

**ASSOCIAÇÃO SOUL BILÍNGUE**

**FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AWARD SBR25022GR0027**

Associação Soul Bilingue

**Soul Bilingue: Democratize international education through English immersion and study opportunities abroad to young people from underprivileged backgrounds in Brazil**

**Mogi das Cruzes**

**2023**

## **1. Summary of Activities Undertaken**

Soul Bilingüe served 159 young individuals from the North of Brazil between January and July 2023. This means that it completed the grant with 106% of the goal achieved. Considering the proposal submitted to the United States Embassy in Brasília to teach English to 150 people over the course of one year (July 2022 to July 2023), which was not possible due to the approval and grant validity timeline, it is worth highlighting that the social organization exceeded the target by assisting more individuals than initially planned, even though it was accomplished in half the time.

Each student had their own English mentor, a volunteer who dedicated hours of their own time in monthly online meetings focused on conversation practice. Similarly, all students were part of a group and were provided with psychological support, with some individuals receiving individual counseling in psychotherapy sessions.

Additionally, all of them attended regular Saturday weekly classes. They participated in biweekly activities such as the Soul Summits, where they learned about accessible exchange programs, including volunteering, studying, or working abroad, such as the Au Pair program, for example.

Out of the total number of students, five have awarded exchange scholarships to study English abroad for four weeks. With the recently established partnerships with educational institutions in Hawaii and Texas, it expected that the approved students, once they meet the necessary financial requirements, will preferably travel to the United States to study English.

The program concluded with 107 active students, representing 67% of the total.

## **2. Selection Process**

To achieve the proposed number of students, there were some challenges. The biggest one was condensing the originally planned two-semester teaching schedule into just one, as the award was approved in September 2022, whereas the initial plan was for July. Due to the grant's validity in 2022, it was not possible to form separate groups for two distinct projects as originally intended.

To achieve this, the strategy adopted required creativity and proactive measures. First, we established that at least 320 individuals should participate in the selection process for the classes. The objective was to ensure there were two candidates per spot, allowing for the evaluation of candidates' commitment even before the start of the classes, as well as their interest in learning English and being a part of the Soul Bilingüe program.

In this regard, the trip to Acre between September 17 and 22, 2022, was truly significant. The selection of this specific state in the Northern region follow a suggestion from the Senior Education Outreach Specialist of the Brasília Embassy, Leonardo Kajioka Nardon, the project's point of contact.

During the trip, we were received by representatives and spoke to students at the Federal Institute of Acre (IFAC). We visited the Language Study Center of the State Department of Education (CEL), went to the Glória Perez State School, engaged in cultural immersions at Tucumã Park, and were also welcomed by representatives from the Federal University of Acre.

With the relationships established during this trip, we gained support from these educational institutions in the region during the application process, a goal we adopted to collaborate with other

education entities in the state. We also expanded our online contacts with institutions from other states, such as the Federal Universities of Tocantins and Pará, and the President Antônio Carlos Tocantinense University Center (UNITPAC). All of these institutions were able to recommend students for participation in the program.

Finally, we also received support from organizations such as the Sustainable Amazon Foundation (FAS) in Manaus, Amazonas, the Fireflies Institute in Boa Vista, Roraima, and Sebrae in Acre.

## **2.1 Contextualization of the Selection Process**

Historically, introducing the Soul Bilingüe English program to a new state or region of Brazil is gradual and with a smaller number of students. In the case of the North, with the support of the Embassy, educational institutions, and social organizations, and through the in-person trip to Acre, we were able to reach and exceed the goal of 320 applicants, with a total of 370 people enrolled.

During the selection process, all candidates created videos explaining why they consider English important and why they should be participants in the program. They also went through a rigorous document validation process to confirm that they met all the requirements: being between 18 and 26 years old, never having studied abroad, having a household income of up to two minimum wages, and being former students of public schools. The selection process also included assessments of the candidates' perception and understanding of the program's objectives developed by this institution.

