



2025 IDEAS ACADEMY APPLICANT GUIDE



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1. Introduction

Ireland faces complex social challenges that our current systems are struggling to solve. As a result, the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society are often the most affected.

Since 2004, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland has been empowering high-potential, entrepreneur-led organisations to tackle these pressing issues and drive meaningful, lasting social change.

To date, we have supported over **600 social entrepreneurs across the island of Ireland** and we do this in two ways:

1.

We identify individuals with unique insights and scalable solutions to social problems

2.

We provide them with the funding, training, and connections needed to grow their impact

Our approach is built through a three-tiered approach: delivering one-to-one support, building organisational capacity, and developing powerful networks.

We work closely with social entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey, offering tailored mentorship, strategic guidance, and expert-led training to strengthen their organisations. Our support extends beyond funding—we help them build resilience, refine their leadership skills, and develop the tools needed to sustain and scale their impact.

Beyond individual support, we connect entrepreneurs to a thriving ecosystem of peers, alumni, pro bono experts, and sector leaders. By raising their profile through media, sector recognition, and speaking opportunities, we help social entrepreneurs gain credibility and amplify their impact.

Through this comprehensive approach, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland ensures that those tackling Ireland's biggest social challenges have the resources, skills, and networks they need to create lasting change.

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and we are committed to providing equal opportunities regardless of gender identity, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or religion.
(Equal Status Acts, 2000-2018).

"Having the opportunity to learn from others who are on a similar journey to myself, as well as people who have completed the programme in the past, has had a significant impact on how I view my own Idea and what it is capable of in the best possible way. I have made so many super connections and the peer support has been amazing!"

Karina Murray
Conscious Connections
The Ideas Academy 2024





2. The Ideas Academy

Participants on the Ideas Academy will be supported to clearly articulate, refine and progress their solution. You will gain skills, such as design thinking, pilot planning and pitching to help you move from idea to action. You will also learn more about social entrepreneurship and be surrounded by like-minded people who are also starting their journey. You can learn more about what we did last year in 2024's Ideas Academy [in this blog post](#).

We have up to **30 places available** at our selection workshop in May 2025. From this workshop, we will be selecting up to **20 of the highest potential social entrepreneurs to progress to the 2025 programme**. The programme will be delivered both in person and online in 2025 with 5 in-person events including a selection workshop, a launch, two mid-programme events and graduation.

On the Ideas Academy you will:

DEVELOP YOUR LEADERSHIP BY:

- Gaining an insight into the social entrepreneur journey
- Beginning to identify as a social entrepreneur - if you don't already do so
- Increasing your confidence and belief in yourself as the best person to action this idea
- Developing skills to tell your story as a founder and social entrepreneur

BUILD CAPACITY BY:

- Deepening your understanding of the problem and refine your solution
- Developing an action plan to pilot/test your idea, including how to measure impact
- Understanding how to pitch your idea gaining pitching experience and feedback
- Applying for a portion of €20,000 seed funding and further support from SEI at the end of the programme

CREATE A NETWORK BY:

- Building supportive relationships with peers on the programme, as well as making connections to people who become your champions, advisors and mentors.

The Ideas Academy 2025 is kindly supported by Bank of America (Corporate Partner).

If this seems like a good fit for you, apply to the Ideas Academy today to join us in driving lasting social change in Ireland!

3. Programme Structure

The Ideas Academy 2025 will cover three key topics over twelve weeks and will be delivered both online and in person through a mix of large and small group sessions. If you are offered a place on the Ideas Academy in 2025 you must be willing to commit to attending all programme activities to successfully complete the programme.

Provisional programme dates for 2025 are listed below – please note these will be confirmed once participants are selected.

The estimated time commitment required is **3-6 hours per week** for the duration of the programme from September - November.

PROGRAMME LAUNCH

September - In-Person (Dublin – City Centre Location)

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

September - November

PHASE 1: PROBLEM/SOLUTION (SEPTEMBER) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full day workshop – In person• Online 1.5 hour group discussion• Peer group sessions• Actions and work arising from workshops	PHASE 2: PILOTING (SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full day workshop – In person• Online 1.5 hour group discussion• Peer group sessions• Actions and work arising from workshops
PHASE 3: PITCHING (OCTOBER/NOVEMBER) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Half day storytelling workshop – online• Online 1.5 hour group discussion• Mock Pitching day – in person• Peer group sessions• Actions and work arising from workshops	SEED FUNDING (NOVEMBER) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invitation to apply for seed funding• Shortlisted applicants invited to pitch for a portion of seed funding with a panel of judges

PROGRAMME CLOSE

January- In-Person (Dublin – City Centre Location)

To celebrate the participants who took part in the programme we will bring together our team, supporters and alumni for an evening Closing Event in Mid-January 2026. During this event, you will be expected to briefly share your learnings and experiences from the programme.

4. What we expect from you

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland invests significant time and resources to provide a range of opportunities to everyone who participates in our Ideas Academy programme. As with so many programmes and training opportunities, the more effort you invest in the Ideas Academy, the more you will reap the benefits.

