

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

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

This booklet outlines supports which may be available to early stage female entrepreneurs based in rural Ireland and is published as part of the ACORNS 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.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	01
SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW OF MAIN AGENCIES	03
Local Enterprise Office	04
LEADER	10
Enterprise Ireland	12
SECTION 2 - DETAILS OF SUPPORTS AVAILABLE	14
Information/Advice	15
Training	22
Mentoring	28
Finance	30
Networks	43

INTRODUCTION

ACORNS - ***A**ccelerating the **C**reation **O**f **R**ural **N**ascent **S**tart-ups* - that are led by female entrepreneurs, is the objective of the aptly named initiative. This innovative programme, now in its tenth 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.

The National Enterprise Hub (www.neh.gov.ie) is a single source where you can easily find and learn about the range of government support programs available to Irish businesses. Whether you are an innovative start-up with international ambitions or an early-stage venture focusing on the domestic market, here you can find helpful resources to get started.

Having narrowed down potential sources of support in this way, entrepreneurs are encouraged to check out the website of the identified 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 has been designed to be complementary to the ACORNS programme by making female entrepreneurs 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. 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 executives 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 streamlined service to entrepreneurs. Protocols have been developed with key agencies to ensure that new and established business owners have access to all Government supports.

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 Credit Review 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.

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

CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE 31 LEO OFFICES LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

Carlow Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/carlow/
Email: enterprise@carlowcoco.ie
Tel: (059) 9129783

Address:
Enterprise House,
O'Brien Road,
Carlow

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri: 9:00 - 17:00
Closed lunch
13:00 - 14:00

Cavan Local Enterprise Office

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

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Thur: 9:15 - 17:15
Fri: 9:15 - 17:00

Clare Local Enterprise Office

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

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Cork City Local Enterprise Office

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

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Cork North & West Local Enterprise Office

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

Address:
Building C, West Cork
Business & Technology
Park, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:30 - 16:00

Email: northcork@leo.corkcoco.ie
Tel: (022) 43235

Address:
Spa House,
The Spa,
Mallow,
Co. Cork

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

² The LEO offices are closed Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Cork South Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/southcork/
Email: southcork@leo.corkcoco.ie
Tel: (021) 4285200

Address:
The Business Growth Hub,
Cork County Council,
Carrigrohane Road, Cork

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 16.30

Donegal Local Enterprise Office

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 Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 16.30

Dublin City Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/dublincity/
Email: info@leo.dublincity.ie
Tel: (01) 2225611

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri: 9:00 - 17:00
Closed lunch
13:00 - 14:00

Dublin South Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/southdublin/
Email: info@leo.sdublincoco.ie
Tel: (01) 4149215

Address:
County Hall,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24

Opening Hours²
Mon - Thur:
9:00 - 17:00
Fri: 9:00 - 16:30

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/DLR/
Email: leo@dlrcoco.ie
Tel: (01) 2047083

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Thurs:
9:00 - 17:00
Fri: 9:00 - 16:30

Fingal Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/fingal/
Email: info@leo.fingal.ie
Tel: (01) 8900800

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri: 9:00 - 17:00
Closed lunch
13:00 - 14:00

Galway Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/galway/
Email: info@leo.galwaycoco.ie
Tel: (091) 509090

Address:
First Floor,
County Buildings,
Prospect Hill, Galway

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

² The LEO offices are closed Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Kerry Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/kerry/

Email: LEO@kerrycoco.ie

Tel: (066) 7183522

Address:

County Buildings,
Rathass,
Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Kildare Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/kildare/

Email: localenterprise@kildarecoco.ie

Tel: (045) 980838

Address:

MERITS, Devoy Quarter,
Naas East, Naas,
Co. Kildare

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/kilkenny/

Email: info@leo.kilkennycoco.ie

Tel: (056) 7752662

Address:

Kilkenny County
Council, County Hall,
John Street, Kilkenny

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri: 9:00 - 17:00
Closed lunch
13:00 - 14:00

Laois Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/laois/

Email: localenterprise@laoiscoco.ie

Tel: (056) 8661800

Address:

County Hall,
Portlaoise,
Co Laois

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Leitrim Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/leitrim/

Email: info@leo.leitrimcoco.ie

Tel: (071) 9650420

Address:

Aras an Chontae,
Carrick on Shannon,
Co Leitrim

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Limerick Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/limerick/

Email: localenterprise@limerick.ie

Tel: (061) 557499

Address:

ENGINE,
Upper Cecil Street,
Limerick

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 16:00

Longford Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/longford/

Email: info@leo.longfordcoco.ie

Tel: (043) 3343346

Address:

Áras an Chontae,
Great Water Street,
Longford

Opening Hours²

Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

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

Louth Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/louth/
Email: info@leo.louthcoco.ie
Tel: (042) 9335457

