

# Residential Event for Social Firm Managers/Developers

26-27<sup>th</sup> March, Perth



## Evaluation Results

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Social Firms Scotland (SFS) consulted our member Social Firms to gauge interest in SFS hosting a Residential Event for Social Firm Managers and Developers. A number of members expressed an interest in attending and so SFS proposed holding the event centrally to make it as convenient as possible for all members. We put forward a couple of potential dates and asked members to also inform us of any themes/topics that they would be most interested in covering at the residential (eg, funding & finance, marketing, impact measurement etc).

From the responses a programme was then developed to best meet our member's interests and development needs and ensure best use of their time.

This event, funded by Scottish Government, took place in Perth on March 26/27th

### Aims

1. To provide an opportunity to take time out to learn about and discuss current opportunities and challenges facing Social Firms
2. To share experience, learn from each other, understand each other's business goals and issues and develop closer mutual support
3. To hear from a range of speakers on themes of most interest and benefit to SF Managers
4. To learn about various tools and resources

### Objectives

- Provide a sounding board for SF Managers seeking assistance with challenges they are encountering
- Allow SF Managers to identify issues of common concern and share ideas on how to address them
- Provide members with an opportunity to build relationships with their peers
- Offer a forum for professional development for Social Firm Managers

### Outcomes

We hope that the programme would be informative, interesting, engaging and participative and that learning from the event will be of benefit to our members and their Social Firms.

We hoped additionally that it would allow SFS to put in place any actions and/or support initiatives stemming from the event.

## Members attending

NAME	ORGANISATION
Edith Carruthers	Six Marys Place
Karen Cruikshank	The bread maker
Maggie Gardiner	Red & Black Innovations CIC
Lyn Hoar	Touchwood
Mags McCartney	Unity Enterprise
Niall McShannon	Clydesdale Community Initiatives
Julie Milne	VSA
Peter Ramsay	Threshold West of Scotland
Jeremy Richardson	Orkney Blide Trust
Kathleen Singer	Foyer Works
Anne Sobey	Voluntary Action Lewis
Patsy Telford	Turning Point Scotland
Karen Williams	Employability Orkney
<b>SFS STAFF</b>	
Karen Anderson, Janice Barnett, Jayne Chappell, Pauline Graham	

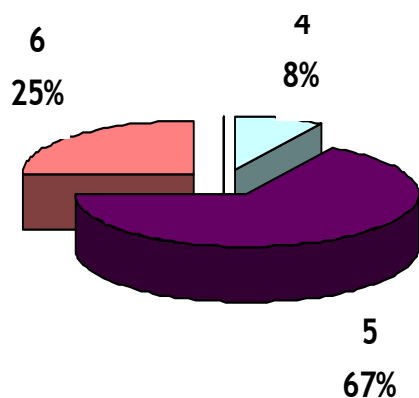
A total of 13 people attended the 2 day residential, 12 of whom completed the evaluation form.

## Objectives achieved

In asking why people attended the event the reasons given were:

- to learn, network and gain a better understanding of the sector and its relationship with Government
- network, inspiration and further understand social enterprise
- gain more information about changing from a project to a business
- find out more about setting up a Social Firm, meet others who are already operating social enterprises
- find out more about Social Firms Scotland, meet team and other managers and the agenda was appropriate to my work
- learn from other managers and boost my personal motivation
- step back and get a perspective and context for our opportunities and threats
- new to the sector - keen to learn about Social Firms and especially learn directly from those who have experience of how to do it
- to network and learn
- find out about how to measure social aspects of the organisation, share the benefits of parts that do not have a financial benefit
- to further my knowledge of other Social Firms/enterprises

We asked all delegates to what extent they felt their objectives for the event were achieved on a scale of 1 - 6 (1 - not at all, 6 - fully).



92% of delegates stated that their objectives in attending the event had been either almost fully or fully achieved.

Workshop	Rating 1 - 6 (1 - very poor, 6 - excellent)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Marketing			29%	43%	14%	14%
Impact Measurement			20%*	40%	20%	20%
Starting a Social Firm				80%	20%	
Growing a Social Firm			17%	16%	17%	50%
Funding & Finance				14%	15%	71%

\* The member commented “felt it was a bit confusing but would be useful. A demo or example of how to do it would be useful”

All the workshops were well received with the Funding & Finance rating the highest. This was also underlined in 3 responses when asked what they liked best about the event.

