
Community Wealth Building

Capacity Building

Skills, knowledge and
learning



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Key messages

- A comprehensive capacity building programme is needed to underpin the delivery of the five pillars of community wealth, which strengthens the knowledge base, core competencies and applied learning, especially across the social economy.
- There have been a range of successful programmes to help start-up and scale social enterprises in particular, including Social Economy Belfast and the North Belfast Ethical Investment programme. Despite the evidence of the impact of both programmes, they terminated after grant funding ended. There needs to be a systemic long-term investment to underpin Community Wealth Building and avoid short term, pilot or limited funding interventions.
- There are also important current initiatives including the Social Entrepreneurship Programme, Supporting People's entry level ONCs and the School for Social Enterprises Ireland at Ulster University. These need to be built upon and better supported in a holistic approach to growing the social economy in Northern Ireland.
- It should be emphasised that capacities need to be built equally across the public and the social economy sectors and where relevant, private businesses, especially in procurement, supply chains and labour market interventions.
- Investment- and contract-readiness is essential and again this can build on existing toolkits and guidance and learn from extant programmes that have registered an impact on organisations to strengthen their commercial sustainability.
- A single technical assistance programme, based on the Scottish *Firstport* model, could integrate training, dedicated technical support and investment capital, especially for social enterprises, procurement opportunities and labour market intermediaries.
- A more focused set of competencies based on building the *economy* of the most excluded places and communities emphasises the importance of social enterprises, more effective use of capital finance, winning procurement contracts, access to decent work and better use of community own land and buildings
- A programme of research would help strengthen understanding of market opportunities, procurement contracts, best practice and measuring social value.
- A regional Procurement Academy could also strengthen skills and practice around social value outcomes across the public, private and social enterprise sector.
- Based on mainstream industry-university models, a knowledge transfer partnership scheme with social enterprises and further and higher education institutions could help strengthen innovation, especially to access high growth sectors of the economy and the labour market.

Draft, confidential and not for circulation

Introduction

The adoption of a comprehensive Community Wealth Building (CWB) policy is a challenge to the skills of community organisations, social enterprises and just as importantly, to the public sector. This paper outlines the implications for a different set of skills, knowledge and learning, that need to work together to support a meaningful community wealth approach. It should be emphasised that there are important and high impact programmes, intermediaries and resources to support such a shift and these need to be built upon within a clear strategic framework for capacity building. For example, [Social Enterprise NI](#) (SENI) is the representative body for social enterprises and social entrepreneurs across Northern Ireland and is an important platform to bring the sector together, undertake research and lobby for a more effective policy regime. SENI is mapping the [priorities for the sector in Northern Ireland](#) and in particular identifies the priorities to skill up and scale up the social economy in the region. This will provide important direction in shaping a comprehensive capacity building strategy.

The paper sets out the need to address three elements of capacity building in what actors in the community wealth arena need to *know*; what *skills* should be prioritised; and how both can be used in a more applied approach to *learning*. All three elements are needed to better support the delivery of CWB in the public, community and the private sector. The analysis looks at capacity building interventions, primarily aimed at the social enterprise sector and current programmes supporting entrepreneurship and university-based degree programmes. It then sets out the core skills across the five pillars before setting out recommendations about the need to rationalise support for CWB.

What do we mean by capacities?

There are important and highly effective capacity building programmes in the social economy, area-based regeneration and community development. However, they tend to be disconnected from each other, address different priorities and are not always aligned to *needs* in an emerging CWB environment. There are, of course, different frameworks for understanding what we mean by capacity and how it can be developed. Part of the challenge is that community wealth itself cuts across economics, community development, spatial regeneration, land use planning, housing and so on.

What knowledge is needed

Different types of knowledge support different strategies, decisions and tactics across the CWB spectrum and these are summarised below with a fuller explanation in Annex I. It recognises that the evidence base for community wealth is partial and that more comprehensive research, intelligence and best practice is needed to grow the social enterprise and procurement sectors in particular. These include:

- a. Current state to understand the size and structure of the CWB 'economy', such as what is the value of procurement contracts, the value-added of social enterprises or where employment opportunities can be maximised.

- b. Predictive knowledge such as where high growth opportunities rest and how can social enterprises access and develop into high value-added sectors.
- c. Social knowledge to better understand the changing nature of precariat work, the intensification of poverty or conditions in particular sectors such as homelessness, rural deprivation or the gendered nature of exclusion.
- d. Policy processes including how the system (asset transfer, social value in procurement and land trusts) could be strengthened.
- e. Outcomes state that could focus on research into social value impacts, return on investment or the way in which community wealth strengthens local multiplier effects.
- f. Policy-social interactions including evaluative knowledge to assess the impact of social enterprise programmes, how policy works (or does not) and what policy instruments (finance, legislative change, intermediaries) are needed, including what do other successful community wealth economies look like.
- g. Normative knowledge is about what to do, such as how to grow the sector and in particular, how knowledge transfer and closer links with expertise in universities, think tanks and best practice can support the growth of the CWB in Northern Ireland.
- h. Theoretical knowledge to help guide the ethics of various CWB interventions, especially around the community basis of social enterprises. How to reconcile tension between the commercial and the social, the importance of effective governance structures and community participation in the design and delivery of programmes are priorities here.

