

INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND
AMBITION TO GROW | SUPPORTING WOMEN (ATG | SW)

October 2025

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please read these FAQs alongside the [Guidance Notes](#). The information and evidence outlined in the guidance notes help confirm your business meets the eligibility criteria and ensures public funds are managed properly.

Please take time to read both documents carefully before applying.

What is Ambition to Grow | Supporting Women?

Ambition to Grow | Supporting Women is a programme designed to support businesses that are not currently Invest Northern Ireland clients and particularly welcome and encourage applications from women-led micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs). It supports them to invest in new employees and business growth activities that will generate sales outside Northern Ireland.

Why is the programme particularly aimed at encouraging woman-led businesses?

Entrepreneurship rates in Northern Ireland are lower among women-led businesses compared to those led by men. We can help increase economic growth by addressing this gap. This programme aims to support women-led businesses to create new jobs and reach target markets outside Northern Ireland. If your business isn't eligible for this programme, you can explore other support options at [Support for business | Invest Northern Ireland](#)

What do you mean by “woman-led businesses”?

We are particularly keen to support businesses where a woman holds a key decision-making role - such as CEO, managing director, partner or founder - and can influence the strategic direction of the business. We encourage these businesses to apply. As the programme involves group sessions and builds a network of women business leaders, applicants must provide the time commitment necessary to fully benefit from the experience.

When does the application call open?

Applications open on **Monday 6 October 2025 at 9:00**. You will find the eligibility checker - and, if eligible, the application form, at investni.com/ambitiontogrow. The call will remain open until **Friday 31 October 2025 at 12 noon**. We reserve the right to close the application call early or extend the deadline based on the number of submissions. Only applications received at the time of closing will be considered.

What sort of businesses is it aimed at?

This programme supports businesses in the manufacturing or tradeable services sectors that plan to increase sales outside Northern Ireland and create new jobs as a result.

We prioritise businesses that innovate, pay higher salaries for new positions and add value to their product. Please see our current [Business Strategy](#) for more detail.

ATG | SW is for businesses that are already generating sales. If your business is currently developing a product or service that is not yet ready for market, this programme may not be right for you at this time although other support options are available.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

How do I know if my business is eligible to apply for ATG | SW?

Please check the guidance notes for full eligibility details and exclusions. You will need to complete the online eligibility checker as part of the pre-application process.

The eligibility checker is available from **9:00 on Monday 6 October** at investni.com/ambitiontogrow.

What if my business has received Invest NI support in the last five years but meets all other criteria?

If your business meets all other criteria but has received support from us in the last five years, contact your client executive to discuss whether you can apply. If you are unsure who your client executive is or want to check if any previous support affects your eligibility, contact us using our [Enquiry Form](#).

Please note: You cannot apply if your business has been offered support or received grant payments under Selective Financial Assistance (SFA) or Growth Accelerator Programme (GAP) schemes within the last five years and that support was linked to new employment or sales growth targets.

Do I need to be over 18 to apply for ATG | SW?

Yes, applicants must be aged 18 or over. The person signing the Letter Of Offer (a contractual agreement) must also be 18 or over and have the authority to represent the business.

What does match funding/balance of funding mean?

Our financial support will cover only a portion of the costs for new employment and business development. You must demonstrate that your business will remain cash positive as it grows and can sustain new employees.

You can use existing cash reserves, loan funding, secured external investment, or projected sales to meet these costs. Be sure to detail your funding sources in the application - we need to understand how your business will manage its outgoings over the coming years.

Does my business need to be registered in Northern Ireland to be able to apply?

Yes, your business must be physically located in Northern Ireland and at least one director, partner or proprietor must live here. For limited companies, at least one director must reside in Northern Ireland. The programme participant must also live in Northern Ireland.

For businesses with multiple locations, including locations outside Northern Ireland, we will consider the overall turnover of the entire business and where your customers are based when determining eligibility.

The growth activities you're seeking support for - including investment and job creation must relate to the Northern Ireland location.

This scheme is only open to SMEs with turnover under £1million or sales outside Northern Ireland of less than £300,000.

Can an advisor apply on behalf of the business?

You can authorise a company contact to complete the online application, but a director, partner or proprietor must submit it. We advise that nobody knows your business better than you do, and the application form has been designed to enable an owner or manager to complete it without outside assistance. If your application is successful, the validation meeting will be held with the business director, partner or proprietor who must be familiar with the application details.

You may find these resources helpful when completing your form:

nibusinessinfo.co.uk – [Plan and forecast sales](#)

nibusinessinfo.co.uk – [Business budgeting](#)

nibusinessinfo.co.uk – [Cashflow management](#)

MAKING AN APPLICATION

How long will it take to complete the form?

