

ACORNS

Accelerating the Creation Of
Rural Nascent Start-ups 

SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE SUPPORTS



Providing early stage female entrepreneurs, living in rural Ireland, with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to meet and even exceed their current aspirations.



The ACORNS pilot programme is funded under the CEDRA 2015 Rural Innovation and Development Fund through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This booklet outlines supports which may be available to early stage female entrepreneurs based in rural Ireland and is published as part of the ACORNS pilot. The information contained herein does not necessarily represent the views of the funding organisation.

Although the information used in this booklet has been gathered from a range of verifiable sources, its interpretation is the sole responsibility of the author, Paula Fitzsimons, Director, ACORNS. The author, for her part, has attempted to ensure accuracy of the information contained in this publication. No responsibility can be accepted, however, for any errors, omissions and inaccuracies that occur.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	01
SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW OF MAIN AGENCIES	03
Local Enterprise Office	05
LEADER	11
Enterprise Ireland	14
SECTION 2 - DETAILS OF SUPPORTS AVAILABLE	17
Information/Advice	19
Training	25
Mentoring	31
Finance	34
Networks	44

INTRODUCTION

Accelerating the creation of rural nascent start-ups that are led by female entrepreneurs is the objective of ACORNS. This innovative pilot programme is funded under the CEDRA 2015 Rural Innovation and Development Fund through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. ACORNS was designed, developed and implemented by Paula Fitzsimons and her team in Fitzsimons Consulting.

ACORNS sets out to provide early stage female entrepreneurs, living in rural Ireland, with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to successfully start and develop sustainable businesses.

Being an early stage entrepreneur may seem a daunting and lonely road to travel. It need not be. There is a great amount of assistance available for nascent entrepreneurs to gain the necessary skills and knowledge that they will need to develop their fledgling businesses. There are also networks available to support them on their entrepreneurial journey.

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

There are over 80 different Government supports for Irish start-ups and small businesses. There is an online guide available, which is part of the Irish Government's Supporting SMEs campaign, to increase awareness of the range of Government supports for start-ups and small businesses. Entrepreneurs are asked to answer eight questions to find out which supports could possibly fit their needs and business requirements appropriate to their stage of development. This online guide is to help Irish start-ups and small businesses navigate the range of Government supports that are available. <http://www.supportingsmes.ie/businessdetails.aspx>

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is not intended to substitute for the comprehensive online guide. Rather it has been designed to be complementary by making the female entrepreneurs, who participated on the ACORNS programme, aware of the supports available to them, in particular from the Local Enterprise Offices, LEADER Programme and Enterprise Ireland. It is intended to assist the progress made by the participants in the pilot initiative. It is hoped that this booklet will also fill an information gap for other rural entrepreneurs, who may not be aware of the range of supports available from these sources.

The booklet is arranged in two sections:

Section 1 presents an outline of the main agencies offering support to early stage businesses in rural Ireland, namely

- Local Enterprise Offices,
- LEADER,
- Enterprise Ireland.

Section 2 outlines the types of support available from these agencies and a selection of others¹ under the following headings -

- Information and Advice,
- Training,
- Mentoring,
- Finance,
- Networking.

¹ This list is not comprehensive but sets out to give a flavour of the supports available from a variety of sources.

SECTION 1

OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN AGENCIES

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the first-stop shop for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland.² The LEOs also fast track companies with clear high growth potential to the next level of support provided by Enterprise Ireland.

LEOs are staffed by professional people with business training, to assist budding entrepreneurs and existing businesses. They are located throughout the country with 31 dedicated teams across the Local Authority network. LEOs are focused on supporting those interested in starting a new business, or already in business, including first time or young entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, start-ups, micro and small businesses looking to expand. The LEOs also have a role in developing an entrepreneurial culture in their area and in encouraging people to think positively about starting and growing a business locally, in particular motivating young people to start their own business.

LOCAL HUB FOR ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

The LEO is the business connection into the Local Authority, Enterprise Ireland and all State agencies that can help grow your business. It aims to bring a more streamlined service to entrepreneurs. New protocols have been developed with key agencies to ensure that the new and established business owners will have access to all Government supports.

There are over 80 different supports available to Irish start-ups and small businesses. The Supporting SMEs online tool is available on the LEO website www.localenterprise.ie to help you navigate the range of Government supports to see which are relevant to you.

The establishment of the LEOs has meant that all categories of businesses – including sole traders, micro businesses and small and medium sized companies – have access to Government supports and advice.

LEOs are the local hub for enterprise support, delivering a comprehensive service to local entrepreneurs and businesses, including:

- Providing business information, advice, training and mentoring,
- In certain circumstances, providing financial support to micro enterprises,
- Providing an enhanced advice and guidance service to all other local and national supports by utilising agreed Protocols with other national and regional service providers, including Revenue, Department of Social Protection, Education and Training Boards, Skillnets, Microfinance Ireland and the Credit Review Office to ease access for micro and small business clients,
- Direct referral of clients to Enterprise Ireland,
- Direct referral to the Microfinance Ireland and Loan Guarantee Schemes.

Many of the LEOs run specific networks for female entrepreneurs. They also jointly organise National Women's Enterprise Day as a means of coordinating these networks in an annual national event and to celebrate the achievements of female entrepreneurs.

For information on upcoming events, clinics, training courses, workshops etc. please consult the website:

www.localenterprise.ie

² The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) replaced the City and County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) on 15 April 2014.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE 31 LEO OFFICES LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

Carlow Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Kieran Comerford
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/carlow/
Email: enterprise@carlowcoco.ie
Tel: (059) 91 29783

Address:
Enterprise House,
O'Brien Road,
Carlow

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:30 - 17:30

Cavan Local Enterprise Office

CEO: James Fox
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/cavan/
Email: localenterprise@cavancoco.ie
Tel: (049) 4377200

Address:
Cavan Innovation &
Technology Centre,
Dublin Road, Cavan

Opening Hours³
Mon - Thur:
9:15 - 17:15
Fri: 9.15 - 17.00

Clare Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Padraic McElwee
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/clare/
Email: localenterprise@clarecoco.ie
Tel: (065) 6821616

Address:
Áras Contae an Chláir,
New Road,
Ennis, Co. Clare

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Cork City Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Adrienne Rodgers
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/corkcity/
Email: info@leo.corkcity.ie
Tel: (021) 4961828

Address:
Cork City Council,
City Hall,
Cork

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Cork North & West Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Kevin Curran
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/corknorthandWest/
Email: westcork@leo.corkcoco.ie
Tel: (023) 8834700

Address:
8 Kent Street,
Clonakilty,
Co Cork

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Email: northcork@leo.corkcoco.ie

Address:
Ground Floor,
Blackwater House,
Mallow Business Park,
Gouldshill, Mallow,
Co Cork

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

³ The LEO offices are closed for lunch; closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

Cork South Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Sean O'Sullivan

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/southcork/

Email: southcork@leo.corkcoco.ie

Tel: (021) 4975281

Address:

Unit 6a, South Ring

Business Park,

Kinsale Road, Cork

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:

8:30 - 17:00

Donegal Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Michael Tunney

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/donegal/

Email: info@leo.donegalcoco.ie

Tel: (074) 9160735

LoCall: 1890 607000

Address:

Enterprise Fund

Business Centre

Ballyraine, Letterkenny

Co. Donegal

Opening Hours³

Mon - Thurs:

9:00 - 17:00

Fri: 9:00 - 15:00

Dublin City Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Greg Swift

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/dublincity/

Email: info@leo.dublincity.ie

Tel: (01) 222 5611

Address:

Civic Offices,

Block 4, Floor 1,

Dublin 8

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:

9:00 - 17:00

Dublin South Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Colm Ward

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/southdublin/

Email: info@leo.sdublincoco.ie

Tel: (01) 4149000

Address:

County Hall,

Tallaght,

Dublin 24

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:

9:00 - 17:00

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Eibhlin Curley

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/DLR/

Email: contact@leo.dlrcoco.ie

Tel: (01) 204 7083

Address:

First Floor,

1 Harbour Square

Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Opening Hours³

Mon - Thurs:

9:00 - 17:00

Fri: 9:00 - 16:30

Fingal Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Oisín Geoghegan

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/fingal/

Email: info@leo.fingal.ie

Tel: (01) 8900 800

Address:

First Floor, County Hall,

Main Street,

Swords, Co. Dublin

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:

9:00 - 17:00

Galway Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Breda Fox

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/galway/

Email: info@leo.galwaycoco.ie

Tel: (091) 509090

Address:

First Floor,

County Buildings,

Prospect Hill, Galway

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:

9:00 - 17:00

³ The LEO offices are closed for lunch; closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

Kerry Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Tomas Hayes

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/kerry/

Email: LEO@kerrycoco.ie

Tel: (066) 7183522

Address:

County Buildings,
Rathass,
Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Kildare Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Mary Foley

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/kildare/

Email: localenterprise@kildarecoco.ie

Tel: (045) 980838

Address:

