

If you are business savvy and passionate about helping others, social entrepreneurship is the perfect path to consider. You get the fulfillment of making changes and earning a profit all at once.

Social entrepreneurs are often considered risk takers, yet many have found success by using tried-and-true methods. Start on the right foot by reading our list of social entrepreneurship ideas.

1. Life Skills Program For Developmentally Disabled Adults

Young adults with [autism spectrum disorder](#) and other developmental disabilities often have difficulty finding jobs. It's also common for them to lack the necessary skills for independent lifestyles.

Create a life skills program that addresses the issues these individuals face. Your plan can include services like:

- job training based on individual passions and strengths
- a course that teaches money management
- courses that teach self-soothing, self-advocacy, and similar skills
- sessions focused on socializing and relationships

Partner with charities, schools, and organizations who can donate new and used supplies. For example, schools can provide used books for personal finance, cooking, and other life skills.

2. Low-Income Food Market

Food waste is a global issue, but [richer countries waste much more](#) than others. Waste is often due to standards regarding the appearance of food. Grocery stores and distributors may throw away safe, edible food due to:

- small dents in cans
- faded or misprinted labels
- food that will expire soon

Approach these companies for donated or heavily discounted food. Use your collected food to set up a low-income food market. Resell the food at below-retail rates or use they pay what you can model.

3. Used Electronics / Textbooks Collection And Redistribution

Approach community colleges, universities, and student organizations for used textbook donations. These groups are potential partners for used electronics donations, too. Collect items like used laptops and cell phones.

Redistribute these items to students who cannot afford them at full price. Use a sliding scale system to determine how much students pay. Some may receive item donations if they're unable to pay.

Partial profits from sliding scale payments go back to the original partners. These educational groups then use the money for their own cause. For example, a community college may use the funds to purchase art supplies needed for courses.

4. Online Microlending Platform

[Microlending](#) is an innovative form of lending that can benefit investors and recipients. Microloans use crowdfunding to build loans. For example, multiple lenders can contribute \$20 or \$30 toward a \$5,000 loan for a startup.

Small contributions prevent significant financial loss for investors. It also makes loans more accessible to those in need. It's a win-win situation for both parties. Microlending platforms for social causes may set very low or no interest rates, too.

You set the criteria for loan applicants, and the applicants pitch their ideas to lenders upon approval. Build your platform with a targeted social group in mind. For example, you may cater to fellow social entrepreneurs looking to make a difference with their product or service.

5. Educational Materials For Social Causes

Write an educational book or magazine designed to benefit a social cause. Market it toward buyers who benefit from the information you offer. The profits from your book/magazine go toward a group in need. Your target audience and the social cause should correlate.

For example:

- publish a book for aspiring restaurant owners and chefs
- Write about the ins and outs of opening a restaurant.
- List foods and beverages create the highest profit margin.
- The buyers get insight to help them succeed.
- A soup kitchen receives a portion of the book sale profits.

Your publication should include a statement about where proceeds go. Your buyers benefit from the value your book offers, and they can feel good about their purchase.

6. Job Assistance Programs

Many low-income or homeless individuals face hurdles when applying for jobs. These groups may not have Internet access for employment searches, transportation to interviews, or basic educational requirements.

You can offer a broad variety of job skill assistance, training, and other resources. Some examples include:

- literacy and mathematics courses
- technology training
- GED study programs
- computer access for job applications
- resume writing services

Develop partnerships with several businesses and organizations. Public libraries may offer free courses or reserve blocks of time for computer access. Community colleges may donate study materials for GED testing.

7. Pay What You Can (PWYC) Business

In recent years, the [pay what you can](#) business model has gained traction. This pricing concept caters to the customer's ability to pay. It's often compared to pay what you want, but PWYW relies on willingness versus the ability to pay.

There are different businesses you can develop using the PWYC model. You can consider:

- opening a small coffee shop
- opening a community theater
- providing digital goods like music and movies

Companies who use this concept benefit, too. They often attract media attention and thus, free promotion. Affordable pricing also leads to repeat customers, long-term success, and the potential for future projects.

8. Microdonation Program

The micro concept for social causes goes beyond loans. Microdonations help build partnerships with several businesses for your social cause. You'll lower your expenses and increase the donations you receive.

Choose a social cause that relates to a wide range of local businesses. Here's an example plan:

1. Find partners for baked goods donations. You can work with local bakeries, chain coffee shops, and grocery stores.
2. Request small food donations or discounted items. Let them know that their contributions are sponsoring a fundraiser.
3. At your fundraiser, sell the baked goods to raise funds for your chosen social cause.

Alternatively, you can request microdonations for money or baking supplies. A dozen partners making small contributions will help you reach your goal.

9. Blessing Bag Organization

Blessing or manna bags are a simple and affordable way to help underprivileged groups. The bags are typically gallon zipper bags or plastic totes. They're filled with items to meet the crucial needs of recipients.

For example, blessing bags may contain:

- socks, gloves, and non-perishable food for homeless groups
- school supplies, toiletries, and stuffed animals for impoverished children
- rash ointment, wipes, and bottles for low-income expectant mothers

There are two ways to collect items for blessing bags. Requesting donations and partnering with other charities is one.

Alternatively, you can buy the necessary items at wholesale price. Sell the bags for \$5 or \$6 to community members so they can give them to those in need.

10. One-For-One Retail Company

One-for-one retail companies are straightforward; for every item you sell, you donate an item. The shoe brand TOMS operates a [successful one-for-one business](#). They give shoes to children in need, and they've made noteworthy profits.

Examples of one-for-one retail ideas include:

- selling baby blankets and giving to low-income mothers
- selling school supplies and donating to students/families in need
- selling winter apparel and donating to homeless communities

Cite the success of the one-for-one model when proposing to investors. The concept benefits every party involved.

11. Elderly Support Program

Senior adults face unique health and social challenges. Create a program or business designed to address one problem they face. Base it in the needs of elderly adults in your community.

Some program ideas include:

- buddy programs with student organizations
- exercise and physical activity programs
- pickup and delivery services (groceries, appointments, etc.)
- employment assistance for seniors who want/need to work.

Overall, choose an idea that is beneficial and safe for senior adults. Focus on building partnerships with groups who are likely to support your cause. For example, a youth center may be interested in the buddy program.

12. Socially Conscious Marketplace

Create a digital or physical marketplace to help disadvantaged groups sell the goods they produce. Some examples include woodwork or handmade jewelry. These groups may have excellent skills but cannot reach potential buyers.

Your socially conscious shop bridges the gap. Buy the products directly from the individuals who make them. Use your advantage to sell the goods to a broader market. Your profits stem from adding a small markup for buyers.

13. Feminine Hygiene Product Distribution

A study showed [two-thirds of women](#) in a major U.S. city could not afford feminine hygiene products. Collect and distribute pads, tampons, and wipes to women in need. There are many affordable ways to get the necessary products:

- Contact feminine hygiene product brands to build partnerships and get donations.
- Work with local churches to host a collection drive.
- Buy the items online at wholesale cost, and use crowdfunding to help pay for them.

Distribute the donations to homeless shelters, domestic violence centers, and other centers that help women. You can even expand your business online and help more communities.

14. Drug Abuse Prevention Program

Create a prevention program that targets underlying causes of drug abuse and addiction. Mental illness is one notable example. Environmental factors also play a part. Exposure to drug use among peers and family may increase risk, too.

Choose one or more underlying causes to target and build your program. You may offer services like:

- access to group or individual therapy
- access mental health treatment
- sports programs and social groups for teens

Success relies on partnering with healthcare professionals and existing healthcare programs. Working with local charities and self-help groups can help, too.

15. Informational Dental Care Packages

Access to oral health care is a common health issue for Americans. The [Center For Disease Control](#) reports that:

- 1 in 4 adults have untreated tooth decay
- 46% of adults 30 and above have signs of gum disease
- For every one adult without medical insurance, there are three adults without dental insurance.

You can offer affordable or free dental care packages. They contain essentials like dental floss, toothbrushes, and toothpaste.

These packages should also contain brochures about preventative care and signs of oral health disease. Include information services provided by dental school programs or low-income dentists.

Approach businesses to collect money or item donations. You can raise funds by starting a crowdfunding campaign, too.

16. Respite Housing Program

Respite housing programs assist people in need of immediate shelter. They may serve people on waitlists for Section 8 housing or inpatient rehab programs.

Respite housing may also help individuals transitioning out of rehab or mental health facilities. Having shelter allows them to focus on rebuilding their lives.

Many respite programs have criteria or rules, and they're designed to benefit residents. Residents may:

- volunteer in the community
- complete household chores
- attend court or therapy appointments
- stay sober from drugs and alcohol

Donations and investments are crucial for the success of respite housing programs. Develop partnerships with local businesses by demonstrating how the program will benefit their community.

17. Online Education And Certification

Online courses can help individuals learn new skills and strengthen their resumes. Unfortunately, traditional online college classes aren't an option for everyone. Lack of childcare and low income are two significant hurdles.

Offer online courses that provide certificates of completion. Contact universities with your business proposal and see what they can offer. You may charge a sliding-scale fee based on income or provide free access to courses.

Beneficial classes and certification include programs in these areas:

- tech and coding
- management
- maths
- healthcare

Certification for a course such as 'The Essentials Of Business Management' looks excellent on a resume. The information learned is also applicable to many careers.

Summary

These social enterprise concepts as inspiration for your own unique business. Read our post [Why Businesses Fail And How To Avoid It](#) for more information on how to succeed.