



Awards Programme 2012 Application Process Guide

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1. The Selection Process

Thank you for your interest in our Awards Programme. Below you will find all the information you need to know about our selection process, along with the 7 key questions that make up our application form.

Before you apply:

(i) *Read all about the Awards Programme*

The Awards Programme involves a large amount of commitment from the social entrepreneurs we support. Read the overview below to ensure that you know all about it before applying.

(ii) *Find out what we're looking for*

You can read all about the type of person and projects/organisations we're looking to support below. Please only apply if you meet the criteria and the description provided. When answering each question in the application form please bear in mind what we are looking for. It is up to you to convince us that you meet these criteria.

(iii) *Take Time to Complete your Application*

Be sure to allow as much time as possible to complete your application form. The online system will allow you to save your application and return to it at a later date, so you don't have to complete the form in just one sitting. **Make sure you save your work regularly to avoid the online form timing out and losing your work.**

(iv) *Get Feedback and Advice*

In order to ensure your application shows the very best side of you and your project/organisation, we highly recommend that you seek feedback on your application before you submit it to us. We'd recommend that you send your application to a few different people who will provide you with constructive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the application. At a very minimum you should:

1. Send it to somebody who knows your project/organisation well. This will ensure that you include all the most important information about your project/organisation when you apply.
2. Send it to somebody who knows nothing about your project. This should ensure that it will be easily understood by our review team within Social Entrepreneurs Ireland.

2. What we're looking for

The Awards Programme seeks to support social entrepreneurs who have an innovative solution to a societal challenge, who have a project/organisation that is up and running with evidence of activities undertaken and who aim to significantly scale and grow the impact of what they are doing.

What that means in more detail:

We're looking to support social entrepreneurs...

The social entrepreneurs we're looking for should be the main driver of the project/organisation with the ability to make top level, direction shifting decisions. They should act in an entrepreneurial manner, and be open to learning and developing themselves through our Awards Programme.

We're looking for an innovative solution...

The people we support have an innovative approach to societal change. They don't replicate what is already provided but seek to provide new solutions and different ways of tackling existing problems. The innovative solution should have a demonstrable impact on the societal challenge.

A societal challenge...

There are many problems and issues to be addressed in Ireland. We're looking for social entrepreneurs who can demonstrate clearly why the issue they are addressing is of particular importance.

A project/organisation up and running...

While we love hearing about new ideas for social change, for our Awards Programme we're looking for people who have moved beyond thinking about the solution and are actively out there making it happen. They should be able to point to some activities that they have already undertaken, and show the impact that they have had already.

Scale and grow their social impact...

We like our social entrepreneurs to think big. We're looking for projects/organisations that have the potential to (someday) change the way the issue they are addressing is dealt with in Ireland. This capacity to scale is a vital aspect of our evaluation process.

Scaling impact can be achieved in various ways, for example scaling the reach of the organisation (geographic, demographic etc.), scaling breadth or depth, or providing a model that can be replicated.

3. What it means to be an Awardee

The Selection Process identifies the eight strongest projects who we work with over the summer on the Finalists' Programme.

Finalists' Programme

All finalists will take part in our Finalists' Programme over the summer. This will consist of a series of group and individual workshops with Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and external consultants to help them to define and explore their project purpose and goals. The workshops will take place between the beginning of June and the end of August.

At the end of the Finalists' Programme, three finalists will be awarded a place on the Impact Programme and the remaining five finalists will be awarded a place on the Elevator Programme.

Note: All applicants will be considered for the Impact Programme. It is not possible to apply separately for the Elevator Programme.



The Impact Programme provides social entrepreneurs with a unique package of financial and practical support to help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to increase the impact of their projects/organisations.

The Impact Programme is valued at €200,000. Growth capital and capacity building funding of €137,500 is provided to Awardees to enable them to develop their project/organisation. In addition, training and capacity building support to the value of €62,500 is also provided over the course of two - three years. The programme focuses on developing both personal and organisational capacity to deliver long term social impact.

