



# Refugee Entrepreneurship Survey 2023

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OCTOBER 2023

# Introduction

Refugee entrepreneurship initiatives (REIs) play a significant role in rebuilding livelihoods and fostering positive social impacts among displaced communities. REIs provide a variety of activities that support people with refugee experiences to create and pursue new business opportunities. REIs have been deployed in camps<sup>[i]</sup> and host country settings<sup>[ii]</sup> around the world, gaining traction with global agencies, including UNHCR<sup>[iii]</sup> and the World Bank<sup>[iv]</sup>. Interest in these initiatives has been heightened by the intuitive connection between the global focus on refugee self-reliance and the process of starting a business. However, growth in interest masks the reality that business support for individuals with refugee backgrounds can be complex to bring to life and difficult to scale. Little is known about the collective reach and impacts of these initiatives, both on business related outcomes and on refugees' personal development. The extent to which REIs typically monitor or estimate reach and impact is also unknown.

REIs must address multiple, persistent refugee issues while at the same time adapting to local differences in how business is done. They are partly predicated on the notion that refugees need bespoke support – ‘regular’ business courses and incubators are inaccessible to most refugee communities<sup>[v]</sup>. But bespoke customization can be difficult to replicate at scale. There is a risk that funders looking to scale up support could deprioritize and underfund tailored aspects of REIs that make a big difference to refugee entrepreneurs' success. Ultimately though, unless REIs prioritize, measure, and report a broadly recognizable set of business-related impacts they may lose funding altogether. Tensions between customization and scalability have become the thorny issue preventing business support from reaching more refugee communities.

The survey presented in this report examines the aspects of REIs that fulfill two important criteria; 1) they are commonly monitored and reported by REI providers regardless of setting and 2) they are indicative of positive business-related outcomes for refugee business owners. Building on findings from several reports and field studies, the academic team held a series of focus groups in 2022 in collaboration with The Human Safety Net to determine activities and outcomes that were meaningful and measurable to a broad constituency of REIs. We developed these focus group findings into a survey which

was tested and then disseminated to a global, diverse group of REI providers in the summer of 2023. This report presents the survey results, giving an aggregate picture of what these providers accomplished as they supported refugee entrepreneurs in 2022.

We see this survey as an important step towards scalable and sustainable refugee business support. For the first time, the survey gives a picture of the collective reach and impact already being accomplished by REIs. The results suggest high levels of demand for business support from refugee communities around the world, indicating REIs' international relevance. Patterns of survey response also highlight the difficulty and sensitivity of collecting some outcome measures, particularly those pertaining to business revenue and livelihoods generation. The report details these challenges and suggests ways forward. We begin by offering an executive summary of our findings and recommendations. We then explain our methods and survey results. Our intent is to showcase the diverse, impactful support offered by REIs while at the same time distilling key collective impact measures that can appeal to funders looking for refugee support solutions that can operate internationally at scale.

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# Contents

<b>Contents page</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Tables and Figures</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary and recommendations</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>7</b>
2022 focus group validation .....	7
Data collection .....	9
Survey content .....	9
Monitored and estimated data .....	9
<b>Question Set 1: REI providers and activities</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Question Set 2: Aggregate reach, outputs and outcomes</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Question Set 3: REI participant characteristics</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Question Set 4 Business level outputs</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Question Set 5 Employment and livelihood outcomes</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Question Sset 6: Meaning of ‘success’</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>31</b>

# Tables and Figures

**Figure 1:**  
Mapping ease and desirability of monitoring and evaluation data ..... 8

**Figure 2:**  
Summary of monitored, estimated and non-responses .....10

**Figure 3:**  
Global picture of number of individuals supported by REIs .....12

**Table 1:**  
Prevalence of initiative activities (reported among 27 REI providers) .....13

**Table 2:**  
Total revenues reported in 2022.....16

**Table Set 3:**  
Summary of responses to Question Set 3 (participant characteristics).....18

**Table Set 4:**  
Summary of responses to Question Set 4 (business level outputs).....21

**Table Set 5:**  
Summary of responses to Question Set 5 (employment outcomes)..... 24

**Table Set 6:**  
Summary of responses to Question Set 5 (livelihood outcomes) ..... 25

**Table 7:**  
Short and longer term indicators of success ..... 28

# Executive summary

This survey aggregates monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data from 27 organizations (NGOs and social enterprises) providing a total of 75 refugee entrepreneurship initiatives (REIs). Despite their common entrepreneurship focus, survey respondents deliver diverse, multifaceted initiatives and measure a catalogue of different activities and outcomes.

In line with this, REI providers are not always able to provide data on the outcomes they would like to capture. A series of 2022 focus groups preceding the survey (in collaboration with The Human Safety Net) identified four measures likely to be meaningful to REIs in any context. These were 1) numbers of individual refugees supported (including women supported as a sub-category); 2) numbers of businesses supported; 3) revenue generated by supported businesses and 4) employment provided by supported businesses. Yet survey responses indicate these are difficult data to collect.

All survey respondents provided data on the number of owners supported. The total was 17322 (240 owners per initiative). The majority (9765) were female. Respondents also indicated that most owners had one business (15,503), although a few REIs did not answer this question. 17 of 27 organizations provided data on the number of employees supported by refugee owned businesses (8531 employment opportunities created). As lower response rates require a more cautious approach to drawing conclusions, we offer raw data counts here as a guide to support M&E practice rather than as a decision-making tool.

Low response rates, estimates and non-responses to survey questions also provide a picture of the difficulty involved in collecting some data. Most notably, only 6 organizations reported business revenue outcomes. Therefore, rather than aggregate revenue

data, we analyze these respondents individually on pg 16. Respondents monitoring revenue tended to be supporting a large number of small businesses to access loans or targeting businesses with high growth potential. Although most REIs found revenue difficult to monitor, there was broad agreement that revenue outcomes differentiated business support from other kinds of refugee initiatives. Revenue data also has the potential to connect REIs to the self-reliance focus of the broader refugee support sector.

