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Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas

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Social Innovation: A Practice Guide
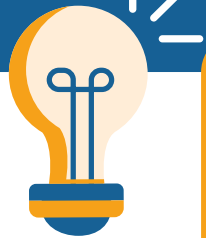
Aim of the practice guide

Have you been witnessing a social need in your community and have an idea - an innovative solution - to resolve it but do not know where to start? Perhaps you do not have the solution, but have been prompted and inspired to work with – even lead - those in your community who may have the ability to do so? Have you already been inspired to set up a social enterprise, which brings to light a social need but have hit a dead end? If your answer to any of these questions is "yes", then this Practice Guide is for you!

The aim of this practice guide is to provide you with a basic overview of social innovation and who engages in it. And why it is important to achieve social change for your community.

To help you understand how to react to your "prompt for change", we present a number of short case studies from around Europe and the Mediterranean region to illustrate social innovation in action.

The aim in presenting these is to take you from "prompt for change" to "trigger for action" as we illustrate the common threads of how people in communities come together and solve a social problem, which has not been resolved by governments or markets. In doing so, it illustrates the creativity, dynamism, and life force amongst community members and voluntary sector organisations in funding permanent and generating suitable solutions to address marginalisation.

What is Social Innovation? Why is Social Innovation Important for Your Community?

You are increasingly recognising that your community is struggling for a particular need in order to develop and thrive, which is not being met by your local government or other types of organisations. You recognise the need for new approaches to address these most pressing social challenges and to increase the wellbeing of your community, and are frustrated that other channels have been halted. You have great ideas to tackle these issues, but you do not know how to do it, or even where to start. If you feel this way, then this practice guide will help you turn your ideas for social change into a reality through developing a social innovation. It will provide you with some background to other social innovations, followed by a step-by-step guide of how you can build and sustain one of your own and bring lasting change to your community.

But what exactly is social innovation? And why is there so much hype around it? And more importantly, do social innovators know they are engaging in it? And how can they be supported in this important role?

Essentially, social innovations are new and innovative approaches to meeting social needs. Social innovations begin with ideas (for solving social problems), develop into prototypes and pilots, can become more stable initiatives, potentially up-scale, and eventually create systemic change without many social innovators even recognising it.

You are not alone! Other people and groups all over Europe and the Mediterranean region have faced similar challenges.

This practice guide is relevant to tackling a broad range of issues through social innovation, such as: (youth) unemployment, poverty, inequality, migration/refugee integration, age discrimination, social expulsion of socially marginalised groups, urbanisation and agricultural processes, climate change, demographic shifts, and the need to protect and enhance rural, coastal and marine ecosystems. These are all challenges for governments and communities across Europe and the Mediterranean region. Marginalisation can be understood as economic, social or political (Price *et al.*, 2017), extending beyond physical spaces and including more social and emotional forms.

SIMRA has investigated some cases in which traditional approaches to tackling local problems had proved inadequate, and therefore Social Innovation was turned to as a means to solve these issues. Some of these cases are drawn upon throughout this guide as inspirational examples of how the community can come together and come up with innovative solutions.

SIMRA'S definition of Social Innovation:

> *The reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors. (Polman et al., 2017)*

An "Innovation Action" is defined by the European Commission as "a demonstration or set of pilot activities aiming to explore the technical feasibility of the new or improved knowledge on Social Innovations — in terms of processes, related technology, products or services — in a near-to-operational environment within Marginalised Rural Areas" (European Commission, 2014).

Some such Innovation Actions rely on Local Action Groups (LAGs), depending on their field of competences (i.e. Local Action Groups focus on rural development more than primary production), and their interest in the topic. Usually, Local Action Groups become key actors to provide contacts, to understand the local problems and identify idiosyncrasies. Other multi-actor platforms can be useful within the Innovation Action such as those used by UNESCO Biosphere reserves and Model Forests.

The Seven Step Guide to Developing Your Social Innovation

Below, we set out the development of social innovation in seven steps. These steps are to guide you to increase your involvement in social innovation. The order of taking these steps will vary depending upon the stage your social innovation has reached, and the region's level of knowledge and support of social innovation in its economic development agenda and policies. You may have already completed some of these steps. So, start at the point, which is applicable to you.

