

|  |
| --- |
| **INITIAL EQUALITY SCREENING FORM** |
|  |
| DIVISION**:** | Regional Business Group | **TEAM:** | Regional Development Team |
|  |
| **Name of Policy/Decision/Practice to be Equality Screened** |
| Economic Recovery Innovation Grant (ERIG) |
|  |
| **Is it New or Revised?** | New |
|  |
| **Who Does the Policy Effect, e.g Service Users/Staff:** | Service Users, Staff |
|  |
| **Question 1** – Define the aim of the Programme. What is it trying to achieve? (Intended aims/outcomes) |
|  |
| The overall ERAP programme encompasses a proposed range of short-term and medium term regionally focussed actions to support the recovery and rebuilding of the NI Economy following the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.The primary strategic aim of the Economic Recovery Innovation Grant (ERIG), which is one strand of the overall ERAP, aims to support local businesses/businesses impacted within Covid hit sectors (such as hospitality, retail, close contact services etc) to introduce and/or enhance innovation activities to embed resilience and agility within their operations. The COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in a level of disruption to the economy beyond that experienced at any time during the last century. Its outworkings, combined with other factors such as supply chain interruptions and changes in consumer behaviour, have substantially affected businesses’ operations and their viability. Consequently, Northern Ireland’s businesses now face a more demanding and competitive environment, not just immediately in responding to the Pandemic, but across the medium-term, having to manage global issues, e.g. climate change, a new national and European trade framework, digitisation and automation, etc.However, it is now evident that the pandemic has affected some groups and sectors more than others, and some are continuing to face restrictions. Furthermore, whilst many economies are rebounding quickly as restrictions are lifted, the ability to sustain growth beyond the initial boost will be critical to longer term wealth creation and importantly restoring the public finances.The ERIG therefore offers the potential to support businesses to embed the resilience and agility they have shown to survive the challenges associated with the Pandemic, and further build their capability to emerge stronger and more competitive to exploit new external opportunities.Whilst risk remains as the strength of any economic recovery in the short-medium term, there is no doubt that many businesses across many sectors have been considerably adversely affected by the circumstances surrounding the Pandemic. However, at the time of writing (early September 2021), in terms of jobs losses and vacancies (in many of the sectors considered to be the hardest hit by the Pandemic) a much more positive picture is emerging than was anticipated at the time that Invest NI developed its initial Regional ERAP proposals.* Based upon the review of market information and feedback from stakeholders, in order to: Minimise potential deadweight and duplication of activity;
* Create the maximum value for money; and
* Support local businesses and impacted sectors to become more resilient to economic shocks, it is considered prudent to pivot the suggested jobs indicator to one that is more flexible and allows for greater recognition of the marketplace (e.g. employment statistics) and the heterogeneity of affected businesses and sectors.

Having considered these factors, both the Business Case Team and the Invest NI Steering Committee consider that a focus on enhancing levels of innovative activity within local businesses and impacted sectors offers the most potential to achieve those goals, whilst also creating the potential for downstream employment growth as a consequence of introducing new or adapted products/processes/services within the businesses.Therefore the ERIP strand will encourage innovation amongst those businesses, with a suggestion that a link could be made with the Innovation Accreditation initiative, which could serve to raise the overall profile of innovation in NI. Please see the proposed overview of the ERIG below:

| **Measure 1** | **Locally Focused Businesses/Impacted Sectors - ERIP** |
| --- | --- |
| Purpose & Scope: | Grant support up to £5k to encourage locally focussed businesses to develop and progress innovative ideas in the business. This measure is **open to all sectors (with exception primary agricultural producer)**. |
| Objective: | Promote innovation within impacted sectors of locally focussed Small & Micro businesses across Northern Ireland that are not currently Invest NI clients. |
| Budget: | £4million  |
| Timescale: | * To commence delivery on 1st November 2021
* To end delivery by 31st March 2021 – (could extend subject to need, demand and budget)
 |
| Eligibility Criteria  | * Your business must be based in Northern Ireland (EC)
* Your business must be a SME (define SME in guidance) (EC)
* Your business must pre-trading or actively trading
* Your business must be registered with HMRC (EC)
* Your applicant / business must be solvent
* Awarded Innovation Accreditation by Innovate NI after October 2019 – (Silver Level Award)
* Confirmation that the grant payment will not take your business over the State Aid de minimis ceiling of €200,000 over the three previous consecutive fiscal years. (EC)
 |
| Who cannot apply?  | * You cannot apply if you have received financial support from Invest NI within the last 3 years (with the exception of businesses who have only received Innovation Vouchers and Covid Emergency Schemes)
* Your business is not pre-trading or actively trading
* Your business has not been awarded Innovation Accreditation via Innovate NI (Silver Level Certificate)
* You have been supported for your Innovation Idea from another government or publics sector source. (with exception of Innovation Vouchers)
* Primary agricultural producers i.e. those primarily concerned with crop or animal production or forestry or logging or fisheries or aquaculture. However, agricultural businesses associated with the processing, marketing and retail of agricultural products can apply to the fund;
* Businesses where the grant received will result in the business exceeding its applicable State Aid de minimis ceiling in the last three years.
* If you do not meet the criteria of SME status.
* If your business is not based in Northern Ireland.
 |
| Trigger Based Grant | Trigger-based grant up to a maximum of £5k per businessProposed Trigger:* The Application has been approved by Invest NI; and
* The Client has been awarded a Silver or above Innovation Accreditation Recognition Certificate by InnovateNI as part of the Innovation Framework.
 |
| Application Process: | This measure will be administered via Invest NI portal with applications applying against set criteria. It will be aligned with standard Invest NI processes and procedures but set up to ensure we can respond quickly to demand.  |

