

The Seeds of Social Change: The Impact of the Stephen Lloyd Awards (2015 – 2024)



March 2025

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Citation and Publication Notices

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Foreword



It is a pleasure to welcome this Impact Report, as we mark a decade of the Stephen Lloyd Awards. It is humbling and inspiring to reflect on the impact we have made together, in empowering visionary leaders to cultivate change. As a trustee of the Foundation, and its chair for the past three years, it has been an extraordinary journey for me personally. What began as a tribute to a respected and much-missed colleague, has evolved into a beacon of hope, championing remarkable changemakers who dare to dream boldly and act courageously.

Over the past decade, we have had the privilege of supporting an array of inspiring founders and organisations, each working tirelessly to address pressing social and environmental challenges. Their creativity and ambition have been the vital spark of the Awards platform, igniting change and transforming individuals and communities in ways that can only be imagined.

This milestone is not just an opportunity to reflect on the past but also to look ahead with renewed determination, build on key insights and take practical steps toward growth and success. Our aspirations to develop an Alumni programme, expand engagement, welcome new trustees and strengthen support relationships point to a dynamic and exciting future. These initiatives will ensure that the Awards continue to uplift ambitious leaders through its warm, collaborative network.

As we embark on the next chapter, I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who played a part in this journey — our generous supporters, funders, volunteers, dedicated trustees, and most importantly, the finalists and winners whose work inspires us all. I'd also like to thank Stephen's family for their continued support of the Awards over the years.

Together, we are creating a platform that not only celebrates innovation but also nurtures it, creating a brighter and more equitable future for all.

We have come a long way. I look forward to the coming years, filled with new opportunities to champion originality that power meaningful change.

With gratitude and hope,

Stephanie Biden

Chair, Bates Wells Foundation

SECTION 1 - Executive Summary

Over the past decade, the Stephen Lloyd Awards (SLA or SLAs) have built a strong reputation as a pioneering and supportive force in the philanthropic landscape. Established in 2015 in honour of Stephen Lloyd, a visionary lawyer and a champion for early-stage social innovation, the Awards have been committed to identifying and nurturing transformative ideas that challenge conventional approaches to systemic challenges. Through an inclusive, flexible, and trust-based funding model, the SLAs have empowered a new generation of social entrepreneurs to pursue bold, creative solutions for pressing issues.

Between 2015 and 2024, the SLAs supported 23 winners and 87 finalists, distributing over £673,500 in funding. Yet, the impact of the SLAs goes beyond financial support. The programme has cultivated a vibrant community of change-makers, providing recipients unparalleled access to a network of over 100 experts offering pro bono support, strategic advice, and mentorship. This approach has enabled participants to grow significantly, build organisational capacity, and enhance their credibility.

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the SLAs in supporting early-stage change innovators with funding and access to professional advice and support over the past decade. Key themes have been identified that illustrate the SLA's strengths in fostering innovation and community while highlighting areas for improvement.

KEY FINDINGS



SLA CULTURE & GRANT PROCESS

The SLA's programme model is designed to be both accessible and rigorous, balancing the need for sufficient information for decision-making with an inclusive, low-burden application experience. This approach creates a supportive and transparent environment for applicants, fostering a strong sense of community and trust among participants. Efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) are ongoing, with improvements in the diversity of assessors and a commitment to continuously refining practices.



CONTRIBUTION TO GRANTEE SUCCESS

The SLA's flexible, trust-based funding model empowers recipients by providing unrestricted grants that enable them to use funds as they see fit, contributing to organisational growth and sustainability. Awardees benefit greatly from access to a robust network of pro bono experts offering tailored support in legal, financial, and strategic areas, enhancing their projects' credibility and visibility. Additionally, the Awards offer crucial intangible benefits, such as emotional support and professional development, which help participants build confidence, refine skills, and expand their networks, often leading to further funding and opportunities.



LEARNING POINTS

While the SLAs excel in fostering a supportive community during the programme, there is an identified need to strengthen ongoing peer networking and support beyond the initial events. Establishing a formal alumni network could facilitate sustained engagement and collaboration among participants. Additionally, there are challenges in accessing the SLA support network, highlighting the need for a more visible and user-friendly platform to connect awardees with potential supporters and enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of the pro bono services offered.

SECTION 2- Introduction

The History of the Stephen Lloyd Awards

The world is full of people wanting to help others...with brilliant ideas and ways of making change happen. Yet too many of these innovators lack support.

Stephen Lloyd was an inspirational lawyer who had a knack of finding real possibilities and potential that others overlooked and backing these innovators with his belief, insight, expertise and care.



Stephen was a former Senior Partner of Bates Wells Braithwaite and a much-loved veteran of the UK charity sector. Stimulated by the ideas and drive of Philip Kirkpatrick and other colleagues and friends of Stephen (Jim Clifford OBE, Ben Metz, Michael Norton, Stuart Etherington and Nicholas Young), the Bates Wells Foundation established the Stephen Lloyd Awards Programme (“SLA” or “the Awards”) in 2015 in honour of Stephen’s remarkable career and commitment to the sector he loved. The Awards support novel, early-stage ideas that address social and environmental challenges at a systemic level. Recognising the dearth in early-stage funding, these are essentially ‘big ideas’ that might not, or cannot, reach the mainstream channels for support or funding.

Stephen enjoyed challenging the boundaries of what was possible, and this approach is very much reflected in the values of the SLA. One of the distinguishing features of the Awards is the openness to supporting ideas in many forms and the willingness to back an idea on one sheet of paper and not to require initial success before support is provided.

In the last 10 years there have been:

- 873 applicants
- 87 finalists
- 23 winners of which 21 are still active
- £490,000 awarded to winning projects
- £183,500 awarded to finalists

Now 10 years on with a large network of enthusiastic, knowledgeable and convivial supporters and alumni, as observed by the researchers during the 2024 Finale Event, the SLA has developed its own identity whilst remaining true to the legacy and inspiration of Stephen Lloyd.

Purpose of this Report

The Trustees of the Bates Wells Foundation have commissioned an evaluation of the SLA Awards which assesses their effectiveness at supporting early-stage change innovators with funding and access to professional advice and support. Areas for further learning, development and improvement of the awards are also identified.



This report builds on the work of the 5 year impact report ‘*Stephen Lloyd Awards (SLA) Programme: Understanding the impact achieved with our winning projects*’¹ and in particular further develops the SLA Theory of Change (ToC). This shows how the SLAs go beyond financial support to empower programme participants, providing them with the resources, guidance, and confidence needed to drive meaningful social and environmental change.

The SLA also aims to be transparent and share learnings and the unique challenges that come with early-stage funding with the wider funding community, entrepreneurs, and future applicants.

The authors and the Trustees of the Bates Wells Foundation hope that this report will inform, encourage, and inspire a wider involvement by network members, funders, and other stakeholders.

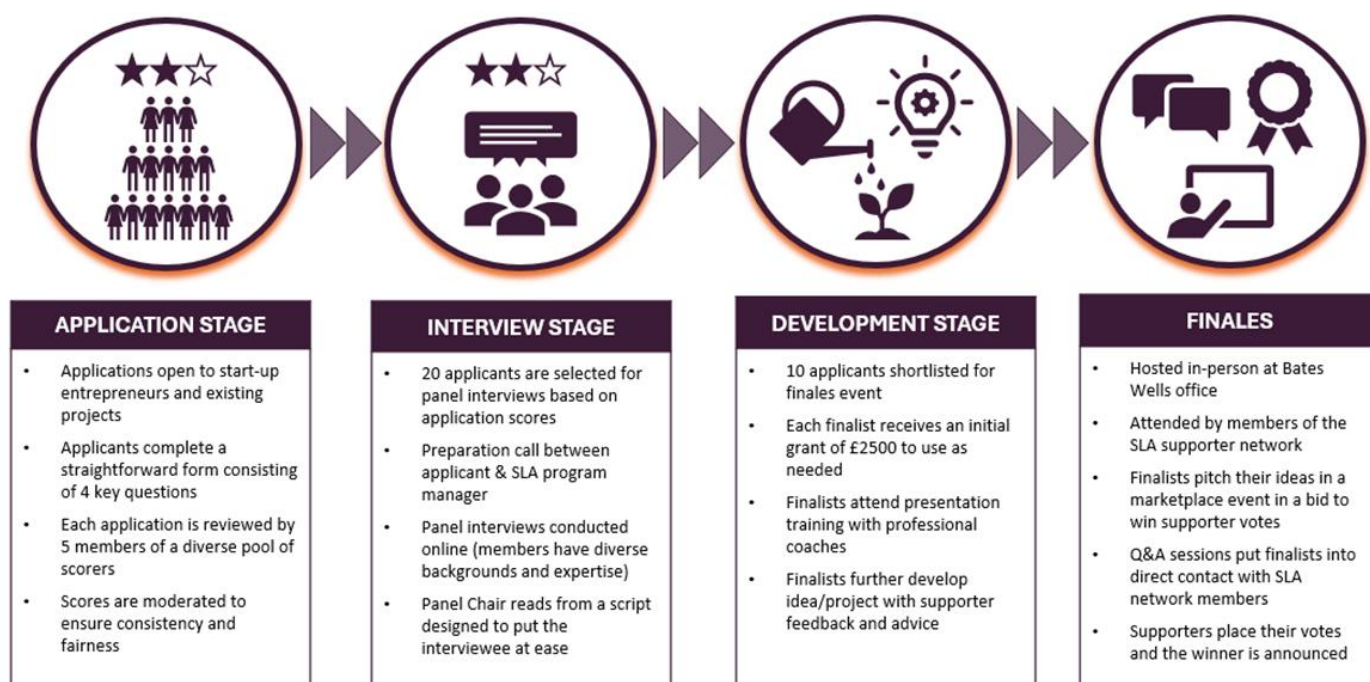
The SLA Programme Model

The SLAs aim to cultivate a culture of innovation by encouraging new, sustainable approaches to address pressing social and environmental challenges. Emerging social entrepreneurs and early-stage projects need more than just financial resources to survive and thrive. They also require capacity-building support, technical assistance, opportunities for growth, and the backing of a strong ally. The SLA model provides a supportive framework that fosters trust and builds relationships. This is achieved through transparent and equitable funding practices and an engaged community of SLA partners, volunteers and supporters.

