

Social Innovation Challenge: Eradicating child poverty / Growing the economy / Tackling the climate emergency / Ensuring high-quality and sustainable public services

Application guidance

This document aims to help you prepare your Social Innovation Challenge application.

Please read it carefully when drafting your application. It explains the steps you need to take to apply and offers further pointers on each question in the **online application form**.

If you have any questions that have not been answered here, get in touch with us at info@firstport.org.uk.

Overview

The Social Innovation Challenge (**SIC**) is a grant-funding and support programme that seeks innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges of our times. The programme is currently focused on addressing the following four themes:

- **Eradicating child poverty:** *innovative ideas which help the families of children living in deep poverty increase their long-term wellbeing and economic resilience.*
- **Growing the economy:** *projects providing innovative routes to meaningful employment for individuals facing significant barriers (such as disability, stigma or discrimination).*
- **Tackling the climate emergency:** *projects proposing innovative ways of reducing reliance on fossil fuels or delivering regenerative environmental solutions (such as increasing biodiversity, improving soil health or addressing water pollution).*
- **Ensuring high quality and sustainable public services:** *ideas that alleviate pressure on essential services by offering support to those who need it most, through innovative means.*

It is essential that your proposed solution fits under one of the themes above and is owned by you, your enterprise or your group.

How to apply

The online application form will become available on our Firstport Community portal once applications open. This is a straightforward form and it will already contain the information you gave us at the Expression of Interest stage. It will contain eight sections:

- 1) **About you:** Basic information about the lead applicant, plus confirmation that you consent to us processing your data and that you meet the eligibility criteria.
- 2) **Your idea:** You will be asked for a very short summary of your idea.
- 3) **Organisation setup:** If you are already incorporated, we will ask you how your social enterprise is set up. If you are not yet registered, we will ask how you intend to set up your enterprise.
- 4) **Expenditure:** How would you spend the £30,000 grant?
- 5) **Equal opportunities:** This section will be pre-populated if you already filled it in at Expression of Interest stage.
- 6) **Supporting documents:** upload your 'Supporting Documentation', made up of the following documents:
 - a) SIC Proposal
 - b) SIC Cashflow
 - c) (If applicable) Annual accounts

When completing your form online, the system will automatically log you out after 2 hours of inactivity. To avoid losing your work, make sure you click **Pause** or **Submit** before this time runs out.

Please ensure you submit your application before the deadline, as noted on our [website](#), as late applications will not be accepted.

How your information will be used

- **Sections 1-4 and section 6** will be used by the shortlisting panel to score your application. As this is a very competitive programme, only the strongest applications (up to 3) will be shortlisted and invited to pitch to the final decision-making award panel.
- **Section 5** (Equal opportunities) will only be used for statistical and monitoring purposes. This information will not be used for assessment.

Information required in the online form

Section 1: About you

This is where you fill out some basic details for the lead contact for this application: name, contact details, date of birth, address.

If you have any accessibility requirements, please let us know. Firstport aims to make the assessment process as accessible as possible, so it's important for us to know if and how we can help.

We will also ask you to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria, that you are happy with how we will use your information and that you understand what will happen next.

Section 2: Your idea

Social enterprise name: If you don't have a name for the proposed enterprise/solution, that's ok. Please follow the instructions in the question description.

Brief introduction: Keep the summary of your idea short and factual. Present a clear picture of what you would like your enterprise to accomplish. The following points should be covered, but very concisely:

- What challenge your solution addresses
- What services/products it will offer
- How it will generate income
- How it will generate social impact

If your idea is shortlisted, we will use this summary to promote your project in a blog announcing the SIC shortlist. You should only include information you would be happy to share publicly.

Sector: Your solution may work across sectors, but there should be a main sector which fits the solution in the drop-down list. If there isn't, please select the closest fit.

Beneficiary location: Some solutions are carried out in one specific local region; others work across a wider area. If your project will not be restricted to a specific place, please select 'Scotland Wide'.

Primary social impact: Your solution may also be delivering impact against several categories, so please select the closest fit.

Section 3: Organisation details

For the SIC, we don't require you to have already set up a company or charity to carry out your project. However, if you have, please let us know the legal structure and the charity/company number if applicable. You can find this number on [OSCR](#) (charities), [Companies House](#) (companies) or the [Mutuals Public Register](#) (mutual societies).

Please remember that the grant can only be released to incorporated and asset-locked social enterprises operating in Scotland. This means that you must either:

- already have a social enterprise structure in place; or
- have clear plans (evidenced in your application) to incorporate as a social enterprise. If this is the case, we will support you through the incorporation process before we pay out the award.

Applications linked to ineligible legal structures (such as companies limited by shares and / or lacking a suitable asset lock) may be considered ineligible.

If you would like more information about this, please contact us to discuss it further.

Section 4: Expenditure

This request will form the basis of your award if you are successful.

