



Employment Accelerator

Proposal



Welcome to SMART Liberia

SMART Liberia equips aspiring young Liberian leaders with the skills and opportunities they need to create social change and lead meaningful lives. Our theory of change is Aspirations + Empowerment = Impact. We identify aspiring young leaders from across the country. Convene these young leaders in our physical and virtual spaces and equip them with the skills and opportunities to develop their leadership potential. Upon completion of their leadership and entrepreneurship development experience, we work with them on their individual quests to create impact by linking them to jobs, venture support and a vibrant network.

Executive Summary: The Employment Accelerator

The youth unemployment rate in Liberia is at 85%, according to an UN report with young people constituting about 65% of Liberia's 4.4 million population. Observing the Macroeconomics, Africa's population is expected to rise from 1.1 billion today to at least 2.4 billion by 2050. McKinsey estimates that if trends continue over the next decade, 72 million wage-paying jobs will be created, but 122 million new entrants will seek jobs. One can only imagine the challenges this population change will have on developing economies.

In a short time span, these very same young people will need to take on leadership roles to define the country's future. Unfortunately, most schools in Liberia are not preparing students with the adequate knowledge, skills, network, and experiences needed to transition into the workforce and tackle Liberia's most pressing challenges. Based on a survey we created, we found that some students graduated and entered

the workforce without digital literacy. They also lacked the ability to use productivity tools such as Google Suite and MS Office- tools needed for entry-level jobs.

Our Employment Accelerator is aimed at creating a local workforce for the emerging Liberian economy. Through tailored trainings in entrepreneurship and leadership, computer literacy, and exposure to productivity tools such as google suite, asana, slack, etc, we will develop a pipeline of young people who have the technical, social, and critical thinking skills for a changing local/global economy.



Why the Employment Accelerator Program?

Liberia is a post-war country with many challenges. Children sell on the streets and youth unemployment is on the rise. There is no doubt that we live in a country with massive problems now and in the future. With a youth population of over 65%, Liberia, like most of Africa, still has the promise of a better future. Unfortunately, young people are unprepared to take on these responsibilities to solve problems and create jobs. Our schools and social institutions are failing to capitalize on the immense economic potential of a youthful population.

We, at SMART Liberia, envision a Liberia where well-educated, entrepreneurial, passionate, and values-driven young leaders are connected and positioned to drive change across Liberia and beyond.

This is why we developed the Employment Accelerator (EA) Program which is geared towards changing the narrative and empowering aspiring young leaders to create meaningful impact in Liberia. Based on findings from a “skills gap” survey we conducted with different companies and employers, we’ve come to know that there is a huge gap between the skills that employers need and the skills that new job-seeking entrants possess. The Employment Accelerator will equip young Liberians with those skills they need to create jobs and/or to be employable.

What’s the Employment Accelerator?

Think of us as a superhighway for job creation in the emerging world. There are currently two aspects to the program: (i) the Full Length EA Program tailored for university graduates with the required time (2 months) and, (ii) the Crash Courses tailored for university seniors or folks who do not have the time to go through the full length program.

Here’s how the **Full Length EA Program works**: Students get recruited through a rigorous application process. They are trained for two months, enough time to learn and experiment through capstones with our project-based learning model. Through our online portal and employer partnerships, we match them with relevant jobs across Liberia, which guarantees their employment and lowers hiring and training costs for partner companies.

The **Crash Courses, alternatively, work like this**: Students get recruited through a thorough application process. They are trained intensively from 9AM-6PM on Saturdays (the number of which depends on the course at hand) and are certificated at the end, provided they grasp the training. Through our online portal and employer partnerships, we match them with advertised jobs that are related to the Crash Course they took in the Program, which helps towards obtaining employment for them and lowers hiring and training costs for partner companies. The more Crash Courses taken with the Program, the higher their chances of being matched with advertised jobs as this enables us to vouch for them in more than one area.

From here on, it only gets better - we also focus on job creation skills. Through our entrepreneurship and leadership curriculum, each fellow will have the training to start their own business and have the option of joining our startup incubator to get support and mentorship. With this model, we'll be tackling the current unemployment crisis twofold with already tested and proven job creation approaches.

We aim to develop young minds to become owners of their future and create widespread social benefits. By training and placing youth in decent jobs, we reduce the risk of idleness and poverty in third world countries like Liberia. Through our Employment Accelerator Program, we aim to provide forward thinking companies with work-ready talents. Our Online Job Portal would save these companies the time constraints of recruitment and also supply the means by which companies can fulfill their corporate social responsibility.

Essentially, our Employment Accelerator Program will provide on-demand technical, social, and critical thinking skills training for college seniors and recent graduates. Also, it will connect them to entry level jobs at companies through our online job portal.

The Model

Train

Fellows in our program will be trained for two months in our full length program or intensively for 2-4 Saturdays (depending on the Crash Course) in entrepreneurship and leadership, communication skills, computer literacy and will be exposed to productivity tools such as google suite, asana, slack, etc.