Given the diverse range of issues tackled by our social entrepreneurs and their differing approaches to driving social change, our support programme will be tailored to meet each Awardee's specific needs. However, experience has shown us that there are six key areas of focus that need to be addressed in order to maximise long term impact:

1. **Planning:** developing a robust strategy and business plan is key to planning for success
2. **Operations:** operational planning helps develop the organisational systems needed for your organisation (financial, HR, IT etc.)

3. **Sustainability:** financial sustainability is critical to the success of any venture, this module helps you plan how to become sustainable
4. **Leadership:** this focuses on the challenges of leadership, team management, board and governance issues
5. **Communications:** a strong communications strategy is essential to deliver key messages most effectively
6. **Resilience:** this helps the social entrepreneur to focus on maintaining a healthy work/life balance so that they can continue to progress both their project and themselves

Where possible, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland will also provide advice, feedback and support and links to useful contacts and resources for the Awardee.



The Elevator Programme is a one year programme of support which will help social entrepreneurs to define and follow an action plan to develop their projects, as well as providing growth capital to help the social entrepreneur to increase their impact. Participants on the Elevator Programme will also have access to workshops and network support throughout the year.

The Elevator Programme provides support to the value of €35,000. Growth capital and capacity building funding to the value of €25,000 is provided to Awardees to develop their project/organisation. In addition, training and capacity building support to the value of €10,000 is also provided over the course of the year.

Where possible, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland will also provide advice, feedback and support and links to useful contacts and resources for the Awardee.

Awardee Workshops & Alumni Network Events

All Awardees on both the Impact Programme and the Elevator Programme will become members of the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Alumni Network, a dynamic network of over 200 social entrepreneurs in Ireland. Awardee Workshops and Alumni Network Events are held throughout the year. These workshops are an opportunity for Awardees to come together for one or two days to network and learn from each other, receive expert advice from other social entrepreneurs and selected guest speakers and to receive practical advice on areas such as fundraising and financing, business planning, growth strategies, marketing and PR and board management and development.

4. What we expect of Awardees

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland invests significant time and resource to provide a range of resources and opportunities to its Awardees. In return we expect:

- Full personal participation on core programme support elements
- Open-minded, honest engagement
- Willingness to participate in group events and share knowledge

The *Impact programme* will have a time commitment of approximately 2 - 3 days per month which will involve a range of activities such as one-to-one meetings with Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, meetings and workshops with expert advisors and consultants, group workshops and networking events.

The *Elevator Programme* has a time commitment of approximately 2 days per quarter which will involve a one to one meeting with Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, group workshops and networking events.

Outside of this time you will also be expected to work towards mutually agreed goals and objectives, all of which should be in line with realising your mission for social impact.

It is important to note that any time spent on the programme will be directly related to relevant programme activities for the Awardee and their project/organisation and should complement, not detract from the Awardees own strategic objectives.

Awardees are also required to provide periodic updates of their project's progress and a formal written report at the end of each year of the award period.

5. Selection Process Stages

(i) Open Applications (16th January – 16th February 2012)

Social entrepreneurs from all over Ireland can apply to the Awards Programme by filling in the short online application form. Applicants from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are eligible to apply.

(ii) Initial Review of Applications

An initial review will be carried out by both the internal Social Entrepreneurs Ireland team and an external panel of reviewers. The top 40 candidates will be selected and invited to attend a one day 'Social Entrepreneurs Bootcamp'.

(iii) Social Entrepreneurs Bootcamp (27th March 2012)

40 applicants will attend a full day workshop on Tuesday 27th of March, where they will have the opportunity to pitch their idea to a panel of judges. Each applicant will pitch their idea for 10 minutes on the day.

Throughout the rest of the day, applicants will be able to attend specially designed workshops for social entrepreneurs on a range of topics such as fundraising, pitching and collaboration.

