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Brexit & Covid supports, loans & grants

In this edition we look at the various supports, grants and loans still in place for businesses that have run the gauntlet of Brexit and Covid-19. Having endured two years like no other, Irish businesses are looking to the future. But they are not out of the woods yet.

Vital measures from tax warehousing to various wage support schemes have played their part, but now is the time for Irish companies to build for the future and a world beyond Brexit and Covid-19.

Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme

The Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) subsidises payroll costs for businesses whose revenue was impacted by the pandemic. EWSS provides a flat-rate subsidy to qualifying employers based on the numbers of eligible employees

on the employer's payroll. The EWSS, operated by Revenue, has replaced the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme and will run until 30 April 2022. The EWSS is for eligible employers experiencing a reduction of 30pc in turnover or customer orders due to Covid-19. Employers can claim back a flat-rate subsidy for each eligible employee. Employers PRSI will be reduced to 0.5pc. <https://www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/ewss/index.aspx>

Brexit Loan Impact Scheme

Ireland's Brexit Impact Loan Scheme aims to provide affordable financing to Brexit-impacted Irish businesses. The scheme is delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders. The fund will make up to €330m available to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees. The loans range from €25,000 up to €1.5m. Loans will be for terms of one to six years with a discounted interest rate, and loans of up to €500,000 will be available

unsecured. The scheme will provide an 80pc guarantee to participating lenders on loans to Brexit-impacted businesses and will be underpinned by a counter-guarantee through the European Commission's pan-European Guarantee Fund, which is managed by the European Investment Bank Group.

Covid-19 Business Financial Planning Grant

The Covid-19 Business Financial Planning grant will provide a strategic intervention for companies to work with third party consultants to prepare a detailed financial and business plan with forecasts and assumptions. It provides grant support to companies of up to €5,000 (100pc of expenditure) for an engagement with an approved external consultant.

<https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/Company/Eestablish-SME-Funding/Covid-19-Business-Financial-Planning-Grant-Ref-Doc.pdf>

Covid-19 Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS)

The Covid-19 Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) was introduced to support businesses significantly affected by restrictions introduced to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. The support will be available to eligible businesses who carry on a business activity that is impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. The business must have been required to prohibit or considerably restrict customers from accessing their business premises. Generally, this refers to Covid-19 restrictions at Level 3, 4 or 5 as explained in the Government's Plan for Living with Covid-19. Certain businesses may qualify for the support where lower levels of restrictions are in operation. The specific restrictions applying to businesses are provided for in regulations made by the Department of Health. Eligible businesses can make a claim to Revenue for a payment known as an Advance Credit for Trading Expenses (ACTE). An ACTE is payable for each week a business is affected by the restrictions. The CRSS is expected to continue until 31 January 2022. <https://www.revenue.ie/en/self-assessment-and-self-employment/crss/index.aspx>

Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme

Announced as part of the Government's suite of supports for businesses that have been negatively impacted as a result of the outbreak of Covid-19 in Ireland, the Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme will facilitate up to €2bn in lending to eligible businesses. The Scheme offers a partial Government guarantee (80pc) to participating finance providers against losses on qualifying finance agreements to eligible SMEs, small Mid-Caps and primary producers. It is designed to incentivise participating finance providers to continue to play their role in supporting the availability of

additional liquidity to Irish businesses. Loans under the Scheme range from €10,000 to €1 million, for terms of up to five-and-a-half years. Financing will be offered through a range of products, including term loans, working capital loans and overdrafts. Loans of up to €250,000 under the Scheme are available unsecured (except where this is a requirement of the product feature, as in the case

approved service provider up to a value of €9,000. A maximum daily rate of €900 per day shall apply. It is expected that the support would be provided over a relatively short period but can be spread out over a maximum of six weeks. <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/productivity/digital-innovation/digitalisation-voucher/>



of asset finance, invoice discount facilities, etc). <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/Access-to-Finance/SME-Credit-Guarantee-Scheme/>

Covid-19 Business Loans Scheme

A package of liquidity and enterprise investment measures worth €55m has been put in place to support small and micro companies through additional resources for MicroFinance Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices. <https://microfinanceireland.ie/covid19/>

Digitalisation Voucher

The objective of the Digitalisation Voucher is to help companies prepare a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across the business. The fund is open to manufacturing and internationally traded services companies. The voucher covers either technical or advisory services related to the operations of the business from an

Enterprise Support Grant

The Enterprise Support Grant is available to assist eligible self-employed recipients who close their Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment. This will provide business owners with a grant of up to €1,000 to restart their business which was closed due to the pandemic. It has been extended to assist existing businesses who are reopening after Covid-19 restrictions. <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/6efad-enterprise-support-grant-for-businesses-impacted-by-covid-19/>

