

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE PROGRAMME OUR BOYS MATTER FOR THE YEAR SEPTEMBER 2018 TO AUGUST 2019



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ACRONYMS

A.D. P	Adolescent Development Programme
B.S. S	Bocage Secondary School
C.A.R.E.	Center for Adolescence Renewal Education
C.S. S	Cicero Secondary School
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
E. D	Executive Director
E.S. S	Entrepot Secondary School
G.I.S. S	Gros Islet Secondary School
G.W.	Grow Well
P.E.P	Productivity Enhancement Programme
R.M. O	Resource Mobilization Office
S.C.	Steering Committee
S.S.D. F	St. Lucia Social Development Fund
S.I.S.S.S.	Sir Ira Simmons Secondary School
S.S.J.O.M.S.S	Sir Stanley Jon Odum Memoria Secondary School.
S.S.S. S	Social Support Services Supervisor
T.C	Transportation Cost
V.B.S. S	Vide Boutielle Secondary School

BACKGROUND

The Our Boys Matter program is a pilot project/study that is based on the belief that the dropout rates/poor performance of boys specifically is due mainly to the fact that many students who have no interest in academics are nevertheless placed in academic areas of study with few options to be involved in areas of interest to them, hence affording them the opportunity to be engaged in areas which they are passionate about.

The “**OUR BOYS MATTER** “(OBM) pilot sort to develop as many pathways as possible to keep our youth productively engaged in education.

THE MANDATE

Notwithstanding the SSDF’s belief in the potential success of placing students in areas of their interest, we are also mindful that other factors outside of educational curriculum can and do affect students’ behaviors, attitudes and performances, including their housing situations, transportation, and access to meals. Therefore, the program intends to:

1. Afford boys who are on the verge of dropping out of school assistance to remain at school
2. Provide all participants where necessary with a range of needs including housing assistance, educational assistance, psychosocial support, apprenticeship, job placement and micro enterprise grant support
3. An opportunity to transition to an institution which will provide training in soft skills as well as technical skills that are certified and portable.
4. Opportunities to attend after school lessons to facilitate their continuation at school;
5. Provide boys with deviant behaviour an opportunity to change through the Adolescent Development Programme (A.D.P)
6. An opportunity to learn non-traditional skills which would empower them to earn their livelihood
7. Impact on their parents through empowering them to be better communicators with their boys as well as where applicable assist parents in being self-sufficient.

8. Exposure all students to the ADP, which is heavily based on the understanding of self, literacy building, personal development, Conflict Resolution, among many others.

PILLARS OF SUPPORT

- Training
- Housing Assistance
- School supplies
- Transportation
- Meal Allowance
- Psychosocial Support (Mentorship, Parenting Skills Training, Adolescent Life Skills Development Training)

THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Our boys become more focused with a desire to set goals which allows them to feel a sense of achievement and are more motivated. Without a focus in their lives they drift.
2. Families / parents who are better able to support their children, understand the development of their male children and seek to build them up.
3. Improvement in attendance, regularity and better performance
4. Boys who have been exposed to the Adolescent Development Programme would be better equipped with soft skills and a better attitude to learning
5. Males who at the end of their skills training (3 years) at CARE are equipped with employable skills in the area of their interest or can create their own micro business and become role models in their community.
6. Are better citizens who have a more positive outlook on life.
7. Parents who are better able to communicate and raise their children.

PROCESS.

A comprehensive process was developed and can be seen in Annex I.

TARGET GROUP

One hundred (100) males between the ages of twelve (12) to seventeen (17) years attending Secondary school.

SCHOOLS TARGETED

The following schools were selected

1. Bocage Secondary school
2. Ciceron Secondary school
3. Entrepot Secondary school
4. Gros Islet Secondary School
5. Sir Ira Simmons Secondary school
6. Stanley Jon Odlum secondary school
7. Vide Boutielle Secondary school

Schools were selected based on the following criteria:

- Poor academic performance for CESEC
- Poor attendance of students
- Level of attrition and drop out of students
- Boys who had the potential to excel but were under performing due to a lack of economical means and needed support
- Poverty/ Indigence

FUNDERS

The Government of Saint Lucia provided funding for the program in the 2018-2019 budget, in the amount of \$203,110.00. However, the two primary sponsors are Saint Lucia Electricity Services Limited and Massy Stores Ltd, each contributing \$50,000.00; while the 2019 Prime Minister's Independence Ball donated \$10,000 towards the programme.

