



International Year of **Microcredit** 2005

Guidelines for Organizing a Microfinance Club

The following guidelines and suggestions may be helpful to students who want to establish a microfinance club at their university or institute of higher learning.

Find other people interested in founding the Club

Often there are message boards in central campus locations, such as cafeterias and bookstores, where you can make postings to attract interest in the club. Another good tactic is to ask professors of relevant courses (Finance, Economics, etc.) to allow you to make a brief announcement about founding the club at the beginning of class. You should include your contact information in your announcement so that students can get in touch with you. Talk to as many people as you can about your idea, even those who aren't interested, because they may know someone who is.

Establish a mission, objectives and strategy

The first step you should take is to create a mission statement, which includes the objectives and strategy of your club. Try to be as specific as possible. For example, if your objective is to raise awareness about microfinance, among what population are you trying to do this? How will you do it? A sample mission statement might be something like "...mission is to create an environment for students, alumni and practitioners to engage in an open dialogue about the microfinance sector, learning more about the current and future trends and organizing activities to promote microfinance as a tool for alleviating poverty both locally and globally."

Brainstorm supporting activities

Once your mission, objectives and strategy are in place, it's time to brainstorm activities that will support these objectives. For example, if education is part of your mission, a panel discussion of microfinance professionals on a specific topic could be organized. If creating career opportunities for members is the main goal, a job fair with local Microfinance Institutions (MFI's) and other Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) could be planned. Other activities could include:

- Organize a lecture series or panel discussions by inviting prominent professors, researchers and microfinance practitioners to your university.
- Work with university administration to develop and add a course on Microfinance.
- Incorporate microfinance into annual undertakings such as social venture competitions.
- Encourage research and writing in the areas of microfinance that will support the objectives of the International Year of Microcredit (IYM). You can do this by submitting articles to publications such as the World Bank Economic Review (<http://wber.oupjournals.org>), the Journal of Finance (<http://www.afajof.org>) and others. The United Nations' online newsletter, **Microfinance Matters** (<http://www.uncdf.org/mfmatters>), also welcomes submissions. Please contact Vanessa Ward at vanessa.ward@undp.org for more information.
- Reach out to journalism students to coordinate media campaigns, write for the newsletter, and take photographs to create stories.
- Participate in the Global Microentrepreneurship Awards (GMA) Programme (See www.yearofmicrocredit.org). For more information, please contact Gayle Tzemach at ytzemach@mba2006.hbs.edu or Carola Saba at carola.saba@undp.org.
- Organize "Made by an Entrepreneurs" Initiative (See www.yearofmicrocredit.org). For more information, please contact Sadia Mian at sadia.mian@undp.org.
- Post a website for your club and link it to as many microfinance resources as possible, including other microfinance clubs. Your club can also be linked to the Year of Microcredit website.

Assess resource needs

Once activities have been brainstormed, it is important to assess which resources will be necessary in order to implement these activities. What sort of space will be needed? What things will be free and what will your club have to pay for or seek to have donated? Where will these resources (financial and otherwise) come from? Some options are charging a small membership fee, fundraising from outside sources, and seeking in-kind donations.

Designate Action Areas & Responsible Parties

Once you have a general framework consisting of the club's mission, objectives, strategy, activities and a plan for providing resources, the challenge is to make these come to fruition. Designating action areas and assigning key club members as the primary responsible parties for these areas can make this easier. Examples of these areas include Communications & Public Relations, Fundraising, Event Planning, Membership, etc.

Write a business plan

It is helpful to formalize all the ideas and plans you generate into a concrete business plan. This is a dynamic document that can be changed and improved as the club evolves and it provides a good record for members to refer to, especially if new people come into positions of leadership. The business plan should carefully state your objectives and strategy, as well as include sections that address the following:

- Short and long term goals of the club
- The club's foundation activities and their implementation
- Meeting financial and resource needs
- Organizational structure of the club

Get faculty support

Soliciting the advice and support of a key faculty or staff member (either someone knowledgeable in the area of microfinance or just familiar with the administration of the university) can be helpful in terms of securing administration buy-in, generating publicity and demonstrating to other students that the club is serious about this new venture. Try to set up a meeting with key faculty or staff members and introduce the club and see how they can help.

Develop strategic partnerships

It can be helpful to partner with existing clubs with similar objectives both to share best practices and to share the costs/planning burden of events. The Graduate Student MADVC (Microfinance and Development Venture Capital Network) is an international network that links students with high quality development finance institutions. The network provides a channel through which such institutions can promote job, internship, conference, and training opportunities and students can build knowledge about and contacts in the microfinance industry. It may be helpful to visit the MADVC Network online at www.microfinancenetwork.org or subscribe to its monthly newsletter by emailing CamMicrofinNet-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. The MADVC Network currently has more than 450 members on 6 continents and several strategic partners in the field. There may also be similar clubs at other, neighboring universities with which you can partner. In addition, strategic partnerships with university administration can also be helpful. For example, if the university has a career services office, they could help in organizing and sponsoring a job fair specifically for microfinance and may even have additional important contacts in the industry.

Make technology work for you

If possible, establish a website that, at the minimum, provides a list of activities in which students can get involved and who they should contact. You may also want to consider establishing a list serve on which members can post articles, job postings and other information in one central location. It is also helpful to maintain a database of membership information and the information of any MFI's or other outside organizations with which you make contact.