Aras Chill Dara,
Devoy Park, Naas,
Co. Kildare

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Sean McKeown

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/kilkenny/

Email: info@leo.kilkennycoco.ie

Tel: (056) 7752662

Address:

42 Parliament Street,
Kilkenny City

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Laois Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Evelyn Reddin

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/laois/

Email: localenterprise@laoiscoco.ie

Tel: (056) 866 1800

Address:

Portlaoise
Enterprise Centre,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Leitrim Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Joe Lowe

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/leitrim/

Email: info@leo.leitrimcoco.ie

Tel: (071) 9650420

Address:

Aras an Chontae,
Carrick on Shannon,
Co Leitrim

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Limerick Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Eamonn Ryan

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/limerick/

Email: localenterprise@limerick.ie

Tel: (061) 407499

Address:

7/8 Patrick Street,
Limerick

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Longford Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Michael Nevin

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/longford/

Email: info@leo.longfordcoco.ie

Tel: (043) 3343346

Address:

Longford County Council,
Great Water Street,
Longford

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

³ The LEO offices are closed for lunch; closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

Louth Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Thomas McEvoy

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/louth/

Email: info@leo.louthcoco.ie

Tel: 1890 202 303

Address:

Town Hall,
Crowe St,
Dundalk, Co. Louth,

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Mayo Local Enterprise Office

CEO: John Magee

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/mayo/

Email: info@leo.mayococo.ie

Tel: (094) 904 7555

Address:

Cedar House, 2nd Floor,
Moneen, Castlebar,
Co. Mayo

Opening Hours³

Mon - Thurs:
9:00 - 17:30
Fri: 9:00 - 17:00

Meath Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Caroline Lynch

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/meath/

Email: localenterprise@meathcoco.ie

Tel: (046) 9078400

Address:

Enterprise Centre,
Trim Road, Navan,
Co Meath

Opening Hours³

Mon: 9:30 - 17:30
Tues - Fri:
9:30 - 17:00

Monaghan Local Enterprise Office

CEO: John McEntegart

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/monaghan/

Email: info@leo.monaghancoco.ie

Tel: (047) 71818

Address:

Unit 9, M:TEK Building,
Knockaconny,
Monaghan

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Offaly Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Orla Martin

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/offaly/

Email: info@leo.offalycoco.ie

Tel: (057) 9357480

Address:

Aras an Chontae,
Charleville Road,
Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Roscommon Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Louise Ward

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/roscommon/

Email: localenterprise@roscommoncoco.ie

Tel: (090) 66 26263/ 26765

Address:

Roscommon West Bus. Park
Roscommon Town
Co. Roscommon.

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Sligo Local Enterprise Office

CEO: John Reilly

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/sligo/

Email: localenterprise@sligococo.ie

Tel: (071) 91 44779

Address:

City Hall,
Quay Street,
Sligo

Opening Hours³

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

³ The LEO offices are closed for lunch; closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

Tipperary Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Rita Guinan
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/tipperary/
Email: leo@tipperarycoco.ie
Tel: (052) 6129466

Address:
Ballingarrane House,
Cahir Road,
Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Tel: (052) 6129466

Address:
Civic Offices,
Limerick road,
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Waterford Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Ciaran Cullen
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/waterford/
Email: info@leo.waterfordcouncil.ie
Tel: (0761) 102905 (City)

Address:
32 The Mall,
Waterford

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Tel: (058) 21442 (County)

Address:
Civic Offices,
Dungarvan,
Co. Waterford

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:30 - 17:00

Westmeath Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Christine Charlton
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/westmeath/
Email: localenterprise@westmeathcoco.ie
Tel: (044) 9338945

Address:
Westmeath County Council,
Áras an Chontae,
Mount Street, Mullingar,
Co Westmeath

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Wexford Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Tom Banville
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/wexford/
Email: info@leo.wexfordcoco.ie
Tel: (053) 9196020

Address:
Wexford County Council,
Carriglawn,
Wexford

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Wicklow Local Enterprise Office

CEO: Sheelagh Daly
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/wicklow/
Email: enterprise@leo.wicklowcoco.ie
Tel: (0404) 30800

Address:
Wicklow County Campus,
Clermont House,
Rathnew, Co. Wicklow.

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

³ The LEO offices are closed for lunch; closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

LEADER

The LEADER Initiative (Liaisons entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale - *Links between actions of rural development*) was established by the European Commission in 1991 and is a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in local rural communities. LEADER uses a 'bottom-up' or community led local development approach to rural development. Through the framework of local development strategies, with all funding decisions being made at a local level by Local Action Groups (LAGs), LEADER can and does make a real difference to the daily lives of people in rural areas.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Rural development is a significant component of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and is supported by funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which in turn is delivered through nationally co-financed RDPs. LEADER is specifically programmed under Priority 6: *promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas*. This acknowledges the key challenges facing Irish society following the economic downturn, with the impact of high levels of unemployment and an increase in levels of poverty and exclusion.

The Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 as a whole includes a range of both on and off farm support measures to support the sustainable development of rural Ireland. The programme, is administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government administers the LEADER element of the Programme which aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage diversification of economic activity in rural areas. It seeks to bring about positive change, helping to support and sustain rural areas for the better.

The report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) launched in 2014 identified a range of areas of particular need that could be supported through LEADER interventions. These include economic development and job creation, rural tourism, enhanced national communication initiatives to improve broadband and building community capacity, training and animation.

The Programme will facilitate a community led approach and will outline a number of themes for support that have emerged from the consultation process and from the research conducted by CEDRA. These themes will include Rural Economic Development / Enterprise Development and Job Creation including Rural Tourism, general Enterprise Development, Broadband and support for the development of Rural Towns and social inclusion through building community capacity, training and animation, and support for the environment in rural areas.

It is expected that LEADER will fund projects under the following themes:

LEADER Theme	Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation	Social Inclusion	Rural Environment
Leader Sub Theme	Rural Tourism	Basic Services targeted at hard to reach communities	Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources
Leader Sub Theme	Enterprise Development	Rural Youth	Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity
Leader Sub Theme	Rural Towns		Development of Renewable Energy
Leader Sub Theme	Access to Broadband		

The Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 is open to men and women equally. In this context, equality has been and will continue to be promoted. Actions supported under the Enterprise Development sub-theme may include sector-specific training programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, social enterprises, start-ups and established businesses.

GRANT RATES

It is expected that grant aid will be provided at a rate of up to 50% for private promoters and up to 75% for community organisations. Training activities may be funded up to 100%. Benefit in kind may also be used.

AREAS COVERED

In the overall draft Rural Development Programme for Ireland the five main cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick have been excluded. After that it will be a matter for the Local Development Strategies to determine the area to be covered within the sub-regional area.

COMMUNITY LED APPROACH

As a community led local development (CLLD) approach, LEADER is a methodology that places the rural community at its centre. Groups of people representing defined geographical areas called Local Action Groups are charged with identifying and determining where the challenges to development lie and what initiatives are required in order to address these challenges in their own communities. Through Local Development Strategies, Local Action Groups seek to facilitate participation by all parties who wish to contribute to this process, thus ensuring that the Local Development Strategies are as representative of the community view as possible.

Local Action Groups are made up of public and private partners from the defined geographical areas and include representatives from different sectors of the local economy/ community (community, business, environmental, and youth among others).

A list of the Local Action Groups is available on <http://www.environ.ie/community/rural-development/leader/eu-rural-development>

It is important to note that the process of the selection of Local Development Strategies to support the delivery of the LEADER elements of the rural development programme 2014-2020 has not yet been concluded. **The website link will be updated as decisions are made in this regard. This is expected to be from May 2016 and onwards.**

The Programme will be administered by Local Action Groups throughout the country. These are responsible for selecting and approving projects in their respective areas. It should be noted that LEADER is delivered through the medium of Local Development Strategies and that specific projects funded will depend on the individual needs and objectives identified in the area's approved Local Development Strategy. **The Department has no role in selecting what projects are funded. Its role is to ensure that the Local Action Groups adhere to the Programme's operating rules.**

Complementary approach

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) have primary responsibility for micro-enterprise in Ireland. Accordingly, LEADER will complement rather than compete with LEO activity at local level. Effective systems of collaboration and consultation are being put in place to ensure a co-ordinated and effective allocation of resources.

Further Information

<http://www.environ.ie/community/rural-development/leader/eu-rural-development>

A basic guide to the LEADER approach

http://www.environ.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/leader_factsheet.pdf

European Commission DG Agri

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en.htm

For further information please contact:

Rural Development Section

Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

Government Offices

Ballina, Co. Mayo

Email: rdp1420@environ.ie • **Tel:** 096-24200

www.environ.ie

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. To this end, EI works in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and win export sales on global markets. Thereby EI supports sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment.

EI provides funding and supports for companies - from entrepreneurs with business propositions for a high potential start-up through to large companies expanding their activities, improving efficiency and growing international sales. EI also provides funding and supports for college based researchers to assist in the development, protection and transfer of technologies into industry via licensing or spin-out companies.

