

Resources for Social Enterprises

Starting your business – support available for all types of businesses

All businesses need the same type of support when starting out. Here are your go-to organisations for general business support, whatever legal structure you choose for your social enterprise:

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) provide impartial support for businesses to grow and realise its potential with free business support, it offers advice, training, networking and support. Additionally, they can offer access to grants, mentoring and help with efficiency savings.

Business support specific to starting a social enterprise

Ten steps to starting a social enterprise:

1. Form follows function

Don't get hung up on choosing the right legal structure early. There are half a dozen possible structures for a social enterprise, but if you decide first what you want to do, and how you want to do it, those options are reduced.

2. Get the right mix of skills and experience

Business scholar Michael Gerber suggests that there are three broad roles for starting and sustaining a new business – the entrepreneur (who has the vision and ideas), the technician (who does the work) and the manager (who makes it happen). Then there are more specific skills like financial management. Identify your weaknesses and build your team to plug the gaps.

3. Clarity of purpose

Be sure you can articulate your vision and purpose clearly and succinctly (in a 60 second pitch?) You should be able to share vision and values with your team and external 'stakeholders' so that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

4. Know your market

As a social enterprise – meeting the needs of your clients/ customers/ service-users is paramount. Make sure you know what those needs are, and that there is both a 'gap in the market and a market in the gap' to give your enterprise the best chance of succeeding.

5. Flexibility in a framework

If the early stages you should be clear about what you are trying to do and try to capture the concept in words both verbally (the 60 second pitch above) and in writing (through a draft business plan) Your plan will develop as you go along; putting some thoughts on paper early on will help crystallise them.

6. Make sure the figures add up

Understand the relationship between cost, price and value to give your new enterprise the best chance of being financially sustainable. Don't under-estimate costs, don't under-price your products and services (but it's OK to have a range of prices that recognises the differing abilities of your customers to pay).

7. Know the environment

Become an information-gatherer – on your competition, and opportunities for collaboration – with other social enterprises and the private sector - to combine your specific expertise.

8. Passion, persistence, patience

Passion persuades – you can go a long way to get people to help and support your efforts if you can inspire them. But don't let your heart rule your head – the essential business idea must stand up – financially and socially. Over-night success is unlikely – you must be in it for the long haul.

9. Kit yourself out

When starting a business there's likely to be a lot of blood, sweat and tears. But long hours and low pay are not sustainable and social enterprise is about a better way of doing business, so good working conditions are important.

10. Plan your journey

Know where you're going, monitor your progress, and make sure your systems are in place and running smoothly. But don't overdo it - you can't drive while reading a map with the bonnet up – sometimes you have to just get on and do it!

Success in social enterprise:

In their booklet *"Unlocking Enterprise"*, Partners For Social Enterprise researched that successful social enterprises:

- Gain independence and autonomy through trading
- Display entrepreneurial, innovative risk-taking behaviour
- Adopt flexible and adaptable practices
- Maintain a customer and community focus
- Engage stakeholders
- Adopt a democratic and participative management style
- Deliver socially and/or environmentally, as well as financially
- Remain financially viable, gaining their income from selling goods and services.

Developing your social enterprise – stages and support:

Development stage	Support
Idea or opportunity	In-kind resources (time and facilities) Peer support and study visits
Market testing and governance	In-kind resources (time and facilities), small grants from local sources, donations from the community
Feasibility study and draft business plan	Unlimited Awards (small grant fund for social entrepreneurs) Stages 1 & 2 Peer support and informal/formal learning (e.g. Social Enterprise East of England (www.see.co.uk))
Business planning and start-up support including legal considerations	Pro-bono expertise (e.g. Cranfield Trust, Business in the Community) Networking and business partnerships (social enterprise and private sector) Investment – loans (social lenders)
Start trading	Income from trading Business support and training

Business development	Earned income from contracts (public and private sector) Loans (social lenders) and other investments, including venture philanthropy Partnerships (private and social enterprise sectors e.g. housing associations) Business networks (including Chamber of Commerce, green business clubs etc)
Monitoring and evaluation	Social return on investment/ outcomes-focus – through information, training and/or commissioned studies
Growth / decline	Replication (social franchising or licensing?), scaling up through partnerships, consortia, mergers. Selling intellectual property rights. Business support

Has your trading idea got legs?

