



# Equal Invest

## Mentor recruitment report



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## 1 Introduction

This is the second report to come out of the Equal Invest project. Equal Invest offers an opportunity for selected social enterprises to access investment and social enterprise business development expertise and leapfrog the hurdles that block them from growing both their size and impact on the community.

Equal Invest provides structured mentoring, with additional consultant support and a wide range of rich e-enabled tools and resources. Using an established structured investment impact and value framework, Equal Invest aims to focus the social enterprises on the specific changes in practices, process and systems directed at business impact outcomes that will help them to be more sustainable and attract investment. At the end of the project period, participating social enterprises will have an opportunity to pitch their aspirations to a range of investors who may be prepared to invest in order to help them grow their organisations and in doing so, their positive social impact.

All selected enterprises will receive business advice through the initial health check consulting process, with a clear and documented list of business outcome measures to be achieved and specific outputs to be delivered. Through the four month mentoring process, the enterprises will be supported by extensive on line resources, learning materials and action learning tools and templates.

Mentors will have an opportunity to apply their skills and experience in business development in new social enterprise contexts, learning with peers through action learning groups, enabling and supporting an enterprise as it prepares for the investment pitch, and making a positive contribution to the social missions of the organisations they work with.

## 2 Mentor recruitment

This report considers an important part of the first phase of the project; the recruitment and selection of mentors to support the social enterprises participating in Equal Invest. It describes the objectives, activities and outcomes of the recruitment and selection processes. The report also provides summarised data which provides an insight into the types of mentors that came forward to volunteer their services to support the social enterprises, with a view to building their own capability and using the experience to explore new mentoring opportunities.

It also draws some tentative conclusions about the success of the recruitment and selection activity and some lessons learned. These lessons will be of interest to the project partners and stakeholders and perhaps also other organisations providing mentoring services to social enterprises and to professional business coaching and mentors more widely.

The project has established a set of operating principles among which is the aim to be as transparent as possible in describing the activities, interests and areas for improvement learned from this experience. Attached as appendices to this 'public' report are a number of documents which are referenced throughout the report.





One document that is not publicly available is the detailed results of the assessment exercise which includes scores and commentary on each of the applicant mentors (appendix 3). It was not considered appropriate to make public any data concerning individual mentors. A full list of participating mentors has been published and is on the Equal Invest web site, which is found at <http://equalinvest.tribalctad.co.uk>.

### Objectives of Phase 1

#### Awareness and interest

- To target relevant channels informing potential mentors in the UK of the opportunity to participate in Equal Invest.
- To generate a list of potential candidates who will be invited to apply as Equal Invest mentors.

#### Criteria for selection

- To establish a set of criteria for selection of mentors that is transparent, fair and easy to score.
- To disseminate a prospectus and application forms with clear and transparent criteria and information requirements.

#### Communicate the opportunity

- To respond to all questions about the opportunities and the criteria for selection.

#### Generate response

- To provide adequate time for completion by applicants.
- To generate a level of response that would allow for a real selection of the candidate mentors from a larger body of applicants.

#### Selection process

- To establish simple transparent processes for reading each application and scoring it across the criteria.
- To create a list of applications in excess of those needed to support the fifteen selected enterprises.
- To transmit the result to selected mentor candidates very quickly to ensure commitment secured as quickly as possible.
- To interview successful applicants to generate data for enterprise matching.

## 3 Activities

### Identification of criteria for participation

Eastside, which is experienced in providing consultant and mentoring services to social enterprises, drafted a set of criteria which were then discussed and agreed by the partners. The criteria included mandatory requirements (with a scoring system of yes/no) together with a range of minimum requirements of experience and especially desirable criteria. The final version is attached as appendix 1. From these criteria for



selection, application instructions were developed (also part of appendix 1) that aimed to capture all relevant data from each applicant mentor.

### Creating awareness and generating interest

Awareness was generated through each partner's own channels, including the Equal programme through Tribal, the Social Enterprise Coalition's networks and Eastside's own consulting and mentoring networks. A total of 48 potential candidates were identified and invited to apply.