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Mayo Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/mayo/
Email: info@leo.mayococo.ie
Tel: (094) 9064299

Address:
Mayo House
Moneen Rd, Moneen,
Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Opening Hours²
Mon - Thurs:
9:00 - 17:30
Fri: 9:00 - 17:00

Meath Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/meath/
Email: localenterprise@meathcoco.ie
Tel: (046) 9097000

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

Opening Hours²
Mon: 9:30 - 17:30
Tues - Fri:
9:30 - 17:00

Monaghan Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/monaghan/
Email: info@leo.monaghancoco.ie
Tel: (047) 71818

Address:
Unit 9, M:TEK Building,
Knockaconny,
Monaghan

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Offaly Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/offaly/
Email: info@leo.offalycoco.ie
Tel: (057) 9357480

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Roscommon Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/roscommon/
Email: localenterprise@roscommoncoco.ie
Tel: (090) 66 26263

Address:
Áras an Chontae,
Roscommon,
Co Roscommon

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Sligo Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/sligo/
Email: localenterprise@sligococo.ie
Tel: (071) 9144779

Address:
City Hall,
Quay Street,
Sligo

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

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

Tipperary Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/tipperary/
Email: leo@tipperarycoco.ie
Tel: (052) 6166200

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Tel: (0818) 065000

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Waterford Local Enterprise Office

Web: www.localenterprise.ie/waterford/
Email: info@leo.waterfordcouncil.ie
Tel: (051) 849905 (City)

Address:
32 The Mall,
Waterford

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 16.30

Tel: (051) 849905 (County)

Address:
Civic Offices,
Dungarvan,
Co. Waterford

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri
9:30 - 16.30

Westmeath Local Enterprise Office

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 Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Wexford Local Enterprise Office

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

Address:
Wexford County Council,
Carriglawn,
Wexford

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

Wicklow Local Enterprise Office

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

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

Opening Hours²
Mon - Fri:
9:00 - 17:00

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

LEADER

LEADER is a community-led approach to local development that supports private enterprises and community groups who improve quality of life and economic activity in rural areas. LEADER is a multi-annual programme for rural development co-funded by the EU through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan (CSP).

The programme plays an important role in supporting communities and enterprises in progressing job creation, social inclusion and environmental projects at local level. 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 in the form of Local Action Groups (LAGs) are charged with identifying the challenges to development in their own communities and developing initiatives to address these challenges.

Through Local Development Strategies (LDSs), LAGs seek to facilitate participation by all parties who wish to contribute to this process, thus ensuring that each LDS is as representative of the community view as possible. Over the lifetime of their respective LDS, LAGs will support those initiatives they consider will have the greatest impact on their community's development. LAGs are responsible for selecting and awarding LEADER funding to projects within their own geographical area.

The 2023-2027 LEADER programme will fund projects under the following three Themes and thirteen Sub-Themes:

LEADER THEME	1. Economic Development and Job Creation	2. Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion	3. Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
SUB THEMES	• The Green Economy • Agricultural Diversification • Rural Tourism & Recreation • Enterprise Development • Rural Food Production • Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises	• Rural Infrastructure • Accessible Services • Optimising Digital Connectivity • Rural Youth	• Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment • Climate Change Capacity Building • Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The programme is open to men and women equally to apply for funding. In this context, equality has been and will continue to be promoted. Actions supported under the Economic Development and Job Creation theme may include sector-specific training programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, social enterprises, start-ups and established businesses.

GEOGRAPHICAL 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 area.

COMMUNITY LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT (CLLD) APPROACH

As a community led local development approach, LEADER places the rural community at its centre. LAGs are charged with identifying and determining where the challenges to development lie and what is needed in order to address these challenges in their own communities. This is outlined in the LDSs developed by each LAG.

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

A list of the Local Action Groups is available on the Government of Ireland website at:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c45498-local-action-groups/>

The Programme is administered by LAGs throughout the country. These LAGs 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 LDS. The Department of Rural and Community Development has no role in selecting what projects are funded.

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 coordinated and effective allocation of resources.

Further Information

Please see the following link for a list of approved projects under the LEADER Programme:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b849be-local-action-groups-approved-projects-2014-2020/>

Government of Ireland website containing information on LEADER

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/179274-leader-rural-development/>

Local Action Groups (LAGs)

Those interested in accessing assistance under the LEADER Programme should, in the first instance, contact the Implementing Partner of their local LAG to discuss their proposed project. Please see the following link for contact details of <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c45498-local-action-groups>.

www.gov.ie/drcd

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 support services 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 third-level 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 – ‘High Potential Start Ups’

In terms of early stage businesses Enterprise Ireland supports what they call high potential start-ups, businesses that are internationally focused, have developed a minimum viable product (MVP) and demonstrated some commercial traction.

