

Enterprise Agencies in Belfast



The local enterprise agencies (LEAs) in Belfast are located throughout the city and work together to maximise the support for local entrepreneurship and local businesses.

...they exist to support local enterprise and business rather than for financial gain.

They were set up by local business people and active community leaders to support individuals to set up their own business, to create jobs and stimulate further development within local areas.

They provide best value delivery to the government and investors, as they exist to support local enterprise and business rather than for financial gain.

There are a growing number of organisations in Belfast who offer training and support for business start up and business growth but the enterprise agency is the first local contact point for any individual seeking to start, maintain or grow a business.

Through the voluntary efforts of Directors, the professionalism of paid staff, the direct involvement of the Council, Invest NI and their staff and the participation of the local business community, Local Enterprise Agencies make a real contribution to the social capital of Belfast. They provide the capacity, the capability and the expertise to make things work better at local level. They also provide the means by which local communities can respond to both opportunity and challenge.

Local Enterprise Agencies are locally based, not-for-profit companies who reinvest any surplus funds back into business support.

Ormeau Business Park - one of six run by Belfast's local Enterprise Agencies





Representatives of the Belfast Local Enterprise Agencies

Capacity

- 400,000 sq ft of workspace and office space is rented out to local people to start their own business.
- Over 350 units/offices to rent.
- Almost 2000 people are employed across seven sites.
- 56 Voluntary Directors drawn from the local community who oversee local operations.
- 47 staff, who are in the main graduates and members of the Institute of Business Consulting. Their Chief Executives and Directors have significant involvement in the local community as well as at a strategic level with other economic development bodies. They draw on the expertise of specialist trainers and consultants to meet client needs.
- Operate to ISO9002 standard.

Enterprise NI

Enterprise Northern Ireland (ENI) is the organisation representing the network of local enterprise agencies in Northern Ireland. By working together through Enterprise NI, Local Enterprise Agencies can offer a service of a consistent standard across Northern Ireland.

Enterprise Northern Ireland ensures that there is a minimum level of support available in every Local Enterprise Agency and coordinates a number of programmes designed to encourage enterprise, start up and business growth.

Enterprise Northern Ireland also ensures that every agency operates a quality service, and over the past 5 years has helped to improve IT infrastructure, customer service within agencies, training and professionalism of staff and public accountability.

Services

Workspace and offices

Each organization offers flexible and low cost accommodation for local businesses. While most of the accommodation was originally warehouses and workshops targeted at micro industry, the enterprise agencies are starting to offer professional and sometimes serviced offices for the growing service sector. Tenants can benefit from on site services that are offered, which may include discounted room hire, access to photocopying and administrative services and access to business advice, information and programmes. The workspace is ideal for new start up companies as the Enterprise agencies can give more flexible lease terms than those offered by the private sector. ►



► Enterprise Agencies in Belfast continued...

Promoting enterprise in the community

The Local Enterprise Agencies continually work to promote enterprise through ongoing community outreach and marketing, delivery of taster workshops and Exploring Enterprise programmes. They work in partnership with community organisations and also target specific groups such as ethnic minorities, women and the unemployed.

Helping individuals and groups start in business

Start A Business Programme

The Programme is funded by Invest Northern Ireland and is structured to help people start a business. It provides a package of advice, training and support ensuring people have a strong team to help them along the way.

The Business Advisory Service

Clients are provided with the services of an expert business adviser who works on a one-to-one confidential basis to help prepare the business. Advisors are also available to meet with once the business has started.

The Into-Business Course

This course comprises eight modules focusing particularly on sales and marketing, financial management, legal and statutory issues, ICT and general business practices. The course is offered over four days or eight evenings.

The Financial Planning Service

This service will help you to decide how much money you will need to start the business and explore all potential sources of funding.

New Deal for Self Employment

This programme is available to the following:

- Lone parents in receipt of income support, or who work less than sixteen hours per week.
- 18-24 year olds who have been claiming job-seekers allowance for six months or more.
- 25 + who have been claiming job-seekers allowance for eighteen months or more.
- New Deal for Partners.

The main benefit is a period of "Test trading" enabling people to operate in business for a period of 26 weeks, but maintain any benefits which they are currently receiving plus an additional training and childcare allowance. At the end of the 26 weeks, participants will be encouraged to come off benefits and remain in self-employment. The Jobs & Benefits Office will advise an individual on their eligibility for the programme.