Identifying ideas is the easy bit. The question is – are they right for you and your organisation? Here are 10 questions to answer (honestly!) about your idea:

1. Does it meet a significant need for your potential customers?
2. Is the market for your product / service sizeable and/or growing?
3. Is the market attractive and accessible?
4. What's the competition, and can you realistically compete?
5. Will it require high initial investment?
6. Is there likely to be a good return on your investment (time and money)?
7. Is there good fit with your mission, values and organisational culture?
8. Does it use/develop your existing skills?
9. Do you have access to potential partners and support networks?
10. How risky will it be, and can you afford to take that risk?

Free sources of further information:

Start your Social Enterprise

SEUK's '[Start your Social Enterprise](#)' guide takes you through the start-up essentials from forming your social mission to funding, and everything between. A great new resource for budding entrepreneurs.

Social Enterprise Planning Toolkit

The British Council [Social Enterprise Planning Toolkit](#) is a practical 'how to' manual for those wishing to form a new social enterprise or expand an existing social enterprise.

Twine Together

Twine's joined-up productivity tools simplify the data and workflow needs of your business. Twine's tools are free to community businesses and other third sector organisations and included a useful [Community Sector Business Overview tool](#).

Social Enterprise Business Planning Toolkit

Red Ochre produced this [Guide](#) with Business Link London to support the writing of a business plan

Is it a good idea? A guide for charities thinking about Social Enterprise:

A [Guide](#) from the Centre For Charity Effectiveness

Why Social Enterprise; A guide for charities

Charities can diversify their income streams by looking to social enterprise. SEUK's [Guide](#) offers practical tips and advice on the issues to consider before trading. As charities face a tougher funding environment, this guide aims to help those trying to diversify their income by becoming a social enterprise.

National Council for Voluntary Organisation's Sustainable Funding Project

A [Website](#) with a range of resources and good links for voluntary organisations and charities that would like to explore enterprise. Such as: market testing on a budget and generating income from buildings.

NCVO's [Good Guide to Trading](#) takes you through the process of launching a successful trading initiative from start to finish. Guidance is presented in an easy-to-use format, with tools, case studies, signposts to other resources, key tips, and pitfalls to be aware of.

It's an idea, but is it a business?

A step-by-step [Guide](#) to third sector trading published by WCVA

Making Local food Work

Trading for Success, a practical [Guide](#) to marketing and financial management for community run food enterprises. A useful marketing and financial management guide for all SME social enterprises and co-operatives

Co-operatives UK

[Co-operatives UK](#) is a specialist support organisation and membership body for the co-op sector in the UK. Their specialist legal team is an excellent source of advice on legal structures for social enterprises (not just co-op models). They have sets of model rules that social enterprises can sign up to (charges vary) and can provide bespoke structures for more complex enterprises.

[The Hive](#) is a support programme for co-operatives delivered by Co-operatives UK in partnership with The Co-operative Bank. If you are looking to set-up a co-operative, or you're from an existing co-operative with ambitions to grow, you could benefit from up to 12 days bespoke support, training and mentoring. Many resources available.

Locality

Formerly the Development Trusts Association, [Locality](#) specialises in working with asset based community and social enterprises, through the transfer of community assets into independent social enterprises run by members of the community. It is a membership organisation for these types of social enterprise.

Spring Impact (previously known as International Centre for Social Franchising)

An advice organisation to help charities and social enterprises to scale up, replicate and grow. [Website](#) includes a replication readiness and toolkit

Social Business Trust (SBT)

Unlocking Growth – The Insider's [Guide](#) to Scaling your social enterprise or charity.

