# Start It Award criteria and process

Firstport supports individuals with great business ideas that benefit people, communities and the environment. We provide a full package of support that includes seed funding, business advice and practical resources.

Our Start It awards are for individuals with innovative business ideas which address social, environmental and/or community issues. If you have an idea but need to test it to help get it off the ground, you can apply for up to £5,000 of start up costs to pilot your idea.

**Social Entrepreneurs Fund**

Since 2009, the Scottish Government's Social Entrepreneurs Fund has made 739 awards and distributed £5.7 million across Scotland. SEF looks for enterprising individuals that are looking to create a long-term, sustainable solution to a social issue.

# Assessment Criteria

When we assess your application, we will look at the following factors:

**Individual** – Do you have the drive, passion and motivation to succeed? What relevant skills and experience do you have?

**Business** – Do you have a business model that shows how you can make money from your idea? Or will you rely mainly on grant funding to sustain your idea? Do you know who your customers and competitors are?

**Social** – Who will benefit and what difference will your idea make? What need have you identified and will your idea meet this need?

To further understand how we will assess your application, please see the following grid. This grid highlights how we will grade your application on a high, medium or low basis:

| | HIGH | MEDIUM | LOW |
|---|---|---|---|
| **INDIVIDUAL** | ▪ High energy/motivation<br>▪ Some level of personal sacrifice made (financial or time) to develop idea<br>▪ Strong personal reasons<br>▪ Previous experience of social enterprise<br>▪ Clear vision<br>▪ Has several quotes for costs | ▪ Has already sought advice or contacted/researched similar projects<br>▪ Has spent some time working to develop idea<br>▪ Track record in being involved in social/community projects<br>▪ Has researched costs | ▪ Primarily looking for a job for themselves<br>▪ Works in isolation<br>▪ Poor awareness of market in which they plan to operate<br>▪ Lack of self awareness - idea at very early stage, no clear planning in place<br>▪ Has guessed at costs<br>▪ Social motivation not clear or doesn't exist<br>▪ Skills/experience not particularly relevant – needs to undergo further |

| | | | training or study before can get started |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BUSINESS POTENTIAL** | ▪ Clearly identified customer base<br>▪ Some indication of potential interest from paying customers<br>▪ Aware of competitors<br>▪ Has support network/partners in place<br>▪ Has clear achievable milestones as to what will be achieved with award<br>▪ Can identify clear income streams, preferably more than one and likely to know pricing<br>▪ Clearly understands importance of costs | ▪ Has identified but not yet spoken to potential customers<br>▪ Has idea of what will be achieved but no specific milestones, targets or tasks identified<br>▪ Some level of business awareness<br>▪ Can identify possible income streams<br>▪ Has had initial conversations with potential partners | ▪ No idea who paying customers might be<br>▪ *Project/idea will be wholly/mainly grant dependent*<br>▪ No grasp of costs<br>▪ No clear idea what hopes to achieve with award<br>▪ Has targets but these are not achievable within resources available<br>▪ Proposal focuses on need itself |
| **SOCIAL IMPACT** | ▪ Clear idea of social need (from personal experience or knowledge)<br>▪ Can evidence the need (stats/consultation)<br>▪ Potential for replication/expansion<br>▪ Targets hard to fund work/beneficiaries<br>▪ Benefits highly disadvantaged area<br>▪ Can quantify impact (e.g. number of training / volunteering opportunities) | ▪ Addresses gap in services<br>▪ States/describes the need<br>▪ Not profit distributing | ▪ Primary benefit is to applicant<br>▪ Doesn't target social disadvantaged or environmental problems<br>▪ Low numbers of beneficiaries in comparison cost<br>▪ Benefits easy to fund work/beneficiaries<br>▪ No clear social benefits |

# Application process at a glance:

**You read the Guidance Notes**
- We encourage you to complete our quiz on the website to make sure you are eligible and that Start It is the most suitable programme for you
- Take a look at our funding criteria and priorities to check how suitable your idea is to our funding
- Take a look at our case studies to get an idea of the kind of ideas we support
- Remember you can access free business advice / workshops should you require this before applying for funding

**You submit your Application**
- Please submit your application electronically by following the link on our website.
- We currently have a turnaround time of around 12 weeks from the day you submit a fully completed application until the day we give you a decision (We do not process incomplete applications so please double check it before your submit it!)

**We assess your Application**
- We will confirm receipt of your application via email
- We may contact you to ask further information if we feel we need it to fully assess your idea, however this is not always necessary.
- We look at three main criteria when assessing your application - **1.** Your experience and motivation, **2.** The social/environmental benefit of your idea, **3.** Your business model

**We reach a Decision**
- If your idea is successful in receiving funding, we will send out a welcome pack with your contract and payment information, to be returned in order for the first payment to be made.
- If your idea is unsuccessful, we will send you a feedback letter with the reasons as to why you were not funded on that occassion. You are welcome to reapply.

**You return your Paperwork**
- We can only process your award once we receive all your paperwork and two references
- When all paperwork is returned, you should expect to receive the first instalment of your award within four weeks of being awarded