The Impact Programme

Applicant Guide 2021

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1 - The Impact Programme

Do you have a project that is tackling a particular social or environmental problem in Ireland and are looking to grow your impact? Through our Impact Programme we provide funding, mentoring and a network of supports to high-potential social entrepreneurs and their project, helping them to become a more impactful, effective, scalable, and sustainable organisation.

We look for 5 social entrepreneur-led projects with the potential to significantly impact the problem that they are addressing in Ireland, and work with them for 9 months. The Impact Programme will be delivered primarily online in 2021-22 with in person elements when and if safe to do so.

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

Funding

Each Impact Awardee will receive €20,000 in funding.

Training & Support

Impact Awardees will receive support valued at approximately €20,000. They will join an accelerator programme where they will receive mentorship, training, and consultancy in areas like leadership development, fundraising, governance, strategic planning, and communications. They can also receive pro-bono support from partner organisations, ensuring that they receive the best professional services available at no, or a low, cost.

A Powerful Community

Each Impact Awardee will become a member of the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Community, made up of social entrepreneurs, sectoral experts, and SEI's funders and supporters. Community workshops, retreats, and gatherings are an opportunity for Alumni to come together to network and learn from each other, receive advice from other social entrepreneurs and hear selected speakers on both personal and professional topics. Through this community, you will receive peer support from experienced social entrepreneurs and expand your network significantly, connecting with the largest community of social entrepreneurs in Ireland.

2 - What We Are Looking For

The Impact Programme works with high-potential social entrepreneurs and their organisations to become more impactful, effective, scalable, and sustainable.

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)

What that means in more detail:

We are looking to support social entrepreneur-led projects…

The person applying must be the main driver and lead decision maker with a project already up and running. They should be open to learning and developing themselves through the Impact Programme. We accept applications from individuals and two-person partnerships. While your project may have more than two founders/ leaders, for the purposes of our selection process and programmes only two partners can apply, and both must be the main decision makers. The person/people who make(s) the application should not be making it on anyone else's behalf, rather they are the individual(s) who will engage in the SEI support programme.

A societal challenge…

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

A new or better solution…

The people we support don't replicate what is already being provided but instead seek to approach issues from a different angle, improving on what is already being done or introducing a completely new solution altogether. They should be able to clearly articulate what makes their solution unique.

Mission driven & effective…

All of our applicants should be leading projects that are primarily focused on the mission of solving a social or environmental problem. We support organisations with any and all legal structures, but

you must be in a position to convince us that the social mission is the core driver. You should also be able to provide us with evidence that what you do actually works in addressing the problem you've identified, proving that it has a positive impact.

Desire & potential to scale their impact…

We are looking for social entrepreneurs who think big, ultimately looking to change the way the issue they are addressing is dealt with in Ireland. Having the desire and potential to scale in the future is therefore important. 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 - Application Process Eligibility Criteria

Every year we hold an open call for applications which is followed by a selection process to determine the social entrepreneurs we will support that particular year. Our Impact Programme caters for established projects at various stages of development and aims to support social entrepreneurs with the greatest potential to bring about positive change to Ireland's most pressing social and environmental challenges.

Eligibility Criteria

In order to apply to the Impact Programme, you must meet the following criteria:

- You are aged *18 years or over* at the time of applying for the programme.
- You are the social entrepreneur leading the project - *the main driver and decision maker*.
- The primary focus of your project is on *benefiting people in Ireland*.
- You have identified a *social or environmental issue* and *developed a clear business model* to solve it.
- Your solution is *new or better* than others in existence already in Ireland.
- Your project *has moved beyond the initial idea stage*, with activities up and running that relate directly to the problem you are trying to address.
- You have *evidence to illustrate the social mission and impact* of your project on your target beneficiaries/audience.
- You have the ambition to *scale and grow the impact* of your project beyond its current level.
- You are open and keen to engage with the *learning and development opportunities* provided through our Impact Programme. The Programme will run from July 2021 – March 2022. This involves a time commitment of on average 2 to 4 days per month.
- You are available to attend the mandatory *Selection Process events*: Virtual Judging Panel on 21st/22nd June and a final interview on 7th July.
- You are willing and able to develop your project on at least *a part-time basis* for the duration of the programme.