Future Growth Loan Scheme

The enhanced Future Growth Loan Scheme makes up to €800m of loans available for terms of 7-10 years. This scheme is available to eligible businesses in Ireland, including those in the primary agriculture (farmers) and seafood sectors, to support strategic long-term investment. Loans are available for amounts from €25,000 up to

Supports, loans & grants (continued)

a maximum of €3m. There is a maximum interest rate of 4.5pc per annum and the first €500,000 can be unsecured. The scheme will run until lenders' capacity has been fully subscribed. <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/Access-to-Finance/Future-Growth-Loan-Scheme/>

Green for Micro programme

The Green for Micro programme, an initiative from the Local Enterprise Offices with support from Enterprise Ireland, is being rolled-out nationwide to help prepare small businesses for the low carbon, more resource efficient economy of the future. With the help of a Green Consultant, small businesses with up to ten employees can get free advice and technical support on resource efficiency, how to better understand their carbon footprint and how to implement an environmental management system to reduce costs and lower greenhouse gas emissions. <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Green>

InterTrade Ireland E-Merge Programme

The E-Merge programme provides £2,500/€2,800 fully-funded consultancy support to help businesses develop online sales and eCommerce solutions. Support is provided in a range of areas including: How to promote and sell online, Website management, SEO optimisation, Identification of sectoral e-markets, E-commerce, Online payment systems/billing/security, Product listing, Product packaging & labelling, Pricing/price matching/batch offers/discounts Secure logistics/delivery methods, Customer service/managing satisfaction ratings, Legal & Insurance implications.



<https://intertradeireland.com/covid-19-supports/e-merge>

Part-time Job Incentive for the Self-Employed

The Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme for the Self-Employed (PTSE) is a new scheme for self-employed people. It provides income support to self-employed people who will lose their Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) if they earn over €960 over eightweeks. It also provides support to self-employed people on a jobseeker's payment who lose their employment due to Covid-19. PTSE is paid instead of your PUP or jobseeker's payment. It is paid at a lower rate, but there is no limit on the amount you can earn. You cannot work more than 24 hours per week with the PTSE. The PTSE will run for as long as the PUP is in operation.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/aa618-covid-19-part-time-job-incentive-for-the-self-employed/>

Trading Online Voucher Scheme

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme run by the Local Enterprise Offices offers funding of €2,500 to businesses of up to 10 employees. It offers financial assistance of up to €2,500 with co-funding of 50pc from the business along with training and advice to help your business trade online. Cutting the cost of developing your online trading capacity by up to 50pc can make this investment very affordable for many small businesses out there. Funding can be used towards adding payment facilities or booking systems to your website or developing new apps for your customers. The voucher can also be used towards subscriptions to low cost online retail platform solutions, to help companies quickly establish a retailing presence online. <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Trading-Online-Voucher-Scheme/>

Workplace Innovation Toolkit

The diagnostic toolkit consists of an online questionnaire designed to facilitate self-evaluation of the organisation's capacity to be an innovative workplace.

The toolkit is based of four pillars and signposts resources and supports to enhance performance in the areas of employee engagement, training, innovation, and productivity.

Workplace Innovation Toolkit
<https://witoool.dbei.gov.ie/>

Background Briefing

Action Plan for Jobs 2018 is focused on embedding the progress made, positioning ourselves to take new opportunities as they arise, and ensuring that our enterprises are focused around resilience in the face of significant challenges. The four key immediate aims of the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 are:

- That Ireland's enterprise base remains successful amid the uncertainty created by Brexit;
- That all parts of the country achieve their potential in terms of job creation;
- That those entering, re-entering, or in the workforce have the incentives and skills needed to prosper; and
- That Ireland's enterprise base remains successful by focusing relentlessly on competitiveness, productivity, and innovation.

The Workplace Innovation Toolkit is an action in Action Plan for Jobs 2018 (Action 39). Based on the pillars of employee engagement; innovation; productivity; and training, it was launched at the Enterprise Excellence Ireland 2018 event organised by Enterprise Ireland in Croke Park on Wednesday 23rd May 2018. This diagnostic toolkit will offer signposts to companies to the relevant supports that will help them improve and grow their business.

Workplace Innovation

Building resilience and achieving and sustaining world-class levels of performance and innovation requires an integrated approach to investment in new technologies, skills and empowering workplace practices. Workplace innovation is about the systematic adoption of workplace practices, grounded in evidence, that unleash employee-led knowledge, skill and innovation at every level of the organisation, and is recognised as one further method to help retain and ultimately increase employment.

Evidence shows that workplace innovation leads to significant and sustainable improvements both in organisational performance (e.g. increased productivity, financial performance and profitability, and improved customer service), and in employee engagement and well-being (playing a particularly important role in reducing stress, enhancing job satisfaction and mental health, and improving retention).

