



Building Financially Sustainable Makerspaces Through the Open Catalogue of Business Models (OCBM)

As makerspaces continue to inspire innovation and empower communities, financial sustainability remains a key challenge. The **Open Catalogue of Business Models (OCBM)**, developed through collaborative input from global makerspaces, offers a flexible solution. This “living document” is designed to help makerspaces adapt business strategies that align with their unique objectives, cultural contexts, and community needs. By providing modular business model elements, the OCBM enables makerspaces to craft tailored paths toward sustainability.

The Concept Behind OCBM: A Toolkit, Not a Template

Makerspaces thrive when sharing stories of innovation, learning, and community impact; however, discussions on financial sustainability are typically more reserved.

“We saw the need for something like a buffet — that people running makerspaces can browse through to gain ideas, choosing elements that seem relevant to what they are trying to create. This is the idea behind the OCBM..”

---Anna Sera Lowe, Manufacturing Change Ltd, creator of the OCBM---

Co-Creating the OCBM: Input from a Global Community

The OCBM was co-developed with input from 50 representatives from makerspaces and distributed manufacturing organisations across Africa and Europe, ensuring it reflected a wide spectrum of business models and entrepreneurial insights.

The inputs were compiled with the assistance of **Martin Oloo**, CEO of Fablab Winam, and **Gertrude Mawuena Goh**, researcher into the marketing practices of makerspaces.



A Path Forward: Expanding OCBM's Reach

There is strong interest in expanding the programme to include more makerspaces, particularly across Africa. Available at LocalEconomies.org the OCBM is continuously updated, incorporating new insights and case studies to support a diverse array of makerspaces worldwide.

Early Success Stories: OCBM in Action

In 2023, a mentoring programme was launched, inviting makerspaces to explore how to apply elements of the OCBM to achieve financial independence.

Ronald from iZone Hub in Zimbabwe shared that the mentoring programme was instrumental in his makerspace's journey towards sustainability.

"It was great how flexible the Open Business Model Catalogue was. We could adapt it to the needs of our makerspace. It was not made in stone, but an encouragement and provided new ideas to make small changes that fit in the current systems."



With guidance from mentors, the team explored alternative revenue streams, such as partnering with organisations to fund training initiatives and offering 3D printing services.

"In one of our sprints, we realised with the support of our mentor that we can try to partner with other organisations to come in and pay for the training. It opened our eyes."



Eric from Garoua Makerspace in Cameroon highlighted the value of exchanging experiences with other makerspaces and learning from diverse mentors.

"The best thing was the sharing of experience with other makerspaces from different areas. We started to collect experiences with offering trainings to be able to generate income. The population here is not so open to new technology, but curiosity is growing."



Michael Danquah from Design and Technology Institute in Ghana reports that the OCBM supported implementing more structured revenue-generating activities.

"It guided us in creating an online training model for 3D modeling, which helps us expand access to our offerings and attract a broader range of users... It has also helped us refine our approach to community engagement by offering new models like Startup Support."



Mary Nyamanga of FabLab Winam in Kenya explains how the OCBM helped to re-evaluate the current business model.

"The OCBM has resulted in re-evaluating our current business model. We are considering implementing complementary models, where we have come up with a price list for different packages, which will help in addressing scalability and financial sustainability."



Through mentorship, co-creation, and an adaptable toolkit, the OCBM can help to transform makerspaces into financially resilient, impactful hubs for innovation. For further information visit LocalEconomies.org or contact anna@manufacturingchange.org.