During 2022 focus group sessions REIs differentiated M&E data by how easy or hard it was to collect and how desirable it was (i.e. did it indicate positive changes meaningful to both initiatives and refugees? See pg 8 for a summary of this exercise). Generally, data gathered during an initiative was easier to collect (including numbers of people registering for support, new skill development, satisfaction feedback, business registration). Outcomes that were more complex to monitor were often more meaningful and desirable (including stability and growth of a business, improvements in livelihood, employing other people).

All respondents provided data about REI delivery giving a rich picture of how they deploy multi-faceted business support. Around half the respondents provided answers about the diversity of refugees supported (previous business experience, education levels and language capabilities). Similarly, around half gave answers about changes during an initiative - although much of this information came from estimates rather than monitoring data. Very few respondents provided data on job creation or livelihood outcomes. These patterns reveal which data are routinely gathered as well as changes that are difficult to monitor or estimate. We give a full overview of monitored, estimated and non-responses on page 10.

# Recommendations

01

Three of the core measures reported were relatively easy and desirable to collect (# refugee entrepreneurs supported, # of women supported, # businesses supported). Sharing best practice can support REIs to transition from estimating to more reliably monitoring these measures. **Funders, agencies and networks should create events that provide opportunities for REIs to share their M&E expertise and resources.**

02

Two core measures were more complex to monitor and difficult for many respondents to even estimate (# of employees in supported businesses, amount of revenue generated by supported businesses). These items require medium to long term follow up with refugee participants that can be resources intensive. **REIs require additional resource to capture outcomes occurring later on after the end of an initiative.** This is a priority given the importance of the data. **Focus groups suggested that funding for longer term, value adding events and activities (e.g. mentoring and alumni events) could support collection of these data points.**

03

There are many opportunities for REIs to transition from estimated to monitored data collection. However, **priority should be given to monitoring items associated with longer term outcomes** (e.g. accounting skills – access to finance – business growth – employment creation). Conversely, **REIs can find efficiencies by dropping M&E measures that are easy to access but less reliable or less relevant to core outcomes.**

04

**Mechanisms for collecting data from refugee participants need to be sensitive to their concerns about the implications of sharing data.** The clearest examples were questions about livelihoods and changes to government support which most REIs chose not to answer. All data collection in this context relies on a great deal of trust between refugee entrepreneur and REIs. **More exploration is needed to identify measures that imply self-reliance outcomes without interrogating refugees unnecessarily.**

05

**The survey should be repeated annually to track changes in core measures. Methods for achieving a higher response rate to the survey need to be identified. Consulting with and including key refugee support agencies will give a fuller picture of the global state of play for refugee entrepreneurship support globally.**

# Methodology

**Our approach to this survey was to provide evaluation data across, rather than within, initiatives. The research is designed to reveal the extent to which common (or ‘core’) criteria are used across different initiatives, contexts, and participant groups. It is also designed to identify criteria that appear to be especially important to the evaluation of specific activities or contexts. REIs may also use the findings to identify ways to adopt new or different criteria that are used by others to improve their own evaluation practices.**

## 2022 FOCUS GROUP VALIDATION

In summer 2022, the research team held two focus groups with REIs funded by The Human Safety Net (THSN). The REI providers operated in France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Luxembourg. The first focus group was held online and the second a month later in person. Each REI collected data to reflect their “theory of change”; input-process-output models that described their positive impacts. The sessions identified what data REIs were capturing, what aspects of monitoring and evaluation were challenging and where they might work together with funders to improve their monitoring and evaluation.

The focus groups revealed big variations in the monitoring and evaluation activities of REIs. Some data marked positive changes occurring within or soon after initiatives; i.e. the outputs of REIs (e.g. businesses registered, new skills, expanded networks). Other changes were more complicated to affect and occurred a longer time after the end of an initiative; i.e. the outcomes of REIs (e.g. revenue generation, employment creation, changes to livelihoods). In addition, different country

contexts made outputs and outcomes more or less meaningful. For example, registering a business could be quick and easy in one country and extremely difficult in another. Some refugee owned businesses may be registered but not yet trading. Business registration triggered ongoing formal data reporting (e.g. annual revenues) in some countries but not others. Thus, when outputs and outcomes were counted this indicated very different levels of effort and achievement for REIs and their participants.

Another central theme of the focus groups was the ease or difficulty of collecting high quality data. Using a matrix that plotted data points according to their desirability (for demonstrating impact) and ease of collection (level of resource required), we generated a detailed picture of the data being prioritized by funders and collected during initiatives (summarized in figure 1). The focus groups agreed that some data were hard to get (shown in the red box) while other data were easy to collect (shown in the blue box). A few data points sparked discussion, because some found them easy while others found them hard (shown in the overlapping area).

The present survey asks for data that all participants agreed could demonstrate positive outputs and outcomes of business support and were likely to be collected in the course of an entrepreneurship focused initiative. However, as we will go on to discuss, the survey revealed that such data can still be extremely challenging for REIs to collect and additional support and funding for data collection should be a funding priority.

**Figure 1: Mapping desirability and ease of access to monitoring and evaluation data**





## DATA COLLECTION

The survey was distributed to 73 organizations in total - including refugee entrepreneurship network members, their recommendations, and participants identified through desk research of agencies and NGOs providing support to refugee entrepreneurs. 27 organizations responded in total, providing monitoring and evaluation data for 75 separate refugee entrepreneurship initiatives, referred to as REIs. We counted REIs as sets of business support activities that had their own distinct aim and cohort of participants. REI responses are fully anonymized in this report, although participating REI providers are recognized and thanked in the conclusion (page 29).

