

Social Enterprise in Ireland: National Data Collection Exercise 2026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why is this exercise being undertaken?

This Census of Social Enterprise in Ireland is being delivered on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht by Amárach Research in partnership with Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI). It is the second national data collection exercise on social enterprises in Ireland, the first one being completed in 2023.

This exercise will identify key data such as the total number of social enterprises in Ireland, their regional spread, the primary sectors they are active in, their staffing levels and traded income. As it is the second national data collection exercise, the Department of Rural and Community Development & the Gaeltacht will be able to conduct a comparative analysis between the 2023 data and the data captured this year. This will provide key information on the status of the sector, whether it is expanding or contracting and will ensure the Government is in a much better position to develop future social enterprise policy and supports based on strong and robust evidence.

2. What happens to the information collected in the questionnaire?

The data you provide will be used for research and policy purposes only. The findings from this data collection will be presented at the National Social Enterprise Conference on 19th November 2026, with the full report published on Gov.ie shortly afterwards. Results will be reported in aggregated form, ensuring that no individual or organisation can be identified.

3. Will the information I provide here affect my funding?

No. The data provided will not be used in relation to any funding applications.

4. How is 'Social Enterprise' defined for the purposes of this exercise?

For the purposes of this exercise, the Trading for Impact National Social Enterprise Policy definition is used, which defines social enterprises as:

'..an enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social or environmental impact, rather than maximising profit for its owners or shareholders. It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and / or services, and by reinvesting surpluses fully or primarily into achieving social objectives. It is governed in a fully accountable and transparent manner and is independent of the public sector. If dissolved, it should transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission'.

5. Why are you asking for the specific location of an organisation?

This information helps the Government better understand the distribution of social enterprises and ensures that policies and supports for the sector are informed by a strong, evidence-based foundation.

6. What do you mean by parent organisation or entity?

To ensure responses are accurately analysed, we need to clearly identify the organisation being referenced. If the social enterprise operates within a larger group, the information provided should relate specifically to the social enterprise itself.

For example, if a Community and Voluntary organisation (the parent organisation) has established a spin-off social enterprise, we ask that you provide both the name of the parent organisation (Q5) and the name of the social enterprise (Q1).

7. What if every question can't be answered?

There are no compulsory questions – but we are seeking the best response rates possible.

8. What does the overarching mission or social purpose of the organisation mean?

This refers to the organisation's main social goals — in other words, its core purpose or reason for existing. It describes the positive impact the organisation aims to achieve and the social need it seeks to address.

9. How should organisational income be measured?

We are seeking an estimate of the organisation's total annual income, along with a broad breakdown across different categories. Please provide figures rounded to the nearest thousand

There are 8 categories for income generated, namely:

Category	Explanation	Examples
Income from selling goods and /or services	Where goods and/or services are sold to customers. This excludes membership fees.	A customer purchases handmade garden furniture, e.g. PACE social enterprise. Property maintenance services are purchased by a customer, e.g. Clean Slate.
Membership fees	Membership fees charged for a service.	Annual membership fees to avail of services. Examples include: membership to a representative organisation, e.g. SERI, The Wheel, CRNI or membership to a sports club e.g. local GAA club
Government-funded grants	This is grant income from the Government that may or may not have been a competitive process.	Usually distributed through an open application process where a social enterprise completes an application process to satisfy the funder that they meet the fund criteria. Examples include: DRCDG Growing Social Enterprise Fund, New Solutions Social Innovation Scaling Fund.
Contract for services from a Government Body - open tender process	This is where a government tender was issued and won on the basis of an open competitive process.	A social enterprise submits a tender bid in response to an Open Competitive Tender process. Contracts are typically awarded under a 'Most

		Economically Advantageous Tender' (MEAT) criterion.
Contract for services from a Government Body – service arrangement	This is a service arrangement with a Government body where a contract is awarded for the provision of a specific service with or without an open competitive process.	It could be referred to as a Grant Agreement (GA) or Service Level Agreement (SLA). The entity submits an Annual Work Plan to a public entity detailing services to be provided to a specific cohort of people which includes costs e.g. Community Services Programme (CSP), Community Employment (CE).
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from corporate organisations and/or philanthropy	Income from either competitive or non-competitive corporate and/or philanthropic giving initiatives, funds or schemes.	This includes one-off or multi-year financial donations from corporate partners and philanthropists. It also includes funding received through the likes of The Ireland Funds, Rethink Ireland, etc.
Fundraising from public and members	Income from fundraising initiatives	Social enterprises can create their own fundraising initiatives at a regional or national level. Income generated through GoFundMe pages, online donations and fundraising activities such as sponsored walks, quiz nights, etc., should be accounted for here.
Other (Please specify):	Any other sources not covered above	

10. Are Section 38 organisations (Health Act) included in this data collection exercise?

No. Section 38 organisations are not included as they do not meet the criterion of being governed independently of the public sector.

11. Are all sporting bodies included in this data collection exercise?

No. Sporting bodies should only complete the questionnaire if they generate income beyond membership fees. Where a sports or leisure club has additional trading income, they are strongly encouraged to participate.

12. Are Credit Unions included in this data collection exercise?

Credit Unions meet the national definition of social enterprise and will be included in the overall report. Information regarding credit unions will be taken from the Central Bank of Ireland annual financial conditions report which relates to all credit unions. We will also report on aggregated reliable sectoral information agreed with credit union national representative bodies. Credit unions are being asked not to complete the survey so that they do not distort the data gathered on the

lesser known sections of the social enterprise sector. In the final report there will be a section on credit unions and they will be included in headline social enterprise sector figures.

13. Whom shall I contact if I have specific questions?

For more specific queries or questions, please email [*project.team@sedatacollection.ie*](mailto:project.team@sedatacollection.ie)