¹ Bates Wells Foundation (2019) Stephen Lloyd Awards (SLA) Programme: Understanding the impact achieved with our winning projects. Available at: <https://www.stephenlloydawards.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Stephen-Lloyd-Awards-Impact-Report.pdf> (Accessed 01 September 2024).

The SLA Application Process

The Awards are open to a diverse range of applicants, from single individuals with big ideas to grassroots community projects and more structured organisational programmes. The common thread is that they are all early-stage ideas, hard to fund by conventional means, and which challenge what is thought impossible. This inclusivity ensures all innovative ideas for positive social change are valued and considered. However, it also requires a carefully designed application process and a diverse, dedicated team of assessors, which is outlined in the diagram below.



As can be seen, the SLA application process is both comprehensive and transparent. Over 1500 hours have been spent assessing applications, with an average of 67 volunteers carrying out this process each year. Each application is reviewed by at least three scorers and moderated for consistency and fairness. Panel interviews also help to reduce bias by leveraging multiple perspectives, increasing objectivity, and enhancing the overall transparency of the evaluation process.


Applicants are supported and encouraged throughout their programme journey. They have direct contact with the programme manager, who guides them through the process and offers moral support and assistance. Those selected to progress to the final stage receive an initial £2500 grant, which they can spend as they see fit, professional presentation training, and feedback and advice to help them refine their ideas and prepare for the final event.

The Awards night provides a platform for shortlisted applicants to showcase their projects and connect with members of the SLA supporter network. The “marketplace” design requires applicants to pitch their ideas, use influencing skills, and flex their entrepreneurial muscles.

The event is attended by an engaged group of dedicated supporters who vote for their preferred applicants, with the trustees retaining ultimate discretion to choose winners guided by supporter votes. Winners are announced on the evening, and funding is provided shortly afterwards. Grants are unrestricted, and quarterly progress reporting is required, until the funds are fully utilised.

Strengthening Diversity Equity and Inclusivity Practices (DEI)

One defining feature of the programme over the last ten years has been a willingness to listen and adapt processes to reflect a wider range of experiences. The Trustees and programme manager assess each year which aspects of the process can be designed and improved. Particular focus has been applied to increase the diversity of the community of volunteer assessors to reflect a wide range of experiences. The below table highlights how the community has changed over ten years.

	THEN (2015)	NOW (2023)
 Pool of application scorers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 42 application scorers ❑ All professionals (many with charity sector experience) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 82 application scorers ❑ 53 professionals, 16 charity sector leaders, 2 former SLAs winners, 11 community members
Interview Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 3 panel members ❑ All men, all white, all professionals ❑ Total hours spent: 36* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 8 panel members ❑ 3 men & 5 women, 4 white & 4 other ethnic backgrounds, 1 young entrepreneur, 1 former SLA winner, 2 Foundation Trustees, 1 from Bates Wells, 3 SLA Partners ❑ Total hours spent: 144*
Pro bono supporter network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ ~50 individuals and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ ~150 individuals and organisations

* Note: The significant increase in hours is due to a larger and more diverse interview panel, designed to ensure fairness and incorporate a wide range of experiences. Expanding the interview panel reflects the SLAs' commitment to continuous improvement, learning, and inclusive practices.

The SLA Partner Network

The SLAs recognise that a key challenge for innovative, early-stage organisations is the cost of accessing professional advice. To address this, the Awards bring together a network of experts who can deliver practical, free support to all finalist candidates. Award recipients are connected with a network of over 100 organisations and skilled individuals who can assist them in refining their strategies, developing their capabilities, and expanding their reach. This support is flexible and can be utilised as needed, aligning with the organisation's timeline and requirements instead of imposing a fixed schedule. Network members are involved at every stage of the programme, from reviewing and scoring initial applications to participating in the democratic vote to select the winners on the Awards night.

The community spirit of these awards reflects many of the best funding practices championed by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR), a respected industry body for the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.² The power imbalances inherent in the funding process call for more open and transparent processes. The SLAs model aims to build a culture of mutual trust and respect, values the applicant's time and expertise, and approaches risk with a healthy appetite.

² Buckley E., Firth, L. and Rooney, K. (2021) *Towards more flexible funding*. Available at: <https://www.ivar.org.uk/publication/towards-flexible-funding/>. (Accessed 01 September 2024).

SECTION 3 - Methodology

The research for this evaluation has been carried out by Melissa Williams and Jacquelyn Van Jaarsveld (“the researchers”), postgraduate students completing the MSc Philanthropy, Grantmaking and Social Investment Programme at Bayes Business School, City, University of London. The researchers have not been paid for their time.

The research was carried out under the supervision of Jim Clifford OBE, an academic at Sheffield Hallam University and City, University of London, and a noted expert in the field of impact measurement (collectively with the researchers “the authors”). Jim Clifford is also a Trustee of the Bates Wells Foundation. The Programme Manager, Mona Rahman, also provided valuable input that helped the researchers understand the nuances of the SLA and facilitated access to key informants.

Therefore, this is considered insider-outsider research and, as such, follows the associated research principles for evidence gathering, ethics, and disclosure of findings³. This approach offers a contextually informed and ethically robust approach to the research framework.

A mixed methods design was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data was collected from multiple sources, which allowed for triangulation and cross-verification to enhance the credibility and validity of the results. This comprised three elements:

1. Documents review and desktop research

A desktop review of all Award finalists and winners was undertaken to map key characteristics of their social projects and identify any notable trends. This analysis offered valuable insights into the programme's reach and the allocation of funding. The analysis focused on the following aspects:

- Current status (active or dissolved)
- Social/environmental theme or cause
- Location
- Type of organisation
- New or existing organisation and project

Data was obtained from application forms and publicly available sources such as Charity Commission filings, Companies House filings, and grantee websites. Details on winning projects can be found in Appendix A, and the analysis results can be found in Section 4—Who are the Finalists and Winners?



³ Louis, M. R., & Bartunek, J. M. (1992) Insider/Outsider Research Teams: Collaboration Across Diverse Perspectives. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 1(2), 101-110. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/105649269212002>

2. Deep-dive interviews with selected winners

Ten semi-structured focused interviews, lasting between 40 minutes and one hour, were conducted online with selected previous winners. The interviews explored the participants' experience of the Awards programme, the evolution of their social projects, and the value they gained from the Awards. The discussion guide is included in Appendix B.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select the interviewees most likely to yield the richest information. The researchers created a shortlist of potential interviewees by excluding projects no longer operating and winners who had been interviewed as part of the 2019 Impact Study. Interviewees were then chosen in consultation with the SLA Programme Manager and guided by availability to represent a range of project themes and participant years. Interviewees are identified in Appendix A.

A thematic analysis of interview transcripts was undertaken to identify the key themes in Section 4—Key Themes.

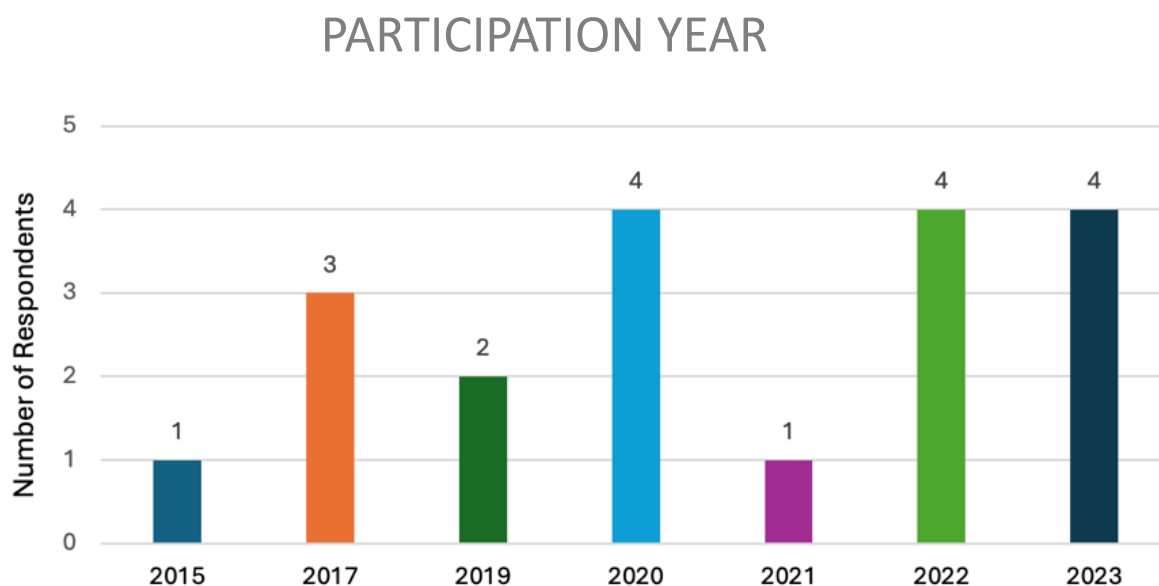


3. Survey of shortlisted applicants

A questionnaire was sent to all applicants shortlisted as finalists in the nine previous years in which the Awards had been held (see Appendix C for survey questions). The purpose was to gather feedback on their experience during the SLA, identify areas for improvement, and validate key themes. The Programme Manager emailed a link to the survey which was prepared using an online form. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete and was kept open for two weeks. The responses were collected anonymously, and all information was unattributed and stored anonymously.