We explained our definition of refugee entrepreneurs to survey respondents. We use the term here for simplicity, but explained that this included all forms of business, self-employment and part time employment of a refugee's own creation. We use this very broad sense of the term to fit alongside other global refugee sector priorities on livelihoods and self-reliance. Respondents answered questions using their organizational monitoring and evaluation data from 2022. Data about individual refugee business owners were not shared and no individual level identifying data was gathered. The survey included data on the typical characteristics of their cohorts, the changes observed during an initiative (outputs) and the longer-term positive changes they targeted that emerged over an extended time after the end of an initiative (outcomes).

## SURVEY CONTENT

The survey was delivered in two parts. The first set of questions focused on capturing REI activities and core evaluation criteria. The average time for completion of the full survey was 67 mins (SD = 150 mins). This provides some indication that participants carefully considered their responses.

Respondents were then invited to complete an optional second set of questions, capturing data relating to context specific criteria for evaluating initiatives. This part of the survey was designed to identify common (and uncommon) evaluation practices. In the second part of

the survey a distinction was made between monitored and estimated data.

## MONITORING AND ESTIMATED DATA

Data formally captured, counted and reported by initiatives was referred to as 'monitored'. Focus groups had also revealed a great degree of diversity between REIs, so we invited respondents to use their expertise to estimate an answer related to activities they did not formally monitor.

Including monitored and estimated data allowed the caveating of analysis so that results based on estimates could be identified and interpreted with appropriate cautions. It also provided information about data that were proving most challenging to monitor. During 2022 focus groups, REI providers reported needing additional resources to transition from estimating to monitoring some data.

Both estimates and monitored data can be imperfect but for different reasons. REI providers report that monitoring is important but resource intensive. They are often faced with difficult decisions between initiative delivery and initiative evaluation. Short-term evaluation data, while participants are active 'in' REI activities or soon after, are typically less resource intensive (e.g., through the collection of data regarding satisfaction with training). These appear to be the data most likely to be monitored.

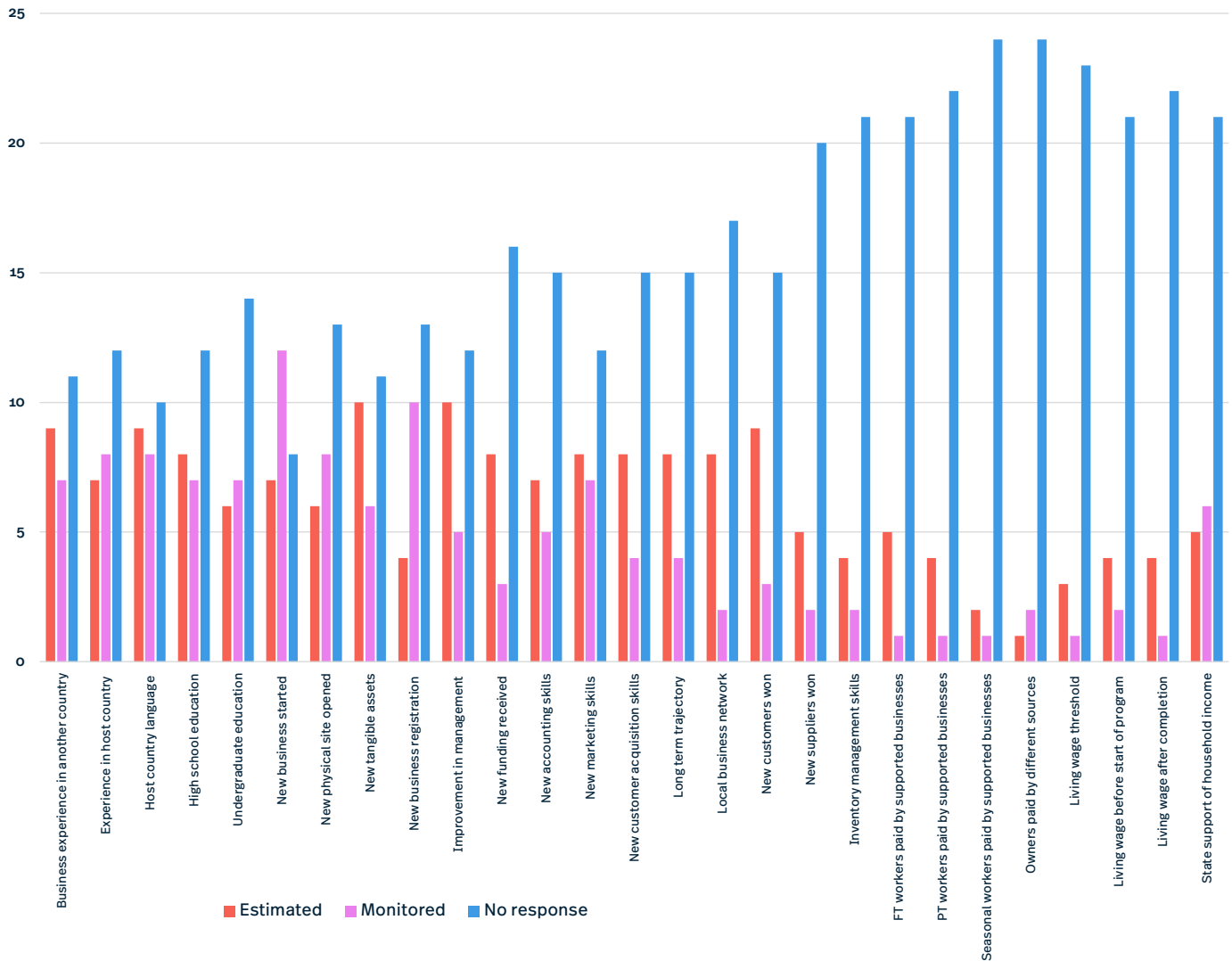
Estimates allow participants to draw upon their expert knowledge of the initiative to provide evaluation data when the results of monitoring are not available. Naturally, these may be impacted by significant limitations regarding the depth of respondents' insight into initiative activities and outcome. They may need to draw upon information transmitted through third parties (such as business advisors or mentors) who are supporting the initiative. Respondents are not necessarily independent scrutineers of the REIs in which they are involved.

