

- **Name of the study:** Evaluation of Phase B of the 'Sparks' project - (implementing the initiatives) about a year after the end of the training for entrepreneurship.
- **Year:** 2023
- **Type of research:** Evaluation research
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- **Authors:** Dr. Adi Levy-Vered, 'Michlol' unit.
- **Research Authority:** 'Michlol' unit, Shalem Fund.

### Abstract

#### **This study was carried out by 'Michlol'- the Evaluation and Measurement Unit of the Shalem Fund**

The 'Sparks' project was developed with the aim of training entrepreneurs from the local and regional authorities to develop new initiatives to upgrade the authorities' actions in the fields of marketing, education, and information, for the benefit of the exposure and integration of people with disabilities in the community. The training for entrepreneurship, led by teams from the "Rothschild Cube" at Ben Gurion University and the Shalem Foundation, included a two-stage assessment. The first phase assessed the effectiveness of the training and led to recommendations. The second phase, held about a year later, focused on evaluating the initiatives developed by the participants. The evaluation is designed to measure participant satisfaction, improvements in initiative development capabilities, and to identify challenges and reasons for the failure of certain initiatives.

This evaluation report presents the evaluation of the implementation phase, which was based on quantitative and qualitative data obtained in online questionnaires filled out by the entrepreneurs.

main findings: As part of the 'Sparks' project, 10 special and diverse initiatives were able to weave skin and tendons and come to fruition, in various cities and towns across the country. The evaluation findings indicate a high satisfaction of the entrepreneurs with the initiatives they developed.

The responses to the initiative highlight its success in fostering inclusiveness, empathy, and awareness. The ways of exposure were participation in the initiative itself, and exposure in social networks. Wide audiences were exposed to them, including organizations and associations, families of people with disabilities, the Authority's employees, the public, people with disabilities and other local authorities. The challenges and barriers that the entrepreneurs faced were in collaborations, in advertising, in finding a place for a regional record day, in recruiting partners with technological knowledge, in revealing the initiative to the public from a religious point of view, in the absence of inquiries during the day-to-day work and in organizing for the general conference. Evaluation findings indicate a very positive effect of the process the entrepreneurs went through as part of the project on other areas of their work - improved entrepreneurial skills were noted, especially in presenting the initiatives and formulating vision and goals. Initiatives that succeeded showed a range of skills improvement compared to those that did not, with writing work plans and creating partnerships being prominent. Motivation, initiative expansion, program development, learning, knowledge building, partnerships, personal growth, and enjoyment have been identified as contributors to the entrepreneurial process. Unsuccessful initiatives attributed failure to cooperation problems, bureaucratic delays, lack of financial and time resources, and skepticism about additional support. Half of the entrepreneurs would not change the training they received, while others suggested adding structured support after the training and expanding topics such as marketing and fundraising. 81% of entrepreneurs intend to launch another initiative in the future, and 93% recommend the program to others.

While some of the ventures mirrored existing ventures, unique and influential ventures still materialized, especially in the Arab community. The process showed the high commitment of the entrepreneurs, even though obstacles such as the COVID-19 pandemic, although it emphasized the need for guidance and understandable

assessment. The positive results of 'Sparks' support the development of similar programs, emphasizing the importance of strategic support and evaluation in future initiatives.

### **Keywords**

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'Sparks' project, training, entrepreneurship, outreach, authorities, developmental intellectual disability, evaluation research

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