What we are looking for here is a clear breakdown of **costs to be covered by this grant**.

Your expenditure should add up to a maximum of £30,000.

The main SIC prize is £30,000, to be spent over 24 months.

Eligible costs: The SIC grant can be used for most start-up and development costs. The kind of costs we can cover are wide-ranging, but we will want to see that the grant request reflects a mature understanding of business needs.

Typical examples of costs we can cover include:

- Legal fees for setting up a legal entity for the enterprise, and/or registration as a charity or community interest company.
- Intellectual property or trademark applications.
- Research and development.
- Salaries, which must abide by Real Living Wage and Fair Work First standards.
- Rent.
- Website, branding, logo design.
- Marketing materials and stationery.
- Insurance.
- Key equipment or digital infrastructure necessary for the delivery of services.
 - Only laptops to a maximum of £600 can be funded, if you can demonstrate that it is an essential need. If you require a higher specification laptop for design work or other similar purposes, a contribution to the cost of the laptop may be considered eligible, up to a maximum of £600.

Costs we cannot cover (ineligible items)

- Consultancy work on business plans, market research or feasibility studies with no clear practical outcomes. If you need support with any of these aspects, our business support colleagues may be able to provide further advice and assistance:
www.firstport.org.uk/business-support.
- Overseas travel.
- Long term training or academic qualifications.
- Expenses already incurred and paid for.

Section 5: Equal opportunities

We only use equal opportunities information for statistical purposes, and it will not form part of your application assessment.

Section 6: Supporting Documents

Here you will be asked to upload the two documents that will form the main part of your application: the completed SIC Proposal form and your Cashflow projections document. Our shortlisting panel will primarily look at these two documents to understand how well your idea meets the SIC brief. There is further guidance on how to fill in these two documents.

If you are an established organisation, we also ask that you provide your latest annual accounts. This will be used to better understand your current financial position and how the SIC grant fits in. Please only provide these in a PDF format.

Once you have completed all the information above and attached your supporting documents, you should be ready to submit.

Please make sure you are happy with the information you provided before you click 'submit' on the submission page.

Please note:

We are unable to contact applicants about incomplete applications or missing documents ahead of the assessment process. It is your responsibility to ensure you submit a complete application, with all the required supporting documents. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible.

We are unable to accept late applications, so please ensure you submit your application before the deadline. If you're having issues submitting your application, please email us at info@firstport.org.uk or give us a call on 0131 564 0331.

What happens next?

You should receive an email confirming we have received your application. You will also be able to see a copy of your application on the Firstport Communities portal, by taking the following steps:

- Go to the 'My account' tab
- Click on 'Contact details'
- Select your name
- Click on 'Applications'

The application will then go through our initial assessment process, where it will be reviewed by our shortlisting panel.

If your application is not shortlisted, we will notify you by email and provide you with feedback as to why it wasn't shortlisted. If appropriate, we might encourage you to work with our business support team to address the feedback with a view to submitting a further application to an alternative fund. Where possible, we will always try to suggest other avenues of support.

If your application is shortlisted, we will invite you to attend two preparatory sessions: **Practice Your Pitch** and **Cashflow Challenge**. Both sessions will take place over Microsoft Teams.

- **Practice Your Pitch** is a session with a Relationship Manager where you can review your proposed pitch, ask questions about the format of the panel and pitching process, and review any feedback you may have received from the shortlisting panel.
- **Cashflow Challenge** is a session with a Business Advisor to review and improve your cashflow projections, as well as review any questions you may receive from the panel about the finances of the enterprise.

The aim of both sessions is to make the pitching experience less daunting, by making you as prepared as possible. If you have questions or concerns, both the Relationship Manager and Business Advisor will be happy to address them.

Pitching documents:

If you are shortlisted, we will ask you to prepare a 3-page '**Pitch and summary**' document based on your application. This will be shared with the Award Panel, alongside your **Cashflow projections**.

Pitching to the award panel:

The Pitch will take place online and the date will be confirmed in advance. Again, if you have accessibility requirements, please let us know. The pitch will take no longer than 45 minutes in total. You will speak about your solution (10 minutes), followed by questions from the judging panel (35 minutes) about your idea and your cashflow projections.

After the panel, all shortlisted applicants will be notified of the decision by phone with a follow-up email.

Any Questions?

If you have any queries at all or would like to speak to us before submitting an application, please give us a call on 0131 564 0331 or reach out to your allocated Relationship Manager. Good luck!

Data protection

Firstport is committed to respecting your privacy and protecting your personal data.

We will keep the information provided within your application on file for a period of seven years. It will be permanently deleted after the publication of Firstport annual accounts. This is for accounting purposes and in line with HMRC requirements.

Submitting an application to the Social Innovation Competition is acknowledgement that you understand and accept our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) set out in our Privacy Policy.