

Support

Working with  
Invest NI could  
connect you with a  
world of business  
opportunities.

Growth



Business Development Solutions

Success

Partnership

Innovation

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As the economic development agency for Northern Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland's aim is to strengthen and grow the economy.

We will achieve this by supporting business development, increasing export levels, attracting high quality inward investment and stimulating a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

## Why work with us?

If you're running a business you'll know there is never enough time to do everything you need, rarely enough resources to do everything you want and, frequently, a lack of expertise in areas that aren't core to the business.

This is where Invest NI can help. As an Invest NI client, you get a partner to help meet your business challenges; a partner who has the same aim as you - to make your business succeed.

By working with us, you can access specialist teams of experts and advisors with many years of commercial, industrial and technical experience, spanning all business disciplines and key sectors.

Our teams become your support network, working with you to help meet your business ambitions.

We're confident that, with our support, your business will become more profitable and be better placed to seize opportunities, and that you will get a higher return on your investment as a result.

When you work with Invest NI, you'll find we share your goals - because our success depends on your success.

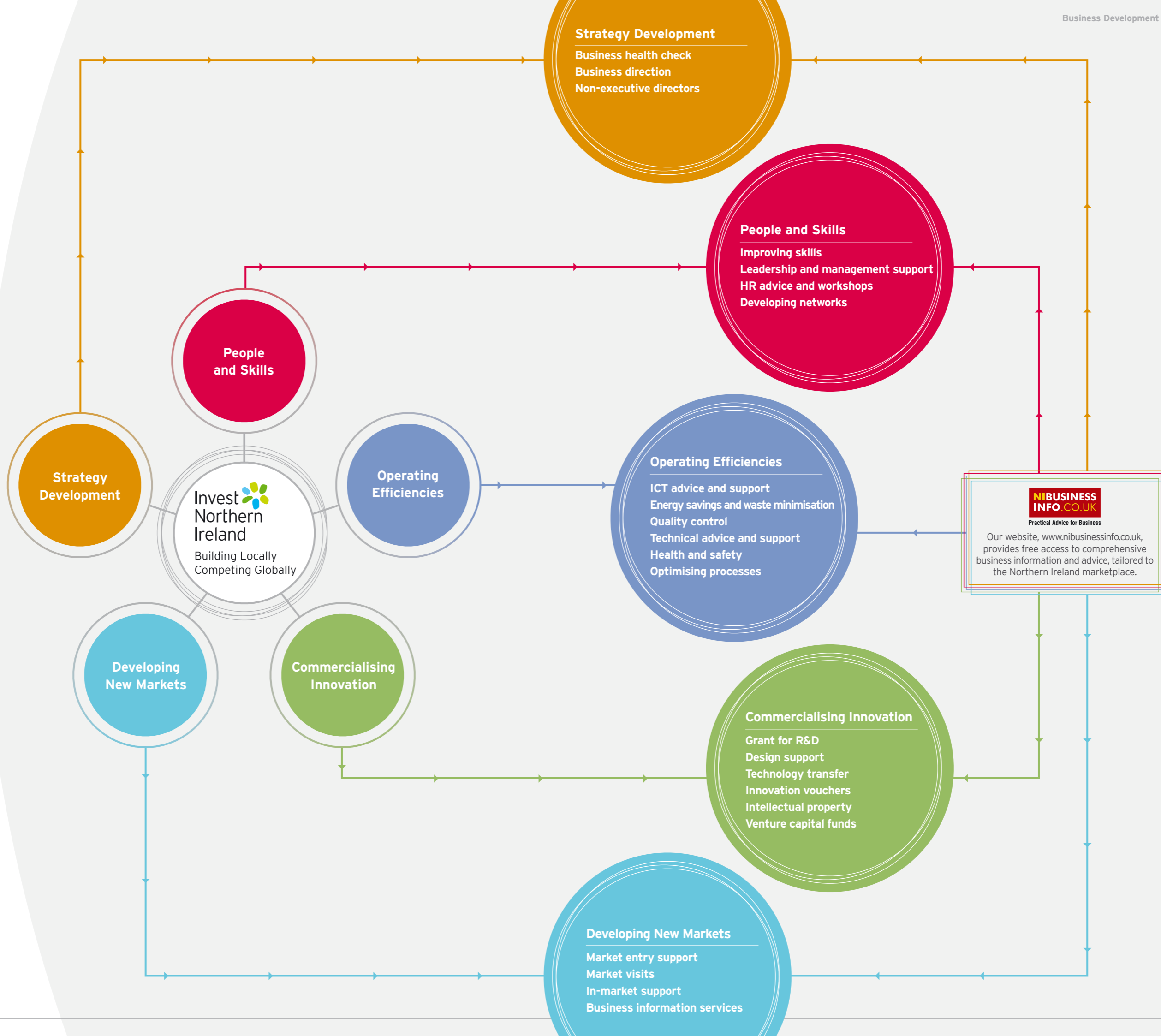
# What can we offer?