Enterprise Northern Ireland Loan Fund

The aim of the Loan Fund is to make funding more accessible to those starting or operating a small business and in support of the loan,

to provide advice on cash flow and other business advice.

The Loan Fund offers:

- Loans from £500 upwards.
- Financial planning support to determine the funding needs of the business.
- Flexible repayment terms.
- A competitive interest rate.
- No arrangement fee (only applies to new start businesses).
- No security required.

There are also local initiatives to meet the needs of specific targeted groups.

The Virtual Secretary Programme

helps unemployed women to gain admin and IT skills to enable them to either gain employment in an administrative capacity or to become self employed as a Virtual Secretary.

The Learn 2 Earn programme

helps women to set up their own business in the catering and hospitality sector by giving them practical skills, as well as developing their personal and business skills.

The Second Chance Programme

reaches out to individuals who have previously been in business but have had to stop trading or have been declared bankrupt, to start a new business in spite of possible past experiences.

► Enterprise Agencies in Belfast continued...

The Franchise Start up programme

promotes the option of franchising which is particularly suitable for someone with the capital to buy a franchise but who lacks the business acumen or know-how.

Social Entrepreneurship Programme

This programme, funded by Invest Northern Ireland, is to help community groups who have a business idea. Social enterprises have social objectives as well as financial objectives and any profits are returned to the organisation rather than to the private individual.

- Offers pre-business support including advice on business concept, researching the market and financing the project.
- Mentoring: to help identify investors for the project, generate ideas, develop networks and do background research.
- Business Plan Support.
- Approval of Financial Start-up Package.
- Start-up Capability Building (training and one-to-one mentoring).
- Post Start Operational Aftercare (training and one-to-one mentoring).

Supporting the Micro Business

Tradelinks

1-2-1 mentoring support for businesses wishing to develop cross border trade. Business needs are assessed and a suitable mentor is identified to assist with the specific needs.

Microtrade

Support for micro-businesses wishing to gain cross border trade or alliances.

- Market Entry Assistance funding to encourage and support companies in taking proactive steps towards developing sales and business opportunities in a cross border market.
- Funding packages for certain types of business collaboration cross border.
- Courses on tendering for public sector contracts.

Franchisor Programme

The Franchisor Programme supports dynamic businesses to understand the opportunities in franchising, to gear their business up and running and to develop systems and procedures that allow the business to be replicated in a franchise format.

There are a number of benefits associated with franchising businesses:

- Provides the opportunity to expand business quickly.
- Expansion is at a low cost and risk (most of finance provided by franchisee).
- Allows businesses to find highly skilled people who will help grow the business.
- No involvement in daily operations of the franchise allowing the business to concentrate on other opportunities.

Womens 1-2-1 Programme

This programme supports women who are in their first years of running their business through identifying and matching them with a suitable mentor. The mentor is also a female who has had the experience of running her own business and can pass on practical and life experience. The programme also brings mentors and mentees together on a regular basis for group learning and networking.

The enterprise agencies offer workshops on a range of business issues...

Enterprise Investment Scheme

The EIS may be an appropriate vehicle to raise the capital of a company. It is a government initiative with the purpose of helping certain types of small higher risk unquoted trading companies raise capital. It does so by providing a range of tax reliefs for investors in qualifying shares in these companies. This programme is designed to raise awareness of the EIS among investors and assist local businesses to become EIS approved in order to attract investment.

Thimble

This is a network of business support for SMEs within the textile sector. Collectively the group export to the mainland UK, Republic of Ireland, Europe and USA. The group has been instrumental in profiling the work of fashion and textile designers based in Northern Ireland.

Business Workshops and Seminars

The enterprise agencies offer workshops on a range of business issues mainly targeted at young businesses. They are also well informed on the range of other business support programmes available and can signpost a business to the right level of support.

Contact your Local Enterprise Agency

North Belfast

North City Business Centre
028 9074 7470
www.north-city.co.uk

East Belfast

East Belfast Enterprise
028 9045 5450
www.eastbelfast.org

Shankill

Townsend Enterprise Agency
028 9043 5778
www.townsend.co.uk

South Belfast

Ormeau Business Park
028 9033 9906
www.ormeaubusinesspark.com

West Belfast

Work West
028 9061 0826
www.workwest.co.uk

Ortus - The Business Development Agency
028 9031 1002
www.ortus.org

