

Program Guidelines

Backing the Bold is a program from Sefa Partnerships designed to empower Impact-led Organisations (ILOs) with the tools, knowledge, and financial support needed to scale their impact. Through a combination of capability-building support and flexible loan finance, we will help ILOs strengthen their foundations, unlock growth potential, and ultimately deliver greater social impact.

Overview

Backing the Bold supports impact-led organisations that:

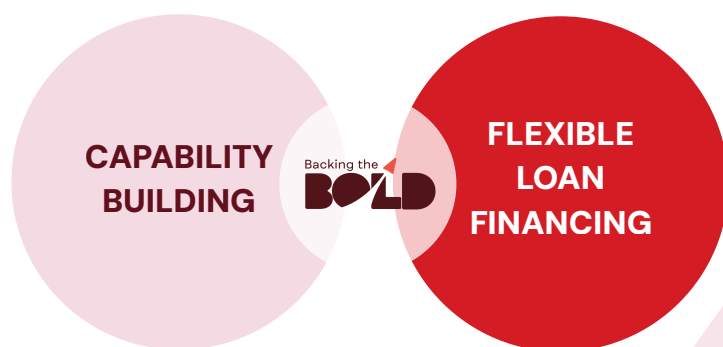
- Address social issues in Australia.
- Are ready to grow and strengthen their sustainability.
- Want access to practical support and flexible finance

Through this program, participants will receive one-on-one capability building and, where appropriate, access to loan finance ranging from \$50,000 to \$200,000 on fair and accessible terms.

Objectives

The program aims to:

- Support ILOs to strengthen their organisational foundations.
- Unlock sustainable growth through tailored capability building.
- Enable access to flexible, repayable finance without the barriers of traditional lenders.
- Build confidence and readiness for future investment.



Scope

Impact areas:

The program is open to ILOs addressing a range of social issues in Australia. While youth-focused services are prioritised, other initiatives with measurable impact for Australians will also be considered.

Location

Applicants must be based in Australia or deliver products and services that benefit Australians. Organisations located outside Australia may be considered if their work directly benefits Australians.

Organisation Types

Eligible applicants include:

- Social enterprises.
- Charities and not-for-profits.
- Purpose-driven businesses.

Note: Sole traders are not eligible unless there is a clear plan to transition to a company structure.

Eligibility

To be eligible, your organisation must be impact-led, or existing to create better outcomes for Australians. You should also generate income through trade, ideally 20–30% of your total revenue, and have a team, co-founders, or active advisors who are committed to building financial sustainability.

We look for signs of traction and growth potential. This could mean evidence of revenue growth over the past one to three years, profits that are either positive or improving, or a clear pathway to reaching around \$50,000 EBITDA. While there is no strict minimum revenue threshold, organisations should be able to demonstrate a commercially viable model and a credible pathway to sustainability.

Every application is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Our aim is to support organisations on their journey, but we do need to see enough momentum and financial performance to ensure the program can help you grow.

Program Components

Capability Building

Depending on the assessment, each organisation may focus on one, several, or a combination of the six areas of investment readiness: impact model, operational efficiency, financial management, governance and risk management, growth strategy, and execution capability. Based on the assessment, we'll design a tailored support plan that reflects your organisation's priorities and stage of development.

Impact Model:

Crystallising your social mission by refining your Theory of Change and improving how you measure, track, and communicate outcomes.

Execution Capability:

For example, upskilling your leadership team, helping to establish good governance, or advising on organisation structure.

Growth Strategy:

Developing or refining your strategic growth plan and financial forecast, including a clear, evidence-based case for how a loan will be used to increase your organisations sustainability.

Operational Efficiency:

Improving your operating model and internal capabilities to support growth.

Financial Management:

Enhancing your financial systems, cash flow practices, and the ability to use financial data to inform decisions, appropriate to your size and stage.

Governance and risk management:

Strengthening your governance structure, including establishing a board or advisory support, and helping you identify and manage key risks to growth.

Support can range from a light one-month engagement to a more intensive program lasting two to six months. Every participating organisation is matched with a dedicated Sefa Engagement Manager who provides one-on-one guidance, with specialist advisors brought in where additional expertise is needed.

We recognise that your number one priority is running your organisation and that you are likely to have other time constraints. You and your Engagement Manager will decide together when and how often to connect, based on what works best for you.

After successfully completing the assessment process, your organisation will receive one of three outcomes:

High touch:

- You're on the right track but need more intensive, hands-on support to get ready for investment.
- You'll be offered a customised capability-building program with weekly coaching and practical tasks to strengthen foundational areas.

Medium Touch:

- You're showing strong potential and may only need targeted support in a few key growth or impact areas.
- This pathway involves shorter, more focused capability-building support.