Throughout this guide we will use the example of a social innovation based in the United Kingdom (The Growing Club) as an example to illustrate a step-by-step process of setting up and running a social innovation. This will be supplemented with other examples of social innovations from the SIMRA project across Europe and the Mediterranean region.

1.

Getting ready !

How you do this in practice?

Identify the issue in your community, think about your motivation and work around it. Being passionate about a mission can make you feel energised, but linking emotion to such work can take its toll on your own wellbeing. One way to minimise negative impacts on your wellbeing is to come together with others and develop a way to cooperate on a similar idea.

The Growing Club

Coaching socially disadvantaged women into developing successful small business initiatives

The Growing Club is a social innovation created by a woman and a team of directors who were increasingly frustrated by the lack of suitable employment opportunities for women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds across Lancashire and Cumbria in north-west England, United Kingdom. Their struggle to find sustainable employment was due to life circumstances such as being stuck in low paid work, living on social benefits, struggling with a disability or primary care responsibilities, or recovering from domestic violence.

The organisation is run through a combination of a very small amount of local council funding, grants, private business support, some income from trade and self-investment. The pilot scheme, The Sowing Club, was run in 2017/18 and funded by their first grant, an 'Awards for All' grant from the UK National Lottery. The success of that application has enabled and encouraged them to successfully apply for more grants and more recently a contract.

The Growing Club social innovation created a 'funded' programme, which offers women business training and marketing skills to explore, develop and grow their small entrepreneurship initiatives. Through this, the women can return to an active role in the local economy and so reduce their dependence on state benefits. This boosts both the local economy and their self-esteem, and subsequently their wellbeing and that of their families. It also aids in the (re)integration of vulnerable women and their families into society. For example, it has supported women refugees who have recently arrived in Lancashire, United Kingdom with limited opportunities for employment.

*Check the **Innovation Action** for more information or watch the **video***

Find a mentor

Find a mentor, a gatekeeper or a champion, who is someone similar to you and your group, who have built comparable social innovations in your region or elsewhere. Learn from their steps, successes and mistakes, and turn to them for support if and when you face obstacles on your social innovation journey.

The Norwegian Trekking Association's role in integrating refugees through trekking activities with local communities

The Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT) is Norway's largest outdoor life organization, with

+300,000
Members

57 *local member organisations across the country*

DNT is a prime example of a structure created by social innovation and driven by civil society volunteer engagement. The association has a long tradition of facilitating an accessible and affordable outdoor life for all types of citizens, and utilizes local, bottom-up initiatives that, if successful, spread across the local branches.

Workshop of Innovation Action partners, with discussion led by Havva, manager of inclusion and diversity at DNT Drammen.

One of these local branches is located in Gudbrandsdalen, an area characterized by an aging and declining population in addition to remoteness, a poor labour market and high social benefit costs. Immigration provides valuable resources to counteract negative effects of these demographic trends. At the same time, the municipalities lack the resources, and perhaps also the knowledge and ability, to facilitate the inclusion of refugees. Both the municipality's refugee services and DNT Gudbrandsdalen wanted to cooperate to facilitate contact between local people and refugees by arranging hikes, trips and walks together. This had already been done successfully by the local branch of the DNT in the urban city of Drammen, so DNT Gudbrandsdalen wanted to adapt this initiative to their local context.

To achieve their aims, they needed a mentor who could assist them in developing and adapting the social innovation to the local context. Havva, a former tour guide and a driver for the local initiative in Drammen, and now a manager of inclusion and diversity at DNT Drammen, worked as an expert advisor in the process of designing and implementing this innovation action. She participated in the initial workshops with local stakeholders, kept in contact with both the researchers and manager of DNT Gudbrandsdalen and guided the process when needed. This enabled DNT to discuss matters with the expert regarding the process, strategies and adaptation of the original initiative to the local context.

Check the *Innovation Action* for more information or watch the *video*

SIparte
Social innovation and youth entrepreneurship

SIparte is a soft coaching training initiative developed by the Local Action Group Preapi e Dolomiti, the University of Padova, and Etifor, a spinoff of the University of Padova, Italy.
The initiative provides opportunities for business start-ups in sectors which are socially innovative in the local rural areas.

