

Trailblazer

Questions from potential applicants



Applicant pack

Questions about Trailblazer

Will the interviews be held online or in person?

The interviews will be virtual. Shortlisted candidates will receive a Teams booking link with interview slot options accessible on a first-come first-serve basis.

"The Trailblazer programme cannot guarantee investment – any decision to invest will be the sole decision of the funder – but the programme will support sites to create as compelling a business case as possible to attract investment."

Considering this statement, can you confirm that there is no direct funding provided through this Trailblazer programme?

Additionally, when you refer to the funder, who exactly is this anticipated to be? ICBs, Social Finance, Macmillan??

While the Trailblazer programme does not provide direct investment into service delivery, selected sites will receive a package of development support to create an investment-ready proposition. This includes a dedicated Development Manager, tailored financial and technical support, group workshops, peer learning opportunities, access to guidance and templates, and mentorship from experienced sites.

In addition, there is up to £100,000 per site available to fund specialist capacity and capability support where needed (for example programme management, analytical support, financial modelling, business case development, or clinical and operational expertise). The purpose of this funding is to support the development of investable propositions rather than to fund service delivery itself.

In relation to the term "funder", it may be helpful to distinguish between two different roles within a Social Outcomes Partnership model:

- The investor provides the upfront capital that enables a service to be delivered.

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The investor takes on the financial risk and is repaid only if the agreed outcomes are achieved. Any decision to invest in a business case will be the sole decision of that investor.

- The outcomes payer is the organisation that agrees to repay the investor if outcomes are achieved. This is typically a statutory body with budgetary responsibility, such as an ICB or another organisation acting as commissioner.

Applicants are not required to have identified a specific **investor** at the EOI stage. The application asks about applicants' current expectations regarding a future investor (for example, Macmillan, another investor with whom they already have a relationship, or no investor in mind at this stage), but this question is explicitly for information only and is not scored. The Trailblazer team will work with successful sites throughout the programme to shape business cases that align with the requirements of a suitable investor.

In contrast, applicants are required to identify a proposed **outcomes payer** from the outset, including support from both an ICB Executive Sponsor and the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) of the organisation that would ultimately be responsible for repaying investors if outcomes are achieved. This is because the programme is seeking to develop investable propositions that have a credible route to implementation, and the involvement of the proposed outcomes payer is essential to ensure the business case, financial modelling, outcomes framework and governance arrangements are grounded in a realistic commissioning and funding context from an early stage.

"Sites that intend to apply to receive investment from Macmillan must demonstrate alignment with the following investment criteria...." Is Macmillan guaranteeing to invest in some sites/business cases?

No, Macmillan has not specifically guaranteed to invest in some of the Trailblazer programme propositions.

At present, Macmillan Cancer Support is the first investor associated with the programme and has stated an intention to invest in several Trailblazer sites following the nine-month development programme. However, this does not constitute a guarantee of investment from Macmillan. Macmillan's final investment decisions are external to their support in the Trailblazer programme and will be predicated on alignment of propositions to Macmillan's criteria. The programme also intends to engage potential investors more broadly, and sites may be supported to align their business cases with the requirements of a specific investor where appropriate.

Can I confirm that the proposal does not need to focus on people living with cancer, and that this is only a requirement if seeking investment from Macmillan?

Proposals do not need to focus on people living with Cancer. The Trailblazer programme aims to support and prepare investable propositions. This process is clearer when a potential investor is identified to tailor propositions to their specific investment criteria. Macmillan is involved in this work and is interested in launching more Social Outcomes Partnerships, but they are not the sole intended investor. The application queries about potential investors for the proposal, but this question is for information only, unscored and assessment of proposals is investor-neutral. Social Finance is completing some investor outreach at the moment and we encourage sites to bring in ideas about potential funders where relevant.

As Macmillan is a keen investor in this space, we have shared details about their requirements. Macmillan's specific cancer-related investment criteria is that a service should be cancer inclusive, meaning that it does not need to be a cancer service, but service beneficiaries should include a significant minority (30%) of individuals living with Cancer.

In [our area] we have [two NNHIP sites]. We work together on many things and have discussed putting a joint application in. I just wanted to understand how feasible this may be and was thinking about outcomes and the logistics of a joint bid and would welcome your views on if it would be better to submit individual applications? This wouldn't stop us working up our proposals together and sharing learning as we have done as NNHIP sites.

We would be happy to consider either a joint application or separate applications. There is no requirement for NNHIP sites within the same system to apply individually, and we recognise that many sites already work closely together and may see value in developing a shared proposition. A joint application may better reflect the Trailblazer Programme's focus on system-level impact and future feasibility to scale.

The key consideration is whether an application can clearly articulate:

- A coherent service proposition operating across the proposed footprint;

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- A clear target cohort and outcomes framework;
- How outcomes would be measured and attributed across both areas; and
- The governance, delivery and financial arrangements that would support implementation at that scale.

As the programme develops investment-ready business cases, successful sites will ultimately need to identify a proposed outcomes payer and demonstrate a credible route to financial and governance approval. A joint application may therefore require additional consideration of how decision-making, outcomes measurement and financial responsibilities would operate across multiple places and organisations. At the EOI stage, we do not expect full details of these considerations, as the programme will support development of these processes when building the investment case.