(iv) Interviews (Early May 2012)

Following the Bootcamp, 18 applicants will be invited to submit a more detailed form, and are invited to attend an hour-long interview for a place on the Finalists Programme. The interview will go into much more detail about the social entrepreneur and the project/organisation.

(v) Finalists Programme (June 2012 – September 2012)

Following the interviews, eight applicants will be chosen to take part in the finalists programme, a three month support and evaluation programme. Each finalist will receive funding for practical and technical support. Working with the finalists for three months will allow us to make a well-informed decision about who should go forward to the two programmes.

(vi) Awards Programme (October 2012)

In autumn 2012, three social entrepreneurs will be selected to take part in our Impact Programme. The remaining five social entrepreneurs will be awarded a place on our Elevator Programme.

6. Eligibility Criteria

In order to apply for the Awards Programme, you must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. You should be aged 18 years or over at the time of applying for the programme.
2. You should be the social entrepreneur leading the project/organisation. You should be the main driver and primary decision maker.
3. The primary focus of the project/organisation should be on benefiting people in Ireland.
4. You should have an innovative approach to drive social change.
5. Your project/organisation should have moved beyond the initial idea stage. You should have activities up and running that relate directly to the problem that you are trying to address.
6. You should be willing to work on developing your project/organisation on a full time basis for the full duration of the Impact Programme.
7. You should have the ambition to significantly scale and grow the impact of your project/organisation beyond its current level.
8. You should be open to the learning and development opportunities provided through our Awards Programme.
9. You must be available to attend Bootcamp on Tuesday 27th March in Dublin.
10. You should be available to participate in the Finalists' Programme that takes place over the summer months.

Please note we are not in the position to support the following research projects, party-political projects, or projects with an explicit religious or faith-based agenda (as opposed to projects that are driven by a personal belief system but are open to all the community).

7. Application Questions

Remember to read through all seven questions before you start and be sure to save your work at regular intervals.

Q1. Overview

This section should give an introduction to your project/organisation and the circumstances in which it was established. This should give somebody who is reading about you and your project/organisation for the first time a good sense of what it is all about. Please keep it short and succinct as the next six questions will delve into greater detail.

- a. **Please give an overview of your project/organisation**
(1000 characters limit – approximately 150 words)
- b. **What is your one sentence description of your project/organisation?**
(160 characters limit – approximately 25 words)

Q2. The Problem

At Social Entrepreneurs Ireland we look to support social entrepreneurs who are addressing a significant societal issue or problem in Ireland. In this section, please define the problem or issue that you are working to address. Convince us that this issue is worth investing in and why it matters to Ireland.

- a. **Define what the societal issue or problem is**
(1000 character limit – approximately 150 words)
- b. **Convince us why it matters and why it merits investment?**
(2000 characters limit – approximately 300 words)

(NOTE: In this section, please do not provide any details about the work that you are doing or how you are addressing this problem. Please just focus on describing the problem itself. Please draw on any examples or research evidence to support your answer.)

Q3. Your Solution

This section presents your solution. It describes what you do, and explains how your solution works in addressing the societal problem. Please draw on examples and research to support your answer.

- a. **Describe the solution you have developed**
(1000 character limit – approximately 150 words)
- b. **Describe what you have done so far**
(1000 character limit – approximately 150 words)
- c. **What evidence do you have to show that your solution works in addressing the problem?**
(1000 characters limit – approximately 150 words. Please provide examples)

Q4. What's Different?

You should be aware of what is currently being done to address this problem in Ireland and know the market in which you operate. You should be able to explain why your approach is different, innovative and more effective than existing approaches in tackling this societal issue. You must identify at least two projects/organisations in Ireland who, at some level, are working on this problem. No matter how unique your solution is, there should be someone out there to which you can compare yourself.