### **Schedule of the selection process**

- Registration: From December 8 to 13
- Deadline for completing the socioeconomic form: From December 8 to 13, 2023, 2022
- Disclosure of the list of registered candidates: December 16, 2022
- Candidate meetings: December 16 and 17 and January 11, 2023
- Deadline for activities - phase 1: December 22, 2022
- Disclosure of the list of approved phase 1: January 5, 2023
- Deadline for activities - phase 2: January 12, 2023
- List of pre-approved: January 16, 2023
- Deadline for submission of documents: January 19, 2023
- Disclosure of the approved list: January 25, 2023
- Start of classes: January 28, 2023

### **Students profile**

- 150 young people approved
  - Acre: 49
  - Tocantins: 38
  - Pará: 34
  - Amazonas: 19
  - Amapá: 05

- Roraima: 02
- Gender
  - 67,29% woman
  - 3,44% men
  - 0,62% nonbinary
- Race
  - 73,58% blacks
  - 25,15% white
  - 0,62% yellow
  - 0,62% indigenous
- Income
  - 64,77% - up to a minimum wage
  - 35,22% - one minimum wage to two minimum wages
- English level
  - 62.89% - A1 Beginner
  - 11.94% - A2 Elementary
  - 10,69% - B1 Intermediate
  - 7.54% - B2 Upper Intermediate
  - 4.40% C1 Advanced
- Education
  - 75.47% - higher education student
  - 15.09% - complete high school
  - 7.54% - complete higher education
  - 1.88% - Technical course (ongoing or completed)
- Higher education students
  - 85.83% attend public college
  - 9.16% ProUni or Fiés - federal government programs
  - 3.33% pay their own studies
  - 1.66% is a full-time scholarship holder
- Area of interest
  - 18.68% - Exact Sciences
  - 42.85% - Human Sciences
  - 12.08% - Technology
  - 26.37% - Health

### **3. The Program**

The Soul Bilingue's program is 100% online. Most activities take place on Saturdays and include classes in separate groups based on proficiency levels, as well as bi-weekly sessions with psychologists, experts in accessible exchanges, and meetings to launch challenges or present results by the social organization's team.

To promote social interaction and socialization, students from the North, although assessed among themselves, participated in classes divided by English proficiency level that included young individuals from other regions, allowing the creation of bonds beyond the geographical boundaries of that region in Brazil.

#### **3.1 Counselors**

Through these activities, where we gather all the students, we discuss, actively listen, and address topics such as the Role of the Psychologist, to make them aware of the importance of this profession; Empowerment and Representation; Suicide Prevention and Valuing Life; Self-awareness and Self-esteem; Failures, Frustrations, Self-imposed Pressure, and Insecurity; Family Support and Dynamics; Empathy; Perspectives and Feelings.

In a feedback survey, João Antonio Matos da Silva from Muricilândia, a town of 3,000 inhabitants in the interior of Tocantins, stated: "I found the meetings with the Counselor to be very important and welcoming. It's a moment where we feel free to talk about our daily lives, concerns, and share experiences, and Carol (the psychologist) with her precise advice. The truth is, it made you want to keep her in a jar whenever you needed guidance or a moment to vent, to have her nearby."

In total, there were 288 collective meetings with the participating students.

#### **3.2 Soul Summits**

On Saturdays, students also participate in the Soul Summits. During these events, we provide information on exchange processes, including topics such as whether it's more advantageous to travel abroad with cash or a prepaid card, how to find the best exchange rates and save money on currency exchange, applying for scholarships in colleges around the world where you can study and receive financial aid, as well as how to apply for programs like Au Pair and Aiesec, among other volunteer models.

The primary strategy in creating the Soul Summits is to provide information and demonstrate that there are real possibilities for low-income young people in Brazil to pursue international exchanges in affordable ways. Considering the transformative power of international experiences and the limited number of scholarships compared to the quantity of students entering the Soul Bilingue program, these initiatives aim to equip young individuals who may not secure opportunities during their immersion with the necessary knowledge to pursue their goals, should they choose to do so.

