



Ladyzhyn Entrepreneurs Club: A New Local Business Development Hub

In July 2020, Ladyzhyn opened its first Entrepreneurs Club tasked with stimulating and supporting the development of small- and medium-sized businesses in the community. The club is an initiative of The Agency of Local Economic Development of Ladyzhyn, under the auspices of the International Technical Assistance Project “Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance” (PLEDDG), DTEK Energo, and the Foundation of Business Initiatives.

“Over the past few years, I have been repeatedly approached by local business owners, who requested that I arrange a place where they would be able to gain valuable insights into best business practices, share experience, and address their issues. We can already see that the Club has brought together residents of Ladyzhyn, becoming a space for quality networking and an effective business support mechanism,” says **Liudmyla Ravliuk, Project Director, Establishing and Supporting Effective Operations of the Ladyzhyn Entrepreneurs Club**.

The club welcomes visitors at the city centre at 4 Kravchyka Street. It offers a comfortable environment for meetings, training activities, and exhibitions. The premises were appropriately furnished, and efficient computers were installed, thanks to the financial backing of PLEDDG. The Entrepreneurs Club of Ladyzhyn hosted a series of trainings and workshops for local business representatives for several months of 2020 with PLEDDG support. Subject matter experts offered insights to training participants into the finer points of doing business online, financial literacy, and implementation of energy-saving technologies. Business owners also learned to write business plans and studied success stories of creative economy businesses.

“Training aimed at fostering private enterprise became a key component of our project. We successfully delivered 6 trainings and a 4-day interactive workshop where business owners learned how to effectively handle typical electronic services, open sources of information, and data management. The training was delivered to close to 170 people. We did not impose any restrictive criteria on the participants relating to their prior business experience or line of work. We extended invitations to all those willing to participate. That is why our training attracted both retailers and managers of food service establishments, as well as providers of engineering services, and creative industry entrepreneurs, to name just a few. In choosing activity topics, we followed the action plan of the SME Development Program in Ladyzhyn to 2021, which was developed previously with PLEDDG support and guidance. However, the most popular training focused on the use of payment transaction management systems: we organized it following multiple queries from business owners looking to sort out the latest legislative amendments,” **Liudmyla Ravliuk** adds.

Apart from the interesting curriculum, the Club also offered individual consultations to business owners, including online consultations once the COVID-19 quarantine was instituted. Business owners entered their questions into a dedicated Google form and received expert advice from consultants within 24 hours. Most of the queries from Ladyzhyn residents concerned the preparation of commercial and employment contracts, issuance of certificates of work completed or services provided, and expense reports. Frequent queries included difficulties experienced in filling out and filing tax declarations, as well as the particulars of specific business plans. Over the course of the year, the Entrepreneurs Club provided over 200 consultations. Given the strong popularity of this format, the Club will continue efforts along these lines.

One of the project participants, Ladyzhyn native Olha Paziuchenko, worked at a local bookstore for 4 years, and last year (2020) became its owner. Being new to the world of business, Olha attended all the training activities offered by the Entrepreneurs Club, as well as received insightful individual consultations.

“I wanted to acquire as much up-to-date knowledge and competencies in the field of private enterprise as possible, so I decided that every training opportunity could come in handy now that I am growing a business of my own. I really liked the workshops on financial literacy and the use of payment transaction management systems. The latter was particularly apropos. I came to this workshop really confused by my lack of understanding of what this was all about, and left fully armed with essential information. I also requested consultations through the Club on more than one occasion: I had questions about obtaining the electronic key, performing payment transactions, and registering in the DIYA app. I received help with everything.

The Club has a very good and friendly atmosphere. Every time I go there, I leave feeling like I am not afraid to contact them with additional questions. All workflows are organized to the highest standards. Business owners in Ladyzhyn previously had nobody to approach for assistance and they typically turned to the Internet for answers and advice. As a result, they would often rely on incomplete or unreliable information in their decision-making. I'm not sure if I'd dare start my own business now and if I'd be able to do everything the right way without the support of the Entrepreneurs Club,” says **Olha Paziuchenko, a bookstore owner in Ladyzhyn.**

The activities of the Entrepreneurs Club in Ladyzhyn also attract seasoned business people, such as, for instance, Andriy Cheperdak, member of the National Union of Blacksmiths of Ukraine, who has been an entrepreneur for over 20 years now.

“I began mastering the skill of a blacksmithing at age 13. My company currently supplies wrought-iron products to buyers all over Ukraine. We mostly manufacture fences, gates, and balconies. I believe that the creation of the Entrepreneurs Club is a very useful initiative that contributes to our city's growth. I attended several trainings, and, despite my extensive business experience, I believe one must never stop learning. For example, the financial literacy training helped me look at certain standard things from a fresh perspective, while some of the things I've learned came as news to me. I think that such training activities offer novice entrepreneurs a wonderful opportunity to receive structured information, practical advice, and support. This lays down a sound groundwork and serves as an impetus for continued progress. The Club has a great atmosphere and truly professional staff members. I look forward to seeing this centre evolve in the future, and I will gladly join its initiatives,” says **Andriy Cheperdak, owner of a company making wrought-iron products.**

The Entrepreneurs Club of Ladyzhyn has become not only a hub for local business owners, but also a place where gifted members of the community can find support. The Club has already hosted two exhibitions by local artists: Oleksandr Shevchuk and Tetiana Kara. The Club is open to supporting and implementing various business initiatives with a view to reinforcing the newly-formed association and promoting business growth, especially in these trying times.

“In a sense, the Club's efforts are presently more important than ever before. After all, we are now witnessing a transition to a somewhat different level of functioning of private enterprise. As a result, people feel a greater need for consolidated information, effective tips, and pooling of resources. I am glad that business owners from the Ladyzhyn community can now learn together and discuss ongoing issues collectively. Here's hoping that more and more new people will be joining the Club's initiatives. We will continue consulting business owners and working on the implementation of activities of the local SME development program,” says **Oksana Chornomorets, Chair of the Foundation of Business Initiatives.**

PLEDDG encourages the establishment of local associations committed to supporting businesspeople, since such entities have proven their effectiveness. Business owners build competencies and capacity, establish useful contacts, and engage in active networking, all of which translate into significant improvements in the business climate of communities. The Entrepreneurs Club in Ladyzhyn will expand this business initiative in the local community, meaning that its efforts will become yet another step towards the systemic development of the economy of both the city and the entire region.



#ChangingCities

The series of success stories #ChangingCities demonstrate successful examples and innovative approaches to democratic governance and local economic development in Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, Poltava and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts in Ukraine, that have resulted from the efforts of the international technical assistance project “Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance” (PLEDDG) which is being implemented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by Global Affairs Canada.