PROGRAMME LAUNCH

The project was launched on January 22nd, 2019, a full term after the initial start date. This late start was necessary, since projects of this nature must have a settlement period. This was achieved in the launch with its major aim of formalizing the partnership between the sponsors and SSDF, as well as dissemination of information to the public. The launch was a success. The main stakeholders were present, and beneficiaries and their parents were given the opportunity to share their testimonies with all. In the photo to the right the main sponsors Massy Stores Ltd. Managing Director- Mr. Martin Dorville and Mr. Trevor Louisy – Managing Director of St. Lucia Electricity Services Limited can be seen with the Minister- Hon. Lenard Montoute and Mr. Allison Mathurin- Executive Director of the SSDF receiving the cheques. The highlight of this launch was the commitment of the Hon. Minister in recognizing publicly the importance of such a project in the lives of the young boys. Hon. Minister pledged his Government support. Students, parents, partner were all present at the launch.



STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

At every stage of this pilot, there was the need for various strategies to be employed. There was the constant need to be reminded that this is not the “traditional” education but there was the need to see beyond the “same old same old”. It was definitive that the first grouping of students sent on the programme were the “outcast” and an opportunity for school to “get rid” of the difficult students.

It was recognized that the strategies should seek to engage all stakeholders and were needed at different levels (i.e. individual, families, community, school, policy);

It was also recognized that there was a “one-size-fits all” solution since each boy came from different communities, home environment and school environments. They each had different experiences and the majority lack parental guidance. This called for the development of guiding templates, requiring policies and strategies which meet the needs and challenges within a given context; and,

- Need for a multisectoral, integrated policy approach to improving boys’ education, as well as
- Contributing factors influencing boys’ education are variable (including socioeconomic factors, and gender stereotypes and norms), with complex dynamic interactions influencing changing patterns in dropout rates and achievement. Both the variable influences and dynamic interactions need to be recognized in addressing changing patterns in boys’ education;

Gender-based association with violence and illegal activities.

Various Strategies Employed:

All stakeholders, including schools, parents, communities and policymakers need to work together to drive change – opening a dialogue to create learning environments where “all children thrive regardless of their gender (Shirley Kelly).”

1. Meeting with Service Providers



CARE was selected as the Service provider and after a series of meeting an agreement was reached. The Director of the Institute was also able to waive cost of registration thus reducing the cost of allowing boys to attend. Several issues with regards to attendance, location and discipline were discussed.

2. Steering Committee

This Committee comprised of the Sponsors or their representatives, the Counsellors, The Executive Director of the SSDF, The RMO/ Coordinator of OBM, Social Assistance Service Officer and the Facilitator of the Programme.

The role of this Committee was established, and it was generally agreed that the Committee would provide guidance and meet once a term.



3. Mentors

Mentors were trained to provide support initially to the students and trainees who were deemed as having the most problems and those who counsellors suggested could benefit from mentorship.

Mentors were trained and over a two-day period by a trained individual. Areas such as Child Protection the importance of mentorship, roles and responsibilities were covered.

They were then assigned to trainees, students.

To date the reports have been encouraging, though a few of the mentees have seen dropped out of school. Mentors have provided various degrees of assistance to their mentee.



4. Parenting Workshops

Parenting workshops were conducted in the area of Effective Communication as well as recognizing the signs of substance abuse.

This strategy was critical to engender a change in the way parents communicated with their children especially their adolescent. This proved to be successful as parents began engaging the facilitators and requesting more time to discuss their personal issues.



Their attendance was a strong indicator of their willingness to learn and to assist their children.

