

The Role of a Business Adviser

A business adviser's job is to help support new and existing businesses. They can provide the expertise and knowledge needed to help clarify business ideas, point out relevant facts and legislation, and help you and your client decide if a business plan is viable.

The section explains:

- The type of advice and support provided by a business adviser
- How to find a business adviser
- How to work with a business adviser

RCO Advisers and business

While not traditionally seen as advisers for businesses or entrepreneurs, an RCO adviser can help refugee clients think more clearly about what they want to do before referring them on to a specialist business adviser. As well as providing a gateway to mainstream business advice, they can prepare a would-be entrepreneur by giving them some of the knowledge they need to start up.

What can a Business Adviser Provide?

Primarily, a business adviser can provide **advice and support** to a new business, which can often be crucial to its survival and success, especially in early stages of development when it can be very easy for a business to lose a sense of proportion. A fresh pair of eyes, which are impartial and objective, can help to achieve a more realistic appraisal of the prospects for the business. An adviser can guide a business find its own solutions and build good working relationships with its clients. They can help the prospective business person gain the necessary skills and confidence, while building upon their existing skills.

The personal business experience and knowledge of an adviser can be applied to most clients' situations, especially **knowledge of the local area**, personal contacts, main business markets and the general state of the economy. In particular, a new business may not have any previous management experience and so an adviser can help devise a successful business plan using tried and tested tools of business analysis. Key areas of business advice that will be covered are finance and accounting, legal requirements, managing people, designing business identity and products, maintaining activities using new technologies and traditional methods, exporting goods and services, environmental management, marketing and sales¹. An adviser will have access to numerous resources, ranging from the latest information on management thinking, to sources of grants, loans, and training courses, to where to find out more specialist knowledge.

The Need for a business adviser to be Culturally and Gender Sensitive

As a RCO adviser, you may need to help business advisers with an understanding of the situation of refugees and an awareness of issues arising from the clients' culture, faith, language and background. These may have created barriers for the client in the past, which a business adviser can help to overcome through guidance and knowledge of the business world of this country. If you are working with a business adviser, they may need guidance on the cultural and gender issues that are pertinent to your community, and possibly periodic use of interpreters.

Where to Find a Business Adviser

There are a number of sources of business advice. There may be local business advice agencies, and some clients may get referrals from Job Centre Plus. Otherwise Business Link and the local Chamber of Commerce may be able to provide more local information, and the local authority will almost certainly have contacts in the local area. The Prince's Trust can provide a service to refugees between the ages of 18 and 31, and also has mentors on hand to provide more specific support. If you can establish a good rapport with local business advisers, the potential for a creative and supportive partnership for refugee entrepreneurs is high. Almost all of these contacts will be available over the Internet, in the yellow pages or the phone book, and some will have specific refugee support programmes.

Checklist

- Business advice agencies help clients decide if businesses are viable
- Business advisers help business with knowledge, advice and support and can be particularly useful at start-up
- Contact information for business advice can be found on the internet or in phone directories

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¹ Business Link