

Scale Up Grant

Guidance for Applicants



Introduction

This is a grant for an established social enterprise or entrepreneur to scale up and/or develop their enterprise. The grant amount is up to €10,000.

Who can apply?

You can apply if your social enterprise idea is already running and has been trading. Successful Scale Up applicants can usually demonstrate a strong track record of both income generation and measurable social impact.

Section One: Eligibility Checklist

Applications must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The applicant is aged 16 or over.
- The enterprise operates primarily for the benefit of people or communities in Republic of Ireland.
- The enterprise and its activities do not involve political campaigning or the advancement of religion.
- The enterprise is an independent organisation and not the project or subsidiary of an existing body.
- If it is not completely independent (for example if it has a parent company) – you must give details of this. If you do (or will) receive funding from that parent company, you must give us as much detail about this as possible.
- The enterprise provides direct social impact to individuals, communities, and/or the environment.
- The enterprise has a track record of income generation and social impact.
- Profits from the enterprise are reinvested in the business and its social aims. No assets or uncapped dividends are transferred out of the organisation to private individuals or bodies.

If the application does not meet these criteria, it will be ineligible for Oakfield Trust funding.

If you have any questions about eligibility that aren't answered below, please contact us via email at gebbs@oakfieldtrust.ie or via phone on 086 1279 362.

Eligibility FAQs

Q: My enterprise will be trading across the whole of Ireland. Is this eligible?

There are no geographical restrictions on trading. However, we would prefer the majority of the social impact must be delivered in Ireland. This means that the majority of people who will benefit from the good work of the enterprise must live in Ireland.

Q: I need funding for more than one salary. Can this be covered?

Scale Up can cover up to €5,000 for a single salary and a further €5,000 for additional essential costs. It is at the discretion of Oakfield Trust whether we could cover another salary.

Q: What is direct social impact?

When a social enterprise carries out work or provides services itself for the good of its beneficiaries (this could be individuals, a community, or even the environment) we define this as direct social impact. On the other hand, when a social enterprise provides services to other **organisations**, who then go on to do the work with beneficiaries, this would be defined as indirect social impact.

For example: an enterprise providing counselling services to a vulnerable group would be seen as direct social impact; an enterprise providing counselling training to a charity who then provides this counselling to their beneficiaries would be seen as indirect social impact.

Q: My enterprise is still relatively new. How much evidence of income generation and social impact is required?

We would usually expect to see a track record of around a year at least, especially if the enterprise has a seasonal business model. However, this is assessed on a case-by-case basis, and some successful Scale Up applicants have been awarded based on potential and proof of concept with a shorter track record of trading and social impact.

Q: I am a sole trader/registered as a private company limited by shares. Am I eligible for Scale Up funding?

We may give priority to applications where the intended legal structure reflects a stronger commitment to social enterprise principles – i.e. where there is a clear intention to reinvest profits back into the organisation and its social aims. The sole trader/private company limited by shares model is more common in traditional commercial organisations as it allows profits and assets to be distributed externally to private individuals or bodies.

Competition for Scale Up funding may be tough, and most of the applications we receive relate to enterprises with legal structures which prevent assets or profits being used for any other purpose than furthering social impact. For this reason, sole traders and private companies are highly unlikely to be supported at this level.

We would always strongly encourage applicants to base their choice of legal structure on what is best for the business, as opposed to being influenced by eligibility criteria for any

particular funding stream – via Oakfield Trust or any other source. Please contact us if you would like further advice on this subject.

Section Two: About You

This is where you fill out your basic contact details.

If you have any accessibility requirements, please tick the box. Oakfield Trust endeavour to make the assessment process as accessible as possible, so it's important for us to know if and how we can help.

If you are developing the idea with someone else, please give further details.

Section Three: Your Social Enterprise

Please provide us with the name of your enterprise and the legal structure.

Please also provide us with your charity or company number. You can find this number on the [Charities Register](#) (charities) or the [CRO](#) (companies).

Some enterprises work across multiple sectors, but there should be a main sector which fits the enterprise in the drop-down list. If there isn't, please select the closest fit.

As above, some enterprises provide social impact across a range of geographical areas. If your beneficiary group is not localised, please select 'Ireland Wide'.

Introduction

The introduction to your enterprise should be brief and factual. The following points should be covered:

- What products/services the enterprise offers.
- How the enterprise generates income.
- How the enterprise generates social impact.

How long has your enterprise been trading?

If you have been trading since incorporation, enter the number of years and months here. If you haven't been trading that long, let us know.

How much has your enterprise generated to date?

This should be your combined income to date. If you don't have this figure, then the last year's annual income will do.

How much of this income was grant funding?

This should be the amount of income that came from grant funding.

Please tell us about how your enterprise generates income and the social impact to date.

Where **Introduction** presented an overview of the enterprise, this question is about detailing the track record to date. Briefly outline the following:

- Products/services offered by the enterprise.
- How these products/services generated income to date.
- The social impact delivered by the enterprise.
- How much social impact (and in what form) has been delivered to date.

Supporting Documents

We require additional supporting documents as part of the Scale Up application. These documents are vital for assessment, so it is important they meet our requirements. Please read the following guidance carefully before submitting your supporting documents.

Business Plan

Your business plan must be submitted as a **Word document** or **PDF**.

It must not exceed 6 sides of A4.

We appreciate that business plans come in all shapes and sizes, but we strongly recommend you use the headings and associated guidance below to ensure you cover all the information we need to assess your application.

Section 1 – Vision

Provide a concise statement of your vision/ultimate goal for the enterprise. Try to present a clear picture of what you would like your enterprise to accomplish. This should act as the foundation for all your strategic planning and be reflected in your Mission and Objectives (see: **Section 4**).

Section 2 – Background

Provide an overview of your enterprise, briefly addressing the following points:

- **An outline of the social problem you are tackling.**
- **Brief information on your beneficiaries.** These are the people you are trying to help and who are affected by the social problem detailed above.? How many people have you helped so far?
- **Evidence that your beneficiaries' needs are unmet.** - your own research, reports from agencies, government stats, and demand for your existing services as evidence.

- **A summary of the activities you have delivered so far.** Successes and milestones, both in terms of delivering social impact and developing your income streams.
- **A summary of how a Scale Up award would allow you to expand on what you already do.**

The other sections of the business plan will provide you with the opportunity to expand and provide more detail, so this section is for overview purposes only.

Section 3 – Leadership

Provide details about yourself and other key people involved in your enterprise. You should include information about:

- **Your relevant skills and experience.**
- **The skills and experience of any other key people involved in your enterprise.** Board members, mentors or key supporters, as well as front-line service delivery.
- **Key partnerships and external support.** Any connections you have made with individuals and bodies that will be important to its continued success.

Section 4 – Mission and Objectives

Your mission statement should be a concise summary of your overall aims. It should outline why you exist, capture the soul of the organisation, inspire change and stimulate progress. For example:

Mission

- To improve the lives of the children who use the centre through:
 - o Improving the parenting skills of the parents using the centre
 - o Increasing children's self-esteem
 - o Helping parents give each other support

The objectives are the practical activities that you use to achieve your overall aim. For example:

Objectives

- Objective 1: to provide workshops, information and advice on parenting skills.
- Objective 2: to provide opportunities for play, drama, and dance.
- Objective 3: to run a drop-in centre with a play area.
- Objective 4: to organise outings for parents.

Both your Mission and your Objectives should tie into your vision statement in **Section 1**.

Section 5 – Products and/or Services

Provide details about the products and/or services your enterprise offers. These should relate to the Mission and Objectives outlined in **Section 4**.

- Be clear about which products/services you are already offering.
- Any new products/services you will offer in the event of a successful application.
- New targets you will set in the event of a successful Scale Up application.

Section 6 – Operations

The operations section tells us about staff, premises and other resources required for your enterprise. It should also give us an overview of your plans for the next year and individual responsibilities.

- **Staff.** Briefly outline the number of staff required (including any existing employees), job remits, and salary requirements.
- **Resources.** For example premises, vehicles, furniture, and IT equipment. Tell us about the resources you already have that will help you deliver your products/services, as well as any additional resources you require.
- **Time plan.** What is your timetable for the next 12 months? Tell us briefly your key aims or milestones over this period and when you would expect to achieve them. These should relate to objectives as detailed in **Section 4**.

It is important that **Section 5** (Products and Services) and **Section 6** (Operations) reflect each other in terms of what is provided by the enterprise and what is required to provide it. We should also see both sections reflected in the submitted cashflow projections.

Section 7 – Market Analysis

Provide evidence of a market for your products/services. You should show a **paying market**, not just a **social need**. Back this up with evidence from your existing track record.

In this section, you should aim to include the following:

- **Any statistics** which shows why you believe your products/services have a market.
- **An overview of your customers – for example:**
 - Who are your customers to date? Any regular customers or contracts?
 - Do you have plans to target new customers in the future?
- **Details of competitors – for example:**
 - Who else provides products/services to the customers/beneficiaries that you have identified?
 - How busy are they? How does this impact on your market?
 - Do they offer the same or a different range of services?

