



Invest   
Northern  
Ireland  
Building Locally  
Competing Globally

## Customer Charter



# Foreword

Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) is the main economic development organisation for Northern Ireland. Our aim is to grow the Northern Ireland economy by helping businesses to compete internationally and by attracting new investment into Northern Ireland. We principally support businesses in the manufacturing and tradable services sectors.

Invest NI offers the Northern Ireland business community a single organisation, providing high-quality services and expert advice. We support businesses throughout their lifecycle and across the full spectrum of their activity including research and development, people management, strategic development, e-business, environmental impact and export development.

We operate under an independent Board whose Chairman is responsible to the Northern Ireland Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment. I, as Chief Executive, am responsible to the Board for the management of Invest NI on a day-to-day basis.

We believe that our wide experience of working with many hundreds of businesses at all stages of development can be of value to you and that the support you receive should be as simple as possible and relevant to your needs.

This Charter is more than just a document - it is a guide for Invest NI customers on our standards and on the delivery of our products and services.

It also indicates what to do if you feel that we have failed to provide a satisfactory service and explains how we will deal with your concerns.

However, the professionalism and integrity of all Invest NI staff in their interactions with our customers will determine whether or not the overall Charter will succeed.



**Alastair Hamilton**  
**Chief Executive**

# What is the Customer Charter?

This Charter is essentially about Invest NI's relationship with its customers. It is about ensuring that:

- we create and maintain a customer focus;
- effective communication exists between Invest NI staff and all our customers;
- we maintain a level of service above certain pre-set limits;
- Invest NI's product range and service delivery are appropriate for customers' needs.

It therefore, defines an ongoing process whereby individual contact between Invest NI staff and customers contributes to an increasing awareness of Invest NI's professionalism and continually improves our customer service.

## **The Charter sets out:**

- What we will do for you;
- How we propose to do it; and
- In what timescale.

It also indicates what we, in turn, expect from our customers to enable us to meet our commitments to you.

Thus, this Charter acts as a 'letter of engagement' and is a statement of what we consider to be best practice.

# Who are Invest NI customers?

Invest NI focuses its resources primarily on those companies that are currently selling or have the capability to sell into markets outside of Northern Ireland.

To be eligible for the complete range of Invest NI support a business must meet certain criteria. It should be able to demonstrate that currently, or over the next three years, it will have:

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

Businesses and individuals that do not currently meet these criteria can still access some of our trade, energy, environmental and knowledge transfer programmes. In addition, Invest NI can provide extensive information and expertise to anyone seeking advice on specific business issues either directly or through [nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

# What will we do?

## **Invest NI will:**

- quickly identify your needs and let you know how we may be able to help. This may mean that we have to make judgements about any proposals that you present\*.
- explain the information we require, how we work (our processes), giving indications of how long each stage may take and what form of support you could receive. Where we are unable to provide any support, we will inform you as quickly as possible and let you know why.
- keep in touch and let you know as quickly as possible if extra information is required or if there will be any delays.
- explain carefully the details of any support that we provide to ensure that you understand any conditions or undertakings for which you will be responsible.
- always work in a professional manner, providing advice or information that is focused on your best interests but which will also protect public funds.
- always ensure that our dealings with you are courteous and confidential and that we will do our best to meet any commitments that we have made to you.

\*subject to prevailing policy and resources

# What we expect you to do

We expect you to:

- provide any information that has been requested within agreed timescales.
- let us know if you are unable to do this or if your circumstances or plans change.
- understand that, where you are offered financial support from the public purse, there will be obligations and conditions that you will need to fulfil.
- ensure that your business meets the targets that have been mutually agreed.

# Key Elements of our Service

The Charter covers four main areas:

## **Customer Focus**

## **Communication**

## **Handling Expectations**

## **Products/services**

### **Customer Focus**

In delivering our products and services we will ensure customer focus by:

- having greater customer contact
- providing customer service training for staff
- maintaining a professional approach
- being empathetic
- being courteous
- being reliable
- maintaining confidentiality
- acting in the customer's interests  
(whilst remaining protectors of the public purse)
- maintaining adequate office cover
- responding to customers promptly and within agreed timescales.

### **Communication**

All our communications will be open, clear and two-way.

Our customers will be issued with clear guidelines regarding the proposed timescale in relation to any specific project and will be given adequate information on Invest NI's procedures. We will also ensure that you are kept informed regarding the project's progress.

We will ensure that our customer-facing staff are equipped with the necessary sectoral/business knowledge to evaluate proposals and provide advice about what Invest NI can offer.

We will use plain English in our offers of assistance and, where jargon is unavoidable, it will be explained. Prior conditions in offers of assistance and post approval monitoring will also be explained.

## **Handling Expectations**

We will ensure that there is a clear understanding of what each party is attempting to do and the procedures involved.

Your queries will be filtered carefully to ensure that they are directed to the appropriate Invest NI representative. Enquiries and queries will be dealt with as quickly as possible and, should there be a delay in answering them, the reasons for this will be clearly communicated.

