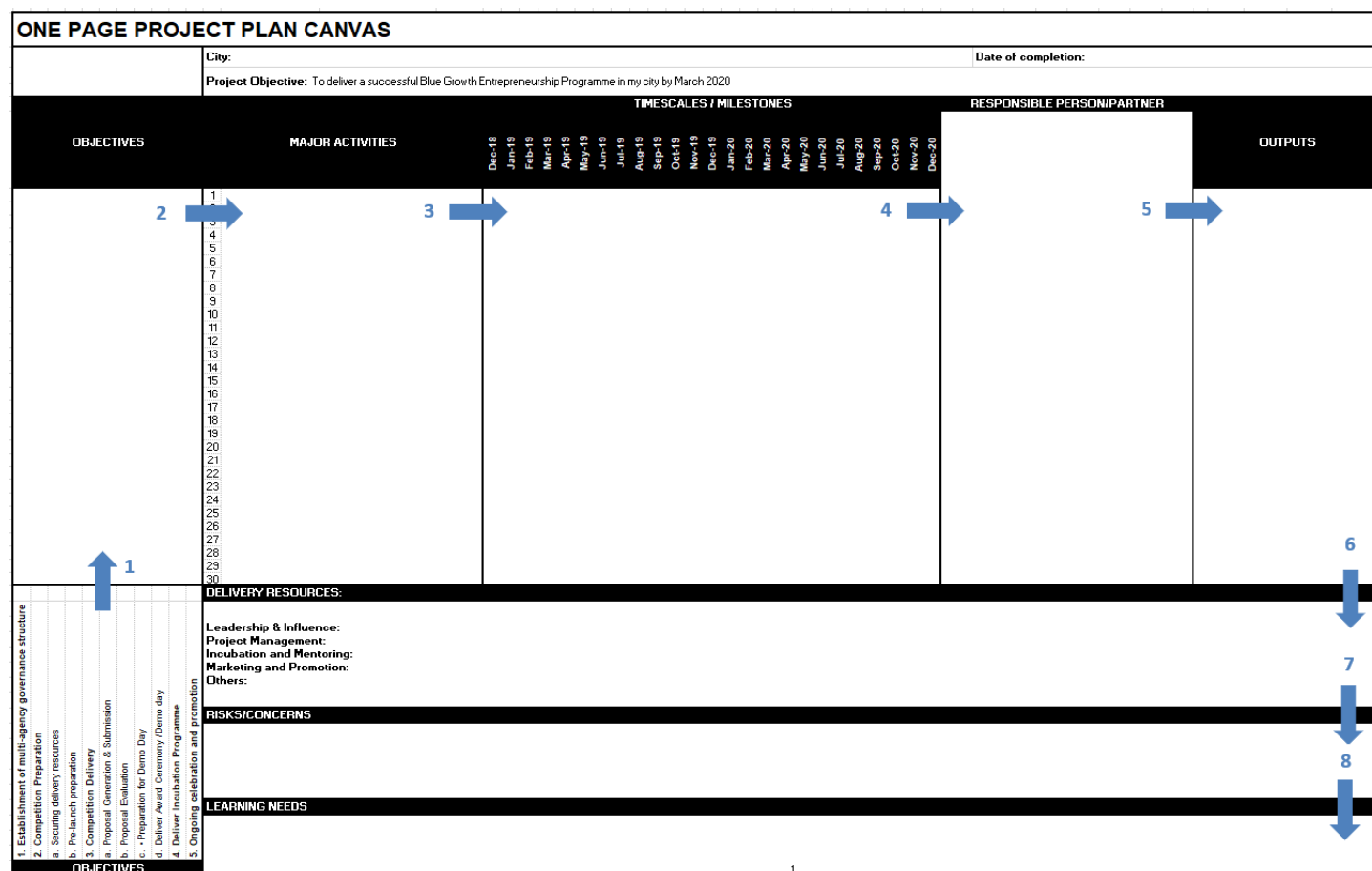


Fig. 1: An Example of a One Page Project Plan, which can be used to develop the overall workplan

To complete this canvas, simply;

1. Complete the Objectives in Section One
2. Complete the Major Activities of the competition in Section Two
3. Complete the Timeline for the various activities in Section Three
4. Identify the Responsible Person/Partner in Section Four
5. Identify the Outputs in Section Five
6. Identify the Delivery Resources in Section Six
7. Develop the Risk Register in Section Seven
8. Identify any Learning Needs in Section Eight

Once complete, this project plan will provide a framework for the implementation of your Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programme and should become a 'living document' you return to regularly to check your plans remain on track.