 |
|  |
| **Question 2** – Does the Programme have the potential to have an impact on the promotion of equality impact for any of the Section 75 groupings? (See Question 4 for list of equality groups.) | NO |
|  |
| If no go to Question 7 – Consultation  | If yes please continue. |
|  |
|  |
|  |
| **Consideration of Available Date/Research** |
|  |
| **Question 3** – What  is there available – statistics or perception – to help you decide who the Programme or might affect the most? i.e. What evidence, qualitative or quantitative, have you gathered to inform your decision making process? |
|  |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Assessment of Impact** |
|  |
| **Question 4** – Explain if what you plan to do is likely to be perceived as having a high, medium or low impact upon the 9 Equality groupings according to their needs. Also if what you are planning to do is likely to be perceived as having a positive or negative effect upon the 3 different groups in relation to the promotion of good relations. |
|  |
| **9 Equality Groups** | **Perceived Impact****High – (H)****Medium - (M)****Low – (L)** | **Why this rating?** | **Promotion of Good Relations****(Yes/No)** | **Why this rating?** |
| Religious Belief | L |  | No | While these measures aim to improve economic prosperity, they do not target specifically address Good Relations. |
| Racial/Ethnic Group | L |  | No | While these measures aim to improve economic prosperity, they do not target specifically address Good Relations. |
| Political Opinion | L | . | No | While these measures aim to improve economic prosperity, they do not target specifically address Good Relations. |
| Age | M | There will be promotion of proposed interventions to young people via targeted marketing campaigns. | - |       |
| Gender | M | There will be promotion of proposed interventions to Women via targeted marketing campaigns. | - |       |
| Marital Status | L |  | - |       |
| Sexual Orientation | L |  | - |       |
| Disability | L | Consideration will be given to ensure accessibility for any people with disabilities. | - |       |
| Dependants | L | There will be promotion of proposed interventions to part time workers via targeted marketing campaigns, which may indirectly benefit people with dependents. | - |       |
|  |
| **Opportunities to better promote Equality of Opportunity** |
|  |
| **Question 5** – Are there steps which could be taken to reduce any adverse impact upon the Section 75 groups as identified in Question 4? |
|  |
| The promotion of proposed interventions to Women, Youth, part-time workers as part of the overall ERAP will be positive, rather than adverse. |
|  |
| **Good Relations** |
|  |
| **Question 6** – Is there an opportunity in what you are trying to do to better promote Good Relations between the 3 groupings as identified in Question 4? |
|  |
| No |

|  |
| --- |
| **Consultation** |
|  |
| **Question 7** – Tell us about who have talked to about your proposals internally or externally to help you decide if the needs further or no further equality investigation. |
|  |
| Internally, discussions on the proposed interventions have taken place with colleagues from the following teams;Regional Business, Strategy, Comms, Digital, Offers and Claims, Finance, IT, Technology Solutions, Compliance and New Programme Development, Energy & Resource Efficiency & Power, State AID and the Equality Manager.Externally, discussions have taken place with representatives from SOLACE, and the independent business case appraisal will also include consultations with DfE, 11 Councils, Enterprise NI, NI Chamber of Commerce, and FSB |
|  |
| **Question 8** – In light of the above should the be |
|  |
| [x]  | Screened Out – No Equality Issues – Please provide rationale for this decision. |
| We do not consider that the Economic Recovery Innovation Grant (ERIG) will have an adverse impact on the promotion of equality to specific groups, rather a number of positive actions are being considered as part of the Regional Economic Recovery Plan in order to assist NI businesses. These actions include the provision of funding to c1000 locally focussed businesses at the start of their innovation journey, provision of funding to support Councils in undertaking research into the wider economic outlook in their specific sub-region, the development and implementation of a strong ‘Green Economy’ Marketing and Communications Strategy and Action Plan the focus of which will be to promote Entrepreneurship in particular to Youth, Females and Part-time Workers. |
| [ ]  | Screened Out with some adjustments. – What adjustments have you made? |
|       |
| [ ]  | Screened In for a deeper level of analysis of what is being considered or intended to be undertaken. (EQIA) – Please provide rationale for this decision. |
|       |
|  |
| Signed: |  | Date: | 27-09-2021 |
|  | Policy /Programme Owner |  |  |
|  |
| Approved | Pamela Marron | Date: | 08/10/21 |
|  | Equality Manager |  |  |
|  |
|  |
| Modifications made. | Date: |       |
|  |
|  |
| Date: |       |
| Approved by Equality Manager |  |  |