



ECONOMIC IMPACT:

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS FUND
AND LAUNCHME

About this report

In 2024, two of our flagship programmes, the Social Entrepreneurs Fund (SEF) and LaunchMe, marked their 15th and 10th anniversary, respectively. Funded by the Scottish Government, the programmes have enabled nascent social enterprises to start and grow, get investment-ready, and create social impact in sustainable and innovative ways.

As we look to the future of these programmes, understanding the economic impact and effectiveness of the social enterprises they support is crucial. We must identify what works – and what needs to change – to enable them to play an even greater role in building a fair and inclusive economy.

We commissioned Social Value Lab (SVL) to assess the economic impact of SEF and LaunchMe. This publication presents the key findings of SVL's evaluation report, covering the period of 2021–2024 for SEF and 2020–2024 for LaunchMe.



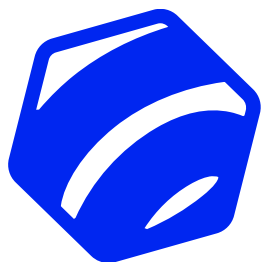
About the programmes



The Social Entrepreneurs Fund provides small grants to individuals testing new ideas and start-up social enterprises building their trading, as well as entry level social investment for early-stage growth. It launched in 2009, radically reshaping and strengthening support available to Scotland's social entrepreneurs. The portfolio of awards (Pounds for Purpose, Start It, Build It, Step Up) offers a unique pipeline of support and funding from idea through to investment.



LaunchMe started in 2014 as Scotland's first accelerator programme for ambitious social entrepreneurs and community organisations, supporting early-stage social enterprises to raise social investment to scale. The programme underwent a significant redesign in 2022, moving from an annual structured, cohort-based support programme to a model of flexible, bespoke support year-round while maintaining the benefits of peer support through regular curated peer sessions and a closed online network.



The Economic Contribution of



**Social
Entrepreneurs
Fund**



340

awards made between 2021 – 2024

worth

£4.2 Million

111.5

JOB CREATION

jobs created by **82** social enterprises supported by **Build It** within the last **3** years.

The programme successfully engaged diverse applicants, with **63%** women, **44%** from SIMD 1–5, **28%** from ethnic minority communities, and **28%** rural-based enterprises.

REACH

63%

202

SCALE

new social enterprises supported.
27 of those awards were early-stage loan finance through the Boost It (now Step Up) programme.

IMPACT

SEF funding was critical for early-stage business survival and growth, boosting confidence among entrepreneurs and enabling them to scale.

Total increase in investment for supported organisations

£1,319,697

Return on Investment (ROI)

For every **£1** invested in SEF, there is a return of **£2.14**, so the total ROI delivered per £1 invested is **£3.14** (£1 original investment + £2.14 return).

According to SVL's calculations, the financial return of the programme is

£11,455,290

What social entrepreneurs say

"The funding is essential. If we hadn't got that during year two, we wouldn't have been able to push on with (the social enterprise). We could see we had lots of potential, but we couldn't sustain it while working full-time. Build It allowed us to focus on the business we were creating and that really helped us to push on."

The Economic Contribution of



30

SCALE

Social enterprises secured investment through LaunchMe, facilitating business growth, financial resilience, and job creation, between 2020 and 2024

The total number of additional FTE roles added by supported organisations was

JOBS

64.5

The total estimated additional turnover generated by supported organisations was

£1,401,398.50

and the total estimated additional investment leveraged by supported organisations was

£5,028,582

According to SVL's calculations, the financial return of the programme is

£13,277,959

IMPACT

Participants gained **cashflow management, governance, and investment-readiness skills**. The strong peer support networks facilitated by the programme increased confidence and encouraged knowledge-sharing.

Return on Investment (ROI)

For every **£1** invested in LaunchMe, there is a return of **£5.20** so the total ROI delivered per £1 investment is **£6.20** (£1 original investment + £5.20 return).

What social entrepreneurs say

"LaunchMe helped us kind of prepare for (social) investment. I don't think I would have applied for or even thought about applying for £85,000 before the LaunchMe programme".



What's Next?

The report finds that SEF and LaunchMe have delivered strong economic returns, effectively promoting financial sustainability, job creation, and investment. It also outlines recommendations to enhance the quality and impact of these programmes.

It highlights the critical role of Firstport and similar organisations in addressing the unique challenges social enterprises face, such as balancing purpose with performance, and reinvesting profits to achieve social goals. Social enterprises fill service gaps, strengthen communities, and tackle pressing issues. And they do all this by undertaking enterprising activities that generate income.

This dual focus on social mission and financial sustainability sets social enterprise apart and requires tailored, specialist support that reflects their complexity and ambition.

While the findings are encouraging, being fit for purpose today is not enough. The world is changing and the pathways and support models needed for tomorrow's social entrepreneurs are unlikely to be what they are now. We must consider what needs to change to ensure policy, funding, and support systems are fit to the future.

We look forward to engaging with the Scottish Government and stakeholders across the entrepreneurial ecosystem to design and iterate programmes that meet not only today's needs, but that unlock the potential of social enterprises to drive long-term, systemic change across Scotland.



Firstport

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