Skills and community wealth building

Under the New Labour administration in the UK, significant progress was made in defining and supporting a different set of skills to help create more sustainable and inclusive *places*. For example, the Egan Review (Egan, 2004) set out the generic and technical competencies required to deliver sustainable communities as set out in the table below.

Generic Skills	Technical Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inclusive visioning ▪ Project management ▪ Leadership ▪ Breakthrough thinking and brokerage ▪ Team and partnership working ▪ Making it happen given constraints ▪ Process management ▪ Financial management and appraisal ▪ Stakeholder management ▪ Analysis, decision making, evaluation, learning from mistakes ▪ Conflict resolution ▪ Customer awareness and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project appraisal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Such as financial analysis ▪ Project management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project monitoring ▪ Technical grounding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning, surveying, architecture ▪ Project wind-down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Succession planning

Work in Scotland, conducted at the same time, broadened the scope of these skills categories to include strategic, process and practical competence sets (see below). *Practical skills* are more concerned with how social enterprises might operate and for the sector are a significant barrier to growth. But they also need to be placed in the context of *strategic skills* on the development of a local plural economy, determine who should own assets or where labour market

interventions fit within a broader regeneration frame. A risk in community wealth in general and social enterprises in particular, is *mission drift* away from the community, social objectives and collectivist approaches. Building the capacity of the staff and Board members of social enterprises and their ability to reconcile the economic and social rationales of community wealth building, is therefore critical. But it is also about experience and *learning* by applying skills in practice and understanding (via *knowledge*) the inherent tensions in managing development trusts.

Strategic Skills

Strategic skills help to initiate and promote change. People responsible for the overall direction and management of a regeneration programme will require these kinds of skills, although they are not restricted to people in positions of authority. They include leadership, lateral thinking and sound judgement.

Process Skills

Process skills are important to enable change to occur and are sometimes called 'people skills' or 'soft skills'. They include communication and negotiation, and attributes such as being adaptable, flexible and understanding.

Practical Skills

Practical skills are vital to delivering change. They contribute to the successful day-to-day running of an initiative. They include writing funding proposals, developing action plans, managing projects and maintaining good administrative system.

Source: Based on Turok and Taylor, 2006, pp. 501-503.

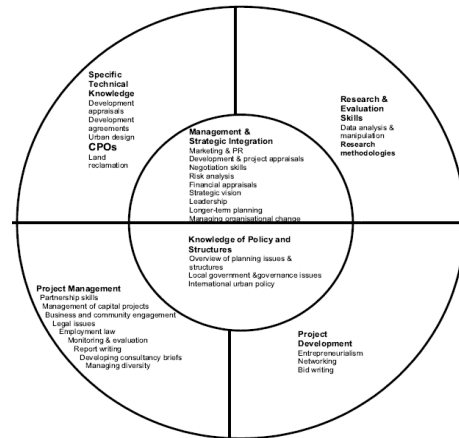
Learning and application

However, the evidence from the DTNI survey show that the skills debate has underplayed the importance of learning and in particular, what motivates social entrepreneurs, staff of community businesses and Board members to apply skills and knowledge within live projects. Here, a *learner centred approach* emphasises the interplay between education, meaningful work and personal development that is essential for achieving the full potential of practitioners, policy makers and critically the citizens affected by local decisions. Citizens need to be seen as active producers, rather than the products of, regeneration practice permitting them to be more innovative and creative and not simply rely on public sector officials or 'experts' to shape their place. Here 'situated' learning emphasises engagement in specific social practices as opposed to 'acquisition' learning where the approach is based on the transmissions of facts and knowledge (Sandri and Holdsworth, 2021). In other words, community wealth is not just taught in the classroom but is *learnt*, in which reflective practice, experience and mistakes are all valued in defining the best approach.

Sandri and Holdsworth (2021) argue that too much emphasis is placed on setting out lists required by practitioners rather than trying to understand how learning takes place in places, organisations and networks. Here, *situated learning* needs to be recognised as support for social enterprises should be grounded in project development and delivery and that learning takes place through knowledge transfer, learning by example and informal mechanisms such as work shadowing and mentoring. In the diagram below, Sandri and Holdsworth (2021) make the important point that substantive knowledge, skills and learning need to work together and this is especially relevant given the disparate elements of community wealth and how

they can be integrated at the point of delivery (a neighbourhood, an excluded group, implementing a contract, getting people into decent work and so on).

- Knowledge of policy and structures of government, how the macro-economy has impacted on local economic change, land reclamation, planning, urban design principles and legal aspects of compulsory purchase and asset transfer.
- Research and evaluation knowledge to understand market opportunity and impacts.
- Skills, including, for example, project management, managing capital developments, business and community engagement, written and oral communicative skills.
- Management skills including project appraisal, negotiation, risk analysis, financial management.
- Learning by applying knowledge and skills on project development, entrepreneurialism, preparing bids, developing networks and consortia.