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.*
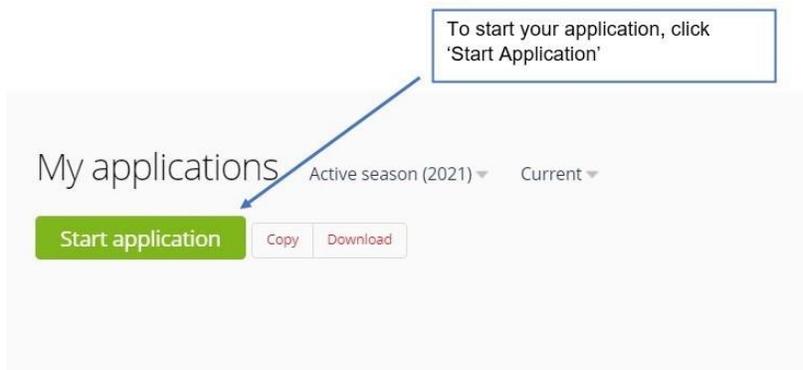
4 - How to Apply

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 www.socialentrepreneurs.ie
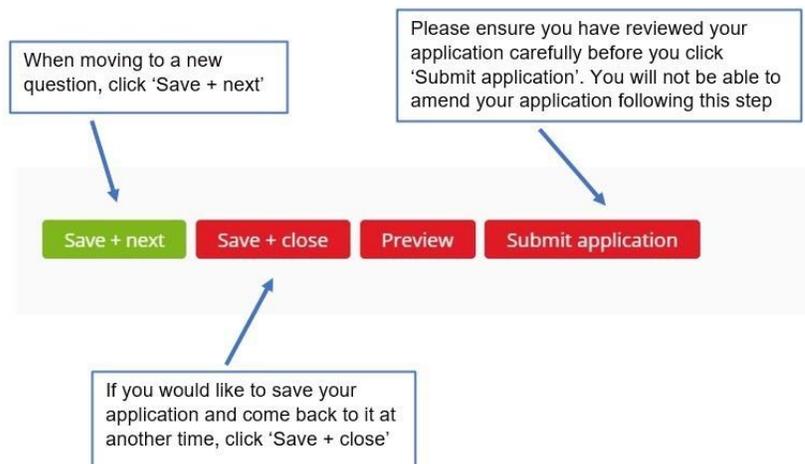
You will be asked to create a profile and login details, you can then log into your application at any time during the selection process period (24th of February to Midnight, 7th of April 2021). After submission **you will not be able to amend your application**, so please ensure you have reviewed your work carefully before submission.

Visual Guide

1. Once you have created your profile and login details, you can start your application.
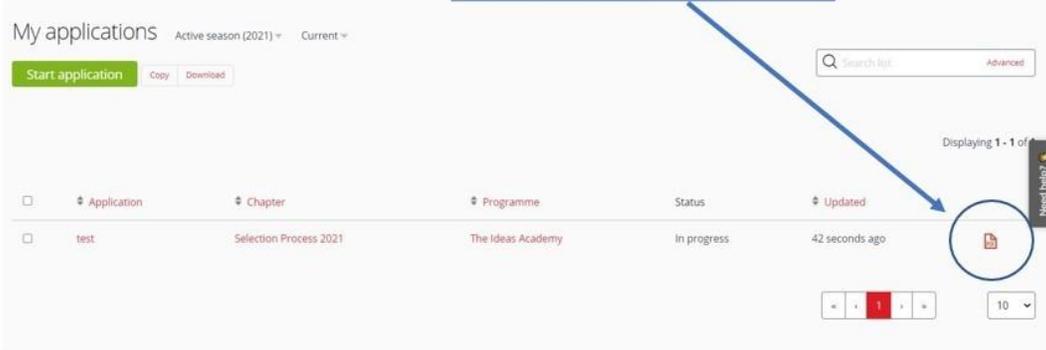

2. You can then move through the application form questions.

3. You can save a copy of your application to your computer at any time.

You can save your application to your computer as a PDF file by clicking this icon

If you have a problem with your application, a specific question not answered in this guide, or if you require extra support in writing your application, you can email applications@socialentrepreneurs.ie or call 01-685-3469 and we will seek to assist you.

