UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH INNOVATION & SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

THE PROGRAMME

RiSE is a PEACEPLUS funded initiative developed to spark rural innovation and strengthen social enterprise across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. The programme is delivered by a partnership comprising of Rural Action who will lead the project along with partners, Irish Rural Link, Social Enterprise NI (SENI) and Social Enterprise Academy Scotland with Community Finance Ireland as an associate partner.

AIM

The aim of RiSE is to support rural organisations engaging in, or wishing to engage in, social enterprise so they can thrive and reach their full potential by:

- Increasing capacity through the delivery of training and mentoring (workshops, cluster events and study visits)
- Fostering collaboration across communities and borders to unlock the power of shared learning and experience

WHAT DOES RISE INVOLVE?

The programme will target 60 rural groups engaging in or wishing to engage in social enterprise activities. There will be three cohorts of groups. Groups accepted onto the programme will participate in collaborative learning support.

STRAND 1

Social Enterprise Leadership & Development

Over a 10 month period organisations will benefit from:

- Training Needs Analysis
- Community Asset Audit
- Accredited and Non-accredited Training and Development e.g. Rethinking Income Streams, Steps to Sustainability and Exploring Enterprising Leadership
- Mentoring and Business Planning Support
- Diversity and Inclusion Plans
- Networking Residentials
- Study Visits (e.g. Northern Ireland, Ireland & Scotland)

STRAND 2

Making it Happen

For those successfully completing Strand 1, a further 10 month programme of support to include:

- Up to £/€5,000 social enterprise project support for advancement of new social enterprise developments or expansions (products or services)
- Mentoring and Implementation Support (workshops, cluster events and study visits)

PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland
Co-funded by the European Union & UK Government

For the purpose of the RiSE programme, a social enterprise is defined as an enterprise that exists to deliver social impact with profits reinvested in community services/social objectives

ELIGIBLE ORGANISATIONS

Types of organisations who can apply:

- Charity
- Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Constituted Group
- Cooperative

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The governing document must show:

- Social purpose/objectives of the organisation
- Appropriate dissolution clauses
- No personal/private gain from profits generated

ELIGIBLE AREA

The project is targeting:

- Rural areas in NI - located in areas with a settlement size of 5,000 or less
- Border counties of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo) - located in areas with a settlement size of 10,000 or less

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT RURAL ACTION

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Demonstrate that they meet the definition of a social enterprise and are a bona fide group (meets the eligible organisation criteria, has a governing document and has a bank account in the name of organisation with 2 signatories (unrelated)
- Have the commitment from the Management Committee to fully engage in the programme and engage on a cross community and cross border basis
- Identify at least 2 core participants that will attend all cluster & networking events
- Have the commitment from the Management Committee to fully support any identified staff or volunteer engagement

HOW TO APPLY

If you are interested in applying to the programme, this can be done via an Expression of Interest form which is available on the Rural Action website

The first intake for completed forms will be accepted up to Friday 27th March 2026

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