

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Social Enterprise Accelerator Malaysia (SEAM) – Cohort 2

1. What is SEAM?

SEAM (Social Enterprise Accelerator Malaysia) is a 12-month accelerator programme created through a partnership between Biji-biji Initiative and IKEA Social Entrepreneurship, with the support of IKEA Malaysia. SEAM exists to support impact-driven organisations in Malaysia to grow sustainably, strengthening their business models while deepening their impact on communities that are marginalised across the country.

Through mentorship, tailored advisory, funding, and ecosystem connections, you'll gain the tools and support you need to scale responsibly.

2. Who is SEAM for?

SEAM is designed for **impact-driven organisations in Malaysia** that are ready to grow. This includes:

- Social enterprises
- Mission-led SMEs
- NGOs with income-generating activities
- Inclusive or purpose-driven businesses

If your organisation is working to improve the lives of communities that are underserved or marginalised, and you're looking to take your impact to the next stage, SEAM could be for you.

3. My organisation is not currently in Malaysia, can I still apply?

No. SEAM is ONLY open to organisations that are operating and **based in Malaysia**. Your organisation needs to have an active presence and be creating a positive impact within the Malaysian context.

4. What stage should my organisation be at?

We're looking for organisations at the **Late Validation to Scaling Stage**.

This typically means:

- You've been operating for at least 2 years
- You have a working business model
- You are generating revenue
- You're now looking to grow your reach, impact, or sustainability

5. What are the eligibility criteria?

To be eligible, your organisation should meet the following baseline criteria. Applications are reviewed holistically, and flexibility is applied on a case-by-case basis.

- You should be a legally registered entity under Malaysian law (SSM/ROC, LLP, ROS, or equivalent)
- Have been operating for a minimum of 2 years
- Have an annual revenue of RM100,000 and above
- Have a team of at least 3 members (with at least 2 full-time), and be able to commit a minimum of two core team members – including at least one in a leadership or decision-making role – for the full 12-month programme duration.
- Your organisation must demonstrate clear social impact embedded in its core operations, with intentional engagement with communities that are marginalised or vulnerable.
- You should also align with at least one of SEAM's five thematic priority areas and have a defined direction for scaling your business and/or impact.

6. What kind of impact is SEAM looking for?

Your organisation must have **clear and intentional social impact** embedded in how it operates, not as a side initiative or by-product.

We prioritise organisations working with or for:

- Communities that are marginalised or vulnerable
- Underserved groups (e.g. low-income communities, persons with disabilities, refugees, indigenous communities)

7. What sectors does SEAM focus on?

SEAM prioritises organisations working in areas such as:

- Circular Economy and Waste Management
- Sustainable Agriculture and Renewable Materials
- Raw Materials and Reforestation
- Aquaculture and Marine Conservation
- Inclusive Employment

If your work doesn't fit neatly into these categories but creates meaningful social and environmental impact, we still encourage you to apply. Each application is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with particular attention to how your work improves the lives of the communities you serve.

8. What will selected organisations receive?

Participants will gain access to:

- **Strategic mentorship** from experienced Thought Partners
- **Co-curated business development support** tailored to your organisation's needs
- **Programme funding** to support, test and grow your ideas
- **Peer learning & community** with other impact-driven organisations
- **Ecosystem connections** (partners, experts, government agencies, investors and networks)

This is not a one-size-fits-all programme. Support is shaped around your organisation's growth journey.

9. What is a Thought Partner, and how is it different from a mentor or coach?

A Thought Partner is an experienced professional – drawn primarily from IKEA's direct network of co-workers and industry practitioners – who is matched with your organisation for the duration of the programme. Think of them as a strategic sounding board: someone who brings an outside perspective, real-world business experience, and genuine curiosity about your journey.

Unlike a traditional mentor who advises based on their own experience, or a coach who guides you through a structured process, a Thought Partner works alongside you as an equal thinking companion. Their role is to ask the questions that sharpen your thinking – not to prescribe answers or tell you what to do.

Each organisation is matched with one primary Thought Partner through a careful process that considers your sector, growth stage, specific needs or gaps identified during the selection phase, and where possible, language or geographic alignment. This matching is carried out collaboratively by Biji-biji Initiative and IKEA Social Entrepreneurship to ensure a strong fit.

Your Thought Partner will be with you across the full programme — from co-developing your Growth Experimentation Plan in Phase 1, through monthly check-ins during Phase 2, to the Closing Summit. You'll also have access to additional subject matter experts and industry mentors throughout the programme based on your organisation's specific needs.