Research has indicated that parents play a critical role in the lives of their children since they are the “first teacher” yet in today’s society many are not very versed in how to nurture their children, this project recognized that it would be useless to invest in the students and not the parents. Therefore, a holistic approach has been adopted. The training of parents will be continuous throughout the time that the student is impacted on.

5. Assessment of Students and Trainees for Specific Learning Disabilities

Assessment of students and trainees was based on the recommendations of Counsellors and Facilitators. The Facilitator/Consultant of the program who is trained in the Assessment procedure was able to diagnose those who had indicators of dyslexic and learning disabilities. Several trainees were found to have strong indicators. The result of the assessment done can be found in Annex 1.

Schools and the CARE Centers were then able to provide interventions such as a Remedial teacher to support the student/ trainee. The OBM also provided support through lessons for those recommended.

6. Alternate Pathways to Learning Explored

Trainees and students who indicated that they were not able to cope with the academic rigorous were afforded the opportunity after consultation with parents and themselves to move to selected apprenticeship program. An “**Alternative Pathway**” was created which would enable the individuals to become employed, be certified through modular CVQ Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) (See Annex II for this and letter written to



workplace). In this way the individual would work in an area where they were happy while being afforded the opportunity to be certified. One such Pathway for a 17-year-old trainee who operates at a reading age of 6 years 8 months. This alternate pathway allows the individual to be mentored, supported by his mentor as monitored by the OBM team. To date, his Mentor- Mr. Ronald “Boo” Hinkson has demonstrated the characteristics which are so essential in mentoring.



The programme intends to use this model for other students / trainees who are finding formal schooling difficult. It is well recognized that the youth must be given the opportunity to find their forte and education must be approached in its holistic meaning which is allowing everyone to reach his full potential in the area of choice.

In the photographs presented the trainee can be seen being mentored where he is being told to remove part from the engine and being taught the specific terminology. Below he can be seen working on his own.

Follow up with his workplace has indicated that he is (a) punctual (b) affable (c) on task and (d) open to learning, and from observation he is happy.

7. Retreat

These retreats were meant to assist the boys in understanding self, develop good study skills and begin to take their education seriously.

Several facilitators such as Mr. Everistus Jn. Marie (a Mentor), Miss Antoinette Joseph (Social Worker), Mrs. Geraldine Lendor (Business Consultant), Mr. Adey Paul, (Principal) and Mrs. Patricia Joseph (Family Life Educators) were brought to impact on them and despite all the challenges those students who came out were highly appreciative.



8. Consultations

A series of meetings and consultations were held whenever it was recognized that the objectives of the project were not understood. It was critical that all stakeholders, beginning with the school, fully understood why this pilot was necessary and the expected outcomes and benefits which were expected not just for the boy but his family and by extension the society.



At every meeting, those present commended the initiative and stated that they hope that this model will be replicated and sustained.

9. Development of Database

There is a strong recognition that the documentation of this project is critical for sustaining it.

It is understood that data translates into knowledge, and with the efficient use of the data there can be multiple ways of arriving at the best positive decisions which will redound to the benefits of the most vulnerable in our society.

Therefore, data on all beneficiaries, their profile at the Secondary School, their academic and record performance, attendance in terms of regularity and punctuality has been created. A profile of the parents in terms of their age, Social security Number, address, contact number (s), employment, number and ages of children, number of persons residing at the homes, ownership of home etc. have been recorded. This information has been found to be relevant in terms of the kind of support which would be given to families as we are very much aware that an intervention such as this, must be holistic and target the entire family.



10. Monthly Reporting

There is a monthly Report submitted which allows the sponsor to request any of the months. These monthly reports track the progress of beneficiaries as well as providing an opportunity to place on record the development of the project. Monthly reports can be requested.

OUR BOYS MATTER

JULY REPORT 2019



Fortuna Anthony

Facilitator

11. Surveys

At the end of the academic year 2018 -2019, a survey was done among all who have collaborated on this programme. There was an over whelming 100% to the question poised with regards as to whether such a project is needed. Beneficiaries were also in support of the need for the continuation of such a project. The result of this can be requested and read in the June 2019 Report.

