The Ideas Academy

Applicant Guide 2020

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1 – The Ideas Academy

Do you have an innovative idea to solve a social problem? Are you ambitious, entrepreneurial, and passionate about social change? This four-month programme (June – September 2020) will provide you with the support and direction you need to help you to kick-start your idea and take the next steps to start tackling the problem.

The participants of the programme will be supported to develop and progress their idea for social change, to build skills and accelerate learning in core areas of importance for social entrepreneurs, to more clearly articulate their idea, and to move from exploration to action. You can learn more about The Ideas Academy in a short video here.

Together with a small group of fellow innovators, you will receive:

Training & Support
Academy participants will receive training and development to help further their thinking and build their capacity as an entrepreneur. Over the course of the Ideas Academy, participants will attend a mixture of online and in-person workshops which will support participants to more fully interrogate the social problem, refine the solution and the skills needed to pilot and test their idea.

A Powerful Community
To support you at the early stage of your journey, you will receive peer mentorship, access to networking opportunities, and expert advice. All participants on the programme take part in learning group session with their fellow participants. These sessions are designed for participants to further their thinking and work on tasks set out at the training days. Social Entrepreneurs Ireland consultants will also offer guidance and support to help you move from idea to action. You will also have the opportunity to apply for additional support and funding following the Ideas Academy, with details provided during the course of the programme.

Opportunity to pitch for funding
As part of the programme, there is a seed fund worth €40,000 available. Participants on the Ideas Academy will have the opportunity to apply to pitch for a portion of the funding at the end of the programme to help them progress their idea.

Note:
SEI has re-designed the Ideas Academy in recent weeks to run it online and transition to in-person delivery, if and when possible during the lifespan of the programme.

2 – What We Are Looking For

The Ideas Academy will provide guidance and support to people with ideas to solve social problems, sparking a new generation of social entrepreneurs. We are seeking to identify individuals with an entrepreneurial drive and aptitude, a passion for social change, a strong understanding of the problem they are addressing, and a great idea to solve it.

What that means in more detail:

We're looking to support potential social entrepreneurs…
The Ideas Academy is for passionate driven individuals, who are interested in tackling a social problem. They should act in an entrepreneurial manner and be open to learning and developing themselves through The Ideas Academy. We are accepting applications from individuals and two-person partnerships.

A societal challenge…
There are a lot of problems and issues to be addressed in Ireland so we're looking for people who can clearly demonstrate why the issue they want to address is of particular importance and why they're passionate about it. The challenge that their project is addressing can be social or environmental.

An idea….
Applicants should have an idea with the potential to solve a social problem. As social entrepreneurs don't replicate what is already being provided, but instead seek to approach issues from a different angle, the idea should be new or better than what is already done to solve this problem in Ireland. The Ideas Academy caters for those who are in the idea or conceptual stages of creating a solution.

Eligibility Criteria…

- You are aged 18 years or over at the time of applying for the programme.
- You are the person leading on this idea – the main driver and decision maker.
- The primary focus of your idea is on benefiting Irish society.
- You have identified a social or environmental issue and have a new or better idea to solve it.
- You are available to commit to full attendance for all Academy events.

Note: *Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is not in a position to 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.*

3 – The Selection Process

Below you will find all the information you need to know about our application and selection process.

Before you apply:

(i)   *Read all about The Ideas Academy*

The Ideas Academy involves a certain time commitment from participants. Please read this document fully and review our website to ensure that you know all about it before applying. All events are mandatory during the application process and programme itself.

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

You can read all about the type of people we're looking to support through The Ideas Academy above and on our website. Please ensure that your application meets the relevant criteria and descriptions provided.

(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. Once you sign up and save your application the first time, it will from then on save any changes automatically. We would also strongly advise that you get feedback on your application before you submit it.

(iv)   *Take note of and ensure you can attend all mandatory Selection Process and Academy Programme dates outlined below*

Open Applications: March
You can apply to The Ideas Academy by filling in a short online application form.

Review of Applications: April/May
A review of all applications will be carried out. Shortlisted applicants will be selected and invited to take part in The Ideas Academy Bootcamp.

The Ideas Academy Bootcamps:
Academy Bootcamps will take place in May. Depending on which programme you applied for, if selected, you will be invited to take part in one of the Bootcamps. You will be invited to pitch your idea to a panel of judges virtually. We will also run a half day virtual conference (date TBC) for all applicants invited to pitch at bootcamp, to help you further your idea not matter the outcome of your pitch. Please see pitching dates for each Academy below:
- Bootcamp South (Cork): 21st May
- Bootcamp East (Dublin): 25th May
- Bootcamp West (Galway): 29th May

Academy Participant Selection

All participants will be informed as to whether they have been selected by the 12th June.

