WHAT’S A GOOD SOCIAL ENTERPRISE?

As a grant-making foundation, we receive numerous requests from people from all walks of life and it has not been easy to decide which appeal should be accepted. Here, in this newly introduced column, we explain our selection criteria.

To be eligible, a social enterprise has to be registered in any one of the 10 Asean countries. Typically, we fund organisations that have been in operation for at least two years but need support to reach the next level. We look into: impact on beneficiaries, innovativeness, sustainability and ability to tap on AirAsia’s strengths.

What do we mean by these criteria? A GOOD project is one that seeks new investment to strengthen or expand the original business. For example, we provided Thai social enterprise Muser Coffee Hill with a new roaster to raise their roasted bean supply as the latterfetches higher market value than raw beans.

Innovation is often taken to mean application of new technology but it can also be about doing things differently. Our grantee Indonesian community architects group Arkomjogja approaches conservation as a community-building initiative. To them, conservation is not just about fixing buildings but about involving local youths so that they value their cultural heritage and carry on the traditions.

To be sustainable, a model must be replicable to benefit new communities while generating income to fund the organisation’s work. We believe social enterprises can be profit making but not profit maximising. From our grantees, we do not seek repayment but we request that they reinvest returns to benefit their communities.

Finally, what is AirAsia’s role in all this? AirAsia Foundation is part of the AirAsia network that spans the region and many industries. AirAsia has a work force of over 20,000 Allstars globally, and in 2016, carried over 60 million guests. A smart social entrepreneur looks at tapping on these strengths. Tonibung, our grantee in Sabah, Malaysia, came up with the idea of having AirAsia engineers train indigenous youths in technical skills while another grantee, APE Malaysia, asked for old aircraft materials to create tools for animal welfare. The possibilities are endless.

So, if you are a social entrepreneur with a business that describes the above and can do with our help, get in touch via airasiafoundation.com.