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SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENT-BUSINESS COLLABORATION

Good practice collection of support services for challenge-based student-business collaboration in sustainable entrepreneurship

Good Practice Profile: BBENG



BBENG

BBENG (BVIO B.V.)

Business development agency

Est. 2018

Netherlands

Groningen

Number of employees

21

Geographic scope of activities

Regional

(focus on Netherlands and Germany)

Type of intermediary

HEI-external

HEI-internal

Hybrid

Intermediary set-up

Single organisation

Partnership of multiple organisations

Intermediation for SBC as

Primary role

Secondary role

BBENG is a consultancy bureau that works to **promote entrepreneurship** and innovation in the north of the Netherlands. With a focus on the **green economy**, BBENG offers services in business development, innovation brokerage, funding consultancy, and communication and marketing.

Background

Founded in 2018, BBENG is made up of a team of entrepreneurs and creatives who specialise in enabling regional transitions in areas such as sustainability, climate adaptation or the labour market, serving clients from government, business, and education. BBENG also works to bring together different parties in result-oriented collaborations. One of its services includes guiding student-business collaboration. The Green Business Challenge is its flagship student-business collaboration format which it runs since 2021, focusing on green and circular economy themes. With launching the Green Business Challenge concept, BBENG wanted to combine two elements: one the one hand, it aims to offer international students a practical introduction to the themes of sustainability, circular economy, bio-based green chemistry, biotech, and climate adaptation. On the other hand, the agency aims to help companies overcome hurdles related to sustainable business development because of lack of financing, time, and personnel.

Funding & Financing Model

- × Revenue is generated through provision of consulting services.
- × The Green Business Challenge is self-financed by BBENG and supported by in-cash and in-kind sponsorships. In-kind sponsorships may include provision of event locations for carrying out the kick-off and final events of the challenge.
- × Challenge owners pay a participation fee.
- × Through programme partnerships, partners provide important content elements such as events, providing expert input, tools and networking for the programme.
- × In addition, BBENG has received a 60.000 EUR grant for the time period September 2022 to May 2023 through the EU Erasmus+ programme to support the development of the Green Business Challenge Toolkit, an innovative toolkit aimed at disseminating and scaling the Green Business Challenge concept to youth work organisations across Europe.



GBC participants during a study visit of a production facility.
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Intermediary Support Services & Activities

GENERAL SUPPORT

- × Development of programme content for the Green Business Challenge concept on the themes of circular economy, biobased and circular product design, biocomposites, green chemistry, and climate change.
- × Operational management and organisation of the challenge format across five locations, including guidance through the four phases of the Green Business Challenge model (see image „The GBC-Model“ on p. 19) and accompaniment of participating students during the challenge.
- × Acquisition of external stakeholders, including companies as case owners as well as partners supporting the challenge.
- × Acquisition of students via partner networks.
- × Event management, including the organisation of the final challenge event with student pitches as a public event.
- × Extensive communication and marketing around the challenge carried out by two BBENG staff members.

COMPANY-SPECIFIC SUPPORT

- × Development of a common understanding of the problem faced by the company.
- × Guidance of participating company representatives in their roles as challenge owners or supervisors through expectation management and provision of relevant information regarding interaction with the student teams and expected inputs.
- × Quality management of the challenge process, including continuous checks to ensure adequate use of resources, high quality of challenge outcomes and meeting of official agreements.
- × Visibility through communications and marketing around the company and the solutions developed for its challenge, for instance in the form of a challenge aftermovie for each company case.
- × Network building by providing challenge partners with the opportunity to forge cooperations with other challenge partners.

