

► 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.