
Plymouth University

Contact Details

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Model

Find, Fund and Support

Starting Point

The University of Plymouth has well established programmes in supporting enterprise in general, with considerable expertise within the different departments across the University. As a leader of the Peninsula Growth Acceleration and Investment Network (GAIN), Plymouth offers a wide range of support, advice and facilities to support individuals looking to start, grow and develop an enterprise. In addition, social enterprise is well supported. It is an elected module for all students and the University offers placements at social enterprises for students and staff to learn and experience more about the sector. The HE Support Programme has enhanced the support available.

Delivery Structure

The HE Support Programme is 'housed' within the University's Social Enterprise University Enterprise Network (SE-UEN: www.plymouthsocialenterpriseuen.co.uk), which is based centrally and dedicated to extending and demonstrating the value of social enterprise for social and economic benefit. In addition, a number of other departments have been involved in providing support to both the Programme and to Award Winners including the Students Union, Enactus, the local Social Enterprise Network (which is linked in to SE-UEN) and Formation Zone (www.formationzone.co.uk), the onsite business incubator managed by Eleanor Butland.

The Delivery Team

The Plymouth Delivery Team have a broad range of experience of entrepreneurship – both social and general. The SE-UEN, managed by Judith Reynolds, works with students, university staff and the wider community to inform them about social enterprise business models and offer practical support to develop their social enterprise ideas. Their remit is to look at policy and research, support and training for students and staff and to help social enterprises become more competitive and sustainable. The Formation Zone, managed by Eleanor

ENTERPRISE WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Butland, nurtures and develops new, high-value businesses and provides a dynamic environment encompassing the knowledge, facilities and resources to inspire and enable successful business ideas.

Delivery Approach

At the onset of the Programme, the Delivery Team set about recruiting volunteer champions from across the Institution to act as advocates for the Programme. This proved successful and ensured that the Programme was promoted to the wider audience at every opportunity. This was also successful via a network of staff and student social enterprise ambassadors, including the very active Entrepreneurs Society, Enactus Society and Enterprise Enablers. Social media networks, webpages, LCD screens, flyers and poster sites across the University were also utilised. The local newspaper "The Herald" picked up on the opportunity and featured their first two award winners from November 2012. Plymouth held a social enterprise trade fair and conference which attracted approximately 250 people in one day, offering a range of talks, workshops and exciting stands from social enterprises that were part of the very active Plymouth Social Enterprise Network. They also held informal student drop-in sessions, informative talks to undergraduates on enterprise and established a 'Joined Up Entrepreneurship' Meeting Group which disseminated information to staff and students active in delivering entrepreneurship services.

Support from SE-UEN included well-informed advice and their unique ability to draw on academic expertise from across the University network to add value to their work. SE-UEN supported the Programme by delivering events, an internship programme, knowledge transfer surgeries, 1:2:1 advice and guidance, research and workshops.

The Formation Zone provides high quality, flexibly managed workspace and business support for

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start-up or existing businesses, particularly aimed at marine/environmental, creative, medical/health and engineering sectors. Entrepreneurs can benefit from exploring initial business ideas with experts as well as learning new skills to underpin starting up and managing a business. Access to student and graduate resources, along with the introduction to academic expertise and state-of-the-art facilities, are also key benefits. Alongside this, the University is leading the GAIN community across the South West region, which introduces entrepreneurs to useful networks, contacts, events, investment opportunities and business support organisations. The incubation space is available on flexible terms ranging from workstations to self-contained buildings with access to a leading edge ICT, shared services and meeting rooms. In addition, the shared professional environments also facilitate collaboration with other start-up businesses and all clients are supported by dedicated, experienced teams to help their business develop. Pre-incubation provides the space and support to an entrepreneur to develop an idea into a viable business. This could include market testing for the idea, linking into specialist networks and expertise, producing prototypes, forming a business plan and guidance to improve business skills. Once a business has been formed then the incubator stage helps them to take the next steps to grow their business and successfully move on. For Award Winners, 1:2:1 support was provided through Eleanor Butland. Participation in the Tectona Business Challenge, run by Formation Zone, was encouraged and several award winners took part, accessing expert advice and workshops to strengthen their social enterprise ideas.

Did it go according to plan?

In general the Programme has gone according to plan with the Awards pot being fully allocated by July 2013. The response to the Awards was very positive and Plymouth had a consistent level of interest for the Awards. Applications have peaked in the third term of the academic year.

Partnerships

Delivery and management of the Programme was via a number of key partners including SE-UEN, the Formation Zone, Entrepreneurs Society, Enactus Society, Enterprise Enablers and the Plymouth Social Enterprise Network.

Challenges

There were no real challenges as such. Plymouth did find one small challenge around the timing of

applications/assessment panels being held and where the academic year was winding up to final projects and exams. This led to applications being postponed and resulted in a small bottleneck occurring in the third term. This proved a challenge in managing the award winners and supporting their projects.

Results

These results are for the programme up until June 2013. There is one more round of applications and awards for the beginning of July.

Applications

- Try It Awards - 6
- Do It Awards - 3
- Build It Awards - 2

Awards Made

- Try It Awards - 4
- Do It Awards - 2
- Build It Awards - 1

Total Award Value of £21,490

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