As a new initiative the attempt was to reach young people in different communities over a six-month period, through participatory training workshops, visits to local areas and the organisation of a rural hackathon for the presentation of the idea. Different experts and mentors participated in the workshops, hackathon and follow-up soft coaching of the selected startup. Through the process, key people from local associations and social cooperatives supported the dissemination of the initiative and the engagement of young people.
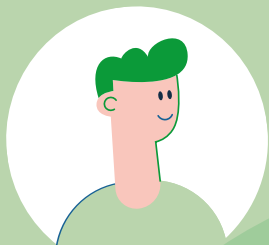

Photograph of events linked to the rural hackathon in Feltre, Italy (Source: Catie Burlando)

Check the *Innovation Action* for more information or watch the *video*

Well-being: restore and recharge!

How will you and your team manage your time? Is this social innovation a full-time endeavour? Or part-time? How will you make money to sustain the social innovation while sustaining your own livelihoods?

4.
Manage your time and tasks to keep the social innovation on track, and to manage and address the critical stages

1.
Build a robust team in whom you trust

3.
Think about how you will organise your time as a group, i.e. are you volunteering whilst maintaining a full-time job? Who will work which days? Will you work weekends? What is your family's expectations?

2.
Share administrative tasks amongst members of the team

→ ## National Forum for Social Agriculture (FNAS)

The Italian National Forum for Social Agriculture wanted to bring together different perspectives, circumstances and professions, for example farmers, teachers, psychologists and doctors. Such arrangements seem normal in 2020, but in the late 1980s and early 1990s this was an innovation in Italy.

Check the Innovation Action for more information

VàZapp'

The Italian rural network VàZapp' designed and proposed an innovative model of meetings amongst young people of the area called a "contadinner". This is formed by the words 'contadino' ('farmer' in Italian) and 'dinner'. The contadinner is a motivational experience leading to collective decision-making, increasing the level of trust between participants, and initiating new collaborations. It consists of using the dinner experience as a convivial environment in which young people can share experiences and new ideas for their personal development.

contadino

Check the Innovation Action for more information

Learn about what your social innovation means and entails, and put together the different pieces with a committed team from your community. Streamline the actions that could form part of your social innovation by getting insider knowledge. Then develop a smart strategic plan for the social innovation to run as a pilot study. For more details see the following sections.

2.

Do your research and engage the community

Why is a civil society-led approach, alone or in collaboration with other agency (public sector, private sector, partnership) the best one for to tackling the issues and needs you identified? Is this approach shared by other community members? Do you need a legal form, and what different legal forms exist in your region or country? Which are right for you?

Creating a context map

One way to think about whether the social innovation is the best approach to tackling the needs identified is by developing a context map. This will help you structure the different social, economic, environmental and political influences on the social innovation, and to present them clearly and coherently. Using a large sheet of paper and a few coloured pens draw the idea in the middle of the paper and add the various trends, developments and →

SIMRA Innovation Actions Lessons Learned Workshop, September 2019 (Source: Sophie Alkhaled)

→ uncertainties related to your idea. In this way, an overview of the different forces is created and of the trends which could affect your social innovation.

Check the **Innovation Action** for more information or watch the **video**

Two social innovations in Lancashire, United Kingdom The Growing Club and the Sewing Café, come together to share their ideas on how to bridge their social innovations with policy change to support the integration of socially disadvantaged groups (with the Grwoing Club focusing on women and the Sewing café focusing on refugees and asylum seekers).

Does your community share your vision?

The idea of you and your group might seem great, but what does the rest of your community think? Share your ideas in an informal manner with your family, friends, and local associations. Or, organise a community meeting to gauge their needs and interests towards your innovation. This approach can keep the project operating at a grassroots level and thus be more effective for the community. It can also avoid external impositions and influences on the issue you wish to address.

It has been crucial to the development and success of The Growing Club that we have a constant feedback loop from participants that directly impacts our decision making. Whilst we have a core focus, our work is constantly evolving to address the issues the women bring to us. Many of the women stay involved with us and help us develop the work by becoming directors, peer trainers and volunteers.

