



**Making the digital economy our own.**

## **PROGRAMME GUIDANCE NOTES**

This guidance will help you to decide whether the **</UnFound>** accelerator programme is right for you. It includes information about who can apply, an outline of the programme schedule as well as commitments required by participating co-ops. The guidance also provides information that will help you complete the application form.

**</UnFound>** is brought to you by [Co-operatives UK](#) and [Stir To Action](#), both of which believe in being truly inclusive and treating everyone with respect. We seek to be genuinely inclusive organisations by advancing equality and diversity through our policies and practices. We encourage and welcome applications from people from all backgrounds. If you require this guidance to be sent to you in another format, please get in touch.

## Introduction

With the rise of the online gig economy and the [National Co-operative Development Strategy](#) calling for support for “platform co-operatives using new technology for shared ownership services”, Co-operatives UK are teaming up with Stir To Action for **UnFound**, an accelerator programme for early stage co-ops. UnFound is the UK’s first structured programme of support for platform co-ops and will run from May through to June 2018 — more details on the schedule are provided below.

## What is a Platform Co-op?

A platform co-operative is a co-owned, democratically-governed business that uses an online platform or mobile app to enable people to meet their needs or solve a problem by networking people and assets. [\[Find out more\]](#)

## Why this accelerator?

- > Digital companies are monopolising key economic sectors
- > Labour platforms are encouraging precarious employment practices
- > Co-operatives can expand their presence in the digital economy
- > There is a demand for user and worker-owned digital platforms
- > Co-operative models can be more competitive than investor-owned models
- > Crowdfunding can challenge investor capital

## Is my co-op right for UnFound? What type of co-ops do you work with?

We are looking for platform co-ops that have their core team and governance arrangements in place. You do not need to have a product built or be generating revenue, but your co-op must be based on an idea that has been market tested.

If you have already raised investment elsewhere we are still happy to talk and consider your application. If you're unsure then get in touch and ask. If in doubt, apply any way, what have you got to lose?

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

UnFound is an intensive programme of support for early stage platform co-ops. The programme is built around a series of masterclasses with participants supported by a team of six mentors throughout the duration of the programme. A minimum of one member from each participating co-op must be able to attend each masterclass in person.

### **Launch**

**Tuesday, 8 May 2018**  
**Manchester**

We'll welcome your team to the programme, explore what we'll cover during the masterclasses, and hear from guest speaker Brianna Wettlaufer, Stocksy CEO and co-founder. You'll also meet the UnFound mentors, a group of social entrepreneurs and co-op experts who have been successful within their sectors.

### **Platform development - a route to success**

**Tuesday, 15 May 2018**  
**London**

What's your MVP? We will challenge you to continue to test your platform's feasibility. This session will explore your tech development, and how to effectively brief and work with developers. It will also include service design and working on your UX.

### **The art of co-operation in the digital age**

**Tuesday, 22 May 2018**  
**Birmingham**

Platform co-operatives often have distributed memberships, working across national and international scales. We'll explore the most effective approaches to online governance, hearing from Stocky's governance manager Margaret Vincent who will explain how they maintain consensus amongst their 1,000-strong international membership. We'll also explore some of the most effective approaches for conflict resolution.

### **Back to basics**

**Tuesday, 29 May 2018**  
**Manchester**

Is your business plan working hard enough? Have you taken stock of your finances? This session will hold up a mirror to your current plans to enable you to identify areas that require investment.

### **The Funding mix**

**Tuesday, 5 June 2018**  
**London**

We'll explore the investment opportunities within a changing funding landscape and how a 'funding mix' of grants, loans, community shares, and grant equity could work within your financial strategies. We'll be joined from Germany by Fairmondo co-founder Felix Weth to hear about their crowdfunding 'co-op shares' campaign and their sweat equity scheme, Fair Founding Points, giving early contributors rights to future surplus.

**All aboard - bringing others along with you**

**Tuesday, 12 June 2018**  
**Birmingham**

One of the biggest issues for early-stage businesses is user acquisition. We'll explore – with the help of communication expert Glyn Britton — how to reach people with your product or service. Your brand identity will also impact on your ability to attract new customers, so we'll develop communication strategies for all of your different stakeholders.

**Pitch perfect**

**Tuesday, 19 June 2018**  
**London**

Telling your story, framing your core values, and asking your 'crowd' for financial support is crucial to your business development. This session will involve proposal development and pitch training for the live crowdfunding event.

**Crowdfund your idea**

**Saturday, 23 June 2018**  
**London**

Each group that completes the programme will get the chance to pitch their business to a 400 strong delegation at this year's Co-ops UK Congress event in London. This live crowdfunding session will be facilitated by Anna Laycock, Executive Director of the [Finance Innovation Lab](#).

The masterclass schedule is subject to change, with topics, dates and locations confirmed in consideration of our final participant cohort.

