



Social Enterprise Program

Rethinking plastic through social entrepreneurial innovation.

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”
-Robert Swan OBE

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Rethink Plastic through Social Entrepreneurial Innovation

Plastic is integrated into almost every aspect of our lives. Plastic is wonderful because it is versatile and durable. Unfortunately, plastic does not naturally decompose or biodegrade. We believe that plastic pollution is a consequence of a global disposable lifestyle. We buy products, like water bottles, sodas and snack-food packs without considering the environmental cost. We once thought that we could use these plastic products once and throw them away without causing harm to humans and animals. We now know this is untrue!

You can help save the environment by creating innovative change. With a little imagination and creativity, you can develop solutions that make a big difference.

We aim to bring together young entrepreneurs like you, to solve the plastic problems with corporations, influencers, and strategic innovators.

What is a social entrepreneur?

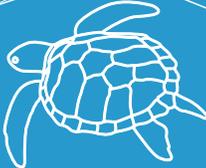
A person who establishes an enterprise with the aim of solving social problems or effecting social change. Anyone can be a social entrepreneur provided they have an understanding of the social problem, a method for generating a solution, a business/sustainability plan, and an action plan.

What is a social problem?

A social problem is an undesirable social condition that affects many people in a society. Homelessness, drug addiction, and environmental pollution are examples of typical social problems.



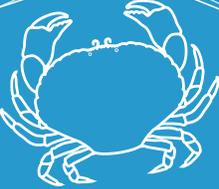
PLASTIC POLLUTION
is a global social issue that impacts both our ocean and our health.



8 MILLION TONS
of plastic waste enter our oceans every year.



50% OF ALL PLASTIC
we produce is used just once and thrown "away".



80% OF ALL TRASH
in our oceans is plastic.



The ocean provides
50%+
of the oxygen we breath.



MARINE ANIMALS
are mistaking plastic for food - and it's killing them.

Program Design

This program is designed to teach you to solve the social problem of plastic pollution, while developing your social enterprise. You will work with a peer team and a Social Enterprise Program (SEP) mentor to conduct research into a social problem, use critical thinking to identify and develop a solution for that problem, and then develop and execute a business action plan. By the end of the program, you will have created a sustainable social enterprise capable of making a difference in your community.

Task 1: Research the Problem

Use the form in Appendix A to complete the following task.

Objectives

1. Develop research questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how).
2. Distinguish between fact and opinion.
3. Apply research method to social problem.

This task will help you to understand how our reliance on plastic products has created negative effects. The first step to creating a successful business is to research the problem. For example, you might learn that students and faculty throw away hundreds of water bottles in a day. You might design a business that sells reusable bottles with your school logo. Your social enterprise would earn money while also greatly reducing plastic waste in the school community.

Your research on plastic pollution starts with the general information on page 4 and will continue with the following steps.

To best identify solutions, you should take the time to do further research on your own to understand the social problem from your perspective.

Step 1: Webinar

To learn more about the problem, you will meet with your SEP mentor and scientific expert in a webinar. Before this meeting, you might want to write a few questions to ask the expert. Be sure to take notes during the webinar. It is important to understand your industry as much as possible by researching online to maximize your time with the industry expert. More hints on research strategies are described below.

Step 2: Distinguish Fact from Fiction

When you conduct research, you are looking for facts that explain something about the problem that you are studying. In this case, you want to use sources that provide facts about the plastic industry, general use of plastics, and the disposal process. Remember to search for potential opportunities in your community for your enterprise.

Be careful when conducting research! Too often, sites offer information about a topic because they have something to gain from the information. To determine the “good” from the “bad”, please watch the following videos. These will help you understand how to determine important information that you will use in your business development. The videos are:

[How to Choose your News - Damon Brown \(5 min\)](#)

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Step 3: Conduct Research

The best way to begin is to create a research plan. This includes gathering your sources and bookmarking them on your computer, creating questions that you want to know about the topic, and writing notes about facts. Then, begin your research by trying to answer the questions that you developed. This exercise will help you to find the facts first.

As you read the materials, make note of patterns of facts. For example, do most of the articles suggest that water bottles are the biggest landfill problem? Check the resources. Are they from government agencies or university ecological sites? If so, they are likely to be factual. If they are sponsored by environmental non-profit groups, check those facts with government or university sites. Write a short summary of what you discovered. Decide what information might be useful to you in creating your business and put a star by it.

After conducting research, you will have a lot of ideas about businesses that you could start. Write these down as you will use them later.

Guiding questions - begin with these:

1. How do microplastics affect the ocean's food chain?
2. Which industries create the most plastic pollution?
3. Which items are responsible for the majority of plastic pollution?
4. What needs are plastics fulfilling? Whose needs are plastics fulfilling? Are these needs essential for life or for convenience?