Everything we do is to help you enhance your skills as a social entrepreneur and develop your solution to pilot. We really want you to succeed! In return we expect the following from you:

- **Full participation and attendance** on core programme support elements, outlined above, in order to successfully complete the programme and avail of other opportunities.
- **Open-minded, professional, and collaborative engagement.**
- **Willingness to participate in group events and share knowledge.**
- During the programme you will be expected to complete a number of **surveys** primarily the **pre-programme, post-module and post-programme surveys.**





5. Selection Timeline

Open Applications: 7th April - 1st May 2025

You can apply to the Ideas Academy by filling in an online application form. Details on how to apply are outlined in the section 'How to Apply'.

Selection for Assessment Workshops: 21st May 2025

Once applications close we will conduct a comprehensive review of all applications to select the 30 applicants to attend our Assessment Workshops.

Assessment Workshop: 29th May 2025, from 10am to 4pm, Dublin, in-person

Applicants who make it through to the next stage will be invited to take part in a selection workshop. At the end of the workshop, there will be a short interview with a panel of judges who will help us select who takes a place on the programme.

Ideas Academy Participant Selection: w/c 2nd June 2025

Applicants will be informed of the final outcome of the selection process in early June.

Ideas Academy Launch: September 2025, Dublin, in-person

If you are selected to the programme you will be invited to take part in the Ideas Academy Lunch event in Dublin early September.

6. What are we looking for?

The Ideas Academy works with ambitious budding social entrepreneurs who are ready to kick start their projects. It is suitable for people with ideas at either the ideation or piloting stages. We want to make sure that you are applying to the programme that makes the most sense for where you are at in your journey. We also want to make sure that you have the time, capacity and commitment needed for the programme.

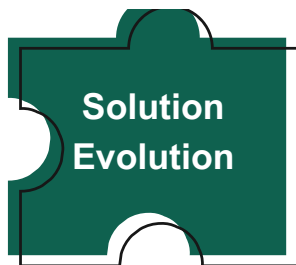
Does that sound like you? We hope so!

Throughout the application process, we aim to understand your story, delving into your understanding of the social or environmental issue, the evolution of your solution and why now is the right time for you to apply to the Ideas Academy. There are three key areas that make up our evaluation criteria and these are outlined below:



1. Solution Fit

A strong solution starts with a deep understanding of the problem. We want to see a clear grasp of both the broader issue and the specific challenge you aim to address, including the affected group(s) and the barriers they face. Your idea should outline a clear plan to tackle these obstacles effectively.



2. Solution Evolution

We want to understand how you plan to implement your solution/idea and any steps taken thus far. For example, we're interested in understanding what a pilot plan would look like for your solution. We are looking for evidence of research and your drive to develop your solution/idea.



3. Spirit of a Social Entrepreneur

Tell us your story—what drives you to create social or environmental change? We're looking for passionate, determined leaders with a clear vision for their solution. Share why you're the right person to lead this project and make a lasting impact.

7. How we use our Evaluation Criteria

At each stage of the Selection process we focus on different Evaluation Criteria - as set out below.

At every stage we also assess your overall fit and readiness for the programme, your commitment to bringing about change, to engaging with SEI and your fellow social entrepreneurs and your willingness to make best use of the programme's supports.

APPLICATION

At the application stage, we will focus on your understanding of the problem and the strength of your idea to address it. We're looking for early-stage solutions that show a clear grasp of the issue you want to tackle, who it affects, and why it matters. We also want to understand how you plan to develop or pilot your idea — and what steps, research, or thinking you've already explored. We're not expecting a fully formed plan, but we are looking for insight, curiosity, and a strong sense of direction.



ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS

During the workshops we will focus on your fit for the programme including your willingness and curiosity to dive deep and your collaborative skills that allow you to work with others.



8. Selection Preparation

BEFORE YOU APPLY

1. Learn About the Ideas Academy

Before applying, **review this guide and explore our website** to fully understand the Ideas Academy, including the **time commitment** involved. Participation in selection events and the programme itself is **mandatory**, so ensure you're ready to engage fully.

2. Check Your Eligibility

Verify that you meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this guide. You can also learn more about who we support through the Ideas Academy by visiting our website.

3. Take Your Time with the Application

Give yourself plenty of time to complete your application before the deadline on 28th April 2025 (**midnight**). Our online system allows you to **save your progress and return to it later**. Once you sign up and save your application for the first time, **all changes will be saved automatically**.

💡**Tip:** Before submitting, we strongly recommend **seeking feedback from a friend, colleague, or mentor**. A fresh perspective can help strengthen your application.

4. Attend Our National Call Information Event – 8th April 2025 (*not mandatory*)

Join us to find out if the Ideas Academy is right for you! This session will cover:

- Eligibility criteria and what stage of development is best suited for the programme.
- The types of support offered to help social entrepreneurs grow.
- Insights from current participants on how the programme has helped them scale their impact.

💡**Can't attend live?** A recording will be available on our website after the event. Follow us on social media for updates and registration details.



What supports does Social Entrepreneurs Ireland offer to help with the application process?

