

Social Impact Ireland Overview



**Together we drive change,
together we have an impact.**



Table of Contents

Social Impact Ireland's Journey 3

Our Story 4

Values Driven 5

The Mission this set for us 6

The Activities this drove us to deliver 7

The Impact we strive to deliver 9

Our Audience 11

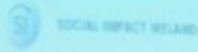
Our Activities 15

- Advocacy & Promotion of the Sector 15
- Social Sector Relevant Business Supports 19
- Impact Supports 20
- CLOSER Community 21

Our Overall Impact 24

Our Partners Contribution 27

Our Decision to Close 28



SOCIAL IMPACT IRELAND



NATIONAL ORGANISATION

...in each
...at whatever stage
...on their social
...journey - to fulfil the
...of their endeavour to
...positive impact

1:1 SUPPORTS

Having worked with over 120+ SME's we offer a range of supports such as Business Clinics, Start Clusters, Incubators and much more.

SE MARK IRELAND

It is an international accreditation which acts as an independent externally awarded guarantee that a business is operating on a social enterprise.

CLOSER

Close to our wide community of social enterprises where you can collaborate, share best practice, challenge, drive out all the best of education and more.

Social Impact Ireland's Journey



Our Story

Social Impact Ireland arose from a desire to make a difference in the social enterprise sector in Ireland. We believe in the power and the potential of each individual to make a real difference that will benefit their community and beyond and make a positive social impact.

Social Impact Ireland is a values driven organisation that puts impact at the heart of everything we do. From our original inception as BNest in 2016 we evolved greatly in approach but stayed resolute to our founding beliefs. In that time as an organisation we have moved from an original local orientation to a national reach while expanding our national perspective to involvement in the international space with our accreditation collaboration with Social Enterprise Mark CIC in UK and other initiatives.

We worked hard with individuals and enterprises across the social economy, at whatever stage they are on their social enterprise journey – to help them in fulfilling the potential of their endeavour to make a positive impact to our collective social good.

Ultimately, it is about enhancing and growing a vibrant collaborative social enterprise sector, one which encourages opportunity and empowers collaborative social entrepreneurship for all. One that gives free reign to the passion of the people we all support, to deliver to the benefit of us all.





Values Driven

The character and impact of any social endeavour is determined by the values which underpin that endeavour. As a social enterprise ourselves we actively defined and sought to act to the demands of our core values.

We believe in enhancing the personal '*Autonomy*' for those working and leading within the social sector, the person's ability to act on his or her own values and interests.

We believe on the value of '*Collaboration*' – that together more is possible, fostering connectivity among entities, consistent with their values and contributing to their mutual benefit.

We believe in working with '*Empathy*', with understanding and appreciation for the lived reality of people.

We believe that in our work it is about enhancing and growing a vibrant collaborative '*Community*' of social purpose driven people and enterprises, a mutually supportive community that creates further opportunities to enhance our collective Impact.

Ultimately it is about delivering meaningful positive '*Impact*' than enhances our collective social good.





The mission this sets for us

Supporting social enterprises in enhancing their impact and attaining beneficial recognition of their critical role in enabling a vibrant social economy.

**Together
we drive
change,**

**Together
we have
an impact.**

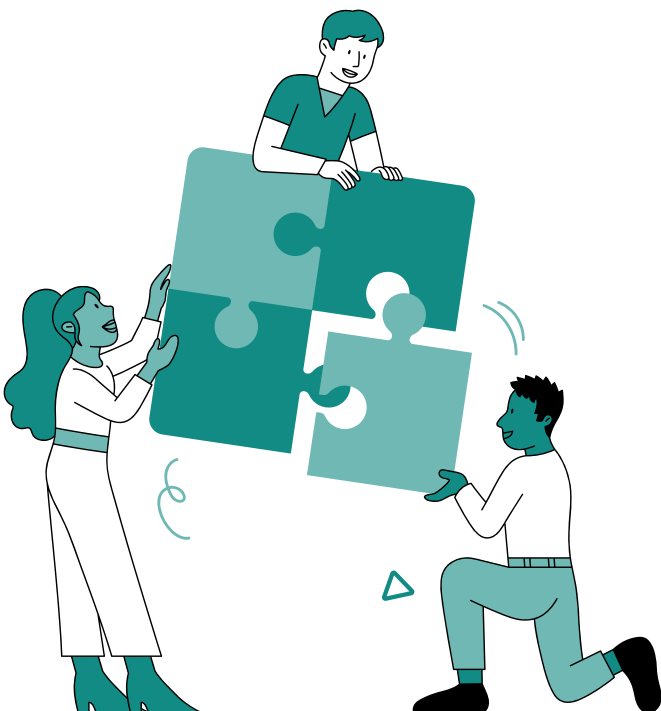




The Activities this drives us to deliver

In Social Impact Ireland, we strive to accomplish our mission by:

1. Providing **Advocacy and Promotion of the social sector**: To promote participation within the sector and engagement by those in the broader economy in support of meaningful social impact.
2. Fostering the development of a self-driven **community of social entity participants** that further enables connectivity and collaboration with the sector.
3. Provision of a range of practical **personal and business supports**, derived from the real needs of the social sector, that assist in elevating participants contribution through their initiatives.
4. Provision of practical **impact focused supports** that helps through enhancing their direct impact and articulating the benefit to the broader world.



