

HOW TO WIN THE INNOVATION AWARD



For members of the public



Overview

Thank you for your interest in applying for the Innovation Award! This document contains important information about the Award, as well as guidance notes for each question in the application form.

Key information about the Innovation Award that you need to know:

- If you have an idea to improve the education system that you want to transform into a thriving initiative, we are here to support you through the Innovation Award.
- Your idea can be anything – a programme, product, service, partnership, campaign or coalition – as long as it has the potential to make education fair. To do this it must focus on tackling socioeconomic disadvantage and closing the gap between pupils from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their peers.
- If you win the Award, your prizes will include:
 -  a six-month salary contribution of £25,000 to go full-time (37.5 hours per week) to drive forward your initiative. We believe it is important to invest in the lead Innovator as the greatest asset for driving forward the innovation and that is why we provide restricted funding to cover their salary contribution.
 -  one year of hands-on support and that brings together everything we have learnt from a decade of supporting 49 impactful education innovations to succeed - including regular workshops on key innovation topics, 1:1 support and mentoring from sector leaders.
- You will need to be able to work part-time on the idea from September 2024 (at least 10 hours a week), and full-time (37.5 hours per week) from January 2025 (when the salary contribution starts).

We are looking for early-stage innovators who can demonstrate the following:

Fit with FEA vision

Diverse leadership

Targeting areas of
greatest need

Align with FEA values

Leadership potential

Willingness to learn

Please read our [Terms and Conditions](#) before applying. If you have any questions about the Award, feel free to contact us at awards@faireducation.org.uk. Best of luck, and we look forward to receiving your application!

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Fair Education Alliance

The Fair Education Alliance (FEA) is a coalition of [over 280 cross-sector organisations](#) that work collectively to tackle educational inequality, so that no child's success is limited by their socioeconomic background.

Fair Education Alliance members work together to achieve the five Fair Education Impact Goals to tackle inequality from cradle to career:



Our members have collectively agreed on four priority areas to achieve an inclusive education system:



We do this by driving collective action, scaling impactful initiatives and influencing policy.

Fair Education Awards

The Innovation Award is one of two [Awards](#) we deliver to invest in, nurture and scale impactful and innovative solutions in education that tackle the root causes of education inequality.

INNOVATION

We will support up to six individuals with new ideas that challenge the status quo and tackle the root causes of educational inequality in England.

- ✓ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC & FEA MEMBERS
- ✓ ONE YEAR OF SUPPORT
- ✓ 120 HOURS OF TRAINING + 20 HOURS OF 1:1 EXPERT SUPPORT
- ✓ SIX MONTH SALARY CONTRIBUTION OF £25,000 PER WINNER

SCALING

We will support up to seven FEA members to scale proven impactful solutions to reach the young people in England who need it most. Open for applications Summer 2025.

- ✓ OPEN TO FEA MEMBERS
- ✓ TWO YEARS OF SUPPORT
- ✓ BESPOKE SUPPORT TACKLING KEY CHALLENGES TO SCALE
- ✓ ANNUAL LEADERSHIP RESIDENTIAL

Innovation Award

Why is the Award needed?

The education system needs innovative solutions that tackle the root causes of educational inequality now more than ever before. As we witness the impact of persistent learning losses from the pandemic, the socioeconomic disadvantage gap continues to grow. Meanwhile, the cost-of-living crisis compounded by public sector funding challenges and decreasing multi-agency resources has exacerbated child poverty, now affecting a staggering 4.2 million children. All this has exacerbated the disparities in learning and at every stage of education, there are substantial and growing gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their wealthier peers.

But with crisis comes opportunity. The past year has been marked by phenomenal collective action in the face of adversity. We have seen schools, colleges, charities, businesses, and society as a whole mobilising its resources and working together to support young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. 2024 offers a unique opportunity for change, with the General Election spotlighting systemic transformation and the role of innovation in helping to shape the country's future.

Through our Innovation Award, we take a networked approach to nurture new ideas that tackle the entrenched issues and root causes of educational inequality in England, in order to reach the young people who need it most.

Who is the Award for?

- If you have an idea to improve the education system that you want to transform into a thriving initiative, we are here to support you through the Innovation Award.
- Your idea can be anything – a programme, product, service, partnership, campaign or coalition – as long as it has the potential to make education fair. To do this it must focus on tackling socioeconomic disadvantage and closing the gap between pupils from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their peers.

The Award is open to two types of innovators:

Any member of the public who wants funding and training to establish a new initiative and to develop, test and scale their solution.