The Founder of the Growing Club

Workshop on how to use social media to promote your business in marginalised rural areas across Lancashire and Cumbria, United Kingdom (Source: Sophie Alkhaled)
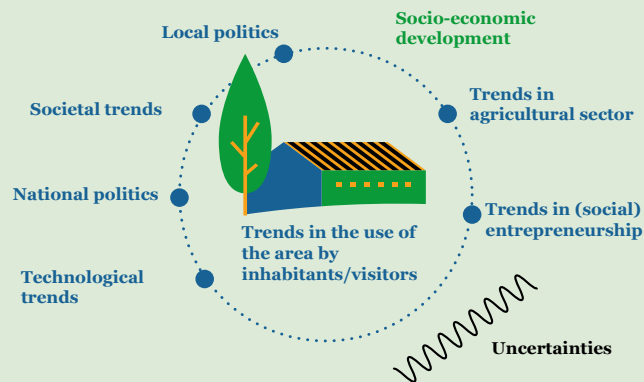
Who do you want to involve?

Throughout this guide, the examples used from the SIMRA project show that many different stakeholders can be involved. After a first iteration using the context map, work together with relevant parties to complete the picture. Together, you will be able to identify opportunities and threats, and how you want to deal with these.

You need to assess whether your social innovation approach can make a difference to your own area. Using your context map to clarify your vision for the future will provide you and your team with a stronger entry point. Think through how the area would look like in five years time. If a film of the area was to be made, what would the viewer see? If an article were to appear about the area in the newspaper or on social media, what would it say? Then use these images to evaluate whether your social innovation is going in the right direction and determine the role of your social innovation within it. Write down the vision using approximately five keywords.

Finally, to keep your plan on track, draft an initial shared values mission statement with input from the innovation actors and the community. It will become a guide for your social innovations and can always be changed if conditions and needs change.

Exercise: Create a context map!

Put your social innovation in the middle, and add the various trends, developments and uncertainties. In this way, you can create an overview of the different forces on your area.

Local politics

Socio-economic development

Societal trends

Trends in agricultural sector

National politics

Trends in (social) entrepreneurship

Technological trends

Trends in the use of the area by inhabitants/visitors

Uncertainties

Adapted from Sibbet, D. (2010) Visual meetings

3.

Setting up your social innovation: develop a strategy/plan

Before you set up your social innovation officially, what types of challenge will you encounter? What will help you address those challenges? Do you need to establish a legal form? What legal forms exist in your country and which would be right or appropriate for you? What will your strategy be?

Answering these questions depends upon the stage of your social innovation. Look at examples of social innovations of other groups (see Other sources of information). Think about the research you did before, and how you would do the following steps during this stage. Also, think about how you would overcome institutional obstacles (e.g. planning permission, asset transfers, "blocking" by established institutions which could be fearful of the innovation making a better job of it than they do).

So far you have

→ Brought together a group of people who are interested in the same community issues that can be tackled through the social innovation
→ Identified challenges and built understanding (it is good practice to borrow from, and share with, other people)
→ Built consensus on how this will be approached

Now, it is time to

→ Formalise your team and decide on a legal form (if needed)
→ Develop a strategy for the next step

The next step is to

→ If needed, find funding, for example from crowd sourcing or grant applications. Finding funding will be time consuming. If one bid is unsuccessful look for other opportunities (Step 4)

In the case of The Growing Club the founder had worked with many women who were running small businesses and had seen the same problems emerge over and over again, with little or no public sector support. The Growing Club team organised an event for some of these women, at which the types of problems which had arisen were discussed to help the women understand how they could be empowered by the social innovation. Soon afterwards, the first group signed up to the pilot programme, which was launched in 2016. The founder explains

When we filled a 2nd course… we decided to go through the process of establishing it as a legally recognised community interest company which allowed us to trade and apply for grants. Despite receiving no mainstream support ourselves, after receiving our first grant we grew strategically and organically based on identified need.

Al-Amal Project

Another example of setting up a community led social innovation is "The Al-Amal Project" in Aberdeenshire, United Kingdom.

In September 2015, Syrian refugees and local volunteers suggested to the local council resettlement officers in Aberdeenshire, UK, the setting-up of the 'Al-Amal Project' (which means 'hope'), through which the "New Scots" could cook and sell food together with the local community. They obtained public funding for the project. The profits from the sale of food are put into the 'integration pot', so the new Scots and local volunteers can organise trips to visit places in and around Aberdeenshire and Scotland, which is their new home.

*Check the **Innovation Action** for more information*

4.

Finding initial and sustainable resources

{ *You have established your group, your social innovation idea, and your strategy to achieve it. Now, how will you translate this into reality? How will you monitor it?*

A. Start by applying for small grants

Start by applying for small grants. With this resource you must prioritise a market research study to prove that the social innovation idea is wanted and needed. For example, in the United Kingdom, initial start-up funds for social innovations and community development are often sought from the National Lottery Community Fund. They can receive funding of up to £10,000, with a view to applying for further funds in future based upon the success of the pilot.

B. Run a pilot

If possible, run a pilot. However, before you run such a pilot, decide on what to monitor, how you will measure it, and how you will use this monitoring to prove to your funder, and other potential funders, that your pilot was a success. Start gathering these data as early as possible! (See step 5 for the full details on the continuous and iterative monitoring process).

C. Social connections & people skills

The resources required are financial, time, knowledge and social. Think about the social connections and the people skills within your group and the wider community. How can you maximise them before you turn to outsourcing for extra costs?

The Growing Club received their first £10,000 as a grant from 'Awards for All', a part of the UK National Lottery awards. However, the founder and the team did not have all the skills required, or the time to apply for such an award. The bid documentation, was prepared by a group of enterprise students from the local university (University of Cumbria), which took on the Growing Club as a project through a networking event. They applied for several grants, and were successful with the one that kick-started the social innovation.

Group photo of all the winners, Mar González collected the award as President of the Association (Source: Asociación Entre Todos)

Integra Todos

Integra Todos is an insertion company that started in Sierra del Segura, Spain, in 2013, the purpose of which is to promote local development. The company set up production activities, while training people at risk of social exclusion, to develop their general social and labour skills. The project was designed and set up by a local association, Entre Todos, with consultancy and collaboration from other actors in the area (associations, enterprises, non-governmental organisations, and the Local Action Group).

Initial funding came from the Local Action Group Sierra del Segura. The local Council of Elche de la Sierra provided space for free. In 2015 the founder applied for a programme of national awards which are granted by one of the largest banks in Spain, La Caixa. The application had to be formally planned and well-structured. In 2016, they were successful and received the grant from the La Caixa Bank awards.

*Check the **Innovation Action** for more information*

5.
Monitoring: Moving forward, pushing through while keeping track

Now that you have started implementing your social innovation idea, how will you monitor it? What types of challenges will you face in the building and implementation phase?

A. Nominate a "scribe"

Record and date the journey of the social innovation as it evolves. This will form part of your portfolio for your next bid for funding. You will be juggling different sets of tasks and face new challenges, so be sure to record as much as you can. Along the way, make videos, take photographs, and collect quotes from those who have benefited from the social innovation. Nominate a 'scribe', who records all events of your journey (small and large), not just keeping the minutes of meetings.

Keep track of details such as names and contacts (ensuring you have obtained the necessary consent), the number of attendees, posters created, invitations and handouts, as well as written or oral feedback from the public and any social media engagement with the community. Such things are time consuming but worth it because they will enable you to show outputs, results and the positive benefits of your activities!

B. Monitor and evaluate

Monitoring and evaluating your social innovation is essential to keep track of what you are doing, whether you are on course with your initial mission and goal, and where you should go next. Feedback should be sought from people using, and benefitting from, the social innovation, such as the community and local stakeholders. Impacts should also be identified (e.g. on the environment and society).

C. Maintain continuous involvement of the community

Maintain continuous involvement of the community by asking for both formal and informal feedback on a regular basis. Be sure to address common challenges that arise from the implementation of social innovation ideas. Some of these are:

- Leader fatigue and succession planning
- Having an income stream to maintain momentum
- Fluctuation in local support and resources
- Keeping your eye on the main goal
- Continuous improvement of service.

Be aware of how work on the social innovation can link to people's emotions and lead to burn out. For example, to make sure levels of stress of your core group are under control, involve their family members.

D. Select a good team of supporters

Select a good team of supporters who can become directors as you move forward. They should be purposefully selected, be hands-on, and passionate about the project and what it could potentially bring to the community. Do not just provide them with feedback, but ensure they are continuously involved and part of the evaluation of the steps towards the success and sustainability of the social innovation.

Empenta Artieda

Empenta Artieda is a participatory project tackling depopulation in a rural remote area in Aragon, Spain, which started in 2016. It has a 4-level structure drawn from residents of Artieda. It comprised:

- The core group that coordinated and implemented the decisions
- The technical team, composed mainly of young residents of Artieda (three out of the four members).
- The monitoring group, which was drawn from community leaders from the region, representatives of various institutions, and technical staff

- Other relevant actors of the territory. These participated in the dynamics led by a core group, which propose general lines of work through assemblies of residents and thematic workshops.

