

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.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

The ACORNS programme is funded through the Rural Innovation and Development Fund by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. ACORNS is an innovative programme specifically designed for early stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland who wish to start and develop new businesses.

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 programme. 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.

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INTRODUCTION

ACORNS - *Accelerating the Creation Of Rural Nascent Start-ups* - that are led by female entrepreneurs is the objective of the aptly named initiative. This innovative programme, now in its fourth year, is funded through the Rural Innovation and Development Fund by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. ACORNS was designed, developed and is being 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.

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

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.

There are over 170 different Government supports for Irish start-ups and small businesses. There is an online guide 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 to which they could possibly apply. <http://www.supportingsmes.ie/businessdetails.aspx>

Entrepreneurs are encouraged to check out the website of the relevant Department or Agency in the first instance and then to contact the relevant body directly to establish if they qualify for support. Further supports are available from a wide number of other organisations and networks.

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 on the programme. 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.

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 new and established business owners have access to all Government supports.

There are over 170 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 Microfinance Ireland and Loan Guarantee Schemes; and
- Preparing businesses for Brexit.

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 series of events 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

Head of Enterprise: Kieran Comerford
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/carlow/
Email: enterprise@carlowcoco.ie
Tel: (059) 9129783

Address:
Enterprise House,
O'Brien Road,
Carlow

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

Cavan Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Marcella Rudden
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/cavan/
Email: localenterprise@cavancoco.ie
Tel: (049) 4377200

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

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
9:15 - 17:15

Clare Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: 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

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

Address:
Room 101, City Hall,
Anglesea Street,
Cork

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

Cork North & West Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: 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 Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Cork South Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Sean O'Sullivan
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/southcork/
Email: southcork@leo.corkcoco.ie
Tel: (021) 4975281

Address:
County Hall,
Carrigrohane Road,
Cork

Opening Hours³
Mon - Fri:
8:30 - 17:00

Donegal Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: Greg Swift
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/dublincity/
Email: info@leo.dublincity.ie
Tel: (01) 2225611

Address:
Civic Offices,
Block 4, Floor 1,
Dublin 8

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

Dublin South Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Thomas Rooney
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/southdublin/
Email: info@leo.sdblincoco.ie
Tel: (01) 4149000

Address:
County Hall,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24

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

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Owen Laverty
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/DLR/
Email: contact@leo.dlrcoco.ie
Tel: (01) 2047083

Address:
County Hall, Marine Road,
Dún Laoghaire,
Co Dublin

Opening Hours³
Mon - Thurs:
9:00 - 17:00
Fri: 9:00 - 16:30

Fingal Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Oisín Geoghegan
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/fingal/
Email: info@leo.fingal.ie
Tel: (01) 8900800

Address:
First Floor, County Hall,
Main Street,
Swords, Co. Dublin

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

Galway Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: 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 Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Kerry Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Tomás 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

Head of Enterprise: Jacqui McNabb
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

Head of Enterprise: Fiona Deegan
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

Head of Enterprise: Evelyn Reddin
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/laois/
Email: localenterprise@laoiscoco.ie
Tel: (056) 8661800

Address:
County Hall,
Portlaoise,
Co Laois

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

Leitrim Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: Michael Nevin
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/longford/
Email: info@leo.longfordcoco.ie
Tel: (043) 3343346

Address:
Áras an Chontae,
Great Water Street,
Longford

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

³ The LEO offices are closed Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Louth Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: Thomas McEvoy
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/louth/
Email: info@leo.louthcoco.ie
Tel: 1890 202303

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

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

Mayo Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: John Magee
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/mayo/
Email: info@leo.mayococo.ie
Tel: (094) 9047555

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

Head of Enterprise: Joe English
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/meath/
Email: localenterprise@meathcoco.ie
Tel: (046) 9078400

Address:
Navan Enterprise Centre,
Buvinda House, Dublin
Road, Navan, Co Meath

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

Monaghan Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: Louise Ward
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/roscommon/
Email: localenterprise@roscommoncoco.ie
Tel: (090) 66 26263/ 26765

Address:
Áras an Chontae,
Roscommon,
Co Roscommon

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

Sligo Local Enterprise Office

Head of Enterprise: John Reilly
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/sligo/
Email: localenterprise@sligococo.ie
Tel: (071) 9144779

Address:
City Hall,
Quay Street,
Sligo

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

³ The LEO offices are closed Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Tipperary Local Enterprise Office

Acting Head of Enterprise: Ita Horan
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/tipperary/
Email: leo@tipperarycoco.ie
Tel: (052) 6129466

Address:
Civic Offices,
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

Head of Enterprise: Richie Walsh
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

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: 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

Head of Enterprise: Vibeke Delahunty
Web: www.localenterprise.ie/wicklow/
Email: enterprise@leo.wicklowcoco.ie
Tel: (0404) 30800

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

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

³ The LEO offices are closed Saturdays, Sundays 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 Rural Development Programmes (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 Rural and Community Development 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, building community capacity and training.

The Programme facilitates a community led approach and outlines a number of themes for support that have emerged from the consultation process and from the research conducted by CEDRA. These themes 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 support for the environment in rural areas.

LEADER funds 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

Grant aid is 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 on community-led and farm diversification (farmer’s labour only) projects.

AREAS COVERED

Rural areas for the purposes of LEADER funding are all areas outside of the five main cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick. After that the priority areas and actions are identified in the Local Development Strategies developed in each County.

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 (LAGs) 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. This is outlined in the Local Development Strategies developed by each Local Action Group.

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 at this link:

<http://dracd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/list-of-LAGs.pdf>

The Programme is administered by Local Action Groups throughout the country. These are responsible for selecting and approving projects in their respective areas. 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 LAGS adhere to the programme's operating rules.**

Complementary approach

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

Further Information

<http://dracd.gov.ie/>

European Commission DG Agriculture

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

For further information please contact:

Rural Development Section

LEADER Unit

Department of Rural and Community Development

Government Offices

Ballina

Co. Mayo

Email: rdp1420@dracd.gov.ie **Tel:** 096-24200

<http://dracd.gov.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 those new businesses which are considered to have high growth potential and are internationally focused (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.

The completed outline business proposition may be submitted to the start-up desk appropriate to the location of the new business. To download an outline business proposition form go to www.enterprise-ireland.com

YOUR LOCATION	EMAIL
Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow	HPSUenquiries@enterprise-ireland.com
Westmeath, Longford	mark.atterbury@enterprise-ireland.com
Offaly and Laois	james.maloney@enterprise-ireland.com
Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow	brian.fives@enterprise-ireland.com
Cork	jacqui.norton@enterprise-ireland.com ciara.concannon@enterprise-ireland.com
Clare, Limerick, Kerry, Tipperary North and South	catherine.hogan@enterprise-ireland.com harriet.cotter@enterprise-ireland.com
Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	westenterprise@enterprise-ireland.com
Cavan, Louth, Monaghan	aidan.mckenna@enterprise-ireland.com anne.caldwell@enterprise-ireland.com StartupBorderRegion@enterprise-ireland.com
Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal	carole.brenan@enterprise-ireland.com

If the new business is not eligible for Enterprise Ireland HPSU support or is too early for HPSU engagement, an entrepreneur may qualify for funding and supports from their 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.localenterprise.ie

Regional Accelerators

The Enterprise Ireland Accelerator programme is part of the organisation's overall strategy to enhance the High Potential Start-Up ecosystem and for increasing the number and quality of start-ups. Four Regional Accelerators have been launched: Propeller Shannon in Clare, NDRC@PorterShed and BioExel in Galway, and NDRC@ArcLabs in Waterford. The Accelerators focus on the Digital Technology, Aviation and Medtech sectors and provide investment and mentoring to more than 75 companies over a two-year period.

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, Enterprise Ireland established a Female Entrepreneurship initiative to support ambitious women grow scalable businesses and to address the key challenges impacting on the growth of female led business opportunities. 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 have been put in place by Enterprise Ireland to respond to the identified needs, including partnering on female specific accelerator programmes such as the Ryan Academy High Flyers, Cork IT Exxcel and Dublin BIC Innovate, the identification and promotion of role models, sponsorship of events and awards and supports for networks.

Enterprise Ireland also co-funds development programmes which are focused on optimising the business capabilities for women led businesses. Included among these is Going for Growth, now in its 11th cycle (www.goingforgrowth.com).

Female targeted initiatives continue to have a positive impact. In 2018, 22% of the HPSU approvals went to female-led companies, and 22% of CSF approvals also went to companies led by female entrepreneurs. In 2018, 29 female-led start-ups received funding in total.

Enterprise Ireland is currently developing its strategy for Female Entrepreneurship for 2019 to 2025. The Manager for Entrepreneurship in Enterprise Ireland is Sheelagh Daly. If you believe that your new business has significant growth potential and that you will develop customers in export markets, Sheelagh is happy to answer any queries that you may have - sheelagh.daly@enterprise-ireland.com.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

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 and Enterprise Ireland, followed by a selection of other relevant sources in alpha order.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Office (LEOs) 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 (LAGs) are playing a key role in rural Ireland in supporting local communities and entrepreneurs to develop new business ideas and to enhance existing enterprises.