FEA member organisations who want to launch a new initiative within their organisation and want funding and training for a staff member to develop, test and embed an internal innovation.


For more information on applying as a member, please click [here](#).




What do I win?


Over the past ten years, we are proud to have incubated 49 impactful innovations. We have put everything we have learnt from a decade of supporting education innovation to design a package of support that addresses the key barriers to innovation and provides our Winners with what we know works in helping new solutions to start up and scale.

The yearlong programme of support helps you to turn your idea into an impactful initiative that will thrive and have sustainability beyond your pilot, and develops your leadership skills to drive your initiative forward and make change in the sector. The support programme includes:

 Salary contribution: £25,000 covering six months for you to go full-time (37.5 hours a week) to drive forward your initiative.


 Expert training: The Innovation Incubator provides supportive and intensive technical and leadership training to generate insights about the problem you want to solve, create, and test a new programme, product or service, and develop your leadership competencies and tools to scale the innovation. The curriculum includes:

- In-depth problem research
- Human-centred design
- Rapid testing
- Personal leadership
- Effective monitoring and evaluation
- Financial sustainability


 Bespoke 1:1 support: fortnightly meetings with the Head of the Innovation Award and monthly meetings with a mentor from Bloomberg to receive direct guidance and brokered support leveraging Bloomberg's extensive technical and leadership expertise, and the expertise and experience of the Fair Education Alliance's over 280 member organisations.

 Professional advice from experts: legal, finance, sales, HR and other key areas.

 Peer support and network: access to a network of entrepreneurs, mentors and peers.

 Office space: guest access at [FiveFields](#), the Fair Education Alliance office space - a hub redefining charity sector collaboration and innovation.

 Endorsement: Fair Education Alliance Innovation Award logo and statement of support.

 FEA membership post programme to amplify your innovation's impact.

““It has been a brilliant programme, and I am a huge advocate for it (I'm constantly telling people to apply!) The quality of the support has been really strong and the impact of the FEA on me and GoodWork has been game changing. I think without the knowledge that the salary funding was coming, I could easily have given up over the summer when things were financially really tough.”

Innovation Award Winner 2023 Felicity Halstead, CEO of Goodwork



One year of support: September 2024 - August 2025

See the [2023-24 incubator schedule](#) for a taste of the full curriculum. Dates for the 2024-25 incubator will be released by the end of April.

September '24

December '24

January '25

August '25

Part-time

Innovators will be able to give 10 hours per week to the Award and join monthly incubator workshops focused on:

- Developing a theory of change using in depth problem research and human-centred design principles
- Impact Measurement setup and rapid testing
- The fundamentals of financial management
- Incorporating as a legal entity (for those not within an established organisation)

Full time

Innovators will give 37.5 hours per week to the Award supported by our £25,000 salary contribution, and will join fortnightly incubator sessions focused on:

- Business foundations for sustainability and growth
- Routes to market
- Fundraising and selling
- Strong operations and people management
- Strategic planning
- Presenting Impact

Throughout the year: personal leadership development training, fortnightly 1:1 strategic support from the Head of the Innovation Award, brokered bespoke support for the Fair Education Alliance including industry experts and education specialists



The Story Project
Olivia Richards

"My experience of the Innovation Award so far has been absolutely fantastic. Our projects are so much stronger for the support and I have really valued the expert guest speakers on important topics such as finance and safeguarding."

Is this right for me?

Value add	We want to ensure that there is a clear value add from winning this Award and that the type of support we offer is appropriate for the stage you are at.
Focus	Your idea is focused on addressing socioeconomic disadvantage and closing the gap between pupils from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their peers. This means your solution should disproportionately target children and young people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage. We define 'innovation' in a broad sense e.g. it could be a new programme, product, service, target group etc or a new partnership, campaign or coalition.
Stage	The Award is designed to support you to develop, test and scale a new idea. You don't need to have done any work on the idea to be eligible for the Innovation Award, and we encourage applications from individuals who are still at the idea stage. You do not need to be legally incorporated to apply for this Award. We will offer winners advice on legal structure as part of the package of support.
Income	Since January 2023, you haven't generated £50,000 of income/turnover OR You haven't yet been able to pay yourself (entrepreneur) or a lead intrapreneur a minimum salary of at least £25,642 (London) or £20,319 (non-London) annually (one-off payments are not counted). 'Minimum salary' is benchmarked to the London Living Wage of £13.15 an hour or the National Living Wage of £10.42 an hour – calculated using this website and based on 37.5 hours a week: https://www.thesalarycalculator.co.uk/hourly.php
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are able to work part-time on the idea from September 2024 (at least 10 hours a week), and full-time (37.5 hours per week) from January 2025 (when the salary contribution starts) to June 2025. You commit to all the selection dates and the <u>year-long programme of support</u>. You are required to attend all incubator sessions and 1:1s.

