

Oxford University's Social Enterprise Awards

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Background

Oxford Hub is delighted to work with the University of Oxford's Research Services to offer Oxford University staff and students the Social Enterprise Awards.

The Social Enterprise Awards exist to support individuals and teams to take action and make the world a better place. Since 2013, more than 40 different ventures have been supported, from a community cafe to a soap recycling enterprise. You can find examples of previous award winners featured on Enterprising Oxford's website, including [Project Soup](#), [Common Ground](#), [Language Amigo](#), [Pick Me Up Parcels](#) and [SociAbility](#), and our [blog](#).

Through the awards scheme we offer social entrepreneurs:

- **Funding:** depending on whether the proposal is a vague plan or a tried and tested model, we have two options. The first is a Try It award of up to £500, or alternatively there is a Do It Award of up to £1,000.
- **Support:** including access to AWS credits, check ins with staff, introductions to our network, free publicity and room hire at our home on Little Clarendon Street.
- **Community:** the opportunity to join a community of ambitious individuals tackling social and environmental issues in Oxford, whether through social enterprise, placements, or volunteering. Find us at speaker panels, socials, fundraisers and more.

Who are the Awards for?

The Awards are aimed at helping Oxford University staff and students to get started with their enterprising ideas. Applicants will need support to either prototype (test out a first version) of their project or, having prototyped, progress with the first phase of their project.

Teams are eligible to apply for the awards where:

- Their project has a benefit for the Oxford or Oxfordshire Community .
- Their project has the potential to create some income with a view to being financially self-sustaining in the long term.
- The applying member of the team is a current member (staff or student) of the University of Oxford.

These Awards are Social Enterprise Awards as they are aimed at projects with a social purpose, which also have the long-term potential to generate revenue and be financially viable. For more information on social enterprise, you can see the [Social Enterprise UK website](#), or have a chat with our Placements Officer by emailing eliza@oxfordhub.org.

The Types of Awards

Try It Award

The Try It Award is intended to enable applicants to test out their enterprising idea. Applications for the Try It Awards need to meet the criteria, in terms of being well thought through and compelling, but they don't have to have proof of concept. The idea of a Try It Award is to allow people to see what works in practice at a small scale, and learn from that experience to build on their idea and potentially apply for a Do It Award in the future.

Try It Award applicants could be granted up to £500, as well as AWS credits, use of Oxford Hub's Little Clarendon Street office, and introductions to useful contacts in the Oxfordshire ecosystem.

Do It Award

The Do It Award is intended to enable teams who have tested their idea out already to implement their project in full.

Successful applicants for the Do It Awards need to demonstrate that their idea is tested and viable, that they understand their market, and that there is financial sustainability.

Do It Award applicants could be granted up to £1000, as well as AWS credits, use of Oxford Hub's Little Clarendon Street office, and introductions to useful contacts in the Oxfordshire ecosystem.

To apply for a Do It Award, the judges appreciate substantial evidence to accompany your application. This should include: detailed financials and/or a business plan, and evidence of partnerships and/or a customer base.

Application Process

All applicants should discuss their project idea with Eliza at Oxford Hub in order to assess whether it would be a good fit for the Social Enterprise Awards. If appropriate, they will then be encouraged to produce a written application. The application process is as follows:

1. Contact Oxford Hub through the website or by emailing eliza@oxfordhub.org to express your interest in the awards.
2. Meet with Eliza, the Placements Officer, to discuss your project.
3. Fill in an application form.
4. Email Eliza the application form before the deadline.
5. Decisions will be announced within two weeks of the deadline.

Applications are reviewed twice a year by a panel made up of university and community experts. Decisions will be based on the criteria listed below and feedback will be given to all applicants.

Please note that while contacting Eliza prior to emailing your application form is encouraged, we will accept applications from students and staff who have not done so.

Criteria for All Projects

1. The applicant clearly states the benefits (either social, or environmental) that this project could have for individuals/groups in Oxford or Oxfordshire.
2. The applicant clearly demonstrates the need for this project, showing a clear understanding of, and research into, relevant factors (including a current lack of realistic alternatives that meet the need).
3. The application displays a passion for the issue addressed.
4. The applicant displays a sound understanding of the anticipated costs of the project.
5. The project has a clear and realistic model for revenue generation. While it does not have to be entirely self-sustaining initially, all projects should have scope for this.
6. The application clearly shows how an Award would benefit the project.

Additional criteria for Do It Awards only:

7. The applicant has given the background of their project, including details of what has been achieved with any previous funding.

8. The applicant has considered the on-going progress of the project and displays an understanding of the implementation issues the project is likely to encounter.

Tips, Tricks, and Things to Know About Submitting a Good Application

1. Remember these are Social Enterprise awards
 - Most applicants are more confident with either the social impact or the business side. While this isn't a problem in itself, good applications will show an understanding of the social impact, as well as an idea of costs.
2. You are applying for an amount of money
 - Having a precise idea of what you will use the money for and making that clear in your application will be a benefit.
 - Particularly for the Do It Awards, be aware that it is rare for the full amount of £5000 to be awarded. Good applications tend to pitch for amounts that they can compellingly show that they can put to good use.
3. Show why you are applying for these Awards in particular
 - If these Awards offer the kind of opportunity that is crucial to your success, make it clear why that is! It can be more difficult to be successful if the judges feel you could access similar support from elsewhere.
4. Don't be intimidated
 - These Awards are meant to help people get started with putting their project into action. All kinds of skills will help you do this, and the panel don't expect you to be an expert in all things social impact and start-up - they know you will learn on the way!
5. Get in touch
 - The best applications come from people who have spoken to us before they apply. That is why the first step is to meet with us. We can answer your questions, give you advice on your application, and help you develop your ideas before you apply.
 - We genuinely love talking to people about their ideas. Even if you're just curious about the awards, get in touch by emailing eliza@oxfordhub.org.