The length of time depends on how much information you already have. It will take longer if you are starting from nothing and less time if you have recently completed a business plan. You can save your application and update it any time before the application call closes.

The form asks you to describe your business's current position, outline your future, plans, and explain how our support will help you achieve them.

Can I save my application and return to it at a later stage?

Yes, you can save a draft and return to it later, but you must submit it before the deadline. We recommend saving regularly to avoid losing any unsaved work.

How do I submit my application?

Click the 'Submit' button once your application is complete. You will receive a confirmation email when it's successfully submitted.

If you have any problems submitting your application, please call our Business Support Team on 0800 181 4422.

Can I submit my application in a different format?

If you require an application form in an alternative format, please email our [Equality Team](#) or see our [Equality Statement](#) for further details.

I made an error on my application form. What should I do?

If your form is still in draft, you can edit it before submitting. Once you've made changes, click 'Submit' again. If you have already submitted your application but need to make changes before the deadline, complete this [enquiry form](#) or call 0800 181 4422. We will return your application so you can update it.

How do I check on my application progress?

After the closing date, we will assess and score your application. We will notify you by email once scoring is complete. If your application passes the first stage, we will invite you to a validation meeting.

Can I reapply if I was previously unsuccessful and am not an Invest NI client?

Yes, you can reapply if you haven't become an Invest Northern Ireland client or received support for the same project or activities.

Do I have to do what I said in my application?

Yes, this programme supports businesses that plan to grow sales outside Northern Ireland and create new jobs.

If your business does not follow through on its commitments, it may affect your ability to receive grant payments or apply for future support. Only apply if you can realistically deliver the activities and outcomes you have outlined in your application.

NEW EMPLOYMENT

Do I need to commit to creating new jobs as part of my application?

Yes, your application must outline plans to create a minimum of two new full-time equivalent (FTE) roles beyond your current staffing levels.

Do new jobs need to be full time?

You can meet the requirement with full time, part time or a combination of both.

What does Full Time Equivalent (FTE) mean?

A role is full time if is contracted for a minimum of 30 hours per week and is then classed as 1.0 FTE. Part time positions, contracted for 15-30 hours per week are equivalent to 0.5 FTE.

As an example, two full time roles, four part time roles, or one full time and two part time roles would all be equivalent to 2.0 FTE.

What if I receive an offer of support but do not create any jobs?

This programme aims to encourage job creation and growth into external markets.

If you receive support but don't increase employment, it may affect your eligibility for future funding.

It is important that you keep your Client Executive informed of any changes to employment levels.

PAYMENT

How much grant can I expect to receive?

Successful applications will receive **up to £30,000** in support, subject to Know Your Customer checks. This will be offered via a contract with us, and includes:

- Up to £15,000 for creating two new FTE roles
- up to £10,000 for business development activities at a support rate of 50% of eligible costs. This can include expenditure on market, product, or skills development.
- £5,000 for completing an Export Health Check, Innovate NI Self-Assessment, and attending a series of Leadership Development workshops.

The total amount of financial support offered depends on the proposed salaries and activities outlined in the application. It will not exceed 30% of the total annual salaries of new positions over two years.

We will outline full conditions in your offer document. You must sign and return it before starting any funded activities.

Support is conditional on your business committing to creating new jobs and maintaining them for at least two years. If employment drops within two years of receiving payment, we may request full or partial repayment.

When can I expect to receive the grant payment?

Grant payments are not made up-front. You will receive funding after completing specific activities outlined in your offer – such as hiring staff or spending money on eligible development activities. Once you have completed an activity, you can submit a claim. A Client Executive will be assigned to each successful company and will explain the detail behind the offer of support and guide you through the process.

OTHER FAQs

What other support is available?

We offer a range of business support to Northern Ireland businesses. Visit investni.com for details.

Is the grant awarded on a first come first served basis?

No. Applications open at **9:00 on Monday 6 October 2025** and close at **12 noon on Friday 31 October 2025**.

Funding is awarded competitively. We will assess and score all applications and invite the highest scoring businesses to a validation meeting. Final awards depend on successful Know Your Customer checks.

We reserve the right to close or extend the application window depending on demand. If we close early, only applications submitted on the portal at that time will be considered.

What is a client executive?

A client executive is a member of our team who will be your main point of contact if your application is successful, they will support you through the project.

How will I know if my application is successful?

We aim to assess all applications within four weeks of the closing date. We will contact successful applications by email and schedule validation meetings with top-ranked businesses.

If you have a question that is not covered here or in the guidance notes, you can contact the Invest NI Business Support Team via our [Enquiry Form](#) or call 0800 181 4422.