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 years of starting up.

It is also worth noting that Enterprise Ireland's HPSU main support mechanism is based on equity investment rather than grants on a co-funding basis with other investors, when a truly international led business is up and running and ready to grow and scale in international markets thus adding value and employment in the Irish economy. They do not lead on investment rounds and you will need to raise external investment before they can get involved in the round.

Details of supports for High Potential Start Ups can be accessed in the link below:

<https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/>

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 (LEO).

Support for Women in Business

In 2011 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 women 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 women led business opportunities.

A range of initiatives has been put in place by Enterprise Ireland to respond to the identified needs. These include partnering on women specific accelerator programmes, the identification and promotion of role models, sponsorship of events and awards and supports for networks, as well as the introduction of female specific funding calls under the Pre-Seed Start Fund.

Enterprise Ireland also funds and supports development programmes which are focused on optimising the business capabilities for women led businesses. Included among these is Going for Growth (www.goingforgrowth.com).

Female targeted initiatives continue to have a positive impact. In 2023, 31% of start-ups funded by EI had a woman in the Founding team.

In January 2020 Enterprise Ireland launched a six-year strategy for Women in Business. The new strategy was developed based on extensive research and represents a broader approach by Enterprise Ireland to tackling the continued gap between men and women starting and growing businesses in Ireland. The research identified multiple inter-connected contributory factors, including cultural and societal roots. The research indicated that women take a different approach to risk and decision making, their business networks tend not to be as broad as their male counterparts, which can have an adverse impact on their access to 'warm introductions' particularly in the area of securing funding. In addition, women can tend to be more critical in assessing their own capability and this in turn can impact on their confidence.

On a societal level, women in Ireland continue to shoulder the bulk of unpaid work and in relation to educational and employment sectors, women are much more likely to operate in sectors such as health and education than in engineering, ICT or manufacturing.

Enterprise Ireland's Women in Business strategy aims to address these challenges and to this end sets out four key objectives for 2025:

1. Increase the number of women-led companies that are growing and scaling through international trade.
2. Increase the number of women in middle and senior management and leadership roles in Irish companies.
3. Increase the number of women becoming entrepreneurs
4. Increase the number of women-led start ups with high potential

Underpinning the four objectives are 24 actions that Enterprise Ireland has embarked upon working in partnership with the wider eco-system.

The Enterprise Ireland strategy for Women in Business can be accessed here: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/documents/action-plan-for-women-in-business-en-92306.pdf>

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.

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

A list of the Local Action Groups is available on the Government of Ireland website at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c45498-local-action-groups/>

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.³

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.

EI has recently launched The National Enterprise Hub (www.neh.gov.ie), a one-stop shop where you can easily find and learn about the range of government support programmes available to Irish businesses.

EI also makes available to client companies its Market Research Centre⁴, its International Office Network and the opportunity to take part in organised Trade Initiatives.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

BORD BIA

- **Bord Bia Website**

The Bord Bia website is an online resource for Irish food, drink and horticulture businesses. It provides information on upcoming events, publications, sector overview and much more.

www.bordbia.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

³ A High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) is defined as a start-up venture that is:

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

⁴ 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. Access for can also be requested for LEO clients. More information is available at: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Export-Assistance/Market-Research-Centre/Market-Research-Centre.html>

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 help start-ups to navigate the minefield of raising finance, sorting out business propositions and arranging agreements with shareholders and investors. They also work closely with Enterprise Ireland clients on their Pre-Seed Start Fund Application, as well as running a 12 week Prep4 Seed Investor Ready Programme with Enterprise Ireland.

The BICs also 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:

- AxisBic (formerly Cork BIC) – www.axisbic.com
- Furthr (Dublin) – www.furthr.ie
- Propelor (formerly South East BIC) – www.propelorbic.ie
- West Business Innovation Centre – www.westbic.ie

DESIGN AND CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCI) 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 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.

• **Showcase⁵**

Showcase – Ireland's Creative Expo® has established itself as the foremost trade event for retailers from around the world to discover unique, design-led products across fashion, jewellery and home & giftware. Showcase is a partnership between DCCI and Showcase Ireland Events Ltd, with support from Enterprise Ireland and the LEOS, in promoting the show internationally.

• **Irish Business Design Challenge⁶**

The DCCI Irish Business Design Challenge (IBDC) is aimed at all eligible micro, small and medium enterprises in Ireland that have designed sustainable products, services, or strategies that have benefitted their customers, communities and the environment at large.

