

## Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

### SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

#### 1A. Name of Public Authority.

Invest NI

#### 1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

The Process and Organisational Improvement Grant (POIG) scheme is an Invest NI competitive grant scheme of up to £50K-SME, £200K-Large aimed at all NI businesses of a certain scale, to support the investigation and implementation of business improvements. Particularly in the area of digital technologies.

#### 1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

#### 1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Process and Organisational Improvement Grant (POIG)

#### 1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The scheme aims to provide financial support to NI businesses to investigate and implement business improvements particularly in the area of digital technologies. The type of projects that will be supported covers both organisational and process improvements. It will allow:

1. The building of internal teams to investigate and understand how different technologies can help the business change operations and also to implement these ideas; and
2. Bring in consultants to provide expert advice to support the work;

**1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

*Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.*

N/A

*Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.*

N/A

*Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.*

N/A

## SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

**2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.**

Rural Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text"/>

**If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.**

**2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.**

The scheme is open to all NI businesses via Invest NI website and offers financial support to investigate and/or implement business improvements. The scheme is unlikely to impact people in rural areas differently than those in urban areas.

Support offered is the same independent of business location and is based on the costs associated with the project. The scheme will be a competitive call for applications and applications will be scored based on technical evaluation criteria (4Manufacturing 5 key themes) and the improvement from current business practice.

The Scheme is accessed online via Invest NI website, this will not negatively impact rural businesses and we have ongoing schemes operating via the same system being accessed by rural businesses currently without issue. However, if rural businesses are experiencing issues accessing online Invest NI resources, they can call our business support team who can assist in providing hard copies of applications.

### SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

**3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?**

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

**3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.**

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

**3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.**

**3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?**

If the response to Section 3A was **YES** GO TO Section 4A.

**3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?**

The overall aim of the department is economic development and the scheme aims to improve businesses which in turn should improve the local economy. As the scheme is unlikely to impact people in rural areas significantly, no actions were taken to identify additional social and economic needs beyond those established in RNIA guidance documentation. However, we considered the following:

Is appropriate infrastructure in place to enable people in rural areas to access the service? Yes, currently many rural based businesses successfully access INI support already.

Will people in more remote rural areas be able to access the service? Yes

Could it cost people in rural areas disproportionately more to access the service? No

Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who rely on public transport services? No

Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who don't have access to high quality broadband? No

Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas whose access to mobile communications is variable or limited in areas. No

Could there be a disproportionate effect on people operating businesses in rural areas? No

Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who have to travel longer distances to avail of employment opportunities?  
No

Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who require access to childcare facilities? No

Will the policy, strategy, plan or public service affect certain groups of people in rural areas disproportionately e.g. seasonal workers, farmers and farm families or older people, younger people or people with disabilities who do not have access to transport? No

Are there pockets of hidden poverty or deprivation within rural areas which need to be taken account of in determining the effects of the policy, strategy, plan or public service on people in rural areas? No

## SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

### 4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

- Financial support for internal costs of project definition or implementation of business improvements
  - o No difference in support offered, same value to both urban/rural
  - o The scheme plans to support employee salary at fixed £24/hr rate which is based on NI average salary independent of geographical location.
- Financial support for external costs of project definition or implementation of business improvements
  - o No difference in support offered, same value to both urban/rural
  - o External consultants costs are likely more influenced by sector/digital technology (robotics/AI vs MS office) than location.
- This scheme can allow businesses in rural/urban areas time to identify cost saving activities as well as new revenue sources
  - o Project scopes may differ from candidates from rural/urban areas
    - Scoring/evaluation will need to reflect a fair system so as not to discriminate any geographical area.
    - Planned scoring will be based on the 5 key themes of 4Manufacturing and how much of a change it is from current business practice. The bigger the change, the higher the score.
- This scheme will allow an employee(s) to get first-hand experience of business improvement with an expert consultant which they will benefit from and be able to instill within the business. This should help rural businesses that may feel “left out” from technology integration that can be adopted into businesses in urban areas due to location of services/networking events etc. This scheme will provide an opportunity for rural businesses that want technology adoption to get financial assistance to develop a plan and/or implement business improvements.

## SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes  No  If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **5C**.

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

N/A

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES** GO TO Section **6A**.



**5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.**

This scheme although it may have some benefits to rural businesses was not created with them in mind. It was developed to help NI businesses improve their processes and organisation. This business need was identified from Invest NI client companies, which are ~1,500 companies based all over Northern Ireland in a range of sectors, and from issues they have shared with Invest NI. It allows for internal and external costs to develop a plan for improving their business. The plan chosen by the applicant businesses is unique to their needs.

## SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

**6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.**

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:</b>	Josh McCann
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Staff Officer
<b>Division/Branch</b>	Technical Advisory Unit
<b>Signature:</b>	Josh McCann
<b>Date:</b>	26/10/20
<b>Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:</b>	Pamela Marron
<b>Position/Grade:</b>	Equality Manager Deputy Principal
<b>Division/Branch:</b>	Business Performance EU and Compliance Team
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>Pamela Marron</i>
<b>Date:</b>	19/10/20