

# Lessons Learned and Pilot Implementation Guidelines for the FREELANCER Training Programme

Funded by the European Union. This document summarises the collective insights gained during the pilot phase of the training programme and provides guidance for future trainers wishing to implement the materials in diverse educational and professional settings.

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## 1. Introduction

The FREELANCER training programme was piloted across several countries and institutions with the aim of validating the relevance, usability, and pedagogical value of the developed modules. The training covers a broad range of competencies—such as personal branding, time management, financial literacy, digital outreach, and project management—designed to support aspiring freelancers and early-stage entrepreneurs.

Across all piloting contexts, the programme was received with highly positive feedback. Participants consistently emphasised the practical relevance, the clarity of the materials, and the immediate applicability of the tools and exercises. This document brings together the lessons learned from all partners and provides recommended guidelines for trainers preparing to use the materials in new settings.

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## 2. Lessons Learned from the Pilot Phase

### 2.1 Flexibility and Applicability of the Training Content

Piloting confirmed that the materials are highly adaptable across different learning contexts. Although originally designed for individuals entering or developing careers in freelancing, several partners successfully applied selected modules in broader reskilling initiatives, particularly for women transitioning into the IT sector. This demonstrates the material's strong potential for wider use in vocational education, adult learning, and early-career professional development.



The modular design allows trainers to select and combine individual topics according to the needs of their audience. This flexibility benefited mixed groups, including vocational students, young entrepreneurs, educators, and professionals at different stages of digital maturity.

## 2.2 Value of Practical Tools and Hands-On Activities

A recurring theme across all piloting sites was the high appreciation for practical tools—such as templates, checklists, structured exercises, website creation tools, social media and SEO guides, and AI-supported content development techniques. These resources helped participants transform abstract concepts into actionable processes.

The pilot study by IWS, covering 92 participants across four intensive in-person sessions, strongly reinforced this finding. Participants praised the exercises embedded in the PPT modules, which required them to apply concepts immediately (e.g., drafting a personal vision statement or outlining a basic advertisement campaign). The clarity and practical nature of the modules were repeatedly highlighted as key strengths.

## 2.3 Importance of Curated Learning Environments

Across the pilots, facilitated learning settings consistently produced the strongest results. Trainer-guided sessions enabled contextualisation, deeper reflection, peer learning, and interactive feedback. This format also helped reduce attrition, which commonly affects fully self-paced online courses.

Nevertheless, independent learning pathways also proved effective when supported by modular structure and supplementary tools. The introduction of an AI-based mentor—trained exclusively on FREELANCER course materials and available for 24 months after project completion—significantly enhanced the experience for self-paced learners by providing accurate and real-time guidance without relying on external sources.

## 2.4 Self-Reflection as a Learning Driver

Participants benefited greatly from self-reflection activities, such as creating personal summaries and comparing them with expert examples. These exercises strengthened the learning process by helping learners identify their understanding gaps and personal development needs. Partners noted that self-reflective elements contribute to deeper engagement, especially in modules focusing on financial literacy, business identity, and professional growth.

## 2.5 Need for Clear Target Group Definition

While the content was consistently well received, several partners noted that defining a more precise core target group would support more coherent communication, selection of participants, and adaptation decisions. The breadth of the content is a strength, but clearer targeting would help trainers choose the most relevant module combinations and avoid potential overload in shorter training formats.

## 2.6 Technical Expectations and Learner Experience

Participants expressed a preference for modern, interactive learning environments. Shorter sections, embedded questions, visible progress tracking, and dynamic digital interfaces were identified as desirable improvements. Although the current platform supported the training effectively, enhanced interactivity would especially benefit younger learners and vocational education contexts.

## 2.7 Monitoring, Assessment, and Certification

Evaluation processes benefited from the use of practical assessments rather than knowledge-only tests. Exercises that require learners to apply concepts—such as setting up a simple webpage or drafting a communication plan—provide a more accurate indication of learning outcomes. Partners suggested incorporating pre- and post-tests to help participants visualise their progress and strengthen the perceived value of the certificate.

## 2.8 Country-Specific Notes (Where Applicable)

Some feedback referenced local educational cultures:

- Vocational learners respond especially well to very concrete, hands-on tasks and short, clearly structured components.
- In contexts where digital tools are rapidly evolving, the inclusion of AI-supported strategies was seen as particularly innovative and motivating.
- In several regions, entrepreneurship education frequently lacks practical financial literacy components; therefore, the clarity with which the programme explains financial concepts was considered an important added value.

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## 3. Guidelines for Future Trainers

### 3.1 Preparation Phase

Define the target audience clearly.

Identify whether participants are beginners, experienced freelancers, or reskilling professionals. Select only the modules and submodules that align with their developmental needs.

Familiarise yourself thoroughly with the materials.

The training's effectiveness relies on the facilitator's ability to contextualise and guide. Trainers should review:

- learning objectives,
- practical exercises,
- templates and tools,
- recommended digital resources,
- AI-supported functionalities (if used).

Plan the learning format.

While curated sessions are recommended, the programme also supports hybrid or semi-independent formats. Ensure that learners understand how and when they can access the AI mentor, platform resources, and additional materials.

### 3.2 Implementation Phase

Use a blended methodology.

Combine short, clear expository elements with practical exercises. Many partner institutions found that 30–50% of the session time devoted to practice yields optimal engagement.

Encourage immediate application.

Tasks such as drafting branding statements, outlining campaigns, designing a webpage prototype, or testing SEO tools help learners connect theory with action.

Promote self-reflection.

Integrate exercises that require learners to summarise key ideas, evaluate their progress, or compare their solutions with expert examples.

Foster peer learning.

Group work, discussions, and knowledge exchange proved particularly valuable, especially in entrepreneurial and vocational contexts.

### 3.3 Technical Setup

Ensure that all tools are accessible.

Check in advance that participants can access digital tools (website builders, social media dashboards, AI writing tools, etc.) using available devices and internet connections.

Use modularity effectively.

Since the content is organised into coherent modules, trainers may use shorter sessions or thematic blocks as needed.

Consider platform expectations.

While the current platform supports the training, increasing interactivity—for instance, adding embedded quizzes or visual progress tracking—enhances motivation.

### 3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Use mixed assessment methods.

Combine short knowledge checks with practical tasks. Consider adopting:

- pre-training and post-training questionnaires,
- reflective assignments,
- applied tasks (e.g., draft campaigns, financial calculations).

Gather direct feedback.

Verbal discussions, short surveys, or open questions at the end of sessions provide valuable insights to adjust future delivery.

Strengthen certification value.

Ensure that participants demonstrate practical understanding before receiving certificates, thereby improving both credibility and impact.

### 3.5 Sustainability and Long-Term Use



Encourage continued learning through the online platform.

Direct learners to additional modules not covered in the session and highlight opportunities for further skill development.

Leverage the AI-based mentor.

Since access is guaranteed for two years after project completion, trainers should actively promote its use, especially for independent learning.

Integrate materials into wider institutional offerings.

Several partners successfully embedded modules into national reskilling programmes, entrepreneurship mentoring sessions, and vocational curricula. This demonstrates strong potential for long-term mainstreaming.

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## 4. Conclusion

The pilot phase demonstrated that the FREELANCER training programme is a robust, flexible, and highly appreciated learning resource for individuals developing their professional competencies in freelancing, entrepreneurship, and digital work. Its strengths lie in its practical orientation, clarity, adaptability, and alignment with modern digital trends, including AI-supported learning.

The lessons learned provide a solid foundation for scaling the programme across diverse educational settings. The guidelines in this document support trainers in delivering effective, engaging, and meaningful training experiences that uphold the positive outcomes observed during the pilot phase.



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