Start-ups with high potential and international focus

In terms of early stage businesses, Enterprise Ireland is specifically focused on high potential and internationally focused business (HPSUs).

HPSUs are start-up businesses with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale on international markets and the potential to create at least 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 to 4 years of starting up.

EI clients are assigned a Development Adviser (DA) according to stage of development and sector. DAs are available to

- Discuss the development needs of the business.
- Provide impartial and confidential advice to the entrepreneur on their business plans.
- Provide information on the wide range of financial and business development supports available from EI.
- Guide the entrepreneur through the application process for relevant supports.
- Make the entrepreneur aware of sectorial events and networks of relevance to their business.

Support for Female Entrepreneurs

In 2012 businesses headed by women accounted for just seven percent of the new high potential start-up businesses in which Enterprise Ireland invested.

With a clear objective of addressing this imbalance and supporting more female entrepreneurs, the Female Entrepreneurship Unit was established within EI to support ambitious women grow scalable businesses and to address the key challenges impacting on the growth of female led business opportunities. A manager was appointed with responsibility for female entrepreneurs and a target was set to double the percentage of innovative new client businesses with significant growth potential that were led by women.

Research was carried out to identify the main challenges faced by female entrepreneurs so that measures could be put in place to tackle the barriers identified. These included lack of role models, less access to finance and lower levels of risk taking, low self-confidence, a shortage of female networking opportunities and a lack of technical expertise.

A range of initiatives were put in place to respond to the identified needs - dedicated competitive funds to support female led businesses teams, including a female-only Competitive Start Fund and a female-only Feasibility Fund.⁴ Identification and promotion of role models and

⁴ There will be two female only calls in 2016. Non gender specific calls are made throughout the year and both men and women may apply for these. Female entrepreneurs do not have to wait until a female only call is issued.

sponsorship of events and awards have become an integral part of the Unit's activities, as has supporting existing and new networks and the creation of a dedicated ambitious women section on Enterprise Ireland's corporate website.⁵

EI has also developed and facilitated a web-based networking programme for their women clients. It was launched in 2014. In addition Enterprise Ireland has co-funded four development programmes, which are focused on optimising the business capabilities for women led businesses. Included among these is Going for Growth, now in its eighth cycle.

Results have indicated that female targeted initiatives have had a positive impact. In 2015, 21% of the businesses in which EI invested were run by women. This is more than double the 2012 figure.

The Manager for Female Entrepreneurship in Enterprise Ireland is Sarita Johnston. If you believe that your new business has significant growth potential and that you will develop customers in export markets, Sarita is happy to answer any queries that you may have. She may be contacted at Sarita.Johnston@enterprise-ireland.com.

Alternatively, if you have completed a business plan or an outline business proposition, you may send it to the start-up desk appropriate to the location of your new business.

YOUR LOCATION	EMAIL
Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow	HPSUenquiries@enterprise-ireland.com
Westmeath, Offaly, Longford, Laois	mark.atterbury@enterprise-ireland.com denis.duggan@enterprise-ireland.com
Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary South	brian.fives@enterprise-ireland.com jacqui.norton@enterprise-ireland.com ciara.concannon@enterprise-ireland.com
Clare, Limerick, Tipperary North, Kerry	catherine.hogan@enterprise-ireland.com harriet.cotter@enterprise-ireland.com mary.rogers@enterprise-ireland.com
Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	westenterprise@enterprise-ireland.com
Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo	startup.borderregion@enterprise-ireland.com

If your new business is not eligible for Enterprise Ireland HPSU support, you may qualify for funding and supports from your Local Enterprise Office. With 31 dedicated teams across the Local Authority network in Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices offer a first-stop shop for entrepreneurs and small businesses with 10 employees or less. They can provide advice, mentoring and funding, including feasibility funding, to eligible start-ups.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

⁵ <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Startups%20led%20by%20Ambitious%20Women/>

SECTION 2

DETAILS OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

INFORMATION/ADVICE

INTRODUCTION

The paragraphs that follow describe sources of information and advice available to early stage entrepreneurs. The sequence of agencies/organisations in this and the following sections is Local Enterprise Office, LEADER, Enterprise Ireland and a selection of other relevant sources in alpha order.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Office (LEOs) will provide advice, information and support on starting or growing a business. They are located throughout the country with 31 dedicated teams across the Local Authority network.

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) acts as a first-stop shop through which all information on State supports can be accessed, for anyone interested in starting up or growing a business in Ireland. Business information/advice is available to entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, start-ups and small businesses.

www.localenterprise.ie

LEADER

Local Action Groups will play a key role in supporting local communities and entrepreneurs to develop new business ideas and to enhance existing enterprises.

Information will be provided at local level on the range of supports available under the LEADER programme. They will include enterprise training courses, advice and provision of LEADER grant aid for micro-enterprise and networks and networking events.

The Local Action Groups will provide advice and information on a project's eligibility under the LEADER programme. They are located in each county throughout the Republic of Ireland.⁶ Any community group or individual project promoter interested in pursuing funding under LEADER should contact their Local Action Group for advice and guidance on the application process.⁷

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

In terms of new business, Enterprise Ireland (EI) is focused on those businesses, which are considered to have potential to grow significantly and are internationally focused. These are referred to as High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs).

⁶ In view of the size of the Cork County Council area, there will be three sub-regional areas for County Cork, which will mean 28 sub-regional areas in Ireland for LEADER purposes.

⁷ A list of the Local Action Groups is available on <http://www.environ.ie/community/rural-development/leader/eu-rural-development>. It is important to note that the process of the selection of Local Development Strategies, to support the delivery of the LEADER elements of the rural development programme 2014-2020, has not yet been concluded. **The website link will be updated as decisions are made in this regard. This is expected to be from May 2016 and onwards.** After this time, they will be available to provide information and advice.

EI's HPSU team provides hands-on support and advice to entrepreneurs and early stage companies that are considered by the agency to meet the HPSU criteria.⁸

EI's Information Store for Start-ups, which is available on the website, provides general information and links for start-ups including business plan templates, registration and employment information, as well as incubation space and sources of private investment.⁹

EI's support for early stage start-up business focuses on refining the business proposition and developing the strategy, product, team and market/customer channels with a view to getting the business to an investor ready stage.

- **Start-up Adviser**

A start-up adviser is available to speak to you in confidence and to review and discuss your plans. They will advise you on how best to progress your proposition and identify where your business will best be supported to develop to an investor ready stage.

- **Enterprise START Workshops**

Enterprise Ireland also holds a number of entrepreneurial workshops throughout the country - Enterprise START - which help early stage promoters understand and evaluate the entrepreneurship process and what it involves. Each workshop is targeted at individuals with a business idea that has the potential to be scaled up significantly within three years and be export driven.

For entrepreneurs who require further assistance to develop their business proposition, Enterprise Ireland, in conjunction with the four **Business Innovation Centres** (BICs) in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Waterford, has developed the EnterpriseSTART 2 programme. It is designed to help entrepreneurs and early stage companies that have a business proposition but need to develop it to a point where it can be considered by Enterprise Ireland as a HPSU.

Success in export markets is crucial to the long-term growth of Irish businesses and the Irish economy. Support for companies focused on growth through international sales is a priority for EI, which is committed to facilitating the development of a strong exporting sector by offering flexible solutions to client needs. An Export Start Guide, developed by Enterprise Ireland, Chartered Accountants Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland, can be also downloaded from their website.¹⁰

EI also makes available to client companies their Market Research Centre,¹¹ their International Office Network and the opportunity to take part in organised Trade Missions.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

⁸ High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) is defined as a start-up venture that is:

- Introducing a new or innovative product or service to international markets.
- Involved in manufacturing or internationally traded services.
- Capable of creating 10 jobs in Ireland and realising €1 million in sales within three to four years of starting up.
- Led by an experienced management team.
- Headquartered and controlled in Ireland.
- Less than five years old from the date of your company's registration.

⁹ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Information-Store-for-Start-ups/>

¹⁰ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Publications/Export-Start-Guide.pdf>

¹¹ EI's Market Research Centre can provide access to the business intelligence an early stage exporting company needs to explore opportunities and compete in international markets. More information is available on the website: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Export-Assistance/Market-Research-Centre/Market-Research-Centre.html>

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

BORD BIA

Bord Bia has a range of programmes and supports for those thinking of starting a new business in the food or drink manufacturing area.

- **Bord Bia Vantage**

Bord Bia Vantage is particularly useful. It is an online resource centre for small food businesses. It is focused on supporting entrepreneurs looking to start a food business, looking for finance, developing a new product, looking for a distributor, and/or exporting for the first time.
www.bordbiavantage.ie

www.bordbia.ie

BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTRES (BICS)

The Business Innovation Centres are public-private business support organisations. They work with state agencies and private sector investors to support entrepreneurs as they build the next generation of successful Irish businesses.

The BICs provide high quality specialised business consultancy and active incubation. Each BIC team works closely in collaboration with other local, regional, national enterprise support agencies and has strong international connections, particularly in Europe, through its membership of the European BIC Network (EBN).

The BICs advise companies on business planning and development; provide incubation space; and create platforms for entrepreneurs to develop their skills and networks.

BICs located outside Dublin include the following:

- Cork Business Innovation Centre – ***www.corkbic.com***
- SEBIC South East Business innovation Centre ***www.southeastbic.ie***
- West Business Innovation Centre ***www.westbic.ie***

INTERTRADEIRELAND

InterTradeIreland provides practical cross-border business funding, business intelligence and meaningful contacts to SMEs across the island, North and South, looking to grow their businesses.

InterTradeIreland has a variety of supports in place from working with businesses to increase their cross-border sales, to support with innovation and new product or service development, to advice with tendering into the public procurement market.

For an early stage business looking for Seed Funding, Business Angel Investment or Venture Capital Funding, InterTradeIreland can also help with support, guidance and advice.

To date over 31,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradeIreland and have capitalised on the extraordinary possibilities that exist right here on the island of Ireland, where cross-border trade exceeds £2bn/ €2.8bn annually.

www.intertradeireland.com

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

Taking Care of Business is a new wide ranging initiative being undertaken by the Health & Safety Authority to support & assist small business to deal with health and safety in their workplaces.

As part of the Taking Care of Business initiative for small business, the Authority has launched **BeSMART.ie** a free, easy to use, online resource which will allow you to carry out risk assessments and develop a safety statement for free for your business.

www.hsa.ie

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

The Office of Government Procurement centralises public sector procurement arrangements for common goods and services. The office manages the eTenders website, which displays all Irish public sector procurement opportunities currently being advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union and other lower-value contracts.

www.procurement.ie

OFFICE OF THE REVENUE COMMISSIONERS

There is detailed information for those starting a business on the website of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners¹² as well as details of the tax reliefs, deductions and exemptions in place that contribute towards the creation of jobs and the range of supports, reliefs and incentives available for small, medium and start-up businesses.¹³

Before registering for tax purposes

- A self-employed individual must have a PPS number (personal public service number) (i.e. social security number) obtainable only from the Department of Social Protection.¹⁴
- A Company must be incorporated in the Companies Registration Office.

The Revenue online service (ROS) is the method by which the Office of the Revenue Commissioners delivers its services electronically to individuals/businesses.¹⁵ Service providers can register for ROS, which facilitates the filing of online annual tax returns, payment of taxes and allows their tax details to be accessed online. ROS also allows service providers to make periodic returns and payments for VAT and the PAYE/Universal social contribution for any employees they might have.

www.revenue.ie

¹² <http://www.revenue.ie/en/business/running/registering-tax.html>

¹³ <http://www.revenue.ie/en/business/running/initiatives-smes.html>

¹⁴ www.welfare.ie

¹⁵ www.ros.ie

REGULATIONS FOR BUSINESSES

The purpose of this portal is to assist in identifying the main regulations which affect a business and to provide links to the relevant agencies and their guidance, tools and contact points. There is a specific area on this website which is designed to provide the basic information for those wishing to start a business.¹⁶

Two recent government-led initiatives designed to assist entrepreneurs are also now available online: SURE is a tax refund calculator for potential entrepreneurs¹⁷ and the Supporting SMEs Online Guide is an interactive guide that lists cross-government supports for businesses.¹⁸

www.businessregulation.ie

TEAGASC

Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities.

For early stage food entrepreneurs, Teagasc provides the following:¹⁹

- **Technical information in new food product development and food standards**

The Teagasc Food Research Centres in Moorepark, Fermoy, Co Cork and Ashtown, Dublin 15, provide an Information Service to help meet the continuous need of food companies for reliable information. The service aims to address the technical, marketing and practical questions that can arise for the food industry. Topics include food safety issues, new developments or trends, new technologies, food marketing and food legislation. Access can be provided to external databases and other information sources, including the extensive research programme of Teagasc and national and international scientific linkages.

- **Access to product development kitchens and pilot scale food production**

Food processing facilities and the expertise of scientists and technologists at Ashtown and at Moorepark are available to support potential entrepreneurs and established companies wishing to develop innovative food products. Expertise and facilities between both locations cover the complete range of food types - from dairy products and meat products, through fruit and vegetable products, beverages, to soups, sauces and ready meals. Services include access to R&D facilities and expertise, food preparation kitchens and product testing, such as microbiological, chemical and sensory analysis.

Teagasc's food research centres are Knowledge Providers for Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Voucher Scheme. This scheme awards vouchers of €5,000 to small companies who have a business opportunity or problem. The voucher can be exchanged for advice and expertise.

www.teagasc.ie

¹⁶ <http://www.businessregulation.ie/Start-ups/>

¹⁷ <http://www.sure.gov.ie/>

¹⁸ <http://www.supportingsmes.ie/businessdetails.aspx>

¹⁹ Further information is available from the website www.teagasc.ie in the first instance or by contacting eddie.oneill@teagasc.ie or pat.daly@teagasc.ie.

ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations.

The authority endeavours to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community based activities

Údarás na Gaeltachta encourages investment in the Gaeltacht through a range of generous financial and non-financial incentives for new and existing enterprises in the Gaeltacht. The organisation supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development. Gaeltacht companies span a range of commercial sectors, including life sciences, ICT, tourism, fish processing and aquaculture, renewable energy, food, niche manufacturing, audio visual and digital media, arts and crafts. The following are among its non-financial supports:

- Business Premises: ready-to-occupy factories and offices are available,
- Help in the recruitment and training of staff,
- Advice from experienced business advisers.

TRAINING

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

There are a variety of training courses provided by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEO). The following are a sample of the types of courses available from the LEOs. **Please note, however, that not all the courses mentioned are available from all LEOs, so check with the LEO in your county to see exactly what courses are available and when.**²⁰

- **Start Your Own Business Course**

Start Your Own Business Courses are well recognised as providing an excellent first step in getting an early stage entrepreneur from concept through business plan to implementation. These are generic courses and the elements covered in the programme apply to all start-up businesses.

The Start Your Own Business Course is particularly focused on those with a business idea. They are likely to be still in full-time employment, are unemployed or have recently been made redundant. This also applies to women returning to the workforce and unsure as to how to develop their idea into a business plan. The objective is to assist you in assessing your idea, its viability and to decide if you should proceed or take a step back.

- **The Food Academy**

More recently developed, this training programme is proving highly successful and is of specific interest to those who are starting a food or drink production business. The Food Academy training programme provides integrated support and training to support early stage businesses as they progress on their journey of growth from start-up to national distribution and export. The programme runs for four months and has been developed through collaboration between Bord Bia, SuperValu and the LEOs. Please note, however, that not all of those who apply will be accepted on to this programme.

- **Accelerate**

The Accelerate Management Development programme provides the owner manager with the management, leadership, skills and knowledge to achieve sustainability and growth in their business. This integrated learning and mentor programme is designed to make an impact on the owner manager and their business. To be eligible to participate, your business must be up and running for a minimum of 18 months

Besides these specific training courses, business advice clinics, specific training in key functional areas, mentoring, financial support, networking and enterprise education, are just some of the services available to those thinking of starting a small business or are in the early stages of developing a business.

www.localenterprise.ie

²⁰ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Find-Your-Local-Enterprise-Office/>

LEADER

Local Action Groups will play a key role in supporting local communities and entrepreneurs to develop new business ideas and to enhance existing enterprises.

Under **the Enterprise Development** sub theme, LEADER can support micro, small and medium enterprises. Potential sectors identified for future enterprise development and LEADER funding include the following:

- Artisan and other food businesses,
- Renewable Energy,
- Marine diversification,
- Social Enterprises and,
- Creative Industries.

Actions supported under this sub-theme may include sector-specific training programmes, among other supports, for aspiring entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, social enterprises, start-ups and established SMEs. In the context of RDP Priority 6, the development of inclusive models of business support is an important tool to realise the potential of groups who are underrepresented in enterprise, including women, young people and people with a disability.

Enterprise training courses will be provided appropriate to the needs at local level as identified by Local Action Groups. Possible areas include courses in starting your own business, online strategy and social media.

LEADER can provide training and skills development at a rate of 100%, so there will be no matching funding requirements on the part of the trainee. The type of training will need to address enterprise and community development needs. This measure is not a mechanism to simply fund courses already provided: applicants will need to show that the course addresses needs in a new and innovative manner.

www.environ.ie

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

Enterprise Ireland (EI) supports potential HPSU entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas, who are planning to establish and run their own company, with significant employment and export potential.