4.4 Establish prizes (including in kind support)

Following the establishment of the Advisory Board, it is important to put in place the competition prizes and secure the in-kind support you need to run the competition. This process will largely revolve around securing sponsorship or in-kind support from potential contributors to the competition (who could also be Advisory Board members).

The particular support you need to run a successful competition includes things like;

- Sponsorship towards awareness raising material – the website, promotional material etc.
- Sponsorship towards events – Hackathon's, Demo Days, Preparation Days, Award Ceremony's etc.
- Event Catering Support
- Incubation, Mentoring and Coaching support
- A potential Prize Fund

In some cases, your partners may be willing to provide some in-kind support to the project to help organise it. However, you may also need to secure some cash sponsorship.

This whole issue of seeking support and sponsorship needs to be handled carefully however, as partners need to understand that the competition cannot proceed without sponsorship and in-kind support from others. The organisation of such a competition requires a group of committed partners, all of whom are willing to contribute time and effort into the organisation of the competition.

Our own experience suggests a sensible place to start is to talk to your partners about whether they would be willing to contribute some of in-kind resources to the overall programme, potentially adapting a little of what they already do, to fit into the requirements of a Blue Growth Competition.

You may also want to try to develop a sponsorship proposal for the different elements you are looking for support for. If cities are keen to develop sponsorship proposals, it is important to make a professional pitch. Traditional asks for sponsorship should cover;

- **What the need is.** Explaining what the need is and who exactly will benefit by meeting that need. In this section we actively aim to make supporters feel that they can make a difference, by setting out how their investment will help change people's lives;

- **Why the need is now.** Making it clear why the need is now, and urgent. In order to evidence this, we try and rely on surveys, third-party (expert) opinions, or statements from the people who need help;

- **How the organisation seeking funding is uniquely qualified to tackle this need.** In this work we try to create a clear, unique, and compelling source of competitive advantage for our clients, by leaning on the competitor analysis we have previously undertaken;

- **What the benefits of the action will be.** Setting out the major and minor, positive consequences (guaranteed and hoped for) that will result from the investment;

- **What the negative consequences are likely to be if the organisation seeking funding fails.** Setting out the major and minor impacts if the funding is not forthcoming.

In addition, some of the contributions that come from partners can come in the form of in-kind support. However, in order for these in-kind contributions to be forthcoming, the competition organiser still has to make the ask. Developing a sponsorship pitch at least enables the conversation to be had with target donors and if partners give you some in-kind support, at least it starts the sponsorship bandwagon rolling (and some small early successes can help to feed the process, as you can talk about some of the early sponsors that have already committed resources when you talk to other sponsors).

In addition to having 1:1 conversations about sponsorship and in-kind contributions with potential sponsors, we recommend organising a facilitated process with the Advisory Board about how they can support the delivery of the competition through awareness raising and the delivery of incubation support.

At the end of this combined process, you will have hopefully drawn together a variety of 'offers' from partners who are open to providing support to the competition, in one form or another. This will allow you to publicise the prizes for the competition (which might include a combination of incubation support, prize fund, marketing and promotion etc.) This process will also help you shape the 'scale' of the competition, as you will have a clearer idea of the resources you have available to you to work with. Sponsorship and support generation can continue throughout the process of organising the competition, but it is important to gain some understanding of the potential prizes prior to launch (so they can be included in the promotional material, as incentives to encourage people to enter).



4.5 Agree the competition rules and establish a judging panel

Following the process of securing the resources to run the competition, it is important to agree the competition rules and establish a judging panel. By competition rules, we mean;

- Terms and Conditions
- Selection Criteria
- The Competition Themes

It is particularly important to publish the criteria on which Business Plans will be evaluated, to ensure applicants understand how they will be judged. Implicit in this process is also the need to establish a judging panel to be able to evaluate the different proposals.