Low Touch/Investment ready:

- You are ready for investment and may move straight into the loan application process with the Social Finance team which may include minimal support to finalise your readiness.

Thanks to the support of Hand Heart Pocket, all capability building services are offered free of charge.

After completion:

- There is no obligation to apply for a loan.
- If you do, the process is streamlined, drawing on what we've already learned about your organisation.
- You can apply anytime within two years of completing the program.

Loan finance

Loans offered through the program typically range from \$50,000 to \$200,000 and carry a fixed interest rate of 7%. This reflects the types of rates ILOs might face when accessing mainstream finance. The goal is to help ILOs build confidence and capability to manage and repay capital, improving their ability to access mainstream finance in the future if needed. They are generally provided over a term of three to five years, with flexibility to include repayment holidays or interest-only periods where appropriate. Importantly, no security or personal guarantees are required.

It will typically take 1–2 months from application to loan approval. Even though it is not expected to receive detailed report on how the funds were used, the program is designed to determine if the funds provided supported the SPO with their intended need. Therefore, an update on operations and financial performance related to uses of funds will be sought through periodic reviews for the duration of the loan.

Funding can be applied to a wide range of business needs, such as covering staff wages, boosting marketing and sales activity, upgrading systems and technology, or purchasing equipment. Reporting requirements are light-touch and focus on financial and operational progress, keeping the emphasis on supporting your growth rather than adding administrative burden.

Application and assessment process

Application stages

1. Expression of Interest (EOI):

Please complete a short online form to help us assess your organisation's eligibility. It should take less than 15 minutes.

Submission received

Once you submit your EOI form, we'll receive a notification via email. Our team checks this inbox daily.

Acknowledgement

You'll receive an email confirming we've received your submission within 1-2 business days. We'll also add your details to our internal system for tracking.

Review and consideration

Our team reviews all submissions weekly. If we need more information, we'll be in touch within 3-4 business days of that review, to schedule a follow-up call.

Next steps

If your EOI is a good fit, we'll contact you within a week about next steps in the process. If not, you'll hear from the team to close the loop, both within two weeks.

2. Application

You'll be asked to complete a more detailed application form covering your organisation's growth plans, financials, and operations. This should take around 20-30 minutes.

3. Assessment Call

Within a week of receiving your completed application, our team will contact you to schedule a 60-minute assessment call, where we'll dive deeper into your organisation's current capabilities and future plans. You'll meet virtually with our team to share further context on your business model, team, and growth strategy. After the call you may be asked to share additional documents such as financial forecasts, team structure, or board information to support your application.

Assessment criteria:

- Organisations will be assessed against their:
- Impact model
- Operational efficiency
- Financial management
- Governance and risk management
- Growth strategy
- Execution capability

4. Assessment Outcome

After reviewing your application and assessment call, we'll determine whether your organisation is a good fit for the program. If suitable, you'll be assigned one of three support pathways: High, Medium, or Low Touch. Whether you progress or not, we'll schedule a findings call within two weeks to walk you through our assessment, share feedback, and discuss next steps.

5.If successful, kick-off and welcome

We'll first confirm your project timeline based on your availability. You'll then attend a kick-off session where you'll meet your Program Manager, agree on your tailored scope of support, and sign your Letter of Engagement to formally begin the capability building process.

6.Begin Capability Building

Join weekly calls with your Program Manager to work through capability-building topics (estimated commitment: 1–2 hours per week). Between coaching sessions, you'll complete practical exercises that help build your internal capability and develop deliverable to add to your investment readiness profile. (Estimated commitment: 2–4 hours per week)

At the end of your program, we'll assess whether your organisation is ready to move into due diligence and the loan application process.

If you're ready, you'll begin the loan application process. If more time is needed, you'll be supported with feedback and may have up to 12–18 months to strengthen your position before reassessment.

Key details at a glance:

Item	Description
Eligible organisations	Social enterprises, charities, impact-led businesses
Location	Based in, or delivering impact in, Australia
Support offered	Tailored capability building + loan finance
Loan amounts	\$50,000 – \$200,000
Loan terms	7% fixed, 3–5 years, no security
Capability building	Free, 1–6 months depending on support level
Application outcome	Capability building, loan offer, or capability roadmap

Terms and conditions

- Participation in the program does not guarantee funding.
- Organisations are responsible for their own costs during the application process.
- Privacy and confidentiality apply to all applications.
- There is no obligation to take on a loan after capacity building.

Contact / next steps

Submit your Expression of Interest via <https://www.sefapartnerships.org.au/backing-the-bold>
For further information, contact bold@sefapartnerships.com.au