- **New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme**

If your business proposition appears to have HPSU potential but is at an early stage of development, you may be referred to a start-up development programme or business accelerator, such as the New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme. New Frontiers is run in partnership with the Institutes of Technology and is funded by Enterprise Ireland. It is designed to give support to entrepreneurs to move their business proposition to an investor ready stage. A range of supports including mentoring, incubation space and a €15,000 scholarship payment is provided to help accelerate the development of the business and to equip the promoter(s) with the skills and contacts needed to successfully start and grow a company. No equity is taken.²¹

Ensuring that business women realise their full business potential is a major priority for Enterprise Ireland. As part of its strategy to increase the number of women led businesses that achieve significant scale, EI has supported a number of key specifically tailored development programmes

²¹ www.newfrontiers.ie

to support ambitious women optimise their business success, through its **Businesswomen 4 International Growth** initiative.²²

Three of the initiatives are accelerators for early stage female led business and were designed in response to the call from EI for such initiatives.

- **DCU Ryan Academy Female High Fliers**²³

The Female High Fliers Programme is an accelerator for female led start-ups which specifically addresses the challenges facing female entrepreneurs. This programme fast tracks female entrepreneurs, their leadership skills and their businesses. It includes a comprehensive programme of workshops, bespoke mentoring and excellent networking opportunities. All participants need to be prepared to work intensively on their business during the 13 week programme (1 day per week), which ends with a Demo Day at which each company pitches to a network of investors, mentors and corporates.

- **Exxcel STEM Programme, run by CIT Rubicon**²⁴

Exxcel is a part time programme designed for females who have a business idea with high growth and export potential. Ideas can include ventures that are Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) related. Training is on one Saturday per month over a six month period followed by intensive mentoring.

- **NDRC Female Founders**²⁵

NDRC Female Founders has recently partnered with Enterprise Ireland's Competitive Start Fund. It has been designed to support ambitious female entrepreneurs to take their idea, validate its potential, craft a scalable business model and connect with follow on investors to build the next generation of Irish HPSUs. The partnership with EI's Competitive Start Fund makes available an investment of €50,000 from EI to successful participants for 10% equity and €5,000 from NDRC for 1% equity. Also included is participation on the accelerator programme combined with access to an extensive network of investors, mentors and fellow entrepreneurs.

The fourth initiative, supported by EI, has been successfully implemented since 2009.

- **Going for Growth**²⁶

Going for Growth is designed to support women who are serious about growing their businesses. The initiative is based on interactive roundtable sessions that are facilitated, not by consultants, academics or professional trainers, but by successful female entrepreneurs. The main focus of Going for Growth is a female owner manager of a business which has been trading for at least two years. If an applicant has been trading for less than two years and wishes to be considered on an exceptional basis, she must demonstrate a longer development cycle than the norm, that the new business is highly innovative and that her growth ambitions are very significant. If successful, she will be placed with other early stage entrepreneurs at a dedicated Starting Strong table. Selection is on a competitive basis.

EI is committed to assisting companies to strengthen their export selling capabilities and offers customised sales training and access to experts to bolster and develop the international selling

²² <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Startups%20led%20by%20Ambitious%20Women/>

²³ <http://www.ryanacademy.ie/what-we-do/>

²⁴ <http://www.rubiconcentre.ie/female-entrepreneurship/>

²⁵ <http://www.ndrc.ie/female-founders/>

²⁶ <http://www.goingforgrowth.com/>

skills of client companies. Included in their **Export Events, Workshops and Programmes** are the following:

- **Excel at Export Selling**,²⁷
- **Get Export Ready**,²⁸ and
- **First Flight**.²⁹

www.enterprise-ireland.com

OTHER SOURCES OF TRAINING

BORD BIA

Bord Bia has a range of programmes and supports for those thinking of starting a new business in the food or drink manufacturing sector. Two that are particularly pertinent are the following:

- **Food Academy**
Whether you are considering starting a food business or are in the early stages, you might be interested in the Food Academy, which is run in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and SuperValu.³⁰
- **Food Works**
Entrepreneurs with ambitious export targets might be interested in the Food Works programme that is run in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland and Teagasc. This programme starts in April each year and provides a structure to explore your idea and develop it to a business plan designed to secure external investment.³¹

www.bordbia.ie

BORD IASCAIGH MHARA (BIM)

BIM supports the growth of the Irish seafood industry, with a focus on increasing profitability and employment in the sector. To this end, assistance is provided to seafood companies through a variety of commercial services. BIM's business development advisers can assist with product development, improving the efficiency of your processes, adding value through product labelling and setting up food safety systems. BIM's regional officers, located around the coast, provide hands on professional mentoring in business planning, identifying new market opportunities and branding, as well as advice on funding—all of which enable companies to grow more rapidly than they could alone.

²⁷ Upcoming workshops may be found on this link: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Events/OurEvents/Excel-at-Export-Selling-Series-/Excel-at-Export-Selling-workshop-series.html>

²⁸ These short (typically two-hour duration) workshops are run regularly in a number of locations around Ireland and are aimed at companies thinking of exporting for the first time. The list of forthcoming workshops, when arranged, may be found on the following link: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Events/OurEvents/Export-Workshops/Export-Workshops.html>

²⁹ The First Flight Programme is designed to assist companies seeking to export for the first time. It is also of benefit to companies that are currently exporting and planning to target and sell into new markets. Companies attend a short introductory workshop and are matched to an experienced business mentor, who will advise and guide them on developing their export strategy and export development plan. More information is available on this link: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Export-Assistance/Get-Export-Ready/Export-workshops-and-support-programmes/>

³⁰ www.bordbiavantage.ie/business-development/irish-retail-programme-2/food-academy

³¹ www.foodworksireland.ie

BIM's regional officers can direct those interested to their range of services, which include the following:

- **Business Development**
'Ireland Seafood' seeks partnerships with international food companies to collaborate and enable profitable access to new markets, customers and consumers.
- **Process efficiency**
BIM's processing efficiency services can help your business increase its competitiveness and improve its revenue through more effective and efficient processes that save time, money and effort.
- **Process capability**
BIM's process capability services are designed to assist seafood processors to set up food safety systems and to comply with food safety laws, certification programme standards and best practice recommendations.
- **Retail & food service support**
BIM assists the retail and food service sectors to increase seafood sales through improved product quality. BIM also provides access to specialist knowledge of seafood handling, labelling, presentation, supply chain and cold chain management.
- **Seafood Development Centre**
The Seafood Development Centre fosters innovation and assists seafood businesses to develop new products and processes.³²

www.bim.ie

DESIGN AND CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

Whether you're starting or growing a design and craft enterprise the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) has a range of training and programmes to help its registered members. The programmes of support are made available under three broad headings *Innovation & Development Programmes*, *Market Development Programmes*, and *Education Training & Development Programmes*. The following are just a few examples of what is available.³³

- **Building Craft and Design Enterprise Programme**
This is a premium package of support tailored for designer-makers to boost their product in the marketplace through a series of design-led workshops. During the programme participants undertake market research, engage in design-focused workshops and learn about branding, costing, promotion and strategies to expand existing market channels.
- **Enterprise Development Workshops**
Enterprise Development Workshops cover topics that have been identified by DCCoI as relevant to the ongoing development of design/craft enterprises. These workshops are organised by DCCoI, often in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), and are advertised on specified dates and times in various locations throughout Ireland.
- **FUSE**
Fuse is a series of experimental clinics to develop the design and innovation capabilities of the design/craft sector. The clinics have a number of elements that address product innovation

³² <http://www.bim.ie/our-services/seafood-development-centre/>

³³ <http://www.dccoi.ie/craftspeople/overview-of-all-programmes-for-craftspeople/>

and explore the potential to access new markets. Previous events have included one-to-one clinics with experts and product design challenges.

- **Smart Exporter Programme**

DCCol in partnership with the LEOs are delivering an accelerated Smart Exporter Programme to bring together a group of like-minded design & craft businesses who have already begun the export journey and are committed to export development.

www.dccoi.ie

FÁILTE IRELAND

Fáilte Ireland has signed a formal agreement with Enterprise Ireland, whereby all tourism businesses can now avail of the supports and services offered by Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) nationwide.³⁴ LEOs will now support tourism start-ups in the same way as they support all other sectors. The supports available will range from one-to-one meetings, guidance on business planning or advice on sourcing finance to attending the 'Start Your Own Business Programme'.

www.failteireland.ie

TEAGASC

Teagasc Food Research Centres are located at Moorepark, Fermoy, Co Cork and Ashtown, Dublin 15. The centres are well equipped and between them have research and analytical laboratories, pilot plants for meat slaughtering and for prepared consumer products, test kitchen, test bakery, sensory evaluation unit and nursery units for start-up food businesses. A new state of the art training conference centre has been completed. The centre provides specialist technical training courses and seminars in all aspects of food quality and safety with a view to assisting food business to meet legal obligations, customer requirements and industry best practice.³⁵

Teagasc also runs Rural Business Start-up courses which are targeted primarily at farmers participating in the Options for Farm Families Programme, who wish to start a small business.