• **Irish Design Week⁷**

Irish Design Week is a week-long series of events that focuses on why design matters and highlights complex design issues around sustainability, diversity and inclusion. A full programme of events is organised by DCCI as well as a wide range of workshops, exhibitions, talks and conferences which take place across the country. The Irish design community are invited to contribute their events to the programme to help ensure a wide range of audiences is catered for.

⁵ <https://showcaseireland.com/>

⁶ www.dcci.ie/whats-on/dcci-awards-2024/dcci-irish-business-design-challenge/

⁷ www.dcci.ie/whats-on/irish-design-week/

- **Made Local campaign⁸**

The Made Local, Made to Last campaign was initially developed by Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI) in 2020 to help the Irish craft and design sector through the challenges brought about by COVID-19. The campaign brings together makers, retailers and consumers to celebrate and support Irish makers and their work and to drive Irish made craft sales. It is a year-round social media campaign, supported by high profile national advertising and marketing campaigns.

- **August Craft Month in collaboration with Craft NI⁹**

August Craft Month is an all-island celebration of craft and design that takes place every August. It is led by DCCI, in partnership with Craft NI. August Craft Month provides opportunities for designers, makers, communities, families, collectors and enthusiasts from across the island of Ireland to make, see, learn about and buy craft.

- **Future Makers¹⁰**

Future Makers is one of the largest prize-funded award programmes in Europe. It creates a platform to showcase talent, as well as providing much needed financial support. Its aim is to support the next generation of makers, designers and craftspeople to take the step from training into enterprise.

- **Direct-selling opportunities**

DCCI supports and promotes selected design and craft enterprises at direct-selling events. These include key shows that are open to the public such as Bloom and Gifted – The Contemporary Craft & Design Fair.

www.dcci.ie

INTERTRADEIRELAND

InterTradeIreland is a Cross-Border Trade and Business Development Body, funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in Ireland (DETE) 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.

InterTradeIreland's dedicated Post-Brexit advisory service helps companies to manage the new trading relationship between Britain and the EU.

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 60,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradeIreland and over €1.95bn worth of trade and business development has been generated.

www.intertradeireland.com

⁸ www.dcci.ie/about/what-we-do/our-initiatives/made-local/

⁹ www.dcci.ie/whats-on/dcci-august-craft-month/

¹⁰ www.dcci.ie/dcci-future-makers/

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) supports and assists 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.¹¹

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 billions of euro 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.gov.ie

OFFICE OF THE REVENUE COMMISSIONERS

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

Before registering for tax purposes, one of the following must be actioned -

- A self-employed individual must have a PPS number (personal public service number) (i.e. social security number) obtainable only from the Department of Social Protection.¹³
- 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.¹⁴

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

¹¹ <https://www.besmart.ie/>

¹² <http://www.revenue.ie/en/starting-a-business/index.aspx>

¹³ www.welfare.ie

¹⁴ www.ros.ie

MAKING IT EASIER 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.¹⁵

Another Government-led initiative designed to assist entrepreneurs is also available online: Start Up Relief for Entrepreneurs (SURE) is a tax refund calculator for potential entrepreneurs.¹⁶

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 Programme. This scheme awards vouchers of €10,000 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

¹⁵ <http://www.businessregulation.ie/BusinessReg/Starting-a-Business/>

¹⁶ <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/investment/relief-investment-corporate-trades/start-up-relief-for-entrepreneurs.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 is 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.¹⁷

- **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 most 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.

- **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.

- **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.

Besides these specific training courses, business advice clinics, 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

¹⁷ <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 **Economic Development** theme, LEADER can support micro, small and medium enterprises. Potential sectors identified for future enterprise development and LEADER funding include the following:

- The Green Economy
- Agricultural Diversification
- Rural Tourism & Recreation
- Enterprise Development
- Rural Food Production

Social, Community & Cooperative Enterprises Actions supported under this theme may include sector-specific training programmes, among other supports, for aspiring entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, social enterprises, start-ups and established SMEs.

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

www.gov.ie/drcd

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/Technological Universities 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 stipend 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.¹⁸

Ensuring that businesswomen realise their full business potential is a 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 specifically tailored development programmes to support ambitious women optimise their business success.

EI has also supported **Going for Growth**¹⁹ since its implementation in 2009. More recently, EI also supports 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, has some revenues or has raised significant equity investment, 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 ambitious, and that she expects to be an exporter. If successful, she will be placed with other early stage entrepreneurs at a dedicated Starting Strong table. Selection is on a competitive basis.

EI also work closely with the BICs, running a 12-week Prep4 Seed Investor Ready Programme.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

¹⁸ www.newfrontiers.ie/

¹⁹ <http://www.goingforgrowth.com/>

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.

