

# Award Entry National Convention 2017

## Award Category

### Best Inter-organization Collaboration Project

#### a) Basic Information

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Language:          | Dutch   |
| Project:           | JCI Starterscafé  |
| Root cause:        | slow economy, providing opportunities for craftsmen - a target audience (bottleneck jobs) often overlooked. |
| Purpose:           | Give smaller chapters the opportunity to organize a bigger project  |
| Start date:        | March 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2017   |
| End date:          | March 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2017   |
| Target:            | Reach 100-150 young potential entrepreneurs   |
| Sd goal:           | Decent work and economic growth   |
| Development stage: | Education and Economic Empowerment  |

#### Overview:

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017 the four chapters of district Antwerp; JCI Mechelen, JCI Lier, JCI Gheel-en-Thals and JCI Antwerpen, organized JCI Starterscafé in Lier. With our slogan "Handig? Word zelfstandig!" we focused on craftsmen, a target audience often forgotten. Due to the good inter-organization collaboration we could reach a larger public far beyond the borders of Lier.

#### b) Objectives, Planning and Execution

##### 1) *What were the objectives of this program?*

As an organization which stimulates active citizenship JCI Mechelen, Lier, Antwerpen and Gheel-en-Thals saw it as an opportunity to join forces **to encourage young potential entrepreneurs in their pursuit towards reaching their professional goals**. The vision of the project was to facilitate young starters to start their own business by providing them with the necessary tools and information.

With **joined forces between the four local** chapters from the district of Antwerp, Belgium we aimed to create an event that **stimulates, inspires and motivates young potentials and aspiring entrepreneurs to start their own business**. Our goal was to welcome around 100 young participants, all potential JCI members. The cost of the event was to be **entirely financed by our partners and sponsors** so that we were able to offer a free event to the participants. The event was to host both partners, **free information** and keynote speakers on all subjects related to entrepreneurship. By focussing on craftsmen, we wanted to **create job opportunity for the hard to fill jobs**.

Joining forces not only enabled us to further **strengthen the bonds between the local chapters** of our district, but also made us **learn from each other** and allow the smaller local chapters to organize a bigger event.

By organizing this project in Lier, we were able to **boost local economy** in a town that works hard on a daily basis to increase business in the area. Lier is a town that saw the number of bankruptcies in the past years increase, and not many entrepreneurs dare to take on the challenge. However, Lier has a lot of vacant buildings in which a small independent business could start up with financial aid from the government, so this **opens opportunities for our target audience**. This was explained during the opening speech by the mayor of Lier, Mr. Frank Boogaerts.

## 2) *How does this program align to the JCI Plan of Action?*

IMPACT: One of the goals was to **stimulate local entrepreneurship and economic growth** while improving relationships between four local JCI chapters.

MOTIVATE: The **collaboration between four local chapters** proved very motivating for all the chapters. Of course, we also **stimulated 120+ participants to start their own business**, providing them with all the necessary tools and information.

INVEST: By investing in people who want to move forward and create job opportunities we intend to create long term impact in our community.

COLLABORATE: Not only did four JCI chapters collaborate, we closely involved partners and businesses from our local communities in this project. **Providing business opportunities for JCI, participants and partners.**

CONNECT: collaboration and connecting members from four local chapters through a joint project. By using **modern technology** like a Whatsapp group and Google Drive, everybody was up to date at all times and delays in communication were minimized.

## 3) *Was the budget an effective guide for the financial management of the project?*

The initial project budget was created with our goal of 100 participants in mind. It was easy to find sponsors for this project due to the success of the previous event. We raised the prices for the sponsors and worked with **different sponsor packages to enable both large and smaller local companies to be a part of this initiative.** Our partners made it possible for the participants to enter free of charge.

All this was foreseen in the budget which made it an effective guide for the project and gave a good forecast of our financial result. The budget was approved by all four local chapters.

Having a budget is a great way of measuring the progress of the project. Because we needed to at least break-even, the budget was one of the most valuable **tools for progress.** Using the knowledge from the previous edition, we were able to **budget effectively and correctly.**

## 4) *How does this project advance the JCI Mission and Vision?*

- **growth** of individual members of the commission
- create long lasting **partnerships**, friendships and collaboration that will lead to many new initiatives
- **development** of local talent
- involve **local community**
- stimulate **entrepreneurship**
- encourage **local economy**
- promote JCI as an organization and **growth of the local chapters** (in numbers and in acquired knowledge and skills)
- create **goodwill from partners and community**

## c) Cooperation between the Local Organizations

### 1) *How did the 4 chapters work together?*

The 4 chapters worked together on multiple levels. Not only did we need to coordinate meetings with 4 different local chapters and **overcome geographical distances**, the project also needed to fit within the planning of each individual chapter. The local presidents were in contact with each other throughout the entire preparation, and **everyone was kept up to date at all times** through the meeting reports.