Some outcomes (such as business growth or funding) tend to have a time 'lag' and therefore require the tracking of participants beyond the duration of incubation training initiatives. This presents many challenges as the resources required to stay connected with participants

are significant and securing their involvement in detailed evaluation is difficult. 2022 focus groups revealed that these indicators are those most likely to be estimated or not available. Participants were asked not to respond if they felt unable to form what they considered to be a satisfactory estimate.

The survey results revealed an evaluation paradox for REIs. Important evaluation criteria can be difficult to obtain and efforts to do so may compromise the resources available to the delivery of the REI. The results indicating which data are most estimated and which are monitored provide important insights into how this paradox is experienced and dealt with by REI providers.

**Figure 2: Summary of monitored, estimated and non-responses**

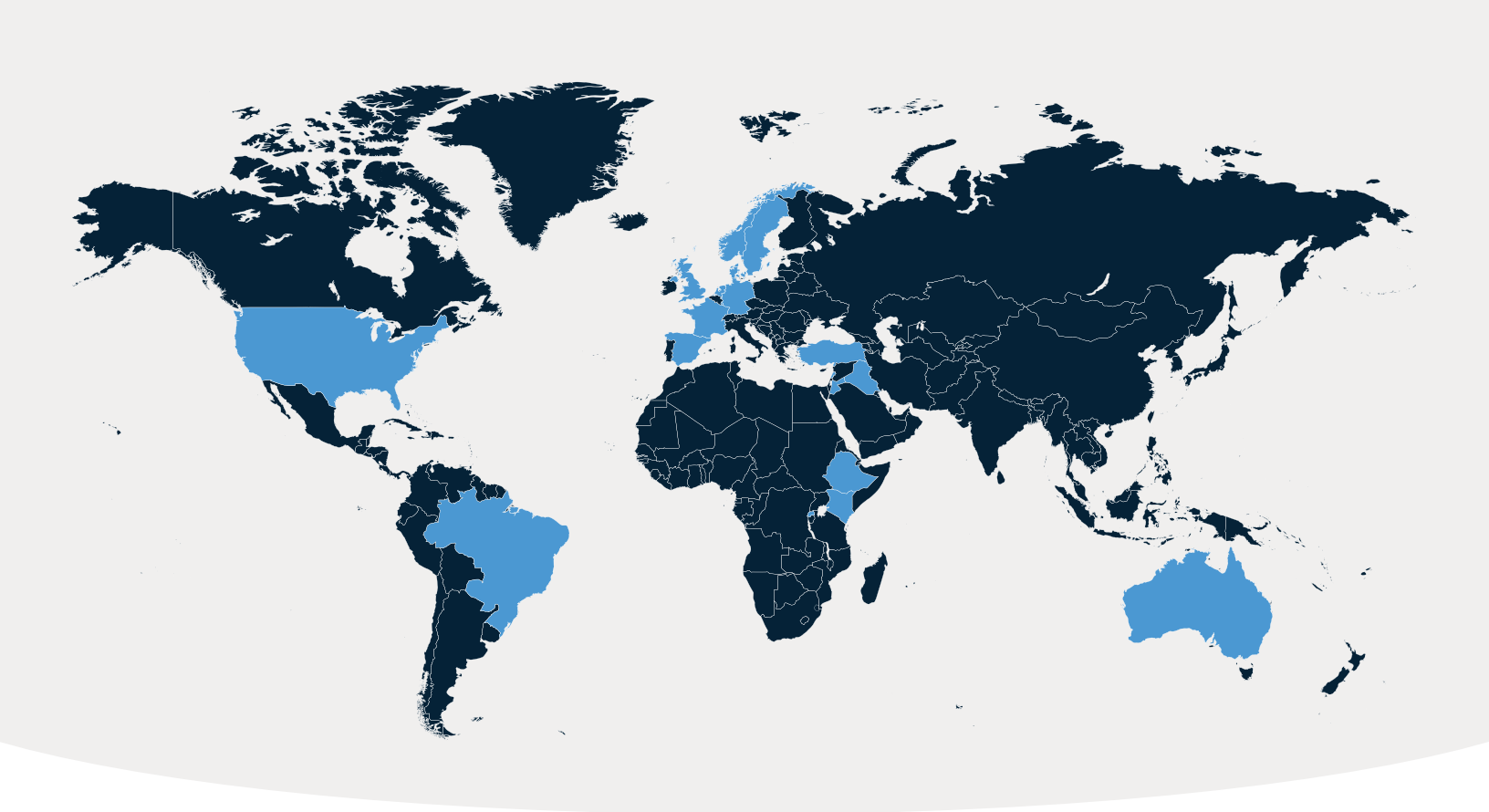


**THE REST OF THE REPORT IS ORGANIZED AROUND THE FOLLOWING SIX QUESTION SETS.**

*Each section presents the original survey question(s), a brief rationale and background, survey results and analytic commentary. The recommendations of the report are found upfront in the executive summary and as a narrative in the concluding remarks.*

QUESTION SET 1

# REI providers and activities



The 27 organizations responding to the survey operated 75 distinct REIs. REIs were defined as having their own distinct cohort of refugee business owners. In some cases organizations offered the same mix of activities in different geographic territories, in other cases they offered different activities within a territory. Map 1 indicates the spread of REIs included in this survey. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive picture of international refugee business support - a number of International agencies and NGOs run their own large scale business support initiatives and chose not to participate in the survey.

Organizations commonly report that national context impacts outputs and outcomes and how these should be interpreted. For example, in contexts where there is little financial support for newly arrived refugees, entrepreneurship activities may be seen as especially attractive. In countries where resettlement processes are especially difficult, unpredictable, or opaque, refugees may incorrectly believe that their resettlement prospects could be harmed by engagement in initiative activities. Outcomes such as the formal registration of businesses can be impacted by legislative barriers to, or facilitators of, entrepreneurial activities in the host nation. Where resettlement occurs relatively quickly, obtaining evaluation from participants can become difficult as they lose contact with the initiative.

