

Social Economy West Accelerator Programme 2025-2026

Funded by West of England Combined Authority, delivered by
the School for Social Entrepreneurs

Guidance Notes for Applicants



How do you survive in a time when grants are limited?



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UK Government

WEST MAYORAL
OF ENGLAND COMBINED
AUTHORITY

**Business
West**



school for
social
entrepreneurs



Contents

About the Social Economy West Accelerator Programme	2
Accessibility and our commitment to inclusion	3
The learning programme.....	4
Who should apply for this programme?	6
Making an application	6
Support with applying	7
FAQs.....	7

About the Social Economy West Accelerator Programme

A West of England Mayoral Combined Authority initiative, Social Economy West will support and grow the social economy in the Bristol and West of England region, helping organisations to overcome increasing demand amid the cost-of-living crisis.

As part of this initiative, the School for Social Entrepreneurs are offering a 9-month Accelerator Learning Programme designed for leaders of purpose-led organisations to enhance business strategy, scale impact and foster peer collaboration in the West of England.

SSE was founded in 1997 by Sir Michael Young. We work with around 1000 social enterprises a year, helping leaders to start, scale and strengthen organisations that make a positive difference. But we're not a traditional school. Learning with SSE is inspiring, action-based and accessible - no textbooks. [The School for Social Entrepreneurs \(the-sse.org\)](https://www.the-sse.org)

You must apply online by 12 pm, Monday 13th October 2025

Apply via the online form which can be found at the bottom of this webpage (please note, Business West manage all applications):

[Social Economy West | Business West - Accelerator Programme](#)

Develop skills to:



Diversify your income streams.



Create a resilient, growing organisation.



Adapt to changes in external environments.



Reduce your carbon footprint & drive sustainable growth.



Build and benefit from new networks.



Lead an effective team.

Our 9-month learning programme will help you to unlock the potential of your purpose-led organisation. Our experienced facilitator will help you gain insights into business strategy, scaling, leadership, marketing etc.

Find out more

To find out more, read these guidance notes, or join an **Online Information Session** (these sessions will be delivered using Zoom:

1 - 2 pm Monday 15th September 2025 [To book a place, click here](#)

5.45 - 6.45 pm Tuesday 16th September 2025. [To book a place, click here](#)

If you have specific queries, please email the programme manager, Felicity Day felicity.day@sse.org.uk

Accessibility and our commitment to inclusion

If this document is formatted in a way that is not accessible to you and/or if you would like support to submit your application then please email felicity.day@sse.org.uk so that we can aim to meet your access needs in the best way possible.

We recognise that discrimination of all sorts infiltrates every part of our society, and we are working hard to counter that wherever we find it. We actively encourage applications from organisations led by women, racially minoritised communities, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, people with lived experiences and leaders working in areas of multiple deprivation. We also want to ensure

geographic representation from across England.

The learning programme

SSE's learning programmes are very different to traditional teaching and no educational qualifications are needed to join. Expect to try new approaches and learn through doing. The programme will push, challenge and support you. You will:

- **Learn from experts, leaders and social entrepreneurs** who will speak openly about the realities of running an organisation so you can learn from their experiences.
- **Build a support network.** You will be in a cohort of 16-18 people who will support and learn from each other.
- **Join an Peer Coaching Group** to develop your own solutions to challenges you face.
- **Tailored business development:** Receive expert advice through business development support panels and action clinics designed to help you overcome challenges and seize growth opportunities

This FREE learning programme takes place over 9 months, through a blend of online and in-person learning and bespoke one-to-one support. It includes:

- 7 study days - with a focus on scaling, leadership and business development
- Opportunities to network with your peers to support learning and reflection
- Business development panels and Action clinics specifically for you and your business.
- 4 online Peer Coaching sessions designed to support your resilience and wellbeing.

Our expert facilitators are able to flex learning with the aim of ensuring everyone's needs are met, as well as creating a great group dynamic. Some of the topics we are likely to cover are:

- Financial resilience and sustainability
- Income stream development
- Product and service development
- Creating an innovation plan for business
- Leadership
- Marketing and social media
- Confidence-building, adaptability and emotional resourcefulness
- Developing your impact and purpose.

- Building your networks

Location

The learning program will consist of 4 in-person days held in the West of England and 3 online days conducted via Zoom. If your organisation provides a learning space we could use, please let us know. We like to support local venues where possible.

