



Invest 
Northern
Ireland

Building Locally
Competing Globally

3rd Progress Report on Invest NI's Business Development Solutions Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

December 2010

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

INTRODUCTION

As an agency of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), Invest NI's role is to provide support to businesses by delivering the Government's economic development strategies.

In particular we:

- Support new and existing businesses, particularly those capable of growing through sales outside Northern Ireland;
- Encourage companies to increase investment in all aspects of innovation, not only research and development (R&D); and
- Attract new investment into Northern Ireland.

We work with many other organisations at a local, national and international level, including councils, universities, the wider education sector, government departments and agencies, business organisations and international networks.

BACKGROUND

Invest NI has an Equality Scheme in place which sets out its commitment to the Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties and contains a timetable for undertaking a series of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). The Equality Scheme was ratified by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 19 November 2003.

In line with the EQIA timetable, Invest NI has carried out an EQIA of its Business Development Solutions Policy during June 2007. The aim of this Policy is to:

help companies grow by focusing on capability-building factors which will contribute to increasing competitiveness, international expansion and investing in research and development.

The draft EQIA went out for a 12 week consultation period in June 2007. Following the close of this consultation a final report was published in November 2007. The final report outlined the actions/recommendations which Invest NI committed to take forward and to monitor on an annual basis. The first year progress report was then published in November 2008 and the second in December 2009.

CURRENT POSITION

Invest NI has now undertaken the 3rd year review of the actions/recommendations contained in the final report and would like to highlight the progress made to date against each recommendation. The table below outlines progress made up to December 2010:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROGRESS TABLE

Point	Recommendation	Progress up to 30/11/10
1	Set up an effective equality monitoring strategy in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.	We now have an equality monitoring strategy in place and we have collected information from companies in receipt of assistance for the 08/09 and 09/10 financial periods. At present we are constructing an electronic reporting system to enable us to analyse this information.
2	Additional criteria for programmes or schemes will be clearly defined and set out; and any potential adverse impacts associated with these criteria will be considered.	The majority of BDS programmes target client companies. On the rare occasion where programmes have targeted individuals, there has been a sound rationale for this and criteria have been explicitly defined. There is also ongoing screening of all programmes to ensure equality of opportunity. We will again look at access to our programmes and services within the remit of the ongoing Communications and Access EQIA.

3	<p>When a BDS programme targets certain groups then the reasons for targeting these groups will be made transparent. A review of programme accessibility will also be undertaken to ensure consistency of approach.</p>	<p>Where a BDS programme targets a certain grouping there will be a clear rationale outlined for this. The Communication and Access EQIA, due to be finalised in 2010, will review overall accessibility to Invest NI, including that of programme accessibility.</p>
4	<p>There will be ongoing training of front line staff and in particular Client Executives in Section 75. Where external consultants are employed then their responsibilities under Section 75 will also be made clear, and this will include any training requirements.</p>	<p>All Invest NI staff has received equality and diversity training. This will continue for any newly recruited staff. In 07/08 staff received specific disability awareness training and tailored training is ongoing for all staff. Staff also availed of equality screening and monitoring training in May 2009 and we have conducted additional training on how to complete the new equality screening forms during the summer of 2010.</p>
5	<p>Each programme will make clear, in all documentation, that materials can be made available in alternative formats where necessary and on request.</p>	<p>It is stated on all major Invest NI corporate publications, that they will be made available, on request, in alternative formats. We will however review this through the course of the Communications and Access EQIA and make changes where appropriate.</p>

6	Marketing of BDS programmes and services among minority communities will be considered as part of a broader positive action programme.	In August 2008 Invest NI held an Engaging Ethnic Minority Enterprise seminar in conjunction with NICEM. This seminar promoted Invest NI programmes and how this grouping could best avail of the assistance on offer. We are also working with ex-prisoners groups to promote services and better accessibility to services.
7	All application forms will use a format with clear fonts, layout, and colours etc. that are accessible to those with special needs.	We have developed and produced "Making Information More Accessible" guidelines which are held on Invest NI's intranet and accessible to all staff. We are currently reviewing this as we conduct our Communications and Access EOIA to ensure that the information and guidance is still up to date and practical.

INFORMATION

If you would like to view the draft Business Development Solutions EQIA or the Business Development Solutions EQIA Final Report or 1st/2nd Year Progress Reports, you can do so by accessing the Invest NI website at:

www.investni.com/equality

Alternatively, you can obtain a hard copy of the reports by contacting:

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If you have any queries about this document and/or its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk, audio cassette or in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English), then please contact the Equality Team at the above mentioned address.



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