Place

We have also developed an online job portal that gives our fellows and partner companies the opportunity to create an online professional profile. Fellows can create a user account and upload their aspirations, experience, skills, set goals and track achievements, etc. They also have access to view and contact companies on the platform. On the other hand, companies can post from one to an unlimited number of vacancies, depending on their payment plan. They also

have access to our fellows and can recruit from the pool of talent. This not only lowers the hiring and training costs and time for companies, but also guarantees employment for our fellows.



Pay it forward

In the long run, fellows who have had some work experience and gained specific skills will have the opportunity to return and deliver workshops, trainings, symposiums, etc.



Program Impact

Proposed Impact

At the end of our pilot year, we will train and place approximately **140** young people into decent jobs in companies across Liberia, and **700** young people after **5** years. Our goal is also to train up to **700** young people with the skills to find and create jobs for a fast changing local/global economy after **5** years of operation.

Impact Measurement (Key Performance Index)

In order to measure the impact of the program and determine our Key Performance Indices (KPIs), we have set the following criteria:

Amount of participants to join our startup incubator -- track the number of people who apply and are accepted into the programs

Productivity evaluation -- test participants in verification centers; monitor and evaluate their progress through mentorships and reports.

Number of fellows placed in decent jobs -- track the number of people hired by companies

Number of employer partnerships -- track the number of companies who join our platform as partners

Number of jobs postings and placements -- track the number of job postings and placements done through our online job portal

Graduated fellows' performance on the job -- post employment survey

Sustainability Plan

In our pilot phase, revenues from fees will cover approximately **73%** of our annual operating budget in the first two to three years of operation. Young people will be charged a market sensitive fee with very reasonable and affordable payment plans. In addition, we will be building paying relationships with companies for our job placement services. We will also keep fundraising as part of our sustainability strategy. In terms of our growth and scaling stages, the use of technology and increasing the number of young people we reach each year will be the focus. Growth through technology will allow us to keep our administrative costs down while growing our revenues.

Competitive Landscape

Currently, there are no direct competitors in terms of our program focus and design. However, almost every institution working to promote quality education as well as job acquisition and creation act as competitors. The Executive Mansion's site (emansion.gov.lr) is the closest to our intended job portal. However, the EA's platform differs from theirs in that we don't only provide a platform for partner companies to advertise their job vacancies, we also provide the medium through which fellows of our program will apply to these jobs directly through the site thereby allowing

said companies to pick from the qualified pool of candidates; all with the click of a button. Nonetheless, we are the first program with an intentional focus of bringing together the country's brightest young people in one place and activating their passions, inspiring them to aspire and create, while providing the support/platform for them to learn, experiment, fail, and grow. Our core programs of entrepreneurship, leadership, understanding Liberia and global citizenship will establish the foundations for our students to understand the world around them and what they can do to affect change. This, in addition to our intensive courses on Job Readiness and Computer literacy, will mold the EA fellows into top-notch employees who will do very well at jobs with our partner companies.

Selection Criteria

Our application process is extremely competitive as we can only take maximum 20 fellows per cohort who are successful in the application process and are willing and able to pay the mandatory fee of \$250.00 USD using varying payment plans for the Full Length Program, and maximum 12 fellows per course who are successful in the application process and are willing and able to pay the mandatory fee of \$20.00 USD using varying payment plans for the Crash Courses. . We invite all applicants who meet the below criteria to submit an application:

University graduate or current senior graduating this year (2018/19).

Individuals between the ages of 19 - 35 years.

Students with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 with conditional recruitment set up for graduates scoring between 2.5 and 3.0.

Exceptional Leadership Ability

Proven Commitment to Service

Desire to Lead Systemic Change

What you will need to do/submit:

Full Length EA Program

- Signed/Sealed University Transcript (Photocopy).
- Two Letters of Recommendation (School and Character reference).
- Submit for an Aptitude Test (Math, Reading/Language, Writing).
- Submit to an Interview Process (Singles/Group).
- Select a payment plan best suited to your financial comfort.

Crash Courses

- Signed/Sealed University Transcript (Photocopy) or Official University Document showing that you are a senior student
- Submit an online application and aptitude tests (online and in person)
- Submit to an Interview
- Select a payment plan best suited to your financial comfort.

Application Process

First Round--General Application

Potential applicants will fill out our application form--online or via paper. The application includes biographical information and short questions and essays.

Second Round--Aptitude Test

We will invite the candidates that most closely match our selection criteria for a test in math, reading and writing to gauge their ability to learn what we teach and their readiness for the workforce. Fellows in this round will be asked to submit their transcripts.

Third Round--Interview

Candidates with exceptional scores will be invited for interview(s) where we will assess their ability to succeed in the network and the feasibility of their plans to transform Liberia.

Fourth--Selection

We will invite maximum 20 applicants to join our Full Length EA Program cohort and maximum 12 applicants to join our Crash Course class(es) and begin our process of creating a local workforce for the emerging Liberian economy.

Budget

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