***Original question: Which of these support opportunities do your initiatives provide? (tick ANY AND ALL that apply to your initiatives. If you run more than one initiative, please consider them all together for this question)***

This was an essential question in the first part of the survey because these activities deliver the active ingredients (or working parts) of a REI. The assumption is that activities drive outcomes (as echoed by theory of change models). Early focus groups in 2022 showed that most REIs are multi-modal, with activities designed to work in sequence and / or combination. Business owners typically need more than one form of support because of the diversity, nuance, complexity, and unfolding nature of their needs.

### Activities are designed to:

- meet typical generic business needs (e.g. knowledge and skills gaps)
- logically link to output and outcome indicators (e.g. improved host country integration).
- reflect the demands placed on refugees by the host country context (e.g., building understanding of local customs, rules, and regulatory requirements).
- include mechanisms for tailoring provision to individual refugees (e.g., mentoring and coaching).

2022 focus groups identified seven broad categories of activity. The survey asked organizations to indicate which of these were included in their REIs.

**Classroom based taught content** These activities typically focus on basic business skills ('know how') including important precursors of business growth. For example, training in bookkeeping, sales, marketing, operations management and understanding of the local business context.

**Individual mentoring from an advisor** Facilitates tailored application of skills in context, to build refugee entrepreneurs' confidence and support appropriate business decision making.

**One-off in-person events** Designed to inspire refugee entrepreneurs e.g. the presentation of inspirational case-study examples or to support the growth of their social network through networking events.

**Virtual community networking** Helping refugee entrepreneurs connect easily with peers in ways that integrate easily with their everyday lives (e.g., this included the use of Facebook, WhatsApp and other similar mechanisms).

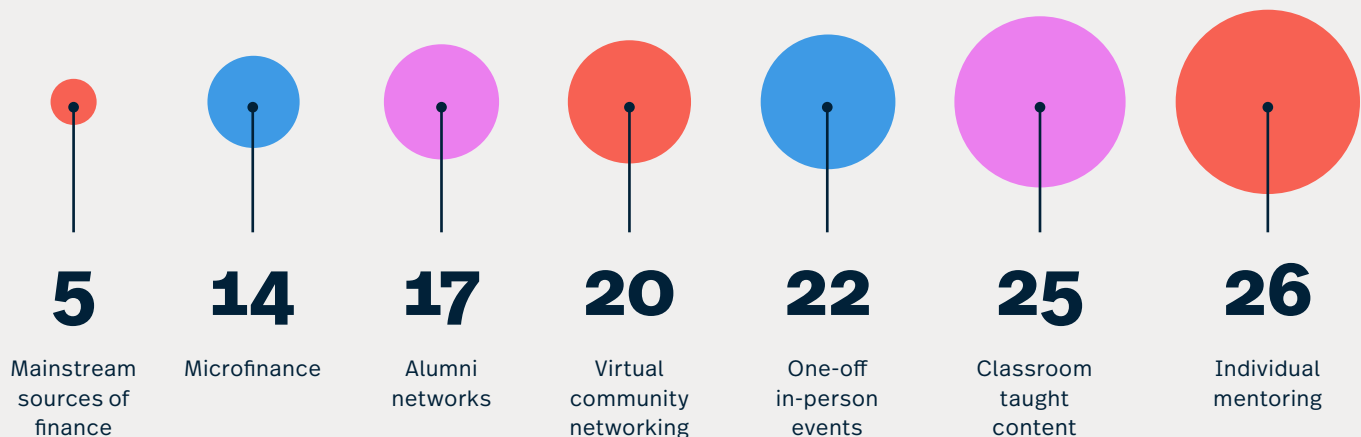
**Alumni networks** Facilitate business owners to keep in contact with each other and the initiative delivery team, facilitating long-term peer learning activities and support from the initiative.

**Microfinance** (e.g., microloans, small grants, crowdfunding) These are used to help refugee entrepreneurs acquire stock, equipment, or staff. They may also be used to establish a track record of creditworthiness, increasing opportunities to obtain further finance, or larger loans, from more traditional or established sources.

**Mainstream sources of finance** (e.g., business overdrafts, large loans, equity funding).

Among the 27 REI providers responding to the survey, Table 1 shows the prevalence of each activity.

**Table 1: Prevalence of initiative activities (across 27 REI providers)**



QUESTION SET 2

# Aggregate reach, outputs and outcomes

**Original question: Taking into account all initiatives, please indicate the number of business owners supported in 2022 (defined as individuals with a refugee background who enrolled on one of your organizations' business support initiatives)**

The total number of refugees supported across all REIs provides an indication of the scaling and impact of the activities. 2022 workshops showed that REI providers routinely collect such data, given its importance to funders and the role that it plays in shaping delivery. Raw measures of participation are, in themselves, an informative evaluation criterion because of complex recruitment challenges. REI providers also indicate that resourcing initiatives aimed at large numbers of participants presents unique challenges and opportunities that have the potential to either dilute initiative outcomes (e.g., through resources being too thinly spread) or enhance them (e.g., through economies of scale, visibility, and reputation with stakeholders).

**17,322**

In total across all initiatives, 17,322 business owners were supported during 2022<sup>[1]</sup>.

**Original question: If possible, please indicate how many of your 2022 cohort were women.**

This measure was included for several reasons. Women and men may obtain different benefits from initiatives designed to develop their skills, confidence, and social capital. Organizations indicate that in refugee populations women have less experience of starting and running businesses and may therefore be more likely than men to require and benefit from training. Their businesses may be qualitatively different to those established and run by male business owners – and this may impact on the overall level of revenue and growth in number of employees. Therefore, such indicators may need to take into account the proportion of female business owners during interpretation.