The value we see in our work is created through:

- A constant Impact driven focus.
- 'Collaboration enabling' where sensible and practical.
- 'Person Centric approach' which respects autonomy and seeks to explore and learn rather than prescribe.
- Striving always for a professional business driven perspective.





The Impact we strive to deliver



Theory of Change

The Impact that our mission drove us to deliver to, is one which visualises a vibrant, collaborative, connected community of socially motivated enterprises and individuals, delivering real growing impact, engaged, recognised and supported as a vital contributor to a thriving social economy.

The Outcomes* that this can be judged through are:

Within the Sector:

- Broader social enterprise sector awareness & recognition
- Enhanced economic viability opportunities for social entities
- An evolving, innovative, sector relevant, practical supportive framework

Among Participants:

- Enhanced Social Economy Participation
- Enhanced Social Economy Community Growth
- Enhanced Individual Autonomy

Our business strategy sought to develop our activities aligned to these outcomes and actively utilises metrics relevant to these outcomes to report and continuously advance our impact.

* The Outcomes are based on several references covered in our summary Appendix.

Our Purpose

Supporting social enterprises in enhancing their impact and attaining beneficial recognition of their critical role in enabling a vibrant social economy.

The "Impact" we want from Our Mission

Vibrant, collaborative, connected community of socially motivated enterprises and individuals, delivering real growing impact engaged and recognised as a vital part of the social economy

The "Outcomes" that will show us we are delivering on our Mission

Sector Relevant Practical Supportive Framework

SE Sector Awareness & Recognition

Enhanced Economic Viability Opportunities

Enhanced Social Economy Participation

Social Economy Community Growth

Enhanced Individual Autonomy

The Activities we do



Relevant Indicators

Sector Promotional Metrics
SE Mark Advancement
Reports & Insights
CLOSER Community Metrics
SE Supports Work
Project Work
Impact Work
Collaborations & Connections



Our Audience

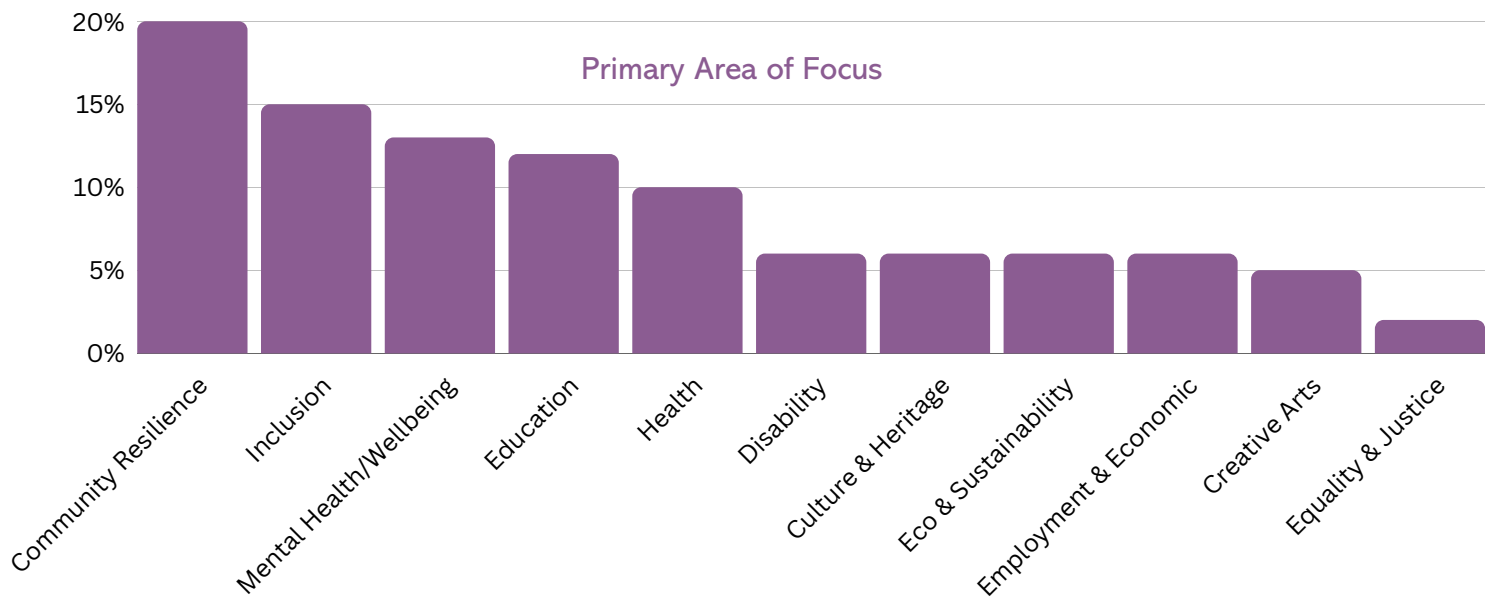
The audience we engage with is extremely divergent. Our interactions to date cover over 250 social entities and over 500 participants in the sector along with a equal number of supportive individuals either through support agencies, commercial representatives or other interested parties.

To show the diversity of our audience we track through our CRM system their focus in terms of UN sustainable Development Goals as well as a classification by primary purpose. This analysis is based on the primary focus of the social enterprises as against claiming all conceivable benefits.



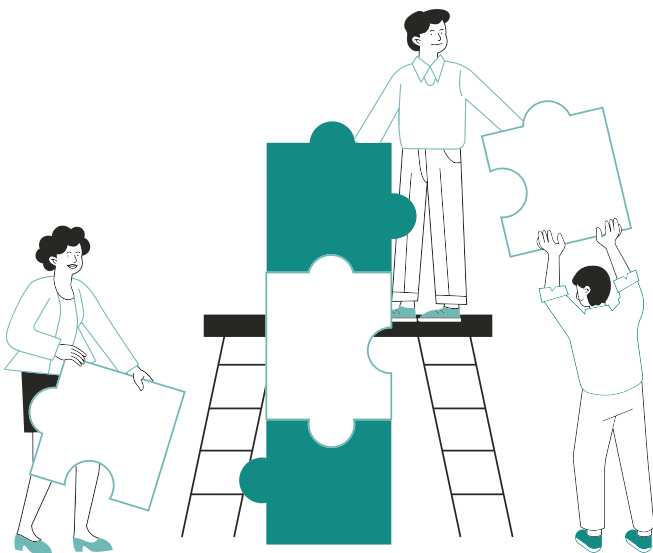
Mapping of our Social Entity interactions to their SDG focus

Indeed not all social entities will map well to the SDGs' so we also track by principle area of focus.

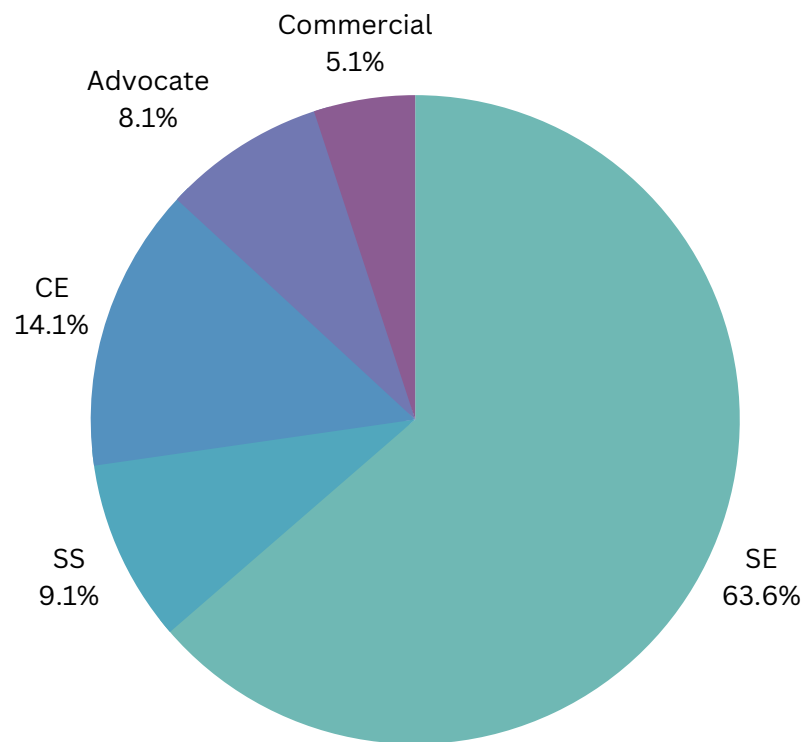


Not surprisingly, the principal concentration is on community resilience, inclusion, mental & physical health, and educational enhancement. Over the past year there is a significant rise in the eco/sustainability space but in many instances the community resilience incorporates large elements of this as well.

A feature of the sector as a whole is the overlapping of areas of interest and the general confusion around definitions of social entities. To us in our work we use the simple concept of 'application of an enterprise approach in pursuit of a social purpose'. However, we also track this by the more accepted definitions that are there, although the Irish landscape does not neatly match to this.



Social Enterprise by Type



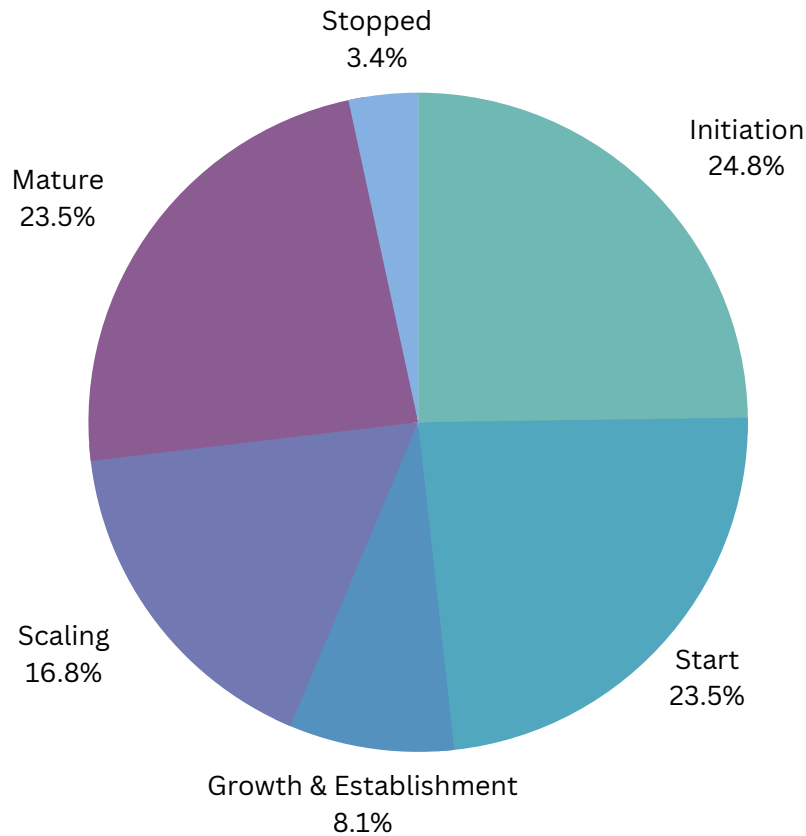
As shown above:

- Social Enterprise (SE) is a trading focused entity pursuing a social purpose,
- Support Service (SS) is one where some trading occurs but is primarily the vehicle for delivery of a supported service,
- Community Enterprise (CE) is one where the target area is defined by a specific local community.
- Advocacy is one that does not really trade but exists to advocate for a specific social cause.
- Commercial is an enterprise, clearly driven by a social purpose, but operates as a commercial business.

The reality is there is no neat segmentation with combinations of almost all of these forms existing. This is the noisy reality – people driven by a purpose find a path that works for themselves.

Within our work we also attempted to understand the stage of development these are at. There is as much anecdotal judgment as measurement in this assessment but it does give some insight.

Life Cycle



While somewhat imprecise it does reflect the 'struggle to develop' that all social endeavours face. Mature reflects the organisation achieving their desired end state and does not necessarily require them to have 'scaled' as in a commercial sense. The scaling portion above is probably an 'overestimate' as it reflects those attempting to scale.

In comparison with the commercial sector, the start-up phase is more challenging as the viable models are harder to evolve with initial funding being very challenging. This has a double impact as for those that progress to a desire to scale they are generally under resourced and undercapitalised to be successful. We believe that addressing these issues imaginatively to us is critical in evolving a successful social enterprise sector.



Our Activities

Advocacy & Promotion of the Sector

Our work in this space fell principally in two areas:

- Advancement of the international accreditation Social Enterprise Mark within Ireland
- A range of promotional events that seek to highlight the contribution of the varied social initiatives we interact with.

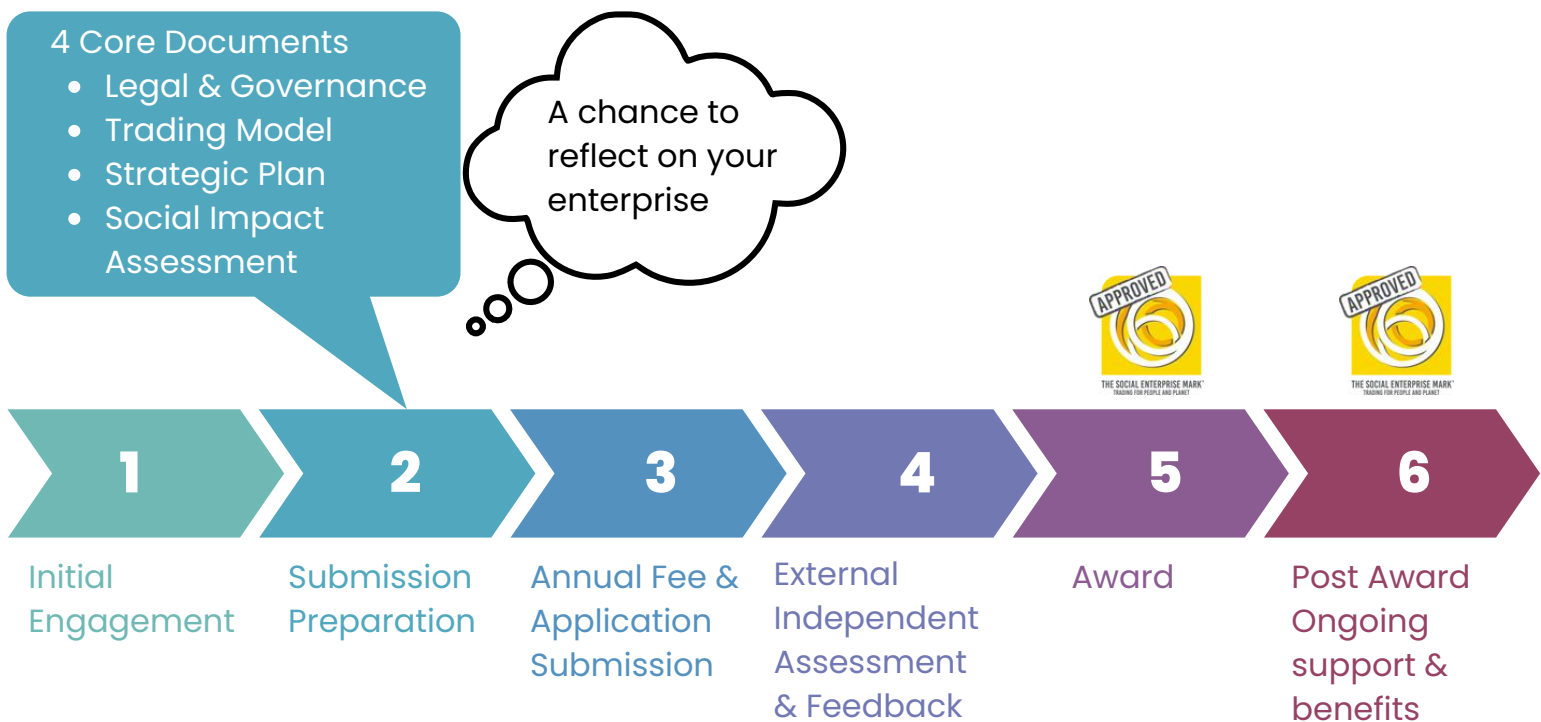
Social Enterprise Mark Ireland

Through 2021 and 2022, SII worked on customising the international accreditation mark SE Mark CIC for use in Ireland. The SE Mark CIC is the only international accreditation that identifies social enterprises and the motivation for its introduction to Ireland was to assist in overcoming the complexity in recognising social enterprises through specific legal formats while also offering a development path for initiatives in enhancing their activities.



In introducing this mark, the approach taken was one designed so that the application process itself acted as a self-assessment by the applicant to allow them to cross check the development of their social initiative. The process assists in understanding:

1. Better governance approach
2. Understanding the core trading model
3. Checking the alignment of their strategic direction to their needs
4. Providing a means of assessing their progress towards the impact they strive to deliver.



Benefits of Accreditation

- Easy identification as a social enterprise
- Enhanced ability to showcase your Impact
- Annual targeted promotional SE Mark campaign highlighting the Businesses, Stories and lives of the Awardee Mark
- A supportive media pack to help you leverage the value in the mark for yourself
- Collaborative opportunities to engage with fellow mark holders in a range of ways.

The initial applicants in the pilot phase assisted in developing an assessment that was bound to the principles of social enterprise but practical in application to the Irish landscape.

This pilot phase concluded in November 2022 with an awards ceremony that showcased the initial 8 holders of the mark, and reflective of the wide spectrum of participants in the Irish social sector, included CLGs, DAC, LTD entities.

Utilising their experiences within this process we continue to build out the cohort of mark holders and targeted significant growth through 2023. For the mark holders we visualise the award as the beginning of the journey, one aimed at enhancing the impact of the mark to its holders through 2023 and beyond.

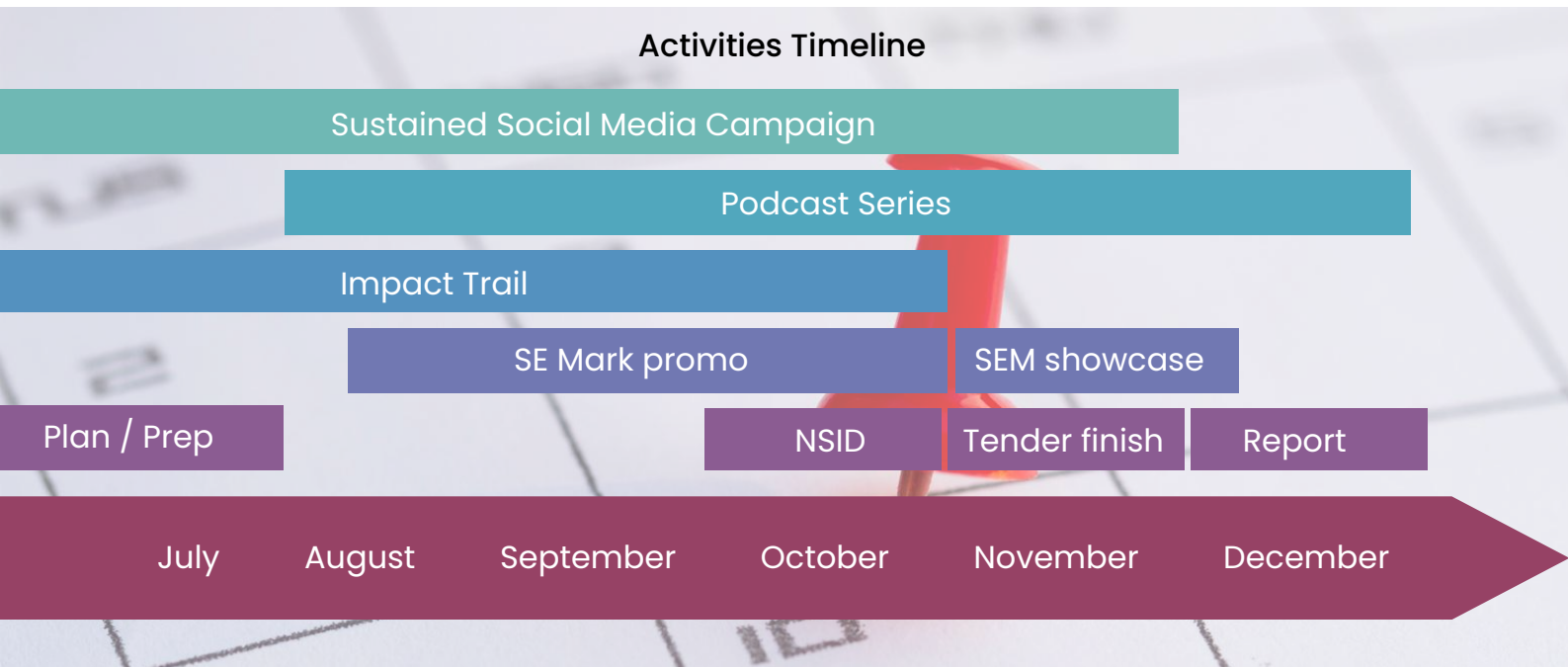
Advocacy & Promotion of the Sector

The SII approach was one aimed at building awareness by actively involving social enterprises and their representative organisations in promotional activities – leading with the individuals and enterprises that are at the heart of the social sector.

Our advocacy sought to honestly portray the true value of the sector highlighting the benefit and impact from participation in the sector but one that equally gives voice to the challenges the sector has. Our aim was to assist in letting their voice be heard, voices that with all of the demands of their direct work can be sometimes overlooked.

In our work we utilised a blended mix of online and offline events, emphasising two sides of the story – those creating Impact, those receiving the benefit of the impact. In developing working pieces for use in our promotional activities we strove where possible to create pieces that can be directly used by the participating social enterprises in their own promotional activities, developing to date a media library of over 60+ social enterprise profile pieces.

The year just past saw the first national promotional initiative under the current social enterprise policy. The ARISE programme is an initiative created by the Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD), supported through The Dormant Funds Account, and administered through Popal with a shared goal of supporting initiatives that will increase awareness of social enterprises and their potential across the island*. SII was a participant within this programme and engaged on a significant number of events directly in support of this programme. Additional elements were also provided in partnership with Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick, through this programme.



A separate Impact Report was drafted of the outcomes of this work* and elements of this are included in Part B of this report: "Part B – Social Impact Ireland Achieved Impact".

A separate strand of our promotional activity was within the community, seeking to create awareness and connections among social sector participants who are unaware of fellow participants. Our CLOSER community initiative had this as a prime goal and through the year we have expanded the range of promotional activities to encourage engagement through this platform.

* "Awareness Raising Initiative For Social Enterprises (ARISE) Scheme 2021", DRCD, www.gov.ie/en/news/4ddaf-awareness-raising-initiatives-for-social-enterprise-arise-scheme-2021/

* "Social Impact Ireland ARISE Impact Report – 2022", SII publication

Social Sector Relevant Business Supports

SII Direct Supports

As a result of our sustained interactions with a broad spectrum of social entities SII has developed a set of business supports tailored specifically to the additional needs of the social sector. Among those supports we both developed and provided were:

- Business Clinic Service – One on one session for a social enterprise dealing with specific issues of significant concern for them.
- Coaching initiative – where we work with a social enterprise in a sustained way on a specific issue that are relevant to them. This covers:
 - Short Term engagements: Examples include funding application advice, governance and legal structure approaches, engagement issues etc.
 - Project level Engagements: Longer term engagement usually to a specific purpose with often a complex mix of interactions.
- Specialist Short Courses – targeting specific areas identified as critical within the social sector. Currently our short course list includes:
 - “Articulating Your Impact”
 - “Values driven Business Strategy”.
 - “The many hats of a Marketeer”
 - “Roadmap to Social Media Success”
 - “Personal Strategic Direction”
- Connections – mutual introductions and facilitated contacts between social entities for their mutual benefit.
- Social Enterprise Incubator Programme – A long term structured programme that over a four month period assists an emerging social entity in working towards viable sustainability.
- Provision of custom tailored programmes with an ‘applied learning approach’ delivered at the request of external bodies.

Impact Supports

Through 2022, SII streamlined its approach to Impact management to develop a methodology more in step with the practical challenges and resources available to the bulk of our audience. Central to this is presenting Impact Management as a methodology rather than a report.



Social Impact Ireland Impact Methodology

Adapted from the well-established continuous improvement approach, we see the approach to Impact as a methodology which links a custom understanding of the impact within the enterprise to measurement that both helps the organisation enhance further its impact while also assisting it in gaining greater understanding with its needed audiences.

Utilising this methodology, we have over the last twelve months developed custom impact methodology overviews for over 12 enterprises, developed 7 out fully into formal impact reports while also developing a range of marketing options around the subsequent use of these reports.

The feedback on our approach has been very positive and delivers on the key goals in our approach, namely:

- Enhanced sense of understanding, control, and ownership by the enterprise leadership on their impact.
- A source of validated meaningful inputs in to how their business strategy might evolve.
- A means of engaging with their audiences in a simple yet relevant way to those audiences.

CLOSER Community

At the heart of our approach is enhancing the collective impact of the sector by fostering the development of a collaborative community of social initiators who can help each other advance their impact through shared experiences, mutual learning, collaborations and mutual support. This led to the development of www.CLOSER.ie and the growth, in both numbers and depth, of that community over the past year has been a key strategic goal.



Welcome to our Engaged Community

Closer brings together the Social Enterprise Sector to build and empower an Engaged Community, so that we can collectively, and individually, create positive impact across our communities. The platform offers collaboration and support for all the needs of the social enterprise journey.

The Ethos of Closer is to have a place where Social Entrepreneurs and people who are interested in the SE Space can find and share information, collaborate, learn and grow together. Since Closer began in 2019 we have grown the platform to over 500 members.



Our Vision for a connected community

Our vision for the future is a true community of socially motivated entities, with meaningful and substantive interactions among its members creating a mutually supportive value adding community, fostered on the principle of collaboration and impact.

In doing so we hoped to help the community separate and elevate the social enterprise sector building broader awareness and interest in social enterprise.

“ Closer has been a great tool for linking in with other Social Entrepreneurs and hearing opportunities to further the mission of my social enterprise. ”

Mamobo Ogoro, Gorm Media

“ As a solo social entrepreneur, I find the support from like-minded people on a very similar journey invaluable. The updates, links, funding opportunity news, and general chat are so useful. ”

Rachel Tyrell, The Colour Club

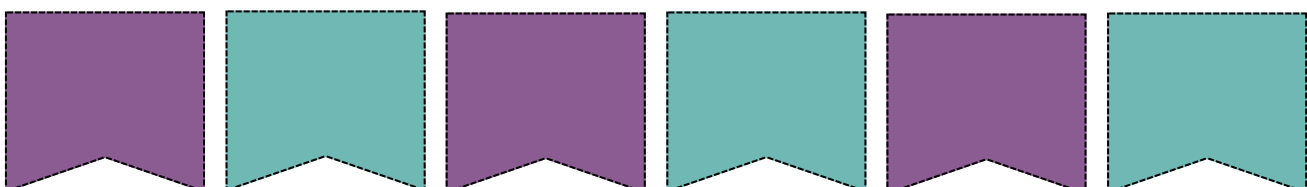


Our Overall Impact

We apply the methodologies that we develop internally to ourselves as a social enterprise. Our own theory of change is developed to that methodology, and we review our impact by that means.

Our direct impact is a secondary one in that all our work is aimed at supporting the social sector we interact with, to grow their impact in terms of scope, depth and professionalism of execution. We can readily measure our activities through which we seek to achieve this and the past year has seen a remarkable amount of work. To briefly outline, within 2022/2023 we have:

- Ran a wide range of events involving over 480 social initiatives to showcase to others the reality and rich potential of the social sector.
- Delivered 7 short course programmes and one incubator programme involving 50+ participants.
- Provided over 150 customised substantive supportive interactions along with many more casual interactions.
- Executed 15+ sustained project based interactions.
- Developed and delivered three custom social business programmes on behalf of external partners, one as part of a European programme.
- Developed supportive programmes for two external bodies to deploy to their audiences.
- Completed 12+ Impact assessments and seven formal reports.
- Successfully delivered the introduction of the SE Mark, the most recognised international accreditation, to Ireland with our initial 7 awardees.





Impact by Numbers

While this is direct activity, we viewed our ultimate impact as been determined by the growth in numbers and depth of the CLOSER community. Throughout the year, we have seen a 2x growth in the CLOSER community with over 500 entities now present on the system. We shifted our primary delivery of our work to the CLOSER environment and seen early stage indicators of potentially substantive collaborative projects developing.

The future of Social Impact Ireland

SII was itself a social enterprise and sought over time to achieve self sufficiency. While the recent year saw significant progress towards that, to sustain further required a significant level of future investment by us. Regretfully, in spite of the progress made we are no longer in a position to be able to resource the level of investment needed to try to bring our model to self sufficiency.

So it is with a bittersweet sentiment that we formally announce the closure of Social Impact Ireland operations.

Our mission to foster social entrepreneurship and heighten awareness of social impact in Ireland has reached a natural and fulfilling closure.

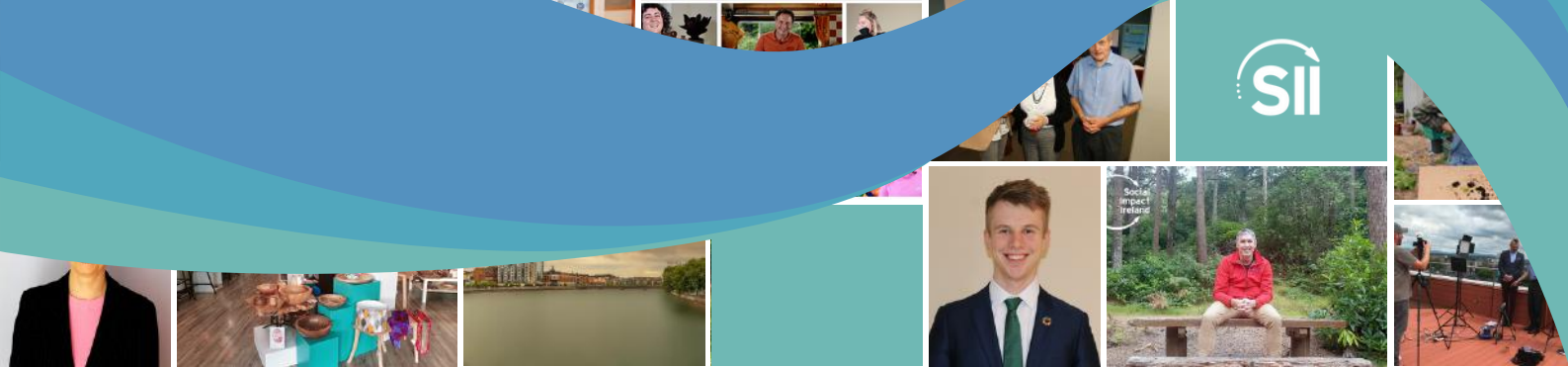
We take pride in having served as a catalyst for countless individuals, empowering them to bring their innovative ideas to fruition as social enterprises with meaningful societal contributions.

We now close our doors, but not without a sense of fulfilment and optimism.

Our dedicated team, instrumental in our journey, has successfully transitioned to new ventures, carrying forward the invaluable insights and expertise gained during their tenure with us. This knowledge, we are confident, will continue to propagate the ethos of social enterprise in their future endeavours.

We extend our deepest gratitude for the unwavering support that has been the backbone of Social Impact Ireland from its inception. The work we have accomplished together has been pivotal in establishing a robust foundation for social enterprise growth in Ireland—a growth poised to enrich communities with positive, lasting social change.

In expressing this final farewell, we extend my heartfelt thanks for the memories, the collaborations, and most importantly, the collective impact we have achieved. It has been an honour to share with you all such a transformative endeavour.



Our Partners Contribution

In SII we were part of a collective journey and sought to work in a collaborative way with all those contributing positively to the sector.

We continue to remain in awe of those social innovators with whom we worked, and are very appreciative of the time they gave us, time that is always their most critical resource.

. On that journey we would like to recognise the support we have received from Enterprise Ireland through the REDF, RETS and REISS programmes.



2022 saw an end to our initial REDF programme and with that the end of the consortium which contributed to this whose assistance and support we would also acknowledge.



We have worked with many groups but would like here to acknowledge two others that we have repeatedly and positively engaged with – Innovate Communities, based in Ballymun, Dublin, and Kemmy Business School, U.L.



The social sector in Ireland has undergone radical change in the time since our initiative first came to life in its BNest format. In that timeframe we saw the emergence of the first social enterprise policy under the auspices of the Department of Rural & Community Development. At Social Impact Ireland we would like to acknowledge the leadership shown there towards the social enterprise sector and the positive collaborations it has enabled us to engage on.



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund

The period also saw, aligned to the first objective of that policy, a huge broadening in awareness of social enterprise as both an existing contributor to our social good and the potential for the future value that it can contribute. The EU also launched its 2021–2026 European Action Plan for the Social Economy recognising the social economy as a needed integral part of a vibrant economy.

Both of those policies are critically aware that understanding the real needs of the participants is a key element for progress. The coming time we believe will see a further acceleration of the rate of change needed with new innovative approaches emerging. We continue to see the building of a truly collaborative community of social entities as a key element of this and that without this the restrictions of social initiatives to scale will remain.

The work recorded here is also reflective of all of those who have contributed at different times to SII in roles as board members, employees and contributors.

Finally, to all of those in the social sector that have engage with us on our various activities our heartfelt appreciation for your trust and openness with us and hope we have contributed to the courageous impact you all set out to achieve.

Thank You