Information is provided at local level on the range of supports available under the LEADER programme. They include enterprise training courses, advice and provision of LEADER grant aid for micro-enterprises, networks and networking events, support to avail of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and Women in Enterprise programmes.

The LAGs provide advice and information on projects' eligibility under the LEADER programme. They are located in each county throughout the Republic of Ireland.⁴ Any community group or individual project promoter interested in pursuing funding under LEADER should contact their LAG for advice and guidance on the application process.

A list of the Local Action Groups is available on the Department of Rural and Community Development website at:

<https://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/180813-Update-Contact-Details-for-LEADER.pdf>

⁴ In view of the size of the Cork County Council area, there are three sub-regional areas for County Cork, which will mean 28 sub-regional areas in Ireland for LEADER purposes.

ENTERPRISE IRELAND

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is focused on those highly innovative internationally focused businesses that are considered to have potential to grow significantly. These are referred to as High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs).

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.⁵

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.⁶

EI's support for an 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 Advisor**

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

- **Enterprise Start 2**

For entrepreneurs who require further assistance to develop their business proposition, Enterprise Ireland, in conjunction with the four **Business Innovation Centres** (BICs) has developed the Enterprise START 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 High Potential Start-Up. The programme involves two half-day group workshops and two one-to-one mentoring meetings with experienced business consultants. Please contact your nearest BIC for further information: www.corkbic.com; www.dublinbic.ie; www.southeastbic.ie; www.westbic.ie.

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 site.⁷

EI also makes available to client companies its Market Research Centre,⁸ its International Office Network and the opportunity to take part in organised Trade Missions.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

⁵ A 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 company registration

⁶ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Information-Store-for-Start-ups/>

⁷ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Publications/Reports-Published-Strategies/Export-Start-Guide.pdf>

⁸ 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 Vantage**

Bord Bia Vantage 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.

All upcoming Bord Bia events and supports can also be found on www.bordbiavantage.ie

- **Library Research**

Opened in 2016, Bord Bia's Thinking House holds an excellent library which can provide access to a range of research and data to assist all food companies.

E-mail: thethinkinghouse@bordbia.ie

www.bordbia.ie

BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTRES (BICS)

The Business Innovation Centres (BICs) 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 in Ireland are:

- Cork Business Innovation Centre – www.corkbic.com
- Dublin Business Innovation Centre – www.dublinbic.ie
- South East Business Innovation Centre – www.southeastbic.ie
- West Business Innovation Centre – www.westbic.ie

INTERTRADEIRELAND

InterTradeIreland is a Cross-Border Trade and Business Development Body funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in Ireland (DBEI) and the Department for the Economy (NI). The organisation supports businesses through innovation and trade initiatives to take advantage of North/South co-operative opportunities to improve capability and drive competitiveness, growth and jobs.

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. The organisation 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 39,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradeIreland and over €1bn worth of trade and business development has been generated.

www.intertradeireland.com

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

Taking Care of Business is a wide ranging initiative being undertaken by the Health and Safety Authority to support and assist small businesses to manage health and safety in their workplaces.

It provides a range of practical tools, guides and health toolkits for small businesses designed to help improve workplace health and safety and reduce accidents. These include **BeSMART.ie**, a free, easy to use, online resource which facilitates workplace risk assessments and the development of a safety statement for the business.⁹

www.hsa.ie

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

The Office of Government Procurement centralises public sector procurement arrangements for common goods and services. The State spends €8.5bn every year on goods and services and the Office is critical in ensuring that the Public Service operates in a co-ordinated and efficient way. The Office of Government Procurement manages the eTenders website, which displays all Irish public sector procurement opportunities, currently being advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union, as well as other lower-value contracts uploaded to the site from awarding authorities.

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 Commissioners¹⁰ 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.

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 Employment Affairs and Social Protection.¹¹
- 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.¹² Service providers can register for ROS which facilitates the filing of online annual tax returns, payment of taxes and allows 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

⁹ https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Small_Business/Taking_Care_of_Business/

¹⁰ <http://www.revenue.ie/en/starting-a-business/index.aspx>

¹¹ www.welfare.ie

¹² 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.¹³ The site includes a link to a new guide that has been launched to help people running SMEs find out which Government financial supports may be available for their businesses.

