

SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTIONS

GUIDANCE NOTES

The Invest Northern Ireland Supply Chain Solutions helps businesses to address their supply chain challenges and develop their supply-chain function to enhance value, reduce risk and improve competitiveness. The service is free to companies participating in the programme however eligibility criteria apply.

This document provides guidance on the support available through the Supply Chain Solutions (SCS) including eligibility criteria, the application process and evidence required. If you are considering applying for this support, please read this document carefully before submitting an application.

The programme will close to applications at **15:00 on Friday 21 February 2025**, or earlier if the available advisory resource, or budget, is fully allocated. Projects will be approved on a first-come first-served basis.

OVERVIEW

The Supply Chain Solutions support has been developed to help businesses improve their supply chain resilience and competitiveness.

SCS will provide a graduated framework of support, primarily providing specialist advisory support to help businesses identify supply chain risks and appropriate mitigations, identify supply chain opportunities, and develop supply chain capability.

Financial assistance towards salary cost of a dedicated supply chain worker may also be available, depending on a business' circumstances.

SCS is open to manufacturers and internationally tradeable services businesses who manage a supply chain as part of their business, or who are involved in the extended supply chain. Please review the eligibility criteria below and complete the eligibility checker before applying.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

The overall aim of SCS is to build a Northern Ireland supply chain ecosystem by helping companies to enhance value, reduce risk and improve competitiveness.

The scheme will provide a blend of specialist advice and financial support to help eligible businesses implement sustainable supply chain improvements and opportunities.

SCS will provide a graduated level of support to businesses:

Step 1

Initial engagement with businesses will be in an advisory capacity from our team of supply chain professionals. Businesses will receive up to one half day of free support and specialist advice to help it understand the key supply chain issues it is facing and provide initial advice and direction on how to resolve these.

Step 2

If, in consultation with the business, there is a clear need for an improvement action plan that will strengthen the business' supply chain operation, up to a further 10 days of support may be made available. A dedicated supply chain specialist will work with the business to support, coach and mentor it through an agreed supply chain improvement plan, owned and delivered by the business, which could cover some or all of the following areas:

- Coaching and mentoring on supply chain improvements/techniques to deliver sustainable benefits.
- Facilitating, mentoring, and coordinating supply chain improvement projects.
- Supporting businesses to assess supply chain risk and mitigation opportunities.
- Providing strategic procurement and supply chain advice to companies.
- Identifying supply chain opportunities within businesses and promoting the benefits of a structured approach to managing suppliers.
- Supporting businesses on repurposing operations and supply chains to meet potential new opportunities.

Step 3

If, as part of the action plan agreed in Step 2, a business does not have the required supply chain resource or capability and identifies the need for a new, dedicated supply chain role, financial assistance may be available towards 50% of up to the first 12 month's salary costs, up to a maximum of £25k of support.

To receive this support, the business will need to complete an online application form, demonstrating the need for the new role, how the role will help deliver the above agreed action plan, what benefits the role will bring to the business, and what tangible outcomes it will deliver.

Financial assistance available under SCS will be allocated on a first-come first- served basis.

To receive this support, the business will need to complete an online application form, demonstrating the need for the new role, how the role will help deliver the above agreed action plan, what benefits the role will bring to the business, and what tangible outcomes it will deliver.

ELIGIBILITY

SCS support is open to any business which meets the following criteria:

- Is based, and operating, in Northern Ireland
- Manufactures products or provides internationally traded services
- Has a total supply chain spend of at least £100,000 in one of the previous 2 financial years
- Be able to demonstrate how your supply chain has been adversely impacted due to a disruption in the production, sale, or distribution of products
- Either be able to demonstrate your business has or will reach a turnover of £250,000 per annum in the next five years and achieve at least 25% of those sales outside of Northern Ireland; or be an existing Invest NI customer
- Be able to complete a State Aid declaration in the event that financial support for a new key supply chain worker is determined

EXCLUSIONS

The following businesses are not eligible to apply:

- Business already in receipt or intending to gain other government support for the project.
- Businesses that do not provide commercial products and/or services.
- Businesses with less than £100,000 total supply chain yearly spend in the past two financial years.
- Businesses that cannot demonstrate they are a viable business.
- Businesses involved in activities that Invest NI considers as ineligible or as involving an unacceptable reputational risk, such as gambling, adult entertainment, tobacco products and cannabis-based products which are not authorised as medicines.

