



Big Up Small Business

Creating new opportunities for small and medium tourism business enterprises in Jamaica



CASE STUDY

An initiative of



INTRODUCTION

This case study shows how the Travel Foundation, in partnership with TUI Care Foundation, created new opportunities for 300 small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) in Jamaica, by building their capacity to access the tourism market, develop their products and promote them to hotels, tour operators and tourists.



Small and medium-sized businesses have long been the engine of the Jamaican economy, comprising a huge share of employment in Jamaica and they are playing a vital role in the country's economic recovery following the pandemic.

Travel and tourism is a major source of economic growth and employment in Jamaica. With the right conditions, tourism has great potential to enable small businesses to prosper. Integrating local businesses into the tourism offer helps to build strong local economies, enhance livelihoods and reduce inequality. However, accessing the international tourism market is not always easy. By ensuring products and services are appropriate for international markets, SMTEs can improve their business and livelihoods, increase employment opportunities and further contribute to a healthy, thriving economy.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

23%

OF JAMAICA'S
POPULATION LIVED
IN POVERTY IN 2020
(WORLD BANK)



4.3m



NUMBER OF TOURISTS WHO VISITED
JAMAICA IN 2019 (JAMAICAN
GOVERNMENT)

60%

ECONOMIC LEAKAGE OF
TOURISM REVENUE
(JAMAICAN
GOVERNMENT)



29%

TOURISM'S
CONTRIBUTION TO
GDP IN JAMAICA IN
2019 (STATISTA)



MSMES ACCOUNT
FOR

80%

OF JOBS IN JAMAICA
(JAMAICAN MINISTRY OF
INDUSTRY, INVESTMENT
AND COMMERCE)



OUR APPROACH



We worked with a whole range of exciting small businesses in Jamaica to support them to better connect with tourists and operators and to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the Big Up Small Business project small businesses, including artisans, accommodation providers, community enterprises, craft and food producers and micro excursion providers, received training and marketing support, both in person and online, to improve their businesses and better understand international market requirements.



**Businesses
received coaching
and practical
support to better
understand market
requirements.**

WHAT WE DID

2019

Researched and mapped key stakeholder groups.

Delivery of in person regional workshops.

The project was paused for 7 months in 2020 due to the pandemic, and upon the restart, **pivoted to the delivery of all primary activities online and to a focus on supporting business survival and recovery.**

Bespoke, tailored support was provided to a small cohort of **'booster businesses'**.

As well as capacity building, the project also focused upon **supporting businesses to promote themselves effectively and to develop networks** with other relevant stakeholders.

Training and resources were developed and made available to all SMTEs in Jamaica to build their capacity as entrepreneurs.

A series of **training webinars** was delivered for all Jamaican SMTEs, focused on business skills.

2023

All resources are available to view and download on the project website www.bigupsmallbusiness.org

WHAT WE DID

Research

Mapping enabled Big Up Small Business to identify the type and nature of SMTEs in Jamaica, their current capacity and training needs, demand for the kind of products and services offered, as well as existing support mechanisms and marketing channels.

Regional workshops

Three regional workshops were held in Negril, Treasure Beach and Port Antonio in November 2019, with training aimed at increasing market access for SMTEs and covered a variety of areas including: routes to market, customer demand, product development, pricing, health and safety, and online marketing and promotion. Participants were also provided with a handbook.



Business recovery

Due to the pandemic, international travel was suspended and, as a result, all tourism businesses suffered. Small businesses were most severely affected, with larger drops in sales and higher rates of permanent closures. More generally, the Caribbean region suffered disproportionately due to its strong reliance on international tourism which decreased significantly, reducing travel and tourism's contribution to the region's GDP by 58% (according to the WTTC's Global Trends report). Because of this Big Up Small Business refocused on supporting businesses to recover once the tourism industry was allowed to reopen.

Tailored support

Bespoke, tailored support was provided to a small cohort of 'booster businesses' identified through an application process as having the most potential to develop their offer, activities and marketing.

WHAT WE DID

Training resources

In 2021, four 'Are You Ready for Recovery' webinars aimed to help SMTEs recover after the COVID-19 pandemic. Each webinar was accompanied by a practical manual on the topics covered: Markets & Products; Health, Safety & Security; Pricing and Getting Ready for Business. A further five tourism business training webinars were delivered in 2022.

Networking & collaboration

Whilst in person contact was limited due to the pandemic, a webinar module and handbook included support for businesses to prepare for approaching and meeting with operators to sell their products. A series of online networking 'virtual coffee' sessions also enabled SMTEs to share ideas, opportunities and trouble-shoot challenges with the support of industry advisors.

Local knowledge

Big Up Small Business' programme coordinator in Jamaica has invaluable experience of the tourism industry, extensive contacts and insight into the the sector, which contributed significantly to the success of the project.