What do I need to demonstrate through my application?

There is no expectation that you apply with a fully developed and tested idea - we welcome early-stage thinkers who could benefit from the full package of support on offer. However, you should utilise the [Application Form Guidance](#) and [attend application support](#) to provide a clear articulation of your idea against each of the criteria.



Fit of your idea with the Fair Education Alliance's vision

Instead of solutions that make an unfair system a little less unfair, we are particularly interested in new ideas and approaches that have the potential to significantly contribute to ending education inequality in England.



Leadership potential

You will demonstrate the relevant experience, skills, and mindsets to develop and implement the new initiative in the short and medium term. You do not need to possess all these capabilities, but should be able to take the leading role, including recognising any gaps that exist, and explaining how they will address them. You may plan to develop these capabilities yourself or by using a third party. You are enthusiastic and motivated to lead change across the sector, proactively seeking ways to build and develop partnerships with others.



Willingness to learn

You should be willing to learn and adapt as you develop your idea into a thriving initiative and make the most of working with the Fair Education Alliance and its network of over 280 members to improve the impact, efficacy and footprint of your innovation.



Diverse leadership

You are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles in your work. We want to know about your lived experience of the challenges you are addressing through your work, and/or how you are embedding EDI principles in your innovation. We strive for a diverse cohort of Award Winners.



Alignment with the Fair Education Alliance's values

It is important to us that innovators who go on to win the Innovation Award are committed to embodying and upholding [our values](#).



Ambition to reach areas where the need is greatest

Children from low income backgrounds are falling behind their wealthier peers in all stages of education, and this gap is even greater for young people outside of London. Through the Award, we want to support organisations that are ambitious about reaching areas where the need is greatest.

What application support is available?

Throughout the application process, the Awards team will be on hand to provide more information and offer support and guidance. You can [email us here](#).

- ✓ **Introduction to the Innovation Award:** watch [this webinar](#) for an overview of the Fair Education Alliance, the Innovation Award and to hear from a current Award Winner!
- ✓ **Saturday 16 March - The Fair Education Innovation and Scale Booster:** [SIGN UP NOW](#) for a full day of FREE interactive workshops and 1:1 clinics for anyone with an idea to tackle educational inequality in England AND FEA members wanting to develop an internal innovation or scale to areas of greatest need! Find out more [here](#).
- ✓ **1:1 clinics** – [Book a timeslot](#) to speak with Tisha, Head of Innovation, about your idea and for guidance on your application.
- ✓ **Application support webinars:**
 - **9 April online workshop:** Top tips for writing a great application. Sign up [here](#).
 - **23 April online workshop:** Young Founders: starting your own initiative (adapting and building on our session from Youth Summit). Sign up [here](#).
 - **9 May online workshop:** Teacherpreneurs: innovating within your school OR moving from the classroom to start-up your own initiative.. Sign up [here](#).
 - **4 June online workshop:** Top tips for preparing pitches. Sign up [here](#).
- ✓ **For any questions:** please contact us on awards@faireducation.org.uk



What is the selection process?

The Innovation Award selection process is designed to be a useful, developmental and stimulating experience for applicants regardless of the outcome.

To do this, the selection process:

- Includes a variety of opportunities for support in developing your application.
- Assesses applicants via a *written application and presentations to our panels of judges.
- Offers applicants expert feedback at key stages throughout.
- Draws on the expertise of sector leaders and youth representatives and offers an opportunity to raise your organisation and Innovator's profile.



Image © 2020 & 2023 Award Winner Power2

*If providing a written application is a barrier given your accessibility needs, please contact us on awards@faireducation.org.uk so we can discuss the support available.

Selection Dates

- ✓ 8th February: Innovation Award applications open
- ✓ 31st May, 12pm: Deadline for Innovation Award applications
- ✓ 23 and 24 July : Shortlisted applicants present to the Shortlisting Panel, with Finalists selected
- ✓ 8th August: Innovation Award Finalists submit their videos for the Community Choice Award. This is an opportunity for the public to vote for their favourite video out of the Finalists.
- ✓ 15th August: Finalists present to the Final Panel, with up to six Innovation Award Winners selected
- 🏆 12th September: Innovation Award Winners are publicly announced at a celebration event with leaders from across the sector
- ✓ 19th September: Award Winners' package of support begins. We will release the dates for all incubator sessions by the end of April. See here for [2023/24 incubator dates](#) as an example.