### Call for mentor applications

A prospectus (appendix 2) was drafted and agreed and together with the application form, circulated at the start of July through the above channels. The potential applicants were requested to respond within two weeks. A total of 18 applications were received.

### Processing applications and selecting mentors

A panel of assessors comprising nominees from partners and primary stakeholders was set up and a process for review and selection was agreed in advance between the main stakeholders. Each application was first reviewed for compliance with mandatory requirements. Each was then read by at least one assessor (in most cases, two), and scores and accompanying comments were documented. A consolidated list of the results was shared in an e-mail exchange.

A final document in spreadsheet format was prepared with details of the assessment scores, commentary to support the scores, a list with the agreed conclusion for each applicant. This document, although listed below under appendices as appendix 3, and as noted earlier in this report, is not available as a public document.

A total of 18 mentors were selected to be invited to participate.

### Communication of results

All the mentors that had applied were successful and most immediately accepted the opportunity to participate. A small number said they wished to wait until after the mentor induction day which took place on August 1, 2007 (after which, two mentors decided not to proceed due to time resource commitments).

All mentors were then followed up with a telephone interview prior to the mentor induction day. These interviews were conducted by Eastside, with the aim of answering any mentor's questions particularly about the Induction day and gathering some more detail on each mentor to assist the process of matching each mentor with an enterprise. The details below are drawn from the notes taken during these interviews.





## 4 Data gathered on the selected mentors<sup>1</sup>

Male	Female
10	8

Age	Number
<35	1
35–50	8
50+	9

Background industry / sector	Number of responses
Consultancy	9
manufacturing	2
Charity/social enterprise	2
Coaching services	2
Academic	1
Corporate	1
Technology	1

Main skills / expertise	Number of responses <sup>2</sup>
Management	10
Marketing	6
Coaching	5
CSR/sustainability	4
Finance/accounting	3
Entrepreneurship	3
Social issues	2
Research	2
Procurement	1
IT/web site development	1

<sup>1</sup> Includes all those invited to participate

<sup>2</sup> Mentors were asked to provide data on first and second level expertise/skills – all are included here





## Passions

Mentors were asked to describe their passions; this data helped to plan the 'match' with the enterprises.

Among the passions listed were the following (bracket figure donates the number that cited this)

- Ecological/environment (8)
- Agriculture/food (2)
- Disadvantaged youth (2)
- Entrepreneurialism (2)
- Technology (2)

The following passions were also cited: Mental health, Aids/HIV, Disability, Well being, Community development, Older citizens/workers, Business ethics, Creativity, Intergenerational relations

## 5 Objectives and success criteria

### Awareness and interest

- **To target relevant channels to inform potential mentors in the UK of the opportunity to participate in Equal Invest.**

### Success criteria

- Equal channels used to convey information to potential applicants.
- Social Enterprise Coalition channels covered.
- **To generate a list of potential mentors to invite to apply to participate in Equal Invest.**

### Success criteria

- Sufficient level of enquiries to generate level of applications to cover required number of mentors (just)

### Criteria for selection

- **To establish a set of criteria for selection of mentors that was transparent, fair and easy to score**

### Success criteria

- Utilisation of 'best available' expertise to establish the criteria for selection keeping in mind the project objectives, the Equal programme priorities and criteria that would deliver potential mentors.



- **To disseminate a prospectus and application forms with clear and transparent criteria and information requirements.**

### **Success criteria**

- All candidates understood the criteria for selection and were able to respond accordingly.
- All of the selection panel understood the criteria for selection and selection was carried out with speed and consistency.

### **Communicate the opportunity**

- **To respond to all questions about the opportunities and the criteria for selection.**

### **Success criteria**

- Accessible information sources (email, telephone) were able to respond to all enquiries

### **Generate response**

- **To provide adequate time for completion by mentors.**

### **Success criteria**

- The majority of those expressing interest in applying were able to submit forms within required time period
- **To generate a level of response that would allow for a real selection of the candidate enterprises from a larger body of applicants**

### **Success criteria**

- Sufficient level of enquiries to generate level of applications to cover required number of mentors (just)

### **Selection process**

- **To establish simple transparent processes for reading each application, scoring it across the criteria.**

### **Success criteria**

- Sufficient time allowed for applications to read by two assessors; for each assessor to have time to read and record scores and comments; for all scores and comments to be collated and discussed
- **To create a list of applications in excess of 15 required.**

### **Success criteria**

- More than 15 selected (18 selected).