Two Government-led initiatives designed to assist entrepreneurs are also available online: SURE is a tax refund calculator for potential entrepreneurs¹⁴ and the Supporting SMEs Online Guide is an interactive guide that lists cross-government supports for businesses.¹⁵

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. The organisation provides a comprehensive technical support service to the food processing sector and in particular to SMEs and start-up food businesses.

Teagasc provides a range of supports for early stage food entrepreneurs. The food processing facilities and the expertise of scientists and technologists at the Teagasc food research centres at Ashtown, Dublin 15 and Moorepark, Fermoy, Co Cork, provide support to established companies and potential entrepreneurs 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 that have a business opportunity or relevant problem to tackle. The voucher can be exchanged for advice and expertise.

www.teagasc.ie

¹³ <http://www.businessregulation.ie/BusinessReg/Starting-a-Business/>

¹⁴ <http://www.sure.gov.ie/>

¹⁵ <http://www.supportingsmes.ie/businessdetails.aspx>

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. The Authority 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 advisors; and
- Online trading scheme.

www.udaras.ie

TRAINING

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

There are a variety of training courses provided by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). 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.¹⁶

- **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 who are unsure as to how to develop their idea into a business plan. The objective is to assist in assessing the idea, its viability and to decide if you should proceed or take a step back.

- **The Food Academy**

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.

- **LEAN4Micro**

LEAN4Micro has been adapted by Enterprise Ireland for LEO clients to help small businesses boost competitiveness, increase performance and profitability as well as building resilience within their companies. Under this programme, clients can avail of the support of a Lean Expert (a qualified practitioner), who will work with the company to introduce Lean principles, undertake a specific cost reduction project and assist the company in benchmarking its performance.

- **Food Starter Programme**

The Food Starter programme is a joint initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices and Bord Bia for both pre start up producers and those already started within the first 24 months of their journey. The programme is designed to equip new food business entrepreneurs with the necessary skills to get their business off to a good start. Food Starter is a precursor to the revised Food Academy programme, which is a collaborative initiative between the LEOs, Bord Bia and SuperValu. Food Starter is a two-day programme which focuses on providing new food businesses with all of the possible information they might need in the earlier stages of their business. The content of the programme has been carefully constructed by Bord Bia and the delivery is rolled out by all Local Enterprise Offices.

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 who are in the early stages of developing a business.

www.localenterprise.ie

¹⁶ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Find-Your-Local-Enterprise-Office/>

LEADER

Local Action Groups (LAGs) 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 LAGs. 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 needs to address enterprise and community development needs. This measure is not a mechanism to simply fund courses already provided. Applicants would need to show that the course addresses needs in a new and innovative manner.

<http://drccd.gov.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 the business proposition appears to have HPSU potential but is at an early stage of development, the early stage entrepreneur 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.¹⁷

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 to support ambitious women optimise their business success, through its **Businesswomen 4 International Growth** initiative.¹⁸

¹⁷ www.newfrontiers.ie

¹⁸ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Start-a-Business-in-Ireland/Startups%20led%20by%20Ambitious%20Women/>

Two 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 Fliers¹⁹**

The Female High Fliers Programme is an accelerator programme 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 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 Rubicon²⁰**

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

EI has also supported **Going for Growth²¹** since its implementation in 2009. More recently EI has also agreed to support the Going for Growth Community for past participants to enable their further growth and development.

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 skills of client companies. Included in their Export Events, Workshops and Programmes are **Excel at Export Selling²² and Get Export Ready²³**.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

¹⁹ <http://www.ryanacademy.ie/what-we-do/>

²⁰ <http://www.rubiconcentre.ie/female-entrepreneurship/>

²¹ <http://www.goingforgrowth.com/>

²² 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>

²³ 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 these are arranged may be found on the following link: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Events/OurEvents/Export-Workshops/Export-Workshops.html>

OTHER SOURCES OF TRAINING

BORD BIA

Routes to Market

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

- **Food Academy**

Food Academy Start is a training programme that supports and nurtures small food businesses throughout Ireland. Bord Bia, SuperValu and Local Enterprise Offices work together to provide food marketing knowledge to new and early-stage food business owners. Running across the entire Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network, the programme to date has supported close to 750 participants. Programme partner SuperValu provides additional support, and access to the Food Academy Fixture in store. More information about the next Food Academy programme is available from your Local Enterprise Office.²⁴