#### **3.3 Mentoring**

The students from the North participated in 1,185 English mentoring sessions during 22 weeks of the Soul Bilingüe program. This number is equivalent to seven daily meetings between students and volunteer mentors, occurring approximately every 3 hours.

A mentoring session is an online meeting between a student and a volunteer with English proficiency who has experienced international experiences or not. The goal is to have three mandatory meetings per month with a focus on English conversation.

Regarding this, students respond in surveys about their mentors:

- a) Do you believe you had a good connection with your mentor during this period
  - i) (66%) Yes, we built a connection that goes beyond English.
  - ii) (30%) Yes, but it was mainly focused on English and Soul Bilingüe.
  - iii) (4%) We didn't have a significant connection.
  
- b) Do you believe that the mentoring sessions with your mentor have helped in your overall English learning process?
  - i) (99,5%) Yes
  
- c) Do you believe that the mentoring sessions with your mentor have helped in developing your confidence and proficiency in English language skills, such as conversation and communication?
  - i) (98,1%) Yes
  - ii) (1,9%) No
  
- d) Do you believe that the mentoring sessions with your mentor have helped in developing your autonomy in language learning?
  - i) (95%) Yes
  - ii) (5%) No
  
- e) Do you believe that the mentoring sessions with your mentor have helped in opening your mind to new professional opportunities, life experiences, and/or general personal and professional growth?
  - i) (92%) Yes
  - ii) (08%) No

Through contact with mentors, who make up a network of 250 volunteers spread across all continents, students connect culturally and personally with other individuals. The primary purpose of these mentoring sessions is to strengthen conversation and English language practice for the young learners, often resulting in the development of friendships and relationships that endure even after the program ends. It's not uncommon for mentors to assist students in applying for job positions, preparing for exams, or pursuing study and work opportunities abroad.

"I loved my mentor. She taught me English through series and songs that resonated with me, in addition to the class topics. She was perfect, and I'm so grateful for giving me the confidence not only to speak English correctly but also to correct me when needed. Thank you very much, Jessica!" said Layane Leite de Sousa from Araguaína, Tocantins.

After Brazil, the United States has the highest number of mentors, both Americans and Brazilians.

### **3.4 Attendance**

Maintaining student engagement and interest is one of the greatest challenges of the Soul Bilingue program because commitment is the most crucial indicator throughout the journey. As per the registration rules, students are removed by the social organization if they miss three consecutive meetings or seven sessions spaced out. Additionally, some students drop out for reasons ranging from scheduling conflicts to starting work.

Based on the data we collect monthly:

#### **January**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 159
- Average attendance: 87%
- Dropout rate: 0%
- Dropouts: 0
- Removed: 0

#### **February**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 159
- Average attendance: 70%
- Dropout rate: 7%
- Dropouts: 6
- Removed: 5

#### **March**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 148
- Average attendance: 65%
- Dropout rate: 15%
- Dropouts: 11
- Removed: 12

#### **April**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 125
- Average attendance: 65%
- Dropout rate: 15%
- Dropouts: 9

- Removed: 9

### **May**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 107
- Average attendance: 64%
- Dropout rate: 15%
- Dropouts: 1
- Removed: 2

### **June**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 107
- Average attendance: 65%
- Dropout rate: 0%
- Dropouts: 0
- Removed: 0

### **July**

- Students at the beginning of the month: 107
- Average attendance: 60%
- Dropout rate: 0%
- Dropouts: 0
- Removed: 0

## **4. Program Income e Cost Share**

The program reached the intended amount of US\$ 1,000.00 through the registration process when 370 individuals enrolled and paid the social contribution of R\$ 15 (equivalent to US\$ 3). It's worth noting that the fee for the rest of Brazil is higher, at R\$ 30 (US\$ 6.50).

