



Charity number 1118686

*Registered address c/o James Cowper Kreston, 2 Communications Road, Greenham
Business Park, Newbury, RG19 6AB*

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Who we are

The Shackleton Foundation was established in 2007 by the direct descendants of Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1907/08 Nimrod expedition, to celebrate the legacy of the legendary polar explorer and great man.

We are a small charity - run by a diverse, voluntary trustee board with a wealth of expertise from across the business and charity sector, plus a part-time administrator.

We believe that excellent leadership, as epitomised by Shackleton, has the potential to create opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable, ultimately improving people's lives and enabling them to reach their full potential.

Since 2007 we have distributed over £668,000 as Leadership Awards to 66 Leaders.

Our vision is for a society where young people can thrive and flourish.

Our mission is to support inspirational and courageous leaders who have bold and innovative solutions to issues affecting young people experiencing disadvantage in the UK today.

Our charitable objectives are:

- To provide financial support to people of any age, background and nationality who exemplify the spirit and leadership qualities of Sir Ernest Shackleton, and whose conscious and deliberate efforts will improve the lives of disadvantaged and socially marginalised young people in the UK.
- To commemorate the life and achievements of Sir Ernest Shackleton by such means as the Directors will determine.
- To advance the education of the public in any recognised academic discipline that touches upon the life and achievements of Sir Ernest Shackleton, including but not limited to leadership, history, geography, geology, photography, and climatology.
- To advance such other lawful charitable purposes as the Directors shall in their absolute discretion determine.

Our approach and strategy

Sir Ernest Shackleton enabled his crew to overcome their doubts and fears in the face of true adversity. We look for individuals, often with lived experience, who display those same characteristics of courage and resilience, and who have a big, bold idea to help others. The trustees look for examples of leadership, innovation, enterprise, inspiration, ambition, endurance, and courage.

Individuals who have long-lasting, far-reaching projects tackling key issues such as: youth offending, education and attainment, life skills and employability, community cohesion, and physical and mental health.

We fund early-stage organisations run by social entrepreneurs who have developed a new model or approach to a social problem, with significant potential for breakthrough social impact. Projects should have a clear social purpose grounded in evidence with a sustainable business model.

To be eligible, applicants' projects must

- benefit disadvantaged young people in the UK
- fulfil a clear need and demand
- be innovative and fresh
- Ideally be in the first year of development and/or early planning stage
- have well-defined outputs and goals
- have a demonstrable social impact
- have potential for real growth and sustainability

What sets us apart from other funders is the projects we support are often considered too risky or too early-stage, so without our help many would struggle to get their concept off the ground. Our model is a unique way of transforming the lives of some of the UK's most disadvantaged young people by supporting these bold, inspiring, and effective ideas, and helping to make them a reality.

True to the spirit of Shackleton himself, we take calculated risks in supporting these social entrepreneurs, and we assist with practical aspects of starting up a social venture. This includes seed-funding, support from our trustees, and access to our Shackleton Leaders alumni network, so that we can give Leaders the best chance of maximising their impact and building a sustainable business model.

Our ambition each year is to appoint ten Leaders, awarding a total of £100,000. We generate this money through a mix of fundraising sources, by building relationships with grant giving trusts and foundations, corporates, and individual donors.

Our theory of change

Excellent leadership has the potential to transform lives.
But many social entrepreneurs struggle to turn their concept into reality as securing funding without a proven track record is extremely challenging.

Our Activities

We raise funds from trusts, individuals, and companies

We invest catalytic seed capital in social entrepreneurs (Leaders) who embody the leadership spirit of Sir Ernest Shackleton

We provide Leaders with support (mentoring, expertise, introductions)

We build an alumni network of Leaders, to enable peer-to-peer learning, connections, and workshops from experts

We develop informal partnerships with organisations to help source Leaders and enable follow-on funding opportunities



Our Outcomes

Social entrepreneurs have access to capital to launch and grow successful enterprises

Innovative solutions to social problems are developed and scaled

Social entrepreneurs have the confidence to kick-start a project

Organisations are more effective and sustainable

More funders are aware of the value of early-stage risk capital



A society in which young people can thrive and flourish without social injustice or discrimination

Our process and governance

Our application process is rigorous and professional. Each quarter the trustees carefully consider written submissions, objectively reviewing these independently of each other and identifying the strongest candidates that best meet our selection criteria. The 3 or 4 who score the highest are invited to meet in person, pitching to the trustees to add more depth and detail and answering further questions that have arisen during the process – these provide additional insight into the candidate’s leadership qualities and spirit. After a week of reflection, the trustees meet to discuss and agree who should become a Shackleton Leader and receive funding.

The successful candidate(s), now known as Leaders, will receive one-off seed-funding of up to £10,000 in the form of a grant. If the project is not a registered charity or Community Interest Company, it is deemed to be a loan rather than a grant and repayable when the project comes into profit – the returned money is then recycled back through the system.

We require safeguarding policies to be in place, check references, and ask Leaders to prepare a Shackleton Leaders Agreement (SLA) which outlines the ways in which the project will be managed and their obligation to share information with the Foundation. This data capture is collected and collated for our own measurement ensuring we meet our own objectives, culminating in the publishing of an impact report every 3 years.

The Foundation is committed to building, supporting and nurturing a community, and Leaders have access to an alumni network and mentoring programme. The network offers the best chance of maximising impact and building a sustainable business model and our annual Leaders’ Forum and ‘Advice Surgeries’ promote continued learning and growth among those we support, introducing external speakers and encouraging connections and debate – topics include scaling strategies, crowdfunding, fundraising, and building equitable, inclusive, and purposeful organisations.

The Shackleton Foundation is committed to the principles and practice of good governance, ensuring our modest board of voluntary trustees is diverse, committed, engaged and reliable, adding value in strategy direction and advocacy. We preserve a trustee position for a Leader, to bring expertise and wisdom from their own experience to the board.