The project has become a collective learning mechanism for those living in the village. The meetings of Empenta Artieda provide a formal forum for participation in which issues that affect local development are dealt with in an open way. The core group meets weekly, with the additional participation of young people with entrepreneurial initiatives, and the municipal council. The meetings provide a hub for coordinating the process of the social innovation, and attendance at which is open to the whole population.

Check the Innovation Action for more information

Ok ... so now you are up and running... you have some funding and you are operational. How can you keep your eye on the main goal and ensure continuous improvement of service?

E. Have a good accountant

As your social innovation ebbs and flows, contracts and grows, you may find that you are spending your time continuously fundraising and obtaining small sums of funding, all of which will require reporting. Therefore, amongst all the other stresses, you may begin to lose track of the obligations associated with different sources of funding. Moreover, as you report to funders, you will have to prove how you managed resources, demonstrating you are reliable and organised before you are able to apply for more funding. As you grow your social innovation it becomes essential to have a good accountant, as part of your team of directors (or outsourced) who is dedicated to keeping track of the finances and funding.

F. Find a marketer and develop a presence!

Should you wish to grow your social innovation, good marketing will be essential for higher levels of fundraising. Allocate time to your public relations and marketing as part of the strategic development plan for your social innovation. For example, you may need someone dedicated to marketing, who could also have a role as a social media officer. Social media is a tool you can use to demonstrate transparency to your funders as well as your community, providing evidence of the journey of your social innovation. It is particularly essential for Marginalised Rural Areas to develop a presence as people in urban areas, and funders, are often unfamiliar with remote regions and their needs.

The Growing Club started with 3 hands-on directors, essential for founding a Company, two of whom were trainers and one an administrator. They soon recognised that they needed a stronger team of directors. They purposefully approached and recruited women, bringing on-board a woman with a background in the UK Government Department of Work and Pensions. They also brought in two women who had participated in the initial Sowing Club programme, one an accountant and the second a successful businesswoman and entrepreneur. The founder explains...

We open up our Annual General Meeting and invite people who we want to support our work, including elected members. Many women who have been through our courses stay actively involved, for example helping with public relations and marketing and writing funding bids. Having been on the receiving end of our work they are good advocates of its activities. This has helped our social innovation grow significantly and organically through its own community... Our next step is to create a clearer system of stakeholder involvement.

→ ### Supporting Dairy Producers Organisations Through a Public-Private Partnership Programme - Tunisia (FAOSNE)

The concept of producer organisations is an innovative idea in a Tunisian context. It involves a process of innovative engagement of stakeholders at different levels through a participatory approach. In this case, FAO acted as a catalyst to ensure the implementation of a sustainable public private partnership programme in the dairy sector. The FAO technical cooperation programme supported implementation within the framework of the Tunisian Livestock Strategy. This partnership led to the stable and sustainable growth of the social innovation.

FAO/ Sub-regional office for North Africa

Check the Innovation Action for more information

6. Organic Growth of your Social Innovation

Your Social Innovation is community led. Unlike a business, you do not have to set targets to be achieved in order to be able to 'sell-up' and 'exit'. Instead, you should aim to grow organically. Have a 5-year plan that is flexible, modifiable and adjustable to accommodate the needs of the community, information from the feedback, monitoring and evaluation, and the conditions of the local economy. However, to keep on track, go back and revisit your shared values mission statement created by the innovation actors and the community. Returning to this statement is a useful way of tackling the inevitable disagreements that will arise in a group in order to avoid significant divergence from the initial idea and mission statement.

As The Growing Club grows we remain mindful of our values and purpose and whilst our purpose can expand, our values are a point of reference that enables us to check if we are making appropriate decisions, for example around charges, and in terms of frustrations we may feel. We now have our values on our walls so they are in view at all times. This is particularly important as new members join the team and for new participants to understand what we are about. This leads to joint ownership of the work.