In total, the Soul Bilingue program generated US\$ 5,006.00, exceeding the \$15,000.00 shared cost with the participation of teachers, mentors, and psychologists. We surpassed the initial \$1,000 goal during engagement campaigns.

- Selection Process
  - US\$ 1.110,00

### **4.1 Engagement Challenges**

"Engagement Challenges" are activities conducted twice during the program. In these challenges, students are called upon to mobilize their own network of contacts to make donations to the social organization.



In these challenges, the program team teaches young individuals how to create a plan of action to achieve a specific goal - the points on the ranking - and encourages them to learn about engaging and mobilizing communication.

## **Results:**

### **"Por um Brasil Bilíngue" Campaign**

- Engaged students (mobilized at least one donation of US\$ 2): 58
- Amount raised: US\$ 2,500.00

### **"Aventura Nacional" Campaign**

- Engaged students (mobilized at least one donation of US\$ 2): 18
- Amount raised: US\$ 1,406.00

## **Total:**

- Engaged students: 76
- Amount raised: US\$ 3,906.00
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## **5. Risks**

Throughout the program, we request that young individuals who decide to leave the program fill out a form to inform us of their reasons and provide feedback they consider necessary for improvements. To delve deeper into the dropout analysis, we also conducted a survey managed voluntarily by a student from the University of São Paulo.

What observed is that, contrary to what we might imagine, lack of internet access has not a reason for leaving the program. The primary reason for dropouts or consecutive absences leading to elimination is the lack of time to balance personal activities with those of the Soul Bilíngue program, whose schedules are provided in the registration announcement. Few students point to internet access as a hindrance, which also applies to the issue of employment, areas we considered risky before the program's start.

Lets see:

- **I need to give up other activities to attend Soul Summit/Counselors meetings**
  - 21.2% Never
  - 21.2% Rarely
  - 34.8% Sometimes
  - 9.1% Frequently
  - 13.6% Always
- **I need to give up other activities to attend English classes**
  - 33.3% Never

28.8% Rarely  
19.7% Sometimes  
9.1% Frequently  
9.1% Always

- **I have difficulty finding a good time to schedule mentoring sessions**

37.9% Never  
37.9% Rarely  
18.2% Sometimes  
1.5% Frequently  
4.5% Always

- **The time zone in my state makes it difficult to attend the meetings**

56.1% Never  
6.1% Rarely  
19.7% Sometimes  
10.6% Frequently  
7.6% Always

- **I have a fixed routine of activities (e.g., the same work or school hours, etc.)**

6.1% Never  
10.6% Rarely  
24.2% Sometimes  
22.7% Frequently  
36.4% Always

- **I am looking for a job or another opportunity, and if I succeed, there is a possibility of no longer being a student of Soul Bilingue**

65.2% Never  
19.7% Rarely  
12.1% Sometimes  
1.5% Frequently  
1.5% Always

- **I can keep up with all the messages sent in the WhatsApp groups**

1.5% Never  
4.5% Rarely  
18.2% Sometimes  
36.4% Frequently  
39.4% Always

- **I can keep up with the classes on the Teams platform**

1.5% Never

3% Rarely

13.6% Sometimes

34.8% Frequently

47% Always

## **6.1 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Soul Bilingüe measures progress in English comprehension with the EF placement test, which each student takes upon entering and completing the Soul Bilingüe program which demonstrates that at least 50% of the students increase their ability to understand and communicate or, even better, advance to a higher level (from A1 to A2, A2 to B1, and so on).

The Soul Bilingüe program uses a gamified method where all tasks generate points, and students can check their scores on the organization's platform. We can measure the frequency, engagement, and performance of each student in individual or group activities.

Furthermore, the coordinators of each department in the program provide a monthly report of their teams' activities. Based on this document, we can access up-to-date information on the number of English tutoring sessions held each month, individual psychological consultations, active volunteers, evaluations of students participating in the activities, and much more. This allows us to track statistics and descriptive data, making it possible to create action plans for corrections if necessary.

