

Oakfield Trust

Social Enterprise Policy 2023/2024 Submission

Section 1: Building Awareness of Social Enterprises:

1. **A national social media / online campaign** with short, well-produced viral video explainers about social enterprise – IE what it is, examples of it, and how to support it. Simple but effective, short videos, 30 secs to 1 minute long.
2. **A regular social enterprise feature on national TV** broadcasters and beyond, with features and updates about social enterprises – something like Ear to the Ground except exclusively for social enterprise. The public are often still blissfully unaware of how extensive social enterprise is and how to support it.
3. **A fit-for-purpose, mobile-web-app** (not app - mobile website), which can allow potential customers to easily find social enterprises (coffee shops etc) while on the move. We have the BuySocial website however it is not fit for purpose. There could be great potential in something like this especially for socially conscious young people who use their phones and technology extensively when choosing where to shop, eat, have coffee etc.

Section 2: Growing Social Enterprise:

Under Business Supports

1. **A government-supported business support consortium**, delivering critical and time-consuming business support services such as: strategic planning, legal and governance advice, HR.

Business support for social enterprise and community organisations as you know, is something that comes up time and time again. It's consistently a thing that has the potential to hamstring even the most thriving social enterprises.

If these business support services, were supplied by a group of specialised service providers, on a project and application basis, who will only be spending money when they are providing services, it will always be money well spent, with very little wastage. It's much more targeted and efficient system.

This can be advanced via a regional pilot with minimised service offering in the short-medium term. An example of where this has worked extremely successfully is Just Enterprise in Scotland which is rolled out nationally. This is a model that WORKS.

Oakfield Trust have started this conversation by bringing over members of Just Enterprise to speak to an audience from the social enterprise sector in 2023, and those conversations have continued among several potential stakeholders and advocates. The team from Just Enterprise will also be returning to Donegal in Spring 2024 to among other items, discuss the pathway.

It is essential to plant the seed of this idea into government circles now, and to present a model which does work (as evidenced in Scotland) and is surefire way of developing the social enterprise sector so that social enterprises who have the potential to thrive, are not hamstrung by lack of business support resources.

2. Advancement of the next suitable iteration of the **Shared Services Model** (or similar model) currently being piloted by DLDC. The focus here is the business support for more 'regularly' required resources, which may be shared by social enterprises - for example bookkeeping. We are awaiting the results and a report from the Donegal pilot but this is certainly a step forward.

The medium-long term strategy would be to marry 1) and 2) above in one programme, with one single-entry application point for social enterprises, with applicants being directed to the appropriate stream based on the nature of the resource required.

Under Access to Finance

Regarding the reference to:

'Under the new policy, opportunities which leverage funding from philanthropic and/or corporate social responsibility sources should be pursued to support social enterprises.'

- thought given to supporting/subsidising programmes which may assist SEs in engaging with the philanthropy sector.

Under Social Procurement

Regarding the reference to:

'The new policy should seek to support an increased engagement of social enterprises in public and private social procurement opportunities.'

(The recently updated [Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services](#) -) These should arguably not be just 'guidelines' - in time it should be mandatory to have community interest / social enterprise clauses etc.

Section 5: Data Collection and Social Impact Measurement

Regarding the reference to:

'A key objective of the new policy should be to further develop national, regional, and local data availability relating to social enterprise in Ireland.'

- what is also desirable here is a sector-accredited and standardised impact measurement / illustration platform or tool which for social enterprises.

Achieving this is likely to be a joint venture involving organisations providing creative/technology solutions, and social enterprise sector experts to identify key metrics and sector-specific data which would feed the impact measurement platform in each individual case. In delivery terms, simplicity of use is the key here, so that social enterprises are not even further burdened by the measurement/illustration tools.