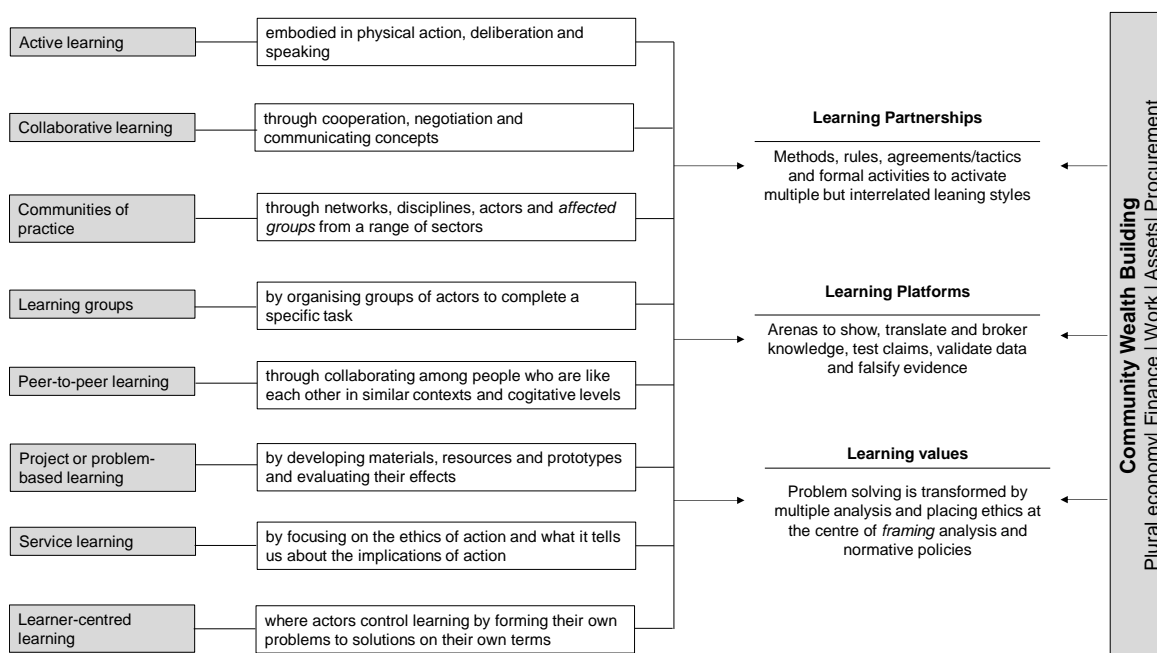
Source: Based on Bagwell, 2022, p.198.

Different types of learning

Knowledge and skills need to be put to work and supported to enable projects within the various strands of CWB to function in practice. This is about technical support and how social enterprises, labour market intermediaries, procurement opportunities, drawing down finance and managing land and property work in practice. Kean et al. (2005) highlight the need for learning partnerships and platforms that broker and translate research for use by actors in each of these pillars. Partnerships imply a stronger relationship between those who supply skills and knowledge and the projects (such as social enterprises) that need them. Platforms they argue are about the sector coming together to determine what it needs in terms of skills and knowledge and working together to source and *apply* them.

For example, Social Economy Incubators in Brazil bring expert knowledge, high levels of technical specification and data into community learning processes in some of the poorest favelas in the country. In Mondragon, in the Basque Country, the Mondragon Team Academy (MTA) is helped because the Mondragon Corporation (see *TAP 2 The Plural Economy*) has developed its own university, knowledge frameworks and learning methods to support its business roll out strategies. The University Research Programme in Quebec is funded by the state and has underpinned the development of regional markets, strengthened skills, particularly in finance and has helped to move social enterprises into high growth sectors of the economy.

The diagram below recognises the way different actors in the social economy learn and emphasises an action learning approach in which more direct application of knowledge is critical in starting, scaling and sustaining social enterprises. It also shows the importance of organisations within the sector learning from each other and pooling expertise, problem solving and knowledge transfer processes. The weakness of such learning support is part of the reason why the social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland (as just one aspect of CWB) remains underdeveloped compared to the UK.



Source: Murtagh, 2019, p. 179, after Schweitzer et al, 2008, p.53; Keen, 2005, p.10.

Supporting capacity: practice and impact

There have been a number of reviews that highlight the skills needs of the community sector, social enterprises and in contract readiness. A review of social enterprises involved in urban regeneration showed that they lacked skills across the development chain including:

- Getting advice to start up the project, 40%;
- Getting the right staff to develop and manage an enterprise, 45%;
- Getting access to finance to grow the project, 80%;
- Finding premises or facilities, 14%;
- Lack of information on the problems and pitfalls, 48%;
- Support from the public sector, 63%;
- Support from volunteers, 23%;
- Equipment or IT systems, 23: and
- Marketing, 43% (Murtagh and McFerran, 2015, p.1591).

These barriers are significant, especially if a comprehensive CWB agenda is to make an impact on the most excluded people and places. There have been important interventions in the past and each has had their own strengths and limitations. Whilst they registered an impact on social enterprises and the wider social economy, they have often been short term, under-funded and lacked access to resources (funding, technical assistance, expert staff) to make a lasting impact on the sector.

