

## Pioneers for Prosperity introduces awards program



ABBY NOBLE

And if you already own a small business, there is an opportunity to participate in an awards programme that can help grow your business. This morning at the Radisson Hotel, a group known as Pioneers of Prosperity introduced an initiative through which small business owners can be awarded as much as one hundred thousand US dollars. The program promotes innovative ideas and dynamic business modules introduced in Africa two years ago and due to its success, the Inter-American Development Bank is encouraging implementation in some Caribbean countries. Leading the charge locally is Beltraide and organizations such as the Belize Chamber of Commerce, BTB and non-governmental organizations signed on to the agreement. Duane Moody has reaction from representatives of the private and public sectors.

### Duane Moody, Reporting

The program intends to connect entrepreneurs locally and regionally to share expertise and technology. And according to Director of Product Development for B.T.B., Laura Esquivel, the program is relevant to small business owners.

### Laura Esquivel, Director of Product Development, B.T.B.

*“The mission of the Belize Tourism Board is to promote the country of Belize. While we do that, we also come in contact with many small hotels restaurants, tour operators who have traditionally not fallen into the category as small business, but really they are. And this helps us to help them to learn about best practices, learn about accounting practices, forecasting, how to make their product which is already great, even greater in terms of being able to market it.”*

### Duane Moody

“You feel that this program is going to help us?”

### Melanie Gideon, Dir. of SME Capacity Building & Dev. Unit, Beltraide

*“Yes, the misconception is that this is not the only thing on the table. There are various aspects of—well I like to say bag of tricks—this is just one aspect of it. Assisting entrepreneurs, knowing that your work will be valued, will be rewarded, probably not financially but through technical assistance, being a part of a network where you can say for instance I don’t know how to do this part of my job, can you help me here. How can I fine-tune this production technique? All of that again comes back to the support structure.”*

### Duane Moody

“And that is what this program is going to do?”

### Melanie Gideon

“Yes.”

Director of Development for Beltraide, Melanie Gideon, says the program will offer support to entrepreneurs.

**Melanie Gideon**

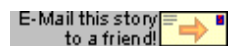
*“Entrepreneurship is not at the level that we want it to be. The various aspects, each organization is trying to see how well we develop entrepreneurship. It’s just the culture itself, we come from a different—the last few decades—it’s just a different mindset where you know it’s employee based minds leaning over to being the boss, being the entrepreneur, having the support structure, which in Belize is not as developed as we would like it to be, and that’s again what this is showcasing; for the developing of the support structure, to encourage entrepreneurship, to encouraging Belizeans to take the risk to go on his on her own.”*

Belize’s representative to Pioneers for Prosperity, Abby Noble, says that to win the award, there is a criteria to qualify.

**Abby Noble, Country Rep. for Belize, Pioneers of Prosperity**

*“There are two parts to it. The first part is a competition where we encourage all applicants that have owned a business for two to three years, has between five to two hundred and fifty employees and has between a hundred thousand US dollars and five million US dollars in annual revenue to apply. There are four rounds to the application. The first is a half hour survey that they fill out online at [www.pioneersofprosperity.org](http://www.pioneersofprosperity.org). The second phase is a follow up to that with more indebt questions. The third a half hour phone interview with the entrepreneur and the fourth phase is site visits where we interview the entrepreneur, their staff, their clients, their customers and really get a sense of what their business is. The countries that we are working with are Belize, Bahamas, Barbados, Haiti, Trinidad, Guyana and Jamaica. Our goal is to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs because we believe that prosperity will ensue with the right minds and with the right businesses to employ people, to treat their employees well and invest in the future of the country and are looking to create something different within the business community.”*

The deadline for applications is March ninth. Duane Moody for News Five.





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