



## SOCIAL OUTCOMES



## Glasgow City Council

### The Social Innovation Challenge Fund

**The Social Innovation Challenge Fund is an initiative led by Glasgow City Council to break down long-standing barriers that prevent underrepresented communities from engaging in entrepreneurship. Aimed at fostering innovation, collaboration, and fair access to business support, the Fund has become a vital tool for empowering individuals who often remain excluded from start-up assistance.**

In June 2021, Glasgow's City Leadership Team took part in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Innovation Track Programme—an intensive, design-based learning model aimed at helping cities tackle challenging problems with new creative approaches. Through this process, the city identified significant systemic barriers affecting underrepresented residents—particularly women, minority ethnic communities, and younger individuals from deprived areas—who face disproportionate difficulties when trying to become entrepreneurs.

In response, Glasgow City Council's Business Growth Team developed the Social Innovation Challenge Fund, a new model of grant support and codesigned engagement aimed at addressing these inequities. Drawing on design-based methodology, the Fund seeks to establish a new way for the council to deliver entrepreneurship support by ensuring services meet the needs of communities that have traditionally been underserved.

The fund's objectives were designed to engage and empower organisations to create and develop new services or expand existing activities to reach new beneficiaries that will:

- drive and support entrepreneurship
- encourage collaboration
- provide expert guidance
- foster greater levels of innovation.

To enable this co-production the fund centred on key themes to collaborate with organisations to:

- Promote and establish new entrepreneurial engagement with underrepresented communities in the city.
- Promote Glasgow as a place to start a business, breaking down barriers that prevent people from taking risks and becoming entrepreneurs.
- Promote actual or new networks (business-related or not) that support the development of businesses of minority ethnic communities and/or other underrepresented communities.
- Promote the business support services of Glasgow City Council and our partners, ensuring a coordinated, collaborative approach.



**Gilded Lily Inspiring CIC - Her Future Enterprises 2025, Pitching Competition**

Following a thorough engagement and application process, which included an independent lived-experience decision panel, awards totaling £230,907 were granted to four successful applicants.

**Collective Communities CIC** – The Collective Communities Circle initiative focuses on building strong, resilient communities by supporting local projects that address social issues. It aims to engage with participants, providing access to a thriving local business community network and a rolling programme of tailored business guidance, start up support, and peer mentorship.

**Community Renewal Trust** - Roma Entrepreneurship/Start-Ups Programme aims to support community-led initiatives that address social and economic challenges in Glasgow. The project delivers one-to-one mentoring, business training, financial literacy support, and access to funding opportunities, ensuring that culturally tailored, multilingual business support services are provided, with the aim of creating new Roma-led businesses.

**Gilded Lily Inspiring CIC** - Her Future Enterprises is an initiative that seeks to inspire and support females from underrepresented groups to start their own businesses. It provides training, mentorship, and access to resources to help aspiring entrepreneurs turn their ideas into viable enterprises.

**West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC)** - Bridge to Business - Minority Ethnic Pathway to Progress. This initiative aims to promote equality and diversity in the business sector. It provides support to minority ethnic communities and other underrepresented groups to help them overcome barriers to entrepreneurship and achieve their business goals.



**Gilded Lily Inspiring CIC** - Her Future Enterprises 2025, Graduating Participants

These four organisations are now delivering collaboratively designed programmes through the Fund to remove barriers to entrepreneurship, supporting nearly 100 individuals with the skills, contacts, and confidence to start and succeed in business.

Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, said: *"The City Council has changed the way we deliver business support to undeserved communities, particularly those from black and minority ethnic communities and women entrepreneurs. The Social Innovation Challenge Fund is about supporting that business talent that has operated under the radar of public sector support for too long. It's about providing the skills, the contacts, and the confidence so Glasgow's underrepresented entrepreneurs are empowered to thrive. Our message is clear. Wherever you are, and whatever your background, we want to work with you to ensure you get the support you need to start, scale, and grow your business."*

The successful Social Innovation Challenge Fund programme is underway again in 2026/27, funding and co-designing programmes of support for people from under-represented groups to connect and empower early-stage entrepreneurs and start-ups in Glasgow.

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