The survey was emailed to the leaders of the 87 projects that were shortlisted as finalists over the entire 10-year span of the Awards. Participants were instructed to provide one response only per project/organisation. Nineteen responses were received providing a response rate of 22.84%, this is acceptable for this research, given the types of questions being asked, the small numbers in the sample, and that this is only one of three main sources of evidence. Demographic data for survey respondents are shown in the charts below. Survey results validated and further refined the key themes identified from the interviews described in Section 4—Key Themes.

Of the individuals who responded to the survey, 74% were women, 21% were men, and 5% preferred not to specify a gender. Eighty-four per cent identified as White, 11% as Black and 5% as having a mixed ethnic background. The graph below shows the breakdown of responses by year of participation.



Graph 3. Survey respondent year of participation in SLAs (n = 19)

Limitations and bias in this research

This evaluation has some limitations; the key ones and their implications for this report are described below.

Due to the low response rate and the relatively high margin of error, the survey's reliability is limited. The interviews only spanned winners. Consequently, little information is available on the experiences and outcomes of award finalists who did not receive a main grant prize. Widening the interview shortlist to include finalists may have identified differing themes or points for improvement. This is an area the SLA may wish to investigate further in future evaluation initiatives.

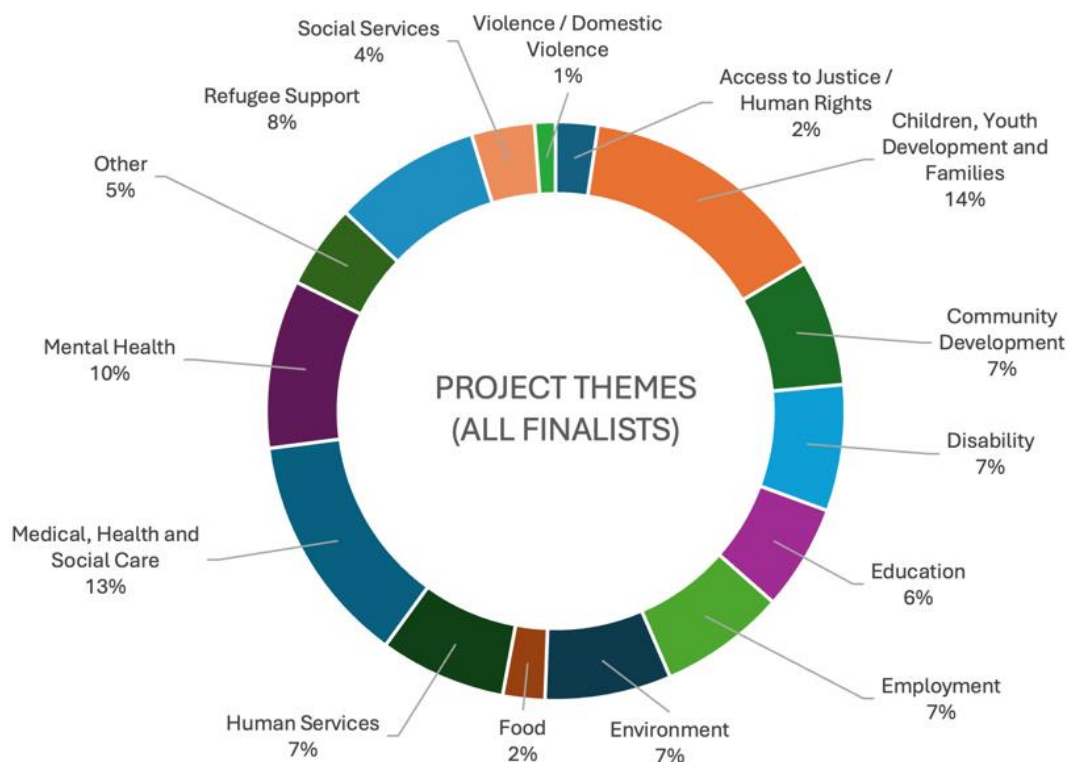
The power dynamics inherent within any funding model can make it challenging to obtain objective feedback from grantees. The survey design attempted to mitigate this drawback by allowing participants to deliver anonymous feedback. However, due to the abovementioned limitation, the survey responses may not reflect the broader applicant community, and caution should be taken when extrapolating the results.

Finally, recall bias was evident for several interviewees and survey respondents due to the passage of time and the salience of more routine programme elements (e.g. application form completion). This may lead to inaccuracies in the data collected and compromise the validity of the evaluation findings. The researchers have highlighted the areas impacted by this issue in the findings described below.

SECTION 4 – Study Findings

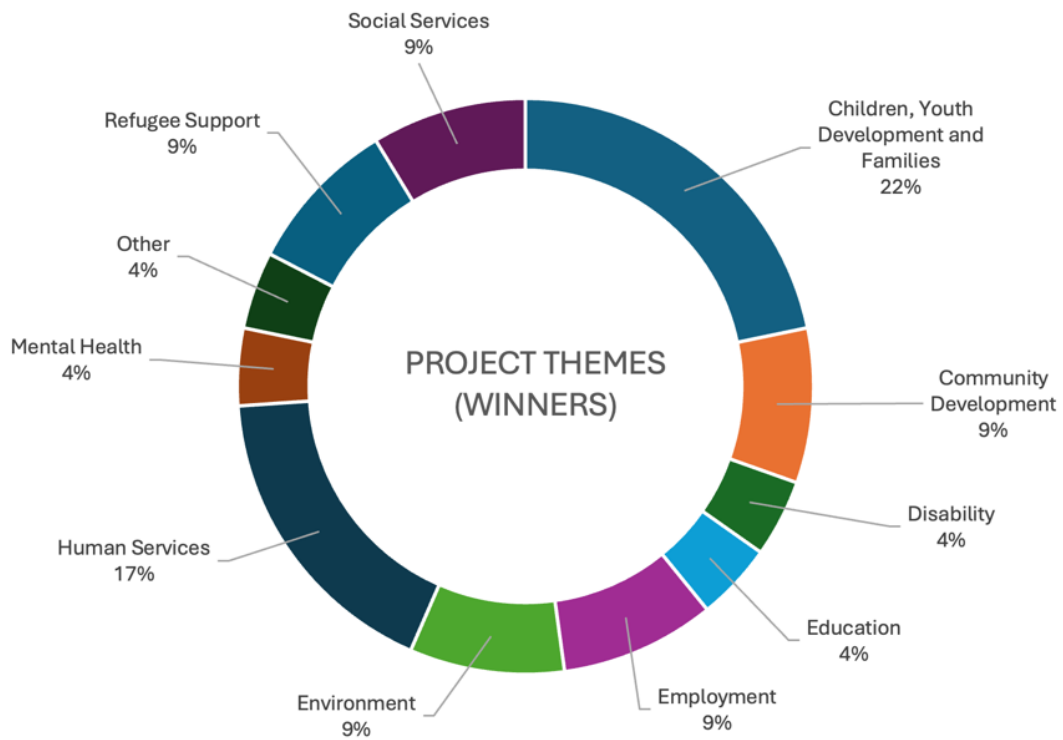
Overview of winners and finalists: who, what, where?

The analysis of supported projects reflects the diversity of social entrepreneurship in the UK. This is evident in the broad spectrum of social and environmental causes addressed, and the type of organisation structure shortlisted organisations use. This diversity also indicates that the SLA’s programme design does not favour any particular sector, cause or organisational type as reflected in the charts below. The graphs below show the breakdown of all shortlisted and winning projects by theme. Project summaries for the winners are provided in Appendix A.



Graph 4. Project themes as a percentage of total all shortlisted finalists (2015 – 2023)



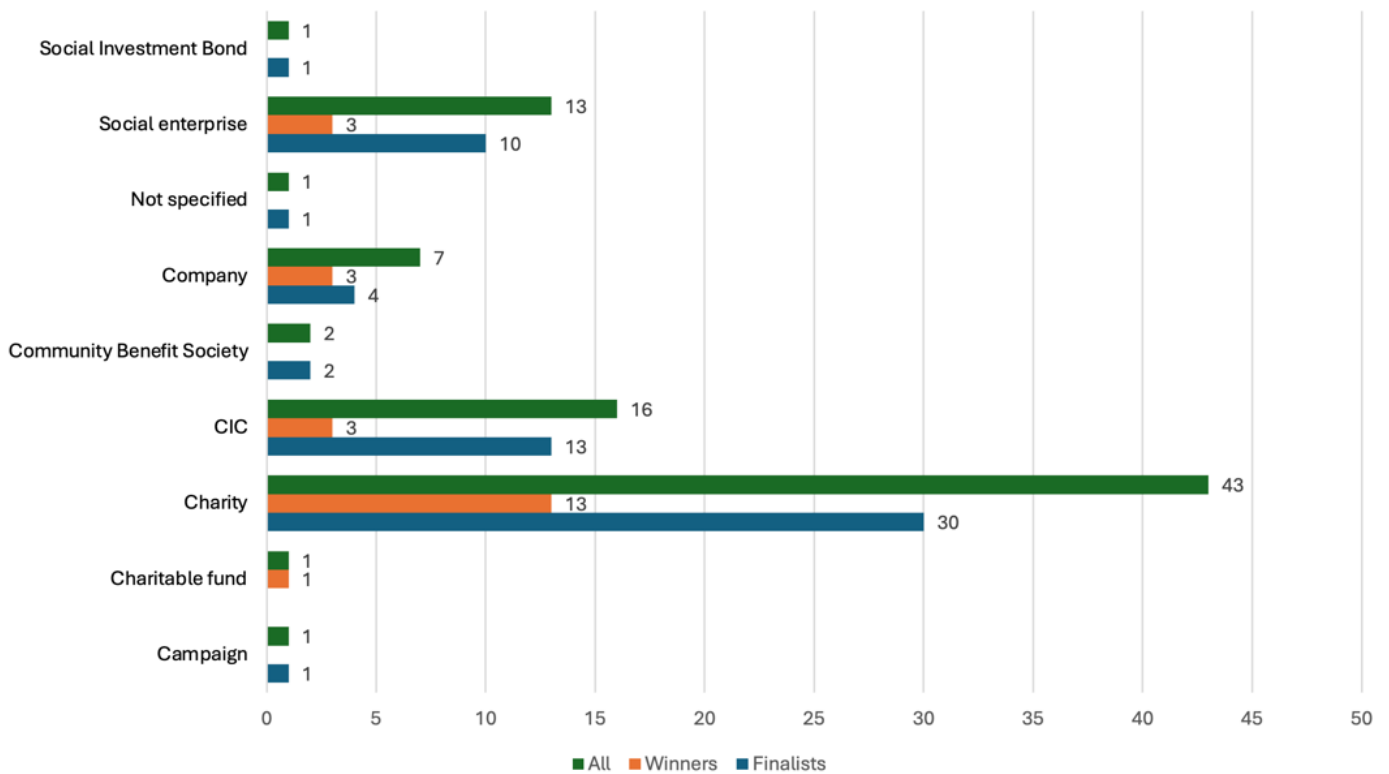


Graph 5. Themes of winning projects as a percentage of all winners (2015 – 2023)



As illustrated in Graph 5, most of the organisations and projects that received support were still operational as of June 2024. The SLAs acknowledge the inherent risks in funding early-stage ideas and projects and anticipate some level of failure in their development. Although this statistic is not necessarily considered an indicator of the SLA's success or impact, it is encouraging for the Awards to see that a substantial proportion of funded projects continue to operate.

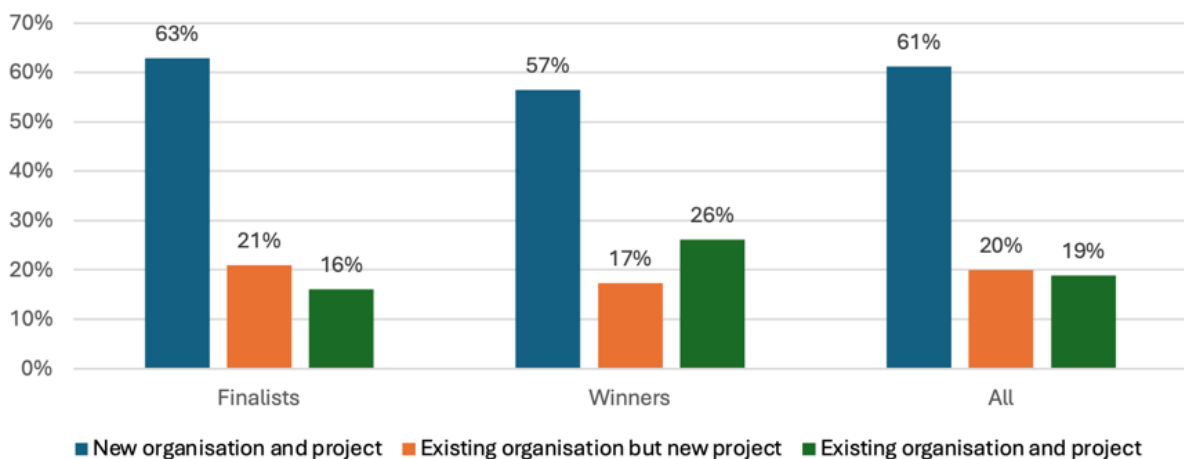
ORGANISATION STRUCTURE



Graph 6. Type of organisation of supported projects (2015 – 2023)

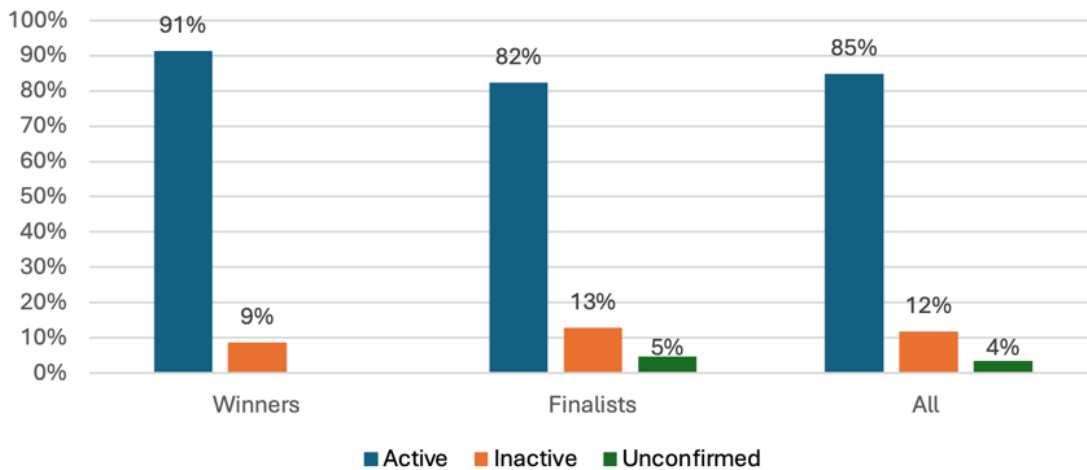
Aligning with the Awards' goal of supporting innovative ideas over established organisations with proven success, most shortlisted organisations and associated projects were either newly formed or in the early stages of development (see Graph 7 below).

PROJECT / ORGANISATION STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT



Graph 7. Stage of organisation and project development at time of entry in SLAs (2015 – 2023)

CURRENT PROJECT/ORGANISATION STATUS



Graph 7. Current operational status of supported projects as at June 2024 (2015 – 2023)

The map below shows the location where supported projects operate or the region in which they aim to make an impact. The percentages represent the proportion of all shortlisted projects, and winners are shown in brackets. It is encouraging to see that although the SLAs are based in London, their reach extends across most of the UK, with both finalists and winners drawing from various regions. Furthermore, over half of the supported projects aim to have a UK-wide impact.

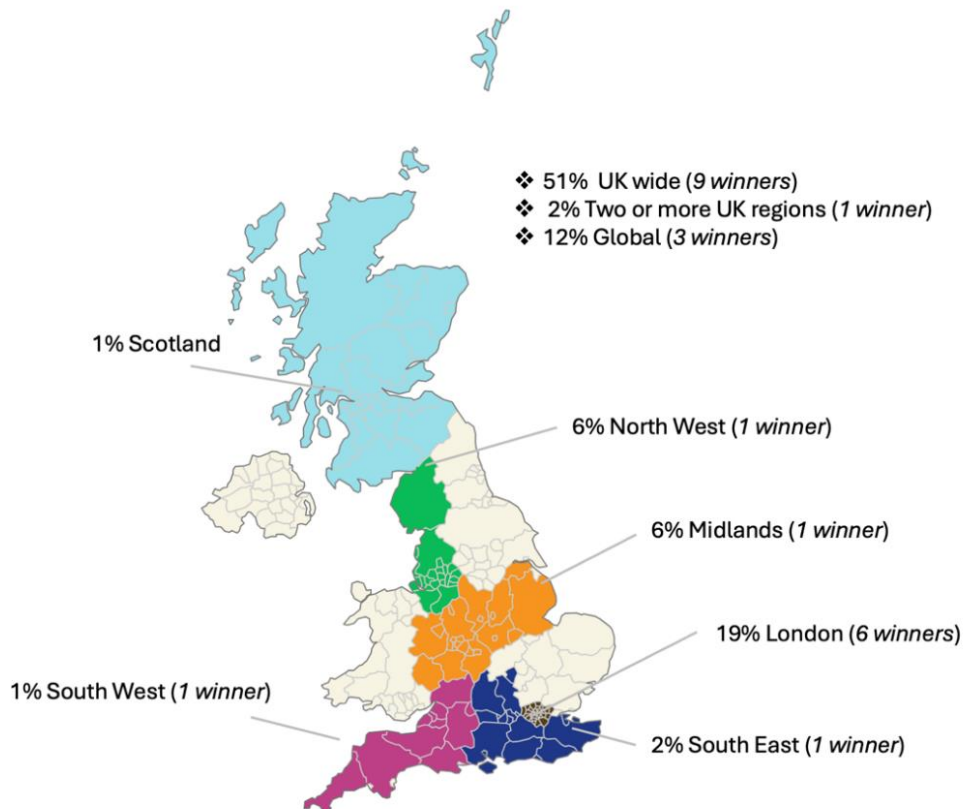


Figure 1. Location of supported projects aim to have an impact (2015 – 2023)

Information about the diversity of project leaders and their teams is limited, as data on protected characteristics—such as ethnicity, gender, and disability status—is not currently collected during the application process. The data obtained from the questionnaire suggests SLA may need to continue to work towards attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds. However, due to the small number of survey responses received, caution should be taken when extrapolating these results to the broader group of finalists.