**9765**

56% of individuals supported by REIs were women

**Original question: Taking into account all initiatives, please indicate the total number of businesses supported in 2022 (We are asking this because an individual may operate more than one business. Please count the total number of businesses supported by any service offered through your initiatives).**

This question indicates the reach and effectiveness of REIs. It also indicates the entrepreneurial profiles of the individuals supported (i.e. typically how many businesses each refugee entrepreneur launched in 2022). However, four REI providers did not respond to this question, so some caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions about the relationships between measures. Taking into account only the data of REIs answering this question, 94% of REI participants owned or launched a business in 2022. This number reflects the extent to which REIs facilitated a meaningful outcome - the launch and support of refugee owned businesses.

**15,503**

total number of businesses were supported (answered by 23 REI providers)

**Original question: Please indicate the total number of individuals employed by the supported business (in your answer please include the self-employment of business owner, and include the total full time, part time, seasonal or occasional workers paid by supported business in 2022. Please do not include individuals only paid for one off pilot events or tests).**

This question facilitates a basic analysis of the number of people whose livelihood could be positively impacted by REIs. This figure indicates the scale of REI impact is not limited to refugee entrepreneurs alone. It also indicates the typical size of businesses in terms of employee numbers, an indicator of business growth. 17 of 27 REI providers answered this question, indicating this data is not collected by everyone. The 2022 focus group suggested that these were desirable data [RR1] but difficult to collect. REI participants might employ freelancers, seasonal workers, or family members they do not count or formally record as employees. Further

questions included later in the survey delve deeper into the different types of employment provided by the businesses.

**8351**

employment opportunities created  
(answered by 17 REI providers)

**Original question: Please indicate the total revenue generated by all businesses supported across all support initiatives for entrepreneurial refugees in 2022. (Please indicate currency for this question)**

This question indicates the overall financial impact of REIs on refugee-led businesses. It also provides information about the survival and growth of businesses. REIs indicated that revenue figures are available but can be difficult to collect and that their accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Only 6 REI providers responded to this question - always reported in Euros and dollars. One response was excluded due to uncertainty about reliability of the data provided. We standardized the currency to Euros given the geographic location of the majority of REIs.

The REI providers monitoring revenues were either working with many small to medium sized businesses (i.e REI provision at scale) or had a strategy of targeting high growth potential (but not small) businesses. Both of these approaches make revenue highly relevant data in demonstrating the impact of businesses. Importantly, revenue figures alone do not consider borrowing or other costs to the business.

2022 focus groups suggest that this is desirable but difficult and sensitive data to collect. It can take much longer in some contexts for REI participants to generate revenues, by which time it becomes harder to get survey responses from successful businesses. Results may be impacted by refugees' ability to keep reliable records and their willingness to share accurate data (e.g., due to concerns over its impact on financial support from the host nation, support from the REI and on their overall resettlement prospects). The six responses to this survey demonstrate that it is possible to collect this data, but focus groups and non-responses suggest it is both resource intensive and challenging to do so.

**Table 2: Total revenues reported for 2022 participants**

REI identifier	Total 2022 revenue (€)	Revenue/ participant (€)	Revenue/ business (€)
REI 1	500,000	5,263	5,263
REI 2	434,400	289	334
REI 3	2,000,000	80,000	95,238
REI 4	4,150,880	341	341
REI 5	400,000	10,000	10,000



QUESTION SET 3

# REI participant characteristics

During 2022 focus groups REIs frequently mentioned the importance of refugees’ individual circumstances. These details help establish appropriate goals as well as supporting the effective tailoring of activities.

In this survey, the purpose of including questions about the monitoring of participants’ background was three-fold:

1. To assess diversity among REI participants.
2. To identify the prevalence of business-related competencies when first engaging with a REI. This is one indicator of participant readiness.

3. To examine the extent to which REIs gather information about participants’ personal circumstances

Assessing participant circumstances indicates how REIs can ‘fit’ their resources to the needs of refugees, supporting efficient delivery, retention and satisfaction indicators.

	Question	% Mean (inc. monitored and estimated)		
What they were asked	Business experience in another country	42.75		
	Business experience in host country	20.00		
	Host country language	42.75		
	High school	55.13		
	Undergraduate	45.57		
How they answered	Question	Monitored (%)	Estimated (%)	No Response (%)
	Business experience in another country	42.75	42.75	42.75
	Business experience in host country	20.00	20.00	20.00
	Host country language	42.75	42.75	42.75
	High school	55.13	55.13	55.13
Undergraduate	45.57	45.57	45.57	

Table Set 3: Summary of responses to question set 3 (participant characteristics)

**Original question:** *In rough percentage terms, please indicate the approximate percentage of the 2022 cohort could be described by the following statements (but leave it blank if you do not know).[2]*

## Examples of tailoring resources

### PRIOR BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

Without prior business experience refugee entrepreneurs are likely to benefit from basic training in business know-how. They may also require more intensive mentoring and support to deal with basic business issues. Training in core business skills such as bookkeeping take on extra importance.

Those with prior experience may instead need support focused more on the development of their social network and social capital.

Those without experience in the host country may need activity activities that focus on the development of knowledge of local business context (e.g., rules and regulations, business customs and practices) rather than basic, context-independent, business skills.

### CONVERSATIONAL GRASP OF HOST COUNTRY LANGUAGE

Initiatives supporting refugees without conversations grasp of the host country's language face additional demands in communicating and delivering REI. Achieving reach, initiative satisfaction and trust with this population is likely to require more resources. The measure indicates the extent to which initiatives are attracting and retaining refugees without this level of language capability. The measure is also relevant to understanding the impact of the REI on empowerment and integration outcomes. Specifically, it is likely to be linked to the speed at which business owners can transition away from intensive support offered by REIs.