Forming a judging panel, or selection committee composed of the right people is an essential component of the competition's planning stage. Picking the right people is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, choosing the right individuals to sit on the judging panel can be key to attracting more applicants. In this regard, high profile judges, judges with access to good networks, or finance providers can be particularly useful. If aspiring entrepreneurs feel that the judges are there to mentor and support them if they win, this can also help.

Secondly, having the right individuals can also help influence the type of participants you attract (i.e. high-growth entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, start-ups etc.). Selecting the right ones for the life-stage of the applicants you are targeting can be key. Overall, you should try to assemble a judging panel that is as representative as possible of the individuals you are trying to attract and champion. For a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition, having Port Authorities, Ship Owners, Investors etc can be particularly useful. If you can secure a wide network of private sector actors, judges may be well placed to help put competition winners and high-potential candidates in touch with prospective investors and incubators.

Finally, consider adding some wildcard judges. Having people with different backgrounds and expertise sit on the same panel can be useful in ensuring people with unusual profiles stand a good chance of getting through.

As far as evaluating the different proposals are concerned, in the case of the Blue Growth Initiative, proposals are evaluated according to a range of factors, including the overall Business Concept; the pitching Team; the quality of the Presentation; the Competencies of the Team; and the Sustainability of the Business Idea. You may choose different judging criteria, based on the objectives of your competition.



4.6 Establish a Website to promote the competition and receive applications online

Following the agreement of competition rules, it's normal to then develop a website, to promote the competition, but also to receive applications online. The functionality needed for this website is fairly simplistic, containing a number of brochureware pages and a form to enable applicants to submit their business plans online.

That said, the site needs to have a professional look and feel and could include pages on;

- About the Competition
- About the Judges
- About the Sponsors
- How to Enter?
- Why Enter?
- Terms and Conditions
- Contact Us

Keeping the site clean and simple will help give it a professional look and feel and increase the number of applicants you receive (although promoting it more widely is more likely to be a key success factor in this regard).



4.7 Launch Marketing campaign

Once the website is live, you can start to promote the competition. This element of organising a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition is one of the most important aspects to get right.

Insufficient, or bad promotion can result in you receiving too few applications.

Understand your local entrepreneurial marketplace

Before you start to organise your promotional activities, it is important to try and understand a bit more about your local entrepreneurial marketplace.

If you happen to be in a city which is a peripheral city, that suffers from a high degree of out-migration and low levels of entrepreneurial activity, it is quite likely that you are going to struggle to encourage sufficient applications by just running a traditional marketing campaign.

In cities with these characteristics, you might need to engage in more proactive outreach /community-based ideation activities (organising hackathons and similarly structured activities to stimulate business ideas). Adopting this approach will help you bring together different elements of your community to stimulate early stage business ideas.

Conversely, if you are in a larger, more popular city, with higher levels of natural entrepreneurship, and a strong Marine/Maritime Entrepreneurial Eco-system you may just be able to launch a traditional promotional campaign to generate sufficient business ideas.

Utilise your partnership to market the competition

In reality, it is important to recognise whichever approach you adopt, that community outreach and engagement is key to generating a good number of applications. The start-up entrepreneurial market is essentially a consumer market, as every individual in a particular city has the potential to have a business idea that they have been incubating.

Because of this, the more 'routes to market' that you have to reach potential applicants the better. That is why good quality partnership/network marketing (where you market through and with a range of partner organisations) is key to generating a good number of applications. This is also why it is worth trying to have a conversation with the competition stakeholders about what they might do to promote the competition to their own stakeholders.

BluAct partners own experience of marketing their own Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competitions suggests key marketing partners can include the media, universities and research organisations, trade associations etc. If all these partners can work together to market the competition to their respective stakeholders, the chances of generating sufficient applications will increase considerably.

Plan a strong campaign

Planning a strong campaign is important in generating a good number of ideas.

Empirical evidence suggests that the minimum period of time that an organiser should set aside for the marketing campaign is 3 months, although this can extend to 5-6 months in some cases. Anything shorter runs the risk of limiting the number of competition entrants.