HOW TO APPLY

Your first step is to check if you are [eligible to apply for SCS](#).

If you meet the eligibility criteria, you will be directed to complete an online enquiry form and the SCS Team will then contact you.

You will need to provide the following details in your application:

- Your business name
- Your contact name and number
- Your business address and postcode
- Number of people you employ in Northern Ireland

You will also need to provide electronically:

- Signed company accounts to evidence that your business had a minimum total supply chain spend of at least £100,000 in one of the previous 2 financial years
- Be able to demonstrate how your supply chain has been adversely impacted due to a disruption in the production, sale, or distribution of products
- The maximum file size of each attached document is 10MB.

You will also be asked to complete a supply chain checklist which will be sent to you as part of the application process.

ASSESSING YOUR APPLICATION

Your application will be assessed based on the information you provide in your application form, which must be submitted before the closing deadline of **15:00 on Friday 21 February 2025**.

Please note that if the number of enquiries exceeds the capacity to deliver the advisory service effectively, or we exceed the budget available for the financial assistance, we may need to pause or close the application process before this date.

TIMESCALES

SCS is now open for applications.

Projects will be approved on a first-come first-served basis. The programme will close to applications at **15:00 on Friday 21 February 2025** or earlier if the available advisory resource, or budget, is fully allocated.

Please read and check your application before submitting to ensure that the information provided is correct. Corrections or additional information provided after the closing date will not be accepted.

NOTIFICATION OF FUNDING DECISION

If eligible for Step 3 support, businesses will be sent an online application form to complete. The application will be assessed by the SCS Team and once a fully completed application is approved, applicants are informed, and a Letter of Offer will be issued.

Please do not start your project, incur cost or pay deposits until you receive written confirmation of funding from Invest NI. If you incur costs because you have signed contracts, given permission to start work, raised invoices or made payments before funding is approved, these costs cannot be claimed for and could prevent you from accessing any of the funding awarded.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

Invest NI will determine at its sole discretion:

- Whether sufficient information has been provided to assess an application.
- Whether an application has been successful.
- Whether an applicant will progress to the next step of the scheme.

If you have any enquiries about your application, please complete this [enquiry form](#) and a member of the SCS Team will get back to you. If you are an Invest NI customer, please contact your Client Executive.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You are responsible for providing accurate and true information on your application.

The provision of wrong or misleading information is an offence and any such information may be used against you in any subsequent criminal investigation. The information provided on this application form may be made available to other departments or agencies for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime.

You are responsible for obtaining any legal consents and complying with any legal requirements for the implementation of your project. This may include but is not limited to requirements in relation to building controls, planning permission and landlord consents. Invest NI will not accept responsibility for your failure to comply with any legal requirements in the implementation of your project should it be successful.

DATA PROTECTION AND HANDLING

SCS is managed and administered by Invest NI which will have access to the information you provide as part of your application; both as a means to assess your eligibility and to conduct any post scheme governance assessments.

As any financial support is sourced from public funds Invest NI will, in the interest of openness and transparency, proactively publish limited information on the fund including:

- name of applicant
- application title
- amount of assistance

Invest NI will handle your data in compliance with applicable laws including the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. For further details on our data handling practices please see the [Invest NI Privacy Notice](#).

STATE AID / SUBSIDY CONTROL

De minimis aid

Under Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol to the UK EU Withdrawal Agreement, EU State aid rules continue to apply to the UK in respect of measures which affect trade in goods between NI and the EU. SCS financial support to which Article 10 of the NI Protocol applies constitutes de minimis aid and falls within the scope of the EC's de minimis aid Regulation. The maximum amount of de minimis aid a company can receive over 36 months is €300,000, approximately £258,000 at 3 October 2024.

UK Subsidy Control

SCS financial support to which Article 10 of the NI Protocol does not apply falls under the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) provisions of UK Subsidy Control as set out in the UK EU Trade & Cooperation Agreement (TCA). The maximum amount of SDR support a company can receive in a three-year fiscal period is 325,000 SDR, commencing 1st January 2021 (approximately £334,000 at 8 March 2021).

Repayment of Grant

If SCS grant support results in a breach of these ceilings or there is any contravention of de minimis aid rules, other State Aid rules or the provisions of the UK Subsidy Control, irrespective of whether this was a deliberate or otherwise deception or error or as a result of any misleading statements given on the application, this support will be recoverable in full and may be subject to legal action.

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

For general enquiries, please contact Invest NI's Business Support Team on 0800 1814422. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm