



Challenges
Group

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

AUTUMN 2025

WHAT WE'RE HERE TO DO

OUR PURPOSE

We exist to maximise enterprises' potential, so they can deliver extraordinary impact.

OUR VISION

A world whose biggest challenges are being tackled by enterprises creating extraordinary impact.

THE PROBLEM WE'RE TACKLING

Many enterprises do not perform at their fullest potential and may lack the capacity to operate better, thereby limiting their impact on global challenges.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to help deliver better solutions to global challenges by improving the performance of enterprises.



OUR GLOBAL IMPACT SINCE 1999

27,888 PEOPLE TRAINED

223,774 CONSULTING DAYS
DELIVERED

89 MARKETS, INDUSTRIES AND
COUNTRIES ANALYSED

£92m ACCESS TO FINANCE SUPPORT

DELIVERING GLOBAL CHANGE THROUGH PURPOSE-LED VENTURE SUPPORT!

Sustainable Development Goals impacted by the following programmes:

1 NO POVERTY



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



The Ready for Inclusive Sustainable Employment and Entrepreneurship (RISE/E) Programme



First launched in 2023 as an empowering initiative funded by Futuremakers by Standard Chartered, the programme is now in its 2nd year running across our teams in Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

RISE/E aims to empower young people, particularly women and people with disabilities, to become successful entrepreneurs and drive sustainable economic growth. By offering expert business development advice and fostering a nurturing environment, Participants are equipped with essential skills and resources to grow sustainable businesses.

98 businesses engaged across 4 country sites.

75% increased their customer base.

72% of microbusinesses reported improved performance.

183 jobs created and sustained by supported microbusinesses.

68% improved financial management and competency skills.

71% strengthened personal competencies.

13 businesses received direct support to access these funds

£53k of external funding received in total

Ventures Lab

Where founders build for people and our planet

The Ventures Lab sees the potential of enterprise to change lives and transform systems.

Our mission is to help founders build strong, market-ready ventures that are able to deliver big impact for years to come.

We've taken the best of what we've seen across the world over the last two decades and consolidated it into a model that works for Scotland and beyond.

We work hand in hand with founders for years, not weeks, and we believe in building value for people, planet, and profit.

We don't do it alone; we work with multiple partners to identify and support ventures that put IMPACT first.

“

Ventures Lab are always supportive and amazingly helpful, and it has been inspirational to network with other founders in the programme who also have social impact businesses. The staff are knowledgeable change-makers, and they are already moving the dial by supporting more and more social impact enterprises. Together we have worked on an application to the Catalyst Fund, accessed legal advice for our platform, conducted market research, and business development, focusing on our mission to make sure no one is left out of the classroom.

– Dr Kate Smith & Daisy McConville (L-R) **Founders of ProfessorMe**



28 Impact ventures in the programme.

13 university partnerships to support impact-led spinouts in their growth journey.

5 new ecosystem partners and growing to taking enterprises to new heights.

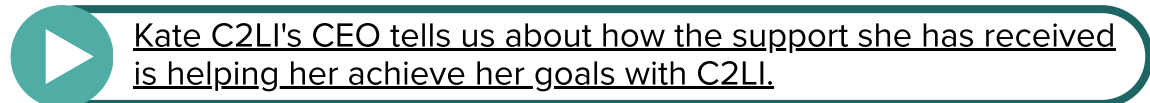
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Ventures Lab | Growth Services

Helping post-investment, impact-led businesses commercialise, develop and grow.

Too many ventures stall in the first five years; we exist to change that. We plug in practical support across finance, strategy, marketing and sales so founders can focus on their passion and genius, not the admin of running an SME.

We work as part of the team, advising and delivering for as long as we're needed, with an outcome-first approach that drives clear plans, clean reporting and a steady sales rhythm that sticks. And we don't do it alone, our network of like-minded professional partners helps impact ventures scale from Scotland and beyond.



15 professional partners and counting

6 Ventures in the growth services

20+ jobs supported

£400k+ of investment supported



“
If you're considering The Ventures Lab - do it. They have been fundamental to my businesses growth.

- Kate McKenzie, **Founder of C2LI**

The Ventures Lab | Discovery

Where innovation and intentionality meets impact.

Across three distinct programmes, Ventures Lab applied a diagnostic-led, context-sensitive approach to enterprise support. The Dundee UKSPF Social Innovation Accelerator helped eight early-stage ventures refine their models, strengthen partnerships, and prepare for investment through tailored consulting and cohort sessions.