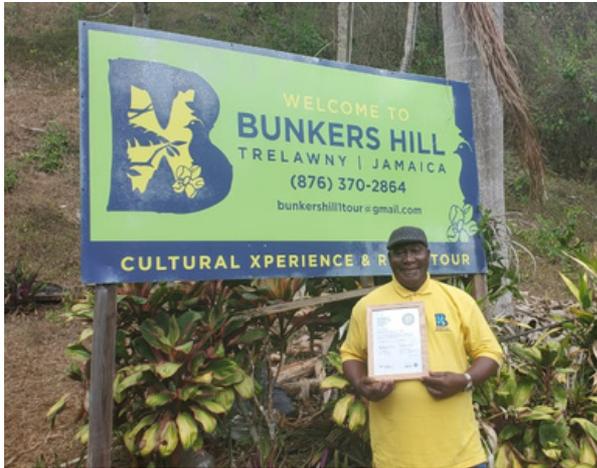
The Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) is the government agency responsible for the development and enhancement of Jamaica's tourism product. TPDCo provided strong support for delivery of the regional seminars and training webinars. Their in-depth knowledge of the Jamaican tourism industry also helped us gain valuable insights into the operating environment, challenges and opportunities for SMTEs.

Consultants based in Jamaica also delivered some of the 'business basics' training which proved very successful, as their specialist expertise of national and local requirements was essential to the content.

Communications

Social media accounts and a website www.bigupsmallbusiness.org was set up to provide access to resources, training webinars, news and regular blog articles on a range of topics as well as blogs by some of the booster businesses. Bespoke resources including a digital marketing guide and access to finance guidance were also produced.

THE BOOSTER BUSINESSES



We worked with seven 'booster businesses' to provide tailored support. The booster business programme aimed to inspire other small businesses and provide examples. The seven booster businesses were;

Animal Farm and Nature Reserve, a rural attraction offering farm and nature-based tours and activities as well as eco-cottages.

Bunkers Hill Culture XPerience & River Tour, an attraction, offering nature trail and hiking tours, food sampling, picnic grounds, river bathing activities and camping.

Far Out Fish Hut, a family-run seafood restaurant and bar set on the seafront.

llysse Experience, a guided culinary experience, enabling guests to sample local food and drink in a rural setting.

Holywell and Blue Mountain Peak Trail, recreation areas located within the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, operated by the Jamaica Conservation Development Trust (JCDT).

Nonsuch Falls, a guided hike through the Jamaican rainforest to one of the country's tallest waterfalls.

Trench Town Ceramic and Arts Centre, a social enterprise comprising an art and craft production facility, creating ceramics for sale in gift shops, offering tours of the facility and workshops for visitors and young people from the local community.

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“We have received invaluable coaching, mentorship, and advice from experts tailored to our specific needs and goals.”

Geoffrey Williams, Owner,
Animal Farm and Nature Reserve

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Most of our booster businesses wrote blogs about how Big Up Small Business helped them. They can be found at www.bigupsmallbusiness.org/blog

THE BOOSTER BUSINESSES

Support for booster businesses

Our support for the seven booster businesses included consultations, action plan and road map development as well as ongoing one-to-one support, photography, online workshops, providing support with access to finance and running competitions, each designed to help them implement their learning in specific ways.

Competitions

Four competitions were run for the booster businesses; risk assessment, digital marketing, product development and third party selling. Each competition winner was awarded £2000, which was used to carry out further improvements to their business.



“ The digital marketing competition that was launched in July 2021 gave me the opportunity to develop a campaign that promoted my partnership with a street photographer. As a result of that campaign, we were able to produce items that showcased the Jamaican culture and heritage and post these on social media. Those social media posts resulted in an increased interest in the Centre as well as increased sales for the items. Items were purchased from Jamaicans and foreigners from as far as New York.

Garfield Williams, Owner,
Trench Town Ceramic & Art Centre

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Wider impacts

Other organisations also benefited from the wider support of the BUSB project. Representatives of the Catadupa Development Benevolent Society, who attended training and networking sessions used the training manuals to independently gain funding for heritage tours.

Booster business JCDT is using the BUSB resources to help eight local communities (with support from the inter-American Foundation) to develop their products and capacity to benefit from tourism, including supporting their community tourism efforts and facilitating cross-marketing and promotion opportunities.

Most of our booster businesses wrote blogs about how Big Up Small Business helped them. They can be found at www.bigupsmallbusiness.org/blog

EXAMPLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Animal Farm and Nature Reserve

Expanded their accommodation offerings by opening a new solar-powered eco-duplex cottage, upgrading the existing cottages to provide hot water to them as well from additional solar power funded with the prize funds won from the digital marketing competition.