Application Form Guidance

We have put together the below guidance to ensure you are able to submit a strong, well-rounded application for the Innovation Award.

1. PROBLEM

Explain the problem that your idea addresses, including the following information (250 words):

- A description of the young people it affects
- The number of young people it affects
- How it affects an individual young person

Your answer should begin by clearly defining the problem that you want to solve. You should then explain how this problem relates to our ultimate goal of ending educational inequality in England.

You should be precise when defining the scope of the problem, identifying the type of young person affected by the problem (for example young people of a certain age or ethnicity) and the number of young people affected by the problem. To satisfy our judging criteria, the problem must affect a significant number of young people across England, even if you will pilot/test with a sub-group of those individuals.

We also want you to explain how the problem affects an individual young person. We understand that a problem will affect different people in different ways, so please answer with reference to a 'typical' young person.

We anticipate that many applicants will want to address problems that they have experienced first-hand. Your answer may include anecdotal evidence of the problem based on your own experiences, but this will not be sufficient to demonstrate that you have identified an important problem. You should also quote relevant facts and figures from credible third party sources, such as national datasets and academic research, as evidence of the problem.

2. YOUR SOLUTION

a) Explain your proposed solution to the problem, including the following information (200 words):

- Who you (will) deliver the solution to
- What you (will) do and how you (will) do it
- When, where, how often and by whom it is (or will be) delivered

Your answer should begin by explaining your proposed solution to the problem in one or two sentences. You can provide greater detail about your proposed solution in the rest of your answer.

You should explain to whom you will deliver the solution. In many cases this will be the young people affected by the problem. In other cases, you may plan to deliver your solution to other relevant stakeholders such as teachers or parents.

You should provide as much detail about the delivery of your solution as possible. In particular, we want to know what form your solution will take, when, where, how often and by whom it will be delivered. We understand that your plans are likely to change as you work on implementing your idea. However, we want to see that you have really thought through your solution and how to implement it.

b) Describe what is currently being done to address the problem and explain how your idea is different or better than existing solutions (150 words):

You should start your answer by providing an overview of how other organisations and institutions are already working to address the same problem that you have identified. For example, what are schools already doing to address this problem? How does government policy attempt to address the problem? Are there independent organisations working to solve the problem? It is very unlikely that no one else is working on the problem that you have identified, so ensure your research is thorough.

Next, you should explain how your idea is different or better than existing solutions. For example, will your solution be more effective? You must clearly demonstrate that your idea is not just replicating existing ideas.

We would also like you to consider what the future of education and work might look like, and if your solution would be preparing young people, or schools and teachers, for that future.

3. IMPACT

Describe the typical changes that you expect to see in a young person who benefits from your idea (150 words):

We understand that just as a problem will affect different young people in different ways, your solution will have a different impact on each young person that you work with. However, in order for us to understand the potential impact of your idea, please describe the changes you would expect to see, or have already seen in a pilot/test, in a 'typical' young person. These changes include, but are not limited to, improvements in knowledge, skills, attitude or behaviour.

As well as identifying the changes you would expect to see in a typical young person, you should also explain why these changes are important to future opportunities for this young person. For example, as a result of your solution, a typical young person may improve their behaviour. However, this has a wider reaching impact and you should explain what this will be. This will allow us to understand the ways you could measure the impact of your idea and how this might contribute to solving the problem.

4. SUSTAINABILITY

Explain how you will fund the delivery of your idea (150 words):

You should start your answer by providing an overview of who you believe will pay for the delivery of your solution. For example, will you be charging schools? Will you try to find third parties such as charitable foundations or corporate sponsors that are willing to fund you?

Next, you should explain why those people will be willing to pay for the delivery of your idea. For example, if you plan to charge schools, can you identify the budget they would use to pay for your solution? If you plan to get funding through third parties, can you name specific organisations that you believe would be willing to pay for the delivery of your solution?

You must demonstrate that you have thought carefully about how you will fund your idea and ensure its long term sustainability. In order to have a sound understanding of projected income streams, we recommend that you speak with budget holders of potential funders (for example schools, grant making organisations or corporates).