## Highlights

We asked members what they liked best about the event. There was a variety of responses to this however the main highlight that was mentioned by 10 of the 12 delegates who completed evaluation forms was the opportunity to network, meet and learn from other members.

Other comments about what members liked best were

- Funding and finance workshop (3 people)
- Programme mix (4 people)
- Meeting SFS staff (2 people)
- Personality test (2 people)
- Food (4 people)
- Friendly atmosphere
- DIY Feasibility Toolkit
- Flexibility, meeting the needs of the participants, changing the plan when necessary
- Professional input from all concerned
- Time out from the business
- Made contacts to buy off

## Improvements

### **We asked members what they liked least about the event.**

One member felt that there were *“a few times when we were unsure what was happening and the programme was not fully followed”* another commented that there was a *“lack of definition on sessions, eg if had had a clean break at 5, I would have been ready to work again at 7”*

Two members said they disliked the use of abbreviations which assumed a prior knowledge. Other comments were *“long periods of listening”*, *“sessions slightly long (90 mins is too long)”* and *“finance session was very prescriptive in parts”*

One member remarked that the room was not good in terms of hearing

### **We then asked what was not covered that they were expecting to be.**

2 delegates answered this question - one stating they'd hoped to cover governance structures available to Social Firms, the other said *“the informal surgeries were missed - I was interested in business development and finance surgeries”*

SFS staff will follow up with these individuals regarding their interests.

### **We finally asked what they would like to see covered at a similar future event.**

There were again a variety of answers

- work of SFS
- how to expand a business
- writing tenders
- sharing good practice with/from other Social Firms - since there was loads of experience amongst participants
- surgeries around direct issues, where SFS can offer support, advice or signpost as appropriate
- tendering and procurement
- shorter, more interactive sessions, smaller groups

One member said they were unsure but would like to see a similar balance of workshops, presentations and inter-active work, another said to keep the focus on current issues alongside those which will always be needed (eg starting/growing a Social Firm).

Another member said that they would be in a better position to answer this question when their Social Firm was up and running

## Learning from the event

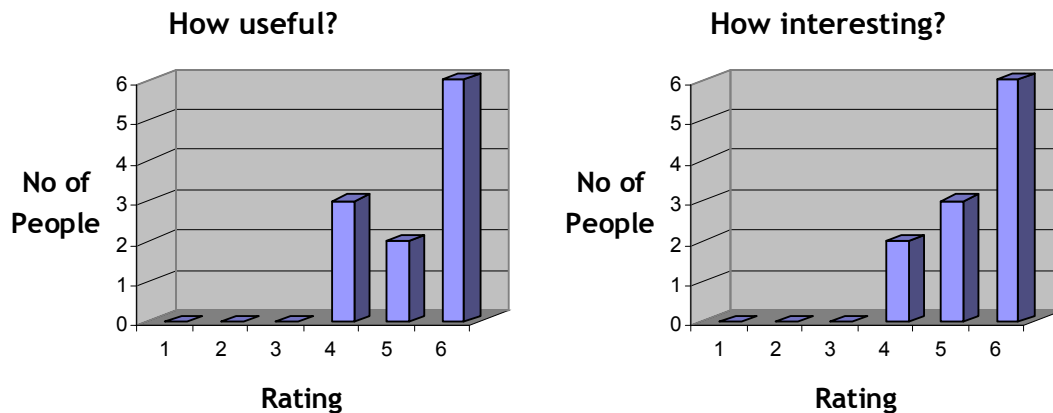
**We asked what learning members would take back to their organisations.** The main focus of this was:

- the difference between enterprising and enterprise
- the idea of self sustainability and what this means in reality
- information on funding
- if you don't act like a business you won't have any opportunity to have a social purpose

- information/understanding around starting up
- the need to evidence outcomes and benefits and how to do that.
- the resources available via Social Firms Scotland
- the motivation to continue to apply for funding
- clarify outcomes and relate directly to customers. Sell benefits not features
- where we fit in the sector
- from chatting to others that it would be useful to visit other businesses

## Conclusion

We asked members to rate how useful and how interesting they found the event on a scale of 1 to 6 (1 - of little use/interest, 6 - very useful/interesting). 11 members responded to this as follows



Overall feedback has been positive particularly given this was our first such event.

We were extremely pleased and excited with the initial level of interest in the event and delighted to see this translate into a high number of attendees.

The event was well received by delegates underlined by the fact that **we asked if they would attend a similar annual event and 11 of the 12 responses said YES.** The one member who said no explained on the form that this was because they felt it would be more suitable for someone else in their organisation.