- **To transmit the result to selected mentor candidates very quickly to ensure commitment secured as quickly as possible**

### **Success criteria**

- Commitment secured very quickly with majority. Only two withdrew after mentor induction day.
- **To interview successful applicants to generate data for enterprise matching.**

### **Success criteria**

- All mentors interviewed by telephone and data gathered prior to mentor induction day.

## **6 Conclusions**

### **A rapid start up**

The Equal Invest team faced a significant challenge in starting the project from scratch on June 1 2007, with a completion date at end of December 2007. This meant that the recruitment and selection of mentors needed to occur extremely quickly.

The entire process from project start to finalisation of mentor selection and recruitment was executed in less than seven weeks, took place simultaneously with enterprise recruitment and selection and both occurred during the early part of the holiday period.

### **High quality, committed mentors applied**

Awareness was sufficiently raised to have sufficient high quality mentors apply. However, there is no 'slack' and with the loss of two mentors following Induction Day (noted earlier) and one more since (due to family reasons); the project has no contingency for the loss of further mentors.

### **Good transparency**

The process has been documented and is reasonably clear and transparent.

### **Strong in some areas of expertise**

There is a particularly high level of expertise in marketing, management and coaching.

## **7 Lessons learnt**

The short time scale meant that there was very limited time for recruitment and as a result, the number of mentors is only just at the level needed. More time might have allowed more exploitation of Equal networks as well as the use of other approaches to generating interest and applications.



While the group has some great strengths, the number of mentors who are strong in finance and accounting is very small; and, given the focus on preparing for investment, this will put pressure on the limited resources available to support enterprises in financial matters. There is also a limited amount of technology expertise; again this will mean limited resources are available to assist enterprises in looking at how technology might assist their marketing and sales channels/approaches and their process efficiencies (including financial management).

There are a large number of consultants in the group. This is positive as most will gain important insights and experience in the social enterprise domain which can be mainstreamed later. However, while a small number have worked in large corporations, there is no-one currently employed in the corporate sector, committed as part of their organisation's CSR programmes. A strong link to CSR programmes was one of the early aspirations of the project team.

The absence of corporate representatives working as mentors as part of CSR projects may be largely due to the tight timescales; generating awareness, getting approval and executing the process of allocating staff for CSR projects takes a long time; probably more than is available for the whole project period!

An important lesson for partners is to consider immediately how to communicate the activities and outcomes of the project to managers of CSR projects in large organisations so that as part of any future mainstreaming, a take up of similar mentoring roles with other social enterprises might be stimulated to follow immediately after Equal ends.

Finally, the relatively high number of mentors expressing a 'passion' for ecological/environmental protection and improvement is not matched by the profiles of the participating social enterprises. The selected social enterprises are primarily concerned with social (economic/educational/employment) issues, especially relating to those disadvantaged and at risk in the labour market. The very small number of selected social enterprises with activities which directly impact the environment will mean that some mentors will not be able to indulge their passion on this occasion. However, it is also possible that they may introduce ideas to their enterprises which link sustainability and environmental concerns with the social issues they are primarily concerned with.

Had more time been available, it could have afforded an opportunity to carry out a 'second round' directed at recruitment of specific profiles to counteract or complement the profiles attracted in a first round; such as attracting more mentors with finance and accounting expertise. Time for a second selection might also have allowed some additional mentors to be recruited in case of need.



## 8 Summary of overall project progress to date

In July 2007, eighteen mentors were selected to participate in Equal Invest. The majority met at the induction day on August 1 2007, and, within a week, sixteen had been matched with their enterprise – some partnering together on more than one enterprise. By the end of August, mentors were already providing mentoring to the fifteen social enterprises, building their capability and enabling those that are investor-ready to pitch for funding in December 2007.

## 9 Appendices

- 1 Equal Invest mentor application instructions and selection criteria
- 2 Equal Invest mentor prospectus
- 3 Equal Invest mentor assessment template (completed) 240707