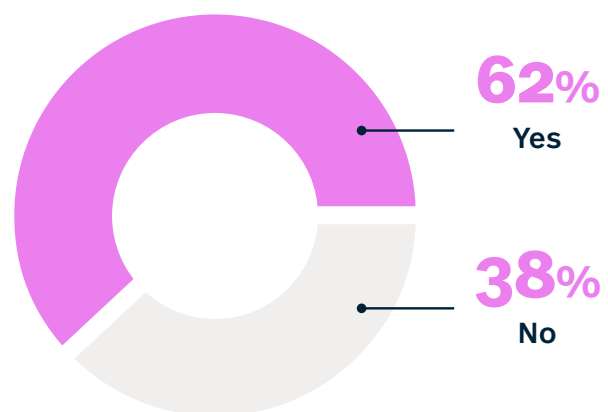
## LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

These questions were included for three reasons:

1. They examine the reach of REIs to a diverse group of refugees as indicated by education background.
2. They indicate initiative participants' readiness for the REI activities. Educational background can provide a proxy but imperfect measure of ability
3. It provides insights into typical attractiveness of entrepreneurship as a route to self-reliance to those from different educational backgrounds.

**Original question:** *Does your initiative also support local citizens with their businesses (i.e., mixed programming) (Yes / No)*

REIs were asked this question to assess the extent of integrated learning involving both the host and refugee communities. Some REI providers indicate this can be mutually beneficial to both groups. It can provide refugees with links with other new local businesses, facilitate shared learning and peer support (especially with regard to knowledge of local trading conditions, business language and customs) and open avenues for sourcing new customers and suppliers.



QUESTION SET 4

# Business level outputs

Stimulating, supporting, and nurturing new business owners are core aims of REIs. The number of new businesses launched is seen by organisations and funders an important easily collected, short-term, proximal, and sensitive indicator of REI outcomes.

It is to be expected that not all participants in an REI will go on to open a business. Some may use their increased skills and confidence to instead seek employment through other routes. Some refugees may leave the initiative significantly more employable, but before starting a business. Some may decide that entrepreneurial activity is not right for them (a good fit) at this time.

What it means to start a business can also vary significantly across host nations. In some formal registration is a first

step to opening a business, in others it only occurs once the business has a track record of trading.

**Original question:** *How many of the individuals you supported opened a new business as a result of the initiative?*

**Original question:** *How many of the individuals you supported open a new physical site for an existing or new business (please do not include digital websites in this answer)*

**Original question:** *How many businesses acquired a new tangible business asset during the course of the initiative? (For example, machinery, premises, stock, digital assets like websites or other tangible resources)*

Question		% Mean (inc. monitored and estimated)		
What they were asked	New business started	18.52		
	New physical site opened	15.05		
	New tangible assets	33.30		
	New business registration	34.84		
Question		Monitored (%)	Estimated (%)	No Response (%)
How they answered	New business started	25.93	44.44	29.63
	New physical site opened	22.22	29.63	48.15
	New tangible assets	37.04	22.22	40.74
	New business registration	14.81	37.04	48.15

**Table Set 4:** Summary of responses to Question Set 4 (business level outputs)

These changes are indicators that a business has become established and shown growth. Re-investment of revenue in assets that help to grow the business can be an important tangible indicator of the sustainable medium-to-long term impact of the REP. These indicators provide important insights into how the refugees are using the know-how, coaching, and mentoring provided

by the REP i.e., to re-invest in business. Re-investment may also suggest that business owners are generating more than enough revenue to sustain a livelihood. These measures may be correlated with but not directly captured by information about revenue or employment levels in the core questions.

QUESTION SET 5

# Employment and livelihood outcomes

Indications about whether refugee businesses provide wages commensurate with a national thresholds for a living wage. 2022 focus groups suggested that refugee entrepreneurs valued how a newly launched business improved their lives. Although different dimensions of this can be unpacked in greater detail - one numerical indicator is whether a business can support a minimum standard of living in the host country. However issues with how much a business is making are sensitive for refugees to share. Uncertainty about how host governments perceive refugee businesses, and cultural concerns about the sensitivity of income data can mean this data is very difficult to collect. There are few opportunities built into initiatives when such data would naturally be shared and REIs are reluctant to damage positive relationships by asking prying questions.

Very few REIs answered questions related to employment or living wage. To give a picture of how many could answer this question see table/ appendix.

**Original question:** *With regards to individuals employed in the businesses you support in 2022, please provide the following numbers (but leave it blank if you do not know). Also indicate whether data is monitoring data or estimated data*

**Original question:** *How many full-time workers were paid by supported businesses (including self-employment)?*

**Original question:** *How many part-time workers were paid by supported businesses (including self-employment)?*

**Original question:** *How many seasonal or occasional workers were paid by supported businesses?*

**Original question:** *How many business owners also had paid employment from a source other than their business?*

Question		% Mean (inc. monitored and estimated)		
What they were asked	FT workers paid by supported businesses	64.00		
	PT workers paid by supported businesses	62.20		
	Seasonal workers paid by supported businesses	8.75		
	Owners paid by different sources	13.00		
	Question	Monitored (%)	Estimated (%)	No Response (%)
How they answered	FT workers paid by supported businesses	18.52	3.70	77.78
	PT workers paid by supported businesses	14.81	3.70	81.48
	Seasonal workers paid by supported businesses	7.41	3.70	88.89
	Owners paid by different sources	3.70	7.41	88.89

**Table Set 5:** Summary of responses to question set 5 (employment outcomes)



**Original question:** With respect to livelihoods generated by the businesses supported, please provide the following numbers (but leave it blank if you do not know). Also indicate whether data is monitoring data or estimated data

**Original question:** What proportion of your 2022 cohort were able to achieve a living wage by the start of your initiative? (percentage value)

**Original question:** What proportion of your 2022 cohort were able to achieve a living wage by the time they completed the initiative? (percentage value)

**Original question:** What proportion of your 2022 cohort were able to transition away from state support of their household income? (percentage value)

Question		% Mean (inc. monitored and estimated)		
What they were asked	Living wage threshold	-		
	Living wage before start of program	22.16		
	Living wage after completion	45.00		
	State support of household income	27.50		
Question		Monitored (%)	Estimated (%)	No Response (%)
How they answered	Living wage threshold	11.11	3.70	85.19
	Living wage before start of program	14.81	7.41	77.78
	Living wage after completion	14.81	3.70	81.48
	State support of household income	18.52	22.22	77.78

**Table Set 6:** Summary of responses to question set 5 (livelihood outcomes)

QUESTION SET 6

# Meaning of 'success'

The identification of initiative-specific measures of success and failure can support flexibility, expansion, and innovation in initiative evaluation across REIs. The contextual commentary helps to capture the transient and persistent contextual factors that need to be considered when interpreting REI outcome data.

