

The Hive application guidance – start-up co-op businesses

Application guidance

This guidance is for people who are applying for The Hive support for start-up co-op businesses.

PLEASE NOTE

The Hive programme in its current form is having a facelift. We are launching a new, improved support programme the week of 16 January 2023 which will continue to support new and existing co-ops and conversions.

To give us time to transfer to the new programme, we are taking a short break from taking applications under the existing Hive programme.

If you have started and saved an application using the 'save my progress and resume later' function:

- You should have an email with a link to continue and complete your application
- If you don't have an email, please contact support@uk.coop with any details of your application, including the email you used for your application and we will help you access your application
- For any incomplete applications, the deadline for submitting is midnight, Sunday 29 January – please contact support@uk.coop if you have any questions

Not applying for support for a start-up co-op?

If you need application guidance for other Hive support, click on the relevant link below:

- [Existing co-ops trading for a minimum of two years.](#)
- [Businesses looking to convert to worker or community ownership.](#)

This guidance takes you through the questions you will be asked in the application form – it is most useful to have this information with you as you complete the application.

You can have this guidance open in a separate tab or window, or click the download button at the top of this page to download a pdf copy of the guidance.

There are two steps when applying to The Hive

Step 1: Eligibility checker

You should have already completed the initial [eligibility checker](#). If you are able to demonstrate that you meet our minimum eligibility, you will have been directed to a page ready to complete the full application form. PLEASE NOTE: As we are closing this application form, if you have not already completed the eligibility checker and started an application, you will need to wait until the week starting 16 January. [Read more >>](#)

Step 2: Application form

Applicants complete a full application form – questions will relate to your support needs.

The following pages outline the information you need to successfully complete the online application form – including any documents you should attach in support of your application.

We will assess your application based on the information you provide.

The Hive is open to applications all year round

Applications are reviewed at monthly panel assessment meetings. We aim to notify applicants of the outcome within two weeks of a monthly panel meeting. This means that the maximum amount of time an applicant will have to wait for a decision following submission is eight weeks.

Application questions – contact information

Organisation details

- Organisation name
- Job role within organisation
- Have you applied to The Hive before?
- Contact details
- Address
- Region

Social media

Co-operatives UK would like to follow/engage with you on your journey through this process. Please help us do this by providing as many of the below social media links as you can. These links will also help us to assess your application and understand more about your group/business

- Website
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn

Other funding and support

Have you received, or are you currently applying for, support or funding over the past 12 months?

If so please provide details of the funder, the name of the programme and the value.

For example: *Power to Change, More than a Pub, £10,000.*

Application questions – about your business

Organisation aims/brief description

Tell us about your emerging co-op/ business idea (max 80 words)

Briefly describe the co-op business – aims and purpose

Background/motivation

Tell us about you / your group

- What's your motivation for starting the co-op and why do you think it's needed?
- What's your background and experience? This can be about your personal circumstances, career and skills.
- How long have you been working on this and what have you achieved so far?
- Why is a co-op a good fit / better model?

Products, services and customers

How will it work?

- What are your products and services?
- Who is the co-op for e.g. workers, community, customers?
- Who will be the members?
- Who are your intended customers, users and members? Are they individuals or businesses?
- Try to be specific. How many customers or users will you aim to have? What are their demographics? Where are they located (local community, regional, national or wider)?

Testing and Viability

Viability, sustainability and growth.

- How have you tested your business idea?
- What evidence can you provide? This can be market research, feasibility study or a prototype.
- Are you filling a gap in the market, offering something new?
- Have you undertaken any community engagement? (pledges, surveys, social media, crowdfunding)
- Have you drafted a business plan?
- Have you produced financial forecasts, cashflow?
- How are you raising the funds to start your enterprise? This could be from your own funds, loans, grants, crowdfunding etc.
- What are the likely risks, main barriers?
- What are your ambitions for the business?

Governance

Governance. How are you organised

- Who are your core founding group?
- How many people?
- What are their roles, skills and relevant experience?
- How long have you been working together?

Impact

- Tell us how your business idea/organisation supports, serves or benefits under-represented or hard to reach communities and demographics, e.g. Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic communities (BAME), or young people.
- Tell us how you are creating or delivering social value and environmental impact (what issues, problems are users/beneficiaries facing and how are you solving these issues? How will you measure social impact?
- Do you have an understanding of the co-operative values and principles?

Application questions – additional details

Industry sector

Which sector do you operate in?

- Community energy, sustainability and environment
- Community retail, wholesale
- Digital, creative and media
- Employment, training and education
- Agriculture, community supported agriculture
- Finance
- Health and social care
- Housing
- Manufacturing
- Food services, accommodation, pubs and brewing
- Sport and leisure
- Tourism, arts, heritage and community hub
- Transport

Legal form

What is your organisations legal status?

For companies, societies and charities we need a registered number.

- Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Community Interest Company
- Company
- LLP
- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Society
- Unincorporated
- Don't know

Number of staff

How many employees, volunteers or members do you currently have?

Part time / Full time staff; Volunteers; Members; Board members.