12. Summer Camp

The aim of this six-day camp was to provide the beneficiaries with an opportunity to develop skills of team building, public speaking and self-motivation and control. It was also a time to expose them to some of the historical sites in the Soufriere area since many had not been to Soufriere.

The camp was Coordinated by M r. Cecil Charles who was supported by other facilitators. The camp targeted 30 students however all did not attend. There was nineteen (19) in attendance. There were many lessons to be learnt. However, those who attended were highly motivated and parents attended the closing ceremony.



CHALLENGES

The project encountered several challenges which required a change in mindset in terms of delivery, strategies and the development of out of the box strategies. Challenges encountered were:

- The persistent unacceptable behaviour of students who had transitioned from the Secondary schools to the Centre for Adolescent Renewal Education (CARE).
- Most boys were low achievers with low self esteem
- 44.5% of those who transited were persistent undisciplined students who were users of substances and dealers.
- Students who had continued suspension at their previous Secondary Schools and had very poor parental guidance.
- Non-conforming behaviours, which required constant attention from teachers and facilitators thus causing a constant diminishing of instructional time.
- Low literacy level of the boys thus making it difficult for them to appreciate the opportunity provided.
- Counsellors who felt overwhelmed by the numerous tasks and demands made on them, therefore, unable to pay closer attention to the boys.

Despite the challenges there have been several accomplishments which are measurable indicators of the importance of this pilot programme.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A Steering Committee to provide oversight to the programme.
- A service provider - emphasis on life skills to students wishing to transition from traditional to nontraditional environment.
- The boys within the Secondary school who received support recorded better attendance.
- Parents in attendance at meetings and training.
- Alternative pathways were created for five (5) of the 26 trainees.
- Sixteen (16) of 26 trainees successful in moving onto Skills - Year 2 in areas of their choice
- Attendance of trainees at CARE improved and the profile showed improvement in attitude.
- Two of the students supported in at Secondary School were accepted at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC)
- Twenty-five (25) Mentors trained to support students and trainees
- Retreat conducted during the Easter break for fifth formers with 50% in attendance
- Support in mathematics and English classes for CSEC students
- Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) conducted for Secondary Students during the Easter break.
- Meeting with Parents at Secondary Schools
- Orientation of all parents at CARE successful and attendance of parents at 90%
- Counsellors report indicate better attendance and change in attitude of students being supported, as well as a decline in drop out.
- Support provided to families who after assessment of their homes/ house will receive support in terms of structural repairs, windows, etc. This is provided in collaboration with the Social Assistance Services Unit of the SSDF

CONCLUSION

The first year of this initiative, has been what can be described as a major challenge. The challenges though were not insurmountable due to the understanding and team effort of those charged to deliver the project. CARE, the Service Provider, was challenged very early. Boys who were not used to being known, were challenging the authority of the facilitators and Coordinators who quickly recognized that the traditional disciplinary measures would not work. As noted earlier, approximately 9 chose to leave. The Secondary school students felt better as they were constantly checked on by the Counsellors.

It cannot be underscored that when we look at the condition of our society, locally, regionally and internationally, research shows that predominantly our young males are the ones making the headlines in connection with many acts of crime and violence. Academically, they are the lower achievers and the drop out rate is much higher than that of females. This is enough evidence to propel us to develop all possible pathways to assist the males as well as females.

It can be noted that many times our boys fall through the cracks not because of what was done to them, but rather what was not done for them by institutions that matter – the family, the church and the schools. This project has shown that there are significant gains when boys are cared for and have the necessary support. The project has also shown that the ADP has assisted the youth in understanding who they are and the value of having the right attitude to their life.

The methodology and strategic approach of this project is also evidence that there is need for a “holistic approach” in resolving the issues of the boys. The home environment, parenting and mentorship, provision of wholesome activities such as sports and summer camp are all essential elements if there is to be a change in the way of life of the boys and their family.

Educators are aware that for effective change to take place and for the measurement of a one-year project is insufficient time. It is for this reason that there has been the ongoing introduction of changes and various templates to address issues as they arise. Flexibility, and a change of mindset has proven to be a plus for this project.