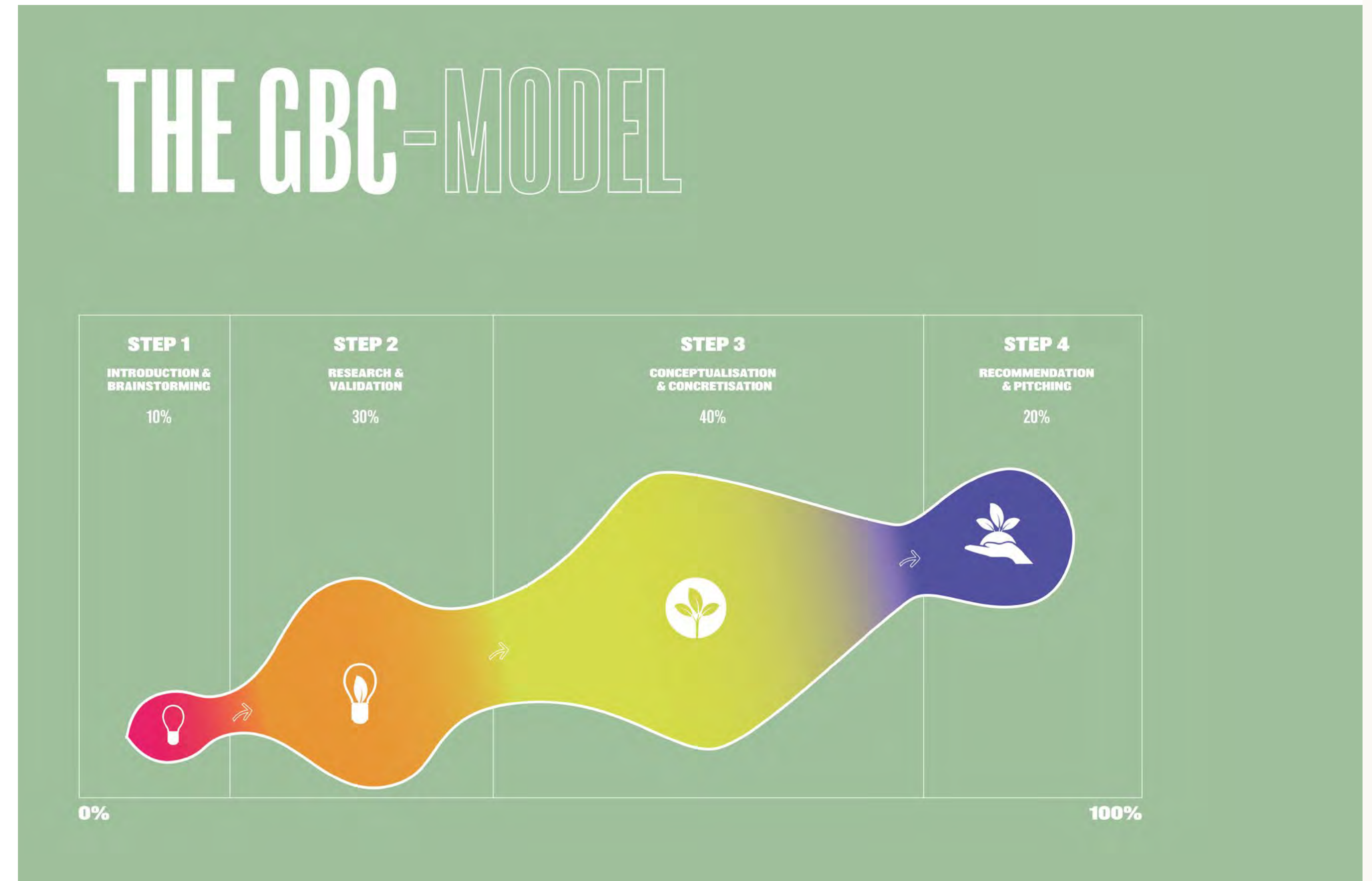


A student team discusses their ideas. © BBENG

Intermediary Support Services & Activities

TEACHER- AND STUDENT-SPECIFIC SUPPORT

- * Offer of free of charge participation in the Green Business Challenge for students, including sustainable food and travel options.
- * Development of challenge briefing containing detailed information about challenge owner, challenge history, and directions and criteria for solutions, indicating previous ideas or actions.
- * Provision of one supervisor per team who shares expert knowledge.
- * Provision of guidance to students throughout the challenge, e.g., through structuring team organisation by appointing team leaders as well as coordination of daily stand-ups which allow for regular exchange and give students the opportunity to report on their team progress.
- * Organisation of expert input provided at each location from theme specialists, business developers, university professors, e.g., in the form of workshops and thematic sessions.
- * Guarantee of availability of challenge owners to students throughout the programme for feedback on the developed ideas.
- * Organisation of opportunities for social interaction and gatherings.
- * Provision of certificates of recognition as well as awards and prizes, for instance the Green Business Challenge ambassador prize which grants challenge winners travels including university and business visits.



The GBC-Model. Source: Green Business Challenge Toolkit.



Students meet with a challenge owner. © BG Creative

Curricular Integration

While the Green Business Challenge is organised independently of HEIs, BBENG puts emphasis on connecting with educational systems and cooperating with HEIs and their entrepreneurship centres for mutual learning. For instance, BBENG partners with universities as partners who provide supervisors and theme experts for the student teams and to make the challenge programme available for curricular integration. BBENG plans to expand on these partnerships and collaborations in the future by setting up multiple editions a year with different lead partners. A pilot for curricular incorporation of the approach is an option BBENG wants to pursue.