- **Grow with Aldi**

Grow with Aldi was launched in 2018, in collaboration with Bord Bia. In August 2018, 71 Irish products, made by 38 suppliers, were listed in Aldi stores nationwide as part of their Aldi's Specialbuys Irish Food promotion. The Grow with Aldi programme will be taking new applicants in 2019. More information is available at www.Aldi.ie

- **Lidl Kick Start**

Lidl's Kick Start programme, in collaboration with Bord Bia, gives Irish food and drink suppliers the chance to showcase their products and grow their business through Lidl stores across the country. Two promotions were held in Lidl stores in 2018 and more information about the 2019 programme will be available at www.lidl.ie

- **Food Starter**

Food Starter was developed by Bord Bia and the Local Enterprise Office network to assist companies that are at the very early stage of developing a food business. The two-day programme is delivered by the Local Enterprise Office and is a prerequisite for *Food Academy Start*. More information is available from the Local Enterprise Office.

- **Bord Bia's FoodService Academy**

Bord Bia's FoodService Academy, run in partnership with Musgrave MarketPlace, is aimed at providing participants with tailored support and guidance for their business. The programme seeks to help participating producers grow sales within the foodservice, or out-of-home, market. The initiative also offers the opportunity to achieve growth within Musgrave MarketPlace's foodservice business, which supplies over 6,000 customers each week ranging from hotels and restaurants to pubs and nursing homes.

- **Farmers' Market Training**

Food markets (or farmers' markets) and other direct routes to market continue to play a vital role for companies in the start-up phase and beyond by providing low risk market access and direct consumer feedback. Bord Bia delivers a regional workshop programme to help support new and existing food vendors as they seek to grow their business directly with consumers. These workshops will be offered during the second half of 2019 and more information will be available on www.bordbiavantage.ie

²⁴ www.bordbiavantage.ie/business-development/irish-retail-programme-2/food-academy

- **Food Works**

Foods Works is an accelerator programme for food entrepreneurs who have ambitions to build scalable exporting businesses. Following a competitive pitching selection process, the programme provides intensive customised supports for a select number of entrepreneurial food companies. Having celebrated its 6th year in 2018, Food Works is now recognised and regarded as a highly specialised programme that is delivering a pipeline of successful food and drink businesses. Since 2012, Food Works has worked with over 85 start-ups. Programme partners Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland and Teagasc continue to work with past participants through the alumni network. www.foodworksireland.ie

www.bordbia.ie

BORD IASCAIGH MHARA (BIM)

BIM is the Irish State agency responsible for developing the Irish seafood industry. The organisation helps to develop the industry by providing technical expertise, business support, funding, training and promoting responsible environmental practice. 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.

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

- **Technology Services**

BIM's technology experts can advise on new fishing and fish farming opportunities using technical innovation, and gear modifications and other Technical Conservation Measures and trials.

- **Business Development**

Their business development advisors can help with product development, improving the efficiency of a new business's processes, adding value through product labelling and setting up food safety systems.

- **Environment**

Their environment programmes can help entrepreneurs to conduct their business in an environmentally responsible manner and BIM can advise on Natura 2000 assessment.

- **Training**

BIM can help an entrepreneur develop their skills with training in fishing, fish farming and seafood processing. Their safety courses can be taken to get a Basic Safety Training card.

- **Funding**

Up-to-date information on funding options and the latest schemes.

- **Seafood Development Centre**

The Seafood Development Centre fosters innovation and assists seafood businesses to develop new products and processes.²⁵

www.bim.ie

²⁵ <http://www.bim.ie/our-services/seafood-development-centre/>

DESIGN AND CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) is the national agency for the commercial development of Irish designers and makers, stimulating innovation, championing design thinking and informing Government policy. The organisation provides a range of programmes, supports and services for designers and craftspeople, learners and teachers, retailers and gallerists, shoppers and collectors, media and partner organisations, in order to raise the standard and profile of Irish design and craft.

Whether starting or growing a design and craft enterprise, DCCol has a range of training and other 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.²⁶

- **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 DCCol as relevant to the ongoing development of design/craft enterprises. These workshops are organised by DCCol, often in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), and are advertised on specified dates and times in various locations throughout Ireland.

- **Direct Selling Opportunities**

DCCol supports and promotes selected design/craft enterprises at direct selling events. These include key shows that are open to the public such as Bloom in the Park and Gifted – The Contemporary Craft & Design Fair, and trade only events such as Showcase.

