



## Cost of Living Challenge Fund 2023 Notes for Applicants



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The deadline to submit your application is **10am on Thursday 9 November 2023.**

## Find out more

- Signing up for our Info session on Monday 23 October at 4pm - attend the live event or access a recording via our website. To book your place, please register [here](#).
- Attend a Drop In Application Support Session:

Wednesday 25 October at 2-3pm [Link here](#).

Wednesday 1 November at 2-3pm [Link here](#).

## Programme overview

Are you developing or growing an ambitious trading-based solution to support communities hardest hit by the cost of living crisis?

Are you aiming to increase your trading by at least £15k by summer 2024?

We want to supercharge your trading plans, by challenging you to increase your trading, and supporting you through grant funding and a capacity building programme offering advice, training and support.

SSE's **Cost of Living Challenge Fund** will support 36 charities and social enterprises serving the most disadvantaged communities in England who are struggling most with the cost of living crisis- for example, those that are providing food, energy saving and warm spaces, access to essential goods, financial advice, essential transport, mental health support and access to housing.

The Cost of Living Challenge Fund is run by The School for Social Entrepreneurs and funded by [Access, the Foundation for Social Investment](#).

## What's on offer

- A Match Trading grant of up to £25,000, with the possibility of rapid drawdown and further funds for exceptional performance.
- Flexible capacity building support to help build your organisation's resilience and sustainability and support you to build up enterprise activity to meet increased demand.

## Match Trading™ Grant



Your social enterprise will receive a **Match Trading™** grant of up to £25,000. This grant is designed to challenge you to grow your trading income. Match Trading has been proven to increase income from trading and boost resilience.

Your social enterprise will receive £5,000 up front, and then 2 further instalments of up to £10,000 over the programme period matched against your increased trading from December 2023 to May 2024, as compared to your trading in December 2022 to May 2023

Based on your financial history and your plans for increasing trading over the next 6 months, we will agree with you a Match Trading target. There is an option for rapid drawdown, if you hit the match target more quickly than expected. There will also be stretch targets available for high performers.

Your grant can be used flexibly, including to support you to attend the programme and to put your learning into practice by developing your trading and community business.

### **What can I spend the grant on?**

Grants are linked to learning and are designed to be flexible. Grants may be spent on any activity related to developing projects which support communities hit by the cost of living crisis. Grants may be spent on:

- project costs to support the development of activity related to the Cost of Living Challenge Fund

- salaries to support development of trading activity and attend skills development programmes
- marketing and sales developments to support trading activity to support projects related to supporting communities hit by cost of living crisis
- backfilling posts to allow time for leaders to develop skills and get strategic support

You cannot spend the grant on:

- Private benefit that is not “incidental”
- Assets over £1,500 in value, including refurbishment of buildings or purchase of vehicles unless agreed in advance with us.
- Work that has taken place before the grant was awarded.
- Costs associated with the application or interview.
- Academic qualifications.
- Anything that would create religious or ethnic discord or would support illegal activities.

## Capacity building

Alongside the Match Trading period, you and your business will receive tailored and adaptable capacity building support from January to July 2024. This will be delivered at pace, over six months, to support the rapid implementation of further trading plans.

It will support you and your leadership team to weather the challenge of responding to the ongoing cost of living crisis hitting your beneficiaries, increasing your resilience as you strive to increase and sustain your impact and trading income.

The package of support will be flexible and targeted, enabling you to access support for you or for key members of your leadership team via:

- **A core capacity building offer**, highly focused on equipping organisations to respond to the crisis and support them to sustain their service delivery and/or scale up enterprise activity to meet higher demand from their community.

This support will be delivered both online and in-person, learning alongside a cohort of business leaders, placing you at the heart of a network of peers who can understand and support your enterprise journey.

- **An additional customised support package**, offered in response to an in-depth organisational diagnostic assessing your organisation’s needs and capabilities.
- Plus optional **financial literacy coaching sessions** *and*
- Access to **ongoing modular learning** via SSE’s innovative Virtual Learning Environment, available during and post-programme to support your future development.
- The opportunity to **collaborate and build a relationship** with SSE and its wider Fellows’ network.

To embed skills across the organisation applicants will be encouraged to engage the most relevant people within their team in this training. We expect for many organisations this will be the CEO, however, you may choose to send board members, commercial or trading leads to take part in the training instead and/or as well. We will work with you to fit the programme to your team's needs.

## **Is my business eligible?**

We are looking for social enterprises and charities with ambitious plans to significantly scale up their trading activity to boost their impact on communities and individuals hit hardest by cost of living pressures. You should be ready to put your plans in place and expect to increase your trading by at least £15,000 between 1 Dec 2023 and 31 May 2024.

You will be asked to explain in your application how your business supports people in crisis due to cost of living pressures.

### **Your organisation must: -**

- **Provide services to support people facing crisis due to the increased cost of living.** This may include:
  - **Food** - eg. Community shops, pay-as-you-fee cafes, supply of fresh produce, holiday and breakfast clubs etc.
  - **Energy saving and warm spaces** - provision of warm spaces, provision of energy saving advice and support, access to home improvements etc.
  - **Access to essential goods** - clothing, furniture, goods for children and babies.
  - **Financial advice** - welfare and benefits advice, support with utilities, credit union development, access to low cost loans.
  - **Essential transport** - access to transport for disadvantaged communities, community transport, rural services, alternative transport, such as access to bikes, shared services etc.
  - **Mental health support** - provision for people experiencing more mental health as a result of the stress of cost of living crisis.
  - **Access to housing** - rent deposit schemes, housing offers, independent living schemes etc.
- **Have plans to grow trading activity that directly supports or subsidises cost of living services**
- **Have an existing track record and income of at least £70k** (we may consider more recently established organisations and incomes of over £35k, where there are exceptional plans to grow)
- **A business model which is substantially based on trading**
- **A clear plan for increasing trading by £15k - £35k** between December 2023 and May 2024, which you will be asked to outline in your application.
- **Based in England**, with a majority of beneficiaries living in England
- **Working with deprived communities** - You must be working with people affected by the cost of living crisis and at least 80% of grantees will be based in, and working with communities that are in IMD 1 - 3

