



National Student SPARK Social Enterprise Awards

What are the National Student Spark Social Enterprise Awards?

Students undertaking Social Care Practice or Youth and Community, Early Childhood Care in Education, Business Studies and Accountancy programmes, both undergraduate and post-graduate level, have the potential to be the social enterprise leaders of the future. Now in its second year, the SPARK social enterprise awards competition will facilitate, recognise and reward creative, innovative and inspirational solutions to a diverse range of social issues. The SPARK social enterprise awards were conceived by lecturers delivering social science programmes at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology, Sligo and Institute of Technology, Tralee.

The competition involves students studying on Institute of Technology programmes working as members of inter-disciplinary teams composed of between two and four members, with at least one member from social sciences. If it is not possible to compose teams inter-disciplinarily, other team components will be considered. Broadly, the competition seeks to encourage students to think about social issues that require innovative, imaginative, and creative solutions that will improve the lives of people and enhance communities. The competition is intended to create and facilitate spaces for students to imagine, think, apply and act as social entrepreneurs. The SPARK national social enterprise awards represent a valuable learning experience for all participants and could quite possibly result in a society changing innovation: make it happen!

Benefitting enormously from sponsorship provided by The Irish Association of Social Care and the Accelerating Campus Entrepreneurship initiative in 2014, this year's competition is exclusively and generously sponsored by the **Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (CPA Ireland)**. Cash prizes are available to winners at regional and national levels. Both SPARK and CPAI are committed to the key objectives of the competition namely to create and support the next generation of social enterprise leader and innovators.

Through participation in this experiential learning experience, students will develop team work, critical thinking, and effective communication and leadership skills, all directly relevant to their future employability.

Student motivation for participation will come from their commitment to make Ireland a better place to live in, the opportunity of working in inter-disciplinary groups and the prospect of winning generous cash prizes! Effecting change for good will be a driving force for these students. The fact that there are cash prizes for the most innovative solutions will also act as an incentive for participation.

One of the key recommendations of the recent Forfás [“Social Enterprise in Ireland-Sectorial Opportunities and Policy Issues” Report](#) highlighted the need to adapt third level curricula so that social enterprise and non-profit management are included in mainstream academic courses. These awards recognise the importance of providing entrepreneurial education for students and by participating, students will gain valuable experiential learning opportunities to think, feel and act as social entrepreneurs.

What is Social Enterprise?

Social enterprises are business models set up to address social, economic or environmental issues. With their roots in local and community development, Ireland has a proud tradition of the co-operative movement and one of the many positive impacts are that the nature of social enterprises can support local economic empowerment and self-determination in marginalised and excluded communities.

For the purposes of this competition a social entrepreneur is defined as:

“an individual or a group (of no more than four people) who acts for public or social benefit (rather than to make money),has an innovative approach in addressing a need, has an ability to effectively develop and grow their new idea to maximise impact” (adapted from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland).

In Ireland, there are four main types of social enterprise, and often social enterprises may overlap in these goals:



At national level, the Programme for Government 2011-2016 recognises the important role of social enterprise in creating significant employment potential currently employing between 25,000 and 33,000 people in over 1,400 social enterprises with a total income of €1.4 billion. Evidence of the commitment at Government level to develop the estimated potential for employment of creating 66,000 jobs in the social enterprise sector, was the initial allocation of this responsibility to Minister Seán Sherlock TD, at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and subsequently to his ministerial colleague, Mr. Ged Nash TD. In an EU context, social enterprise accounts for approximately 6% of GDP and the European Commission's 'Europe 2020' Strategy sets a target for this contribution to increase to 9% over the decade. Moreover, following the '[Strasbourg Declaration](#)' in January 2014, the European Union is committed nurturing and resourcing a social enterprise culture as part of the EU Commission's Social Business Initiative throughout the member states. In a nutshell, social enterprise and social entrepreneurship are set to become significant features of future European and Irish social and economic growth delivery mechanisms. Participation in SPARK will help prepare you for these opportunities.

Competition Criteria

The following ideas serve as a guide to help contestants and judging panels better understand the framework and content of the competition criterion.

Social Benefit - the proposal enhances and/or improves the well-being of individuals/groups/ communities in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

Needs- enhanced or improved well-being is brought about when the physical and social needs, which all people across the world share, are met. We can distinguish between two types of human need:

‘Thin’ needs which require satisfaction to survive and ‘thick’ needs, which, when met, enable a person to have a sense of purpose, feel able to achieve important goals, participate in society and make a contribution to the community.

Thin Needs	Thick Needs
<input type="checkbox"/> Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/> Having a sense of purpose
<input type="checkbox"/> Food/water	<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling able to achieve important goals
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare	<input type="checkbox"/> Participating in society
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-hazardous living environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Having supportive personal relationships
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-hazardous work environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Living in a strong and inclusive community
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial security	<input type="checkbox"/> Having meaningful and rewarding work

Applying Entrepreneurial and Economic Concepts – In addition to demonstrating vision, imagination, innovation and creativity contestants are required to apply business and economic concepts to their projects. The application of an entrepreneurial mind set to the project process, content and delivery should result in the creation of economically viable/sustainable projects.

Entrepreneurial Approach – Contestants are required to demonstrate creativity and innovation in the manner in which their project is pursued and completed.

How does it work?

All ideas are welcome. It could be for a product or a service. The idea could plan to operate as a traditional commercial business, a social enterprise or a creative idea and must be related to an unmet or inadequately met social need. If you are not sure about the potential of your idea, talk to us about it. We can help.

Who can enter?

The competition is open to all current undergraduate or postgraduate students registered at

Institutes of Technology with at least one social science student on each team (social care, early childhood education, MA students)

What help and support can I get?

In supporting students to demonstrate clarity of their ideas and to compile competition appropriate entries, Spark SE Champions located in each participating HEI will provide bespoke support to intending competition entrants. Contact details are available on the SPARK website.

How are the National Student SPARK Social Enterprise Awards 2015 Judged?

The applications will be judged by an independent panel of judges composed of five people with recognised expertise in the area of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship who will consider the application in terms of both the business idea and the ambition and drive of the team making the application. Last year the judging panel was composed of Ms. Laura Dennehy (Enactus Ireland), Fr. Peter McVerry (Peter McVerry Trust) and Mr. Darren Ryan (Social Entrepreneurs Ireland). Detailed instructions and guidelines on how to construct applications are available on the SPARK website (See below). The judges will consider a number of factors when making their decisions including:

- The viability and feasibility of the business idea, including a business plan and its social applicability;
- Any evidence of a researched target market;
- The drive and ambition of the students involved;
- The creativity and innovativeness of the idea;
- A short presentation and questions and answers session with the judging panel

PRIZES

Competition winners will be awarded cash prizes both at local Institute level, and with an overall national winner being announced following a 'Dragons Den' feasibility event involving all Institute winners to be held at the headquarters of CPAI, Harcourt Street, Dublin.

Prizes at local Institute level:

- 1st Place €250
- 2nd Place €100

National winner prize:

- 1st place €2,000
- 2nd place €1,000
- 3rd place €500

CONTACT INFORMATION

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