Independently developed an Operations Plan/Manual for the staff team that highlights strategies that are foundational to the business' performance such as business opening and closing checklists, health and safety procedures, and marketing and social media guidelines.

Far Out Fish Hut

Revamping their marketing efforts through social media promotions including setting up an Instagram page which now has 1,943 followers.

Implementation of curbside pick-up during the pandemic, which has been continued and expanded into a popular take-out offer.

Bunker's Hill Cultural XPerience

Despite having to close the business for a period due to personal circumstances, the business owner has been able to explore partnership options with a view to reopening the attraction when it is feasible.

Nonsuch Falls

Introduction of a new activity (Camping Pon Di Falls) - which came out of the business' winning entry to the Product Design Competition and which has proved popular with domestic guests, resulting in an expansion of the camping space with plans to do so further to respond to requests from larger groups, and creation of a different pricing structure for those with their own equipment.

As a result of increased marketing, the business received a visit from the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) who did a pictorial feature of the hiking trail which will be used on the JTB website to promote Jamaica.



EXAMPLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Holywell and Blue Mountain Peak Trail (JCDT)

Reviewed their pricing structure, using the project's pricing template, to ensure that activities are well priced for profit

Developed a map for tour areas to support self-guided tour option and engaging with tour operators to expand marketing and promotion to international tourists

Trench Town Ceramics and Art Centre

Used the opportunity of the digital marketing competition to collaborate with another artist, resulting in sales orders from within Jamaica and overseas.

Established partnership with hotels in Kingston to host their guests on tours of the Art Centre and are creating packages for those guests; contracted with a hotel in Kingston to sell items in their gift shop

Ilysse Experience (Culture Market)

Comprehensive review of activities resulting in a decision to streamline their offering and focus on their main activity - a cooking show.

Improved marketing channels - including a complete re-vamp of the business' website (utilizing images from the photo shoot that was conducted as part of the project).





"Our website got a major tune-up when the Travel Foundation facilitated an on-site photoshoot and provided guidance on how to improve it, including the importance of including testimonials, having clear call-to-actions, and using an easy-to-navigate design. The high-definition photographs, featuring people enjoying the services we offer, have made a huge difference in the visual appeal of our site."

Bianca Young, Marketing Manager, Animal Farm and Nature Reserve

"The main things we learned from participating in this programme have been how to grow our business from writing a business plan to marketing and promotion, health and safety management and mainly how to operate in drastic situations ... We have benefited from being on several platforms in social media networks, travel websites and booking agencies and the exposure from international travel blogs ... We are most proud of the joy, amazement and wonder on the faces of our guests when they arrive, and the pleasure and satisfaction when they leave."

Fabian Samuels, General Manager, Nonsuch Falls





"The resources and training provided have helped me to structure the new tour that we will offer to cruise passengers, as well as with pricing and marketing. We've also established partnerships with hotels in Kingston to host their guests on tours of the Centre and are creating packages for those guests."

Garfield Williams, Owner of Trench Town Ceramic & Art Centre



“Being part of Big Up Small Business helped our focus. We found the pricing tools and technical advice particularly helpful, and we are using them to guide our approach ... We have implemented new activities as a result of Big Up Small Business.

We completed a review of all our product offerings and streamlined them, and we introduced some ‘pop-up’ activities such as a scavenger hunt that has garnered interest from new visitors.”

Dr. Susan Otuokon, Executive Director
JCDT for Holywell/ Portland Gap/Blue Mountain
Peak Trail, St. Andrew



“The support received from Big Up Small Business has been great. The training sessions and guidance have helped us to consider all aspects of the business through a new lens.”
Blayne-Anthony Dalley,
Director,
Far Out Fish Hut

THE RESULTS

The project created significant knowledge and resources for many small and medium tourism businesses in Jamaica, many of whom have changed or intend to change their business practices, products and services for the better as a result. Although the project lost seven months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and had to adapt its goals as a result, 397 individuals representing 300 SMTEs across Jamaica benefitted from improved tourism market access in different ways from the training and resources provided through the programme and over 90% of those trained have increased knowledge of tourist market needs, and a better understanding to develop and adapt their products / services to meet these needs.

Capacity building for SMTEs in Jamaica

A total of 397 individuals representing over 300 SMTEs benefited in different ways from the training and resources provided through the programme. 179 attended the initial in-person seminars in 2019. 92 attended the Recovery webinars in 2021 and 154 attended the training webinars in 2022. Resources have been downloaded 309 times and the Big Up Small Business website has been visited over 4500 times.

Increased knowledge of tourist market needs

90% of those trained have increased knowledge of tourist market needs, and improved skills to develop and adapt

their products / services to meet these needs according to research taken after the webinars. Many of the booster businesses also demonstrated increased knowledge and skills. for example by developing new products or improving existing ones and making changes to business practices.