Dates

The programme dates are below:

Type	In-person or Online	Date	Timings
Learning Day 1	In-person	Wed 19 Nov 25	10:00 - 16:00
Learning Day 2	In-person	Thurs 20 Nov 25	10:00 - 16:00
1:1 Action Clinic 1hr per student	Online	Thurs 27, Fri 28 Nov & Mon 1, Tues 2, Wed 3, Thurs 4 and Fri 5 Dec	1hr per student pre-booked
Learning Day 3 Peer Coaching	Online	Peer Pod 1: Tues 13 Jan	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer Pod 2: Thurs 15 Jan	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer Pod 3: Fri 16 Jan	09:30 - 13:00
Learning Day 4	Online	Wed 28 Jan 26	09:30 - 13:00
Learning Day 5	In-person	Wed 25 Feb 26	10:00 - 16:00
Learning Day 6 Peer Coaching	Online	Peer Pod 1: Tues 17 March	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer pod 2: Wed 18 March	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer Pod 3: Thurs 19 March	09:30 - 13:00
Business Development Support Panels	Online	Thurs 26, Fri 27, Tues 31 March & Wed 1 April	1hr per student
Learning Day 7 Peer Coaching	Online	Peer Pod 1: Tues 21 April	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer pod 2: Wed 22 April	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer Pod 3: Thurs 23 April	09:30 - 13:00
Learning Day 8	Online	Wed 6 May 26	09:30 - 13:00
Learning Day 9	Online	Wed 3 June 26	09:30 - 13:00

Learning Day 10 Peer Coaching	Online	Peer Pod 1: Tues 23 June	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer pod 2: Wed 24 June	09:30 - 13:00
	Online	Peer Pod 3: Thurs 25 June	09:30 - 13:00
Learning Day 11	In-person	Wed 15 July 26	10:00 - 16:00

Who should apply for this programme?

1. Do you operate in the West of England?

(Bristol, Bath and Northeast Somerset (BANES) and South Gloucestershire).

This programme is specifically for purpose-led organisations who are supporting people within the West of England.

2. Are you focused on social and/or environmental impact?

We are looking for purpose-led organisations that are focused on social impact, sustainability or mission-driven objectives and you are looking for opportunities to scale your impact and improve operational activities.

3. Do you hold strategic oversight within the organisation?

You must be a leader of your social enterprise or project, with strategic control, usually a founder or part of the leadership team. You must agree to attend the full learning programme, as peer networking and group dynamics is key to the programme's success. This is a great opportunity to develop as a leader.

4. Your organisation must:

- Have been trading for at least 3 years.
- Have at least 3 members of staff in your team (this can be PAYE or regular freelance/contractors).

Making an application

You must apply online by **12 pm, Monday 13th October 2025**

Apply via the online form which can be found at the bottom of this webpage (please note, Business West manage all applications):

[Social Economy West | Business West - Accelerator Programme](#)

Interview - If you are shortlisted, we will invite you to meet with our facilitator to find out more about you and your organisation so we can tailor the learning programme to suit you and your needs. This will take place in mid-October.

Decision - We aim to make a final decision on places for the programme by the end of October and you will be informed as soon as possible. The programme begins on 19th November. See the programme dates above for more details.

Support with applying

Online Information Sessions: To find out more about the programme, help you understand the criteria and how to apply.

1 - 2 pm Monday 15th September 2025 [To book a place, click here](#)

5.45 - 6.45 pm Tuesday 16th September 2025. [To book a place, click here](#)

One-to-one support: If you have difficulty filling in forms because of dyslexia, language or disability, or need one-to-one advice about applying. Please contact the programme manager, Felicity Day felicity.dav@sse.org.uk who will be able to support.

FAQs

1. What if I have particular needs, which may prevent me from fully taking part in the learning programme?

We are keen to enable people with disabilities and other access issues, to join our programmes. There is a separate small fund held by SSE to enable students who have particular needs to access the programme. This will be agreed on an individual basis. If you have specific needs and are concerned about this, please contact felicity.dav@sse.org.uk to discuss.

2. Can I apply if I have already been on an SSE programme?

You are welcome to apply if you have previously had training and support from SSE. However, we will not be accepting applications from anyone who will be on another programme with SSE that lasts more than 6 months and continues beyond February 2025.