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

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.²⁷ LEOs now support tourism start-ups in the same way as they support all other sectors.

www.failteireland.ie

²⁶ <http://www.dccoi.ie/craftspeople/overview-of-all-programmes-for-craftspeople/>

²⁷ See more at: <http://www.failteireland.ie/Supports/Local-Enterprise-Office-Supports.aspx#sthash.nqNTyTWR.dpuf>

TEAGASC

Rural dwellers establish new enterprises to improve their income, provide employment for family and utilise available resources. Teagasc provides training and advisory services to promote and sustain a range of enterprise development in rural areas.

The Options Programme is designed to assist farm families in looking at all options for growing farm profit and other possibilities for the future. The programme aims to:

- Give individuals a good understanding of how to turn an idea into a viable business;
- Provide a mentor for individuals on their idea and assist in the completion of a business plan;
- Introduce individuals to other agencies/parties who may be able to offer tangible assistance for their specific project.

The programme consists of a series of workshops covering a wide range of topics and participation is free.

www.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 panel of mentors have expertise across a range of areas from strategic planning and general management to specific functional areas such as financial structuring, production planning, marketing, product distribution and people management to website management and design. All mentors sign a confidentiality agreement.

The role of the 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; and
- 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 Actions Groups (LAGs) 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 seek to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship through animation, including support for under-represented groups, including women.

<http://drcd.gov.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 Mentor 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 the 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 short-list 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 is available toward 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, and there is no additional cost to the company.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

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.

BORD BIA

Many of the training programmes referred to under Training include a mentoring component. In addition to these, with support from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Bord Bia has offered free mentoring to small organic producers in recent years. Information on this service is available on: www.bordbia.ie/industry/manufacturers/growingyourbusiness/organic

www.bordbia.ie

DESIGN AND CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCol) mentoring programme provides design/craft businesses with tailored support from a range of experts in design, production, business, marketing and branding, and design/craft specific technical expertise. Mentoring is delivered one-to-one or in group settings. Registered client enterprises can apply for mentoring throughout the year.

DCCol 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 1-2-1 mentoring programme, for example, is designed to address specific issues, areas of expertise, or advise client companies on what they may require in order to grow and develop their craft enterprise.

DCCol mentoring has a number of distinct aspects:

- 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.²⁸ and
- Mentors skilled in export and digital marketing.

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 DCCol website to see if the type of advice you need is available online.

www.dccoi.ie

²⁸ To view the current DCCol 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 are set out on the website.²⁹

- **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; and
- Miscellaneous Costs.

- **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; and
- Need for money and having regard to deadweight and displacement.

Eligible clients may be awarded a Priming Grant within the first 18 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; and
- General overhead costs.

²⁹ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Eligibility-Criteria/Eligibility-Criteria.html>

- **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; and
- 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; and
- 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 (matched funding required).³⁰

- **Technical Assistance for Micro-Exporters Grant**

The Technical Assistance for Micro-Exporters grant supports clients to explore and develop new export market opportunities, such as participation in international trade fairs and development of export-related marketing materials and websites. With a focus on helping companies to diversify, this scheme is a matched-funding opportunity with up to €2,500 available.³¹

³⁰ 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

³¹ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Portal/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Technical-Assistance-for-Micro-Exporters/Technical-Assistance-for-Micro-Exporters.html>

Agile Innovation Fund

The Agile Innovation Fund has been developed by Enterprise Ireland to support product, service and process innovation to build competitive advantage. Compared to the other established Innovation supports from Enterprise Ireland, this fund is geared towards clients in sectors with rapid design cycles or that have not previously applied for RD&I support. The key benefit of this support is that it allows for a simple application process and delivers a faster response time from application to approval. The new Agile Innovation Fund is also open to eligible Local Enterprise Office clients and it allows companies to access up to 50% in support towards innovation projects with a total cost of up to €300,000.³²

Microfinance Ireland

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.³³

www.localenterprise.ie

LEADER³⁴

The LEADER programme has a specific measure aimed at providing grant assistance to new business start-ups or expanding an existing business. Any community group or individual project promoter interested in pursuing funding under LEADER should contact their Local Action Group (LAG) 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 LAG 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, LAGs maintain close liaison with other development agencies, including the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) and Enterprise Ireland, when considering project applications.

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

<http://drcd.gov.ie/>

³² <https://www.localenterprise.ie/News-and-Events/New-Agile-Innovation-Fund-through-your-Local-Enterprise-Office.html>

³³ www.microfinanceireland.ie

³⁴ There is an overall programme budget of €250 million for the 2014-2020 period. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the LAGs throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. The remaining €30 million is broken down between €15 million for the LEADER Food Initiative, €10 million for Co-Operation projects between LAGs at a national or international level (with the 2014 – 2020 programme placing particular emphasis on Irish cross border co-operation), and the final €5 million is for potential Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) projects. The LEADER Food initiative is managed by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with funding provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

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 three to four years of starting up.