**Open communication** was key, for example a WhatsApp group was created to quickly inform everyone about progress made and through the use of Google Drive everyone had access to the most up to date information at all times.

The agreements we made during the kick-off meeting were carefully bundled in a **contract which was signed by the presidents of each chapter** after approval by the entire chapter.

To further improve the **team spirit** and to encourage everyone to the drive the distance we regularly had **dinner together during the meetings.**

2) *Describe how the tasks and planning of the project were divided between the chapters.*

After creating an initial plan, tasks were divided between the local chapters and their members. We had a **team leader and a secretary** from the beginning to make sure we had clear guidance and good meeting reports. We worked with small and well defined tasks, and worked towards **clear deadlines**.

Not every participating local chapter had as many members as some others, but we agreed to have **each chapter represented by 2 members**, as to divide tasks fairly, and not to disrupt the daily routine within each chapter.

Some tasks were shared and split geographically: such as searching sponsors and promoting the event. There was also an agreement that all financial losses or profits would be split equally between the local chapters.

This **equal contribution** was the base of our collaboration on all fields from start to finish.

d) Impact on members and Contribution to the JCI Vision

1) *How did the members of the Local Chapters benefit from running this project?*

The key factor that was learned through this mutual experience was **communication**. It is crucial for good teamwork and avoiding misunderstandings between all the chapters who had actually never worked together before.

The members all experienced **personal growth** during this project. Finding partners, **negotiating skills, media skills, presentation skills, leadership skills** and many more were acquired during the course of the project. Apart from the above, all four chapters got a great deal of **motivation and enthusiasm** from each other and from the rewarding event.

For the smaller chapters it is possible to be part of and organize a bigger event without putting the strain on the local chapter. Because of the joined forces, it is a great place for newer members of the local chapters to **gain experience and confidence** for organizing bigger events within JCI.

2) *How did the program advance the JCI Vision?*

**Member recruitment and brand awareness** was a main priority during the entire event. There was a booth where participants could get information about JCI and the activities in their local communities. The event received **extensive media coverage** through printed media, internet and television. There were several newspaper articles announcing the event. There was an ad campaign offered by one of our partners that ran for a 7 day period 30 times a day on regional television announcing our event ([http://www.rtv.be/publiciteit/player.php?url=R\\_Vdabb1702.mp4](http://www.rtv.be/publiciteit/player.php?url=R_Vdabb1702.mp4)). The press was invited and present during the event itself. All this media coverage allowed for us to spread the word on JCI in the local communities and allow us to further **grow as an organization**.

Throughout the day members could join in on keynotes to learn firsthand from the experiences of other entrepreneurs, and get valuable tips about topics about accounting and online presence to **develop their business idea**.

e) Community Impact

1) *How did the Local Chapters measure the community impact ?*

The impact on the economy cannot be measured in the short run, but any initiative, however small, **supporting economic growth** has to be nurtured and stimulated.

The city of Lier was extremely motivated to host this type of event as it is a **main focus of the current legislature**. The event received a lot of **media attention** and thus spreading the word about JCI which in the long run will result in greater initiatives supported by the local community. The event also attracted **many participants (120+)** which clearly shows the **need for initiatives of this kind**. The current economic climate doesn't stimulate entrepreneurship, rather discourages it and by organizing events of this kind we hope to have a **positive impact on their decision making**.

Working together with the VDAB (the public employment service of Flanders and one of the largest job sites of Belgium), we were able to **reach 6000+ unemployed young people in the area** who had previously showed an interest in starting their own business.

2) *Describe the actual community impact produced by this project.*

Not only did the participants greatly benefit from the Starterscafé, our partners gained a variety of leads for **future partnerships with the potential starters**. We therefore dare to state that we have reached our goal to bring together likeminded people and to stimulate **economic growth**. Every single one of our partners has expressed their desire to work together with JCI again. This has opened the doors for all chapters to look into a third edition and talks are ongoing to involve more local chapters in the next edition of the project, thus growing impact in the community. By focusing on craftsmen, we **reached a target audience often forgotten as entrepreneurs**.

The government subsidises the unemployed when they start their own business. The Start-Up Café facilitated the access to information, **making official authorities more approachable** and otherwise **expensive companies such as accountants, lawyers and marketing specialists readily available to talk to during the afternoon**.

f) Long-term Impact of the Program

1) *What is the expected long-term impact of this project?*

Long term **partnerships** were developed between JCI and the local partners, therefore enabling us to create more events in the future. By involving local governments we were able to **spread the word of JCI** and make our possible impact know to them. We visited a local technical school (VTI Lier) that specializes in training craftsmen, to plant a seed about starting their own business after graduating and even during their studies. The Belgian government supports initiatives by students to motivate them.

It is difficult to measure long term impact of this kind of project, but through promotion of JCI and the established partnerships, we are able to **anchor JCI more deeply in the local communities**.

