

Boosting Business through R&D support for SMEs Application Guidance Notes

Scheme provides up to a maximum of £50,000 assistance for R&D projects – based on a maximum grant rate of 45% or 75%¹ of agreed and eligible project costs.

Innovative, small companies play a key role in the Northern Ireland Economy. Invest NI recognises the need to support them to develop new products, processes and services with a competitive edge and in response has introduced this new Boosting Business through R&D Call. The Call aims to streamline R&D support for smaller projects (up to £50k) for SMEs, allowing you to get your new product/process/service to market faster, ahead of your competitors.

Boosting Business through R&D

SMEs with no previous experience of R&D can receive support of up to 75% (max grant of £50k); and SMEs who have previously received R&D support can receive up to 45% (max grant of £50k). Applicants will need to complete a simple application form to address the following areas in particular:

- The potential commercial opportunity for your new product/process/service?
- Level of innovation in your proposed project
- Your company's capability to complete the project?
- Can you afford to do it – i.e. can your company secure the balance of funding required?

Business Overview and Market Opportunity

In order to appraise your proposed project, Invest NI needs to fully understand the commercial opportunity and benefits it could offer (to both you and the local economy). The questions in this section encourage you to tell us about any experience you already have of your future market, your knowledge and understanding of potential customers and competitors and the potential for future market growth; and how you plan to realise your future sales potential – i.e. your marketing strategy.

About the Project

This section addresses the proposed project, how innovative it is, key project milestones and the main risks to the successful achievement of these milestones. You will need to address how you will mitigate perceived risks – risks will include anything which would cause the project to run counter to how you had planned e.g. Commercial risks (a new competitor) / Financial risks (unable to secure bank finance).

You should attach CVs for key staff and indicate their role in terms of project delivery. This will enable Invest NI to assess your ability to carry out and complete the project as planned and to assess if you have the relevant experience of the industry/market you will be working in and any related technology experience.

Project Costs

In this section you should detail your estimated project costs across the Eligible Costs categories provided on the form. Only expenditure incurred on the project will be eligible for Invest NI support:

- Salary
- Equipment
- Design Consultancy
- Trials & Testing
- Intellectual Property
- Travel & Accommodation
- Depreciation
- Materials
- Sub-contracting
- Technical Consultancy

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Finance

The information you provide in this section will help Invest NI understand how you propose to fund your contribution to the project costs. Without a clear understanding of how the project is to be funded, no offer can be made.

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Invest NI clients, or potential clients, who meet the EU definition of an SME are eligible to apply².

To qualify as an Invest NI client company, your business must be from a manufacturing or international tradeable services sector 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 NI worth more than 25% of turnover or greater than £250,000 a year; and the
- Capability and willingness to work with Invest NI.

So how does it work?

Step 1 Discuss your proposed project with your Invest NI Technology Executive. If you don't have a nominated Technology Executive you should talk to one of Invest NI's Innovation Advisors who will be able to confirm in the first instance if your project is eligible for support, and if so, they will put you in touch with a Technology Executive who will discuss your project with you in more detail. A member of the Innovation, Research & Technology Team at Tel 028 90698264 will be happy to put you in touch with the appropriate Invest NI contact.

Step 2 Complete the application form and forward to the grant for R&D mailbox

grantforR&D@investni.com along with the relevant attachments (annual accounts and CVs for key project staff). An Invest NI Technology Executive will then review your application and confirm in writing within 5 days if it has been accepted and agree with you your project start date.

Step 3 The Technology Executive will then appraise the application and may ask for some further clarification. If the Technology Executive appraisal is positive, a letter of offer will be sent to you within 4 weeks of receipt of a satisfactory application.

Step 4 During your project, progress will be monitored by your Technology Executive. Vouched and approved claims will be made throughout the project with costs paid against agreed expenditure. Invest NI will provide detailed guidance on how your claims will be paid prior to project commencement.

For further information please contact:

The Invest NI R&D team at Tel: 028 9069 8264.

¹The 75% support rate applies only to 'New to R&D' companies – i.e. those companies who have not received assistance through Invest NI's R&D programmes in the past five years and have not exceeded the de minimis aid ceiling of €200k. **Note:** Up to three applications will be considered from the same company in any 12 month period (n.b. where a company hasn't received Invest NI R&D support in previous five years, only the first project submitted will be eligible under the "New to R&D" support category (i.e. up to max 75%), subsequent projects will be eligible for support up to maximum of 45%.

² Link to EU definition of SME:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm