

Free educational outreach for strengthening a community enterprise project

A community enterprise shows its strength and sustainability through capability to offer community products to market and satisfy customers for a long term. Therefore, free educational outreach for strengthening community enterprise is significant in particular for the development of the country's economy and society.

The Project was initiated by the collaboration of School of Accountancy and Finance and the Academic Service Center, Walailak University. Dr. Nittida Sudmai, lecturer in entrepreneurship, and group of third-year students from the Bachelor of Business Administration Program in Business and Finance in the digital era are main responsible for the project. The project aims to provide business knowledge including design thinking concept for product development, business feasibility analysis and digital marketing tools to a community enterprise located in Takiendam Village in Thasala District Nakorn Si Thammarat Province.

The project comprised three main activities. The first activity was to transfer business knowledge to leaders of the community enterprise. The training topics consisted of using design thinking concept in developing community products. This activity was organized to create understanding on using customer problems as a starting point for product development, as well as to encourage community enterprises to realize the importance of market testing in order to obtain meet market demand. At the end of this training, the participants, who are in charge of the community enterprise, understood how to applying the design thinking concept to develop new or improve existing products. The participants also set a plan to develop products using raw material in the community to sell to tourists who want to buy community products as souvenirs.

The second activity was organizing a workshop, which aims to develop skills in understanding customer problems and brainstorming new business ideas. The activity consisted of taking the community enterprise products to collect tourists' opinions such as product' feature, teste, packaging, and price. The data collections took place at tourist destinations in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. After customer problems were collected, the brainstorming meeting, with participants including members of the enterprise group, community leaders, and representatives from local administrative organizations was hold to analyze the data. The workshop results provided information to improve the community product to better meet customer needs, especially using local wisdom to improve the production process, adding value to products through the use of Thai herbs.

The third activity aims to provide business knowledge and free consultation to members of the community enterprise. The topic included how to conduct a business plan for community enterprise, pricing calculation, and digital marketing using social media platforms. The activity consisted of providing knowledge on the components of a business plan, calculating product costs, and demonstrating the use of social media to communicate with customers. At the end of training, the participants were able to understand business feasibility analysis. The participants also reviewed costs related to production and distribution and calculated costs of products more accurately. In addition, the participants learned how to create short videos to communicate marketing to target customers via social media platforms.

The free educational outreach project contributes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) No. 1 No Poverty by supporting assistance to local communities for starting sustainable businesses through education or university resources. The results of the project enable community enterprises to use the knowledge they have gained to improve and develop community products to meet the needs of the target market, to calculate product costs, and to market through online media, which will lead to the sustainable strengthening of community enterprises, the generation of income and careers, the creation of social justice by reducing the income gap, and the improvement of the quality of life of the community.