The Mentor Programme

The Mentor Programme is designed to match up the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business practitioners with small business owner/managers who need practical and strategic one to one advice and guidance.

The mentor contributes independent, informed observation and advice to aid decision making.

All applications for mentor assistance are dealt with individually and are preceded by a business needs analysis to assess the key needs of the business and determine the most imperative mentoring objectives.

Who Qualifies?

The Mentor Programme is open to both new and existing businesses located within the LEO region.

The Role of Mentor:

Listen, advise and provide direction, help the promoter identify problems and suggest areas for improvement, discuss solutions and innovative ways of improving business activity, help with the decision making process, share experience and knowledge, provide structure and context for discussion and offer assistance in compiling a business plan.

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Mentoring/>

How we can help your company

The DIGITAL Skillnet is funded under the government's Skillnet Ireland Initiative. It's aim is to help your company with training needs, save costs through subsidised courses, develop new programmes and access sector-specific skills support.

Benefits of joining the DIGITAL Skillnet

Joining the network enables your organisation to avail of government grant subsidies to support your companies' staff training and development needs.

The benefits to your company include:

- Free network membership
- Grant-supported training programmes
- Free workshops and seminars with technology experts
- New subsidised educational programmes for the sector
- Skills and knowledge for your staff in the latest technologies, project and management techniques
- Increased outputs from your



- training budget
- Cost savings for your company
 - Access top Irish and international trainers
 - Networking with other companies in the Irish software sector

How your company can become a network member

Joining the network is free – just register your company with us to avail of grant aided rates on courses and a range of free services.

- Register with the network
- Send us your training needs
- Request specific programmes at any time

Get involved

Senior staff from network companies can get involved in directing the

network activities in a number of ways.

- Apply to become a member of the Digital Skillnet National Steering Group
- If you are part of a subject matter group within the sector, talk to us about your groups interests and training needs
- If you see a need for new knowledge or skills among companies in the sector bring it to the network
- Join a working group for the development of new programmes
- Become a network champion to spread the word on the network and upcoming events

<https://www.digitalskillnet.ie/company-benefits/>

Spotlight on Skills Programme

Who should participate

The programme is targeted at senior managers with the knowledge of the entire business function and future growth strategy over the next 1-5 years. The programme is aimed at two senior managers per company.

Spotlight on Skills is fully funded by Enterprise Ireland. Next workshop is **Wednesday 9th Feb 2022**

<https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Events/OurEvents/Spotlight-on-Skills/>



Managing Stress at Work

ISME's HR Advisor Cait Lynch poses questions and discusses Work-Related Stress, Conflict In The Workplace And Employer Stress with Patricia Murray, Senior Work & Organisational Psychologist With The Health And Safety Authority.

HSA Guidelines

Remote working allows employees and the self-employed to work remotely from their main place of work on a full- or part-time basis and to set up a dedicated full-time workspace at their home.

Working from home, if planned, can provide significant benefits such as:

- Better work-life balance
- Less impact on the environment
- Recruitment does not necessarily need to be based in a particular geographical location
- A customised work environment for the home worker
- Savings on office space and other facilities

However, homeworking does require management and coordination to ensure employees and the self-employed are not put at risk from longer-term health and safety hazards or other issues that can emerge. Employers and the self-employed need to look at how best to prepare for this type of working arrangement.

The following list highlights some of the challenges that may be encountered working from home:

MANAGING EMPLOYEES DURING CORONAVIRUS

Remote Working: Responsibilities of the employer & employee

ISME
Irish SME Association

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- difficulty adjusting to new homeworking environment,
- staying focused and avoiding home distractions,
- difficulty monitoring performance,
- motivating employees,
- difficulty in building effective teams, team working relationships and team communications,
- over-working,
- stress and isolation from co-workers leading to reduced staff morale and a decrease in productivity,
- providing and maintaining equipment such as computers, desks, monitors, chairs and other equipment,
- carrying out and recording adequate homeworking risk assessments,
- training – continuous professional development and upskilling,
- catering for sensitive risk groups who may have particular needs.

Insurance and Staff working remotely

In relation to your insurance you would need to ensure that you have informed your insurers that remote working is taking place and discuss

your policy with them to ensure that it covers remote workers as well.

Tax Relief

People remote working can claim tax relief for lighting, heat and broadband.

- Information on how to claim this relief is available from Revenue <https://www.revenue.ie/en/jobs-and-pensions/eworking/how-to-claim.aspx>
- Learn more from this article in the Irish Times <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/personal-finance/people-remote-working-can-claim-tax-relief-for-lighting-heat-and-broadband-1.4207169>

ISME Remote Working Q&A

HR Advisor, Cait Lynch answers questions on 'The responsibilities of the employer and employee while working from a location outside of the office' in a 2020 podcast.