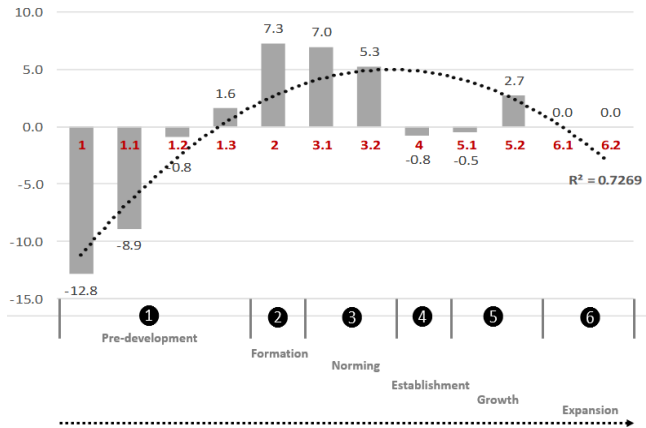
For example, the **Social Enterprise Hub** programme was supported by the Executive Office between around 2014 and 2017 and aimed to offer a physical base for social enterprises as well as training, research services and support accessing mainstream capital and revenue finance. The Hubs were distributed across Northern Ireland and aimed to generate innovation across users of the space and encouraged co-working and more formal joint project development

supported by staff and technical assistance, especially around business planning, human resource and funding applications. As with other interventions, it was short lived, despite evidence of their value, especially at start-up and incubation stage. Such co-location ventures need time to embed their presence in the local market, build awareness and achieve the necessary scale (with a mix of participating businesses) to be effective.

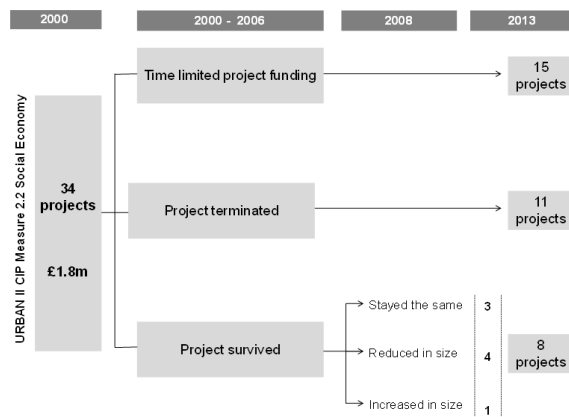
The diagram below shows that part of the problem is the short-term nature of the investment, its limited scale of funding, the emphasis on a particular point in the business development chain and lack of integration between technical support, capital and scaling outcomes. What is concerning is that, in their own terms, they have been successful, including incubation, deepening skills and strengthening commercial viability. **Social Enterprise Belfast (SEB)** was funded by the EU PEACE II Programme between 2000 and 2006, primarily to encourage start-up companies. By 2006, 250 people had received SEB training, there were 290 mentoring sessions and 5 best practice visits were conducted. The programme helped to develop a business network where informal links were maintained and experience shared by people with similar development challenges and plans.

The diagram below is taken from the evaluation of the programme and plots how enterprises have moved across six stages of the business cycle and shows that SEB has moved a cohort of groups from the pre-start to the formation stage, with some evidence of more permanent business models emerging, especially at stage 3.1 (social enterprise growth) and 4.2 (preparation for expansion). The *polynomial* or curvilinear trend line has a high degree of fit with a regression coefficient of $R^2=0.8543$ and this highlights that the core activity is now firmly concentrated on identifying and supporting the formation of tradable services within organisations. Clearly, the lack of activity in phases beyond stage 4 illustrates that SEB has stayed close to its core objectives on social enterprise start-up and incubation. The problem is how such growth is then consolidated and scaled and how start-ups (or diversification) are supported beyond the funding.

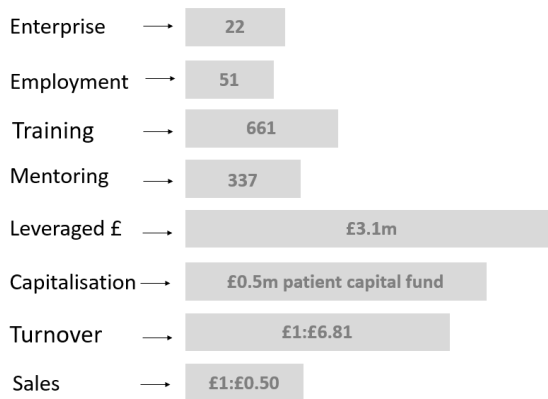
Social Economy Belfast (2000-06) aimed to: Build awareness and promote the benefits of the social economy to people and organisations working in community development; develop business competencies and entrepreneurship within organisations working in the social economy; develop tailored business solutions to support the individual needs of organisations working in the social economy; and develop and maintain formal and informal support networks in order to build a durable social economy.



The **URBAN II Programme** involved approximately £12.74m including a Measure on the Development of community businesses and the social economy. The diagram shows that most projects did not develop into viable social enterprises and only 1 (an already large social enterprise) increased in size. Short term investment in a concentrated area that lacks the infrastructure, volume or diversity of community businesses will have limited prospects of success.



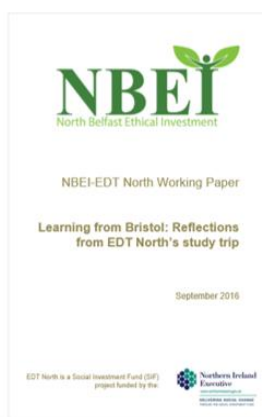
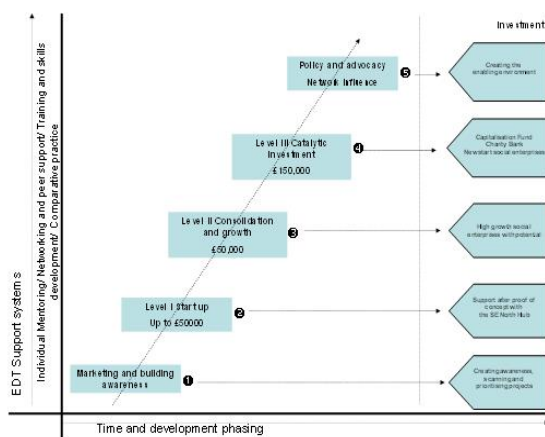
The **North Belfast Ethical Investment** programme was a Social Investment Fund (SIF) revenue project that aimed to develop and diversify the social economy in the north of the city. NBEI provided investment and technical assistance to support social enterprises to redevelop an existing asset, acquire a new property or develop a business concept. It supported 22 enterprises, created 51 jobs, strengthened turnover and leveraged £3.1 of investment into the businesses.



