



SELEP SOCIAL ENTERPRISE WORKING GROUP PAPER

BACKGROUND

The **SELEP Social Enterprise Working Group** is a cross sector partnership working collaboratively to promote social enterprises as significant providers of local employment and inclusive employment opportunities whilst delivering local impact.

We aim to develop the size and diversity of social enterprises by supporting social enterprises to start, sustain and scale.

In 2019, the Working Group developed the [South East Social Enterprise Prospectus](#) which outlines our seven priorities to develop social enterprise across the SELEP area:

1. Providing a wide range of business support
2. Coordinating information on the sector
3. Promoting networking opportunities
4. Engaging the procurement and commissioning agendas
5. Encouraging access to suitable finance
6. Improving promotion of the sector
7. Measuring social impact

SELEP's Economic Recovery & Renewal Strategy further emphasises the importance of social enterprises in supporting business resilience & growth, delivering a skilled workforce, supporting equality and promoting greater resilience in our places.

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

- Social Enterprises have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic disruption over 2020-21, but remain critical drivers of local economic recovery.
- There has been significant work by social enterprises to innovatively adapt delivery of services in line with pandemic restrictions.
- Collaboration has increased during the pandemic, with strengthened and new partnerships formed by social enterprises coalescing around a common purpose.
- However, there has been a significant impact on finances, with some short-term funding at the height of the crisis but increasing concerns about long-term financial stability.

Despite these challenges, social enterprises have played an important role in addressing a range of issues that have arisen or been exacerbated during the pandemic including access to essential supplies, social isolation, mental & physical wellbeing, childcare, economic hardship or insecurity, housing issues, and social inequality.

Given the important role that social enterprises have played throughout the pandemic, it is critical that this sector is supported to emerge stronger from the economic crisis.

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ACCESS TO SUPPORT

There are a significant number of active and planned funds to promote economic recovery and growth. We want to ensure that we can be part of these opportunities:

- As unique business models we want any funds made available to ensure they include us too.
- There should be funding made available that specifically targets start-ups.
- Funders should broaden their horizons and consider where the specific gaps are for particular activities and organisations.
- Supply chain contract value should embed within it the wider impacts such as the non-financial impact for local communities and consider social value in their analysis.
- Funding structures should be inclusive of smaller organisations to take account of such things as trading size and costs associated with bidding.
- As a group of social entrepreneurs we are proud of our diversity and the communities we represent. We ask that you remember us as we seek funding networks and opportunities.

CALL TO ACTION: COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

Social enterprises are based in the heart of local communities and will be critical to ensuring we deliver a Faster, Smarter, and more Sustainable economy.

We are calling for an improved, joined-up strategy for funding that has increased emphasis on local jobs and community impact.

In 2021-22 the Social Enterprise Working Group will be:

- Delivering through partners the successful Sector Support Fund proposal supporting the sustainability of social enterprises across the SELEP region.
- Engaging with Central Government and local authorities to ensure future funding criteria and priorities include the development of support for Social Enterprise start-ups and to sustain and expand established social enterprises.
- Building on the pilot work of the Sector Support Fund and local initiatives to pro-actively secure funding and develop a pipeline of potential funding.
- Collaborating with other LEP social enterprise networks to promote support for social enterprise start up and sustainability.
- Creating opportunities for training and business development; acknowledgement of social and community value; business space and procurement potential for social enterprises.
- Building the mutual support for social enterprises across the SELEP area.

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