Link to video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_i8q2k8all

National Minimum Wage 2022

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) applies to most employees. It is the minimum hourly pay rate that must be paid. It applies to full-time, part-time, temporary, casual employees and seasonal workers.

The national minimum hourly rate

became €10.50 on 1 January 2022.

The full rate applies to experienced adult workers. There are three sub-minimum rates that allow for the relatively poorer productivity of young, inexperienced employees. These are:

- Aged 19 - €9.45 (90% of NMW)
- Aged 18 - €8.40 (80% of NMW)
- Under 18s - €7.35 (70% of NMW)

From January 2022, the following categories of employees are excluded from the NMW:

- Employees who are close relatives of the employer, where the employer is a Sole Trader, such as a spouse, civil partner, parent, stepparent, grandparent, child, stepchild, grandchild, sibling or half-sibling of the employer.
- A craft apprentice within the meaning of the Industrial Training Act, 1967, or the Labour of Services Act, 1987.



Since 4 March 2019 trainee rates have been abolished. For the purposes of the NMW your gross wage includes, for example, the basic salary and any shift premium, bonus or service charge. If you receive board or lodgings, that is food or accommodation from your

employer, the maximum amounts that can be included are:

- for board only €0.94 per hour worked
- for accommodation only €24.81 per week or €3.55 per day

The following payments (list is not exhaustive) cannot be included to make up the national minimum wage rate:

- any payment of expenses incurred by the employee in carrying out his/her employment
- Premiums including overtime, unsocial hours or call out
- Allowances for special duties including a post of responsibility, on call or standby
- Tips or gratuities paid into a central fund and paid through the payroll
- any payment to the employee not made for their role as an employee
- any payment in kind or benefit in kind
- any sum payable to an employee in lieu of notice of termination of employment

Masterclass - Jan 28th at Noon

Using Best Practice Standards can Add Value to your Business

Improve your business processes and productivity to meet your customer expectations. Adding value to your business means improving your

business processes and productivity to meet your customer expectations. Availing of best practice principles and methods from national and international standards supports you in striving for excellence in delivering your products and services. This masterclass will focus on customer

centric best practice methodologies that can improve your productivity and competitiveness.

<https://www.ibec.ie/sfa/news-insights-and-events/events/2022/masterclass---using-best-practice-standards-can-add-value-to-your-business/general-details>

Muted expectations on 2022

Confidence among small business owners has taken a tumble in the last quarter of the year, according to the latest Small Firms Association “Business Sentiment Survey, Winter 2021”. The small business community has muted expectations on their outlook for 2022, with 41% of small business owners being optimistic in winter 2021 compared to 55% in summer 2021.

Sven Spollen-Behrens, SFA Director said: “Many small businesses find themselves back in a situation of Covid restrictions, which they did not expect in the earlier half of the year. This has affected their ability to trade optimally. They have been particularly affected by issues such as an increase in the costs of doing business, the cost of raw materials and restricted supply chains.” “Domestic economic growth continues to be the primary

driver of business opportunities. Ireland’s entrepreneurs continue to seek out new opportunities in their digital transformation and investing in business expansion.”

“When asked separately about the green economy, 61% of small businesses owners said that they view the Green Economy as a priority for their business in 2022. However, when asked about the challenges in a green transition, small businesses identified the high costs involved as the most significant barrier, followed by lack of clear access to information and a disjointed approach by State Agencies.”

In conclusion, Spollen-Behrens stated: “The final quarter of 2021 was a difficult one for the small business community with the stop, start nature of Covid restrictions causing a fall back in confidence levels. We must now need to find a way to live with Covid safely given the highly successful uptake of booster

Small Business Sentiment Survey

January 2022



vaccinations. The SFA will remain focused on working and supporting members, as they navigate this uncertain period.”

- 41% of business saying that the business environment is improving compared with 55% in Summer 2021.
- 43% of small businesses saw Covid restrictions on their ability to trade as their biggest challenge of the past 12 months.
- 61% of small business see the green economy as a priority for their business in 2022. High costs identified as the most significant challenge that small businesses face as they consider their green transition.

Markets & Opportunities

Discover Enterprise Ireland’s supports, resources and connections to help you access new markets.

Our dedicated market advisers have the expertise you need, from regional information and sectoral opportunities, as well as the best advice on routes to market and

common pitfalls to avoid, you can prepare to scale, globally.

Visit the country pages below to access market information and to download our Going Global guides with the key insights needed to plan your new market entry.

<https://globalambition.ie/markets-opportunities/>