It is indeed critical to note here that fragmentation will not assist this project in moving forward. The sponsors, the Government of Saint Lucia, Massy Stores Ltd. and Saint Lucia Electricity Services Limited must be commended for their constant support to making a difference in the lives of our boys.

We will take small steps and the vivid and tangible result of the effort of the sponsors, can be seen in the twelve (12) 5th Formers who graduated. Two students transitioned to Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, and others holding jobs.

Lessons Learnt

- Such a project requires fine tuning of the IP which would bring to the fore the gaps to be worked on.
- Time management is critical to the success of such a project especially when it comes with implementation of the assistance promised
- Need for a definite cut out timeframe, which if not done could create challenges for budget allocation.
- Draft budget allocation should be completed as early as possible.
- Timely feedback is also a necessary priority for the success of the project.
- As the project is worked, many critical issues which affect the ability of recipients come to the fore. To maximize on the success of these students, these will also have to be addressed. Issues such as water, electricity, housing and appropriate environment for the students are among the most pressing.

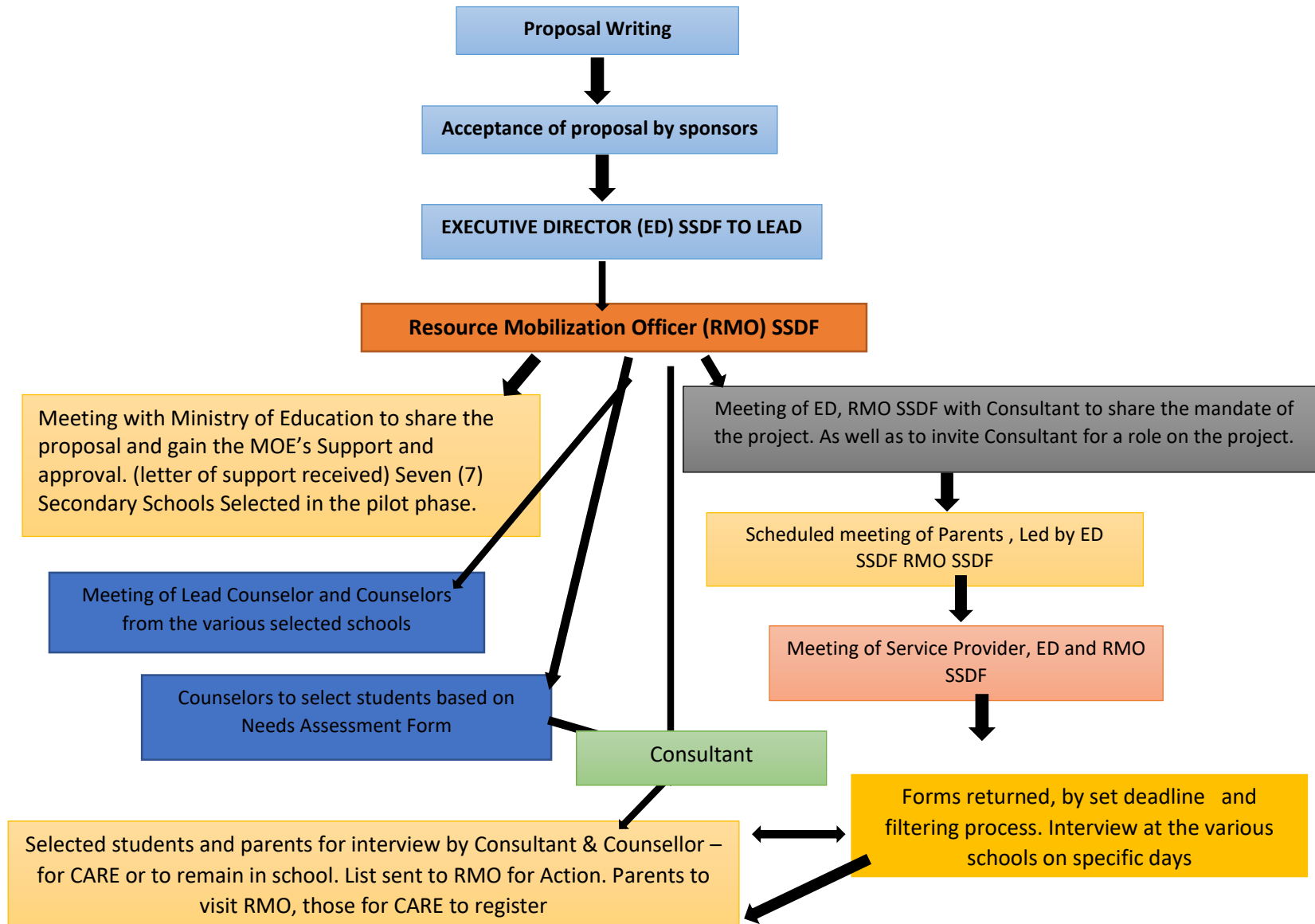
RECOMMENDATIONS

- The sustainability of this programme is a factor which must be considered as reach will support the interventions such as this one, can only reap the necessary changes if it is sustained over a period.
- The environment within which a child is nurtured has much to do with the results that are achieved. From the assessment of homes under the SLT-Net, it is evident that many of the boys who live in the “ghetto “areas, are impacted by many negative influences in the community, poor parenting, poverty and many others and it becomes very difficult for them to sustain the positive work which is done. There must be the determination and lobbying to the Government to build a home for beneficiaries who are from poor environments. There they would be nurtured and supported before becoming offenders.