- **Grow with Aldi**

Grow with Aldi was launched in 2018, in collaboration with Bord Bia. The programme is designed to help small to medium Irish food and drink businesses secure a retail listing with a national retailer. Participants receive tailored mentoring and access to bespoke workshops with Aldi buyers and Bord Bia technical experts. More information is available at www.aldi.ie/grow

- **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. Producers on the programme will participate in a tailored workshop to support them in having the tools to have a successful product launch. More information is available at www.lidl.ie/kickstart

- **Food Works**

Food Works is Ireland's leading accelerator programme for food and drink start-ups. The programme works with a small number of high potential food and drink start-up teams boasting a strong food or drink business idea. The programme, run by Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland and Teagasc, aims to foster and encourage innovative new product ideas which satisfy a genuine market need, while supporting the growth of the Irish food industry on a global scale. Since 2012, Food Works has worked with over 100 start-ups in developing scalable and export focused business ideas. More information can be found at 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.

- **Sustainability and the Environment**

They work with the Irish Seafood Industry to ensure the sustainable production of Irish Seafood by minimising impacts, improving performance efficiencies and achieving the highest standards in food safety, quality and environmental management.

- **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 Innovation Hub**

The Seafood Innovation Hub fosters innovation and assists seafood businesses to develop new products and processes. It applies an Innovation design process to provide seafood specific supports that can add-value, by facilitating discussions on technical feasibility, market desirability and commercial viability, interpreting findings and arriving at an action plan through a business specific case.

www.bim.ie

TEAGASC

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

The Options Programme²⁰ is designed to assist farming families in looking at all options for growing farm profit and other possibilities for the future. The programme aims to:

- Provide new thinking
- Generate new ideas
- Generate additional income on and off farm.

The programme consists of a series of workshops covering a wide range of topics. Guest farmers who have successfully diversified speak at each workshop. Teagasc specialists are also in attendance to answer questions. Visits to farms with successfully diversified farm enterprises are a vital aspect of the programme. Participants also have the opportunity to network with local development and training agencies.

www.teagasc.ie

²⁰ <https://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-development/options-programme/>

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 knowledge and experience.

All applications for mentor assistance are dealt with individually. To ensure a mentor with the right skills and experience is assigned, a business needs analysis to assess the key need of the business is carried out.

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 a business owner is unsure as to what specific area(s) they 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

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 client companies 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 experienced business people, 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 up to 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.

www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/supports/mentor-grant

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.²¹

- **Feasibility Study Grant²²**

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 Grant²³**

A Priming Grant is a business start-up grant, available to micro enterprises within the first eighteen months of start-up for growth in domestic and/or export markets.

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.

- **Business Expansion Grant²⁴**

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:

- In general, the enterprise must not employ more than 10 people; In some cases, depending on certain criteria, businesses with 10 employees or more may be eligible, please contact your [Local Enterprise Office](#) advisor for more information on eligibility;

²¹ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Eligibility-Criteria/Eligibility-Criteria.html>

²² www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Feasibility-Grant/

²³ www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Priming-Grant/

²⁴ www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Business-Expansion-Grant/

- The enterprise must be established, registered and operate within the geographic location of the Local Enterprise Office;
- The enterprise must operate in the commercial sphere;
- The enterprise must demonstrate a market for the product/service;
- The enterprise must have potential for growth in domestic and/or export markets and also potential for new job creation.

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.

Priming and Business Expansion Grants may be awarded to sole traders, partnerships or limited companies that fulfil the following criteria:

- In general, the enterprise must not employ more than 10 people; In some cases, depending on certain criteria, businesses with 10 employees or more may be eligible, please contact your Local Enterprise Office advisor for more information on eligibility;
- The enterprise must be established, registered and operate within the geographic location of the Local Enterprise Office;
- The enterprise must operate in the commercial sphere;
- The enterprise must demonstrate a market for the product/service;
- The enterprise must have potential for growth in domestic and/or export markets and also potential for new job creation.

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 €50,000, or with a cumulative value of €100,000 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 Minimis state aid'.

• **Grow Digital Voucher Scheme²⁵**

The objective of the Grow Digital Voucher is to help Small Businesses (with between 1 and 50 paid employees) to improve efficiency, expand reach, and compete effectively through the purchase and implementation of new digital software. It is a grant covering 50% of eligible costs (minimum grant of €500 up to a maximum grant of €5,000) limited to new software subscriptions for a period of 12 months (e.g., e-commerce, CRM, accounting, cyber security) and training and configuration of the software (limited to 50% of overall project cost). Please consult LocalEnterprise.ie for the full list of eligibility criteria.

²⁵ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Portal/Growdigital/>

- **The Market Explorer Grant**²⁶

The Market Explorer Grant supports first time and small-scale exporters to undertake essential market research and to support the development of viable and sustainable market entry strategies in new geographic markets for businesses. The amount of the grant is to a maximum of €10,000 or 50% of eligible costs. The Market Explorer Grant is for businesses seeking to explore either a new geographic market for an existing product/service or an existing geographic market for a new product/service.