Key Themes: Interviews and Survey Responses

The following analysis identifies key themes from interviews and survey responses relating to:



Theme 1: Application process - challenging yet accessible

Feedback from the interviews and survey suggests a straightforward and transparent application and shortlisting experience that is accessible and appropriately challenging. The programme balances gathering sufficient information to allow sound decision-making and avoiding placing undue burden on applicants. SLA staff and Partners create a safe and inclusive environment that puts applicants at ease and encourages them to put their best foot forward. At the same time, the right amount of stretch is provided to stimulate thinking and encourage applicants to refine their interventions.

Although memory and the passage of time prevented some participants from providing feedback on the application form, 53% of survey respondents found the questions easy or very easy to understand (42% provided a neutral response or could not remember). Only one respondent found it difficult, although this was not seen as a drawback.



“I say 'difficult' because I had to think about them more than usual applications! But they are good questions to ask.” (Survey Respondent)

Similarly, 58% of survey respondents found the interview questions easy or very easy to understand (37% responded neutrally or could not remember), and 95% said they had no difficulty explaining their projects to panel members. Interviewees commented on the notable effort made by panel members to understand applicant projects and the issues they were trying to solve. They appreciated the panel's diversity and the preparation call beforehand, letting them know what to expect. Additionally, 89% of respondents felt the interview's outcome was communicated clearly.



“The process was excellent - clear and gave us a fantastic opportunity to share our work with people who understood it and asked great questions.” (Survey Respondent)

While uncomfortable for some, the “marketplace” approach to the final event was predominantly viewed as a rewarding experience, as it encouraged idea development and growth. Interviewees and the majority of survey respondents (84%) felt they were well-supported in their preparation. The presentation training and the funding provided to cover the cost of their time and expenses to attend the event were greatly valued and seen as unique features of the SLAs.



"Being in a situation to pitch and get support is unique, and though it felt a bit nerve-wracking, it was very useful." (Interviewee)

During the event, 79% of survey respondents felt they could explain their project well during the elevator pitch component, and 74% felt the same when presenting in separate rooms. The "supportive and friendly" atmosphere helped to ease the participant's nerves, and the logistical and technical assistance was appreciated.

A small number (4) of survey respondents reported being unable to communicate their ideas effectively. One finalist indicated this was due to the impact of COVID and the online format required during this period. Others suggested extending the initial 'elevator' pitch times (from one to three minutes) and controlling room size and audience numbers to improve the experience. However, such changes may also challenge the inherent design of the marketplace-style event and would need to be considered in light of the benefits derived from the fast-paced format.



Theme 2: SLA community - a warm and supportive environment

Award winners and finalists praised the strong sense of community and support provided throughout their SLA journey. The respect and camaraderie among those involved contributed to a positive experience, and the detailed and personalised support helped applicants feel valued and understood. The dedication and responsiveness of key individuals, such as the Programme Manager, were specifically mentioned. Their support extended beyond professional help to personal encouragement.



"It was such an enjoyable experience to enter. Everyone was going to help, and it was just so nice to be a part of it." (Interviewee)

Effective communication and a warm, supportive environment provide as solid base for the SLAs to build strong relationships with grantees, grounded in mutual trust and respect. Trust enhances collaboration, mitigates power imbalances, and fosters innovation.



"[SLA] was probably one of the first grand makers, where we developed a better relationship, a working relationship, and where there was trust, and they would understand us". (Interviewee)





Theme 3: Grant usage - flexibility and trust empowers recipients

The Award winners interviewed valued the flexibility of the SLA grant terms and the trust placed in their ability to fulfil their commitments without excessive supervision. This contrasted with more restrictive grants provided by other funders and allowed recipients to allocate the funds as they saw fit. Unrestricted grants empower grantees with greater autonomy and support organisational growth. This form of funding can help organisations adapt to evolving needs, enhance essential operations, and attract and keep skilled staff.



"Here's the money. Here's the project that you've said you're going to do, and we trust you to go off and do it". (Interviewee)

Funding has been used for a wide range of purposes. Examples include adding it to reserves to provide much-needed financial stability, covering the cost of prototype development, purchasing equipment to help scale the project, paying staff salaries, and covering campaign expenses.



"We could allocate it as we saw best to fulfil our mission... it was great to have that flexibility." (Interviewee)



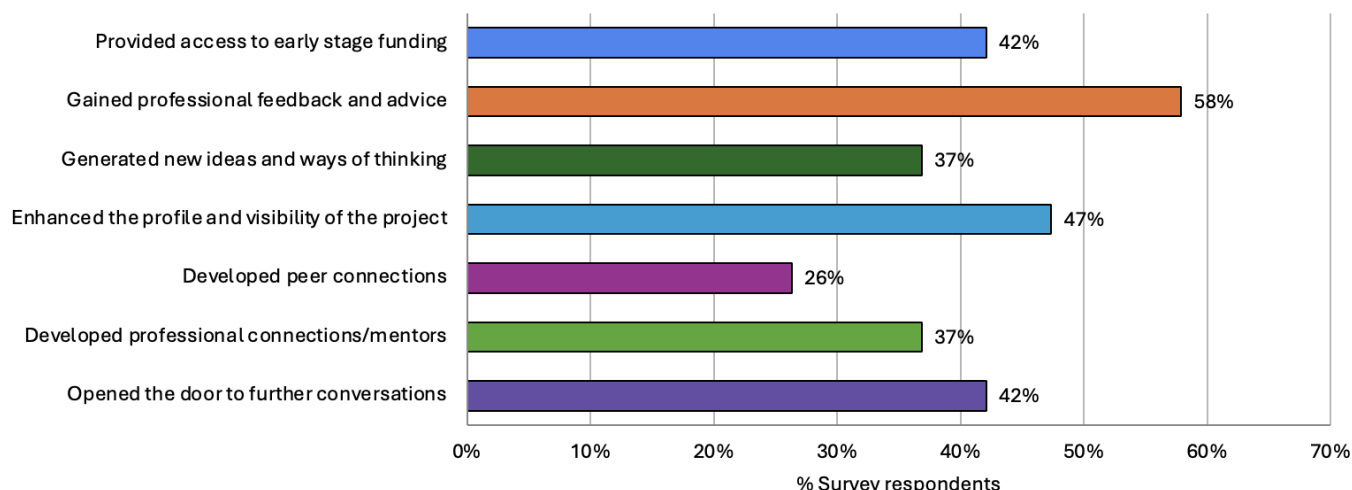
Theme 4: SLA Partner Network - vital pro bono support and advice



A clear strength of the SLA programme is the passionate community of supporters who offer their time and expertise free of charge to winners and finalists in need. All but one interviewee said they had received pro bono advice and support from a member of the SLA Network since winning the awards. This support has been instrumental in addressing legal, financial, organisational, and strategic needs and has contributed to the growth and effectiveness of the awardees' organisations.

The survey results reinforce this finding, with 63% of respondents indicating they received support from an SLA Network Partner following the official programme of events, 42% of which reported having engaged with them on more than one occasion. An equal number said they received support in more than one area of expertise. These findings are illustrated in the charts below.

BENEFITS EXPERIENCED

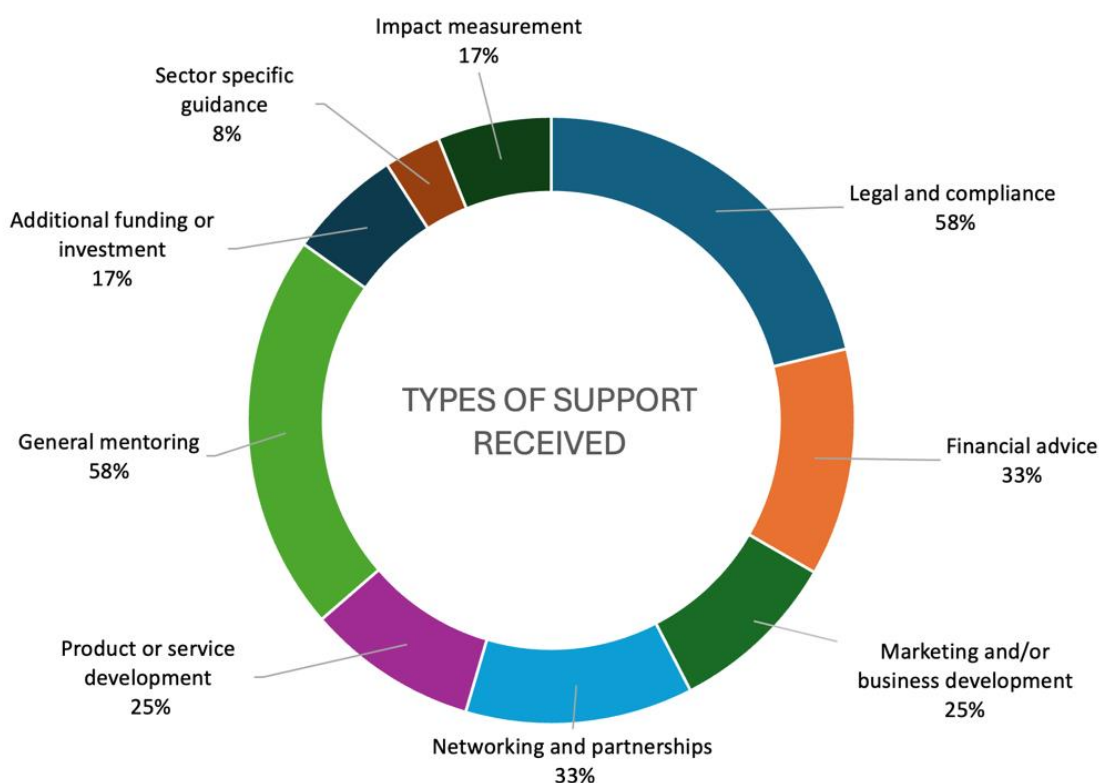


Graph 8. Benefits of participating in the SLAs identified by survey respondents (n = 19)

Pro bono legal support is particularly valued, given its potential high cost. Additionally, impact measurement and evaluation assistance were crucial for demonstrating their projects' social, economic, and environmental benefits. The support was often targeted and specific, tailored to the unique needs of the organisations and included strategic planning and leadership training.



*"They provided us with pro bono work as well ...literally partners are looking into your case, and they are genuinely interested because they've seen you on that night."
(Interviewee)*



Graph 9. Types of support received from SLA network members identified by survey respondents (n = 19)

When asked what programme component was valued most at the time of the Awards, survey respondents most frequently mentioned financial support. This was followed closely by access to the SLA Partner Network and pro bono support. However, when asked to reflect on what they found most valuable now, with hindsight, only one participant mentioned funding, while support from the Network was mentioned the most.

Additionally, since access to the support network is not limited by time, SLA alumni can and do seek assistance from its members at any point after their involvement with the SLAs. This enables organisations to utilise free advice whenever they are ready, even if not immediately after the awards. Participants appreciated this unique benefit of the programme design.



"I know that now, in 2024, I could go back to them and say, remember me? I won this thing in 2021, and I need someone who helps with pro bono marketing and then find someone, and I think that's quite unique." (Interviewee)



Theme 5: Project visibility - credibility and funding opportunities

All interviewees and 47% of survey respondents reported that their involvement in the SLAs enhanced the profile and visibility of their social project. In addition, 80% of survey respondents reported using their success in the SLAs as a marketing or fundraising tool.

Interviewees discussed how the SLAs significantly boosted the credibility and reputation of their organisation, aided in marketing efforts, and increased recognition within their sector. This opened the doors and made securing additional funding and support from other sources easier. They often marked the beginning of significant momentum for early-stage ventures, leading to new opportunities and growth.



"It kind of felt like the start of the snowball effect, where we were able to kick off some momentum and really build on that momentum." (Interviewee)



Theme 6: Intangible benefits - emotional support and growth

The impact of winning the SLAs extended far beyond financial rewards, providing participants with crucial emotional validation and professional growth opportunities. Both interviewees and survey respondents reported their involvement in the SLAs significantly boosted their confidence and validated their efforts.



"We knew we had a good idea and a solution to a problem; the Awards gave us the validation we were seeking to confidently progress." (Interviewee)

The recognition increased morale and reduced feelings of isolation, offering emotional and psychological support. This motivated them to continue and expand their initiatives. Although the financial reward was appreciated, some considered these non-financial benefits equally important, even "game-changing."



"Winning the Stephen Lloyd Award was game-changing in terms of the fact that it gave us the confidence that the idea that we had was not only valuable but scalable". (Interviewee)

Participating in the Awards also empowered participants to grow professionally and feel more confident in their capabilities. The preparation process, particularly for public speaking (facilitated by Map Consortium), helped sharpen presentation skills. Exposure to corporate environments boosted

readiness for future professional interactions. Some commented that it was an “intense” and “nerve-racking” experience but ultimately “a very useful thing to do”.



Theme 7: Peer networking - missed opportunities

While the Awards night fostered a sense of community among participants, several interviewees felt that more could be done to maintain and strengthen these connections beyond the programme. Only 37% of survey respondents reported making ongoing connections with other programme participants, and 42% felt they had adequate opportunities for networking.



“Opportunity for alumni was missed – this could be an epic network of change and impact in itself.” (Interviewee)

To address this need, the establishment of a formal alumni community was proposed. It was suggested that this community could feature ongoing communications, a newsletter for sharing project updates, annual gatherings, and a mentorship system where previous participants support new ones. Such a network would create a space for participants to exchange experiences, discuss challenges, and share best practices, ultimately fostering peer learning, collaboration, and partnership.



“I was hoping that it would be like a cohort in some ways...so you get that sense that you’re part of something greater....” (Interviewee)



Theme 8: SLA Network - accessing support can be challenging

Interviewees and survey respondents conveyed the need for a more visible and accessible network of SLA Partners to facilitate ongoing support and connections. Some participants expressed disappointment that winning the awards had not provided them with the types of professional connections they hoped to make, such as potential clients and policymakers. Others had trouble connecting with SLA Partners listed on the website, as emails had gone unanswered.



“We would have loved to have connected with more advisors after the event, but many of our emails requesting this connection went unanswered, despite being told by advisors that they wanted to help” (Interviewee)

One interviewee reflected that, although they had formed beneficial relationships with several SLA Partners, this was partly due to their tenacity in pursuing these connections. They thought this may be challenging for more introverted individuals. While the Programme Manager’s effort to facilitate network connections was appreciated, concern was also voiced over the capacity of one person to manage all requests sustainably.

Theory of Change: how the SLA delivers impact

When examining the survey results and interviews, it becomes clear that the SLA holds significant value. The Theory of Change (ToC) below brings together these emerging themes to show how the SLA enables innovative, early-stage projects and to deliver sustainable social and environmental change.

What is a Theory of Change (ToC)?

A ToC articulates how an organisation’s activities are expected to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts. It outlines the sequence of steps from initial actions to the achievement of long-term goals, while also highlighting underlying assumptions and clarifying changes (outcomes). It shows how the following elements are linked:

- **Needs.** What early-stage projects and social entrepreneurs need to survive and grow.
- **Activities.** What the SLAs will do to bring about these outcomes.
- **Approaches.** Unique features of the methods used that are particularly effective in facilitating change.
- **Mechanisms of change:** Aspects of the SLA participant’s immediate experience that drives change.
- **Primary outcomes.** Short-term direct changes resulting from the activities typically reflect the fulfilment of the participants’ needs.
- **Secondary outcomes.** Longer-term or other indirect changes that occur for participants and their organisations as a result of the activities. These may align with the original needs or show broader positive changes.

SLA Theory of Change Diagram

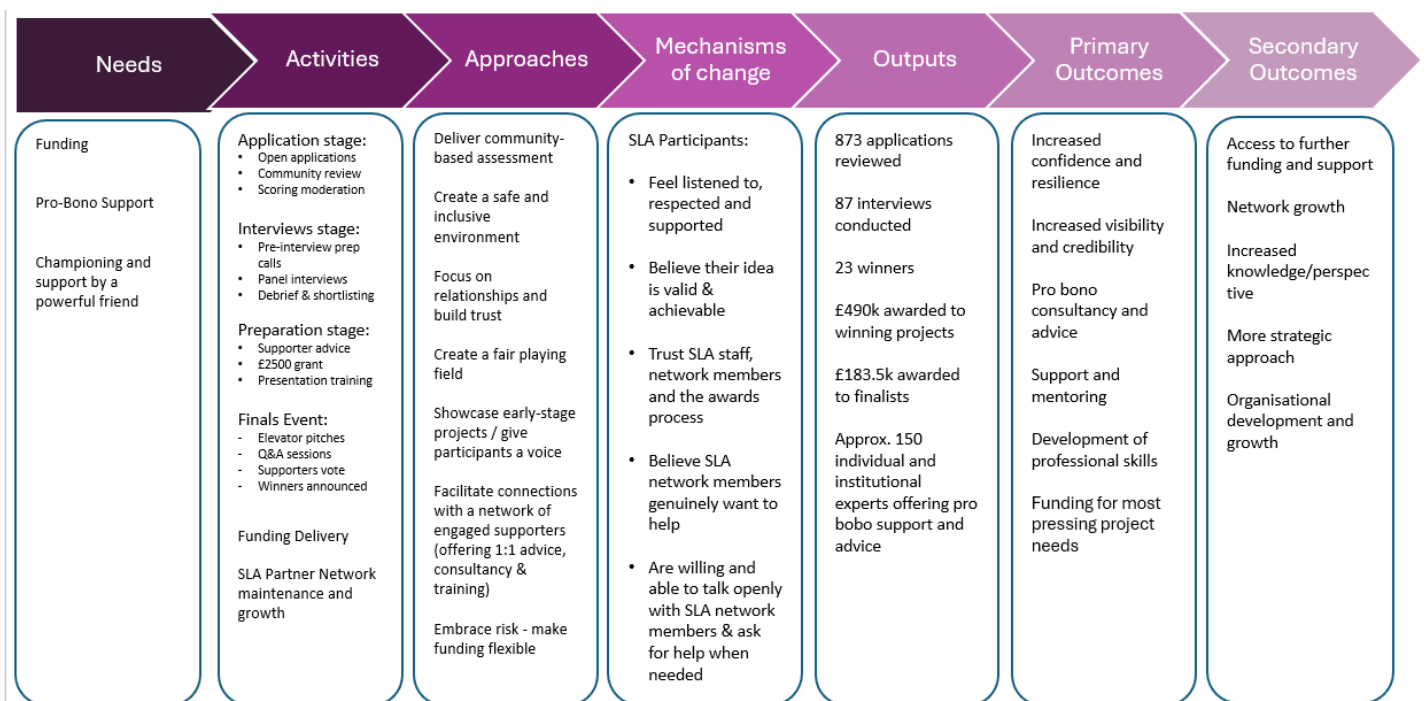


Figure 2. SLA ToC model

The ToC diagram outlines the strategic pathway to support innovative projects by addressing participants' needs for funding, pro-bono support, and advocacy. Through a structured process involving community-based application reviews, panel interviews, enablement support, democratic decision-making and networking, the programme fosters an inclusive and trust-building environment. Key activities aim to empower participants, enhance their credibility, and provide them with financial and expert resources. This approach leads to immediate outcomes like increased confidence, visibility, and skill development, as well as longer-term outcomes, including access to further support, network expansion, and organisational growth.