These largely experimental approaches have been successful against the limited resources invested and their duration. They have emphasised a developmental approach by recognising that a different set of skills, understanding and learning is needed at each stage of the development cycle. The Social Economy Belfast programme is summarised in the table below and reflects a well thought through, evidenced-led and applied approach to technical support. Yet, after it was completed and the evaluation verified its impact on start-up and consolidation, it effectively ended, unable to exploit the expertise, systems and experience of the people and users involved.

Phase	Title	Module	Content
1	Raising awareness of social businesses	1	Social enterprise; what is it all about? Social enterprise and us Finding a social enterprise idea First steps for social enterprise Sustainability for social enterprise Building social capital and counting value added; Next steps
2	Start a social business	1	Management and leadership skills
		2	Emotional intelligence
		3	Presentation skills
		4	Assertiveness, negotiation and management conflict skills
		5	Developing your business ideas
		6	Raising finance
3	Exploring social business	1	Preparing a business plan
		2	Marketing strategy and market research
		3	Financial Planning
		4	Operational management
		5	Legal structures, compliance, risk and management
		6	Information management
4	Develop a social business	1	Strategic review
		2	Sustainability
		3	Marketing
		4	Successful selling
		5	Human resource management
		6	Financial management
		7	Legal structures and governance
		8	ICT: Information and Communications Technology
		9	Social capital and social auditing

The start-stop nature of support was also evident in NBEI that matched revenue funding, with technical support for a range of social enterprises in the inner city. The developmental approach is evidenced below, with entry level support, backed by three grades of investment for asset holding social enterprises. This enabled organisations to identify the type of support they needed such as economic appraisals, business plans, legal advice, planning guidance and so on, to get the concept to the next stage of development. The combination of expert assistance with development finance and access to mainstream grant and debt worked affectively albeit on a limited scale. NBEI also placed an emphasis on learning with best practice visits, technical guidance, sharing *what works* (including on the potential of accelerator models) and research into sectoral opportunities including community-led housing, tech and fabrication and specialist textiles (linked to film production).



Skills and learning provision

There are existing programmes that deal with different levels of support, specialist areas (such as procurement) or sectors, including support for entrepreneurship. These need to be built upon and integrated into a clearer and more sustainably resourced framework to enable community wealth building and its delivery across pillars and places. For example, **Supporting Communities** deliver entry level OCN programmes that also link with the advanced programme on social enterprise at Ulster University.

Social Enterprise Awareness is designed to increase basic awareness of the sector and give participants an introduction to the development of business income streams. This involves: understand the purpose and function of a social enterprise; the of a range of social enterprises; and recognising challenges and opportunities.

Understanding Social Enterprise OCN Level 2 aims to build on this entry level to explore the sector in more detail and in particular evaluate options for growth and development.

Developing Social Enterprise OCN Level 3 is aimed at those who have an idea for a business and want to take it forward. It examines: the philosophy and impact of your social enterprise; market research; financial projections and potential for growth; organisational and legal structures; business planning; and finance and investments.

The screenshot shows a webpage titled "Social Enterprise Courses". It lists three courses:

- Social Enterprise Awareness (2.5 hours)**: This 'one off' session is designed to increase basic awareness of Social Enterprise and give participants an introduction to the development of business income streams. Find out what we mean by Social Enterprise and how this type of business functions.
 - Understand the purpose and function of a social enterprise
 - Be aware of a range of social enterprises
 - Recognise the challenges and opportunities
- Understanding Social Enterprise OCN Level 2**: This accredited course can be delivered in a series of half day sessions over 6-8 weeks, in 2 weeks with full day sessions or in and intensive 2 day residential. During the course you will:
 - Understand the purpose and function of a social enterprise
 - Be aware of a range of social enterprises
 - Recognise the challenges and opportunities for the development of social enterprises
- Developing Social Enterprise OCN Level 3**: This course is geared towards those who have an idea for a business and want to take it forward. This accredited course is typically delivered in a series of half day sessions over 12 weeks but other arrangements can be made with our trainer if necessary. This course will cover:
 - The Philosophy and Impact of your Social Enterprise
 - Introduction to Market Research - Knowing your Markets
 - Financial Projections and Potential for Growth
 - Organisational and Legal Structures
 - An Introduction to Business Planning
 - Finance and Investments

Source: <https://supportingcommunities.org/social-enterprise-courses>

The **Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP)** aims to support and encourage new social enterprises to operate under commercial business models, in order to maximise their economic impact (in terms of jobs and wealth creation), whilst maintaining a focus on wider economic and social benefits. The SEP provided three autonomous, but interrelated, strands of support, which had a number of entry and exit points. These are:

1. Lead In Capability Support to provide groups with well-defined social enterprise projects and ideas;
2. Core Capability Support to provide tailored one-to-one support to focus on the development and implementation of a social enterprise's business plan; and
3. Start-up Grant to assist with those costs that were associated with establishing their social enterprise.