The friendships and bonds between the local chapters were further made, and it is our goal to continue this **collaboration between chapters** in the future and to be the example to other chapters that **working together multiplies the impact** and is beneficial to everybody.

In our district, we are currently looking to extend the impact of this project and collaboration by organizing another edition of this event, and with all acquired knowledge, even bigger and better!

2) *What changes would you make to improve the results of this project?*

We can advise to **think big** from the beginning. A good location with great accessibility and infrastructure is a must. A more central location, in the middle of the geographical area of the four local chapters could give the opportunity to attract more participants.

Personal roadshows to schools and universities would grow the impact and involvement on young people because of the face to face interaction and immediate chance for questions. On top a more effective marketing campaign could lead to more participants as well. There could be a feedback system set up for the participants so that the event itself can be improved and aligned to the expectations and needs of the potential starters.

g) Images



*A few of the members of the team.*



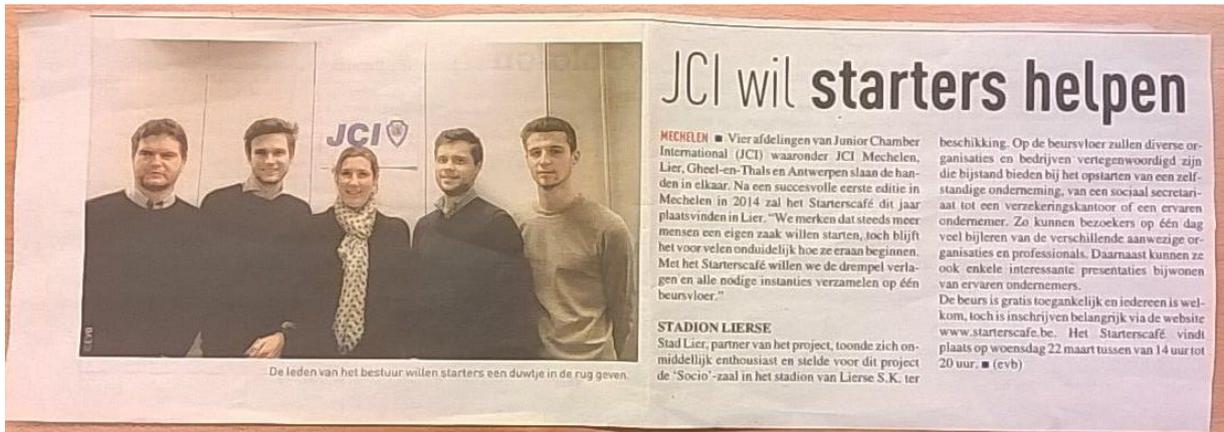
*Wiet Vandeveldt keynote, a young succesful entrepreneur sharing his experiences.*



2 local JCI Presidents at the JCI info stand



A partner stand providing information about safety regulations and accident prevention in the workplace



A local newspaper promoting the event



Voka, Flanders' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, featuring our event



## JCI STARTERSCAFÉ INSPIREERT ONDERNEMERS IN SPE

LEEN DE MOOR × 22 MAART 2017

Ruim 100 belangstellenden bezochten woensdagmiddag het JCI Starterscafé in zaal Socio van het stadion van SK Lierse. Het event werd georganiseerd door de JCI-afdelingen Mechelen, Lier, Antwerpen en Gheel-en-Thals.

"We willen met deze beurs de drempelvrees doen afnemen en iedereen laten kennismaken met ondernemerschap. Het thema *Handig? Word zelfstandig!* is specifiek gericht op stielmannen of -vrouwen die een eigen zaak willen starten. We merken dat steeds meer mensen een eigen zaak wel zien zitten, maar toch blijft het voor velen onduidelijk hoe ze eraan kunnen beginnen. Met het starterscafé willen we de drempel verlagen en alle instanties die nuttig kunnen zijn bij de start van een bedrijf verzamelen op één beursvloer", zeggen de organisatoren.

De starters en ondernemers in spe konden met hun vragen terecht bij onder meer advocaten Gwen Smans en Leen Putman van Vermeulen Heylen Michiels advocaten, gespecialiseerd in arbeidsrecht en socialezekerheidsrecht, de Mechelse co-workingplace Conventus die binnenkort opent, het Mechelse Cre@ctiv, gespecialiseerd in webdesign, grafisch ontwerp en digitale marketing, en Blueground uit Keerbergen, experts in finance en accountancy. Er was ook een vertegenwoordiging van Voka-Kamer van Koophandel Mechelen.

Tijdens het event deelden verscheidene sprekers hun ervaringen met de aanwezigen. Bij hen waren ook jonge Mechelse ondernemers: Wiet Vande Velde van Maro/RED en Elien Defraeije van Cre@ctiv.

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Plaats(en): [Lier](#)

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*We were featured before and after the event on 'Made in Mechelen', a website and daily newsletter specialized in local economic news.*