SECTION 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The SLA have demonstrated a unique approach to funding social innovation over the past decade. They have embraced a flexible, inclusive, and trust-based model that differentiates them from traditional funding mechanisms. This has enabled them to largely achieve their objective of enabling early-stage social and environmental innovation by providing flexible, unrestricted funding and

fostering a supportive network that empowers social entrepreneurs to develop and scale their initiatives. The continued activity of most funded projects and the positive feedback from awardees on the programme's impact suggest that the SLAs effectively support social entrepreneurs addressing systemic social and environmental challenges.

The application process is notable for its clarity, inclusivity, and accessibility. It balances the need for detailed information with an approachable format supported by a diverse panel of assessors to ensure fairness. Although the Trustees of the Bates Wells Foundation ultimately decide the number of awards and the winning projects, these decisions are strongly influenced by the democratic voting process of all attendees on Awards night, further demonstrating the SLA's commitment to community involvement. The SLAs have cultivated a caring and compassionate environment that provides emotional support, validation, and professional growth opportunities. This holistic approach has significantly boosted the confidence and morale of award recipients, helping to mitigate feelings of isolation often experienced by social entrepreneurs.

A defining strength of the programme is the engaged and committed network of pro bono supporters, including legal, financial, and strategic advisors. This network has provided invaluable support beyond the initial funding, contributing significantly to the growth and sustainability of grantees' projects. The flexibility of accessing this support at any stage of development further enhances its value.

The demonstrated commitment to continuous learning and adaptation, particularly in enhancing DEI within their processes, is commendable. However, some areas for improvement have been identified. Participants highlighted challenges in maintaining ongoing peer networking and accessing the SLA partner network, indicating opportunities to strengthen community-building efforts and ensure sustained support for awardees.

Recommendations

1. Enhance alumni engagement and networking opportunities:

To build on the sense of community fostered during the Awards process, it is recommended that the SLA establish a formal alumni network. This could include regular communications, annual events, and opportunities for previous participants to mentor new awardees. Such a network would not only strengthen peer support but could also lead to collaborative projects and shared learning opportunities.

2. Improve accessibility to the SLA support network:

While the SLA Partner Network is a valued resource, there is a need for more structured and accessible pathways for grantees to engage with partners. It is recommended that the SLAs develop a more visible and user-friendly platform for connecting with SLA network partners. The Awards could consider implementing an online directory or portal that allows awardees to identify and reach out to potential supporters easily. Regular updates and communication could help maintain engagement from both sides.

3. Strengthen data collection mechanisms:

Improve the collection of data on the diversity of applicants and awardees, including demographic information such as ethnicity, gender, and disability status. Collecting and analysing DEI data is crucial for a funder to comprehend, evaluate, and adjust its practices and behaviours. This data will support more nuanced evaluations of the programme's reach and effectiveness in attracting diverse innovators.

4. Leverage the Awards to advocate for relational, trust-based funding:

Utilise the credibility and visibility of the SLAs to advocate for more flexible, trust-based funding models across the philanthropic sector. Sharing insights and successes through publications,

presentations, and collaborations with other funders can help promote this innovative approach and encourage broader adoption of similar practices.

In conclusion, the SLAs have carved out a unique and impactful niche in the philanthropic landscape by embracing flexibility, trust, community, and continuous learning. By building on these strengths and addressing areas for improvement, the SLAs can further enhance their support for early-stage social innovators and inspire other funders to adopt more inclusive and adaptive funding models.

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The Trustees would like to thank all their funders and pro bono supporters, current and former, for their invaluable support which is vital to the SLAs, in particular to Bates Wells for its ongoing annual support. The Awards' partners include a number of organisations and individuals, and the trustees would like to thank them all immensely for their commitment and dedication. The full list of partners can be found on the Stephen Lloyd Awards website at www.stephenlloydawards.org/partners.



Appendix A: SLA Winners (2015 – 2024)

Year	Project	Summary	Website
2023	Children Heard and Seen <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	We know how many Labradors are registered in the UK, but not the number of children with a parent in prison. There is currently no statutory framework in place designed to support, or even identify, these children. Children Heard and Seen was established in response to the lack of support available to children impacted by parental imprisonment. These children are at a much greater risk of experiencing mental health problems, a failure to achieve in educational settings, alongside an increased likelihood of committing criminal offences.	https://childrenheardandseen.co.uk
2023	Release Mates	Reoffending rates in the UK are amongst the highest in Europe. Most prison leavers do not wish to reoffend, yet recent figures from the National Audit Office show that over 2 in 5 of the 58,000 people who leave prison every year in England and Wales, go on to reoffend within a year of their release. Release Mates is a group of prison leavers who recognise, from their own lived experience, the difficulties facing those embroiled in the criminal justice system. The organisation is made up of volunteers who have left prison and are in recovery from addiction living a pro-social lifestyle. The team focuses on diffusing day of release anxiety for prison leavers, offering practical support with accommodation, drug and alcohol recovery, probation appointments, and more, whilst most importantly providing hope and belief that rehabilitation is achievable.	https://www.releasemates.org
2023	Tangent <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	Tangent is on a mission to close the professional network gap for millions of people by helping lower socioeconomic jobseekers (63% of the UK population) access employment opportunities which are currently out of their reach due to systemic inequalities. You're 9x more likely to be hired through an employee referral and 82% of employers rank referrals as their best hiring source. That's great, if you have a professional network, but if you come from a lower socioeconomic background, you don't have this type of network and are locked out of the most successful recruitment channel.	https://www.jointangent.com
2022	Real Ice <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	Real Ice are targeting direct action on climate change in the Arctic, where global warming is occurring at the fastest rate on the planet. They aim to achieve this by restoring Arctic sea ice using technologies that leverage renewable energy sources such as tide and wind to grow new ice. These systems will be maintained and operated in collaboration with the indigenous people of the High Arctic regions. Real Ice aims to prove that it is both technically feasible and financially viable to restore Arctic sea ice, in order to then inspire other, global organisations to take up the mantle at massive scale, thereby cooling the planet and helping defer the worst of the impact of ocean heating.	https://www.realice.eco

2022	Ripple Suicide Prevention	Ripple Suicide Prevention was set up in September 2021, in memory of Alice's brother Josh who took his own life in November 2020. Ripple is a browser extension currently compatible with desktop computers and laptops and is available on Edge, Opera, Firefox and Google Chrome. Once Ripple is downloaded, if an individual were to search for harmful material relating to self-harm and suicide, their search would be intercepted and they would be presented with a short breathing exercise which is designed to give them time to stop and think about what they are about to do, followed by a message of hope, before being signposted to one of the many mental health resources that can give them the appropriate help and hope that they need.	https://www.ripple-suicideprevention.com
2022	The Vavengers (2024 Interview Participant)	The Vavengers listen, support, and take action. They educate, collaborate, aid and empower. They are a survivor and migrant-led organisation, standing with and for every woman affected by Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).	http://www.thevavengers.co.uk
2021	Parenting Mental Health (2024 Interview Participant)	Parenting a child with poor mental health is something no-one is qualified for or wants to do. At Parenting Mental Health, they've seen the transformative impact that a parent has on their child's mental health, and their own, when they are connected, supported and skilled. Through their training, emotional support interventions, and community of 20,000+ parents, they aim to take the isolation, shame, and stigma away from unsupported parents facing unenviable challenges.	https://parentingmentalhealth.com
2021	Say It With Your Chest (now inactive, had to close down)	Empowering young people who were at risk of school exclusion or needing support with their personal development to overcome obstacles and cultivate happy, positive and fulfilling futures.	https://sayitwithyourchest.co.uk/
2021	Standing Tall	Standing Tall is a not-for-profit that matches people experiencing homelessness into stable jobs in responsible businesses. Alongside this, they ensure these individuals have a safe home to come back to through their 'Amici' hosting accommodation service. Their results prove that it's this unique combination that's vital – a job and a home together that's helping people to move away from the streets for good. Business owners want to help to reduce homelessness.	https://www.standingtall.org.uk
2021	Street Storage (2024 Interview Participant)	Street Storage is the only UK charity providing free, safe storage for people experiencing homelessness. They are innovative and growing at speed. Increased demand for their service comes weekly from those sleeping out, those in prison, those being evicted (legally and illegally), and those in hostels, shelters, refuges, vulnerable and violent housing situations.	https://www.streetstorage.org

