

AT A GLANCE

| **People & Skills to grow the Social Economy**
(20th March 2024, in-person COLEBRIDGE TRUST)

Please see below the one-page summary of notes from the March 2024 Social Economy FORUM meeting focused on the People and Skills needed to grow the Social Economy.

Professional development in the **social economy** is crucial for fostering growth, improving impact, and enhancing the skills of individuals working within organisations.

- There is a well reported need to provide development programmes that enable people within the social economy sector to develop entrepreneurial behaviours, mindsets and skills.
- There is a need for learning and development programmes that are practical and innovative in how they are delivered.
- There is a recognition that progression routes for staff coming through organisations are often limited and leadership development opportunities are hard to come by.
- There are challenges concerning the skills of boards, especially boards that should be able to support entrepreneurship and risk taking.
- There is often an expectation that boards have the correct skills needed which may not be the case. Similarly, volunteers should have support to contribute effectively in their endeavours.

People need the right skills to help adjust to the constant changes in the environment, technology, and demographic changes. Helping staff and volunteers to adjust to these changes will ensure their well-being and, also, to contribute to sustainable growth and development of the organisation.

60% of all adults should be taking part in training each year (EU Skills Agenda 2024). People need to be equipped with a variety of competences and expertise ranging from basic skills through to entrepreneurial skills. This is a huge topic and it can be approached and driven from many perspectives which include working with young people, developing innovation, sector development, digital skills, entrepreneurship, and individual learning.

There appears to be no current strategy or pathway to support those working in the social economy ecosystem to upskill and reskill and develop knowledge, competences, and capacity to great future challenges successfully.

The conversation at the FORUM was far reaching and honest. Participants spoke about the challenges to maintain professional development within their organisations. The difficulties around recruitment, developing people internally and staff retention due to lack of progression routes.

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Challenges	Solutions
Often organisations don't have a budget identified for staff training	Identify grants for training and developing staff. Could WMCA have a staff training grant scheme?
Recruitment	Train entry level staff and develop staff internally. Take flexible approaches to employment, good holiday entitlements and flexible hours. Promote these aspects of working in the sector. Use clusters to provide back office functions: HR, finance, marketing etc where it's difficult to recruit to. Is there a role for a social economy hub?
Board members and Trustees – they have a key impact on whether the sector thrives or not but there are challenges around recruitment and skill sets.	Often when SE's form they use friends who don't have the skills. Need some specialist support to identify skills required and link with the SE. Support for values matching.
Understanding finance. Reserves policy? Understanding the management of a social enterprise.	Financial training – huge need for this to be resourced.
Developing a cluster that supports SE's, provides incubation, training, and learning, wrap around support	Have a development plan for each cluster.
Are we limiting ourselves by our own capacity to pay people?	We need a better understanding of rates of pay and employment benefits to show sector opportunities.
Training isn't always the answer, can train but it may be the wrong person.	Recruit someone with the correct experience to do the job. Use secondments?
How can we find the best training for our teams?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCSEs: A guide to working with government - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) • Training and Events NCVO • Member updates Social Enterprise UK (webinars etc) • Workshops & training – ACEVO

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	There are national and local training programmes but these need navigating. Online training resources are also available.
Technology – big gaps around future technology. There is a need from practical skills development.	Training to update the sector on the potential of technology within the sector.
Wellbeing and mental health support. Stress is an issue.	Establish a well-being hub for the sector that provides a limited number of paid for sessions for staff working in the region.
Entrepreneurial mindset	Dedicated programmes of support to be developed. Encouragement of partnership working and collective leadership approaches. Support for innovation.
Networking	Create an environment that enables groups of social economy leaders to come together to collaborate, learn and trade and share services.

Some time was spent discussing the difficulties faced by smaller organisations seeking to grow but challenged to recruit skilled staff. Often during the conversation, the participants moved back to the importance of effective clusters, within the region, who could each provide services that could support smaller organisations.

Thanks to David Lane from DISE for sharing the experiences of Chelmund's Fish and Chips and for treating the attendees to lunch from the chippy!

- [Probably the first community owned chippy in the country - Development in Social Enterprise \(disecic.org\)](https://disecic.org)

And finally, thanks to Chet Palmer from Colebridge Trust for hosting the FORUM and giving those attending an opportunity to visit and see the work of Colebridge Trust (colebridge.org).

NEXT: Social Economy FORUM for May 2024 as follows...

- **FORUM 7: Developing new products and services, and driving market innovation** | Tuesday 14th May 2024, 11.00am to 12.30pm (in-person, Birmingham)

[REGISTER TO ATTEND HERE](#) – Book me to attend the May FORUM session please!