The aims and objectives of Rural Business Start-up Courses are:

- To give individuals a good understanding of all aspects of business planning and help turn their ideas into viable businesses;
- To challenge participants to complete a business plan and gain FETAC Accreditation
- To mentor individuals on their business proposal; and
- To introduce individuals to other agencies/parties who may be able to offer tangible assistance for their specific project.

It is the intention that as a result of the training and mentoring that the participants will be better prepared for their encounters with other agencies and also with financial institutions.

www.teagasc.ie

³⁴ See more at: <http://www.failteireland.ie/Supports/Local-Enterprise-Office-Supports.aspx#sthash.nqTNyTwR.dpuf>

³⁵ Further information is available from the website www.teagasc.ie in the first instance or by contacting eddie.oneill@teagasc.ie or pat.daly@teagasc.ie,

MENTORING

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Mentor Programme run by the LEOs is designed to match the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business people with the small business owner/manager who needs practical and strategic one to one advice and guidance. The mentor will work with the entrepreneur on a regular basis and can contribute independent advice based on their experience.

All applications for mentor assistance are dealt with individually and are preceded by a business needs analysis to assess the key need of the business which needs to be addressed.

The Mentor Programme is open to both new and existing businesses. Those interested should approach the LEO in their area to discuss further. In some instances, if you are unsure as to what specific area(s) you need assistance in, many of the LEOs have **Business Advice Clinics** and these may be the best first step. Many of those who choose to seek advice in a Business Advice Clinic in the first instance are often then referred to the Mentor Programme at a later stage.

The role of mentor is as follows:

- Listen,
- Advise and provide direction,
- Help the promoter identify problems and suggest areas for improvement,
- Discuss solutions and innovative ways of improving business activity,
- Help with the decision making process,
- Share experience and knowledge,
- Provide structure and context for discussion,
- Offer assistance in compiling a business plan.

It is important to note that a mentor is not a professional consultant and, under the terms of the programme, may not become actively involved in the day-to-day management or assume the role of executive in the company.

www.localenterprise.ie

LEADER

Local Action Groups will play a key role in supporting local communities and entrepreneurs to develop new business ideas and to enhance existing enterprises. In line with their approved Local Development Strategies, they will seek to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship through animation, including support for underrepresented groups, including women. To this end, one to one mentoring will be provided, among other supports, for key sectors and individual enterprises, with a view to maximising their potential for growth and sustainability.

www.environ.ie

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

EI's Mentor Network was established to help companies identify and overcome obstacles to growth. Mentors in the network can provide tailored advice, guidance and support, to help them accelerate growth and build management capability. Early stage entrepreneurs in manufacturing or internationally traded services who have been accepted as HPSU clients, or who are considered to have the potential to become clients, are eligible to apply for this support.

Mentors are senior executives, drawn from the private sector, with a proven track record in business. They act as a confidential sounding board, advising your company on key operational and strategic issues.

The Network is regularly refreshed with CEOs and senior executives with high levels of achievement and with proven skills in marketing, strategic development, organisation development, R&D, funding and first-time exporting across the software, services, life sciences, environment, food and consumer products sectors.

Companies approved for a mentor assignment are presented with a shortlist of experienced suitable mentors. The final choice of mentor is the company's. The mentor can be changed during the course of the assignment in line with company needs. For example, initially your company may require marketing and sales advice. This may change to production or financial advice during the course of the assignment and EI's mentor programme can cater for this requirement.

A mentoring assignment consists of 5-10 visits from a mentor over a 6-12 month period. Companies choose a Mentor from a shortlist of mentors with the experience to meet their stated needs. The goals and objectives are established by the client in agreement with the Mentor at the start of the assignment. All mentors sign a strict confidentiality agreement with Enterprise Ireland.

Grant support towards the costs of a mentor for up to 10 sessions; maximum eligible cost is €175 per visit (total €1,750). The company is required to authorise Enterprise Ireland to pay the per visit fees directly to the Mentor on its behalf.

All Enterprise Ireland services, advice, programmes and financial supports are made available to clients either through the GET EXPORT READY Helpdesk or via an assigned Development Adviser.³⁶

www.enterprise-ireland.com

³⁶ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Our-People/DA%20Finder/>

OTHER SOURCES OF MENTORS

Many of the training programmes listed in the training section of this booklet also provide an opportunity to have the support of a mentor, while participating in the training provided.

DESIGN AND CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) are continually updating and expanding their Mentor Panel in order to develop a diverse and talented pool of experts who can provide support to the craft and design community. The mentors are based in Ireland and internationally. Their expertise is called upon to provide masterclasses, 1-2-1 sessions or to speak as part of professional development seminars.

DCCoI are committed to providing ongoing developmental supports for their registered client enterprises. The 1-2-1 mentoring programme, for example, is designed to address specific issues, areas of expertise, or advice client companies may require in order to grow and develop their craft enterprise.

There are three distinct mentoring panels:

- Craft mentors with specific expertise in a range of disciplines are available to provide technical advice
- Business mentors, in association with the Local Enterprise Offices, provide a full range of business supports available in local areas.
- Design mentors to assist with product design, production, innovation and new technologies.³⁷

In order to apply for mentoring you must be a registered client of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland. Before making an application you are encouraged to explore the BUSINESS section and the IDEAS section of the DCCoI website to see if the type of advice you need is available online.

www.dccoi.ie

³⁷ To view the current DCCoI mentoring panel visit: <http://www.ccoienterprise.ie/support/category/mentoring>

FINANCE

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) has a range of financial supports that are available to manufacturing and internationally trading businesses. These are available to eligible businesses from the very earliest stages through their development and growth. The detailed criteria for eligibility is set out on the website.³⁸

- **Feasibility Study Grant**

Feasibility Study Grants are designed to assist the promoter with researching market demand for a product or service and examining its sustainability. It includes assistance with innovation including specific consultancy requirements, hiring of expertise from third level colleges, private specialists, and design and developing any prototype required.

The maximum Feasibility Grant payable for businesses in the South and East Region are up to 50% of the investment required or €15,000, whichever the lesser amount is. The maximum Feasibility Grant payable for the Border, Midlands and West Region is up to 60% of the investment required or €15,000, whichever is the lesser.

Expenditure may be considered under the following headings:

- Market Research,
- Consultancy Costs,
- Technical Development/Prototype/Innovation,
- Salary/Own Labour Research,
- Miscellaneous Costs.

- **A Priming Grant**

A Priming Grant is a business start-up grant, available to micro enterprises within the first eighteen months of start-up. Priming grants may be available for sole traders, partnerships or limited companies that fulfil the following criteria:

- Located and operating within the LEO's geographic area,
- A business which on growth will fit the Enterprise Ireland portfolio,
- A business employing up to 10 employees,
- A manufacturing or internationally traded services business,
- A domestically traded service business with the potential to trade internationally,
- Need for money and having regard to deadweight and displacement.

Eligible clients may be awarded a Priming Grant within the first eighteen months of setting up the business. The maximum Priming Grant payable shall be 50% of the investment or €150,000 whichever is the lesser.

Expenditure may be considered under the following headings:

- Capital items,
- Salary costs,
- Consultancy/Innovation/Marketing costs,
- General overhead costs.

³⁸ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Eligibility-Criteria/Eligibility-Criteria.html>

- **A Business Expansion Grant**

The Business Expansion Grant is designed to assist the business in its growth phase after the initial 18 month start-up period. Business Expansion Grants may be awarded to sole traders, partnerships or limited companies that fulfil the following criteria:

- Located and operating within the LEO geographic area,
- A business, which, on growth, will have the capacity to progress to the Enterprise Ireland portfolio,
- A business employing up to 10 employees,
- A manufacturing or internationally traded service business,
- A domestically traded service business with the potential to trade internationally.

The maximum Business Expansion Grant payable shall be 50% of the investment or €150,000 whichever is the lesser.

Expenditure may be considered under the following headings:

- Capital items,
- Salary cost,
- Consultancy/Innovation/Marketing costs,
- General overhead costs.

In respect of both Priming and Business Expansion, grants over €80,000 and up to €150,000 shall be the exception and shall only apply in the case of projects that clearly demonstrate a potential to graduate to Enterprise Ireland and/or to export internationally. In all other cases, the maximum grant shall be 50% of the investment or €80,000 whichever is the lesser. Subject to the 50% limit, a maximum grant of €15,000 per full time job created shall apply in respect of any employment support granted.

All grants of a value greater than or equal to €40,000 or with a cumulative value of €80,000 over three years require Enterprise Ireland approval.

A business that had availed of a Priming Grant will be ineligible to apply for a Business Expansion grant until 12 months after approval/drawdown date of the Priming Grant, whichever is the later, except in cases of exceptional merit and where less than the maximum Priming Grant was drawn down, and subject to the provisions in respect of 'De Minimus state aid'.