To avail of HPSU supports, the entrepreneur must be a client company of Enterprise Ireland. HPSU clients of Enterprise Ireland should contact their Enterprise Ireland Development Advisor (DA) to discuss funding supports. If not currently a client of Enterprise Ireland, entrepreneurs who want to learn more about qualifying as a HPSU, should consult the website, where there is more information.³⁵

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

Companies that 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 for existing high potential start up (HPSU) clients to assist them in further developing their business plan to 'investor ready' stage. Eligible costs can include Salaries and Overheads, Consultancy Fees, Foreign Travel and Subsistence, EI approved Business Accelerator Fees, Trade Fair costs and Prototype costs.³⁶

- **Innovation Voucher**

Innovation Vouchers, worth €5,000, are available to assist early stage companies to work with a registered college or knowledge provider, including TEAGASC, in Ireland and Northern Ireland to explore a business opportunity or solve a technical problem. A Company Registration Number (CRO) is required.³⁷

- **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.³⁸

- **Mentor Grant**

This grant is used to support the cost of a Mentor Assignment.³⁹

³⁵ <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 Section1 of this booklet.

³⁶ More details are available on the website.

<https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/HPSU-Feasibility-Study-Grant-.html>

³⁷ This voucher is not restricted to EI clients. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Innovation-Voucher.html>

³⁸ 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>

³⁹ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Mentor-Grant.html>

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.

- **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.⁴⁰

www.enterprise-ireland.com

OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

BORD BIA

Bord Bia offers financial supports for marketing and related activities to companies with an annual turnover of over €100,000. Applications are taken until end January for that calendar year. Further information is available on www.bordbiavantage.ie

www.bordbia.ie

BORD IASCAIGH MHARA (BIM)

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) provides grant aid right across the seafood industry. The categories covered are Processing and Business Development, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Seafood industry training. Open and specific calls are offered throughout the year for a very wide range of schemes.⁴¹

www.bim.ie

⁴⁰ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/Innovative-HPSU-fund.html>

⁴¹ Details of grants are available on 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). Funding programmes include those listed below. Further information on the full range of funding supports available can be found on the website.

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. This fund also covers group applications to bring expertise to Ireland to deliver masterclasses.⁴²

External Exhibitions Fund

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 Fund

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

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. InterTradeIreland can provide support in these areas, assisting not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and advice, events and vital introductions. Supports include the following:

Sales supports⁴³

The Trade Accelerator Voucher Scheme helps SMEs with funding towards professional advice in relation to cross-border trading and regulations.

Elevate⁴⁴

Elevate supports micro businesses by providing funding towards consultancy expertise to help identify cross-border markets and customers and create cross-border sales development plans.

Equity Advisory Service⁴⁵

InterTradeIreland 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.

⁴² See DCCol's Website - <http://www.dccoi.ie/craftspeople/opportunities> for relevant CPD opportunities.

⁴³ http://www.intertradeireland.com/trade_accelerator_vouchers/

⁴⁴ <http://www.intertradeireland.com/elevate/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.intertradeireland.com/equity/advisory-services/equity-advisory-service/>

Acumen⁴⁶

Acumen assists businesses to source and fund the right people to help increase cross-border export sales North or South, and helps companies develop new markets, new customers and new sustainable sources of income.

www.intertradeireland.com

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.⁴⁷ Some are in more formal networks.

Halo Business Angel Network (HBAN) is an all-island umbrella group responsible for the development of business angel syndicates on the island of Ireland. It is a joint initiative of Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and Invest Northern Ireland. It is managed by Dublin BIC in partnership with the regional Irish BICs in Cork, Galway and Waterford, and with Clarendon Fund Managers in Northern Ireland.

HBAN is actively working to increase the number of angel investors involved in investing in early stage companies and supports the formation of new and existing angel networks, both regionally and internationally, and within industry sectors. 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 the start up.

www.hban.org

⁴⁶ <https://intertradeireland.com/sales-growth/acumen/>

⁴⁷ 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 may be sufficient.

MICROFINANCE IRELAND

Microfinance Ireland (MFI) is a government funded, not for profit lending organisation, established to provide loan finance to both start-up and existing micro-enterprises who may be having difficulty in accessing credit through commercial lenders, and supporting the creation and sustainment of jobs in Ireland.