International & Virtual Collaboration

- ✘ The challenge programme is open to students and young professionals from all around the world, with around 15 nationalities represented by participating students each year. Given the regional focus of the challenge programme, most participants recruited come from Germany and the Netherlands, with a small proportion of students travelling from other places in or outside of Europe.
- ✘ In the past editions, five different locations have been travelled to during the challenge: Leeuwarden, Meppel, Emmen, and Groningen in the Netherlands, as well as Oldenburg in Germany.
- ✘ While most events during the challenge programme take place in person, hybrid events are organised using video conferencing software.
- ✘ Technology integration: BBENG uses TAEMio software to support the building, matching and meeting of student teams and to improve team performance and collaboration throughout the challenge programme.
- ✘ BBENG provides an online environment (Dropbox folder) to provide content such as a handbook, briefings and forms to enable other organisations to successfully organise their own Green Business Challenge format.

Impact

VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

BBENG is driven by curiosity, connection and action. The consultancy aims to make a **positive impact on their environment and region** by supporting sustainable and circular initiatives. Their mission is to help entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs **turn their challenges into opportunities for sustainable transitions.**

RESULTS

- × Annually, around 30-35 young professionals (students and starters) develop eight impact solutions for eight companies, leading to environmental and economic benefits.
- × Student participants develop concrete and practical advice for the challenge owners, presenting this in the form of reports, presentations and / or sustainable business model canvases. In addition, students provide an implementation plan for the companies to enable direct implementation of the solutions developed.



GBC participants at their stop-over in Oldenburg, Germany. © BBENG

- × Companies are connected within networks and the wider circular business ecosystem, strengthening collaboration for innovation in the regions Northern Netherlands and Northwestern Germany.
- × Scaling the Green Business Challenge concept: The Green Business Challenge Toolkit enables replication of the concept, allowing youth work organisations to implement their own challenge programme to empower youth to learn about business development in the green economy and make an impact.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND ENABLING CONDITIONS

- × With great expertise in the green economy, BBENG weaves its working topics such as bio composites, climate adaptation, circular economy, etc. into the development of its challenge programme.
- × BBENG has taken a cross-border regional focus on the North of Netherlands and the Northwest of Germany, building on its strong network to both strengthen its regional partnerships and gradually expand its challenge concept to more regions and countries.
- × BBENG bases the selection of company partners as challenge owners on actual company needs to ensure that the solutions developed by students are implemented. Also, commitment of companies in terms of time and effort investment is a key criterion in selecting company partners.
- × Strong marketing strategy, driven by the communications expertise within the BBENG team. The Green Business Challenge is established as a brand through various channels and networks.

Exemplary Challenge Format: Green Business Challenge – Circular Edition (2022)

The Green Business Challenge Edition Circular took place 6-11 November 2022. **31 international students** participated, working on a circular challenge in teams of four. For the duration of a week, they travelled to five locations with electric cars, visiting their case owners and other companies who provided expert input for their impact solutions.

The Green Business Challenge 2022 was supported by a range of partners, including the regional administrations of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe, the city administrations of Meppel and Groningen, circular economy initiatives such as Noord-Nederland verdient Circulair and NICE Northern Innovation Lab Circular Economy as well as academic institutions such as the University of Oldenburg, University of Groningen, University of Applied Sciences Groningen, NHL Stenden.

RESULTS

The student teams developed:

- ✦ an idea for a new product application for a high-quality and clean medical waste stream coming from hospitals, for Friesland-based circular plastic producer Keunsto.
- ✦ a recycling solution for ropes for the Harlingen-based marine wholesaler BijRinus.
- ✦ sustainable packaging, transport and delivery solutions of internal doors to construction sites for door specialist BPZ - Van Vuuren.
- ✦ an eco-friendly packaging solution, for Groningen-based mustard supplier Marne Mosterd.
- ✦ ideas for scaling sustainable coffins from hemp seeds and mycelium produced by Groningen-based start-up MyCoffin.
- ✦ a development and funding concept for a circular economy living lab, for NICE Northern Innovation Lab Circular Economy.
- ✦ ideas for changing public perception and raising awareness of the benefits of tree harvesting, for the Dutch Forestry Commission Staatsbosbeheer.
- ✦ a circular experience concept for the EnergyHub050 building as a circular showcase of new materials and solutions from the region, for the educational institution Alfa College in Groningen.



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Student participants with challenge owner Marne Mosterd and a business coach.
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PUBLIC CONTACT DETAILS

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INFORMATION SOURCES

[BBENG \(2023\). Official Website.](#)

[BBENG. Green Business Challenges Toolkit 2023.](#)

[European Commission \(2022\). Erasmus+ - EU Green Business Challenge Toolkit.](#)

[Green Business Challenge \(2023\). Official Website.](#)

Expert interview carried out with company representative (14.12.2022).