



Invest 
Northern
Ireland

Building Locally
Competing Globally

1st Progress Report on Invest NI's Business Development Solutions Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

November 2008

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

INTRODUCTION

As an agency of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), Invest NI's role is to provide support to businesses by delivering the Government's economic development strategies.

In particular we:

- Support new and existing businesses, particularly those capable of growing through sales outside Northern Ireland;
- Encourage companies to increase investment in all aspects of innovation, not only research and development (R&D); and
- Attract new investment into Northern Ireland.

We work with many other organisations at a local, national and international level, including councils, universities, the wider education sector, government departments and agencies, business organisations and international networks.

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 has carried out an EQIA of its Business Development Solutions Policy during June 2007. The aim of this Policy is to:

help companies grow by focusing on capability-building factors which will contribute to increasing competitiveness, international expansion and investing in research and development.

The draft EQIA went out for a 12 week consultation period in June 2007. Following the close of this consultation a final report was published in November 2007. The 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 progress made to date against each recommendation. The table below outlines progress made up to November 2008:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROGRESS TABLE

Point	Recommendation	Progress up to 31/10/08
1	Set up an effective equality monitoring strategy in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.	Invest NI has a monitoring strategy in place which will enable it to request Section 75 information from both individuals and companies who receive interventions. Reports on this data will be run in June 2009 however it is envisaged that this process may take time to embed and yield substantial results.
2	Additional criteria for programmes or schemes will be clearly defined and set out; and any potential adverse impacts associated with these criteria will be considered.	The majority of BDS programmes target client companies, although on the rare occasion where these programmes do target individuals there have been defined criteria set out and reasons as to why this is the case. There is also ongoing screening of all programmes to ensure equality of opportunity.
3	When a BDS programme targets certain groups then the reasons for targeting these groups will be made transparent. A review of programme accessibility will also be undertaken to ensure consistency of approach.	Where a BDS programme targets a certain grouping then there will be clear reasoning for this. We will also be undertaking a Communications and Access EQIA in 2009 to review accessibility to Invest NI as an organisation and this will include accessibility to our programmes.

4	<p>There will be ongoing training of front line staff and in particular Client Executives in Section 75. Where external consultants are employed then their responsibilities under Section 75 will also be made clear, and this will include any training requirements.</p>	<p>All Invest NI staff have received equality and diversity training and this will continue for any new staff entering into the organisation. In 07/08 staff also received specific disability awareness training and tailored training will be ongoing for all staff. We have also been working with the Central Procurement Directorate to ensure all external consultants are made aware of our Section 75 obligations.</p>
5	<p>Each programme will make clear, in all documentation, that materials can be made available in alternative formats where necessary and on request.</p>	<p>All major corporate publications state that Invest NI will make them available, on request, in alternative formats. We will however review this through the course of the Communications and Access EQIA and make changes where appropriate.</p>
6	<p>Marketing of BDS programmes and services among minority communities will be considered as part of a broader positive action programme.</p>	<p>In August 2008 Invest NI held an Engaging Ethnic Minority Enterprise seminar in conjunction with NICEM. This seminar promoted Invest NI programmes and how this grouping could best avail of the assistance on offer.</p>
7	<p>All application forms will use a format with clear fonts, layout, and colours etc. that are accessible to those with special needs.</p>	<p>We have developed and produced "Making Information More Accessible" guidelines which are held on Invest NI's intranet and accessible to all staff. We will review this again as we conduct our Communications and Access EQIA.</p>

INFORMATION

If you would like to view the draft Business Development Solutions EQIA or the Business Development Solutions 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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