Invest NI clients can access a wide range of support programmes, advisory services and financial assistance, all tailored to their individual needs. We offer these under our portfolio of Business Development Solutions.

Depending on your needs, you can choose from a range of solutions covering the following areas: people and skills, operating efficiencies, commercialising innovation, developing new markets and strategy development.

Our approach is to work closely with you to identify the support your business will need to meet your growth ambitions.

We can provide you with world-class practices and techniques to help your business achieve sustainable growth in the global marketplace.



Competitiveness

Profit

## Strategy Development

It's well known that businesses that have a sound strategy and a management team with the right skills invariably grow faster and export more successfully.

From the initial assessment of your current performance, through to the development of a detailed plan of action, we can help you meet your long-term objectives and map out a successful future.

Ambition

### Business health check

If your business is to grow profitably, it is vital that you measure how it's performing now, so that you can identify key performance indicators for future success.

Our Business Health Check can help you do this. Free of charge, it is a structured process that allows you to review your present performance. It also benchmarks your business against similar ones in the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Europe and beyond.

The Business Health Check results in an action plan linked to an agreed time period.

Your Client Executive will help you draw up the plan and advise on the Invest NI support that best suits your business needs.

### Business direction

Finding the time to focus on ways to grow your business can be difficult when you're dealing with the day-to-day pressures of the business. Without a clear direction, however, your business will not realise its full potential.

Our Business Direction Service can help your business carve its niche in the market. We can help you to develop a sound strategy for growth that will ensure your business is ready to meet today's competitive business environment.

Working with you, we can help improve your market position and identify ways to differentiate you from your competitors. By recognising your strengths and areas that need improving, you can effectively target your resources to achieve growth and profitability.

### Non-executive directors

Through our Non-Executive Directors initiative you can get a fresh perspective on your business.

Non-Executive Directors can bring considerable experience, skill, expertise, sector insights and financial acumen to your business. This will significantly strengthen your management team.

It is proven that Non-Executive Directors help businesses perform better in the long-run. Being independent, they can challenge your existing management and decision-making processes with a view to refining strategic direction and operational performance. They can also bring new contacts or act as a mentor and sounding board. They offer a low-cost, low-risk option for small and medium-sized businesses.

**Contact your Client Executive to access our range of support programmes, advisory services or financial assistance.**

Performance

Expertise

**People  
and skills**

The single most important ingredient in a successful business is a team of motivated and competent workers.

We offer a range of support to help you improve the quality of your workforce, strengthen management skills, apply best practice in your HR function and so boost your overall business performance.

Training

#### Improving skills

By developing the skills of your staff you can improve productivity and turnover, enhance customer satisfaction and create a more flexible and motivated workforce. We offer practical and financial support for your training and development activities.

This includes benchmarking your employees' performance and capabilities against a framework of nationally recognised management standards. We will then help you arrange training and development initiatives that will benefit your business.

We can also provide experts for one-to-one consultations with senior company managers to help your business overcome problems or barriers to growth.

We can even provide a Business Improvement Agent who will work in your company to help you initiate and manage a rolling programme of continuous improvement.

#### Leadership and management support

Good leadership is key to business success. But sometimes, even an experienced management team needs outside help to tackle a specific issue or project.