[SBT's](#) mission is to support high growth potential social enterprises to scale-up their impact. We do that by investing professional support and cash grants from our leading corporate partners in a carefully selected portfolio of social enterprises - Working with social businesses with established social businesses with revenues of c.£1 million or more that have strong growth potential

Social Firms England

Social Firms England's [Website](#) with a range of resources for social firms

Plunkett Foundation

[Plunkett Foundation](#) supports rural social enterprises, particularly co-operatives. They provide specialist support in transferring businesses such as village shops and pubs into community owned assets, often using community share issues to buy the assets.

[More than a Pub: The Community Pub Business Support Programme](#). For those communities that want to take ownership of their local pub and run it for the benefit of the community. The More than a Pub programme provides business development support to enable the community ownership of pubs in both rural and urban communities across England.

JustAct

Just Act launched by the Community Development Foundation in May 14 to help community groups get support, funding and advice. Lots of great resources found on their [Website](#).

Start up Britain

[StartUp Britain is](#) the Government's national campaign by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs. It offers inspiration, resources and guidance to help people start and grow their own business

Brexit

Government has produced a [seven-point business tool](#) to help find the exact guidance documents relevant to your business, based on factors including size, activity, industry sector to get you ready for Brexit

Sources of support for social enterprise development

Legal structures:

Bates Wells Braithwaite Get Legal [Website](#) includes lots of good information and support for those who wish to set up a social enterprise and also for existing social enterprises.

The Get Legal decision [tool](#) can start you on your journey to find the form that best fits your mission and vision. Following a short series of questions, the tool provides an indicator of an appropriate legal form and a few key aspects to help you make your decision.

SEUK's Legal [Guidance for Social Enterprises on Discretionary Business Rate Relief](#) written by Bates Wells Braithwaite

Gov.uk

CIC regulator [website](#) has a series of step by step guides, forms and on-line process also a list of registered Community Interest Companies

Charitable Incorporated Organisation was introduced in December 2012. A new form of charity that can enter into contracts and hold property. Its trustees will normally have limited or no liability for any of its debts. How to select a structure [Guide](#) available

[Charity Commission](#) have all sorts of readable guidance sheets, including information on charity trading

Co-op UK

[Select-a-structure tool](#)

[Simply Legal guide](#) – all you need to know about legal forms and organisational types for co-operatives and community owned enterprises.

LawWorks For pro bono [free] legal support, see www.lawworks.org.uk Small not for profit organisations are able to access free legal advice from The LawWorks Not-For-Profits Programme. The LawWorks can provide one off legal advice by matching up organisations with a volunteer lawyer.

[TrustLaw](#) is the Thomson Reuters Foundation's global pro bono legal programme. They connect high-impact NGOs and social enterprises working to create social and environmental change with the best **law** firms and corporate legal teams to provide them with free legal assistance.

Funding / finance:

Funding Central

[Funding Central](#): A searchable funding databases (grants and loan finance) from the National Council for Voluntary Service

Other computer-based funding directories are produced by people like www.funderfinder.org.uk , www.grantfinder.co.uk , <https://www.dsc.org.uk/funding-websites/> and www.trustfunding.org.uk/Default.aspx Your local Council for Voluntary Service or local authority funding adviser may well have one or more of these directories and might help you do a search.

NCVO

NCVO [website](#) offers tips and guidance on bringing money into your charity or voluntary organisation - from individual giving and legacies, to bidding for grants and digital fundraising.

NCVO's website includes section on [how to get funding for a social enterprise](#)

Sustainable funding: a Guide for trustees. This guide provides trustees with the information they require to feel confident about developing a 'mixed economy of funding' including generating income from training.

[Guide to Finance for Women in business](#) produced by Prowess (2012)

Community shares

Community shares [website](#) has various guides on how to secure Community Shares for your organisation

Community Shares Step-by-Step is an [online tool](#) that enables you to work towards launching a community share offer

VCSE Strength Checker

The [VCSE Strength Checker](#) is a free diagnostic tool now available to help organisations develop and improve their resilience. It has been developed by Big Lottery Fund with the Cabinet Office. It will produce a personalised report highlighting an organisation's key strengths and areas where they could be more effective.

