

social
entrepreneurs
Ireland



The Ideas Academy
Applicant Guide 2021

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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 three-month programme 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.

Participants on the Ideas Academy 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](#).

There are 60 places available on the 2021 programme which will be made up of 15 social entrepreneur-led projects across four groups (two groups in the East, one group in the West, and one group in the South). The programme will be delivered online in 2021. If Covid-19 restrictions in Ireland allow for it, we will consider holding an in-person session towards the end of the programme if it is safe and appropriate to do so, but this will be communicated with participants on the programme.

Together with a group of fellow innovators, you will receive training and support to:

- Deepen your understanding of the problem you have identified
- Refine and validate your solution
- Develop an action plan to pilot your idea post-programme
- Increase your network
- Grow in confidence as a social entrepreneur
- Gain an insight into the social entrepreneur journey
- Apply for seed funding and further support from SEI at the end of the programme

The Ideas Academy 2021 is supported by Bank of America (Lead Corporate Sponsor), the Lifes2good Foundation (Lead Sponsor of the Ideas Academy West), and the Tomar Trust.

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 looking to find individuals with a passion for social change, a strong understanding of the problem they are addressing, a great idea to solve it, and the drive and courage to act on it.

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 potential social entrepreneurs...

The Ideas Academy is for passionate, driven individuals who are interested in tackling a social problem. They should be ambitious, visionary, and open to learning and developing themselves and their idea 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 are 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.

An idea....

Applicants should have an idea with the potential to solve a social problem. The idea should be new, better or different to existing initiatives which are currently tackling the problem. The Ideas Academy programme is suitable for people with ideas at either the research or testing stages.

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 society in Ireland.
- 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 of the core learning on the Ideas Academy.

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 are looking for*

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

We will be holding an informative online event on the **11th of March** which will outline what social entrepreneurship is, how to get started with your project and how Social Entrepreneurs Ireland can help you bring your idea to life. Please follow us on social media to find out more...

- (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: 24th of February – 7th of April 2021

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 Virtual Judging..

The Ideas Academy Virtual Judging:

The Ideas Academy Virtual Judging will take place in May and June 2021. Depending on which programme you applied for, if selected, you will be invited to pitch your idea to a panel of judges virtually. Please see pitching dates for each Academy below:

- Ideas Academy South: 25th - 26th May

- Ideas Academy East: 1st - 2nd June
- Ideas Academy West: 8th - 9th June

Ideas Academy Participant Selection

All participants will be informed as to whether they have been selected by the 14th June.

Core Programme Days

The Ideas Academy will cover three core modules over twelve weeks and will be delivered online through a mix of large and small group session. If you are offered a place on the Ideas Academy in 2021 you must be available to attend all core programme sessions to successfully complete the programme. Core programme dates for 2021 are being finalised and this guide will be updated with the confirmed dates for each cohort when the application process opens on the 24th of February. Estimated time commitment required is 3-6 hours per week (core programme elements, group sessions and individual work) for the duration of the programme.

Programme Launch – 17th June

Module 1: Understanding the Problem

- Core Learning Day (All Groups) - 22nd June
- Small Group Sessions – 28th June (East 1), 29th June (South), 30th June (West), 1st July (East 2)

Module 2: Refining the Solution

- Core Learning Day (All Groups) - 6th July
- Small Group Sessions – 12th July (East 1), 13th July (South), 14th July (West), 15th July (East 2)

Module 3: Piloting Your Project

- Core Learning Day (All Groups) - 20th July
- Small Group Sessions – 26th July (East 1), 27th July (South), 28th July (West), 29th July (East 2)

Module 4: Funding Your Vision

- Core Learning Day (All Groups) - 10th August
- Small Group Sessions – 16th August (East 1), 17th August (South), 18th August (West), 19th August (East 2)

Programme Close

- Small Group Close Out Sessions – 23rd August (East 1), 24th August (South), 25th August (West), 26th August (East 2)
- Close Out Event – 31st August

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

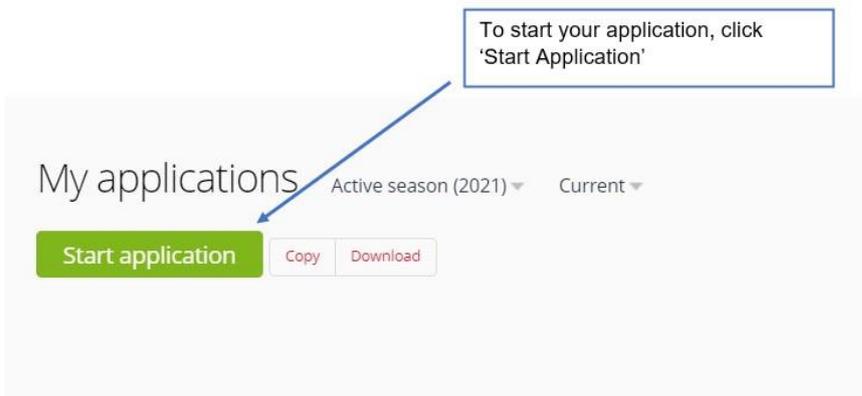
5 - How to Apply

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.