In this instance, we can give you the support of an Interim Manager who will work for you at a senior level on a temporary basis. The Interim Manager will be chosen specifically to suit your particular needs. As well as skills and business experience, they offer an impartial and objective perspective, which can be invaluable.

We also encourage businesses to learn from and share knowledge with the wider business community. Our Best Practice Clubs give managers the opportunity to come together to hear about the 'hot' topics affecting businesses. They also offer a valuable forum for networking.

#### HR advice and workshops

Human resource (HR) management is one of the most complex and challenging aspects of running a business. Getting the best out of your staff is crucial for success, which is why we offer a wide range of advice and practical support on staff-related issues.

We can help you increase your capability in areas such as attracting and selecting the right people, developing an effective salary structure and creating cost-effective benefits packages. We can also help you define roles and create an effective organisational structure.

There is also support for family businesses which have unique issues to deal with, such as succession planning. Our HR Workshops, delivered by external consultants, can provide businesses with practical advice on key topics including best practice, leadership and strategy, performance and reward, and compliance.

#### Developing networks

Working with other companies for a common business benefit makes sense - particularly for small and medium-sized businesses that have limited resources. We help businesses collaborate with other businesses and, where appropriate, with academia and training providers.

Collaboration often results in improved efficiency, better market position and increased profitability. It can also lead to the development of new products or processes.

We can also help you to assess the effectiveness of your supply chain. An effective supply chain can reduce costs for both customers and suppliers and improve your margins. If you are a small company, we can help you develop the expertise to become a preferred supplier to larger companies. Larger companies can benefit through developing supplier clusters and improving the quality, cost or delivery of supplies.

**Contact your Client Executive to access our range of support programmes, advisory services or financial assistance.**

Productivity

Streamline

Sustainable


**Operating  
efficiencies**

Improving the efficiency of your processes and resource usage will increase your productivity and help boost your profits.

Support includes helping you use business improvement techniques, implement the right ICT systems and meet your environmental obligations.

We also offer technical support in specialist areas such as quality control, product testing and health and safety.

#### ICT advice and support

The right ICT system can save money, improve efficiency and enhance the quality of your management information - all in order to help your business remain competitive.

Our ICT Advisors will help you analyse your ICT requirements, identify the solutions that will fit your business objectives and prepare an implementation plan.

You can get advice on hardware and software, internet, e-mail, website design, search engine marketing, e-commerce, financial systems, customer relationship management and networking infrastructures.

We can also arrange hands-on demonstrations of specific ICT systems in our state-of-the-art E-Solutions Centre, so that you can sample before investing. We also provide staff training.

#### Energy savings and waste minimisation

Investing in energy efficiency and sustainable development can improve your profitability and help meet environmental obligations.

Our support in this area ranges from providing free information and advice to help you become aware of environmental issues, to on-site surveys and energy solutions tailored to the needs of your business.

Our free seminars and workshops provide practical and independent advice about matters such as energy-efficient building design, waste management, renewable energy, minimising water use and many other energy and environmental issues.

We also offer interest free loans to help you implement energy efficiency projects.

Businesses that are planning to invest in, or develop energy-related technologies to open up new market opportunities, can also get specialist advice and financial assistance.

#### Quality control

Quality should be a central element of your business both in terms of products and services and in relation to your management systems.

Our Technical Specialists can help you develop quality systems for all aspects of your business. These will ensure that your company has an ethos of achieving the highest levels of performance and production; that a high quality product reaches your customers, on time, every time; and that you improve customer retention and provide more opportunities for new business.

We can provide training and technical expertise to help you develop basic quality systems tailored to the needs of your business; implement and maintain standards such as ISO 1400, BS 7909 and CE marking; and develop quality audits.

#### Technical advice and support

Keeping abreast of technical developments and associated legislation can be difficult in today's climate of increasing product complexity. Our Technical Advisory Unit is staffed by scientists and engineers. They can help you deal with technical issues such as product development, process control, engineering or manufacturing concerns and intellectual property.

By doing a technical solutions audit, our team can identify specific issues faced by your business. They will then advise on solving problems and implementing best practice.

