Investment readiness is a service market

Enterprise growth & inclusive finance

Retrospective · September 2020–January 2023 experience | Published 17 November 2026

Retrospective learning edition: the period above is the experience discussed, not an earlier publication date.

An agribusiness may need finance and still be unable to use advisory services effectively. This edition asks what makes an advisory relationship valuable, trusted and financially workable.

IAM and Bid Capital Partners

The IAM learning brief describes contracting Bid Capital Partners in September 2020 to provide business advisory services to 24 agri-SMEs, with 12 selected for more intensive support. IAM covered advisory costs apart from a success fee linked to completed investment deals.

The account identifies trust, information-sharing, governance and tailored preparation as important parts of the process. It also warns that success fees may not cover the costs of supporting smaller, lower-capacity firms. These are lessons from an advisory intervention, not proof that every supported firm raised capital or could pay a full commercial fee.

What the Activity did

1. Connected agri-SMEs with a specialist advisory provider.

2. Supported tailored preparation, business analysis and investor-facing processes.

3. Tested a subsidised service arrangement with transaction-linked client fees.

Evidence boundary

An implementer learning brief with selected business experiences. Financing ambitions are not treated as completed investments, and willingness to pay is not treated as verified future payment.

What this means for future design

UMSDN editorial interpretation

UMSDN's interpretation is that investment readiness is a relationship and a sequence of business decisions. A pitch deck is useful only if it rests on information that a business understands and can substantiate. An adviser also needs a service offer that fits the client's stage and ability to engage.

A future programme should segment enterprises before purchasing support. Some may need basic records or governance work; others may need transaction advice for an identified financing opportunity. Apply different expectations to those groups. An investor introduction is not a substitute for diagnosing whether the proposed finance suits the enterprise.

The provider's economics deserve equal attention. Ask how much staff time is required before a potential transaction, when payment becomes due and which unsuccessful assignments the fee must cover. Compare a success fee, a retainer and a blended arrangement against the target segment. These are options to assess, not universal prescriptions.

Trust should be treated as an operating requirement. Explain what information is requested, who will see it and what the adviser will deliver. Track businesses that withdraw as well as those that advance. Measure improvements in decisions and operating systems separately from capital raised, and verify any financing claim against the transaction's actual status.

The question for discussion

Who should pay for investment-readiness support when a small agribusiness cannot yet afford the full service?

Try this with your team

Draft a one-page advisory offer for a specific enterprise segment: problem, deliverables, client obligations, price, payment timing and evidence of value. Identify one risk each for the enterprise, provider and funder.

Read the source. Share your view.

The promise of value for small and medium agribusinesses engaging business advisory services: Bid Capital Partners case study

FtF IAM learning brief, published on MarketShare Associates' site. Authors include Miriam Namukose Siriri, Khaled Khan, Gloria Okello and Dorothy Nabatanzi.

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