- **Trading Online Voucher Scheme**

With the trend increasing towards online spending, it is estimated that only 23% of small Irish businesses are engaging in e-commerce sales. Small businesses throughout Ireland can apply for digital vouchers to help their businesses trade online. The objective of the scheme is to help small businesses grow their sales, exports and ultimately jobs. Businesses are permitted to apply for one voucher each, up to a value of €2,500 (required matched funding).³⁹

€5 Million Community Enterprise Initiatives Fund

The goal of this Fund is to stimulate and support enterprise and job creation at a local, community and regional level. Applications are open to new and existing organisations, groups and alliances, who seek to promote entrepreneurship, create jobs, foster innovation and enhance export opportunities

³⁹ The online application form can be downloaded from <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Trading-Online-Voucher-Scheme-/2015-LEO-Online-Voucher-Application-Form.pdf>
More information on the voucher is available from your Local Enterprise Office www.localenterprise.ie

for small business. Applicants need to demonstrate innovative solutions to fostering and creating employment. Priority is given to new approaches that strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

A prerequisite of this scheme is to build on, and take full advantage of infrastructure, investment and supports already made by various enterprise partners such as the LEOs, EI, the Community Enterprise Centres, Skillnets, Chambers of Commerce, ETBs, HEIs, Local Development Companies as well as private sector entities in a collaborative and networked manner.⁴⁰

Microfinance Ireland

In partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) a micro enterprise loan fund is available to all business sectors. Unsecured business loans of between €2,000 and €25,000 are available. The terms are normally between 3-5 years with reduced interest rates for clients of the LEOs. The repayment terms are flexible. Applications may be made directly to Microfinance Ireland. However, applications made through the LEO are eligible for a 1% discount.⁴¹

www.localenterprise.ie

LEADER⁴²

The programme has a specific measure aimed at providing grant assistance to new business start-ups or expanding an existing business. Once the Local Action Group selection process is completed, any community group or individual project promoter interested in pursuing funding under LEADER, should contact their local group for advice and guidance in the application process.

All LEADER funding applications will be preceded by an Expression of Interest form, which will be reviewed and checked for eligibility by the Local Action Group officer. Applicants will be informed and advised as to how the project can best proceed. Advice / information and signposting will be given to the promoter on alternative funding sources or supports where possible. In this regard, Local Action Groups maintain close liaison with other development agencies, including the LEO and Enterprise Ireland, when considering project applications.

In offering support, LEADER will complement the supports offered by the Local Enterprise Office. Effective systems of collaboration and consultation will be in place to ensure a co-ordinated and effective allocation of resources.

www.environ.ie

⁴⁰ Further information may be obtained from www.localenterprise.ie

⁴¹ www.microfinanceireland.ie

⁴² There is an overall programme complement of €250 million for the 2014-2020 period, which is made up of €235 million in respect of the main element of LEADER, coupled with €15 million for two Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine artisan food schemes.

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

Enterprise Ireland is responsible for supporting High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) Companies. HPSUs are start-up businesses with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale on international markets and the potential to create at least 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 to 4 years of starting up.

To avail of HPSU supports, you must be a client company of Enterprise Ireland. HPSU clients of Enterprise Ireland should contact their Enterprise Ireland Adviser to discuss funding supports. If you are not currently a client of Enterprise Ireland, and want to learn more about qualifying as a HPSU, you will find more information on the website.⁴³

Funding supports from Enterprise Ireland are closely aligned to a company's stage of development. Broadly, HPSU companies are viewed as being at feasibility stage, investor ready stage or growth stage.

Companies who are at the feasibility stage can apply for the following Enterprise Ireland supports aimed at developing the business idea or proposal to the point where it is investor ready.

- **HPSU Feasibility Grant**

This grant is intended to support the development of an innovative/high potential start-up and the development of an Investor Ready Business Plan. Eligible costs include Salaries and Overheads, Consultancy Fees, Foreign Travel and Subsistence, EI approved Business Accelerator Fees, Trade Fair costs and Prototype costs.⁴⁴

- **Innovation Voucher**

Innovation Vouchers, worth €5,000, are available to assist early stage companies to work with a registered college or knowledge provider in Ireland and Northern Ireland to explore a business opportunity or solve a technical problem. A CRO number is required. This voucher is not restricted to EI clients.⁴⁵

- **New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme**

New Frontiers is Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme run in partnership with the Institutes of Technology. The programme is designed to support entrepreneurs with innovative business ideas who are planning to establish and run their own company. A range of supports including mentoring, incubation space and a €15,000 scholarship payment are provided to help accelerate the development of the business and to equip the promoter(s) with the skills and contacts needed to successfully start and grow a company.⁴⁶

- **Competitive Feasibility Fund**

Open calls for applications for Competitive Feasibility Funds are held by Enterprise Ireland throughout the year. The funding is designed to assist a new start-up company or individual entrepreneur to investigate the viability of a new significant growth orientated business or proposition. The calls are run throughout the year in specific regions and sectors.⁴⁷

⁴³ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Do-I-qualify-as-a-HPSU-/Overview.html>
Further contact details are set out in Section I of this booklet.

⁴⁴ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/HPSU-Feasibility-Study-Grant-.html>

⁴⁵ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Innovation-Voucher.html>

⁴⁶ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Supports-for-High-Potential-Start-Ups/New-Frontiers-Entrepreneur-Development-Programme.html>

⁴⁷ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Competitive-Feasibility-Fund-CFF-.html>

- **Mentor Grant**

This grant is used to support the cost of a Mentor Assignment.⁴⁸ Companies that have a well-developed business plan and need to raise investment for their business can apply for the following supports.

- **Competitive Start Fund**

A €50,000 equity investment designed to accelerate the development of high potential start-up companies by supporting them to achieve commercial and technical milestones such as evaluating international market opportunities or building a prototype. The fund is open for applications several times throughout the year with special calls made for specific sectors, such as digital media and aviation. In addition, specific calls to support the development of female led high potential start-ups are also run under the Female Entrepreneurship initiative.⁴⁹

- **Innovative HPSU Fund (Equity)**

The Innovative HPSU Fund allows Enterprise Ireland to offer equity investment to HPSU clients on a co-funded basis to support the implementation of a company's business plans. First time and follow-on equity investments in HPSUs are supported under this offer.⁵⁰

www.enterprise-ireland.com

⁴⁸ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Mentor-Grant.html>

⁴⁹ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Competitive-Start-Fund-CSF-.html> A female only call was run in March 2016. A second call for females only will be run in November. Applications by suitable female entrepreneurs can be made in respect of any of the call. They do not have to confine themselves to a female only call.

⁵⁰ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Innovative-HPSU-fund.html>

OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

BORD IASCAIGH MHARA (BIM)

BIM provides grant aid right across the seafood industry. The seafood processing capital investment scheme is currently closed but is listed as being provisionally open in 2016.⁵¹

www.bim.ie

DESIGN AND CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

In order to apply for funding you must be a registered client of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol).

Continued Professional Development (CPD) Funding

The CPD Fund is made available to all DCCol registered clients who wish to pursue continued professional development and training in their respective design/craft discipline. This includes attendance at workshops, short training courses, masterclasses, conferences and symposiums, and to research trade events/fairs.⁵²

External Exhibitions Fund⁵³

The External Exhibitions Fund has been established to assist the development of high-quality, independent exhibitions run by individuals, organisations or groups. This annual fund supports a small number of professionally produced exhibitions featuring Irish design/craft in Ireland or abroad.

International Fair Fund⁵⁴

The International Fair Fund has been developed to financially assist designers/craftspeople in reaching key export markets. The fund provides limited match funding for wholesale trade fairs abroad.

www.dccoi.ie

⁵¹ Details of grants are available on www.bim.ie. Details of this scheme is available on the website <http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafoodprocessingcapitalinvestmentscheme/>

⁵² See DCCol's Website - <http://www.dccoi.ie/craftspeople/opportunities> for relevant CPD opportunities.

⁵³ For relevant call outs, see DCCol's Website - <http://www.dccoi.ie/craftspeople/opportunities>

⁵⁴ For relevant call outs, see DCCol's Website - <http://www.dccoi.ie/craftspeople/opportunities>

INTERTRADEIRELAND

Sourcing specialist consultancy advice or finding the right person with the right skills for your business can be a challenge, while partnering with academic institutes can be complex. InterTradelreland will support you financially in these areas, assisting not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and vital introductions.

Sales supports

Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme⁵⁵ provides small businesses with financial support towards professional advice in relation to cross-border trading and regulation, such as legal, accountancy, marketing and other business services.

Elevate⁵⁶

If you are a micro-business looking to identify cross-border markets and customers to win new business, funding for specialist consultancy support is available.

Equity Advisory Service⁵⁷

InterTradelreland offers a free one-to-one equity advisory service to early stage high growth companies that plan to raise funds within the next 12 months.

HALO BUSINESS ANGEL NETWORK

Business angels are private individuals who invest in new businesses in return for a share of the business. Some invest on an informal basis.⁵⁸ Some are in more formal networks.