If you need information about patents, trademarks intellectual property or industrial standards you can also use the unit's Technical Information Service. With access to over 2,000 commercial databases, this is a unique resource for businesses requiring answers to technical questions in a hurry.

#### Health and safety

Effective health and safety practices bring many benefits beyond complying with regulations. As well as helping your business avoid incidents and accidents that can be costly, they also improve your reputation with customers and employees. Sound health and safety procedures will also help keep insurance costs down.

We can help you meet your business's regulatory responsibilities in health and safety by offering guidance on legislation, control measures, risk assessment and workplace monitoring.

We can advise on health and safety audits that will help you establish your current position and identify areas for improvement.

If you require specialist advice we can signpost you to the appropriate organisations.

#### Optimising processes

Improving manufacturing and business processes will deliver bottom line benefits. We will work with you to help you maximise the operational performance of your business.

If you need to address issues around any aspect of your operations from supplier delivery or redundant stock, to high levels of downtime or customer relationship management, we can help.

Our approach will be to help you determine the root cause of the problems and select the right techniques to solve them. These might include reviewing workplace organisation and layout, reviewing overall equipment effectiveness and planned preventative maintenance or implementing recognised techniques such as Six Sigma and Lean Manufacturing.

**Contact your Client Executive to access our range of support programmes, advisory services or financial assistance.**

## Differentiate

## Collaborate

## Commercialising innovation

Shorter product life cycles, intensifying competition and increasingly sophisticated customers, mean businesses are under more pressure than ever to develop new and better products.

Several of our programmes support research and development (R&D) activities. Whether you want to carry out R&D on your own or in collaboration with academic researchers, we can help.

## Research

## Grant for R&amp;D

If your business is serious about growing market share, you should be investing in R&D. Innovative products and services can help your business increase sales and improve profits.

We can support your R&D activities by offering financial and advisory assistance through our Grant for R&D.

Individuals and new or existing businesses can apply for a grant to carry out an R&D project either on their own, or by collaborating with other businesses, universities or research bodies.

We also support high-tech collaboration between government, business and the science base by providing financial assistance towards the establishment of competence centres for R&D.

Our Innovation Advisors can facilitate the process of seeking help, obtaining R&D funding and accelerating the R&D process.

## Design support

Design impacts on all the characteristics of a product - style, durability, performance, desirability and production costs. It is also an important marketing tool that can help differentiate you from your competitors and enhance the image and brand loyalty of your business.

Our Design Service can help you with anything from updating your product packaging or revamping your brand and marketing literature, to developing a new product or service or optimising a business process.

You can benefit from a free half-day session with a professional Design Advisor who can help with specific project related issues or provide strategic assistance. Or you can participate on one of our design development programmes which includes workshops, one-to-one mentoring and the opportunity to work on your own small scale project with a design professional.

## Technology transfer

Collaboration breeds competitive advantage. Knowledge transfer partnerships are about transferring good ideas, research results and skills that reside within higher education, into business to enable innovative new products and services to be developed. They can provide your business with the resources and expertise you need to help you to innovate, expand and improve your profitability.

Our Enterprise Europe Network offers support and advice to help businesses make the most out of business development opportunities in the European Union.

The R&D Collaborative Service provides support to businesses and universities to participate in collaborative R&D projects particularly those funded by the EU Framework Programme and the Technology Strategy Board Programme.

## Innovation vouchers

If you are a small enterprise registered in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, our Innovation Voucher scheme can help you solve a business problem or explore a new market opportunity.

Jointly administered by Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland, it helps small businesses link up with knowledge providers such as universities, colleges and publicly funded research bodies.

You can use the Innovation Voucher, valued at £4,000, to buy expertise from a relevant knowledge provider.

## Intellectual property

If you develop a new product, service, brand or process, it makes sense to protect your intellectual property (IP). We can give you advice on patents, trademarks, designs, copyrights and technical standards including EN standards.

Our support includes carrying out an IP audit to establish what elements of your business may need IP protection. We can then advise on the appropriate IP protection and recommend how to acquire this.