Application questions – what support you need

Support needs

We offer a tailored support package, which will include some or all of the following:

- One-to-one direct advice: Delivered by experienced support providers
- Peer mentoring: Working with an existing co-op
- Bespoke skills training: Delivered to your group by experienced trainers. It will be helpful to indicate what kind of support you require and how these elements will help you to achieve your intended outcomes.
- Please tick which of the following support needs you require (you can tick more than one)
 - Testing business viability and feasibility
 - Developing business plan, fundraising
 - Identifying the most appropriate ownership model, legal structure
 - Governance arrangements, decision-making
 - Community shares
 - Other (please specify)
- Briefly explain how this support will help you?
- Tell us how bespoke skills training will help you. This might involve skills training for your steering group or board around strategic planning, change management, governance, membership, communications, HR or finance etc.
- Tell us how peer mentoring support will help you.
 - Are you looking to learn from an existing trading co-op in a similar sector, same type of business and/or ownership model?
 - Are you looking to learn from their experience around their governance arrangements, member recruitment and engagement, strategic planning

Registration fee

The Hive support will help groups determine the most appropriate ownership model and legal structure for your co-op. However, the cost of incorporation is not covered by The Hive.

Incorporation of co-ops can be undertaken via our [online registration tool](#). Registration costs £150 which includes VAT and the statutory fee.

This fee is subsidised thanks to The Co-operative Bank, as part of The Hive programme for co-ops. If you use this service, you can also access one year's membership to Co-operatives UK.

Hive support

Once your application has been submitted, we aim to notify applicants of the outcome within a maximum two weeks of a monthly panel meeting, which means that the maximum amount of time you will have to wait for a decision following submission is eight weeks. Please mark on your application if your support is urgent.

The Hive expects the delivery of the support to be completed within a period of six months, please be sure to let us know if you anticipate requiring a longer duration.

Please provide us with more information.

Application questions – additional support questions

Support providers, mentors and trainers

Do you have a specific provider in mind to deliver the direct one-to-one support?

- You are able to indicate a preferred support provider for all aspects of the support available as part of your application. If your application is successful, we will make every effort to allocate you your preferred support provider. However, we reserve the right to offer an alternative based on availability, geography, skills and experience.
- You can see a list of The Hive Support Providers here:
<https://www.uk.coop/start-new-co-op/find-adviser?f%5B0%5D=programme%3A1>
- Do you have an existing working relationship with the selected provider? You will be asked to select the provider from a drop down list.

Peer mentoring

Do you have a specific mentor in mind to deliver the peer mentoring support?

- If you would like to be mentored by an existing trading co-op or have a pre-existing relationship with a co-op that you wish to continue, you will be asked to provide details of the co-op.
- Please provide information regarding your relationship with the support mentor you have indicated

Training providers

- Do you have a specific organisation or training provider in mind to deliver bespoke in-house skills training? If so you will be asked to provide details.
- Why have you indicated this training provider?
- How will you benefit from the training?

Application questions – final details

How did you hear about The Hive?

- Co-operative development body / adviser; Co-operatives UK mailing list or e-bulletin; Co-operatives UK website,
- The Hive website; Event; Social media; Word of mouth; Other (please specify)

Supporting documentation

You may attach supporting documents, please name these clearly, e.g. *Co-operatives UK 2020 Business Plan*.

Commitment fee

By submitting this form you agree that if your application is successful you will pay a fee of £100, or £75 for Co-operatives UK members (including VAT).

About The Hive support delivery

Roles and responsibilities

Co-operatives UK created and manages The Hive support programme.

The Hive has a 'preferred provider' list of co-operative development bodies who deliver support on behalf of The Hive.

You can view this list in our [practitioners directory](#).

Support providers have been selected based on their skills, knowledge and experience and have also agreed to abide by a Code of Conduct.

Privacy notice

By completing the Hive application you agree that the information is a fair and accurate reflection of your organisation and support needs. By completing the application form you also agree with our privacy notice below.

The information captured in your application form will help Co-operatives UK and our funding partner The Co-operative Bank to review and make a decision on your application for support.

Co-operatives UK is committed to processing information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in line with our [privacy policy](#).

The personal data collected on this form will be held securely and will only be used for administration purposes. You are welcome to contact us to discuss the data we hold on you at any time.

If your application is successful, we will share your personal details with relevant third parties who will deliver the programme of support.

All our third-party support providers are required to take appropriate security measures to protect your personal information in line with our privacy policy and they are only permitted to process your personal data for specified purposes and in accordance with our instructions.

Allocating support packages

A bespoke package of support will be agreed for successful applicants based on the needs identified in application as well as further dialogue with The Hive team.

Reporting

Co-operatives UK will agree milestones for the support delivery with the applicant and the support provider and will contact support providers at regular intervals to check against progress.

When the support package has been completed, the support provider will inform Co-operatives UK. Both the support provider and the applicant will be sent an email containing a unique URL to complete an online survey.

This is your opportunity to advise how the support was delivered – what went well, what could have been better and the impact of the support including reporting against agreed outputs.

Additional support and resources

We've listed additional paths of [funding and support](#) via Co-operatives UK and other organisations.

**Thanks for using The Hive
application guidance. Have any
questions?**

Get in touch

<https://www.uk.coop/resources/application-guidance-start-co-op-businesses-hive>

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