- a. **Who else is out there working on this problem?**
(600 character limit – approximately 100 words)
- b. **What makes your approach different, innovative and more effective?**
(2000 characters limit – approximately 300 words)

Q5. You ~ The Social Entrepreneur

At Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, we believe that the social entrepreneur behind an idea is as important as the idea itself. In our evaluation process, we look for key social entrepreneurial characteristics in the individual.

- a. **What prompted you to create social change in this area? Tell us about your journey.**
(2000 character limit – approximately 300 words)
- b. **In your opinion, what are the three most important characteristics of a social entrepreneur? Please demonstrate how you possess them.**
(2000 character limit – approximately 300 words)

Q6. Your Ambition

We are interested in supporting social entrepreneurs who have the ambition to scale the social impact of their project. They should have the potential to (someday) change how the issue that they are addressing is dealt with in Ireland. This section details your ambitions for the project/organisation, and outlines the specific steps you need to take in order to get there.

- a. **Where do you want your project to be in three years' time?**
(1000 character limit – approximately 150 words)
- b. **Detail the top 3 things you need to do in order to get there.**
(1600 character limit – approximately 250 words)

Q7. Anything additional to add?

We know how hard it is to describe your project fully on an application form, so we'd like to give you the opportunity to add something additional. Please tell us if there is something important we have missed about your project. If you like, you can also add a link or upload a file to help bring your project to life. It can be either a short video, some recent media coverage, or a PowerPoint presentation.

- a. **Is there a question you wish we had asked?**
(160 characters limit – approximately 25 words)
- b. **What would your response have been?**
(600 characters limit – approximately 100 words)
- c. **Upload a file to bring your project to life**
You can only add **one** of these three options. The limit on each is as follows:
 - **Video** *(2 minutes max)*
 - **Media coverage** *(1 article max)*
 - **PowerPoint presentation** *(4 slides max, using images and short captions only)*

Please note that uploading a file is completely optional and entries that do not include a video or PowerPoint file will **not** be marked down in any way.

8. Awards Process FAQ

I'm interested in applying for the Awards Programme, how do I apply?

All applications must be submitted online using our online application form. You can log in to our online system and save draft versions of your application before you submit it.

What is the closing date for applications?

Applications must be submitted before 5pm on Thursday 16th of February 2012.

Can I submit a paper version of the application form, or e-mail you a copy of my form?

No. All applications must be submitted directly online using the online application form.

Can I apply for just the Elevator or just the Impact Programme?

No. You must apply for the Awards Programme and we will decide in the course of our evaluation which applicants will go forward to each of our two programmes.

What happens when I submit an application?

Once all the applications have been submitted, a thorough review process will take place. For a full breakdown of the review process and associated timelines please [click here](#).

What will happen if I forget to include something in my application form?

All required questions in the application form are marked with an asterisk*. Once you have submitted your application you will not be able to amend it. Please be sure to review your work carefully before you submit it.

Must I meet all of the eligibility criteria to be eligible for an award?

Yes, you must meet all of the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria aim to ensure that applicants meet the basic requirements for participation on the Awards Programme. If you have a question about eligibility please email applications@socialentrepreneurs.ie.

How many social entrepreneurs will become Awardees in 2012?

Following a lengthy review process, three social entrepreneurs will be selected for our 2012 Impact Programme, and five will go on to our 2012 Elevator Programme.

What do I get if my application is successful?

Three applicants will become part of the Impact Programme, an intensive programme of support to the value of €200,000 to help them develop the impact of their projects/organisations over the course of two-three years.

Five applicants will become part of the Elevator Programme which provides support to the value of €35,000 over a one year period.

Do I have to be the originator of the idea or have been directly involved since the beginning of the project?

No, you don't necessarily have to be the originator of the idea, but should currently be the main driver and decision maker of the project/organisation with the skills to drive it forward. You should be passionate about the work you do and have an entrepreneurial spirit and outlook.

My idea is for a project outside Ireland, am I eligible?

No. If your project activities only take place outside Ireland and the communities benefiting from your activities are outside Ireland then you are not eligible to apply.