- **Briefly explain your competitive advantage.** Why will people use your enterprise as opposed to your competitors?
- **Provide a very brief summary of your pricing policy.** What are you charging for your products/services? How have you calculated this?
- **Very briefly, give examples (if any exist) of how similar ideas have worked elsewhere.** Outline successes and failures of them and what you have learned.

Section 8 – Social Impact

Provide information about the social impact you are delivering through your enterprise.

- **Explain the social impact your enterprise has delivered so far. For example:**
 - How has your social enterprise made a difference to your beneficiaries?
 - How has it helped improve quality of life for individuals affected by a particular problem or issue?
 - Has it created jobs or relieved poverty?
 - Has it improved the environment?
 - Include facts and figures to evidence what you have achieved.
- **Explain how you monitor the social impact of your enterprise.**
 - Identifying the social impact of your work is vital in order to communicate the value of what you do. Explain the systems and approaches you use for capturing social impact or change. For example:
 - Do you collect baseline information to record changes that result from your work?
 - Have you set up a series of indicators that are regularly monitored?
 - Do you ask people to complete questionnaires?
 - Do you keep records on the people you work with?
 - How do you track what happens to people you work with?
- **Explain how the social impact will increase in the next 12 months.**
 - How will a Scale Up award help you to deliver more impact?
 - You have already told us about new products/services you plan to deliver in **Section 5**, so now tell us how these changes will increase social impact.
 - How will you measure the increase?
 - How many more people will benefit?

Pitch Document

Your pitch document should be submitted as a **Word document** or **PDF**.

Ideally it would 2 pages long but not exceed 2 pages and should summarise the key points from your business plan. It should not simply be the first two pages of your business plan. It should not include information that isn't contained elsewhere in your application.

You should approach your pitch document as if you are summarising your application for a reader who will not have access to your application form, business plan, or financial information.

A popular approach is to include a short paragraph on each of the business plan's sections. Your pitch document should at least contain information on the following:

- The background of your social enterprise, its core functions and why it exists
- Your trading track record and how your organisation generates income
- Your social aims and how the organisation generate social impact
- Your highlights and successes so far
- What you need the Scale Up award for
- Why you should be funded

Cashflow Projections

Your cashflow projections should show us how you see your business progressing over **the next two years** in terms of the income streams you plan to develop and the expenses you expect to incur.

These projections must be presented in our Excel cashflow template (available as a download from our website). We understand many applicants have already compiled their own cashflow projections in their own template, but you **must use our template**.

Please submit the document as an Excel spreadsheet, not a PDF of the same.

You should also include **key assumptions** – notes to explain your calculations – in the space provided at the bottom of the template. Feel free to be as detailed as you can here. This section of the document is vital in helping us understand how you have arrived at your figures and your forecasts.

Further guidance on cashflow projections

The guidance below should help you complete the template, but **if you would like further support, please contact us on 086 1279 362.**

- **Your projections should show that your enterprise has the potential to develop into a financially viable and sustainable business.** Successful applications usually show that by the end of the two-year period, they are able to cover at least the majority of their costs through the income generated, with minimal (or a steadily reducing) reliance on further grant funding. It is particularly important to show that any salaries funded by the Scale Up award can continue once the funding ends.
- **You should demonstrate an awareness of how income and expenditure might fluctuate over the two-year period, and how this might affect the enterprise's**

overall finances and operations. For example, if you expect your enterprise to be busier at certain times of year, can you show an ability to cover overheads during quieter periods? And do those busier periods mean planning for corresponding increases in expenditure, such as additional staff time?

- **Your cashflow should also show clear links between income and expenditure and vice versa.** For example, if you plan to take on additional staff, do you have the potential to generate more income? Or will your income remain the same while your expenditure increases with additional staff salaries?

Dos and Don'ts

DO research, research, and research again! The more you know about your income and expenditure, the more accurate the cashflow.

DO make sure you fully understand all aspects of your cashflow – what each income/expenditure line relates to and the relationships between each section. You may be asked detailed questions about your cashflow.

DO use the **key assumptions** section to clarify anything that may be questioned by a reader. More is more in this case, so err on the side of caution and provide an explanation wherever possible. Never assume the reader will work it out or come to the same conclusion as you.

DO show links between income and expenditure.