5 - 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 Impact Programme

The Impact Programme involves a large amount of commitment from the social entrepreneurs we support. Read this document and review other available information on our website to ensure that you know all about it before applying.

(ii)   Find out what we are looking for

You can read all about the type of person and projects/organisations we are looking to support through our Impact Programme in this document. Please ensure that your application meets the relevant criteria and descriptions 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.

 We will be holding an informative online event on the **11th of March** which will outline what a Social Entrepreneur is, how a deep understanding of the problem helps creative innovative solutions, and how Social Entrepreneurs Ireland can help support you and your idea. Please follow us on social media to find out more…

(iii)   Take time to complete your application

Be sure to allow enough time 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.

(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 the application review team.

6 - Selection Process Timeline

(i) Open Applications **(February)**

Social entrepreneurs from all over Ireland can apply by filling in an online application form, found on [Social Entrepreneurs Grant Platform](#) from 24th February to 7th April 2021.

(ii) Review of Applications **(April/May)**

A review of applications will be carried out by the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland team and an extensive external panel of reviewers from our community to shortlist applicants for the next stage.

(iii) Virtual Judging Panels **(21st & 22nd of June)**

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to pitch to a panel of judges virtually.

(iv) Final Interview **(7th July)**

Following the Virtual Judging Panel,12 applicants will be invited to submit further information and take part in a final interview.

(v) Social Entrepreneurs Selected **(July)**

Social Entrepreneurs will be selected and informed by 20th July.

(vi) The Impact Programme **(July 2021 – March 2022)**

The social entrepreneur takes part in 9-month support programme.

7 - What We Expect of the Social Entrepreneurs

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

- Full personal participation on core programme support elements;
- Open-minded and honest engagement;
- Willingness to participate in group events and share knowledge;
- Active involvement with the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Community both during and after the Impact Programme.

A Letter of Commitment will be signed by you and a member of your board of directors (if you have one at time of signing) at the outset of the programme which outlines in more detail the commitments on Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and the Awardees behalf.

Support Programme

All participants will be expected to commit an average of 2-4 days per month to programme over the course of the 9 months.

The programme involves a range of activities such as one-to-one meetings with your Social Entrepreneurs Ireland consultant, meetings and workshops with expert advisors and consultants, group workshops and networking events. Outside of this time you will also be expected to work towards the 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 participant and their project/organisation which should complement, not detract from, the social entrepreneur's own strategic objectives. It is very important to us to work with you to ensure our supports are as relevant and useful to you as possible on an ongoing basis.

All participants are required to submit regular reports as agreed, along with an annual summary report at the end of the Impact programme, which outlines progress made and actions completed against the social entrepreneur's individual development plan. The participants may also be required to provide along a financial breakdown of the donation monies.

8 - Application Questions

The Problem
Q1. The Problem

At Social Entrepreneurs Ireland we look to support social entrepreneurs who have an insight into a particular social problem in Ireland and who can clearly communicate the urgency and effect of this problem.