### **Volunteer Monitoring Management:**

#### **Proportion of Active Volunteers:**

At the beginning of the program, a comprehensive list of active volunteers will be compiled. If they decide to drop out of the program, individuals will complete a form. In the end, we will measure the number of active volunteers and the percentage of dropouts.

#### **Goal: 50% of English mentors conducting at least two mentoring sessions per month.**

In every meeting between the English mentoring volunteer and the Soul Bilingüe student, both must fill out a feedback form regarding the mentoring session. Monthly, we identify the percentage of volunteers who conducted at least two meetings with the student they were assisting.

**Result:** 66% (99 students and mentors conducted) at least two monthly meetings.

Regarding this indicator, it stated that the final result achieved, with 1,185 mentoring sessions, corresponds to 136% of the goal.

- 22% (33 students and mentors) completed 100% of the possible mentorships.

- 33% (50 students and mentors) completed between 75% and 99% of the possible mentorships.
- 11% (16 students and mentors) conducted between 50% and 74% of the possible mentorships.

**The level of commitment of the students in each individual meeting they will have with their volunteer mentors.**

**Goal: average above 3.**

In the feedback forms sent to students and volunteer mentors to fill out whenever they finish an online meeting, there is a question about the importance level of the meeting for the student and the mentor. Individuals rate it on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being not essential and five very important).

**Result:** an average of 4.8.

### **Beneficiary Program Monitoring Management**

**Goal: 60% of young individuals completing the program.**

At the beginning of the program, a comprehensive list of approved students will be compiled. If someone drops out of the program, they complete a form indicating why. Ultimately, we will measure the number of graduates and the percentage of dropouts.

- **Result:**  
67% out of 159 completed the program.

**Percentage of attendance in English classes, emotional support, and meetings with the team.**

**Goal: At least 50% of students improve their English level after the program.**

Upon entering the Soul Bilingüe program, the student takes the EF English placement test and evaluates their listening and reading levels. Based on this result, which reflects the student's overall English knowledge, we administer a new test with the same methodology at the end of the program and compare the results.

**Result:**

- 75% of the students improved their English proficiency in the comparison between the two tests
- 45% changed their English proficiency level in the comparison between the two tests."

**Goal: 40% of the students achieving more than 50% of the possible points in the program**

Each program has a total score. Each activity completed by the student earns points for the ranking. In the end, we will check the percentage of points earned.

Result:

- 57% achieved more than half of the possible points
- 15% achieved between 75% and 99% of the points
- 42% achieved between 50% and 74% of the points.

## **7. Recognitions**

Soul Bilingue received recognition as one of Brazil's top 100 social organizations in the 2023 Best NGOs Awards. This achievement marks the second consecutive year the social institution earned this recognition from Brazil's most prominent initiative for evaluating third-sector organizations. In 2022, Soul Bilingue placed in the top 10 in the Small Size category.

The Best NGOs Awards selects organizations based on their management quality and transparency. It provides a reference for donors and volunteers to decide where to direct their financial support and volunteer hours.

The selection of the top 100 NGOs in the country is based on a methodology for evaluation that combines information on five major cross-cutting themes, allowing for an assessment of transparency and management conditions within organizations.

- Cause and Operating Strategy
- Representation and Responsibility
- Management and Planning
- Funding Strategy
- Communication and Accountability

The evaluation process occurs in three phases, focusing on objective questions and verifiable data in the first phase. The second phase prioritizes more complex questions and requires detailed responses. In the third phase, organizations must submit documents that demonstrate their implementation of best practices in management and transparency.

Every participating organization in the Best NGOs will receive feedback on their participation per the schedule. This feedback will enable the organizations to analyze their performance compared to organizations considered as references according to the methodology of the Award. The purpose of this feedback is to allow organizations to conduct self-assessments, identify potential areas for improvement, and highlight and celebrate areas where they excel.