

PROGRAMME: CEEI FINANCIÁ: ACCESS TO EARLY STAGE FINANCE

Originator: Cristina Fanjul Alonso, Deputy Director, Centro Europeo de Empresas e Innovación del Principado de Asturias (CEEI Asturias)

Weblinks: www.ceei.es

E mail: ana@ceei.es (Ana Mendez) Tel: 0034 985 98 00 98

1. SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE

▪ Overview & Aims

Experienced in providing business planning support and assessing applications for the government Microcredit scheme the **Access to Early Stage Finance** scheme was set up by CEEI Asturias to **help innovative businesses access private/public funding lines.**

Using a specific methodology and a package of support aimed at facilitating access to financial resources needed for business projects the purpose of the scheme is to:

- Improve the financial planning and business modelling capabilities of entrepreneurs
- Facilitate i.e. help businesses identify and source the best financial options from amongst the wide range of private & public funding schemes available e.g. new technology based company (NTBF) subsidies, the Asturias Business Angels Network (ASBAN) funding, subordinated loans, micro credits and risk capital measures etc.
- Help public & private funding entities to understand and meet the needs of business

With extensive knowledge and experience of both entrepreneurs and business finance, CEEI Financia act as an **independent bridge** between the two, **specialising in helping businesses overcome obstacles involved in raising early stage finance.**

▪ Key Resources

- **Programme Partners** – CEEI Asturias work in collaboration with a wide range of regional/national partners and financing entities to help entrepreneurs develop their plans, identify lines of credit and become ‘investor ready’
- **Key partners** include the Government of Asturias (Regional Ministry of Economy and Employment through to the Regional Development Agency – IDEPA), Asturgar (Mutual Guarantee Society: non-profit-making financial institution), FADE (Entrepreneurs Asturian Federation), AJE (Young Entrepreneurs Association), FYCIT (Foundation for the Applied Research & Science & Technology), SRP (Regional Society of Promotion of Asturias: a public body operating in the risk capital market to encourage economic growth), ENISA, CDTI and national/regional banks.

– **Funding: Funding Body & SME Contribution**

CEEI Asturias is an entity supported by the Government of Asturias and a wide range of public & private bodies. It does not have a direct funding role itself. Levels of investment for each particular project are determined by the financial entity concerned

▪ **Eligibility Criteria**

Aimed mainly at innovative and technology-based companies (including spin offs) the scheme is open to all types of entrepreneurs and SMEs.

▪ **Terms and Conditions**

Businesses seeking funding for projects and requesting support from CEEI Financia, sign an agreement with CEEI Asturias setting out the conditions and confidentiality of the service. This includes the requirement to work on a feasible business plan and for CEEI Financia to continue with the process of applying funds from financial entities when the plan has been prepared.

With the exception of funds secured from the Regional Network of Business Angels* for their businesses they represent, the service provided by CEEI Asturias is completely free (no fees, commissions etc). *Incurs a broker fee.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

Running since 2003, the scheme is delivered by two technical staff acting in an advisory capacity on behalf of an extensive partner and financial provider network, facilitating, coordinating and complementing the support already provided for early stage businesses.

The main aim of the scheme is to provide entrepreneurs with the support they need to define their business and financial needs, help them to develop and present a credible case for investment and then signpost them to the type of financing that best suits their particular business projects

Based on a specific methodology and aimed at innovative entrepreneurs and technology based firms the CEEI Asturias Finance scheme is part of an integrated support package developed to help firms progress through each stage of the start-up phase. Helping them move from idea stage to implementation stage as quickly as possible. This includes:

Individual (one to one support) stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pre-feasibility analysis – viability check/due diligence – Financial Assessment – to assess the finance needed – Project/Action Plan – support agreement for a works schedule, on what needs to be done/support allocated – Business Plan/Business Model – preparation – Business Plan – review/update – Investment Readiness Programme – preparation/coaching – Formal Application – to the financial entities selected.
Joint Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Investment Readiness Programme. Venture Investment Competition (for a group of SMEs)



There is no a ‘formal application’ process involved and enquiries can be made by phone and/or email. Enquiries, are followed up immediately with businesses invited to a pre-feasibility analysis and selected for the next stage provided with tailored support and access to the Joint Investment Readiness Programmes held 3 times a year.

▪ **Key Stats - 2012**

KEY MEASURE	TOTAL
Responses made to enquiries/applications for support	116
Application accepted/supported (Technology-based projects)	74
Companies accessing funds (i.e. as a result of CEEI Financia intervention).	31 companies €1.34m

CEEI Financia has obtained > €10.5M funding for technology based SMEs since 2005

3. KEY LEARNING POINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

The experience and results gained through delivering the scheme have resulted in a positive perception of CEEI Asturias now viewed as experts by entrepreneurs and the financial network in helping innovative/technology based SMEs access funds.

– **What worked well/Strengths**

Set up to develop a sustainable service CEEI Financia now provides a regional reference for an increasing number of entrepreneurs and SMEs across all sectors looking for funds Their expertise/‘know how’ also means that they can also provide a reference for regional level policies/service design and promotion of financial schemes offered by the partner network.

Challenges/Weaknesses

Getting SMEs/entrepreneurs to recognise the value of the service and be prepared to pay for it

▪ **Transferability**

– **Opportunities:**

The transferable methodology, first applied to micro credit lines and then transferred to other funding lines helps stakeholders identify the financial needs of entrepreneurs and companies.

– **Threats:**

Reduced funding, resulting in the reduction of financial instruments and support entities available

FURTHER INFORMATION:
 DIFASS You Tube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-U3H1f6T84>
 You Tube Promotional Video (Case Study): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B51z0VqDsQs>
 CEEI Asturias: <http://www.ceei.es>