The evaluation of the programme (Cogent, 2016) showed that between January 2013 and July 2015, 234 organisations were provided with support. The level of net additional GVA was £1,535,914 and looking at the full economic cost of delivering the programme (i.e. £1,446,960), then the GVA return-on-investment is £1:£1.063. Allowing for five years of benefits for each participant, the actual net additional GVA (£1,535,914) and the 'anticipated' net additional GVA (£4,033,699), equates to a total net GVA of £5,569,613. This results in a 5-year GVA return-on-investment of £1:£3.85.

At a more advanced level, Ulster University has developed a range of postgraduate courses that have been consolidated around the *Transform* programme.

The **School for Social Enterprises in Ireland (SSEI)** supports leadership, management and business development programmes and related events for the social economy sector. SSEI was formed in 2005 as a strategic alliance between the Ulster University and The Flax Trust, designed to promote sustainable community enterprise and economic development in Ireland. It delivers the Advanced Diploma in Social Enterprise as the TRANSFORM Development Programme, which is a one-year social enterprise programme designed for individuals who wish to develop a new business; or those in existing community organisations and charities who are trying to diversify their income streams through business development.

Source: [School for Social Enterprises Ireland](#)



TRANSFORM is designed to enable individuals to gain the knowledge and skills required to start or build social enterprise activities via 6 core modules:

- Module 1 Global Social Enterprise Movement
- Module 2 Social Business Model Generation
- Module 3 Governance of Social Enterprises
- Module 4 Creating Social Value through Marketing
- Module 5 Finance for Growth
- Module 6 Social Impact Plan

Structures for capacity building

We can set out what skills and knowledge the sector (specifically the social economy) needs but the way in which learning is applied is also a priority, especially to bring the sector to the next level of development. It is argued here that the Firstport model represents a template to bring the various strands of the framework together in a way that will support the long-term development of the social economy. [Firstport Scotland](#) provides integrated technical support, finance and knowledge building for the social enterprise sector. They are part of a wider ecosystem of entrepreneurial support (see [Scotland Can Do](#)) and work alongside other support organisations, academia and funders to encourage start-ups and consolidate organisations with growth potential. It has therefore, strategic, policy and research functions but builds funding with technical support via a range of developmental products to support the sector across the growth cycle. These include:

- a. Pounds for Purpose: Small £500 awards for individuals aged 16-26 looking to make a positive change in the issues that matter to them;
- b. Social Entrepreneurs Fund - Start It: Up to £5,000 of start-up funding for individuals with a business idea that addresses a social, environmental, and/or community issue;
- c. Social Entrepreneurs Fund – Build It: Up to £25,000 of funding for individuals who have tried and tested an idea and want to turn it into their full-time job;
- d. Social Entrepreneurs Fund – Boost It: is a fund to help social enterprises that have been trading for up to three years to strengthen their businesses so they can successfully sustain trading; and
- e. Social Innovation Challenge: funds and supports innovators to kick-start solutions that tackle some of the most pressing social and environmental challenges.

Firstport also deliver an accelerator model, [LaunchMe](#), which is a dedicated social enterprise accelerator that provides a business support and investment readiness programme to help social enterprises to scale and diversify their business. However, much of the support is one-to-one and concentrates on: working out a business model; understanding pricing and legal structures; developing financial forecasts; and signposting and connecting social enterprises with other sources of support. Accelerators and social innovation are important where they build stable social enterprises and there is a concern across development trusts that ‘innovation’ is portrayed as an easy fix for a poorly performing sector. Social enterprises, social economies and community wealth will not be built with short term interventions espousing creativity but without the capital, time and technical resources to build a stable business. In Barcelona and across Spain, this is precisely what innovation is used for – to build socially responsible and responsive businesses in high growth sectors of the economy.

InnoBA is Barcelona City Council’s arena for *Social and Solidarity Economy and Socio-Economic Innovation* in the city of Barcelona. The innoBAadora incubator hosts projects create synergies between people, groups and companies and provides targeted training and technical support around specific concepts and business projects. InnoBA has a dedicated programme supporting social enterprises, state agencies bodies and firms emerging from the innovation process on public procurement, social clauses and supply chain opportunities. The organisation undertakes research and bespoke support to develop high-growth sectors, business clusters (collectives) and social enterprises along the growth continuum.

Source: [Social economy and innovation in Barcelona](#)

By sectors	For collectives	For start-ups
E-commerce > For online commerce projects.	Ideas with a future > For people aged 16 to 30 who want to start a business.	Pre-acceleration > For technology-based startups.
Handmade > For craft projects.	mature ideas > For people aged 40 or over with a business idea in Barcelona.	preincubation > For digital startups that want to validate their business model.
Createmedia > For projects related to the creative industries.	start > For women with business ideas who need training and advice to get it off the ground.	Deep Tech Node > Initiative with the five Catalan public universities to accompany deep tech startups in their access to the market.
The communicator > For projects with common focus.	We build in feminine > For women who want to promote a project with social impact.	
Social entrepreneurship > For projects with social impact.	Finanwomen > For women entrepreneurs in the process of finding funding.	
Cleantech field > For projects in the field of clean energies.	PD3- Make the change > For professional women and managers who want to develop their individual and leadership skills.	
futurism > For tourism sector projects.	Women Mentoring Programme > Expert support in professional and business development for women entrepreneurs.	
Innofood > For projects linked to healthy eating.		
B-STEP > For startups in the sports sector.		
Blue UP > For startups in the blue economy sector		

Skills for building community wealth

This section draws on a range of empirical sources, including the DTNI survey of development trusts to consider the priority skills areas in each community wealth building pillar.