Increased profile / visibility with tourists

SMTEs who participated in the training learned how to improve their marketing and reach through outreach through digital channels. For example, Animal Farm and Nature Reserve won the digital marketing competition with a very effective 'Free as a Bird' Independence campaign which boosted traffic to their website as well as social media followers.



“Thank you for these workshops it’s the first [time] I have ever been to a presentation about the structure and process to register a business as well as the responsibility that comes along with such and understand clearly what was presented. I’m also understanding clearly [from] this presentation how to create my business plan. Thank you so much for finding competent presenters who are great explainers”

“The BUSB training and resources were very robust, comprehensive, and engaging. We are so grateful that the resources will be online for reference for a few years because we will definitely use them to continue strengthening our business”

THE 4 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS YOU NEED TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

1. A CLEAR CALL TO ACTION



Make your goals easy

Focus on what you want your marketing efforts to achieve. If you want phone calls, display your number prominently, or if you want conversions, make it easy to reserve or buy through your website or Facebook page.

Promoting Your Tourism Business | February 2021



“Wow! This session is really enlightening I’ve learnt a few things. Thank you... This is a game changer workshop”



Owners and managers of small tourism businesses gained significant knowledge and benefited from a range of new resources. Many changed or intend to change their business practices, products and services for the better as a result of Big Up Small Business.

IN NUMBERS

BIG UP SMALL BUSINESS OUTCOMES

397 
INDIVIDUALS

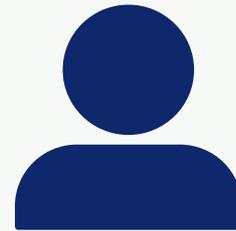
300
SMTES

across Jamaica benefitted from improved tourism market access



90%

of those trained have increased knowledge of tourist market needs, and a better understanding of how to develop and adapt their products & services to meet these needs



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Jamaican SMTEs gained tailored, in-depth training and support to better connect with tourists and to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

KEY TAKEAWAYS

SMTEs have the potential to contribute more to a diverse tourism product

SMTEs from across the spectrum of tourism providers – accommodation, food and drink, attractions, craft vendors, guides, tour operators and others – enthusiastically engaged with the training and learning opportunities offered with the Big Up Small Business project. They were keen to tap into tourist trends including responding to those looking for authentic local experiences. SMTEs in other countries could be supported more in a similar way to contribute to a more diverse and equitable tourism offer.

Consider the enabling environment

Even if SMTEs can build capacity to improve their own business operations, products and services, they may still face barriers to entry, so an enabling environment is crucial, such as support to navigate regulatory and licensing requirements or the provision of marketing exposure on larger channels.

“

The collaboration and partnership with BUSB has assisted TPDCo. in our efforts to achieve our mandate of improving developing and diversifying the Tourism Product. Through the interactive and highly informative sessions, operators gained greater insight into the needs of our visitors, their expectations, and global trends within the tourism industry. Links were forged and ideas blossomed in well-organized, pertinent and accessible modules.

Tourism Product Development
Company

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Online support is helpful to SMTEs

Online support, training and networking opportunities enable SMTEs in more rural / remote areas to be engaged – by removing the cost and time barriers to travelling to in person events.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

SMTEs need and value 'business basics' training and support

As well as specifically tourism-related resources, SMTEs benefit from business support and training on topics such as business planning, structuring, book-keeping and financing.

Networking and connection are important

Better networking and connections between SMTEs could result in enhanced products, packages and itineraries to offer to visitors in search of authentic local experiences and lead to increased benefits for local communities.

“

When the pandemic hit, we were in the first phase of the programme and many of the businesses that were benefiting were negatively impacted, particularly as a result of the temporary closure of the tourism industry and the subsequent fall-off in international tourist arrivals. We were forced to change the way BUSB was delivered and moved most of our support to online activities and training. This, however, proved to be very beneficial as it provided the opportunity for more small businesses to benefit from the capacity building and technical support, giving them the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to changing customer needs and bounce back from the pandemic.

Coral Purvil Williams, Programme Coordinator, BUSB

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LOOKING AHEAD

The project created significant knowledge and resources for SMTEs, many of whom have changed or intend to change their business practices, products and services for the better as a result. Businesses that have engaged with the programme, taken time to learn and applied the learnings to their business operations will continue to reap the rewards, especially as the tourism industry reinvigorates post-pandemic. The project resources will also remain available for access on the Big Up Small Business website for three years after the project concludes.



Having a wider impact

This project can serve as a model to implement similar capacity building projects in other destinations and complement tourism's positive effects on local livelihoods. It shows that where a mainstream tourism sector is active, there are many opportunities for SMTEs to tap into the benefits, with the right enabling environment created by destination organisations and supportive tour operators to maximise their opportunities to access the tourism market and contribute to its vibrancy and appeal.



JBDC



To find out more about the Travel Foundation or the
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