We would encourage you to pursue the option that best reflects how the proposed service would operate in practice and where you feel you can present the strongest, most coherent case for impact, deliverability and future investment readiness.

Increasing uptake on immunisations and vaccinations plus screening programmes for over 18s – is that within scope?

Yes, increasing uptake of immunisation, vaccination and adult screening programmes could be within scope, provided the proposal meets the wider aims of the Trailblazer programme.

The programme is looking for system-level neighbourhood health services that improve health outcomes at scale, provide joined-up and personalised care, reduce inequalities, and have the potential to generate measurable outcomes and system value. It is not focused on specific clinical conditions or service types.

A proposal focused on improving uptake of vaccinations and screening programmes could therefore be in scope if it is framed as a broader neighbourhood health intervention that:

- Addresses an evidenced local need and health inequality
- Operates at sufficient scale across a local system
- Involves joined-up working across relevant partners (e.g. primary care, community services, local authorities and VCFSE organisations)
- Has clear, measurable outcomes for service users, wider communities, and the local health and care system that can be tracked and attributed to the intervention

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- Demonstrates potential to release or reallocate money within the health and care system to fund repayments to investors
- Aligns with local system's priorities around neighbourhood health

As with all applications, we would encourage applicants to focus on the wider service model and outcomes being delivered, rather than solely on increasing activity levels. Stronger proposals are likely to demonstrate how improving uptake contributes to broader neighbourhood health objectives, prevention, reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for a defined population cohort.

Can we submit more than one EOI for our area for different ideas?

Yes. Organisations may submit more than one EOI if they have multiple distinct proposals that they believe meet the aims of the programme. The EOI process is designed to identify promising system-level service propositions, and there is no requirement within the applicant guidance for each area or organisation to submit only a single application.

However, applicants should consider their capacity to engage with the programme, as successful sites will be expected to commit senior programme management, analytical, financial, clinical and operational resource throughout an intensive development process.

Where multiple ideas are being considered, we would encourage applicants to think carefully about whether these are genuinely separate propositions or whether they could be brought together into a stronger, more coherent neighbourhood health model with a clear target cohort, outcomes framework and route to social investment.

If multiple EOIs are submitted, each application will be assessed on its own merits against the published eligibility and scoring criteria. Although across the 6, a range of geographies would be preferable to funding two sites within one area.

We have ICB support and two acute NHS Trusts in our patch and there is a query as to whether they could both be the outcomes payer.

We wondered if potentially a pooled arrangement across multiple partners where benefits are realised

across organisational boundaries could be supported?

As convenor I am seeking clarity as I may need to reapproach the ICB, who support our EOI, to undertake this role if our acute colleagues need more time than is available at this stage to work out who is best placed for this role.

It is our understanding that in a Social Outcomes Partnership (SOP) model, the Outcomes Payer is the organisation that agrees to pay for outcomes if they are achieved.

The Trailblazer Programme expects systems to identify who would be most likely to benefit financially from the intervention and therefore who may be willing to pay for achieved outcomes and for us this would be our two acute partners.

Yes, within a Social Outcomes Partnership (SOP), the outcomes payer is the organisation that agrees to make outcome payments if the agreed outcomes are achieved. The applicant pack notes that this is often a commissioner such as an NHS ICB, but it could also be another organisation with system-facing budgetary responsibility, such as an NHS Trust.

We would be open to proposals where the benefits of an intervention are realised across multiple organisations and where there is a strong rationale for shared involvement in outcome payments. We recognise that, in some systems, the financial and operational benefits of a service may accrue across organisational boundaries rather than sitting with a single organisation.

At the EOI stage, however, we are primarily looking for a credible route towards an investable proposition, rather than a fully developed contractual structure. We would therefore encourage applicants to identify the organisation(s) that are most likely to act as the outcomes payer and to demonstrate appropriate financial sponsorship for the proposal. Successful sites would then be supported through the Trailblazer programme to further develop the commercial, financial and governance

arrangements required for investment readiness.

While the form only allows respondents to identify one lead applicant organisation (the proposed outcome payer) and one CFO sponsor from this organisation, please use the free text boxes elsewhere to note a proposed arrangement with multiple outcome payers.

We are interested in Social Outcomes Partnerships but don't have time to submit a full application / the Trailblazer timeline isn't ideal for us. What should we do?

We understand that the Trailblazer timeline may not work for every system, even where there is strong interest in Social Outcomes Partnerships and outcomes-based investment.

If you're interested in this approach but don't feel able to submit an EOI this time, we'd still encourage you to get in touch with the Trailblazer team. We're keen to understand what barriers organisations are facing, whether that's timing, capacity, governance, competing priorities, or something else.

We'd also welcome hearing from sites that may want to explore Social Outcomes Partnerships in the future. By contacting us, you can help shape our understanding of the challenges systems face and stay informed about future opportunities, learning, resources, and developments related to the programme.

Please email the Trailblazer team at trailblazer@socialfinance.org.uk to let us know about your interest, any barriers you're experiencing, and whether you would like to stay connected to future work in this area.