Building a plural economy focused on social enterprises

Building an alternative economy for the most excluded places and people will require a mix of skills, but the priority here is the development, management and scaling of social enterprises. The analysis shows that too many programmes have been short-term, disjointed and in particular lack access to revenue and capital finance to make a difference to groups with growth potential. Support, of course, needs to be integrated with existing programmes such as the Social Entrepreneurship Programme, SSEI and the Supporting People ONC programme. But the evidence also shows that support is needed for a more engaged model that links technical knowledge with core skills and an opportunity to integrate both into the social enterprise sector.



There needs to be a **long-term investment in a technical assistance model based on Firstport** that can match skills, research and application along with investment finance to start, incubate and grow the social enterprise sector. This would also help to support the governance of the project in design and implementation as well as in management and delivery, understanding and mitigating risk, community participation and reporting social impacts to stakeholders.

The core recommendations are set out below and reflect the core skills that such a programme would involve.

Core plural economy and social enterprise skills

- Business planning, cost accounting and understanding surplus
- Conducting and evaluating economic appraisals
- Human resource planning, people management and policies
- Building social entrepreneurship and leadership succession planning
- Marketing, sales and online communication
- Scaling and replication linked to finance, contracts and applying for money
- Understanding, researching and accessing growth markets
- Building relationships with government, the private sector and crucially, other social enterprises
- Governance, Board competency and community engagement
- Accounting for social impact and techniques in reporting blended value to stakeholders

Making financial power work

Money and the skills to use it is close to the future of a plural economy. There are gaps in the social finance market in Northern Ireland but there are also opportunities to build on investment readiness toolkits and training to strengthen the resilience of the sector.



The priority is to deliver a **comprehensive investment readiness programme** focusing on how social enterprises access and use money. This includes grants, commercial debt, social finance, access to national finance, and community shares and bonds. This could be integrated into the proposed technical assistance programme suggested under the plural economy and social enterprises above.

Such a programme could integrate with the technical assistance proposed earlier so there is a single point of support that would embrace existing analytical systems (getting loan ready) and training on social procurement. It was noted for example, that Firstport had its own capital budget as well as brokering access to regional and national social finance.

Core financial power skills

- Preparing grant bids and aligning with call priorities
- Understanding and accessing loan funding
- Understanding debt and how to manage repayments
- Developing internal systems, reporting systems and financial monitoring aligned with governance structures
- Organising, delivering and managing community share and bond offers

Fair employment and just work

Intermediate labour markets have been operating successfully across areas, sectors of the economy and in formal partnership with private businesses. The runout of the European Social Fund has created a funding challenge across the sector and there is clearly a priority to connect with the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#). As noted under finance, there is a need for a clearer strategy to access a range of Levelling Up, PEACE PLUS and Northern Ireland government funding.

Core skills for fair employment

- Negotiating with the private sector to create pathways into employment
- Working in consortia with third sector organisations to provide comprehensive services
- Build new businesses including cooperatives to strengthen employee buy-outs
- Understanding and accessing high growth sectors via intermediate labour markets
- Building stronger integration with local authority Labour Market Partnerships (LMP)

Progressive procurement

The analysis emphasised that capacity building is needed across the social enterprise, public and private sectors to embed an effective CWB policy. This is especially the case in procurement, where government departments and agencies supplying services; the need to meet social clauses by private bidders and the contract readiness of social enterprises should work in a more integrated way. It was noted in TAP 5 *Progressive procurement of goods and services* that there are toolkits to help development trusts to bid and to support their contract readiness but commissioning and bidding requires distinct pathways for each sector.



The priority recommendation here is to create a **Commissioning Academy** that would support the upstream design and planning of contracts to ensure that they are social value compliant; encourage private sector to consider social enterprises as partners and in supply chains; and to enable social enterprises to bid independently as well as form inter- and intra-sector consortia.

The skills for the development trust sector are outlined below.

Core procurement skills

- Understanding and accessing tender documents
- Complying with procurement requirements including policies, legal forms and financial strength
- Understanding and mitigating risk including risk registers, indemnity insurance and contract clauses
- Legal terms and relationships, contracts, Service Level Agreements and consortia arrangements
- Preparing technical tender bids in repose to contract specifications
- Pricing, profit margins and contingencies
- Building bidding consortia with social enterprises and the private sector
- Developing, measuring and reporting social value outcomes

Productive use of land and buildings

There is good support for asset transfer, utilities management and community ownership, despite the weakness of the regulatory environment. However, a dedicated programme to support asset holding social enterprises and how they use their collateral to scale and diversify their work is a priority. Here there is a connection with the proposal for a Firstport style model of support as demand for skills is centred on: project management from conception through to design and build, disposal and implementation; property management including site identification, purchase/transfer as well as sale and disposal; and land use planning including site analysis, density standards, constraints and scheme layout and design, especially in rural areas with stricter development control designations. Access to a technical assistance budget would tailor support to the needs of the project and would include economic appraisal and feasibility analysis; the legal implications of site purchase, construction, insurance, ownership and management.