- **Have a social enterprise structure** - grantees will be incorporated organisations and must be charities, CICs, Community Benefit Societies, or other legal structures which have a social purpose, reinvest the majority of its profits for social purposes, and an asset lock or winding up clause which means that if the social enterprise is wound up, its remaining assets go to a charity, CIC or other asset locked body.
- **Leadership team**- You must have at least two people on the board of your social enterprise. We cannot accept applications from sole traders.
- We are particularly keen to support social enterprises who are led by Black and minoritised communities, disabled people and LGBTQIA+ communities and people with lived experience of the issues their social enterprise is addressing.
- **Bank Account** - You must have a bank account in the legal name of your social enterprise managed by at least two unrelated people who release payments, OR an account where the participant has sole control.

## Making an application

Apply by 10 am on Thursday 9 November 2023.

However, we'll be assessing applications on a rolling basis and the fund may close early if we receive more applications than we can process.

As part of the application, we ask you to provide your most recent annual accounts if available, and your safeguarding policy if you have one.

If possible, please also provide a copy of current income and expenditure for this financial year, and any useful documents about your impact, such as a case study or impact report if you have one.

Please save these in the following format.

Document type	File name format
Your most recent annual accounts	NameofSocialEnterpriseNameAccounts.doc
Income and expenditure	NameofSocialEnterpriseIncomeExpenditure.doc
Safeguarding policy	NameofSocialEnterpriseSafeguardingPolicy.doc
Documents about your impact and work	NameofSocialEnterpriseImpactReport.doc

- You can save your application and return to it at a later date. Just click “Save for later”, and you will be given a unique link to return to your application.
- When you've completed all the questions, click “Preview” to review your application, then click “Submit”. You will be redirected to our equalities monitoring form and you will also receive a copy of your application by an email from 123 Formbuilder. **Check your junk folder if you can't find the email.**

The deadline to submit your application is 10am on Thursday 9 November 2023.

Under exceptional circumstances, we may give approval to submit your application late. To arrange this, you must email **Claire Binden, Programme Manager** ahead of the deadline on [claire.binden@sse.org.uk](mailto:claire.binden@sse.org.uk).

**Application support:** If you need help with your application, have difficulty filling in forms because of dyslexia, language or disability, or need one-to-one advice about applying, please contact Eric Vintner, Project Coordinator: [eric.vintner@sse.org.uk](mailto:eric.vintner@sse.org.uk)

**Application Questions:** A downloadable set of application questions can be found on our website with guidance for you to plan your answers and share these with others in your social enterprise, but you will need to apply using the online form. It is possible to upload voice recordings for the longer text questions, if you prefer. The link to the website is [HERE](#).

**Information session:** You can find out more about the programme by:

- Signing up for our Info session on Monday 23 October at 4pm - attend the live event or access a recording via our website. To book your place, please register [here](#).
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## **Accessibility and our commitment to inclusion**

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. To that end, we actively encourage applications from people of all faiths, gender identities, sexual orientations, economic circumstances and backgrounds, as well as those from Black and minoritised communities and disabled people. No educational qualifications are needed to join our programmes.

We want our programmes to be as accessible as possible. If you require reasonable adjustments, including financial support, in order to take part in an interview or to participate in the programme due to a disability, caring responsibilities or any other reason, you will be able to provide details in the application form or contact us by phone or email to discuss further.

## **Complaints**

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the running of the programme, SSE has a complaints procedure which is available [here](#).

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **1. Can I apply if my work benefits people outside England?**

Your work must mainly benefit people who reside in England. We cannot fund activity where beneficiaries are based outside England.

## **2. Can I apply if I have been on an SSE programme before or am currently on an SSE programme?**

You can apply if:

- You have attended previous SSE programmes.
- You have applied to SSE before and were unsuccessful.
- You are on a current SSE programme which ends before 1 December 2023

## **3. Can I apply if my business has had Social Investment previously?**

This programme is aimed primarily at businesses who have not yet accessed Social Investment but may be working towards this in the future. You can apply if you have received social investment previously. If we feel that the activity that you are requesting support for could be better provided through social investment, and that is a better fit for your needs, we may refer you to social investors or blended finance.

## **4. Can we apply if our social enterprise has people that are connected to SSE or Access, the Foundation for Social Investment?**

If your social enterprise is run by people who regularly work for or are trustees of SSE, or Access or have a close financial or family connection with staff or trustees, please contact us before making an application to ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

## **5. What if we have particular needs, which may prevent us from fully taking part in the capacity building 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 negotiated individually with participants. If you have specific needs and are concerned about this, please contact us to discuss.

## **6. What happens if my project will work with children under 18 or vulnerable adults?**

You will be required to provide a Safeguarding Policy and may need enhanced DBS checks for staff and volunteers.



## What about Data Protection?

SSE has a Privacy Policy which is available [here](#). SSE also has a [Data Protection Policy](#). We are committed to protecting your personal information and acting in accordance with your rights under the Data Protection Act 1998. We may need to share your information in order to undertake assessment of your application, statistical analysis, research and monitoring, compliance and regulatory reporting and fraud prevention. We may share your information

- with our funders
- with our agents or subcontractors for operational reasons
- with other agencies in order to assess your application
- with others for the purpose of compliance and regulatory reporting and to confirm your identity for money laundering purposes and fraud prevention
- if compelled to do so by law.