Social Investment:

Good Finance

Good Finance [website](#) is a must visit for anyone who want to know anything about social investment. Whether you are a bit clueless about what social investment is and what it can offer your organisation to someone who is ready to find a social investor the Good Finance website can help you.

Read [7 lessons of social investment](#). pulled together for those that have done it.

The [Good Finance](#) website has lots of useful information including a diagnostic tool and case studies of organisations who have already used social investment. It also has an investor directory and some great templates to help you with your business planning as well as resources to help you measure your impact.

If you feel that your board would benefit from some support to find out more about social investment [GET INFORMED](#) has free resources and mentors who can help

Social Investment Tax Relief was also mentioned and if you'd like to learn more about this, you'll find a wealth of resources via [GET SITR](#), which is an initiative to help more charities and social enterprises use the tax incentive.

A Simple Guide to Tax Relief for Charities and Social Enterprise

This [Guide](#) provides an overview of tax reliefs for investing into charities and social enterprises can be found on Big Society Capital's website. (Published July 2018)

Some social lenders

Charity Bank: <https://charitybank.org/>

Responsible Finance <https://responsiblefinance.org.uk/>

Cooperative and Community Finance <https://coopfinance.coop/>

Foundation East www.foundationeast.org

The Social Investment Business <https://www.sibgroup.org.uk/>

Triodos Bank <https://www.triodos.co.uk/>
Unity Trust Bank www.unity.co.uk
Big Issue Invest <https://bigissueinvest.com/>

Big Society Capital

[Big Society Capital](http://www.bigsocietycapital.com) improves the lives of people in the UK by connecting social investment to charities and social enterprises. They engage with investors, fund managers, charities and social enterprises to make it easier to use social investment. With their co-investors, they have made over £1bn of new capital available to organisations with a social mission, through investments into fund managers and social banks. They have a special focus on: providing homes for people in need; supporting communities to improve lives; and early action to prevent problems.

Networks:

Social Enterprise East of England (regional) www.seee.co.uk
Essex Social Enterprise Network www.essexsocialenterprise.org.uk
Social Enterprise UK (national) www.socialenterprise.org.uk
Social Firms England <http://www.socialfirmsengland.co.uk/>

Social Impact –Useful resources:

Inspiring Impact a place for on-line impact resources: <http://inspiringimpact.org/>
Inspiring Impact supports people who work and volunteer for charities, funders, and social enterprises across the UK. They provide free online resources, peer learning networks, and grant funding, so you can plan, understand, and improve your impact

Social Account and Audit Network you can find their guide ‘Prove! Improve! Account! Thinking it Through’ plus many other useful resources and examples of other organisations social accounts www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk

Social Value UK – a wealth of information and guidance can be found on their website <http://www.socialvalueuk.org/>

Proving and improving for social enterprises –this website details information on the many tools and frameworks available for social impact measurement.
www.proveandimprove.org

New Philanthropy Capital run a series of programmes, deliver training and produce publications to support the third sector and this includes the field of social impact.
<http://www.thinknpc.org/>

New Economics Foundation (NEF) is very active in the area of social impact www.neweconomics.org

Social Investment Business (SIB) have recently developed resources covering social impact including some short to the point videos <http://www.sibgroup.org.uk/resources/how-evidence-your-social-impact>

NCVO’s Know How non-profit – various guides and resources <https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact>

Social Enterprise East of England – Consultancy and training in this area and expertise in Social Return on Investment
www.seee.co.uk

Big Society Capital (BSC) has produced an outcomes framework and other resources on social impact
<http://www.bigsocietycapital.com/what-we-do/champion/impact-tools>

Measuring the Social Impact of Community Investment: A [Guide](#) to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach

Other support for social enterprises:

signpost2 grow - Peterborough and Cambridgeshire <http://signpost2grow.co.uk/>

The Hive Enterprise Centre part of the Enterprise 4 Good group <http://www.enterprise4good.org/home.html>