- **Energy Efficiency Grant**²⁷

The Energy Efficiency Grant supports SMEs (1-50 employees) in implementing sustainability projects, following a Green for Business, Green Start, or SEAI Energy Audit. It aims to support businesses to reduce environmental impact and operational costs, fostering innovation and competitiveness. Eligible projects include energy-efficient equipment upgrades, smart controls, and waste reduction systems, with a 75% grant covering costs (€750-€10,000). Please consult Local Enterprise.ie for the full list of eligibility criteria.

- **Green for Business**²⁸

The objective of the Green for Business support is to help prepare small businesses for the low carbon, more resource efficient economy of the future. It supports clients to engage a consultant to avail of advice and technical support, covering topics such as resource efficiency, understanding your carbon footprint and implementing an environmental management system.

- **Lean for Business**²⁹

The objective of the Lean for Business programme is to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of small businesses (with between 1 and 50 paid employees) by introducing and implementing Lean business principles and practices. In simpler terms, it's about helping businesses to:

- Reduce waste.
- Improve productivity.
- Increase profitability.
- Create better value for customers.
- And generally become more effective.

LEO clients can avail of the support of a Lean Consultant, who will work with the business to introduce Lean principles, undertake a specific cost reduction project and assist the company in benchmarking its performance. Please consult Local Enterprise.ie for the full list of eligibility criteria.

- **Digital for Business**³⁰

The Digital for Business initiative provides SMEs with access to expert digital consultancy. A qualified consultant will analyze existing digital systems, identify improvement opportunities, and develop a practical digital action plan. This support aims to enhance online presence and operational efficiency, enabling businesses to expand their reach and remain competitive in the digital marketplace. Eligible applicants must be trading for at least six months, tax compliant, and are not clients of Enterprise Ireland or IDA. Please consult Local Enterprise.ie for the full list of eligibility criteria.

²⁶ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Portal/Discover-Business-Supports/Financial-Supports/Market-Explorer-Grant/Market-Explorer-Grant.html>

²⁷ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Energy/WHAT-IS-THE-ENERGY-EFFICIENCY-GRANT/>

²⁸ The programme is open to all enterprises with 1-50 employees except those involved in activities that the Local Enterprise Offices consider as ineligible for example primary agricultural businesses - farms or as involving an unacceptable reputational risk: gambling including 'gaming' (as defined in the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956), adult entertainment, tobacco products and cannabis-based products which are not authorised as medicines) <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Green/Green-for-business.html>

²⁹ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Lean/Lean-for-Business.html>

³⁰ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Digital/What-is-Digital-For-Business-.html>

ENTERPRISE IRELAND SUPPORTS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LEOS

Research, Development and Innovation Funding

The RD&I Fund supports the development of new or substantially improved products, services or processes which will have a competitive advantage in a company's target market.

Intellectual Property Strategy Offer³¹

To complement Enterprise Ireland's RD&I programmes, the 'Intellectual Property (IP) Strategy Offer' is an additional support to incentivise companies to develop an IP strategy, focused on capturing, managing and exploiting their R&D results to greater effect. This offer comprises of two separate grants: IP Start (max. grant rate 80% and max. expenditure €2,700) and IP Plus (max. grant rate 50% and max. expenditure €70,000). The focus on IP Strategy emphasises the importance of securing the full range of RD&I related IP assets (including patents, designs, trade secrets, copyright, trademarks etc) and deploying them strategically for the benefit of the business. The development of an effective IP strategy can assist companies in achieving their growth targets. This offer seeks to assist companies to address common issues of (a) low IP awareness, (b) limited internal IP management capability and (c) the cost of obtaining external IP expertise. These capability and resource constraints are commonly reported by SMEs as key barriers to undertaking IP activity. The 'Intellectual Property (IP) Strategy Offer' is also open to eligible Local Enterprise Office clients.

Innovation Partnership Programme

The Innovation Partnership Programme can help you to take your business to the next level. The Local Enterprise Office in partnership with Enterprise Ireland can help your company to access the latest skills and expertise from research institutes throughout Ireland. The Innovation Partnership Programme can provide up to 80% of the cost of research work towards the development of new and improved products, processes or services, or generate new knowledge and know-how.