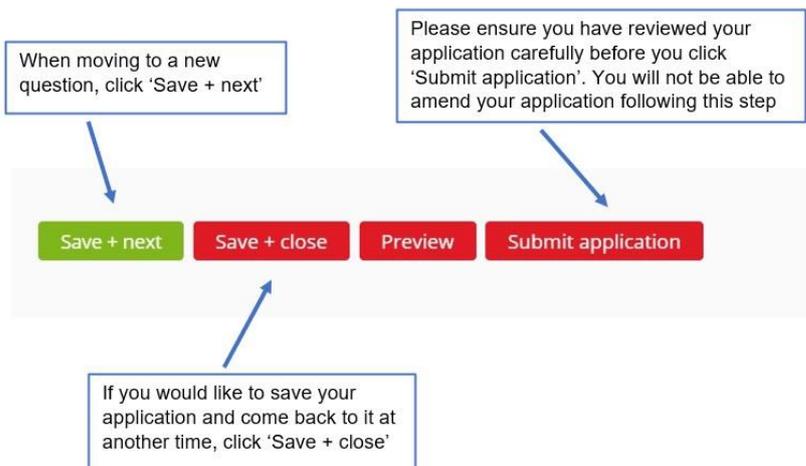
You will be asked to create a profile and login details, you can then log into your application at any time during the selection process period (24th of February to Midnight, 7th of April 2021). After submission **you will not be able to amend your application**, so please ensure you have reviewed your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

Visual Guide

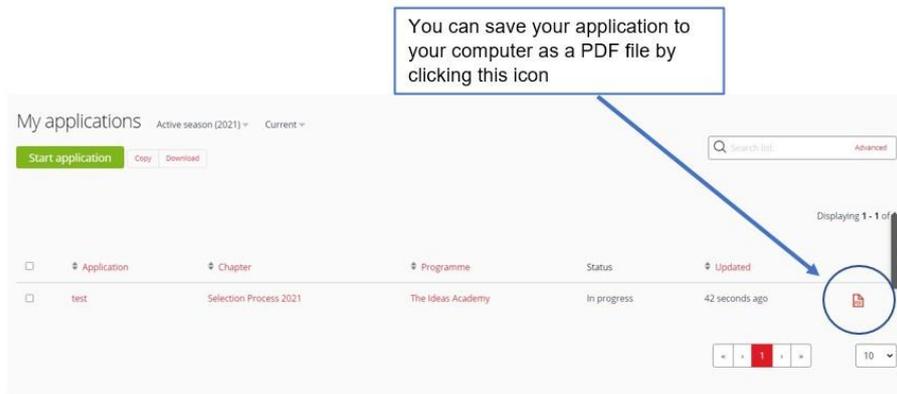
1. Once you have created your profile and login details, you can start your application.



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.



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.

6 - 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 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?** (200)

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. **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.

The Social Entrepreneur

Q3. The Social Entrepreneur

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 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. (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)

7 – 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 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 early stages of developing it, the Ideas Academy 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. 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 organisations with a clear social mission, of any governance structure (e.g. limited by guarantee, limited by shares, charitable status 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 of the island of 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 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. You can apply to the same programme with a new idea.

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.

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 three-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 to help them move from idea to action.

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

The programme will run for three months from June to September 2021. Over the course of the programme, participants are required to attend all core learning elements of the programme, as well as regular learning group sessions with their fellow participants. You should be able to commit 3-6 hours a week (core programme elements and individual work to progress project) to the Ideas Academy for the duration of the programme.

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 the East, one in the South, and one in the West. Each group will have up to 15 spaces available.

Which academy group should I apply for?

The Ideas Academy is divided into four groups by region – one in the West, one in the South, and two in the East. You should apply for the group where you and your project are based, or which is closest to where you are based.

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 pitch to a panel of virtual judges for a place on the Ideas Academy by 11th May. Please see dates for the virtual pitching in section 3 above (Selection Process). You will know by 11th June if you have been successful in your pitch to secure a place on the programme.

How much seed funding is available to apply for at the end of the programme?

There is a total of €50,000 in seed funding available through the Ideas Academy. This is divided between the four academy groups as follows: €20,000 for the West, €10,000 for the South, €10,000 for East group 1, and €10,000 for East group 2. All projects that complete the Ideas Academy programme can apply to pitch for a portion of seed funding at the end of the programme to pilot their idea. Typically, projects that successfully pitch for seed funding receive between €1,000 and €5,000.

Why is the pot of funding for the West group bigger?

The Ideas Academy programme is kindly supported by three different funders. The sponsor of the West programme, the Lifes2good Foundation, have a strategic priority to support social entrepreneurship in the West of Ireland and have granted SEI with a larger pot of seed funding to distribute to projects who complete the Ideas Academy West in line with this strategic priority.