

# Guide to Choosing an Enterprise Form Project 5.8

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# Introduction

The organization of social enterprises takes a variety of legal forms. The aim of this project is to identify the key features of the various ways social enterprises are organized and to produce a Guide for use by various audiences. For-profit and not-for-profit legal forms will be examined.



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# Background and Rationale

Social enterprise currently takes various legal forms: co-operatives, societies, charities. However, there is little knowledge of the law covering the various ways in which a social enterprise can be organized. The rationale of the project is that greater understanding of the advantages and limitations of the particular ways a social enterprise can be structured will help individuals and groups pick the legal form that best suits them – a corporation, a cooperative, or a society, for instance.



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# Community/University Collaboration (partnership)

- There are a variety of partners included in this project, including university, government and social economy organizations
- This project is of potential benefit to anyone starting or currently engaged in social enterprise



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# Project Methodology

A Literature Review and Key Informant Interviews will identify the key legal characteristics of sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited partnerships, private corporations, not-for-profit corporations, co-operatives, not-for-profit co-operatives, societies, and charities. The pros and cons of such structures will be discussed in the Guide.



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# Main Findings To Date

This project is in the early stages of development, and first draft of the Guide is expected Spring 2009 for collaborative review by the research team.



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# Deliverables

- Curriculum Development. The Guide will be part of the teaching materials for an undergraduate business law course & and an Executive MBA course on Law & Ethics at the Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary's Univ, Nov. 2008.
- Publications – The materials will be included in a student text called *A Slice of Law* by B. Anderson, Jan. 2008.
- Other products, events/activities will depend on what the research partners decide.



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# How Students Benefited from the Project

- Students may participate in this project as RAs
- The information developed in Guide form will benefit students studying business and law, as they will learn more comprehensive information about the various forms of social enterprise



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# Conclusions and Next Steps

The next step is to organize the key features of the various legal forms for carrying on social enterprises in a way that aids the understanding of a variety of audiences, and to review the project with the research team.



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