Growing Club Values

- The Growing Club believes in empowerment through education, training and skills-building, for women by women
- The Growing Club believes in creating a community of mutual support, accountability and collaboration
- The Growing Club believes in an ethical approach to sustainable business practice based on honesty, integrity and professionalism
- The Growing Club practises respect for self and others because all lives and dreams matter
- The Growing Club is a bold grass roots organization, open to new ideas, and accountable to the community.

VALAB (Integrated Ecosystemic value-enhancement of the Guadeloupe Forest Agrobiodiversity, Guadeloupe, France)

This social innovation aims to support the development of a shared vision of the Integrated ecosystemic value-enhancement of the Guadeloupe Forest Agrobiodiversity amongst the local actors. For that purpose, a series of activities have taken place with the social innovation actors.

These activities included a rapid scoping exercise of the social, technical, environmental and institutional constraints encountered by the Social Innovation actors. Most importantly, the writing of a Manifesto took place to ensure that everyone had a shared understanding of the aims and objectives. This helped guide two workshops which focused on production within, and protection of, the Guadeloupean forest understorey.

Source: SYAPROVAG

Get more information about the <u>Innovation Action</u> or watch the <u>video</u>

7.

Evaluation, Revitalisation and Renewal of your Social Innovation

{ *What types of challenges are you facing, or could you face, during the evaluation, revitalisation or renewal of your social innovation?*

Monitoring and self-evaluation

Reflect and move forward. Ask yourself:

☑ How well are you doing? What are the problems you have encountered?

☑ Has the environment changed? If so, are you still needed? Or, do you simply need to adjust your mission statement and the activities in which you are engaging?

☑ Do you need to broaden the portfolio of actions?

☑ Have you reached an impasse? Are you struggling to find a way out? If so, try to find some examples of other local or similar social innovations, and to get them to tell you how they have recharged and rebuilt themselves after tackling the struggles they faced.

When evaluating, and when aiming to revitalise and renew your social innovation to adjust it to your current environment, revisit your objectives and your first steps. Re-evaluate what you are doing now, and identify any new problems. What are the main obstacles now? Do these differ from those when you started the social innovation? Is your mission statement still valid? If you have difficulty with your evaluation, find a critical friend from your network to help you look at what you have done and provide suggestions on how to move forward.

The Growing Club uses a process of continuous feedback for all the courses they deliver. This benefits the women as they see their progress, and the trainers as they immediately hear the impact of their work, and the organisation generally as this data is gathered for annual reports and funding bids. In summer 2018 The Growing Club used a 'Unite Plus' placement through Lancaster University for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

Unite Plus is funded by the European Regional Development Fund. It provides a free business support programme aimed at adding value and skills to businesses. It brings together small to medium-sized entreprises (SMEs) which want to develop their capacity through the uptake of new tools and techniques, with students and graduates from Lancaster University and the University of Central Lancashire, who are looking for high quality placements in Lancashire.

The study involved qualitative and quantitative research with participants and other stakeholders to identify initial social impacts. The findings from this were helpful for directing the Growing Club's work as well as for applying to funders who place a high importance on the creation of impact.

However, as the Growing Club was less than two years old at that stage, they plan to revisit that report and do a follow up in 2020. They will re-interview women from the first study alongside newer participants to gain a better understanding of the social impact after four years. This is integral to the steps of continuous monitoring and evaluation to see if the work is evolving naturally and appropriately.

Empenta Artieda

Empenta Artieda is a participatory project tackling depopulation in a rural remote area in Aragon, Spain, which started in 2016.

In the first stage, from December 2016 to December 2017, Empenta Artieda set up three programmes focusing on "Employment", "Socialisation" and "Housing".

The second stage started in 2018, which sought to strengthen and widen the three programmes initiated the previous year, and to launch the programme "Care", the origins of which were in the initial diagnosis of needs for the area. The methodology used in this stage was reviewed, while maintaining the organisational structure.

Empenta Artieda is an educational agent involved in the community. This new line of work translated into the projects "Grow old in your village" and "Empenta chovenalla". These two new programmes were designed to enable the participation of the two sectors of society who were most neglected in the first stage, which were young people aged between 12 and 20, and senior citizens. The aim of these programmes was to develop a youth centre, and to organise events and activities for the younger people of the village in order to create a sense of belonging.

What do you know now?

Now you have read through the 7 steps, where do you think you currently stand in this process? What do you have and what do you need?