Any business with fewer than 10 employees and turnover of less than €2million annually is eligible to apply. Funding is available through four Loan Packages ranging between amounts from €2,000 to €25,000 for a wide variety of purposes including working capital, stock and capital expenditure. Loan terms are available from three to five years.

Microfinance Ireland offers a fixed interest rate of 6.8% APR for applications received through Local Enterprise Offices, Local Development Companies, or Banks. It also has a fixed interest rate of 7.8% APR for applications submitted directly to MFI.

MFI also offers expert one-to-one mentoring to approved loan applicants through Local Enterprise Offices, thereby increasing the chances of small businesses achieving commercial success and helping to sustain jobs in the longer term.

Further information about Microfinance Ireland loans and mentoring services can be found on the website.

www.microfinanceireland.ie

THE EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVE

The Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme (EII Scheme) is a tax relief incentive scheme which provides all income tax relief to Qualifying Investors for investments in certain qualifying small and medium sized companies (SMEs). This scheme is available to the majority of small and medium sized trading companies – exceptions apply.⁴⁸

CREDIT REVIEW OFFICE

The Credit Review Office helps SMEs and farm businesses access credit from banks, providing a helpline for businesses to call that are having difficulty accessing credit, and an independent review process (similar to an Ombudsman) if businesses have been refused credit. The Office also monitors lending trends, and the level of credit sanctioned by the pillar banks, which is reported to the Minister for Finance. It has also developed a number of information notes on current topics, such as loan sales and self-funding, which are available on its website.

Banks currently covered by the Review process are AIB, BOI, Permanent tsb and Ulster Bank.
Email: info@creditreview.ie
Call: 1850211789

www.creditreview.ie

⁴⁸ <https://www.revenue.ie/en/starting-a-business/initiatives-for-startup-businesses-and-smes/the-employment-and-investment-incentive-eii-for-companies.aspx>

CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME

The Credit Guarantee Scheme⁴⁹ is a Government initiative that was set up to encourage additional lending to commercially viable SMEs which, under normal lending criteria, are unable to obtain new or additional facilities from their bank. Run by the SBCI – Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, the scheme facilitates this by providing banks (current participating lenders are Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank) with a Government-backed guarantee for 80% of the facility value.

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.

Among the main crowdfunding platforms in Ireland are:

Linked Finance

Linked Finance is an Irish owned crowdfunding site with favourable commission rates.

www.linkedfinance.com

Fund it

Fund it is an all-island crowdfunding website for Ireland's creative projects. It is run by Business to Arts, a not-for-profit organisation working to support resilience and transformation in the cultural sector through research, innovation and partnership.

www.fundit.ie

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

Kickstarter

Kickstarter helps artists, musicians, filmmakers, designers and other creators to access funding and support to develop their projects. To date, tens of thousands of creative projects – big and small – have been supported by the Kickstarter community.

www.kickstarter.com/ireland

⁴⁹ <http://sbci.gov.ie/sme-credit-guarantee-scheme-cgs>

ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA

Údarás na Gaeltachta can offer qualifying businesses and companies from various sectors a range of incentives⁵⁰ 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 varied business needs. Support incentives include the following:

- 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; and
- Innovation Voucher Initiative.

www.udaras.ie

⁵⁰ <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 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 series of events consists of a variety of developmental support actions, including inspiring speakers, information provision and facilitated business networking to celebrate the achievement of female entrepreneurs. In 2018 National Women's Enterprise Day was celebrated with events which were held in 15 locations, 14 of which were in regions outside Dublin, and attracted over 1,000 women in business.

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 (LAGs) 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.

<http://dracd.gov.ie/>

OTHER NETWORKS⁵¹

BNI

BNI is a global business networking referral organisation, represented in Ireland by BNI Ireland. There are over 1,000 members and more than 50 BNI groups across Ireland. The members help each other to get more business and BNI specialises in helping local business people meet new clients, learn valuable new marketing skills and increase sales through word of mouth marketing.

www.bni.ie

⁵¹ 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.

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. The location of local chambers is on the website.

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 is interested in promoting diversity and equality, entrepreneurship and leadership development, collaborating with like-minded people and organisations.

Established in 1983, Network Ireland has over 1,000 members, with 13 branches across Ireland.⁵² Through their branch network, they organise over 200 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 Annual Conference and Business Women of the Year 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.networkireland.ie

⁵² <http://www.networkireland.ie/our-branches>

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