## The mentor team

In addition to the masterclasses, participants will have access to a six person strong mentor team throughout the duration of the programme. The role of a mentor is to assist participants with setting up and developing their co-op and successfully help them to navigate the complex financial, regulatory, and organisational hurdles. The UnFound mentor teams breadth and dept of start-up experience and will be on hand to respond to questions and ideas that arise from topics covered in the masterclasses.

We envisage that UnFound participants will see their mentors as a sounding board and business friend who will be there to reflect on the content of masterclasses throughout the duration of the programme. Mentors will help generate problem solving ideas and encourage strategic thinking. Offering an objective viewpoint, our mentors will share choices as opposed to directives, will help to spot problems and support you to work through them.

Mentors are not expected to replace the role of consultants, such as legal or technical advisors, but will hopefully provide support to enable you to make more efficient use of such advice, and to help choose reliable and experienced people to support your co-op.

Mentoring activities will be undertaken using a range of interventions including face-to-face meetings (one-to-one or group), telephone discussions, and email exchanges.

## UnFound Mentors

**Mark Hooper** is the founder of Indycube, a co-operative co-working network. He is currently working with Community Union and the small team at Indycube to build UK coverage and a membership of 100,000 freelancers.

**Rebecca Rae** is a pro-social strategist working on digital engagement, social impact and ethics for The Federation, a community of digital businesses in Manchester. She also founded *Tech for Good Live*, a series of events and podcasts that look at how digital technology can be used for social change.

**Dan Stanley** co-founded Small Axe, a movement-building nonprofit, and currently leads Cohere Partners, a brand strategy consultancy that develops brands and communications for some of the biggest businesses and nonprofit organisations in the world.

**Emma Laycock** leads Co-operatives UK's Advisory Services Team and has worked at all levels within co-operative and mutual enterprises to advise on, design and develop governance arrangements, structures, and solutions.

**Dave Boyle** is the Director of the Community Shares Company and has helped over 30 groups raise more than £6.5M from community shares in the last 3 years. He is a Licensed Practitioner by the Community Shares Unit, and is an associate of Crowdfunder.

**Sam Toland** is an Irish legal professional, with a managerial background in technology and housing. He works closely with the Resonate Board and Founder Peter Harris, supporting their co-operatively owned music streaming service.

## Key Dates

- > Application window opens 1 March 2018
- > Application deadline - 31 March 2018
- > Face to face interview - 9 April 2018 - A minimum of two members from each shortlisted co-op must be able to attend the interview.
- > Offer letters issued - 13 April 2018

## Your Commitment

- > There is no fee to participate in the UnFound programme, however participating co-ops will be required to cover all associated travel costs.
- > A minimum of two members from each shortlisted co-op must be able to attend the interview.
- > A minimum of one member from each participating co-op must be able to attend each masterclass in person.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying to UnFound is a two-stage process. The first step is to complete an online application form. As well as providing some basic information about your co-op, and identifying a minimum of three members who will participate in the programme, the online application form requests detailed responses to six substantive questions

**1. What is the purpose of your business?**

Co-ops have been fixing broken markets for hundreds of years, we want to know how your co-op came to be, what market failures it aims to address and the missions, vision and values you have put in place.

**2. Governance**

If you are unincorporated, we would like to learn more about your core founding group. How are you currently organised? Is there a core steering group? How many people are involved? What are their roles and relevant experience? Is there a common vision and aim? What experience do they have of working together? If you are incorporated or currently trading, tell us more about your governance model (board of directors, number of employees, volunteers etc).

**3. What is your service or product?**

What is your business idea? What evidence do you have to demonstrate the business will work? What needs are you trying to address? Evidence could include market research, community support and engagement, a prototype, or successful examples of a similar nature.

**4. What work have you undertaken to develop the technology behind your platform?**

We'd like to know if you've built and tested a MVP, what challenges occurred and what progress you've made. What are your plans to develop this further? What format are you working in (PHP, .NET / C# etc.)?

**5. Membership and social value?**

One of the most difficult parts of scaling any business is actually figuring out which channel is the most sustainable for bringing through new customers. We would like to understand more about your existing or potential members and beneficiaries (customers, employees, local community) and what your user acquisition strategy entails. Tell us about any member engagement / consultation activities you have undertaken; tell us about how your co-op will create community benefit and social value.

**6. Name three challenges you are facing that you would like to work through as part of the UnFound programme.**

We want to make sure the masterclasses and mentor support enable to you to tackle the most pressing challenges and to progress as quickly as possible. Provide as much detail as possible and be prepared to discuss this at the interview!



## Supporting information

All applicants must be able to submit a copy of their business plan (draft copies accepted). Ideally these will be uploaded as an attachment to the application form, however we will accept copies via email at a later date. You can find information on how to write a business plan, including a template, [under the your business plan section](#) of the Hive Website.

Applicants who have been trading for more than two years must provide a copy of their most recent accounts.

To help with your application and our assessment, please email copies of any additional existing supporting documentation i.e. feasibility studies, market research etc.

## Assessment

A panel of five assessors will score your applications against a set criteria, shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend a face-to-face interview on 10 April.

## Enquiries

Email: [unfound@uk.coop](mailto:unfound@uk.coop)