5. LEADERSHIP

a) Explain how your skills and experiences will enable you to deliver the solution effectively (150 words):

Think about the skills that will be needed to develop and implement your solution in the medium-term (two years). You do not need to possess all of these skills, but you should be able to take the leading role. Your answer should explain why you are the right person for the job and how your experience (with specific examples) has equipped you with these skills.

b) Provide information about anyone else who is working on the idea with you (if applicable) (150 words):

We are open to accepting applications on a case by case basis from co-founders if there is someone else leading the development of your idea. Please describe their skills and experience, and why they are relevant to the success of the initiative.

You will need to let us know before submitting your application form if you wish to apply with a co-founder, and we will need to arrange a call to discuss this further.

You will need to let us know who the lead Innovator will be, as we will need at least one person to attend all incubator sessions. We will also need to meet both co-founders during the selection phase.

Please note that we do not need information about advisors, mentors or other individuals who will not be directly involved in developing the idea.

c) Describe any necessary skills that you or your team do not currently have and how you will address these 'gaps' (150 words):

It takes a wide range of skills to develop and implement an idea and we do not expect that you and your team will already have all of them. However, it is important that you recognise any 'gaps' that exist and explain how you will address them. You may plan to develop these skills yourself or you might plan to use a third party. Tell us how you plan to fill the 'gaps' - if you plan to develop these skills yourself, how will you do this? Or if you use a third party, how will you get them on board?

d) Briefly outline your plan for driving forward the idea in the next 6-12 months (imagining that this award doesn't exist) (100 words):

You should provide a realistic overview of what you would like to achieve in the next 6-12 months, and the practical steps you're going to take to get there. How do you plan to keep yourself accountable and ensure you make the progress that you want to see?

6. VALUE ADD

a) Explain why the Fair Education Alliance Innovation Award is a good fit for you and your idea (150 words):

Your answer should explain how you and your idea will be able to benefit from the Alliance's resources and reputation, as well as the prizes for Innovation Award Winners. We encourage you to read through our website and learn about what we do and the impact that winning the Award has had on previous winners. Tell us what practical elements of the Innovation Award will be most useful to you in growing your idea.

b) Explain how you are aligned with the [Fair Education Alliance's values](#) (150 words):

It is important to us that all Innovation Award Winners are committed to leading and upholding our Alliance's values. Our values transcend all levels of the Alliance, from the Secretariat to the Board, and from the membership to the education system.

c) Describe the work that you have done on your idea to date (if applicable) (150 words):

If you have been working on your idea for some time, then your answer should explain what you have achieved to date. Please provide information about the key milestones you have achieved, including details of any pilots/tests you have conducted. (You do not need to have done any work on your idea to be eligible for the Innovation Award and we encourage applications from individuals who are still at the 'idea stage'.)

d) Describe support you are receiving from any other organisations (if applicable) (150 words):

If you have already received support from other organisations, then please provide details about them and the nature of the support they have given you. You should also provide information about any applications for support you have made to other organisations but do not yet know the outcome of. Please note that we only need information about formal support relationships such as the provision of funding or training. We do not require information about advisors or mentors.

Innovation Award 2023 Winners

To give you an idea of the types of initiatives we are looking for, meet our Innovation Award Winners 2023. You can read more about them [here](#)!



GoodWork
Felicity Halstead

GoodWork is a non-profit supporting 18-25 year olds who are excluded from professional opportunities by delivering training, paid work placements and holistic support as they launch their careers into industries they otherwise wouldn't access.



InsideUni
Ellie Cassidy

InsideUni is a student-driven initiative supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to confidently navigate university applications. They empower their nationwide student community to crowdsource and share first-hand advice about applying to university, from choosing what to study right through to what the interview might look and feel like.



Stone Soup
Cooperative Nursery
Laura House
and Tiffany Day

Stone Soup Group are a group of parents from diverse backgrounds on a mission to offer more affordable childcare, with creativity and collaboration at its core. They want to set up a cooperative nursery (led by and for the community), and share their learning so others can replicate their model. They'll offer life-changing educational experiences for children, and support parents to develop their skills and employability.



The Story Project
Olivia Richards

The Story Project turns popular children's stories into a tool to support and improve children's wellbeing. They use popular, diverse and engaging stories and book extracts to explore characters who are tackling the same challenges and emotions that children face, so that children can better understand themselves and others.

Our Fair Education Alliance Members



We are working towards a day when no child's success is limited by their socioeconomic background.

We believe there's still more to be done to create a fairer and more equitable education for all, but together we believe systemic change is possible.

faireducation.org.uk

Fair Education Alliance is a registered charity, no. 1188042