GradStart³²

The objective of GradStart is to assist indigenous companies to scale and grow their businesses through the introduction of good graduate talent to deliver clearly defined projects. GradStart support LEO client companies who have a minimum of five full time employees with ambitious growth plans to employ a graduate on a rolling basis for a 2-year contract duration. Graduates will have a minimum Level 6 qualification on the National Vocational Qualifications Framework or equivalent. The offer is available to LEO client companies who meet the programme criteria. The graduate will complete a project as defined by the company and linked to their overall growth plan. The company will identify an in-company mentor to work with the graduates; they will provide an infrastructure that supports them, both in their development and in the completion of the project, for the duration of the graduate(s) employment. Graduates may work in any area of the business excluding roles related to sales and marketing activities.

www.localenterprise.ie

³¹ <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Research-Development-and-Innovation-Support/IP-Strategy-Offer/IP-Strategy-Offer.html>

³² www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/supports/grad-start

LEADER

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 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 coordinated and effective allocation of resources.

www.gov.ie/drcd

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 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.

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 Grant³³**

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 research on export market potential, technical research, prototyping and business and financial plan development.

- **Innovation Voucher³⁴**

Innovation Vouchers, worth up to €10,000, are available to assist early stage companies to work with a registered third-level institution 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.

- **New Frontiers Entrepreneur Development Programme³⁵**

New Frontiers is Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme run in partnership with the Institutes of Technology/ Technological Universities. 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.

³³ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Funding-Supports/Company/HPSU-Funding/HPSU-Feasibility-Study-Grant-.html>

³⁴ This voucher is not restricted to EI clients. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/research-innovation/companies/collaborate-with-companies-research-institutes/innovation-voucher.shortcut.html>

³⁵ More details are available on the website. <https://www.newfrontiers.ie/>

Companies that have a well-developed business plan and need to raise investment for their business can apply for the following supports:

- **Pre-Seed Start Fund³⁶**

The HPSU Pre-Seed Fund supports early-stage companies to reach key technical and commercial milestones required to attract future Seed Funding within 6 – 18 months. The purpose is to accelerate the growth of early-stage start-up companies that have the capacity and ambition to succeed in global markets. To apply for this, you can do so directly via Pre-Seed Start Fund - Enterprise Ireland ([enterprise-ireland.com](https://www.enterprise-ireland.com))

- **Innovative HPSU Fund (Equity)³⁷**

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.

www.enterprise-ireland.com

³⁶ <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/supports/pre-seed-start-fund>. The BICs work closely with EI clients on their PSSF Application and also run a 12 week Prep4 Seed Investor Ready Programme.

³⁷ More details are available on the website. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/innovative-hpsu-fund>

OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

BORD BIA

Bord Bia offers financial supports for marketing and related activities to client companies with an annual turnover of over €100,000. The application for the Marketing Assistance Programme grant is open from November until the end of January each year. Further information is available on the Bord Bia website.

www.bordbia.ie

BORD IASCAIGH MHARA (BIM)

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

www.bim.ie

INTERTRADEIRELAND

Sourcing specialist consultancy advice or finding the right person with the right skills for your business can be a challenge. InterTradeIreland can provide support in these areas, assisting not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and advice, and vital introductions. Supports include the following:

Trade Export Pathway³⁸

Whether your business is getting ready to export or growing exports, InterTradeIreland offer free, specialist support to grow your exports across six different steps of the export pathway. Your business will benefit from bespoke support tailored to your specific needs.

Digital Sales Webinars³⁹

InterTradeIreland's Digital Sales Webinars are designed to provide practical guidance for businesses wishing to develop their digital skills and know-how. This series of webinars are delivered by leading digital experts and include practical demonstrations of how to implement various digital disciplines utilising best practice.

Equity Advisory Service⁴⁰

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.

Acumen⁴¹

Acumen aims to enhance the capacity and capability of SMEs to take the first formal steps onto the export ladder by helping to fund an experienced and skilled sales resource to help businesses to identify new opportunities and win new sales in the cross-border market.

Innovation Boost⁴²

Innovation Boost (previously known as Fusion) can provide technology support for product development and innovation by helping to fund a high calibre science, engineering or technology graduate and partnering with a third level institution with specific expertise.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs⁴³

In February 2024, the Irish Government announced €800m of funding for Shared Island priorities, including €30m towards the establishment of a new Shared Island Enterprise Scheme developed by InterTradeIreland, Invest Northern Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. As part of this scheme, a dedicated initiative to foster women's entrepreneurship on an all-island basis was launched. New opportunities for support will be announced later this year.

www.intertradeireland.com

³⁸ <https://www.intertradeireland.com/sales-growth/trade-export-pathway>

³⁹ <https://www.intertradeireland.com/sales-growth/digital-sales-supports/webinars/webinar-hub>

⁴⁰ <https://www.intertradeireland.com/funding/equity-advisory-service>

⁴¹ <https://www.intertradeireland.com/sales-growth/acumen/>

⁴² <https://www.intertradeireland.com/innovation/innovation-boost>

⁴³ <https://www.intertradeireland.com/entrepreneurship/womens-entrepreneurship>

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. In this regard, the best source of small scale seed capital for many start-ups continues to be family or friends with the important proviso that both sides know and agree on the ground rules. A simple letter of understanding signed by all parties may be sufficient.

