

How The Market Project Creates its Businesses



The Market Project's Value Proposition: We create viable businesses, that otherwise would not get started in a local context, that employ trauma survivors and bring hope to the individual and transformation to the community.

In order to decide what business we start, we take the following steps:

1. **Build bridges with trauma care organizations.** We work with organizations that are already working with survivors of trauma. We do not seek to become a counseling or rescue organization ourselves, but we work with these organizations to identify men and women sufficiently stable in their recovery to be employed in a trauma-informed (TI) workplace.
2. **Develop pre-business concepts.** We place staff on the ground, look around at existing businesses already running in the region, and speak with a variety of people to come up with ideas for new businesses in the locales where we want to work. These businesses can be of many sizes and composition, but we are generally NOT looking to start micro-businesses.
3. **Apply rigorous research.** After a list of pre-business concepts have been developed, we then do extensive desk research to answer the following questions:
 - a. What is the capital required (and is capital easily identified within the community)?
 - b. What are the barriers to entry in the business?
 - c. Is there a level of sophistication to the concept that would discourage copycats or easy duplication?
 - d. Is the supply chain sufficient and clean?
 - e. Is the product consumable?
 - f. Is the market local, regional or global?
4. **Non-business factors considered.** After we do the initial research, we look at non-business factors before moving forward.
 - a. Does the business offer a workplace requiring a variety of tasks and levels of skills from the employees. Are there entry-level, mid-level and upper-level positions that would offer a natural professional skills development path for employees?
 - b. Can the business be run consistent with TI principles?
 - c. Does the business meet our other criteria of reducing dependence on aid, increasing individual agency, and doing no harm to the environment.
5. **Raise capital.** We work with a variety of funders to raise the required capital for a new business or the re-organization of an existing business needed to make it profitable.
6. **Craft a business plan.** After doing the research above and answering our non-business questions, we work to create a business plan that allows the business to be cash positive in a reasonable timeframe.

7. **Hire a professional and experienced Business Facilitator (BF) or General Manager (GM).** We bring on the right staff to start, restart, or grow a business. These are people who will manage the business, be supervised by TMP, and are teachable on what is required to create a trauma-informed workplace.

8. **Advise, train and problem-solve with the BF or GM** throughout the life of the business including the use of the latest in evidence-based approaches to creating an emotionally and physically safe, TI work environment.

9. **Cross-train each employee.** We work with employees who have the interest and allow them to learn other parts of the business and a variety of skills that will allow them to advance in the business or freely move to other work places as desired.

10. **Earn Out.** We seek to identify employees in our businesses who, after appropriate training and experience, have the ability to run the business without our help. We will offer them the opportunity to execute an “earn out” of the business, finally removing The Market Project from the business.

End Goal: Create a thriving business committed to a trauma-informed ethos that fosters agency in each employee and will eventually be earned out by the employees.