DON'T be unrealistic. Sales figures rising by a significant percentage without good supporting evidence in the assumptions can be seen as a lack of planning and therefore unlikely.

DON'T be overly conservative either.

DON'T rush the cashflow. Take your time to ensure you have filled it in correctly and have given it your full consideration. This is a highly important part of the application.

DON'T be afraid to ask questions if you're having trouble. Support is available if you'd like further guidance prior to application, but ...

DON'T leave it until the last minute! As previously mentioned, the run up to the Scale Up deadline is a busy period for advisors, so make sure you've factored in plenty of time for support if you think you'll struggle with aspects of the application.

Common Pitfalls

You should take care to avoid the following common mistakes:

- **No opening balance.** You need to provide evidence of a trading history to be eligible for Scale Up funding, so your opening balance should not be left blank or show a

zero balance. Use your opening balance to show the enterprise's current funds and your key assumptions to reflect how this amount has been generated (i.e. through trading, grants and donations, or a mixture of both). If your enterprise has a negative opening balance, you should show this and use the key assumptions to provide an explanation.

- **Incorrect grant information.** Research grants or awards that you have secured or hope to apply for – including the Scale Up award! Many applicants forget to enter the Scale Up award. When they do enter it, they show the Scale Up award as a single payment in Month 1 of their cashflow, or as monthly payments across the two-year period. **Scale Up awards are paid in two equal instalments six months apart in Year 1 (so Month 1 and Month 6).** This can have a real effect on the cashflow. If you have any other grants during the two-year period, make sure you're entering the payments accurately. If you have any questions on this, it's always best to call the funders direct for further clarification.
- **Flatlined income/expenditure.** This is where income/expenditure remains static month after month. While some items are unlikely to fluctuate – fixed monthly fees such as rent, for example – other income/expenditure is likely to go up and down. Most businesses experience some level of seasonality, with busier or quieter periods through the year that would affect income levels, as well as periods where expenditure may be affected – higher heating bills in the winter, for example.
- **Impact of marketing.** An enterprise should only invest in marketing costs to increase sales or a service or product. If you include marketing costs in your cashflow, make sure your sales figures reflect the likely impact.
- **Using the wrong template.** We understand that many applicants may have already compiled their own cashflows and there are a number of different templates available. We require cashflows in our template to ensure the information provided is up to date and to ensure consistency of assessment.

PLEASE NOTE: If supporting documents are not in the required template or file format, they will be considered ineligible.

Section Four: Directors / Trustees

The Directors or Trustees involved in the organisation.

Section Five: Disclosures and other Details

These are important questions but not all are mandatory.

Section Six: Budget

Here you need to itemise your funding request. This request will form the basis of your award if you are successful and should be for no more than €10,000 in total.

Eligible Costs

- **Wages.** Specifically, up to €5,000 for one wage, or up to €10,000 for more than one. These roles should be permanent and not seasonal.

If you have any questions about eligible costs, please contact us via email at gebbs@oakfieldtrust.ie or by phone on 086 1279 362.

Section Seven: Bank Details

Here you need to provide us with your bank details to ensure swift payment if you're successful.

Bank Account Name

This should be the account holder's name as it is presented on your bank statement, **not** the bank/building society name.

IBAN Number

The IBAN consists of up to 34 alphanumeric characters. In Ireland, the standard length of an IBAN is 22 characters. Example: IE64IRCE92050112345678

BIC Code

A BIC (Bank Identifier Code) is often called SWIFT Codes and can be either 8 or 11 characters long. For example BOFIE2D

Section Eight: Equal Status

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

If there are any questions that you would prefer not to answer, please leave the field blank.

Section Nine: Data Retention

Data Retention Declaration.

Section Ten: Data Protection and Submit

And you should now be ready to submit! If you've missed any required fields, the form should let you know.

If you're having issues submitting your application, please email us at gebbs@oakfieldtrust.ie or give us a ring on 086 1279 362.

What Happens Next?

Stage 1.

Submit your application online to introduce your social enterprise or your idea. If your application is eligible, after the closing date it will move to Stage 2.

Stage 2.

After the closing date all applications will be assessed. We will either let you know of our decision or ask for more information.

Stage 3.

If you are unsuccessful, we will let you know ASAP by email. If your application is successful, we will email you the amount of funding you are approved for and inform you of any conditions that need to be satisfied to draw down the funds.

In the event that your application is not successful, we will notify you by email with panel feedback.

Any Questions?

If you have any queries at all or would like to speak to us before making an application, please give us a call on 086 1279 362. Good luck!