Halo Business Angel Network (HBAN) is a joint initiative of Enterprise Ireland and InterTradelreland. HBAN is an all-island umbrella group responsible for the development of business angel syndicates on the island of Ireland. HBAN is actively working to increase the number of angel investors who are interested in investing in early stage technology, MedTech, AgriTech & food companies and supporting the early stage entrepreneurial community.

HBAN can introduce entrepreneurs with relevant opportunities to these investor syndicates who not only have the capital capacity to invest up to €250,000+ per investment but have extensive business acumen and industry experience, which can help accelerate the growth of your start up.

HBAN works regionally in partnership with the Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and Galway Business Innovation Centres (BICs) and Halo Northern Ireland who each run local angel networks.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ http://www.intertradeireland.com/trade_accelerator_vouchers/how_it_works/business/

⁵⁶ <http://www.intertradeireland.com/elevate/>

⁵⁷ <http://www.intertradeireland.com/equity/advisory-services/equity-advisory-service/>

⁵⁸ The best source of small scale seed capital for most start-ups continues to be family or friends. Make sure both sides know and agree on the ground rules. A simple letter of understanding signed by all parties will be sufficient.

⁵⁹ www.hban.org

MICROFINANCE IRELAND

Microfinance Ireland lends through the Microenterprise Loan Fund. This is targeted at start-up or growing microenterprises across all industry sectors, which are based in the Republic of Ireland, with less than 10 employees and a turnover of less than €2m.

Unsecured business loans are provided of €2,000 to €25,000 for commercially viable proposals.

Under a partnership between Microfinance Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices, Business Loans are now available through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO's) nationally. By applying through the Local Enterprise Office you can get:

- Unsecured loans from €2,000 up to €25,000
- Term from 3 to 5 years
- Reduced Interest Rate 7.5% (7.8% APR) for LEO clients
- Flexibility on repayment terms

The loans are provided and underwritten by Microfinance Ireland and the final decision for all loan applications is made by Microfinance Ireland. In the first instance, applications made through the LEO offices are assessed locally by LEO business advisors. Loans are repayable to Microfinance Ireland, according to the terms and conditions laid out by Microfinance Ireland.

Unlike some of the other financial supports available from the Local Enterprise Offices, all business sectors are eligible to apply for a Microfinance loan. Sole Traders, Partnerships and Limited Companies with fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover of less than €2m are eligible to apply. Loans may be used to fund the start-up of a business, the purchase of stock, equipment, machinery and business vehicles and are also available to existing enterprises.⁶⁰

SMALL BUSINESS FINANCE

Small Business Finance is a website for businesses seeking information and guidance on how to finance their business. The Irish Banking Federation and Chambers Ireland have partnered to create Small Business Finance one-stop information source for small businesses that is intended to provide access to all the information they need to finance their business. The website is intended to be a valuable, ongoing resource for all types of small businesses, including entrepreneurs, start-ups, established businesses and exporters. The website provides information and tools to help small businesses that need finance. It does not provide finance nor can it assist businesses in accessing finance.

www.smallbusinessfinance.ie

THE EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVE

The Employment Investment Incentive (EII) is a tax relief incentive scheme that provides tax relief for investment in certain corporate trades. This scheme is available to the majority of small and medium sized trading companies.⁶¹

⁶⁰ www.microfinanceireland.ie

⁶¹ www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it55.html

CREDIT REVIEW OFFICE

The Credit Review Office provides a simple review process for Small and Medium Enterprises who have had requests for credit refused or existing credit facilities reduced or withdrawn.

Credit Guarantee Scheme⁶²

This Government scheme enables the State to act as a guarantor to the bank for your loan application. The purpose of the scheme is to guarantee SMEs that have been declined credit due to inadequate collateral and/or lack of understanding of the business model.

www.creditreview.ie

CROWD FUNDING

Crowdfunding is the financing of a new project by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people. It provides access to capital without equity stakes or rigid bureaucracy.

The following are the main crowdfunding platforms in Ireland:

iCrowdFund:

An Irish crowdfunding firm from the same people that developed iDonate, iFundraise and iRegister

Rate: 4% commission

www.icrowdfund.ie

Fundit:

An Irish-owned not for profit organisation working to support resilience and transformation in the cultural sector through research, innovation and partnership.

Rate: 5% commission

www.fundit.ie

Linked Finance:

An Irish owned crowdfunding site with favourable commission rates.

Rate: 2.5% commission

www.linkedfinance.com

You may also want to check out international crowdfunding platforms open to Irish start-ups such as Kickstarter.

Kickstarter

Having funded over 77,000 creative projects since 2009, Kickstarter are a big global player in crowdfunding.

Rate: 5% commission

www.kickstarter.com/ireland

⁶² www.djei.ie/enterprise/smes/creditguarantee.html

ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA

Údarás na Gaeltachta can offer qualifying businesses and companies from various sectors a range of incentives⁶³ and supports to start up, develop, expand or locate in a Gaeltacht region. Hundreds of companies have established businesses in the Gaeltacht with assistance from Údarás.

Údarás can provide a range of financial incentives in the form of grant assistance to assist your varied business needs. Support incentives include:

- Feasibility Study Grant,
- Research and Development Grant,
- Capital Grant,
- Employment Grant,
- Training Grant,
- Commercial Aquaculture Development Scheme,
- Equity Investment,
- Consultancy Services Grant,
- Development of Market Research Skills,
- Trade Fair Participation Scheme,
- Innovation Voucher Initiative.

⁶³ <http://www.udaras.ie/en/forbairt-fiontraiochta/cunamh-airgid>

NETWORKS

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

Many of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) run business support networks for women entrepreneurs. Members can utilise the network to promote their business, create alliances with other members, learn new skills, and increase their business contacts.

As a means of coordinating these networks in an annual national event and to celebrate the achievement of female entrepreneurs, National Women's Enterprise Day was inaugurated in 2008 and has been organised each year.

The aim of National Women's Enterprise Day is to encourage more women to set up their own businesses and to increase national recognition of the essential role played by Ireland's female entrepreneurs. The event consists of a variety of developmental support actions, including inspiring speakers, information provision, exhibition of state supports for enterprise, facilitated business networking and one to one business mentoring to celebrate the achievement of female entrepreneurs. National Women's Enterprise Day is usually held in a location outside Dublin in October.

The centerpiece is a national networking event, which incorporates a conference and runs over two days. The aim is to facilitate female entrepreneurs of microenterprises throughout Ireland in developing useful business contacts, in improving their management and networking skills, and in accessing a broad range of specialist advice and information from relevant agencies in the one place.

www.localenterprise.ie

LEADER

In responding to local perceived needs, Local Action Groups will support local communities and entrepreneurs to develop new business ideas and to enhance existing enterprises. These supports may include the creation of business / entrepreneur networks and the organisation of networking events for business owners and entrepreneurs, as considered necessary.

www.environ.ie

OTHER NETWORKS⁶⁴

BNI

BNI is a global business networking referral organisation. There are over 1,200 members and more than 50 BNI groups across Ireland. The members help each other to get more business. Meetings are held weekly and a membership fee applies.

www.bni.ie

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Chambers Ireland acts as the Irish National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce. It coordinates a network of Chambers of Commerce in every major town and region in the country and enables the local chambers in the network to effectively promote the long term development of their locality on behalf of their members, as well as working towards creating a better environment for business by lobbying the government and other stakeholders on key policy issues. You can find your nearest chamber on their website.⁶⁵

www.chambers.ie

NETWORK IRELAND

Network Ireland is a non-profit, voluntary organisation supporting the professional and personal development of women in Ireland. The membership is made up of a very diverse group of women, from budding entrepreneurs, SME owners, professionals and leaders in indigenous and multinational organisations to non-profits, charities, arts and the public sector. Network Ireland are interested in promoting diversity and equality, entrepreneurship and leadership development, collaborating with like-minded people and organisations.

Established in 1983, Network Ireland has over 500 members, with eight branches across Ireland.⁶⁶ Through their branch network they organise over 100 events annually for like-minded people to come together to collaborate, share ideas, knowledge and support. Most of the local events are free to members. Network Ireland also runs a number of flagship national events, including an International Women's Day Celebration and an Annual Conference and Business Awards.

As a voluntary organisation all committee members, nationally and at branch level, give freely of their time to coordinate and manage events, speakers, and the flagship national events. The funding needed to run the events is achieved through membership fees and financial partnerships with public and private bodies.

Network Ireland offers support, mentoring and confidence building for women, in particular those starting in business or returning to the workplace. Members can develop and pool their individual skills through interaction and collaboration with other women in a supportive environment, which offers training, mentoring and an opportunity to tap into the skills and specialist expertise of other members.

www.network.ie

⁶⁴ There are a number of other networking groups throughout the country besides those listed here. A simple Google search will give information on those local to you.

⁶⁵ <http://www.chambers.ie/contact/find-your-local-chamber/>

⁶⁶ <http://www.networkireland.ie/our-branches>

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