With INSP, the team co-designed a scalable framework for global street paper resilience; combining technical assistance and funding to support long-term sustainability. In Glasgow, the Inclusive Innovation Playbook was developed and piloted with local partners, applying inclusive design methods to diagnose systemic barriers and model viable enterprise pathways.

Working with CEIS, Glasgow City Innovation District, and Glasgow Riverside Innovation District, we helped design and pilot the Inclusive Innovation Playbook, applying inclusive design methods to diagnose systemic barriers and model viable enterprise pathways.

“

The knowledge and insights gained from the entire programme have been transformative for Leximos. We've been able to implement strategic improvements based on the programme's guidance, resulting in more focused operations and enhanced impact potential.

- Mr Sayed Murad, Leximos



8 Ventures were supported through the UKSPF Dundee Social Innovation Accelerator

1 Global framework co-designed with INSP via the Innovate UK Creative Catalyst award

1 Inclusive Innovation Playbook piloted with CEIS and Glasgow partners

”

HARNESSING AND ENABLING INDIVIDUAL TALENT SO THEY CAN DRIVE RESILIENT, IMPACTFUL ORGANISATIONS!

Sustainable Development Goals impacted by the following programmes:

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS
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The Quest Programme

By building on our corporate partnership with a leading international beverage company committed to developing its talented leaders while making a positive impact, we have created a mutually beneficial model.

Together we aimed to:

- to develop the behavioural competencies & leadership skills of our corporate partners' high potential team members
- to help develop the social enterprises' organizational capabilities to elevate their impact

53

corporate employees strengthened their leadership, communication & problem-solving skills

16

Social enterprises in Central Europe supported to elevate their impact in a Strategy Re:Boot programme



[Watch our #Quest Social Enterprise Spotlight](#)

“

The [Quest] programme offered a great balance of expert guidance, peer exchange, and reflection. I have nothing but praise for the mentors and participants [and] I not only gained valuable insights to strengthen the business but also felt seen and supported. It was a refreshing and empowering experience.

– Jure Roić, Manager, Buffet Leptir

”

Making Work Work

Making Work Work – for Edinburgh Women, for Dumfries & Galloway Women and for Mums in Renfrewshire in partnership with Edinburgh, Dumfries & Galloway and Renfrewshire Councils.

The Making Work Work programme empowers talented, skilled women in Scotland to step back into work after a career break. Since piloting Making Work Work in 2021, we have supported over 300 women directly and hundreds more indirectly who have faced barriers to employment despite being highly skilled, qualified and experienced.

300+ women supported since piloting Making Work Work in 2021.

71% in employment, progressed their career or set up on their own business.

65% Average increase from 35% employed to 65%.

17% studying, volunteering, or applying for new roles.



“

[Making Work Work] has entirely changed my attitude towards the next steps in my working life. It has re-energised my journey and given it structure and purpose.

”



MyEdinburgh

Building a Collaborative Edinburgh

Launched in January 2024, MyEdinburgh is a partnership between The Royal Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh and Challenges Worldwide, created to bring together individuals, businesses, and charities to lead positive social initiatives that help everyone in Edinburgh thrive.

Now in its third year of operation, we are delighted that the Mentoring Programme has helped over 30 business leaders, both commercial and social enterprises, and that we are planning further expansion of both the number and range of mentees that we can support.

Over the past year, we have grown our membership and stakeholder network, promoting MyEdinburgh's collaborative workspaces, affordable flexible-desk policy, and cross-sector project initiatives. Our partnerships with local academic institutions and charities have supported new research, mentoring programmes, and community-led innovation.

“

We have been working with Alan for a year now and have met almost monthly. During that time, he has helped us develop our mission, vision and strategic plan. He has supported us in other ways too, such as connecting us with people in his networks. This has led to one completed (paid) project and submission of a joint grant application with the Grassmarket Community Project. He has encouraged us to think about sustainability, our value propositions and our pipeline. He asks critical questions and helps us view issues through a different lens.

- Dr Kath MacDonald **founder of ListenUpStorytelling**



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Trained, confident leaders & managers drive resilient, impactful organisations.

Managing with Purpose

“ I have found this course really helpful and look forward to putting into practice the learning and ideas I have gained. The format of the course was excellent. ”

2,880

CMI learners to date.

254

learners from 2024 - 2025

131

social enterprises have received our Introduction to Project Management.

100%

of participants would recommend our training to a friend or colleague.

Introduction to Project Management

“ I've been managing projects in some capacity for a while now, but I've never had any formal training. Learning about the key steps and understanding planning methods will allow me to work more effectively in the future. ”



Anyim Maber Better and Bright Future

In northern Uganda, youth with disabilities are forging new paths to economic inclusion.

