

## Social Enterprise Trade Association: an overview



### What is the aim?

The Social Enterprise Trade Association (TA) will change the place of social enterprises in the market place.

By using the new social enterprise mark, TA members will be able to indicate to customers that trading with them is achieving a social outcome. Member social enterprises will also benefit from support around leadership skills, proving social impact, and collaboration with other members.

The TA is being piloted initially in the South West.

### What is it?

#### 1. *Membership of the TA*

TA members will be established social enterprises who offer their customers an additional social outcome. Applicants to the TA must provide evidence that they are social enterprises in terms of their: organisational form, distribution of profits, and levels of trading. As the TA is providing a message to the customer, they will also need to provide evidence that they are delivering a social impact. (As the TA is being piloted initially in the South West, applicants must also be based or operational in the South West.)

The detailed membership criteria have been developed through interviews with relevant national, regional and local stakeholders, and with the support of social enterprises – including some who completed a draft membership application form.

For more details on the membership criteria please see the accompanying document “Social Enterprise Trade Association: Membership Criteria”.

#### 2. *The new social enterprise mark*

Members of the TA will be able to use the new social enterprise mark. Awareness of this mark will be developed with key customer groups and stakeholders, and a package will enable TA members to use the mark effectively. The mark will enable customer awareness of social enterprise.

The public sector is a key customer for many social enterprises and therefore part of the target of the social enterprise mark. The mark will work at an individual level to highlight the potential offered by contracting with a social enterprise, and reinforce positive decisions. However the social enterprise mark is not a quality mark and will not work as a short cut to winning public sector contracts and the normal procurement rules will apply.

The social enterprise mark has been developed through focus groups, interviews and an online opinion survey. Three designs have been tested and there is now a period of refinement. The final social enterprise mark will be launched at the RISE AGM on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at the Eden Project. An invite will follow shortly (speakers include Tim Smit, Eden project; Social Enterprise Coalition; and Julie Harris, RISE Chair and Chief Executive of social enterprise: COSMIC).

3. *Leadership development and encouraging strategic alliances*

The TA will also address gaps in the support available to more established social enterprises – especially around leadership development, collaboration and quality. Among the services provided by the TA will be:

- a. Board-room style meetings. Highly tuned networking opportunities, taking the debate between social enterprise leaders to a new level.
- b. Behind the scenes brokering of strategic alliances of like-minded social enterprises with the potential to collaborate. Also brokering to other support services and training opportunities.

Particular emphasis will be placed on improving practice by social enterprises around evidencing social impact. The TA will provide inspiration, tools and some support to members to encourage improvements in this area.

**How will it operate?**

Social enterprises will be supported to complete the application form. All applications will be reviewed by a TA staff member who may seek additional information before submitting a recommendation to the TA panel. Once established, the TA panel will consist mainly of TA members.

Membership of the TA must be renewed on an annual basis with a full re-application every three years. The aim is to demonstrate that the member still meets the criteria of the TA and are further evidencing their social impacts.

The TA is being piloted in the South West by RISE. The development is being taken forward with close involvement from the Social Enterprise Coalition, and in consultation with other regional infrastructure organisations, to ensure there is potential and buy-in for a national roll-out.

Initially the TA will be funded by BASIS Lottery\*, sponsorship, earned income and membership fees. In the medium term, RISE plans for the trade association to be financially viable in its own right, with income from membership fees, the provision of advice/consultancy around quality improvement, and continued support from media/sponsors.

**More information** is available on the accompanying “Social Enterprise Trade Association: membership criteria” document.

The thinking behind the TA builds on the “Together for Trade” feasibility study (RISE, June 2006 – completed in partnership with the C3 programme [www.c3partnership.org](http://www.c3partnership.org)), and “Social enterprise – through the eyes of the consumer” (National Consumer Council, 2004). The TA is integral to the RISE 2006-09 strategy ‘Winning the future... the way forward for the voice of South West social enterprise’. Download these documents from our e-library [www.rise-sw.co.uk](http://www.rise-sw.co.uk)

RISE will be providing regular updates regarding further progress. If you would like to join the circulation list for this, please email us at [info@rise-sw.co.uk](mailto:info@rise-sw.co.uk)

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\* RISE has submitted a business plan to BASIS Lottery. This is part of a non-competitive process.