10. Is the funding a grant or investment? What can the funding be used for?

The funding provided is a **programme grant** — not an investment or loan. It is designed to support your growth and experimentation during the programme.

Funding is intended to support your organisation's **growth and experimentation priorities**, such as developing new products, expanding into new markets, strengthening systems, or testing new approaches to deepening your impact. Funds are tied to milestones outlined in your Growth Experimentation Plan, with 80% disbursed after Phase 1, and the remaining 20% upon programme completion.

11. What is the Growth Experimentation Plan (GEP)?

The GEP is a core part of your SEAM journey. It's a living strategy document that you'll develop during Phase 2 with the support of your Thought Partner. You will outline:

- What you want to grow or test
- Your impact goals
- Key experiments or initiatives

The GEP isn't about hitting fixed targets — it's about learning, adapting, and growing in real time.

12. How long is the programme?

SEAM runs for 12 months, across two main phases.

- **Phase 1 (Strategy & Scoping)** runs from August to December 2026, where you'll develop your growth roadmap/Growth Experimentation Plan (GEP) with your Thought Partner.
- **Phase 2 (Experimentation & Learning)** runs from January to August 2027, where you'll put your plans into action and refine as you go.

The programme is bookended by an in-person Opening Summit and a Closing Summit.

13. What is the time commitment?

You'll need to commit **two core team members** – including at least one person in a leadership or decision-making role – for the full 12 months.

Key commitments include:

- Attending the Opening Summit and Closing Summit in person
- Participating in virtual learning sessions (approximately 1–2 hours each)
- Engaging in monthly mentorship sessions with your Thought Partner
- Contributing to a mid-term reflection session
- Taking ownership of your Growth Experimentation Plan

You're also welcome to bring additional team members to specific masterclasses or workshops where their expertise is relevant. The programme is designed to integrate with your ongoing work, not pull you away from it.

14. How do I apply?

The application process has two stages:

1. **Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment (short form)**
2. **Stage 2: Full Application (for eligible organisations)**

You'll be asked about your:

- Organisation and impact
- Business model
- Financials
- Growth plans
- Statement of purpose

Important: Before starting Stage 2, we recommend having your legal registration certificate (SSM/ROC or ROS), audited accounts for the last two financial years, and your organisation profile or portfolio ready to upload.

Applications can be submitted in English or Malay. The programme itself is conducted in English. Completed application is considered when both of the processes are fulfilled by the applicants.

15. When are applications open?

- **Applications Open:** 1 April 2026
- **Applications Close:** 23 May 2026 (11:59 PM GMT)

Late submissions will not be accepted, so we recommend applying early.

16. How are organisations selected?

Applications go through a **multi-stage review process**, including:

- Eligibility screening
- Application review
- Shortlisting
- Virtual Interview and due diligence with the SEAM selection panel

Final selection is based on:

- Social impact strength
- Business viability
- Growth readiness
- Team capacity

You can expect to be updated on your application status by mid-July 2026.

17. How many organisations will be selected?

Only **ten organisations** will be selected for Cohort 2.

This allows for deeper, more tailored support for each participant throughout the programme.

18. Can we reapply if we are not selected in SEAM Cohort 1?

Yes. We strongly encourage organisations to reapply if they were not selected in SEAM 1.

Many organisations grow significantly between cycles, and SEAM is designed to support organisations at the right moment in their journey.

19. Do I need to be fluent in English?

The programme is conducted in **English**, so participants should be comfortable communicating, presenting, and engaging in English throughout.

That said, applications can be submitted in either English or Malay. We warmly welcome applicants from all backgrounds.

20. What makes SEAM different from other programmes?

SEAM is not a fixed curriculum, it's a **co-curated journey**.

This means:

- Support is tailored to your organisation
- You shape your own growth direction
- Learning is grounded in real challenges and experimentation

At its core, SEAM is about **growing impact, not just scaling businesses**. And you won't be doing it alone – SEAM brings together mission-led organisations and ecosystem partners, creating a space to learn from each other and build something stronger, together.

21. Is the programme practical or more theory-based?

SEAM is highly **practical and grounded in real work**.

You will be applying what you learn directly to your organisation – testing ideas, refining strategies, and learning through implementation.

22. What happens after the programme ends?

You'll become part of the **SEAM alumni network**, staying connected to:

- Ecosystem partners
- Future opportunities
- Ongoing collaboration and learning

SEAM is designed to be the beginning of a longer journey.

Have more questions?

Reach out to us at accelerator@biji-biji.com, or visit programs.biji-biji.com/seam.