Typical marketing activities over this duration of time could include;

- Launch Event – an opening call for entries
- Media Promotion – ongoing media promotion
- PR and Public Relations – highlighting different themed stories (profiling judges, highlighting prizes, publishing research etc.)
- Network Marketing – presenting at relevant events and networks (including looking for relevant meet-ups and third-party hackathons)
- Partnership Marketing – Marketing through partners to target key segments (using partner newsletters etc.)
- Social Media – keeping an ongoing presence on Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in etc.

When trying to target potential entrants, try and make sure you consider the type of entrepreneurs you are trying to attract, and tailor your channels accordingly. Also remember that it is not sufficient to just communicate something once, and that repetition will build your responses.

Following the closure of the competition application process, continue to maintain positive PR and promotion, to maintain a strong profile for the next stages of the competition, which will continue to be of interest to the media (as it will involve personal stories – something that all media likes to showcase and talk about, as it will bring the competition to life).



4.8 Preparation Training

Once the competition is closed, and all the applications have been submitted, it's normal to invite those applicants with credible business ideas to preparation training, to prepare them for a 'Demo Day', where they will showcase their business ideas to the panel of judges.

The scale and amount of preparation training you will need to deliver will depend on the maturity of the business ideas you have managed to generate and/or the life-stage of the individual entrepreneurs. If you have managed to attract applicants with very early stage business ideas, the amount of preparation training needed might be more than if you have managed to attract a group of 'closer to market' entrepreneurs.

As a minimum, the preparation training normally covers subjects such as;

• Introduction to Entrepreneurship

A session exploring what it takes to be an entrepreneur, exploring personal motivations and goals. The purpose of this session is to help the participants explore what it means to be an entrepreneur and whether going into business is right for the applicants.

• Business Model and Customer Value Proposition Development

A session helping the applicants to refine their Customer Value Proposition (CVP) and spend some time refining their Business Model.

- **Business Plan Training**

A session to help the applicants develop the various components of their Business Plan and distil this into a clear and concise document.

- **Pitch Training**

A session designed to help them learn how to pitch their business to potential investors and the judges of the competition.

In the case of the BluAct Network, the majority of the preparation training lasted anywhere between two days and two weeks (depending on the maturity of the business ideas). In practical terms, much of it was orientated towards a pre-incubation programme, helping people to strengthen their business ideas, so that they were ready to present to potential investors in the next stage of the competition.

The training should ideally be practical and experiential, for example, helping the aspiring entrepreneurs to hone their pitching and presentation skills through experience and trialling their presentation.



4.9 Organise the Demo Day

The culmination of this preparation process is the Demo Day – an event where the shortlisted candidates are asked to pitch their business ideas to a panel of judges, that have been previously selected from the Advisory Board.

Judges will normally be given a copy of the evaluation criteria (such as the innovativeness of the business idea, the strength of the business plan and the candidate's entrepreneurial mind set) and be asked to score the pitches in a comprehensive and rigorous way, assessing both the quality of the business plan and the persuasiveness of the presentations.

Typically, the pitching component of the competition should be no more than 1-2 days in total. You should also have decided beforehand how the presentation will be structured (e.g. a 15-minute presentation followed by 10-minutes of questions).

Remember to give sufficient time for the panel to score the finalists and deliberate to reach a consensus on the winners of each prize category



4.10 Awards Ceremony

Following the Demo Day, it's normal to organise an Awards Ceremony, where the public are invited to attend an open event, where the winners are announced, and the competition entrants can receive their prizes.

Typically, the prizes that you allocate to the winners can range from cash grants and preferential loans to sponsored incubation packages comprising office space, internet access, administrative support, coaching etc. When awarding the prizes, you should publish the terms and conditions of each prize, so entrants understand the conditions under which they are offered. This will prevent any subsequent confusion.

You should also take the opportunity to acknowledge the roles that partners played in the competition and invite sponsors, judges, and members of the Advisory Board to the ceremony.

You may also choose to use the opportunity to distribute certificates to all trainers who delivered preparatory training to competition entrants, to ensure that they contributors to the preparation programme are appropriately recognised (and they commit to supporting it again next year).

The awards ceremony is also an opportunity to have finalists showcase their business ideas, before announcing the award winners. You may either invite finalists to briefly present their business ideas at the event or showcase a video compiling short interviews with each of the finalists.