We also offer a series of workshops at which you can learn about best practice and strategy in this important area.

## Venture capital funds

Venture capital funding supports early stage commercialisation of research and technology, helping to bring innovative concepts and business models to life.

If your business has innovative technology and can demonstrate a clear commercial opportunity we can help you get the venture capital funding that meets your needs.

The Northern Ireland Spin-Out Fund (NISPO) provides a comprehensive range of support services for early stage technology companies including the creation of venture capital funds and a proof of concept grant for non-university projects. The Fund Manager can also provide intensive investor readiness support including IP exploration.

We can also help your business become investor-ready and provide mentoring.

**Contact your Client Executive to access our range of support programmes, advisory services or financial assistance.**

Export

Opportunities

**Developing  
new markets**

We can help your business to access new customers and compete successfully in export markets by developing effective export strategies.

This includes working with you to identify future opportunities and developing differentiators that will make your business stand out from the competition.

Customers

#### Market entry support

The key to exporting success is simple: knowing who your customers are and where they are. Whether you're exporting for the first time or targeting new export markets, you need to invest in sound market research and develop the right skills.

Our specialist Export Advisory Service allows you to research export markets by using our network of trade and marketing mentors or advisors. They can help you to carry out market assessments, identify the best approach for market entry and explore market entry strategies focusing on agents and distributors.

Through our series of Export Capability Workshops, we can help you develop an export strategy and address key export issues. The workshops offer a thorough understanding of the processes and practicalities of exporting.

We also offer one-to-one consultations with trade advisors who can help you identify how you can build export skills and capability.

#### Market visits

We recognise the importance of market visits to exporting success. They give you the opportunity to meet potential buyers, showcase your products and services and develop those all important business relationships.

Our specialist trade teams can help your business prepare for overseas exhibitions and trade missions, and to follow up on leads and potential contracts when you return.

By participating in an Invest NI group stand you can gain first hand experience of an export market and assess its potential. We can also help your business to exhibit independently at major international exhibitions and trade shows.

Invest NI offer a programme of sectoral and multi-sectoral trade missions to established and emerging markets across the world. This programme includes one-to-one consultations, specialist advice, networking opportunities and financial assistance.

#### In-market support

Once your business has identified a market, a well-connected network on the ground is essential to establish a presence. Our in-market support teams provide local knowledge, contact information and personalised guidance and advice.

Our Trade Advisory Service can put your business in touch with the right people, provide research and market analysis, advice on market entry and practical hands-on experience - including lead generation.

If you are seeking to establish a longer-term presence in the US or the Middle East, our Trade Development Centres offer fully equipped office space and comprehensive business and in-market support.

If your business would benefit from international partnering opportunities, we can help you to develop strategic business alliances. These can open up new channels to market, and help you to exploit new technologies or products and exchange knowledge.

#### Business information services

Your business will significantly increase its chances of winning sales and new customers overseas if you have a thorough understanding of the target market and your competitors.

We can help you find information on any market, anywhere in the world. Our Business Information Centre is part of a network of 200 centres throughout Europe. It houses an extensive collection of print and electronic market, statistical and sector information.

The Centre offers you free access to comprehensive databases, specialised business and global market information. You can also access information about EU public sector tender opportunities, EU issues and policies, legislation, sources of funding, directives, regulations and much more. Whatever information you need to grow your business, we can help you find it.

**Contact your Client Executive to access our range of support programmes, advisory services or financial assistance.**

Prosper

Economy

## Financial assistance

Our financial assistance is targeted at businesses that have the greatest export potential, as these will deliver the best return on our investment.

If your business is ready to compete in international markets, speak to us about tailored financial support.

As we work within tight financial constraints, we have to focus our financial assistance on projects that have the greatest potential to generate economic growth and prosperity.

To be eligible for financial assistance, a project must be viable, show a need for Invest NI support and generate a positive return to the economy.

Your project will have to meet some of the following criteria:

- be focused on markets outside Northern Ireland;
- feature innovation, or university or research links;

- result in new products or services;
- increase employment;
- create new skills or expertise; and
- demonstrate that the maximum amount of private sector finance has been raised.