- Students who continue to offend and must be withdrawn from C.A.R.E or the secondary schools must be enrolled into an alternative pathway to education.
- The Ministry of Education must be lobbied to create the necessary support institution where students who are placed on suspension can receive the appropriate intervention, be it counselling, remedial or behaviour change strategies. Suspension must be meaningful if changes are to be expected.
- A professional documentary which can be used to solicit funds to sustain this initiative be placed high on the agenda. It is understood that funders require accountability and transparency, since they too are responsible to Boards who they must convince that the organization’s funds are meeting the set goals.
- That the SSDF, remain resolute and continue to impress on sponsors and external agencies the importance of such a project.
- Support the **alternative pathway** to education, allowing for equity and the success of each individual reaching their full potential, with the requisite academic qualification; either the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Royal society of Arts (RSA) or Pitman’s, which ever best suits the area of choice.

- Mandatory evaluation / assessment to all students on the programme. this assessment should inform and guide the intervention as well as disclose the literacy level of students. This will also assist in making meaningful the decisions about the student's education pathway.
- Mandatory substance abuse testing to be done for all students in order to allow institutions to develop the appropriate interventions.

It in the words of Ignacio Estrada ***"If a child can't learn the way we teach maybe we should teach the way they learn"*** Our Boys Matter is attempting to make the difference in all possible ways.

ANNEX I THE PROCESS

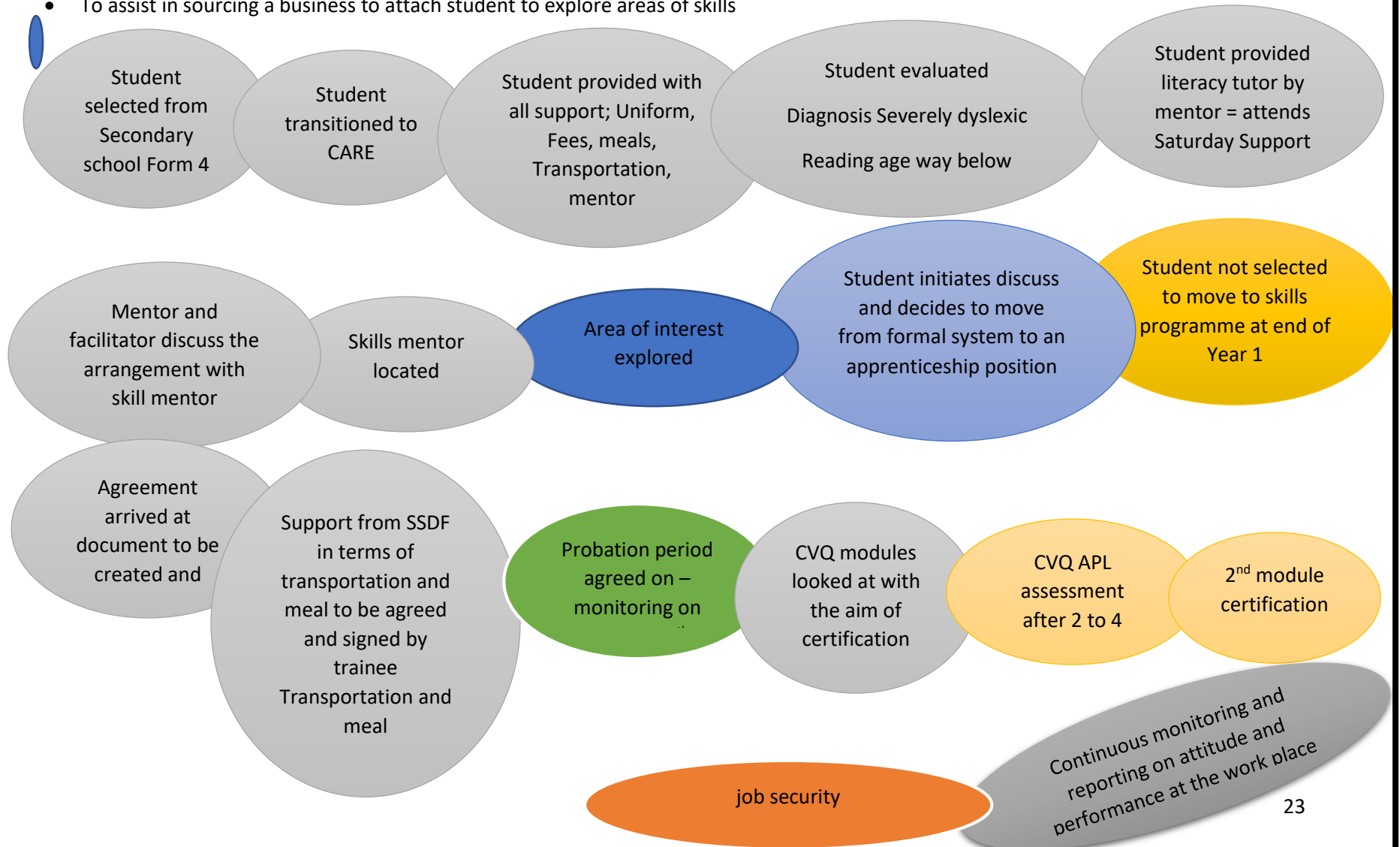


ANNEX II

VARIOUS PATHWAYS FOR SPECIFIC OUR BOYS... CATERPILLAR TRAIL

Objectives

- To provide an opportunity for the student to select area of interest
- To assist in sourcing a business to attach student to explore areas of skills



Mr. Alvin Saiwak
Manager
Construction & Heavy Equipment Rentals Ltd,
Bexon Highway
Bexon

Dear Mr. Saiwak

Further to our discussion with you Mr. Alvin Saiwak, Mr. Ronald "Boo" Hinkson, Mentor and Ms. Fortuna Anthony Facilitator to the Our Boys Matter, it was agreed that you will provide an opportunity for Akim Smith a recipient of Our Boys Matter Programme to be attached on a training program at your garage FIX-IT located in Bexon.

A background to the project was shared with you and it was your opinion that you were prepared to work with Akim.

It was further agreed that Akim would be given a two-week probation period following a successful review you would work with Akim. You indicated that Akim would be attached to one of your long service employees to commence work in the area of Body work.

Agreement was also reached that your secretary would assist in the management of A small stipend to cover Akim's transportation and meal.

Akim would not be required to work on a Saturday as he attends literacy classes.

It was further agreed that with your experience of working with trainees from Sir Arthur Lewis Community College you are prepared to monitor him as he works on modules which would lead to CVQ module certification.

.....

Manager

Date.....

.....

SSDF

Date