

INTRODUCTION

Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) was established as a corporate body under the Industrial Development Act 2002 to work in partnership with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to stimulate and encourage economic development in Northern Ireland.

Invest NI undertakes the activities previously delivered by the Industrial Development Board (IDB), the Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU), the Industrial Research and Technology Unit (IRTU), the Business Support Division of the Department of Enterprise and Investment and the business support functions of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

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 carried out an EQIA of its Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy during July 2005. The aim of this strategy is to:

- Create a culture and an environment through education and promotional campaigns that supports and encourages entrepreneurs;
- Segment businesses into three categories (global; export; local) based on the markets in which they will operate and the value added to the Northern Ireland economy;
- Develop clear support structures for each market segment and ensure that businesses can seamlessly progress from one segment to another;
- Use electronic media, to provide accessible world-class levels of support for entrepreneurs;
- Ensure support is provided in an integrated and effective way through a partnership of public, private and voluntary sectors.

The draft EQIA was issued for consultation for a 12 week period in July 2005. Following the close of this consultation a final report was published in May 2006. This final report outlined the actions/recommendations which Invest NI committed to take forward and to monitor on an annual basis.

CURRENT POSITION

Invest NI has now undertaken a review of the actions/recommendations contained in the final report and would like to highlight the process made to date against each recommendation. The table overleaf outlines progress made up to July 2007:

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS AND PROGRESS TABLE

Recommendation	Action	Progress up to 31/07/07
1	<p><i>Put in place a systematic monitoring strategy and associated procedures for all AES programmes. This will consider realistic and appropriate methods for gathering Section 75 data from those companies seeking AES assistance.</i></p>	<p>At present, we are working with an external consultant in order to develop and roll out an Equality Monitoring Strategy for Invest NI as a whole. The first pilot phase for the strategy will be rolled out during Nov/Dec 07.</p> <p>Initiatives that are collecting data under Section 75 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise (PRIME) • Advantage • Prince's Trust Northern Ireland (PTNI) • Start a Business Programme (SABp) • Enterprise NI • Young Enterprise NI (YENI) – where applicable • Northern Ireland Centre for Entrepreneurship (NICENT) – where applicable • Renewing Communities • Investing in Women Initiatives • Social Entrepreneurship Programme
2	<p><i>Clearly define and set out the selection criteria used for each AES programme. Any potential adverse impacts associated with these criteria will be considered.</i></p>	<p>Eligibility criteria are now set out on the website for each AES programme. Any potential adverse impacts associated with these criteria have been considered and all future programmes will continue to be screened.</p>
3	<p><i>Where any AES programme deliberately targets certain groups then the rationale for this targeting should be made transparent.</i></p>	<p>The targeting of specific groups within the AES reflects their current under-representation amongst the entrepreneurial population. The rationale for this targeting is based on NI survey data (the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) and international best practice in entrepreneurship policy. This information is available on the Invest NI website.</p>

4	<i>Positive action measures in relation to training of women and those aged over 50, in particular, will be considered under AES.</i>	AES has intensified its promotion of female entrepreneurs as role models and now provides a range of training opportunities specifically aimed at developing women in business. A new pilot initiative (PRIME) has also been launched providing tailored support for those (men and women) aged 50+ who are interested in self employment.
5	<i>Review the network of AES Points of Presence across Northern Ireland to ensure an even distribution.</i>	The current Points of Presence network comprises 40 sites across NI with distribution reflecting demographics and levels of entrepreneurial demand. New sites continue to be added and access issues are considered as part of this process. A consultant is currently looking at the overall spread of the network and will provide feedback on what the final number of sites should be.
6	<i>Ensure that the criteria for the Social Entrepreneurship Programme in designated disadvantaged NTSN areas do not discriminate on grounds of race or religion.</i>	The programme is open to all regardless of race or religion and a prerequisite of the eligibility criteria is that projects and groups are capable of satisfying the Peace II Distinctiveness Criteria.
7	<i>Ensure that the distribution of delivery agents for the Social Entrepreneurship Programme affords reasonable access for all communities across Northern Ireland.</i>	Groups from disadvantaged communities in 21 of the 26 Council areas have been accepted on to the Programme to date. Additional marketing will be undertaken early April to encourage further participation from these and the remaining council areas (Banbridge, Carrick, Castlereagh, Cookstown and North Down)
8	<i>Ensure that the Prince's Trust and LiveWIRE programmes continue to monitor and reflect on the age ranges that they cater for and provide a sound rationale for their targeting procedures. Ensure</i>	Both PTNI and Advantage NI (LiveWIRE) have submitted business cases and are currently undergoing economic appraisals in order to obtain future funding. This will ensure that they provide a sound rationale for their targeting procedures and that they continue to reach and monitor the groups that they cater for. Their business cases reflect the need for equality of opportunity for under-represented groups and contain measures to ensure that these groups are

	<i>that the Prince's Trust and LiveWIRE programmes consider any affirmative action and outreach measures that may be appropriate for equality of opportunity for under-represented groups.</i>	reached.
9	<i>Ensure that the auditing of each new Point of Presence in the Start A Business Programme is formalised to ensure that all buildings, locations and venues enjoy equal access for those with special needs.</i>	The points of presence initiative was delayed and the launch has now been rescheduled to commence operations in April 2007 and will include auditing to ensure there is equal access to venues for those with special needs. The points of presence initiative will provide access to a range of business information and advice for entrepreneurs and therefore includes the Start a Business programme and other initiatives under the Go For It brand. The system will operate an accredited Quality Assurance system that will incorporate an audit function.
10	<i>Make all materials for each programme available in alternative formats on request, and consider the marketing of the programmes (through Go For It) using alternatives to the written word.</i>	This is an ongoing process and materials will be made available on request.
11	<i>Format all AES application forms using clear fonts, layout and colours which are accessible to those with special needs.</i>	All applications meet with Corporate Guidelines

INFORMATION

If you would like to view the draft Accelerating Entrepreneurship EQIA or the Accelerating Entrepreneurship EQIA Final Report, 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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