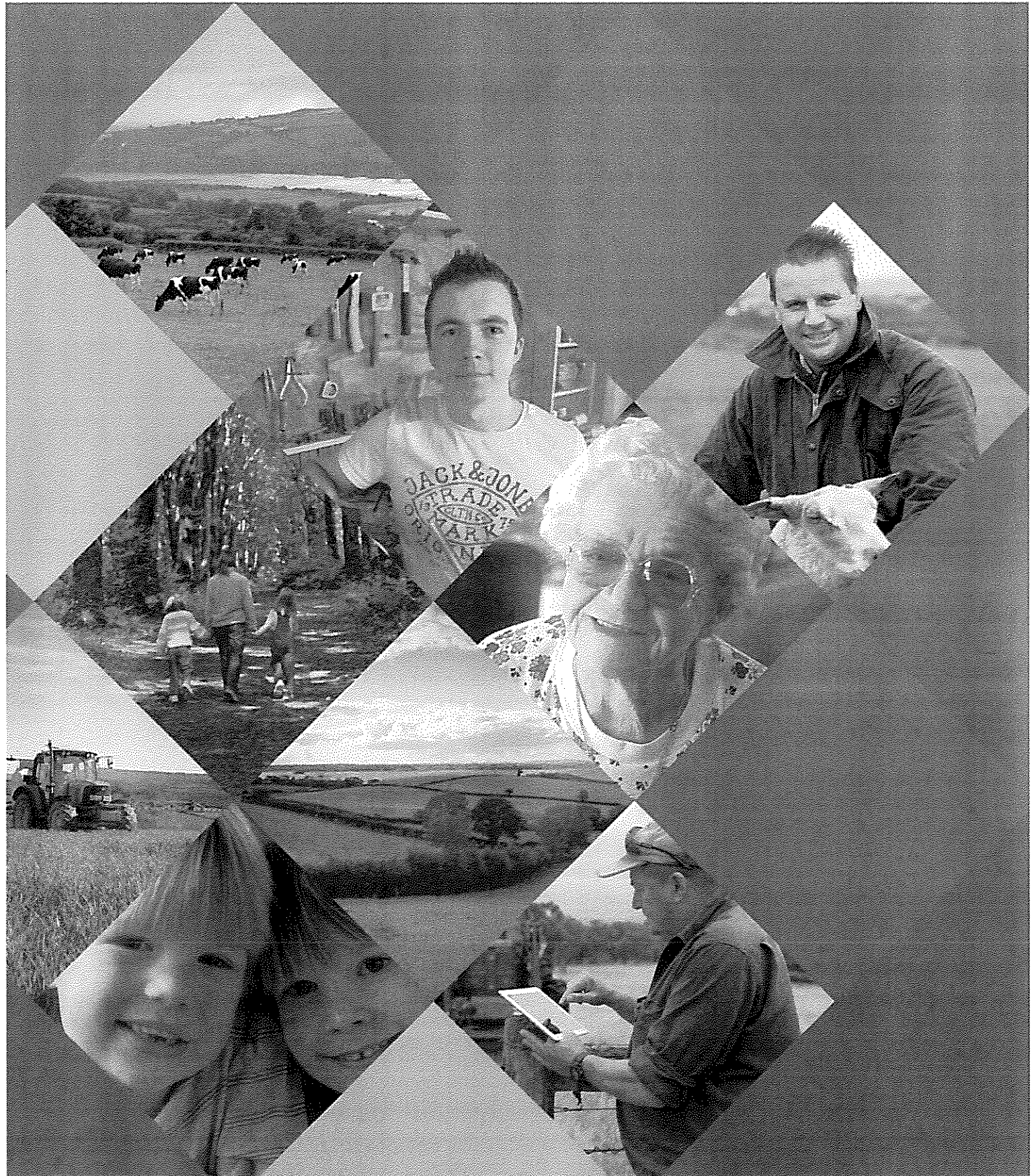


Rural Needs Impact Assessment



Title of Strategy, Policy, Plan or Public Service:

Name of Organisation:

Invest Northern Ireland

Title of Strategy, Policy, Plan or Public Service:

The Graduate to Export Programme (G2E Programme)

Step 1: Define the Issue

Key questions to consider:

- *What are the objectives of the strategy, policy plan or service?*
- *What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?*
- *How is 'rural' defined for the purposes of this policy/strategy/service/plan?*
- *What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?*

The Graduate to Export Development Programme (G2E Programme) is a new initiative. The G2E Programme will target companies across Northern Ireland to help them expand their businesses internationally with the assistance of a supported graduate. Participating companies will gain from having a dedicated market research resource in-market and on completion of the graduate intervention, they will have an export development / market entry plan for their chosen market. The Programme, in turn, will provide graduates with academic training alongside a placement in an overseas market (up to 6 months with company and up to 12 months in-market). Graduate participants will be offered a valuable opportunity to gain practical experience and business skills in international business development. On successful completion of the programme, the graduate will be awarded a number of Level 7 (National Qualification Framework) academic credits, which will go toward a suitable postgraduate qualification should the graduate wish to complete further studies. Graduates will be assigned an academic mentor and a company mentor for the duration of the programme. Mentors will support, challenge and translate learning from the programme into practical use, in-market.

