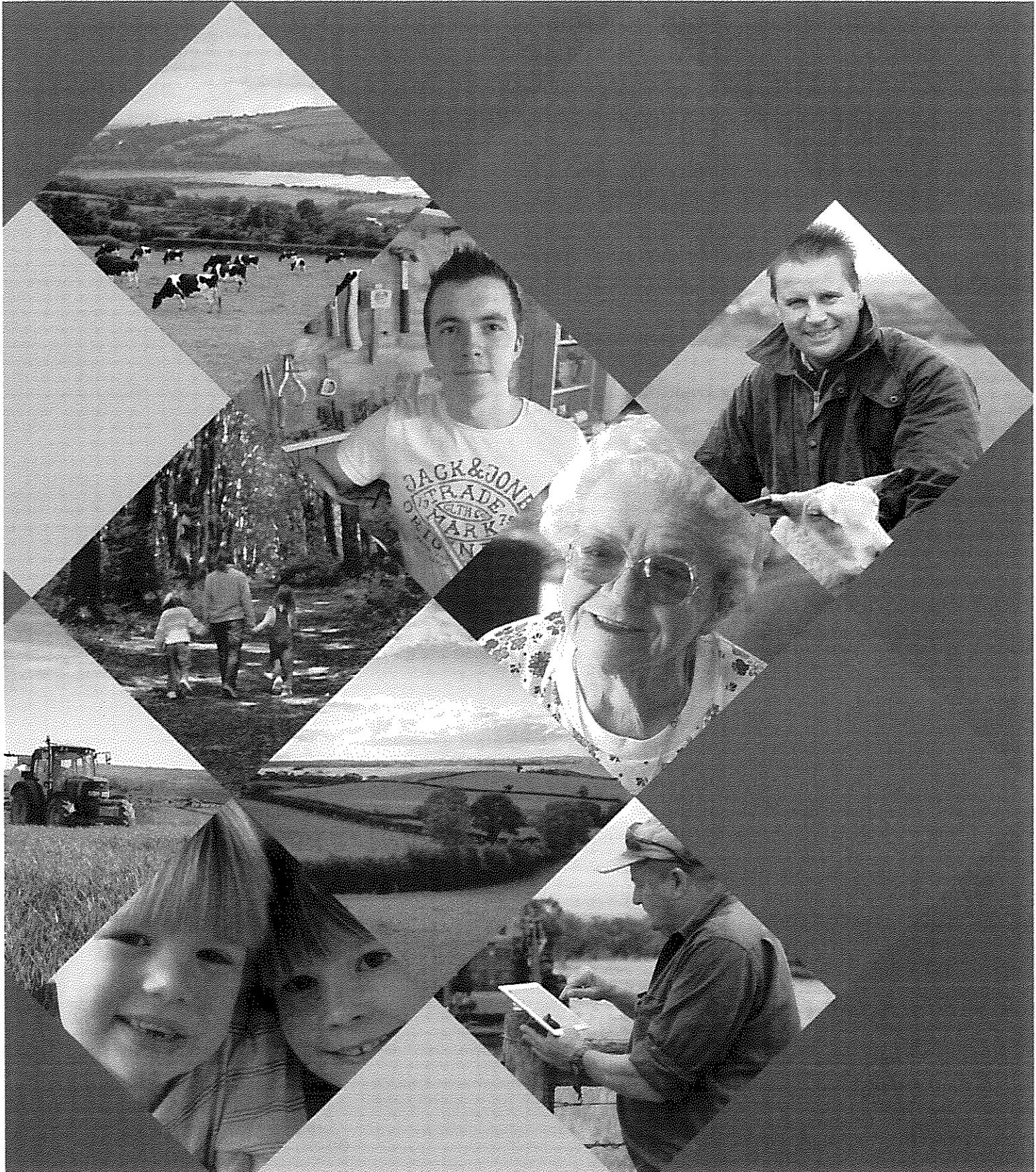


Rural Needs Impact Assessment



Title of Strategy, Policy, Plan or Public Service:

Name of Organisation:

Invest NI

Title of Strategy, Policy, Plan or Public Service:

Propel Pre Accelerator

Step 1: Define the Issue

Key questions to consider:

- *What are the objectives of the strategy, policy plan or service?*
- *What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?*
- *How is 'rural' defined for the purposes of this policy/strategy/service/plan?*
- *What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?*

The Propel Pre-Accelerator is a programme for entrepreneurs who are developing an innovative new technology or product or who are building a business using existing technology to disrupt traditional industries. The business must have rapid scaling potential, can achieve significant export growth and secure external investment.

The Propel Pre-Accelerator is open to all businesses who are resident in Northern Ireland including those based in rural areas. Propel has had a positive impact on rural areas through developing the capability of participant companies to enable it to grow and compete globally, thus benefiting the local economy.

Step 2: Understand the situation

Key questions to consider:

- *What is the current situation in rural areas?*
- *What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas?*
- *If the relevant evidence is not available, can this be sourced?*
- *Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?*
- *Are there existing design features or mitigations already in place to take account of rural needs?*

Propel as a programme is available to all Northern Ireland residents who match the entry criteria. The Programme seeks to recruit 20 teams per annum on a competitive basis. Many teams are recruited from rural areas outside Belfast. However, we will keep this programme of support under review and where any indication of disadvantage emerges we will adapt its delivery accordingly.

Step 3: Develop and appraise options

Key questions to consider:

- *Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas?*
- *If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated?*
- *Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas?*
- *What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?*

The programme is open to Invest NI customers who are able to demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

- The applicant business must be resident in Northern Ireland
- The applicant must establish their business in Northern Ireland

Workshops/mentoring sessions are mainly held at the Programmes headquarters, the Ormeau Baths hub. Here, participants' can avail of a startup ecosystem surrounded by other likeminded entrepreneurs.

Step 4: Prepare for Delivery

Key questions to consider:

- *Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?*
- *Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms?*
- *What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?*
- *Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions?*
- *Are different solutions required in different areas?*

As stated, the Propel Programme is based out of the Ormeau Baths facility in Belfast due to the entrepreneurial ecosystem that already exists and continues to grow. At present all workshops and mentoring sessions are held in Ormeau baths where participants can avail of up to 12 months free co-working space. The current programme commencing January 2019 has been amended to respond to participant needs in that it will concentrate activity on sprints. This will minimize time at the Baths and maximize time in the field or working from a home/rural base. To fully benefit from networking and experience gained from other participants' on the programme, it is more beneficial to work from the Ormeau Baths.

Step 5: Implementation & Monitoring

Key questions to consider:

- *Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor?*
- *How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas?*
- *Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?*

There are no set rural specific indicators as the programme targets participants from Northern Ireland as a whole on a competitive entry basis. Propel has always attracted a good cadre of strong teams from rural areas. The programmes effectiveness is tested via independent interim and final evaluations.

Step 6: Evaluation & Review

Key questions to consider:

- What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service?
- Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process?
- How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?

The Programme will be subject to interim and final evaluations undertaken by independent evaluators. As stated, there are currently no sub-sector KPIs' such as rural needs.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	
Position:	Martin Adair - Programme Manager
Signature:	
Date completed:	4 Dec 2018

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	
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Signature:	
Date completed:	6/12/18