During negotiations you will be made aware of procedures and timescales and agreement will be sought regarding the supply of information for the purposes of appraisal. Should information not be provided by the set date, the implications of the delay will be discussed with you.

You will be regularly updated on the progress of your case and, should there need to be a change of executive, this will be clearly communicated, along with the reason for this. A handover meeting will also be held to ensure that the new executive is fully briefed on the case.

## **Product Range**

We will seek to ensure that Invest NI's products are appropriate to meet your needs by:

- being innovative in new product development
- continually seeking the views of customers and Invest NI staff.

We will carefully communicate Invest NI's relevant products and programmes and provide business solutions tailored to your needs.

# Processes and Service Standards

Through our various interfaces with customers - meetings, telephone, letter/fax/email - we will seek opportunities to manage our professional relationship and increase our understanding of your needs. This will be facilitated by defined service standards.

## **Process and Service Standards**

### **Initial Contact**

Telephone calls will be returned within 1 working day.

### **Meetings**

Will be arranged and confirmed in writing within 2 working days and we will ensure that you understand the purpose of the meeting.

### **Pre-meeting**

Executives will be fully prepared for the meeting.

### **Project Support**

There will be an initial assessment of any project and the process will be fully explained to you. If we are taking the case forward, we may have to request additional information. We will agree timescales for the provision of such information and give an indication of when we are likely to respond.

Should we decide not to support your project we will explain the reasons for this carefully to you and, if necessary, confirm this in writing.

For all substantive processes we will give you an indication of the likely timescales and key milestones. Substantive processes include all our customer-related interactions covering assessments, negotiation, offer preparation and claims processing. Invest NI has also adopted the Government's Better Payment Practice and aims to provide payment to suppliers of goods and services within 30 calendar days of receipt of invoice.

# Improving our Services

We are always seeking ways to improve the quality of our services and your views count. For example, we implement regular customer surveys and the results of these will help to develop future services.

We welcome any comments or suggestions that you might have regarding the service you have received. Compliments or criticisms are equally welcome and you do not have to provide your name if you do not wish to do so. Simply write, telephone or email the Customer Service Manager, whose contact details are given overleaf.

# Recourse

Invest NI is committed to providing a high-quality service to its customers. However, there may be occasions when problems arise and you do not receive the service you expect.

If you have any reason to be unhappy with our service, we want to know, so that we can try to put things right in the most appropriate manner and as quickly as possible.

To ensure that all complaints about our services are dealt with in a satisfactory way and to enable us to improve our services, we have developed a mechanism for obtaining feedback from our customers.

## **How to register feedback**

Often an issue can be resolved quickly and easily by contacting the person with whom you have been dealing. You can do this in person, by telephone, e - mail, fax, or letter.

If you would rather not deal with the member of staff concerned or if you are not sure who is responsible for the service about which you are complaining, you can complete our feedback form which is available in hard copy, on request and on our website.

This should be sent to the Customer Service Manager who will raise the issue directly with the manager responsible for that service.

# Customer Service Manager

**Telephone:** 028 9069 8148

**Fax:** 028 9043 6536

**Email:** [customerservicemgr@investni.com](mailto:customerservicemgr@investni.com)

**Address:** Bedford Square,  
Bedford Street,  
Belfast BT2 7ES

**Website:** [www.investni.com/contactus](http://www.investni.com/contactus)

To help us deal effectively with any issues raised please tell us: what the issue is, when it happened, who you dealt with.

# Regional Office Network

## HEAD OFFICE

Bedford Square  
Bedford Street  
Belfast BT2 7ES

E: info@investni.com  
T : 028 9069 8000  
F : 028 9043 6536  
Textphone : 028 9069 8085



## North West

5th Floor  
Timber Quay  
100-114 Strand Road  
Londonderry BT48 7NR

E : nwo@investni.com  
T : 028 7126 7257  
F : 028 9043 6536

## Southern

Drumalane Mill  
The Quays  
Newry  
BT35 8QF

E : so@investni.com  
T : 028 3026 2955  
F : 028 3026 5358

## Western

Kevlin Buildings  
47 Kevlin Avenue  
Omagh  
BT78 1ER

E : wo@investni.com  
T : 028 8224 5763  
F : 028 9043 6536

## North East

Thomas House  
32E Thomas Street  
Ballymena BT43 6AX

E : neo@investni.com  
T : 028 2564 9215  
F : 028 9043 6536

## Oracle Conference Centre

Southern Regional College  
36 Lurgan Road  
Portadown  
BT63 5BL

E : so@investni.com  
T : 028 3839 0140  
F : 028 9043 6536

## INTEC Centre

36 East Bridge Street  
Enniskillen  
BT74 7BT

E : wo@investni.com  
T : 028 6634 3942  
F : 028 9043 6536

## Eastern

Bedford Square  
Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7ES

E : eo@investni.com  
T : 028 9069 8000  
F : 028 9043 6536

If you require this brochure in an alternative format (including Braille, disk, audio cassette or in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact:

**Invest NI's Equality Team**

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Textphone : 028 9069 8585

E-mail : [equality@investni.com](mailto:equality@investni.com)

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