The diversity of REIs means that quantitative data alone do not always provide a meaningful, accurate or full indication of the success or failure of the initiative. For example, a new business may not survive but a participant's development as a business owner may allow them to find employment (the THSN Employment Model). Some REIs may therefore focus their evaluation on the skills and confidence gained by participants.

What appear to be positive outcome indicators are not always interpreted as successful outcomes by respondents. For example, an increase in the number of customers could mean that the business owner is making very little or no profit from each customer and hence the business is not growing. In some contexts,

formal registration of the business is an indicator that owner has been able to keep transparent records of business activities. This then opens new opportunities for securing credit and funding. In other contexts, such registration may be far less rigorous and meaningful, providing little evidence of the viability and success of the business.

**Original question:** *Please describe an experience from your own initiative that illustrates what an “unsuccessful outcome” looks like. You can use one or more examples. (Please provide as full an answer as you are able to)*

**Original question:** *Please describe an experience from your own initiative that illustrates what a “successful outcome” looks like. You can use one or more examples. (Please provide as full an answer as you are able to)*

We included two qualitative fields that enabled survey respondents to share concrete examples of what success looked like in their context.

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**“Our early stage incubator tasks participants with learning how to turn their ideas into viable project while also evaluating their readiness to be a business owner. Success takes an obvious measurable form when business initiatives are founded, registered, or further developed. However for some, success can take a different path, like deciding not to move forward with a project. The decision to put a project on hold may be based on many factors: in 2022, two participants shifted into leadership roles as Iranian activists, two founders became new parents, two found jobs, and one determined that she did not (yet) have the resources to successfully launch her idea.”**

**– 2022 FOCUS GROUP, REI REPRESENTATIVE**

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	Short Term	Longer Term
Personal Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improved self confidence</li> <li>✓ Strong mentor relationships</li> <li>✓ Overcoming participation barriers (e.g. childcare)</li> <li>✓ Refugee leadership opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improvements to family finances</li> <li>✓ Future family prospects (e.g. better education, dietary improvements)</li> <li>✓ Long term livelihood provision barriers (e.g. childcare)</li> </ul>
Business Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Business covering costs</li> <li>✓ Existing business strengthened</li> <li>✓ Product diversification</li> <li>✓ Business registration</li> <li>✓ New assets acquired</li> <li>✓ Lack of access to funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Business expands</li> <li>✗ Business not sustainable</li> </ul>
Initiative Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Re-enrollment on to subsequent initiatives</li> <li>✗ Lack of engagement (virtual)</li> <li>✗ Dropping out of initiative</li> <li>✗ No business registered</li> </ul>	
Context Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Ongoing turbulence causes drop out</li> </ul>	

**Table 7:** Short and longer term indicators of success

# Conclusion



**This survey tells two stories. The first is a celebration of the collective support for many thousands of refugee entrepreneurs in 2022, sparking tangible and intangible changes to individuals, families, businesses, and communities. The second story emerging from the report is that while monitoring and evaluation remains a big challenge, there are many opportunities to gather data more effectively and efficiently. We hope these recommendations prove concrete and actionable for everyone involved in supporting refugee businesses.**

Decisions about what REIs should measure has significant consequences. What is measured can drive programming by emphasizing some priorities over others. Measurement also sustains funding by demonstrating how REIs affect positive changes. But as we have shown in this report, it is not easy to identify and gather data that reinforces both the moral and business cases for refugee entrepreneurship support. Data points like changes to revenue relate directly to refugee businesses, leaving REIs to infer that more profound life changes are also taking place. Other data like changes in confidence or social networks while positive, do not always indicate a refugee is managing to sustain their business. The most sought-after changes may take much longer to occur and be much more resource intensive to gather information about. Longer term outcomes, though effortful to capture, promise to validate business support as a priority for the sector.

We conclude with an important caveat for funders and agencies. REIs perform a delicate dance between showing empathy for individuals and promoting business growth. A phrase we often encountered was that they try to be easy on the person and hard on the business. Funders should take care to ensure the outcomes data they require similarly balances individual wellbeing and indications of business progress. REIs develop trusting relationships with the refugees they support which can be damaged by over-zealous, extensive data collection. REIs are also under resourced to gather data and must make difficult decisions about where to spend their efforts. We hope this survey will stimulate a dialogue between REIs and funders about how to reasonably sustain these initiatives and make them available to more people as they rebuild their lives.

# Acknowledgements

This survey would not be possible without the support and trust of our partners working directly with refugee entrepreneurs. Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey. More importantly, thank you for your positive impact on business owners who also happen to have refugee experiences - your work makes a difference. We especially want to thank and acknowledge:

Accompany Capital

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ACH

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Bürgerstiftung Lebensraum Aachen

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Capacity

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Caritas Salford

---

Danish Entrepreneurs

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FITT gGmbH

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Forward Inc

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GEN UK

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Hello Future

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Ignite Small Business Start Ups

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Inkomoko

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International Centre for Migration Policy Development

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Interreg & Essex University

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Jusoor

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LOK.a.Motion GmbH

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MENTA

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NESsT Romania Foundation

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Reframery

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SINGA

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Social Impact

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TERN

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Touchpoints

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TU Dublin

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UNHCR Brazil

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