

# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Abstracts are invited for papers from anyone with an interest in rural entrepreneurship; we encourage contributions from academics and practitioners alike. Please indicate which of the conference themes you think is/are most appropriate and limit your abstract to 400 words.

## Your Details

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**Please use the following headings: (boxes will expand as you type)**

<b>Title:</b> The health and wellbeing impacts of social enterprise in rural, remote and fragile communities
<b>Purpose of this paper (please also indicate whether empirical, conceptual or case study etc)</b> <p>The Highlands &amp; Islands of Scotland has some of the most remote and rural areas in the UK, with around one fifth of the Scottish population living in areas that require support to operate and sustain services (Scottish Government, 2015). At a basic logistical level, these rural populations face challenges of isolation, communication, transport and retention of populations (Farmer et al., 2008; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2011; Steinerowski et al., 2008). Rural health inequalities can differ from their urban counterparts with communities facing complexities such as travelling large distances to receive healthcare (Scottish Government, 2008) and limited numbers of skilled healthcare professionals and services (Farmer et al., 2008).</p> <p>Recent Social Enterprise Census figures have shown that 22% of social enterprises in Scotland exist in the Highlands and Islands; 16% of which are located in 'fragile' areas characterised by 'weakening of communities through population loss, low incomes, limited employment opportunities, poor infrastructure and remoteness' (Social Value Lab, 2015). It could be said that such environments of extreme co-dependence and collective resilience are a perfect breeding ground for enterprising activity that contributes to the sustainability, health and wellbeing of these populations, and the reduction of health inequalities (Kay, 2003; Shucksmith et al, 1996).</p> <p>This aim of this study is explore the health and wellbeing impacts of rural and remote social enterprise. The paper will present selected findings from 'CommonHealth'- a collaborative research programme that aims to develop methods to evaluate new pathways to health creation and health inequalities reduction arising from social enterprise. This will be based on empirical evidence gathered over a five year period. In particular, it focuses on 'Growth at the Edge', one of the CommonHealth projects.</p> <p>Presented findings are based on the primary data collected from social enterprises using in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. Social enterprises involved in the study are</p>

supported by the Highlands and Island Enterprise (HIE)- the Scottish Government's economic and community development agency that provides support to strengthen and sustain fragile communities in rural and remote areas of the Highlands & Islands through social enterprise activity.

### References

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### Findings

Preliminary findings will be presented focusing on themes that are generated by the in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. These findings will be centred on issues around the sustainability of communities and health inequalities that exist in these fragile settings.

### Practical implications

The findings will contribute to our wider understanding of measuring the ways that social enterprise may affect the health and wellbeing of individuals in varied settings, and will result in a practical framework of measures. The study will also contribute to understanding how social enterprise may create opportunities for development in remote and rural settings.

### Policy Implications (if applicable)

The study aims to contribute to the creation of flexible policies supporting social enterprise activity in Scotland, and as a proven mechanism to improve the health and wellbeing of populations living in remote and rural areas.

### What is the originality/value of paper

The CommonHealth five year programme will be developing methods for evidencing social enterprise as a public health intervention, first described by Roy (2014) in his paper ' The

potential of social enterprise to enhance health and wellbeing: a model and systematic review’.

The Growth at the Edge project, in particular, is the first of its kind to study the health and wellbeing impacts of social enterprise activity in remote, rural and fragile areas of the Highlands & Islands of Scotland.

**Please indicate the theme(s) that you consider most appropriate for your paper:**

- Entrepreneurship, farming and the natural environment
- Digital Rural Entrepreneurship
- International dimensions of rural entrepreneurship
- New approaches in rural theory, method and measurement
- Opportunities and challenges for rural development
- Rural Innovation, EU funding and the role of Universities
- Rural Social Entrepreneurship
- Rural Place Marketing

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Yes  No

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