For detailed information about the range of financial support we can offer your business, please refer to our Assistance for Your Business brochure or visit our website, [www.investni.com](http://www.investni.com)

## Commitment

Contact your Client Executive to access our range of support programmes, advisory services or financial assistance.

We offer advice and support to businesses of all sizes across all industry sectors.

If you have the foresight and drive to grow your business and expand into new markets, we can give you the help you need to make it happen.

## How to become an Invest NI client.

Over 90 per cent of our clients are local small and medium-sized businesses.

Becoming an Invest NI client is simple. All your business has to do is meet our straightforward criteria.

You will need to demonstrate that now, or over the next three years, your business will have:

- total sales of over £100,000 per year; and
- sales outside Northern Ireland greater than 25 per cent of turnover, or greater than £250,000 a year.

If your business is from the tradeable services sector and can sell its services internationally, it must also:

- have the potential to sustain salaries above the Northern Ireland private sector median; or
- show that it can achieve a minimum gross margin of 20 per cent.

Once you are an Invest NI client, we assign a Client Executive who is your main point of contact in the Agency. This person will work with you in partnership and draw on expertise in Invest NI to deliver the specific support your business needs.

For more information contact us on 028 9023 9090 or visit [www.investni.com](http://www.investni.com)

Many of our support services are also available to businesses that currently do not qualify as Invest NI clients.

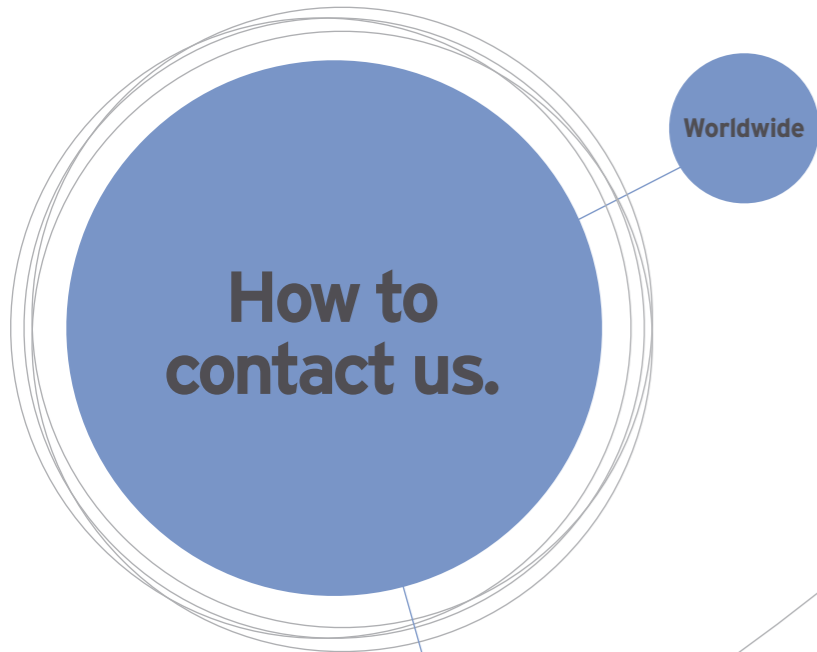
## What can we offer you if you are not an Invest NI client?

These include export development programmes for first-time exporters and more experienced exporters, energy and environmental efficiency support, comprehensive business information services and ICT support.

Our website, [www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk), provides free access to key information, advice, funding and training. With over 5,000 pages of relevant information, the site is the most comprehensive source of online business information and advice in Northern Ireland.

Our Business Information Centre handles over 2,500 business information enquiries every year. It offers access to comprehensive databases, directories, specialised business, sector and global market information.

We also maintain a state-of-the-art E-Solutions Centre that provides practical and independent advice on a range of ICT, technical and environmental issues. You can contact us for free advice on everything from hardware and software solutions to energy efficient equipment.



Worldwide

# How to contact us.

Local

Invest NI has eight offices across Northern Ireland and we work globally, with 13 offices across the world. Through our network of regional offices we ensure that businesses across Northern Ireland have access to Invest NI's advice, assistance and support programmes.