Core skills for the productive use of land and buildings

- Working with government to access assets
- Project planning and management
- Access to capital investment
- Access to revenue funding (for staff, working capital and operating costs)
- Land use planning (application process, conditions and timescales)
- Business planning integrating development costs, depreciation and financial planning
- Understanding liabilities, insurance and governance
- Utilities management and maintenance (cost and programme works – response and planned maintenance)

Implications and recommendations

This analysis is in draft but highlights investment priorities to support a comprehensive Community Wealth Building programme.

Develop a single integrated capacity strategy for Community Wealth Building. There is a need to audit the current supply of training across the functional areas of CWB and to build on effective practice as well as address gaps, especially around social enterprise development, the use of finance and asset management. It should be emphasised that these relate to the

public sector, social economy organisations and where relevant, private sector businesses (especially in procurement).

Create a Procurement Academy for Northern Ireland aimed at service commissioners, anchor organisations and emerging networks and crucially social enterprises bidding for contracts. This can draw on national models but build pathways to grow social value in public sector procurement across departments, local government and statutory agencies.

Develop and fund a Knowledge Builder Programme to generate research and intelligence to support the application of skills across the community wealth spectrum, but especially in the social enterprise sector. To be clear this is not about theoretical research but about generating information that reinforces skills development and applied learning:

- Predictive research to identify high growth sectors, procurement opportunities and potential markets.
- Policy process research especially by developing innovative programmes, say within the context of existing funding programmes including PEACE PLUS, Levelling Up and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Normative understanding by say, transferring best practice especially around interventions, innovative models or programmes from other places.
- Evaluative knowledge especially around return on investment metrics, local multiplier effects and the aggregated impact of the five community wealth pillars on the Northern Ireland economy.
- Networked learning by strengthening the culture of sharing within Northern Ireland, with the rest of Ireland and the UK and globally. Accessing organisations such as the EMES International Research Network underscores the range of applied material, case studies and guides that could be made available with local brokerage.

Develop a bespoke knowledge transfer programme between CWB sectors, the universities and further education colleges. KTPs work effectively to bring innovation into the private sector but tends to be less well used in the social economy (mainly because of the way they are structured to reduce Corporation Tax). An experimental programme could help social enterprises innovate with new markets, develop products or services to access procurement opportunities, strengthen consortia or supply chain relationships.

Annex I Knowledge, practice and the SSE

Type of knowledge claim	Description	Category	Possibilities for the social and solidarity economy
Current state	Empirical account of current socio-economic and environmental situation	Experiential/ Empirical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depiction of the value, size and capability of the sector ▪ Evaluating the performance and <i>triple bottom-line</i> effects (economic, social and environmental) ▪ Valuing lay knowledge, citizen science and embracing <i>affected groups</i> in setting priorities and disseminating research
Predicted state	Prediction of future scenario under trend conditions	Predictive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where is the economy going in terms of growth sectors, areas and markets ▪ Market research into sectors with interdisciplinary and mixed methods into the socio-technical nature of spatial economics ▪ Feasibility studies, appraisals and business plan analysis
Societal processes	Process understanding of social, economic and environmental processes affecting society	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where are the opportunities exist to connect the values of the SSE with local problem solving ▪ What do people want and need and how does this feed into different ways of tackling poverty, isolation and exclusion ▪ What assets are available and can they be mobilised as a basis for planning the SSE
Policy process	Process understanding of policy	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding the processual nature of urban change and the implications of economic restructuring for the spatial economy ▪ Policy making processes, institutional context and the legal and regulatory environment ▪ Power mapping, economic interests and the interface with politics
Outcomes state	Empirical account of outcomes of planning processes in specific societal context	Experiential/ Empirical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appreciation of the influence of the place specific aspects of the economy ▪ Path dependencies, market lock-in and barriers to alternative economics ▪ Forming projects, prototyping, proof of concept and evaluating the ethics of practice
Policy-social interactions	Process understanding of how policy and societal processes interacted to create outcomes	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy impact and effectiveness of the SSE ▪ Identification of gaps in the assemblage that policy can help to fix ▪ The changing nature of poverty, exclusion, isolation and loneliness in which the SSE is embedded
Normative knowledge	Understanding of desired goals for the SSE	Normative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to create, scale and replicate the SSE ▪ Understanding the architecture of the sector including the scope for network planning and market integration ▪ Finance, and investment for SSE growth
Theoretical	Understanding the philosophical basis and competing conceptual interpretations of the SSE	Conceptual/ theoretical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenge the performative authority of market knowledge the instabilities of capital as a basis of challenge ▪ Alternative theoretical explanations of economic change and uneven spatial effects and policy inefficiencies ▪ Anthropological knowledge that identifies and values the mix of distribution systems

Source: Based on Murtagh, 2019, p.177-8, adapted from Rydin, 2007, p. 60.

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[Queen's Communities and Place | QCAP](#) uses research and teaching to help tackle the complex challenges of socio-spatial deprivation. Our social economy strand works with people, NGOs and government to build a more inclusive approach to area-based regeneration.

Draft, confidential and not for circulation