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 relevant examples or research to support your answer.

a. What social problem are you trying to solve? Please include in your response the scale of the problem, e.g. number of people affected by this problem in Ireland (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? (150)

The Solution/Idea
Q2. The Solution

Through our programmes, we support social entrepreneurs who have found new and/ or better ways to solve a pressing social or environmental problem. In this section, we want to hear about your idea to tackle the problem you've identified.

a. Please describe the solution/idea that you have developed to solve the problem you outlined in question 1. (200)
b. What have you done to date to implement this solution? Please be as specific as possible on the results that you've achieved so far. (200)
c. How exactly does your solution directly solve the problem and address the key obstacles you outlined in question 1. (200)
d. Who is your typical beneficiary/ client/ service user, and how do they engage with your project/organisation? (200)

The Social Entrepreneur
Q3. The People

At Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, we primarily support the leader of the organisation as we believe that significant change starts with the vision of the social entrepreneur. The team around that individual is also key to drive that change forward. We would like to know more about you – what motivates and drives you – along with the team around you.

a. What is motivating you as an individual to create social change in this specific area? Please tell us your connection to this social problem and why you want to tackle it. (200)

b. Based on your experience to date, why are you the right person to lead this change? Please include information about any relevant experience and abilities you have. (250)

c. Who is assisting you in your work, and how exactly do they do so? Please make specific reference to staff, board members, volunteers, mentors, wider supporters etc. (200)

The Impact
Q4. The Impact

Your organisation's impact can be described as the longer-term difference that your organisation creates through its actions. Applicants should have a clear understanding of the difference they are making, and be able to provide Social Entrepreneurs Ireland with evidence and examples to show that the particular solution they are implementing is impactful.

a. To help us to understand the potential impact of your solution, please provide an example of the difference your organisation has made to one of your beneficiaries/ clients/ service users. (150)

b. What tangible changes is your organisation currently making? Please draw on external research as appropriate. (200)

c. How do you currently measure your impact? (150)

Note: As opposed to solely outlining how you track your indicators of impact, e.g. social media followers, number of clients, workshops etc., we are primarily interested in **how you are measuring the deeper difference you are making** in people's lives.

The Strategy
Q5. The Market

Knowing the market you operate in is crucial to a social entrepreneur's success. You should know what is currently being done in Ireland and internationally to address the problem you have outlined and how your solution complements or interacts with this existing work.

a. What other organisations are already working to tackle this problem in Ireland and what is the nature of your relationship with these organisations (e.g. collaboration, partnership, referral) and why? (300) **Note:** No matter how unique your solution is, there should be at least one organisation to which you can compare yourself to.

b. Tell us how that your organisation's approach to addressing this problem is better or different to what these organisations are already doing. (150)

Q6. Growth

Applicants **should have the desire and potential to scale and grow their impact in the future**.
Note: Scaling can take many forms; for example, service and/or product expansion, increase in locations and geographical footprint, boosting staff numbers/capacity to deliver current offerings, system change, or providing a model that can be replicated.

a. What does success look like for your organisation in 2-3 years? Please outline your core goals. (200)

b. What are the key obstacles you may face that could prevent your organisation from achieving these goals? Please include any challenges presented by the Covid-19 Pandemic here also. (250)

c. What do you need now in order to achieve these goals, apart from funding? (200)

Q7. The Financial Model

Social entrepreneurs should have clarity on how their business operates financially and be able to clearly articulate what their business model is.

a. How do you currently fund your organisation ? Please list all sources of income, in euro value and percentages of total income. (250)

b. What are your key expenses? Please list all sources of expenditure, in euro value and percentages of total expenditure. (250)

c. How do you plan to fund your organisation in the future (aside from a potential Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Award)? (150)

9 - 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 375 social entrepreneurs.

What programmes does Social Entrepreneurs offer?

Our five 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 Action Lab –** supporting social entrepreneurs who have graduated from the Ideas Academy and are at the piloting stage to effectively roll out their offering and increase their impact.
- **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
- **The Community Programme** – supporting social entrepreneurs by harnessing the skills, knowledge, and experience of our community to help them further their impact.

Applications open for the Ideas Academy and the Impact Programme from Wednesday, 24th February to Wednesday, 7th April. We are not currently accepting applications for the Action Lab, the Scale Partnerships programme, or the Community programme.