My project has activities both in Ireland and abroad, am I eligible?

If a significant proportion of the work you do takes place in Ireland and if you can clearly demonstrate the societal benefit which these activities bring to the communities you work with in Ireland, then you may be eligible to apply, provided you meet the rest of the application criteria.

I am not living in Ireland, can I apply?

No. The Awards Programme is only open to social entrepreneurs living in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Why must an idea or project you support be innovative?

Ireland still suffers from a number of entrenched social problems. In order to address these issues we believe that new, innovative thinking is needed. However, these innovative ideas often struggle to get support, particularly in the early stages of their development. Therefore, through our Awards Programme we support individuals who bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to these problems.

Why do you make awards to individuals rather than organisations?

We believe that the individual behind an idea is as important as the idea itself. As such we look to support the social entrepreneurs who are going to drive social change. Through our Awards Programme we then focus on supporting and developing the social entrepreneur so that they are better able to develop the impact of their project/organisations.

I am applying for an Award but cannot commit myself to working full-time, can I apply?

We believe that social entrepreneurs need to fully commit themselves to developing their project/organisation in order to have maximum impact. Therefore, all applicants must be able to commit to working full-time or equivalent on their projects if they are successful in gaining a place on the Impact Programme.

If I am selected, how much time must I commit to the Awards Programme?

The Awards Programme is tailored to meet the needs of the individual social entrepreneur, with the programme structure agreed at the beginning of the award. The time commitment for each Awardee will be slightly different, but it's important to note that the Programme will require significant input from the Awardee.

If I am selected to receive an Award, why must I commit to participating in the Awards Programmes?

The support structure provided through the Impact and Elevator Programmes is at the heart of the Award. It comprises both financial support and a tailored support programme designed to help social entrepreneurs to maximise their impact and support their personal development. Awardees must commit to participating fully in the programme to gain the benefits it offers.

What sectors or project areas do you support?

We are not limited to any specific sector or area to support, and are open to supporting projects in any sector, once the potential for societal change can be demonstrated.

In the past we have supported projects in a wide range of areas including education and learning, children and young people, older people, mental health, people with disabilities, the environment, community development and new communities.

How can the Award be spent?

The financial support provided by Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is split between restricted and unrestricted funding.

While there are some broad constraints to how the **unrestricted** funding is spent (for example we will not fund illegal activities) we consider the Awardee to be the person best suited to decide how their project can benefit from the financial support. The unrestricted funding may be used, for example, to fund the salary of the social entrepreneur or specific initiatives. Personal expenses incurred while working on the project may also be covered by the unrestricted funding.

The **restricted** funding can be used to pay for a range of capacity building activities that directly help to develop and grow the project/organisation. Examples of such activities include strategic planning, business planning, staff development, financial modelling etc.

These will be agreed with Social Entrepreneurs Ireland as part of the Awards Programme.

My organisation is a for-profit organisation, am I eligible to apply?

Yes. We support both for-profit and not-for-profit projects/organisations. Once you can demonstrate that the primary focus of the project/organisation is to address a societal issue you are eligible to apply.

I have previously applied for an Award from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, can I re-apply?

Each year we receive a greater number of applications and those applications are of an increasingly high standard. We would only recommend reapplying if your project or idea has made significant progress since you last applied for an Award.

Am I eligible to apply if I have previously received an Award from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland or a similar funder?

Yes, you are eligible to apply provided you meet all other criteria.

I have submitted an application. When will I know whether I have been successful?

We will let you know whether you have been successful in reaching the second stage of our application process by mid-March 2012. The complete timelines for the awards process are available [here](#).

If my application is successful, when will the Awards Programme begin?

The Awards Programme will begin shortly after we complete the review process in autumn 2012.

How is Social Entrepreneurs Ireland funded?

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is funded by a range of private foundations, corporate partners and individuals. For more information, please visit our Partners page.