2020	The Black Curriculum	The Black Curriculum is building an online learning platform specifically focused on training senior leaders to create anti-racist schools and equipping teachers to teach Black British history all year round. They previously operated a face-to-face model, and successfully trained 400+ teachers across seven cities. Moving forward, they are building an at scale mode of ending racial inequality in the classroom by providing accredited courses delivered by experts, together with lesson material on a single online platform.	https://theblackcurriculum.com
2020	MYTIME Young Carers <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	At MYTIME, their mission is to level the playing field for young carers by providing them with the support, opportunities and friendship that every child needs. Through their School Support Programme, they aim to raise awareness of young carers within their school communities, to equip schools with the tools and the know-how to identify and more effectively support their young carers, and ultimately, to ensure that young carers have everything they need to achieve their full personal, academic and professional potential.	https://www.mytimeyoungcarers.org
2019	Breadwinners <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	Breadwinners is a grassroots not for profit social enterprise and charity, with the aim of supporting refugees with employment, work experience, training and mentoring whilst providing Londoners with the best organic artisan bread. It supports both refugees with their first UK Job, as well as young people seeking asylum in the UK with their first volunteer work experience, selling the highest quality organic bread on farmer's markets across London.	https://www.breadwinners.org.uk
2019	Inside Workout	Inside workout is a free fitness and wellbeing magazine specifically designed for prison inmates, featuring articles on exercise, nutrition and mental well-being. The magazine features interviews with ex offenders who have used exercise and sports activities to turn their lives around and have a positive impact on society.	http://www.insideworkout.com
2018	EcoAct Tanzania (Garbage Medical Insurance) (inactive)	EcoAct established a micro health insurance programme which used rubbish as a financial resource. With this programme, the community and uninsured poor slum dwellers in Tanzania are able to pay for health cover, drugs and other clinical services by using garbage as payment to an insurance scheme. Their model improves sanitation & health access in slums.	www.ecoact.co.tz
2018	Project Baala	Project Baala seeks to make menstruation a non-issue in India, through specially designed reusable sanitary napkins that can be used for two years and innovative menstrual awareness workshops. Their aim is to impact the 87% of women and girls in India who use old rags and sometimes even leaves, hay and sand as menstrual absorbents. In addition to providing reusable napkins that solve multiple problems like affordability, menstrual waste and accessibility to safe sanitary-wear, Project Baala also conducts multi-generational awareness workshops to eliminate the myths and taboos around menstruation. The project has benefitted 17,000 women in India with great results and feedback.	http://www.projectbaala.com

2018	RefuAid (Equal Access Loan)	RefuAid launched the first (and only) nationwide loan scheme for refugees. The loan scheme provides support to those who have been granted refugee status and have full rights to remain and to work. It offers interest-free loans of up to £10,000 for internationally-trained refugees to pay for UK accreditation, requalification or training, enabling them to return to employment in their prior professional fields.	http://www.refuaid.org
2017	SafetyNet Technologies	SafetyNet Technologies design and build devices that use light to help fishermen catch the right fish and tackle some of the biggest issues facing the commercial fishing industry. Their primary goal is to design and build devices that increase the selectivity of commercial fishing practices. By being more selective with the fish caught, the industry becomes more sustainable, reducing bycatch by up to 90%.	http://snotech.co.uk
2017	Settle <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	Settle is an award-winning social enterprise that supports vulnerable young people moving into their first home. They design and deliver 1:1 training programmes to young homeless people to ensure that they have the skills needed to sustain a tenancy.	http://wearesettle.org
2016	Campaign Bootcamp (inactive)	A hands on learning environment designed to give people the skills, network and confidence they need to change the world through campaigning.	https://campaignbootcamp.org
2016	Canute <i>(2024 Interview Participant)</i>	A new digital Braille 'iPad', which attempts to transform the lives of blind people by helping reverse the decline in Braille literacy.	http://www.bristolbraille.co.uk/canute.htm
2015	Go-Forward	To create a home-away-from home centre for care leavers where young isolated people can find a safe and welcoming haven.	http://www.go-forwardyouth.org/
2015	Energy Local	Means for a community to pool their local generation, use it directly and benefit from time of use prices.	http://www.energylocal.co.uk/
2015	Spark Inside	To develop and pilot a Prison Coaching Programme to systemically address the issue of persistent youth offending.	http://www.sparkinside.org/

Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire

Part A: Background Information

- In what year did you/your team participate in the SLAs? (*drop-down, pre-filled select options*)
- What is your gender? (*drop-down, pre-filled select options*)
- What is your ethnic group? (*drop-down, pre-filled select options*)
- Had you applied for funding from other organisations prior to the SLA? (*no/yes*)
 - *If yes (conditional)*
 - *Please let us know if you were unsuccessful and why you think this was (open-ended)*

Part B: Programme Experience

- How did you find out about the SLAs? (*drop-down, pre-filled select options*)
- How easy was it for you to complete the original application, answering the three main questions (i.e., describe the situation, complication/issue and solution)? (*5-point Likert scale: very easy – very difficult*)
- How could we improve the application form (e.g. make it more accessible, ask clearer questions...)? (*open-ended*)
- How easy was it for you to understand the questions asked during the online/phone interview? (*5-point Likert scale: very easy – very difficult*)
- Did the online interview enable you to explain your project clearly? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
- Was the outcome of the online interview conveyed clearly? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
- How could we improve the online interview experience? (*open-ended*)
- Was the support provided between shortlisting and the finals sufficient? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
 - What did you find most helpful? (*open-ended*)
 - What could have been done better? (*open-ended*)
- On the finals night, were you able to explain your project well during the elevator pitch? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
- On the finals night, were you able to explain your project well in the separate rooms? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
- Were the practical arrangements (access, lighting, sound, information, personal support and guidance....) sufficient for your needs? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
 - What did you find most helpful? (*open-ended*)
 - What more could have helped? (*open-ended*)
- Did you have enough opportunities to network with other programme participants and SLA supporters? (*yes/no/Not sure, can't remember*)
- Did you make any ongoing connections with other programme participants? (*yes/no*)

- Did you receive advice or support from the SLA network of partners following official programme events? *(yes/no)*
 - *No/yes*
 - *If yes - (conditional)*
 - What kind of advice or support have you received? (can select multiple)
 - Networking and partnerships
 - Legal and Compliance
 - Financial advice
 - Product or service development
 - Additional funding or investment
 - General mentoring
 - Marketing and/or business development
 - Sector-specific guidance
 - Impact measurement
 - Other (please specify)
 - Was this advice/support ongoing, or was it a once-off event? *(ongoing/once-off, other – please specify)*
 - *If no - (conditional)*
 - Did you experience any barriers to receiving additional advice and support? (open-ended)
- In what ways have the awards benefited you and your project (select up to three)?
 - Access to early-stage funding
 - Enhanced the profile and visibility of the project
 - Gained professional feedback and advice
 - Generated new ideas and ways of thinking
 - Developed peer connection
 - Developed professional connections/mentors
 - Opened the door to further conversations
 - Other, please specify.
- What do you believe was the most valuable component of the programme at the time of the awards or within the following six months? *(Open-ended)*
- What do you believe was the most valuable component of the programme now, with hindsight? *(Open-ended)*

Part C: Impact Assessment

- Have you launched your product or service since participating in the SLAs? *(yes/no/not applicable)*
 - *If yes – (conditional)*
 - Please indicate how successful your project has been in achieving its goals and objectives. *(5-point Likert scale: extremely successful – not successful, other – please specify)*
 - Since participating in the awards, has your project grown or expanded? *(yes/no)*
 - *If yes – (conditional)*
 - Please provide details on how your project has grown or expanded. *(Open-ended)*
 - Was this connected to the awards (Please provide details)? *(open-ended)*
 - *If no – (conditional)*
 - What has prevented your project from moving forward? *(Open-ended)*

- Do you use your success as a finalist or winner in the SLA awards as a marketing or fundraising tool? *(yes/no/not sure)*
- Were there any unexpected outcomes to your participation in the SLA programme (both positive and negative)? *(Open-ended)*

Part D: Feedback and Suggestions

- What aspects of the programme could be improved? *(open-ended)*
- Any other feedback or suggestions? *(open-ended)*

Appendix C: Interview Discussion Guide

Topic 1: How successful has the participant's project/organisation been in achieving its social aims

Question prompts:

- Tell me about *[insert project/organisation name]* and how it has evolved since winning the SLA awards?
- What were the original goals and objectives of *[insert project/organisation name]* and to what extent have these been achieved?
 - *Can you provide some examples?*
 - *How do you measure progress?*
 - *What were the key activities of [insert project/organisation name]?*
 - *Were they implemented as planned?*
 - *Who were the beneficiaries of the project?*
 - *Were they reached as intended?*

Topic 2: How has winning the SLAs contributed to this success and brought them value

Question prompts:

- How has winning the SLAs contributed to the success (or failure) of *[insert project/organisation name]*?
 - *How did you utilise the funding you received?*
 - *Tell me about the advice and support you received from the network of SLA supporters?*
 - *What kind of advice and support did you receive? Can you provide some examples (e.g. technical advice, mentoring, facilitating connections)?*
 - *What impact did this advice/support have on you?*
 - *Have you formed any ongoing relationships or collaborations with members of the SLA supporter network?*
 - *How has this contributed to the growth of [insert project/organisation]*
 - *How have you used the SLAs as a marketing tool to enhance your visibility and credibility?*
 - *Can you provide some examples?*
 - *Have you applied for funding from any other organisations (either before or after the awards)?*
 - *If so, has this been successful?*
 - *How has the SLA programme influenced your social connections or networks (outside of the SLA supporter network)?*
 - *Did you meet new people or make new connections with other participants?*
 - *Have you continued to stay in touch with anyone you met through the programme?*

Topic 3: How can we improve the SLA programme

Question prompts:

I'd like you to reflect on your experience *during* the SLA programme (this includes the application and interview process, and awards night):

- What components of the programme worked well/what did you find most valuable?
- What could be improved?