Some business angels 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.

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, but have extensive business acumen and industry experience, which can help accelerate the growth of the start-up.

www.hban.org

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 a range of Loan Packages from €2,000 to €50,000 for a wide variety of purposes including working capital, stock and capital expenditure, based on business stage and specific business need. Loan terms are typically available from three to five years.

Microfinance Ireland offers discounted interest rates for applications received through Local Enterprise Offices and Local Development Companies.

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 loan packages and mentoring services can be found on the website.

www.microfinanceireland.ie

THE EMPLOYMENT INVESTMENT INCENTIVE

The Employment Investment Incentive Scheme (EII Scheme)⁴⁴ is a tax relief incentive scheme which aims to encourage individuals to provide equity based finance to trading companies. It provides 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.

www.revenue.ie

CREDIT REVIEW

Credit Review was set up by the Minister for Finance to ensure the bank credit system is operating effectively for SME's, sole traders and farmers.

They provide an informal, effective and affordable appeals process for SME and farm businesses who:

- Have been refused bank credit;
- had existing facilities reduced or withdrawn;
- need to restructure debt with their bank.

Participating banks include: AIB, Bank of Ireland and PTSB, and they review cover credit applications of up to €3m (€100-€250 fee).

The Credit Review team is made up of expert credit/debt professionals, across Ireland, with front-line SME and farming finance experience. The Reviewers engage directly with borrowers by phone, email or videocall. They know and understand the banking sector and how it works. They also understand what it takes to run a successful business. When working on an appeal, their support is determined by their assessment of viability/ability of the business to repay the debt sought.

Their success rates are strong - banks agree to provide credit in over 80% of the cases they support.

Where they are unable to recommend credit, their Reviewers will try to provide a roadmap for the business so that future credit applications can succeed.

Credit Review is available to help all SMEs and farms on credit matters by providing accessible, easy to understand and affordable expert assistance and information.

A call to the Credit Review helpline (Tel: 0818 211 789) is all it takes to find out more – and sometimes issues can be resolved without needing a formal appeal.

Credit Review can also be contacted via email (info@creditreview.ie), and you can visit the website www.creditreview.ie to find out more and request a callback.

www.creditreview.ie

⁴⁴ <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/investment/relief-corporate/employment-investment-incentive.aspx>

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 or Peer to Peer (P2P) lending platform.

www.linkedfinance.com

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

Spark Crowdfunding

Spark Crowdfunding is an equity crowdfunding platform based in Dublin. Established in early 2018, they help Irish companies raise new funds from a vast pool of private investors.

www.sparkcrowdfunding.com

Republic Europe

Republic Europe is a London-based equity crowdfunding platform enabling all types of growth-focused businesses to raise capital and a community in the process.

www.europe.republic.com

STRATEGIC BAKING CORPORATION OF IRELAND

The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) was established to offer low-cost credit to Irish SMEs, while driving competition and innovation in the Irish finance market. The SBCI's goal is to ensure access to flexible funding for Irish SMEs by facilitating the provision of:

- flexible products with longer maturity and capital repayment flexibility and in some instances the provision of a partial guarantee subject to credit approval
- lower cost funding to financial institutions, the benefit of which is passed on to SMEs
- market access for new entrants to the SME lending market, creating real competition.

Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme⁴⁵

This scheme provides SMEs and Small Mid-Caps, including farmers and fishers, with long-term financing to either:

- encourage the growth and resilience of their enterprise or
- invest in climate action and environmental sustainability measures designed to improve their performance.

www.sbc.gov.ie

ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA

Údarás na Gaeltachta can offer qualifying businesses and companies from various sectors a range of incentives 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 and other supports to assist varied business needs. Financial support incentives include the following:

- Feasibility Study Grant;
- Research and Development Grant;
- Capital Grant;
- Employment Grant;
- Training Grant;
- Equity Investment;
- Development of Market Research Skills;
- Online Trading Scheme; and
- Trade Fair Participation Scheme.

www.udaras.ie

⁴⁵ <https://sbci.gov.ie/products/growth-and-sustainability-loan-scheme>

NETWORKS

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

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

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

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.

www.gov.ie/drcd

OTHER NETWORKS

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

BNI

One of the larger of these groups is BNI Ireland, which is part of the world's largest business networking and referral organisation. 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

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Chambers Ireland is the largest business network on the island of Ireland. It is the umbrella group for local affiliated chambers.

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 17 branches across Ireland. 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.

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

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