Information Session - Tuesday, 8th April at 1pm

9. How to Apply

All applications must be submitted online using our online application form.

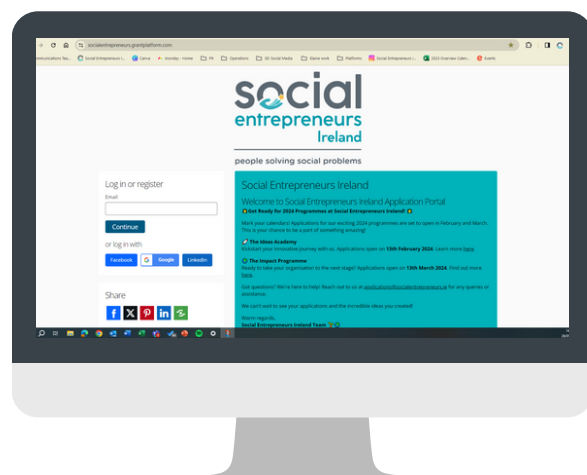
Please access socialentrepreneurs.grantplatform.com to login/register and create your application. You can find all the details you need to enter the application process on our website at socialentrepreneurs.ie.

You will be asked to create a profile and login details, you can then log into your application at any time during the selection process period (7th to 28th April 2025). **Please note:** we have created video guides to help you register and login - see links below.

1. [How to Register on Good Grants](#)

2. [How to Apply on Good Grants](#)

APPLY NOW



After submission you will not be able to amend your application, so please ensure you have reviewed your work carefully before submission.

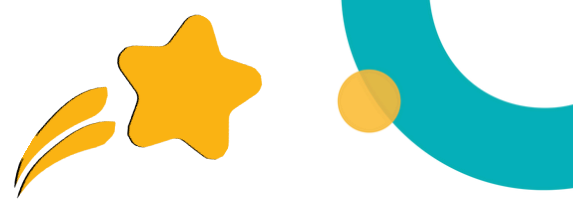


Please check out the [Frequently Asked Questions section on our website](#) for any queries on the programme or the application process.

If you have a problem with your application or a specific question not answered in this guide, you can email applications@socialentrepreneurs.ie or call 01-685-3919 and we will do our best to answer you.

Before going into the actual application questions, you will have the option to submit your responses in written form or as voice recordings. This choice, designed to make the application process more accessible, will apply to all questions and cannot be changed once you begin. You will need to choose the format that best allows you to express your ideas clearly.

10. Eligibility Criteria



Please read our eligibility criteria to ensure that you are eligible to apply to the Ideas Academy.

If you have been on our Ideas Academy prior to 2022, you are eligible to apply again with the same project as the programme's focus has changed since then. The Ideas Academy 2025 will be very focused on piloting your project.

If you have been on our Ideas Academy on any year previously, you can apply again at any time with a NEW idea.

YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION

- You, and your solution partner (if applying as partnership), must be aged 18 years or over at the time of applying for the programme.
- You must have a strong insight into or a strong understanding of a social or environmental problem
- You must have identified a social or environmental problem and have a solution with high potential to tackle it.
- You must be the person/people leading on this idea/solution – the main driver(s) and decision maker(s).
- The primary focus of the impact of your idea must be in Ireland.

YOUR TIME COMMITMENT AND EXPECTATIONS WITH THE IDEAS ACADEMY

- You must be willing to commit to full attendance for all of the core workshops sessions on the Ideas Academy and other events such as:
 - attending mandatory Selection Process and key Programme events (such as the launch) outlined in this programme guide.
 - engaging with the programme for the equivalent of 3- 6 hours per week during the months of September - November

Note: Social Entrepreneurs Ireland does not support 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.

11. Application Questions

SOLUTION FIT

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

1. Describe the social or environmental problem you are trying to address.

Please focus on the description of the broad problem, providing detailed information on the nature of the problem and its root causes. Provide data or evidence to illustrate the extent and severity of the problem as much as possible. *(250 words)*

2. Identify the primary target population affected by this problem and how the problem is affecting them. Describe their situation, challenges, and any specific difficulties they face as a consequence of the problem. *(150 words)*

3. Outline the key obstacles that are preventing this problem from being solved in Ireland today. *(100 words)*

YOUR SOLUTION

4. Describe the solution you have developed to address the problem. Please provide a detailed description of the solution and its key components. *(200 words)*

5. Which specific aspect of the problem is the solution addressing? Please explain why this particular aspect is critical to solve and how your solution effectively targets it. *(150 words)*

POTENTIAL IMPACT

6. Please describe changes you believe the target population/beneficiaries /environmental markers will experience after and as a consequence of receiving your solution. *(300 words)*

7. What other organisations are already working to tackle this problem in Ireland? How is your idea new or different from the work of these organisations? *(150 words)*

SOLUTION EVOLUTION

8. Tell us about what have you done so far and how has that allowed your idea to evolve?

SPIRIT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

12. What motivates you to solve this social or environmental problem? How do your personal, professional, voluntary or educational experiences, as well as your strengths, motivate you and make you the right person to drive this change? **(200 words)**



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