Core Programme Days

Please Note: SEI has re-designed the Ideas Academy in recent weeks to run it online and transition to in-person delivery, if and when possible during the lifespan of the programme.

Orientation – 18th June (online) *All Academy groups will come together for an online orientation session to introduce the key elements of the programme*

Core Learning Day 1 (half day, online) - 23rd June (Cork); 25th June (Dublin – Group 1); 30th June (Galway); 2nd July (Dublin – Group 2)

Core Learning Day 2 (half day, online) - Dates TBC

Core Learning Day 3 (half day, online) - Dates TBC

Core Learning Day 4 (half day, online) - 18th August (Cork); 20th August (Dublin – Group 1); 25th August (Galway); 27th August (Dublin – Group 2)

Core Learning Day 5 (full day, in-person) - 1st September (Cork); 3rd September (Dublin – Group 1); 8th September (Galway); 10th September (Dublin – Group 2)

SEI Awards Celebration – 14th October (The Mansion House, Dublin)
You're invited to enjoy our annual Awards Celebration together with the SEI community, made up of Ireland's leading business leaders, academia, media, and the country's most impactful social entrepreneurs.

4 - What We Expect from Participants

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland invests significant time and resource to provide a range of opportunities to participants of The Ideas Academy. In return we expect:

- 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 collegial engagement;

- Willingness to participate in group events and share knowledge

5 – Application Form Questions

Application Questions

The Problem
Q1. The Problem

The Ideas Academy seeks to support people who have an insight into a particular social-problem in Ireland. Please communicate as clearly as you can the urgency and effect of this problem in this section.

Note: In this section, please do not provide any details about your idea to tackle this problem. **Please just focus on describing the problem itself**. Please draw on any relevant examples or research to support your answer.

a. What is the social problem that you wish to address? (200)

b. How does this problem affect the lives of those experiencing it? (200)

c. What are the key obstacles that are preventing this problem from being solved in Ireland today? (200)

The Idea
Q2. Your Idea

The Ideas Academy seeks to support people with an innovative idea to tackle a social problem in Ireland. Please communicate as clearly as you can the way your idea tackles the problem in this section.

a. Please describe the idea that you have developed to solve this problem. (200)

b. How do you know that your specific idea has the potential to solve the problem you have outlined in question 1? (200)

c. How is your idea better or different from the work of other people trying to solve this problem? (200) **Note:** No matter how unique your idea is, there should be at least one organisation to which you can compare yourself.

About You
Q3. About You

The Ideas Academy seeks to support people who have the desire, ambition, and potential ability to drive this idea forward. In this section, we would like to get to know you better.

a. What is your connection to this social problem? Please tell us about your motivation and why you want to tackle this issue. (200)

b. Why are you the right person to lead and develop this idea? Please include information about any relevant experience and skills you have. (200)

c. What impact would you like to have created in two years time through this project?
Please give us a sense of your ambition and how you will achieve it. (200)

The Ideas Academy
Q4. The Ideas Academy

The Ideas Academy provides guidance and support to people with ideas to solve social problems, through training, peer mentorship, and access to support. In this section, we would like to know more about why you would like to participate in the programme.

a. What do you hope to get out of participating in The Academy? Please outline your three core objectives for the programme. (200)

b. What challenges do you think you might face if participating in The Academy, and how do you intend to overcome these? (150)

c. Please tell us why you feel it is the right time for you to take part in this programme. (150)

d. If you are not selected to take part in The Academy, what are the first steps you will take to further your idea? (150)

6 – The Ideas Academy FAQs

About Social Entrepreneurs Ireland

What is Social Entrepreneurs Ireland?

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) is a privately funded not-for-profit organisation that supports social entrepreneurs with innovative ideas to tackle Ireland's social problems. Our mission is to find people with solutions to social problems and support them on every step of their journey. We walk the path with a social entrepreneur from the moment they have an idea through to when they solve the problem at scale. Since our foundation in 2004, SEI has supported more than 300 social entrepreneurs whose projects have directly impacted over 1.8 million people across Ireland.

What programmes does Social Entrepreneurs offer?

Our three core programmes are:

- **The Ideas Academy** - helping people with innovative ideas to social problems to take those first steps and move from idea to action.
- **The Impact programme** - supporting high potential social entrepreneurs to build strong foundations and a plan for growing their impact.
- **The Scale Partnerships programme** - Bespoke, tailor-made support programmes and funding for organisations who are tackling social problems at scale
- Applications open for the Ideas Academy from Monday, 2nd March to Tuesday, 14th April (deadline extended). We are not currently accepting applications for the Impact or the Scale Partnerships programmes.

