



Compete Programme

Supporting the development of innovative market-led products and manufacturing processes

January 2007

Introduction

An increase in number of well designed and commercially successful products, as well as higher levels and better quality near-market and innovative R&D will increase competitiveness and benefit both individual businesses and the wider Northern Ireland economy.

Our Compete Programme is designed to encourage this kind of competitiveness by providing financial support for the development of innovative market-led products and manufacturing processes.

How will it help me?

Your business should become more competitive after carrying out a Compete Programme.

Compete will help you develop the capability and skill levels within your business to enable you to exploit future opportunities.

Your business will also become more profitable through commercially exploiting the technical innovation developed on the programme.

How does it work?

Compete is run in two distinct phases:

Phase I

The financial support is at a rate of up to 50 per cent of eligible costs to a maximum assistance of £15,000.

This is made available to cover salaries, overhead costs, consultancy costs and travel and subsistence costs. Phase I assistance is normally limited to one project in any twelve-month period.

Phase I is the project definition element of the programme. It provides businesses with the opportunity to plan the project in detail and present a proposal to Invest NI for phase II.

Although phase I is optional, support will only be provided to projects that have been carefully planned and will form the basis of the phase II application.

Phase II

Financial support is up to 40 per cent of eligible costs to a maximum of £250,000 (less any phase I support). Eligible costs include salaries, overheads, consultancy, subcontracting, materials, intellectual property costs, travel and subsistence and trials and testing.

Phase II is the project development element of the programme and applications address key areas such as market research, technical research, product specification and resource specification.

During the development phase you will draw down the agreed finance as the project progresses. You will be required to provide progress reports and grant claims at regular intervals throughout the project lifetime.

Applications for this phase are thoroughly appraised, with the final decision taken by a casework committee. In all instances the business will need to demonstrate availability of the balance of funding for the project.

It is important that you not proceed with the development process until you have received and accepted the phase II letter of offer.

There will normally be a limit on businesses, or groups of businesses, of three projects in any 12-month period.



Who is eligible?

Compete is available to all Invest NI clients, in particular those engaged in manufacturing or from the international tradeable services sector.

Projects where the development phase is expected to last fewer than six months or more than 36 months may not be assisted. We also recommend that participants first carry out our Business Health Check.

Becoming an Invest NI client

To qualify as an Invest NI client company, your business must meet certain criteria.

You should typically be from the manufacturing or international tradeable sectors and be able to demonstrate that currently, or over the next three years, your business will have:

- total sales of over £100,000 a year;
- sales outside Northern Ireland of greater than 25 per cent of turnover or greater than £250,000 a year; and
- the capability and willingness to work with Invest NI.

If you are not an Invest NI client, but can satisfy the above criteria and would like to become one, please contact the Invest NI office in your area.

Full details can be found at www.investni.com.

Contact

Please contact your Client Executive if you feel your business will benefit from this programme. Alternatively you can also contact:

Andy Reilly
Innovation, Research & Technology Division
Invest Northern Ireland
Bedford Square
Bedford Street
Belfast BT2 7ES

T: 028 9069 8765

E: andy.reilly@investni.com

nibusinessinfo.co.uk

Invest NI has launched a new online information and support facility, **nibusinessinfo.co.uk**

This web site provides all Northern Ireland businesses and entrepreneurs with free access to an extensive source of essential business information.

nibusinessinfo.co.uk provides 24x7 advice, information, guidance and signposting, with over 5,000 fact sheets and over 70 interactive tools on offer. Every aspect of setting up and running a business is covered, from the earliest days of developing a business idea to the legal issues involved in selling a business concern.

nibusinessinfo.co.uk also features case studies showing how local businesses have handled particular business challenges.

nibusinessinfo.co.uk provides you with a single point of access for all your business information needs, freeing up time for to concentrate on running operations.