

80th Anniversary
1938-2018
1st National Bank
St. Lucia Limited


1st National Bank
Here...for YOU!

FOCUSING ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Micro Small Medium Entrepreneurship (MSME) Competency Unit

“ Saint Lucia is the pilot country involved in an 8-year project with partners who are eager to see a change in the market and the way in which the MSME Competency Unit can be useful to the country. ”

In 2015, the Bank was privileged to participate in the Micro Small Medium Entrepreneurship Competency Unit, German Entrepreneurship project which is utilizing the country as the pilot for this ambitious programme. A team from key agencies in the country represented the island in a nine-day sensitization trip to Germany taking a first-hand view of the entrepreneurship project. Alongside the Bank's Irvin Springer, Business Development Manager and Angel D'Auvergne, Corporate Lending Manager, the Saint Lucia team were made up of the St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce and SEDU, Ministry of Commerce.



This is pertinent, as one of the biggest problems faced by the small business sector is access to financing. Due to the high risk involved, Banks were reluctant to invest in this sector. The high failure rate of the businesses, the inability to provide adequate security and such issues were highlighted as contributing factors. As such, the German Savings Bank, in collaboration with the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) initiated a project to help enhance the MSME sector within the region. The need was so great, that the ECCB saw it prudent to solicit the support of the Germans as they have a working model which could be adopted and adapted in the islands.

The Germans are world renowned for developing and maintaining the best MSME programme with a failure rate of as low as 4%.

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In this programme in Germany, the educational system is structured for the business environment. Their Dual Vet System is a combination of the apprenticeship and theory. The incubator system helps to develop



an idea, take it to the fabrication lab to develop the project. Then, their Chamber of Commerce helps to plan and prepare the entrepreneur for the next stage, approaching the banks.

In Saint Lucia, Belfund would be supporting the school leavers through an intensive training and sensitization course. These persons will be recommended to the SEDU (primarily for the promotional side) or St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce for the next stage of the programme.

To prepare for this project which officially starts in the first quarter of 2018, the German counterparts will fly in to train the key agencies on the supply and demand side. These training sessions are essential to prepare the trainers and partnering institutions to undertake the project processes.

As part of the programme, the ECCB will give access to finance through a partial guaranteed fund for persons who do not have enough funds. The panel of professionals would come from the St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Commerce's intervention. The success of the MSME pilot project depends on an ecosystem similar to what exists in Germany. x