Table 1 (page 31) contains a checklist of the 7 steps. Questions are provided for each step to help you reflect on the progress you have made. Once you have completed the checklist, you will have a basis for understanding weaknesses and strengths of the social innovation, and those on which to focus your time and resources.

As you develop your social innovation, redo the checklist and compare it with those you completed previously. This is an excellent exercise for monitoring your own progression and making sure that you are on track.

What next?

You have read the guide to social innovation in practice. You should have been able to identify where you and your colleagues are in the seven steps to social innovation. The checklist gives you a means of reflecting on the progress of your social innovation.

You will be aware, or are becoming aware, that taking a social innovation from an initial idea to a sustainable activity is a significant undertaking. So, take some time to learn from the experiences of others. Take a look at the additional information we provide in the next section. If you proceed with you social innovation, we hope to hear about it!

Sources of information and experiences

> *Information about social innovation and its implementation on the ground is accessible from several different sources, described below.*
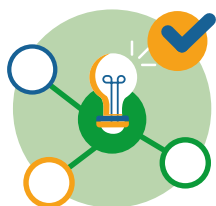
Examples of social innovation

[Collections of examples](#) of social innovation have been compiled under the headings of designing social innovation actions, mountain areas, social innovation in the Balkans, delivering rural services, and a general set.
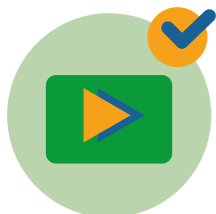
Videos of local experiences

The aims and experiences of seven social innovations have been recorded by the local actors in a set of short [participatory videos](#). They include videos of examples referred to in this guide on the Growing Club, United Kingdom; the Norwegian Trekking Association, Norway; socio-entrepreneurs, Italy; and forest agrobiodiversity in Guadeloupe, France.

Online training course

A training course on social innovation will be launched on FutureLearn from March 2020. The course includes sessions on an introduction to social innovation, social innovation in practice, and good practices and adaptive management of social innovation in projects.

Other briefing documents and manuals

For detailed information about indicators please see the Manual on Innovative Methods to Assess Social Innovation and its Impacts.

In addition, there are two policy briefs which include recommendations for future support of social innovation at local, national and European and international levels.

All [SIMRA resources](#) are available.

Remember...

This is a general guide for one person, or a group of people in a community who have come together to find a solution to a local issue, which needs resolving, and have chosen to do so by creating a social innovation. At every step you must be sure to adhere to the relevant policies and regulations in your region with regards to obtaining funding or permits, depending on what your social innovation requires.

The authors accept no responsibility for the misuse of information contained in the guide or any liabilities arising.

Table 1. Checklist.

In the following questions, score the progress you have made on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 represents not yet started, and 10 represents completed.

Steps	Score
1. Getting ready	
Identifying an issue in the community	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Establishing the motivation for supporting the Social Innovation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Finding a mentor or other similar Social Innovations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Building a team you trust	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Do your research and engage the community	
Drawing a context map	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
To what extent does your community share your team's vision for the Social Innovation?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Creating a Shared Values mission statement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Setting up your social innovation: develop a strategy/plan	
Formalising your team and deciding on a legal form (if needed)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Developing a strategy for the next period	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Finding initial and sustainable resources	
Researching and applying for appropriate small grant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Running a pilot	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Deciding on what to measure, and how, for the pilot	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Identifying your resources beyond the financial (i.e. who in your community can support the Social Innovation?)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Monitoring: Moving forward, pushing through while keeping track	
Nominating a 'scribe'	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Maintaining continuous involvement of the community by asking for feedback on a regular basis	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Nominating a board of directors	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Nominating an accountant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Developing a marketing strategy to be visible in your community	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Organic Growth of your Social Innovation	
Developing a 5-year plan that is flexible, modifiable and adjustable to accommodate the needs of the community	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Revisiting your shared values mission statement created by the innovation actors and the community	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Evaluation, Revitalisation and Renewal of your Social Innovation	
How well are you doing? What are the problems you have encountered?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Has the environment changed? If so, are you still needed? Or, do you simply need to adjust your mission statement and the activities in which you are engaging?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do you need to broaden the portfolio of actions?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Have you reached an impasse?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Are you struggling to find a way out?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Have you revisited your objectives and your first steps?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
How useful has a 'critical friend' been throughout this process?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Acknowledgements

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