The G2E Programme will comprise of up to 3 cohorts of 15 recent graduates per cohort. It is anticipated that the programme will run over a period of 4 years with each cohort lasting 18 months subject to budgetary constraints and satisfactory performance.

The programme is open to Invest NI account managed clients who are able to demonstrate that they have the commitment and resources to participate on the programme as well as having a specific market research project, aligned to their company's strategic marketing plan. Participating companies will receive an offer of a Graduate Support Grant (50% contribution) towards the salary of the graduate for the duration of the programme. Companies are responsible for recruiting and employing the graduate for the duration of the programme.

A training provider will be procured through CPD to design, deliver and manage the graduate training and mentoring element of the programme.

As this is a province wide initiative, no barriers are envisaged in terms of businesses situated in rural areas.

Step 2: Understand the situation

Key questions to consider:

- *What is the current situation in rural areas?*
- *What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas?*
- *If the relevant evidence is not available, can this be sourced?*
- *Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?*
- *Are there existing design features or mitigations already in place to take account of rural needs?*

The strategic context for the introduction of this programme is to contribute to the aims and objectives of the wider governmental industrial strategies and Invest NI's business and international strategies which are inclusive of the whole Northern Ireland community.

Economy 2030 - the draft Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland, sets out a plan to build a globally competitive economy, grounded on five priority pillars. Two of the pillars – “enhancing education, skills and employability” and “succeeding in global markets” outlines the ambition for an export-led economy and recognises the need for companies to have access to a well-educated workforce. The Programme for Government (PfG) recognises that businesses and the workforce remain the key drivers of economic growth. The key drivers of this outcome include improving the skills and employability of those in, and those wishing to join the workforce.

The DfE report, ‘Graduate to Success’ (April 2012- 2020), outlines a desire to ‘provide students with opportunities to develop a portfolio of skills...to include international mobility opportunities’. Research indicates that many SMEs are not inclined to invest in management development training, and market intervention is required, in order to encourage business leaders to develop these skills in their business. In recognition of the strategic drivers outlined above, Invest NI's Business Strategy and International Strategy 2017-2021 states that it will renew and redouble emphasis on International Trade support for its customers with the greatest growth potential to access the skills required to realise their ambitions.

It is hoped therefore that this programme will enhance the economic prospects for rural dwellers as the overall economy improves.

Step 3: Develop and appraise options

Key questions to consider:

- *Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas?*
- *If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated?*
- *Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas?*
- *What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?*

Businesses and graduates across NI will have the opportunity to participate in the programme.

Programme criteria is as follows:

Graduates

The Programme is targeted at recent graduates (within the last 5 years) who fit the required criteria below:

- Seeking graduate entry level market research positions;
- Pass Degree in any discipline;
- Willing to relocate outside NI for up to 12 months, as required by the employing company, and to have the appropriate language skills for that market;
- Able to work in Northern Ireland i.e required to have pre-existing legal status to live and work in Northern Ireland.
- Willing to participate fully in the G2E Programme.

Invest NI Companies

Invest NI Client Companies will provide commercial, real – time assignments which will be carried out by the programme graduates. The companies will be primarily SME's, though not exclusively and will be representative of all sectors. The assignments can cover any market outside of Northern Ireland.

Training Provider

The graduate training element for this programme is being outsourced to an external provider via a CPD procurement process. Tenderers will be required to provide options for modular training both online and classroom based and the content should comprise the skills, experience and qualifications required to deliver sales and marketing, business development and market insight for NI companies in line with global best practice.

Again, it is not believed that there are any barriers to delivery in rural areas.

Step 4: Prepare for Delivery

Key questions to consider:

- *Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?*
- *Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms?*
- *What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?*
- *Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions?*
- *Are different solutions required in different areas?*

The procurement selection process will incorporate appropriate weightings to reflect the necessary expertise / experience required and this will encompass the issue of Rural Needs and other legislative requirements.

Step 5: Implementation & Monitoring

Key questions to consider:

- *Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor?*
- *How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas?*
- *Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?*

Invest NI Trade Division will appoint a programme manager to oversee and manage the G2E programme. Their role will include managing the company selection and also scheduling regular monitoring meetings with the appointed training provider to ensure satisfactory performance against KPIs and to ensure the smooth operation of this contract as per the contract requirements. We do not have any specific rural targets or outcomes given the nature of the programme.

Step 6: Evaluation & Review

Key questions to consider:

- What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service?
- Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process?
- How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?

Break clauses will be included in the training provider contract. An evaluation will be carried out following delivery of each cohort which will consider rural needs. Subsequent cohorts will only be approved based on satisfactory performance against agreed KPIs and with a view to budgetary considerations.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Pauline McKegney
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Signature:	PP Pauline McKegney
Date completed:	6/8/18

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Signature:	Pamela Harron
Date completed:	6/8/18