Which programme should I apply to?

If you have an innovative idea to solve a social problem in Ireland but are in the very early stages, The Ideas Academy may be more appropriate for your stage of development as it will help you to kick-start your idea and take the next steps.

What types of organisations do you support (charities, social enterprises, for-profits)?

We support social enterprises and charitable organisations, of any governance structure (e.g. limited by guarantee, limited by shares etc.) We also support early-stage organisations that have yet to decide which legal structure is most advantageous to their social mission. While we support organisations structured as both 'not for profit' and 'for profit', we only support social entrepreneur-led organisations that can convince us that their social mission is at the core of what they do, regardless of their legal structure.

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.

Why must an idea or project you support be 'new or better'?

Ireland still suffers from a number of entrenched social problems. At Social Entrepreneurs Ireland we believe new and improved thinking is needed. However, these types of ideas often struggle to garner support, particularly in the early stages of their development.

Therefore, through our programmes we support projects that tackle these issues from a different angle, improving on what is already being done or introducing a completely new solution altogether.

How is Social Entrepreneurs Ireland funded?

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland is funded by a range of private foundations, corporate partners and individuals.

Eligibility Criteria

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

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

What do you mean by 'Ireland'?

The term 'Ireland' refers to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

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. Our support programmes are only open to social entrepreneurs living in Ireland.

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 you should currently be the main driver and decision maker of the project with the skills to drive it forward. You should be passionate about the work you do and have an entrepreneurial spirit.

Must I meet all of the eligibility criteria to be eligible to apply?

Yes, you must meet all of the eligibility criteria listed in the Applicant Guide. You will also be asked to fill in the eligibility criteria form in the application ensuring that you are eligible for the programme you are intending to apply for. If you have any specific questions about eligibility criteria, please email us at: applications@socialentrepreneurs.ie

The Application Process

I'm interested in applying for one of the support programmes - how do I apply?

All applications must be submitted online using our online application form. Please access www.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 www.socialentrepreneurs.ie.

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.

I am a past recipient of support from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland - can I apply again?

You are not eligible to apply for the same programme with the same project. If you are a previous Academy participant, you are not eligible to apply for The Ideas Academy with the same project.

Can I meet with somebody in SEI to discuss my application?

We unfortunately can't help people when it comes to filling in their applications - although we're happy to clarify anything about the process if it's unclear. What we would recommend however, if you are looking for feedback on your individual application, is to share it with some friends, colleagues and board members, to get their insights into the quality of your answers.

Our website is also an excellent source of information. If you have a problem with your application or a specific question not answered here, you can email applications@socialentrepreneurs.ie or call 01-685-3191 and we will seek to assist you

I've started my application form; how do I log back in to edit it?

Just log back at the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland grant platform to edit and submit your application.

I don't remember my password. What should I do?

You can easily recover your password by clicking on **Reset Password link** on the login page.

How do I ensure that my work is saved?

After you've registered and have entered the applications portal you will be able to start your application. Upon selection of the programme you're applying for, you will need to enter the Application Name and **press 'Save+Next'**. All your work after this **will be automatically saved**. After submission you will not be able to make any changes, so please ensure that you are submitting an application for the programme you intend to apply for.

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

All questions in the application are required unless marked 'optional'. **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.

What happens when I submit an application?

Once all the applications have been submitted, a thorough review process will take place. A full breakdown of the review process and associated timelines is listed in this document under Selection Process Timeline.

The Ideas Academy

What is the Ideas Academy?

The Ideas Academy is a four-month programme for people who have spotted a social problem and have an idea to tackle it. Participants on this programme receive training, support, and peer mentorship in key areas of importance to early-stage social entrepreneurs such as idea development, piloting methods, and governance practices.

If I am selected, how much time must I commit to The Ideas Academy?

The programme will run for 4 months from June to September 2020. Over the course of the programme, participants are required to attend all core learning elements of the programme including online and in-person training days, as well as regular learning group sessions with their fellow participants.

How many applicants will be selected to participate in The Ideas Academy?

This year we intend to run four Ideas Academies concurrently – two groups in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Galway. Each group will have up to 15 spaces available. Due to Covid-19 we have redesigned the programme in recent weeks to take place online, and to transition to in-person delivery, if and when possible during the lifespan of the programme.

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

We will let you know whether you have been selected to take part in The Ideas Academy Bootcamp by 11th May.

If my application is successful, when will The Ideas Academy begin?

The programme will begin in June 2020 and run until September 2020.