In collaboration with Sightsavers, the project focused on entrepreneurs and job seekers across Amuru, Gulu, Nwoya, and Oyam, providing them with enhanced opportunities for employment and improved employability.

Challenges Uganda delivered hands-on business development support to the initial cohort through interactive sessions, group discussions, case studies, and practical exercises, building core skills.

Participants of the programme now have the capabilities to manage their businesses with greater confidence, boosting productivity, profitability, and access to finance. Many have joined Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), borrowed from community funds, and created jobs.



124 entrepreneurs supported

224 jobs has been created across supported microbusinesses

59% of these jobs have been filled by women

61% reported an increase in profits

55% experienced revenue growth

We Can Work

Funded by the Mastercard Foundation and delivered in partnership with Light for the World, ADF, NUDOR, and CrossWise, We Can Work supports young people with disabilities in Rwanda in building dignified and economically independent lives.

Challenges Rwanda led the delivery of life skills, self-advocacy and entrepreneurship training, supporting two cohorts.

By equipping participants with practical tools and confidence, We Can Work is reshaping what inclusive economic empowerment looks like; placing dignity, agency and sustainability at the heart of development.

74%

launched new businesses during the programme

86%

of the entrepreneurs received direct funding to strengthen their ventures

448

hours of coaching to strengthen their business models and build long-term resilience.

£13K

~ 25m Rwandan Francs

in direct funding was distributed to 66 businesses through the We Can Work programme

Sightsavers Economic Empowerment

Under its Inclusive Futures initiative, Sightsavers have funded a portfolio of economic empowerment projects to support the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market.

Building on the success of projects funded by UK Aid, USAID, European Commission and Standard Chartered Bank, Sightsavers scaled these across several regions including Ghana and Zambia. As the key delivery partner for Sightsavers, The Challenges team in Ghana and Zambia supported aspiring entrepreneurs and start-ups across Ghana, and Zambia's Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces.

The economic empowerment portfolio aimed to ensure all projects contributed to:

1

Build disability confidence in employers

2

Increasing labour force participation of men and women with disabilities

3

Increasing survival rate of MSMEs owned by people with disabilities.

4

Financial inclusion products are accessible and uptake by people with disabilities.



149 entrepreneurs with disabilities supported across Ghana and Zambia.

33 entrepreneurs in Zambia received mentoring on site and remotely.

26% of all participants reported increased income.

59% of participants in Ghana reported improvements in record keeping.

80% of respondents in Ghana increased income.

100% of all participants in Ghana reported increased confidence in Business Management.

A LONGER-TERM SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PLACE-BASED RURAL MARKETS!

Sustainable Development Goals impacted by the following programmes:

2 ZERO HUNGER



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



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17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



From coffee to community impact

A journey of economic diversification in Rwanda.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, like many markets worldwide, the coffee market in Rwanda experienced a significant price collapse, causing a ripple effect and financial slowdown that particularly affected Rwandan coffee-growing communities.

As an organisation actively engaged in supporting enterprises to broaden their capabilities and portfolios, creating the most significant impact in their communities, Challenges Rwanda supported Rwanda's western and southern provinces through an economic diversification initiative that looks beyond coffee.

This initiative was strategically focused on:

- Targeted financing for enterprises in Rwanda's western and southern provinces, or those reliant on regional production inputs.
- Business growth services, including technical assistance, to accelerate scale and measurable outcomes.
- Expanding operational capacity and generating new employment.



10 businesses received investment as part of this initiative

3 businesses adopted sustainable technologies: solar-powered drying, biodegradable packaging, and electric pasteurisation, advancing Rwanda's sustainability goals.

+30 jobs created across non-coffee sectors; digital media, clean energy, food processing, and hardware retail.

85+ suppliers supported, with measurable community benefits.

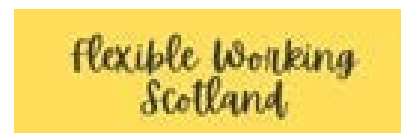
£ 200k invested to help five enterprises scale.

The work we do is made possible by funding and collaborative relationships with our global partners.

Thank you to our partners for continuing this journey to help enterprises maximise their impact for people and the planet.



CONVERGE





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Enterprising Solutions to Global Challenges

MARKET ANALYSIS & STRATEGY | ENTERPRISE SUPPORT | ACCESS TO FINANCE |
LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP | INNOVATION

Delivery partners of Challenges Worldwide.

GHANA | MALAWI | RWANDA | TANZANIA | UGANDA | UK | ZAMBIA

www.thechallengesgroup.com