4.11 Incubation

Following the completion of the awards ceremony, it's normal for some of the entrants to enter an incubation programme. This could comprise a mix of;

- **Further training and support** – to help the competition winners further develop their business ideas;
- **Office Space** – to be part of a more classical incubation programme
- **Mentoring and Coaching** – support from third party entrepreneurs

The type of support offered should depend on the life-stage of the winning ideas and their particular needs.

Generally speaking, early-stage entrepreneurs are more likely to benefit from more 'pre-incubation' support, which comes in the form of training and mentoring/coaching support. At their life-stage, entrepreneurs may well have a sound business idea, but not have fully worked out the Business Plan or the Business Model, sourced the finance they need to start-up or understood whether they have got what it takes to succeed as an entrepreneur etc.

As such, a structured programme of pre-incubation support may help them start to address some of these issues.

Conversely, more mature (or 'market ready') businesses may well have a fully developed business plan and may have even started some test trading. For these businesses, they are more likely to find the office space component and networking more useful, rather than training to further 'hone' their business proposition.

The nature of the incubation offer you make might also depend on the prizes you have been able to secure from local providers. In the case of the BluAct Network, some were based around training, whilst others were office space prizes, provided by partner companies. In some cases, the incubation offer lasted for 3 months, in other cases one year.



4.12 Ongoing Celebration and Follow-up

Following the closure of the awards ceremony, and the award of prizes, the competition organiser should ordinarily continue to celebrate the achievements of the entrants, through ongoing Press and Public Relations.

Continuing to keep the winners in the spotlight and highlighting their ongoing success will help both the entrepreneur succeed, but also make the sponsors continue to support the competition as it evolves. At the close of the competition, the organiser should write to all those that have contributed to the process to date, thanking them for their contribution and eliciting their support for next year's competition.

Thus, the process of securing sponsors starts again and the chances of the overall competition achieving sustainability is maximised.

5.0

CONCLUSIONS

Rather like Business Plan competitions, Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Programmes are fairly straightforward to organise.

They do require a degree of management capacity and a strong place-based partnership that is committed to working together to promote Blue Growth Entrepreneurship in that locality. They are partnership-based initiatives, that require partners to come together to develop a shared vision and action plan for promoting Blue Growth Entrepreneurship.

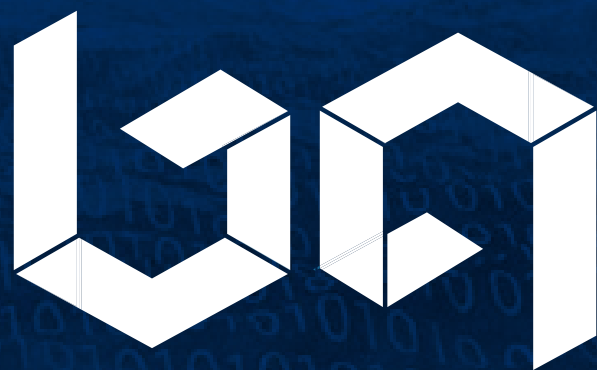
Ideally, these place based partnerships that come together to organise such a competition are comprised of a mix of players who can come together to provide all the key ingredients that make for a successful competition – namely entrepreneurial talent; entrepreneurial development inputs; incubation services; business networks; access to finance support etc.

The stronger the partnership, the more likely the competition is to be successful.

Once this partnership is in place, the process of organising the competition is fairly simple and comprises of a number of steps, including;

- Mapping the Stakeholders and establishing a Strong Governance Structure
- Agreeing the competition objectives and developing a draft workplan
- Establishing prizes (including in kind support)
- Agreeing the competition rules and establishing a judging panel
- Establishing a Website to promote the competition and receive applications online
- Launching a Marketing campaign
- Organising preparation training
- Organising a Demo Day
- Organising an Awards Ceremony
- Organising an Incubation programme

Generating positive public relations throughout the competition process can help strengthen the partners commitment to continue to work together to organise the competition and maximise the chances of the competition achieving sustainability.



BluAct

Starting up the Blue Economy

bluact.eu    [bluactnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/bluactnetwork) [#bluact](https://twitter.com/bluact)



BluAct

Starting up the Blue Economy