Our regional offices are located in Belfast, Londonderry, Newry, Ballymena, Coleraine, Craigavon, Omagh and Enniskillen.

Staff at these offices work with export-focused businesses at a local level. We provide existing clients and start-up businesses with advice and signposting to our programmes and other support organisations.

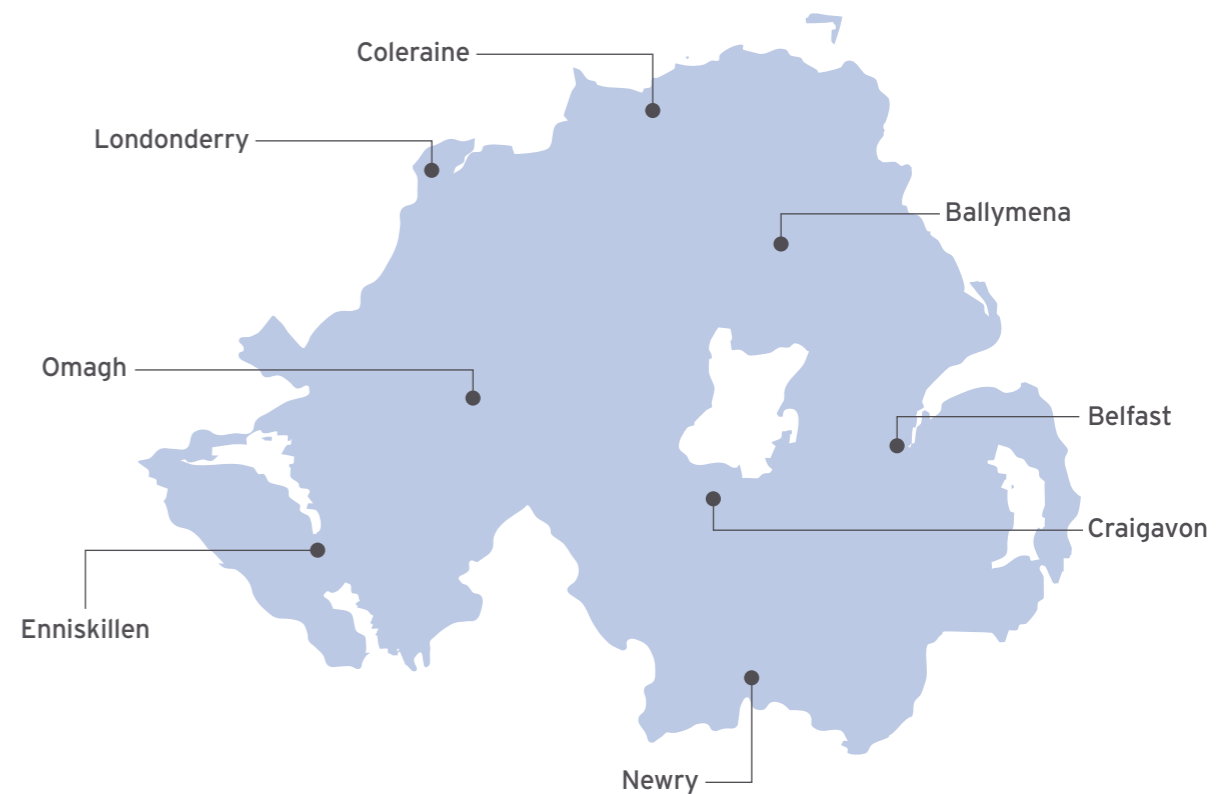
Through our network of international offices, we help businesses to create or expand commercial relationships overseas.

Staff at our international offices can provide your business with direct hands-on, in-market assistance, particularly in the US, Middle East and the emerging markets of India and China. Our international offices are located in North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Our clients can find out more about the full range of Invest NI support programmes and advisory services by contacting their Client Executive. All other businesses can find out about our services, or make an enquiry about them, by contacting their nearest regional or international Invest NI office.

For more information, please visit [www.investni.com](http://www.investni.com)

## Local Network



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