



# Social Innovator Accelerator Applicant Guide

**ACCEPTING FIRST-ROUND APPLICATIONS UNTIL WEDNESDAY, JULY 13**

The Social Innovator Accelerator helps nonprofit organizations gain visibility, expand their networks, and connect with philanthropic and in-kind resources to accelerate their work.

This guide includes information about the Social Innovation Forum, our flagship program, the Social Innovator Accelerator, Application Process for the Accelerator, and FAQs.

- **How to apply to the Social Innovator Accelerator program**
  - **Step 1:** Review this Applicant Guide to confirm eligibility
  - **Step 2:** Attend an information session and/or set up a call with our Program team
    - Info Session #1 on Wednesday, June 22 from 10:00-11:30 am
      - [Zoom Registration Link](#)
    - Info Session #2 on Tuesday, June 28 from 1:00-2:30 pm
      - [Zoom Registration Link](#)
  - **Step 3:** Complete a first round application by creating an account [here](#).
    - If you'd like to review the First Round Application Questions they can be found [here](#)

## Eligibility Requirements

***The Social Innovator Accelerator is open to programs and organizations that:***

- Are a registered 501(c)(3) or use a fiscal agent that is a 501(c)(3)
- Address a specific social need as described in at least one of our [social issue tracks](#) and bring their own perspective and innovation to the topic
- Are working in the Greater Boston area, unless otherwise noted in the track description. *We define Greater Boston broadly. In the past, we've worked with organizations in surrounding cities like Worcester, Lowell, Lawrence, New Bedford and Fall River.*
- Have been delivering programs or services for at least 3 years



- Have a minimum of 1.5 paid FTEs (full-time equivalents—counting full and part-time staff, not volunteers)
- Have an annual operating budget of \$100,000–\$2 million

## Social Innovator Profile

*We refer to organizations that are selected to and go through the Accelerator program as “Social Innovators.” Typically a strong Social Innovator applicant:*

- Uses an **innovative approach**. As we define it at the Social Innovation Forum, social innovation is the process of finding, testing, and honing impactful and potentially transformative approaches that are responsive to the needs of community members, disrupt systems, and bring about systemic change.
- Has a **long-term vision** and has goals, ideas, and/or plans for moving toward its long-term vision.
- Is at a point in its trajectory where it is **seeking to engage in capacity building** to deepen, shift, and/or expand its work and has interest and capacity to participate in the Accelerator program.
- **Works collaboratively** with community partners and stakeholders
- Engages in reflection and **continuous quality improvement**.
- Leadership and decision-making **reflect and are accountable** to the community served.
- The Executive Director and other leaders have **autonomy and decision-making power**.
- Leaders are **open to new ideas** and coaching.
- Is committed to or has intentions to pay **fair wages**.
- Has or is working towards having a **fundraising strategy** and has the organizational capacity to take advantage of SIF’s fundraising supports, including network-building.



For our 2022 – 2023 Social Innovator Accelerator, we will select one nonprofit Social Innovator for each of our eight “social issue tracks.”

## **2022 – 2023 SOCIAL ISSUE TRACKS AND TRACK PARTNERS**

### **Access to Comprehensive and Culturally Informed Mental Health Care**

Track Partner: *Poler Family Foundation*

### **Advancing Environmental Justice Through Community Empowerment**

Track Partner: *The Devonshire Foundation*

### **Advancing Holistic Education Opportunities for Youth and Youth Adults**

Track Partner: *Wellington Management Foundation*

### **Building and Sustaining Social Capital**

Track Partner: *MassMutual Foundation*

### **Community Approaches to Diabetes Treatment and Prevention**

Track Partner: *James B. Boskey Memorial Foundation*

### **Equitable Outcomes in the Health and Wellbeing of Communities in the Fall River and New Bedford Areas**

Track Partner: *Wagner Foundation*

### **Experiential and Work-based Learning Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults**

Track Partner: *American Student Assistance*

### **Pathways to Housing Stability**

Track Partner: *Liberty Mutual Insurance*



## Application Process and Timeline

- **First Round Applications Due:** Wednesday, July 13
  - **Second Round Invites Issued:** Week of Monday, August 22
  - **Second Round Applications Due:** Monday, September 19
  - **Site Visits:** End of October - Mid- November
  - **Selections Made:** Monday, November 28
  - **Program Begins:** Mid-December
- To complete a first round application you'll need to create an account [here](#).
  - First Round Application Questions can be found [here](#)

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until **Wednesday, July 13, at 5:00 pm**; however, early submissions are highly encouraged.

- We will select one nonprofit on each of the eight social issue tracks. The Social Innovator Accelerator selection process is very competitive, and demand far outpaces available resources. Each year we receive an average of 100 applications and select eight Social Innovators.

## Information Sessions

We will be hosting two virtual Information Sessions:

- **Info Session #1 - Wednesday, June 22 from 10:00-11:30 am**
  - [Zoom Registration Link](#)
- **Info Session #2 - Tuesday, June 28 from 1:00-2:30 pm**
  - [Zoom Registration Link](#)

## Benefits to Social Innovators

Each Social Innovator receives access to cash and in-kind benefits valued at more than **\$150,000** that include:

- **Six months of consulting services** focused on enhancing the organization's ability to articulate the social problem it is addressing, its innovative approach, and its social impact. The consulting engagement culminates in the development of the



following materials designed for funder/investor audiences:

- Written investment prospectus
- Five-minute pitch (with PowerPoint slides)
- Model Graphic - tool used to illustrate programming
- **Graphic design services and presentation coaching**
- An opportunity to **connect with investors and funders** by presenting the work of the organization at the annual Social Innovator Showcase - to be held in May 2023 for this cohort
- Opportunity to **be in a cohort of grassroots nonprofit leaders** with diverse experiences, working in different social issue areas in Greater Boston
- **Networking and relationship-building support** to expand organization's access to external funding and support
- Five months of **executive coaching to focus on promoting professional growth** for the leadership team
- **\$10,000 cash** upon completion of the consulting engagement
- Additional **support from SIF's in-kind partners** (e.g., legal, graphic design, PR, technology)
- **\$2,500** capacity building grant in 2024
- **Ongoing support** through the [Social Innovator Accelerator Alumni program](#)

### Who would be involved?

- 1 "lead" Innovator (typically Executive Director or Program Director)
- Optional: 1-3 other staff to support decision making on materials and participate in executive coaching

### Time Commitment Required of Social Innovators

In order to take full advantage of the consulting, coaching, and other services that the Social Innovator Accelerator provides, Social Innovators should expect to commit on average six to eight hours per week for six months (December 2022 to May 2023). From September 2023 to the end of 2024, we ask that the Innovators set aside a few hours per month for executive coaching sessions and quarterly check-in calls.



Please see below for an overview of the time commitment required of Social Innovators through three phases of the Accelerator Program:

- **Phase #1: Consulting Engagement + Showcase Prep**
  - December 2022 - May 2023
    - 6-8 hours *per week*
- **Phase #2: Executive Coaching**
  - September 2023 - February 2024
    - 6-8 hours *per month*
- **Phase #3: Quarterly Check-in Calls + Progress Reports**
  - March 2024 – December 2024
    - 6-8 hours *per month*



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Social Innovation Forum?

The Social Innovation Forum (SIF) brings together nonprofits, philanthropy, government, and business to support the spread of emerging social innovations in Greater Boston. SIF creates positive social change in Greater Boston by:

- Engaging and informing funders and investors so they can direct resources most effectively
- Educating and supporting leaders of nonprofit organizations so they can deliver the most effective solutions to social issues
- Making connections and building relationships across diverse communities so people can help each other generate significant social change

The Social Innovator Accelerator provides a unique opportunity for innovative nonprofit organizations to gain visibility, expand their networks, and build capacity. Each year, we partner with leading local funders to identify and support a small cohort of Social Innovators. Our search and selection process lasts six months and involves two rounds of written applications, informational site visits, and other forms of due diligence. This process brings together a range of stakeholders, including SIF staff, track partners, and an evaluation committee made up of more than 80 business, government, and foundation leaders.

Our unique approach, working with both funders and practitioners, creates a “Social Impact Marketplace” that is informed, connected, and engaged in the pursuit of positive social change and measurable results. Thus, our direct work is leveraged to create broader impact throughout the community.

### What are the Social Innovator Accelerator’s results?

To date, the Social Innovation Forum has directed more than \$52 million in cash and in-kind services to help more than 100 social impact organizations accelerate their growth and amplify their impact.



According to recent surveys, **100% of Social Innovators** said they would recommend the Accelerator to another organization and **94% of Social Innovators** found the program extremely useful or useful for:

- Improving the organization's **ability to communicate their work externally**
- **Increasing their confidence** as a representative of the organization
- Improving their **leadership skills**
- Promoting personal and professional **growth**

**88% of Social Innovators** are still applying what they learned in the Accelerator on a weekly or monthly basis.

In addition to all the benefits of the Accelerator curriculum, Social Innovators also get access to SIF's expansive network of foundations, businesses, nonprofits and other stakeholders in the Greater Boston community.

### **How does SIF define social innovation?**

We define social innovation as the process of finding, testing, and honing impactful and potentially transformative approaches that are responsive to the needs of community members, disrupt systems, and bring about systemic change. We believe that organizations that utilize and promote social innovation work collaboratively with community partners and stakeholders and their leadership and decision-making reflect and are accountable to the community served.

### **Is it possible to apply as a program or initiative within an organization?**

Yes. Any program or initiative with an operating budget between \$100,000 and \$2 million may apply. In these cases, the Program Director as well as a representative from the parent organization must be committed to participating in Accelerator meetings and events. In addition, the entire application must refer to the program, not the parent organization (budget numbers, performance metrics, etc.).

### **Is it possible to apply to more than one social issue track?**

Applicants can only apply to one track for the 2023 Social Innovator Accelerator. We ask organizations that might be a good fit for multiple tracks to read through the [Track](#)



[Descriptions](#) and choose a track that they believe they are the best fit for. Please feel free to reach out to the SIF Program team if you are unsure of which track would be best.

### **What is the application process for those who applied during a previous cycle of the Social Innovator Accelerator and were not selected?**

The application itself changes from year to year. In order for us to have consistent information across applicants, all applicants for this year's cycle must complete a 2022 – 2023 application. However, it is often possible to copy and paste responses from a previous application into corresponding sections of the current year's application. To assist you, we are happy to provide copies of your past application(s) upon request.

### **What is the Social Innovator Showcase?**

The **Social Innovator Showcase** is an event focused on highlighting the Social Innovators to potential investors, as well as sparking conversations on the best approaches to developing and spreading innovation. Each lead Innovator presents a five minute pitch, accompanied by PowerPoint slides, to an audience of more than 350 business, government, and philanthropic leaders from Greater Boston at this event. The Social Innovator Showcase will be held in May 2023 (exact date TBD).

### **What if I have more questions?**

If you have any questions about the application process, please do not hesitate to contact our team at Social Innovation Forum, at [team@socialinnovationforum.org](mailto:team@socialinnovationforum.org) or at 978.344.2622.