The Cranfield Trust are always looking for 'projects' for their MBA-qualified volunteer consultants to work on with charitable organisations. For details about this free management consultancy go to www.cranfieldtrust.org

Inspire2Enterprise a free to access service for social enterprises providing information, specialist advice and support from start-up through initial growth and beyond <http://inspire2enterprise.org/>

Expert Impact is supporting social entrepreneurs to scale, with introductions, mentoring and advice from experts. <https://www.expertimpact.com/about-us>

Cambridge Social Ventures supports a whole range of businesses that have positive **social** and environmental impacts <https://www.jbs.cam.ac.uk/faculty-research/centres/social-innovation/cambridge-social-ventures/>

School for Social Entrepreneurs Based in London, the School for Social Entrepreneurs runs programmes for individuals wanting to become social entrepreneurs, whether alone or as part of a social enterprise. There is a fellowship of people who have been on the programme to enable them to access peer support. <https://www.the-sse.org/>

UnLtd finds, funds and supports social entrepreneurs - enterprising people with solutions that change our society for the better. For social enterprises starting and those that are scaling up. <https://www.unltd.org.uk/home-page/>

Bean Bag Café CIC offer support to equip community groups to start and successfully run sustainable community-oriented coffee bars, coffee shops and cafés. www.beanbagcafe.co.uk

Riverside Community Big Local offering support to start up in South Essex and help with marketing <http://www.riversidecommunity.org.uk/>

Anglia Ruskin University

ARU operates the 3rd Sector Futures unit that promotes and supports social enterprises, including working with SEEE to run an annual conference for social enterprises. The university runs a fully accredited distance learning programme - [Managing in a Third Sector Organisation to diploma or degree level](#) and operates a bursary scheme to support students' costs.

Councils for Voluntary Service

Some CVSs across the East offer support to new start social enterprises or voluntary organisations that are seeking to earn more income and develop social enterprise models. It is mostly the larger CVSs that are offering this support but it is worth building relationships with these agencies as they have a strong local presence and many of their resources are useful to social enterprises, such as legal structures and governance, relationships with public authorities and standard policies and practices suitable for value-led organisations.

Voluntary Sector Training (VST)

[VST](#) runs a range of training programme so for the VCSE sector in Essex

Hertfordshire Training and Development Consortium

[HTDC](#) runs a range of training programmes and workshop for the VCSE sector in Hertfordshire

Social Enterprise Accreditation:

Social Enterprise Mark

The [Social Enterprise Mark](#) was developed in consultation with social enterprises and other support bodies and enables social enterprises to acquire independent validation of their status as a social enterprise – that they earn a minimum of 50% of their income through trading and trade to deliver a social purpose. Has UK and international awards, fees vary according to the size of the applicant organisation and level of accreditation.

People like you:

If you want to learn from like-minded organisations (experts by experience) go to:

Real Tales of Earning at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/funding-finance/tools-resources/sustainable-funding-case-studies

The SEEE members listing can be found at www.seee.co.uk click on 'meet our members'

Books:

Social Enterprise: How to successfully set up and grow a social enterprise, by Heidi Fisher

Inside social enterprise: Looking to the future, by Helen Fitzhugh and Nicky Stevenson

Social Enterprise: What it is and why it Matters, by Dr Martin Price

Maximising Income Generation: Quick tips for non-profits to achieve sustainability through trading, earned income, social enterprise and commercial ventures, by John Pepin et al, Directory of Social Change.

Your chance to change the world: The No-fibbing Guide to Social Entrepreneurship by Craig Dearden-Phillips,

How to be a social entrepreneur, make money & change the world, by Robert Ashton, Capstone Publishing Ltd
www.robertashton.co.uk

The Social Entrepreneur Revolution: Doing good by making money, making money by doing good by Martin Clark (and Director of SEEE): <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Social-Entrepreneur-Revolution-Doing-making/dp/1905736428>

Hot to step out: to inspire and guide you, Craig Dearden-Phillips has pulled together the personal stories and experiences of those individuals that lead mutual or social enterprise spin outs. A free copy of this guide is available at <http://howtostepout.com>