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. If you have started to run activities and meet all the remaining criteria for the Impact Programme, then this is the programme for you. It will provide you with specialised support and funding to help bring your project to the next level. Please see the website and relevant programme Application Guide for further information on eligibility criteria.

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. You can find more information on our supporters on our website.

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.

My project is up and running – which SEI programme is for me?

If you have started to run activities and meet **all the remaining criteria** for the Impact Programme, then it is for you. If you are in the very early stages and do not meet all criteria for the Impact Programme, The Ideas Academy may be more appropriate for your stage of development.

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 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, but you could consider applying for the Impact programme if your project is eligible.

Can I meet with somebody in SEI to discuss my application?
If you are looking for feedback on your individual application, we would recommend sharing 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 require extra support in writing your application or have a specific question not answered here, you can email applications@socialentrepreneurs.ie or call 01-685-3469 and we will seek to assist you.

Can I apply to The Ideas Academy and the Impact programme?
No. You can only apply to the programme that is most relevant to your project's stage of development. You cannot make two applications to two programmes with different projects. The Eligibility criteria is listed in this document and in the actual application form.

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 Impact Programme

What is the Impact Programme?

The Impact Programme is a nine-month accelerator programme. Through it, we support Ireland's highest potential social entrepreneurs to build strong foundations and a plan for growing their impact. With group and individual support and training in areas like strategy, governance, business modelling, fundraising, communications, and leadership and wellbeing, we help you to bring your organisation to the next stage. We also pair you with highly experienced mentors, coaches and our extensive network of social entrepreneurs to support you to build an impactful, scalable, and sustainable organisation.

How long will it take to fill in the Impact Programme application form?

While everyone will be different, in general we advise that it takes approximately 5-6 hours to complete the application form, depending on the level of detail being provided. Trying to do all of this in one sitting is tough though, so we advise completing the application form in sections, making use of all the time available to complete the form.

How many social entrepreneurs will become Impact Awardees this year?

5 social entrepreneurs will be selected as Impact Awardees.

What do I get if my Impact application is successful?

All Impact Awardees will receive funding of €20,000 and a support programme from SEI worth approximately €20,000. Impact Awardees of Social Entrepreneurs Ireland are also entitled to receive a series of pro-bono supports from several partner organisations, ensuring that each of our social entrepreneurs receive the best professional services available at no cost to them or their organisations. Impact Awardees are also provided with access to numerous free/low-cost training courses and workshops to help develop both themselves and their organisations further.

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

The Impact 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 Impact Awardee will be slightly different, but on average 2-4 days per month. It's important to note that the Programme will require significant input from the Impact Awardee in order to benefit from the supports on offer, and that we seek to make these supports as relevant and useful as possible.

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

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

At what stage of development should my project be to be eligible to apply to the Impact Programme?

The Impact Programme caters to social entrepreneur-led projects at various stages of development, from early stage to growth. Your project must have moved beyond the idea/conceptual stage, with activities up and running that relate directly to the problem you are trying to address. We are looking for projects with the desire and potential to scale beyond their current reach and impact.

What are the reporting requirements for Impact Awardees?

Impact Awardees are required to submit reports throughout the period of their Award, along with a summary report at the end of the Award period. This report outlines progress made and actions completed against the Awardee's project plan, along with a financial breakdown of the donation monies.

Can I apply to other funds and the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Impact Programme?

Yes, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland realises how tough it can be to raise the necessary funds for a project, particularly in the early stages of development. As a result, we have no issue with applications being made to other funding opportunities that may arise, and we actively encourage this.

I have previously applied to Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, can I re-apply?

Yes. However, we would only recommend re-applying if your project or idea has made significant progress since you last applied or if you have taken on feedback that was provided.

I have submitted my Impact Programme 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 Impact Programme Virtual Judging Panel by the last week of May.

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

The programme will begin in July 2021 and will run until March 2022. You can find more details on this and associated timelines in the Selection Process Timeline in this document.