Building an Innovation Ecosystem in the Social Sector Training Course



19 - 23 Oct 2026

Lisbon

4500 € (Per Person)

Ref: #INN4396_56047

Course Introduction / Overview:

This training course is designed specifically for professionals in the nonprofit and civil sectors who are looking to build a sustainable culture of innovation. It provides a strategic framework for developing an innovation ecosystem that can drive social impact and organizational effectiveness. The program moves beyond a traditional focus on fundraising to address the core challenges of adapting to new needs, developing creative solutions, and implementing them with limited resources. Participants will explore concepts like social innovation, impact measurement, and collaborative problem-solving. The curriculum is informed by leading academic and professional insights, including the work of Christian Seelos and Johanna Mair, who in their book Innovation and Scaling for Impact, provide a practical guide for scaling social innovation. This course at BIG BEN Training Center will equip leaders and staff with the tools to foster a creative culture, engage community stakeholders, and design programs that deliver lasting social value. It is an essential program for any organization that wants to be more responsive, resilient, and effective in a changing world.

Target Audience / This training course is suitable for:

- Executive directors and program managers of nonprofit organizations.
- Community organizers and social entrepreneurs.
- Fundraising and development specialists.
- Team leaders and staff in civil society organizations.
- CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) managers.
- Government officials working with social programs.
- Volunteers and board members of charitable organizations.

Target Sectors and Industries:

- Nonprofit and Philanthropic Organizations.
- Civil Society and NGOs.
- Community and Social Services.
- Healthcare and Public Health.
- Education and Youth Development.
- Environmental and Sustainability Organizations.
- Government agencies and equivalent public sector organizations.

Target Organizations Departments:

- Program and Operations.
- Fundraising and Development.
- Community Engagement.
- Human Resources (HR).
- Strategic Planning.
- Communications and Advocacy.
- Volunteer Management.

Course Offerings:

By the end of this course, the participants will have able to:

- Develop a strategic plan for fostering social innovation.
- Engage and mobilize community stakeholders for new initiatives.
- Identify and secure funding for innovative projects.
- Measure the social impact of new programs and initiatives.
- Build a culture of creativity and experimentation within their organization.
- Navigate regulatory and resource challenges in the social sector.
- Create a roadmap for scaling successful social innovations.

Course Methodology:

This training course uses a collaborative and action-oriented methodology that is tailored to the unique environment of nonprofits and civil organizations. The program is built on a series of real-world case studies that highlight both successful and challenging social innovation initiatives. Participants will work together in teams to brainstorm solutions to common problems faced by the sector, from engaging diverse communities to securing sustainable funding. The course includes interactive workshops on topics like design thinking for social good and lean startup principles for non-profit projects. We will also incorporate peer-to-peer learning sessions where participants can share their experiences and challenges in a supportive environment. The program at BIG BEN Training Center is designed to be highly practical, with each unit culminating in a tangible output, such as a concept for a new program or a draft of a strategic plan. This approach ensures that participants leave with a clear roadmap for how to implement what they have learned in their own organization.

Course Agenda (Course Units):

Unit One: The Foundations of Social Innovation

- Defining social innovation in the context of nonprofits.
- Understanding the difference between social and commercial innovation.
- Identifying key drivers for innovation in the civil sector.
- Analyzing the innovation ecosystem of a nonprofit.
- Case study on a successful social innovation.
- The role of leadership in fostering a culture of change.
- Assessing your organization's readiness for innovation.

Unit Two: Designing for Impact

- Using design thinking to understand community needs.
- Developing a clear problem statement and theory of change.
- Brainstorming and prioritizing new program ideas.
- Creating a prototype for a new service or initiative.
- Testing ideas with community members and stakeholders.
- Gathering feedback and iterating on a concept.
- Measuring the potential impact of a proposed innovation.

Unit Three: Funding and Scaling Social Innovation

- Exploring different models for funding innovation.
- Creating a compelling grant proposal for a new initiative.
- Using data to make a case for investment.
- Developing a sustainable financial model for social projects.
- Understanding the challenges of scaling a social innovation.
- Creating a roadmap for scaling your program.
- Case study on scaling a social enterprise.

Unit Four: Building an Innovative Organization

- Fostering a culture of experimentation and learning.
- Empowering staff and volunteers to take initiative.
- Creating cross-functional teams for innovation projects.
- Overcoming institutional resistance to change.
- Developing an internal reward system for creativity.
- The role of leadership in championing new ideas.
- Building a network of external partners and collaborators.

Unit Five: The Future of Innovation in the Social Sector

- Identifying emerging trends and challenges.
- Exploring the role of technology in social innovation.
- Developing a personal action plan for leading changes.
- Creating a roadmap for your organization's innovation strategy.
- Final project presentation and peer review.
- Reflecting on the course and preparing for implementation.
- The power of collaboration for lasting impact.

FAQ:

Qualifications required for registering to this course?

There are no requirements.

How long is each daily session, and what is the total number of training hours for the course?

This training course spans five days, with daily sessions ranging between 4 to 5 hours, including breaks and interactive activities, bringing the total duration to 20 - 25 training hours.

Something to think about:

In a sector often focused on fulfilling immediate needs with limited resources, how can leaders justify and allocate funds toward high-risk, long-term innovation initiatives?

What unique qualities does this course offer compared to other courses?

This training course is unique because it is tailored specifically to the context of nonprofits and civil organizations. Unlike many innovation programs that focus on corporate profit and market share, this curriculum centers on driving social impact and mission fulfillment. The program directly addresses the specific challenges faced by the social sector, such as resource limitations, reliance on grants, and the complexities of community engagement. It provides a clear framework for building a sustainable innovation ecosystem, moving beyond one-off projects to create a lasting culture of creativity. The course uses case studies and examples from the nonprofit world, making the content directly relevant and applicable. It emphasizes practical skills, from writing a compelling grant proposal to measuring social outcomes, which are crucial for success in this sector. This course is not just about adopting new tools; it is about developing the strategic mindset needed to lead change and maximize social good in a world that is always evolving.