



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

IMPACT REPORT 2025

#MakingItHappen

*Measuring the
impact of Local
Enterprise Office
supports in 2025*



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

in partnership with



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland

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Acknowledgements:

This LEO Impact Report is published on behalf of Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities by Enterprise Ireland. It has been produced with the assistance of the LEO Communications Committee and the Operations & Client Excellence Unit, in Shannon, Co. Clare. Our thanks go to all the current and former LEO clients that feature in it.

A national network provided locally

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) is the first stop for anyone thinking about starting or growing a business.

There are 31 Local Enterprise Offices across the country. Each is there to provide new and existing businesses with the expert advice, tailored training and financial supports they need to help them thrive.

Established in 2014, the network of Local Enterprise Offices operates in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, Local Government Ireland, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



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Grow Digital Voucher

flagged up the value of automation for **Flynn Signs & Display**

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helped **8A Brasserie** serve up energy savings

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Business Expansion Grant

helped **Sugar Plum Sweetery** to scale up sweetly

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Welcome

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are at the forefront of Ireland's enterprise ecosystem, empowering entrepreneurs, supporting business ambition, and enabling sustainable economic development in every community across the country.

As Ireland's first stop for enterprise support, we work with thousands of entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses each year, helping them navigate change, seize opportunities and build resilient, competitive enterprises. Through our nationwide network of 31 offices, embedded within communities and connected through a coordinated national framework, we combine deep local insight with strategic national reach to deliver impactful, customer-focused supports.

Our role extends far beyond supporting business start-up and growth. We are catalysts for innovation, productivity, sustainability and digital transformation, helping businesses adapt and thrive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment. By fostering entrepreneurship and strengthening indigenous enterprise, we contribute directly to balanced regional development, job creation and the long-term competitiveness of the Irish economy.

The Local Enterprise Office network represents a successful model of collaborative public service delivery, bringing together the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Enterprise Ireland and Local Authorities to create a seamless pathway of support for small businesses. This partnership ensures that enterprise policy translates into practical action, delivering measurable outcomes for businesses, communities and the wider economy.

Throughout 2025, our strategic focus has been on enabling businesses to build capability, increase productivity and embrace innovation. We have continued to invest in programmes and initiatives that support digital adoption, sustainability, leadership development, export readiness and operational excellence, ensuring that Irish SMEs are equipped to succeed in both domestic and international markets.

As this Impact Report demonstrates, our success is measured not only through outputs and performance indicators, but through the tangible outcomes achieved by businesses across the country. Every job created, every new market entered, every innovation

commercialised and every enterprise scaled contributes to stronger local economies and more vibrant communities. Through an integrated portfolio of supports including mentoring, business advisory services, financial assistance, Start Your Own Business programmes and dedicated strategic initiatives in Lean, Green, Digital and Exporting we provide businesses with the tools, expertise and confidence they need to realise their ambitions. Our approach is centred on meeting businesses where they are in their journey and supporting them to reach their full potential.

We also continue to champion entrepreneurship through flagship national initiatives that inspire enterprise, celebrate achievement and strengthen Ireland's entrepreneurial culture. Programmes such as Local Enterprise Week, the National Enterprise Awards, National Women's Enterprise Day, the Student Enterprise Programme and the Local Enterprise Village at the National Ploughing Championships provide valuable platforms for learning, collaboration and business growth. The strength of the Local Enterprise Office network lies in its ability to transform local engagement into national impact. By combining community-based knowledge with strategic enterprise supports, we help create an environment where innovation can flourish, businesses can scale, and regional economies can prosper.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to supporting the ambitions of Ireland's entrepreneurs and small businesses. As enterprise continues to evolve, our focus will remain on fostering innovation, accelerating digital and green transitions, building resilient and productive businesses, and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Together with our partners, stakeholders and clients, we will continue to shape a stronger, more competitive and more entrepreneurial Ireland one business, one community and one opportunity at a time.



Kieran Comerford,
Chair of the Local Enterprise Offices

At a glance: highlights from 2025



7,261
new jobs

were created
in 2025



2,479
Net employment
gain in 2025

82% of
new jobs

created were outside
the Dublin region



12th year
of consecutive jobs
growth for the Local
Enterprise Offices



7% job
increase
from 2024



Local Enterprise
Offices now support
40,285 jobs
in 7,148 companies

Providing solutions tailored to small business

Celebrating Ireland's entrepreneurs

LEOs drive Ireland's entrepreneurial culture through high profile initiatives such as:

Local Enterprise Week

Student Enterprise Programme

National Women's Enterprise Day

National Enterprise Awards

Local Enterprise Village (Ploughing)

Local Enterprise Showcase at Showcase

Food Academy and Food Starter

Every business is different but each can benefit from the right support at the right time, whether it's starting or growing.

LEOs provide a range of supports to help, including:



Financial assistance
and access to
microfinance loans



Competitiveness
and productivity
supports



Signposting to
relevant bodies
and agencies



Training and
development



Mentoring
and advice



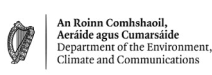
Sustainability
supports

Signposting supports for Ireland's entrepreneurial ecosystem

LEOs help clients to navigate organisations that can help their business grow, including:



Credit Review



Making an impact on employment



7,261 new jobs

were created by LEO grant supported clients, however, there was a loss of **4,782** jobs resulting in a net gain of **2,479** jobs, a seven per cent increase on 2024.

40,285 people were employed

by **7,148** small businesses and start-ups that had received financial assistance from the Local Enterprise Offices by the end of 2025.

More than money

The job numbers above refer only to jobs recorded by those businesses that received LEO financial assistance. Thousands more jobs are created by businesses which have received non-financial LEO supports, such as **expert advice**, one-to-one **mentoring** or targeted **training**.

*FT stands for full-time and PT stands for part-time. The Annual Employment Survey was compiled by the LEO Operations & Client Excellence unit in Enterprise Ireland.

Row Labels	2025 No. of LEO Clients	2025 All Jobs (FT + PT)	2025 Gross Total Job Gains	2025 Net Job Gains/ Losses
Carlow	183	1,120	226	43
Cavan	186	1,403	157	32
Clare	206	1,348	184	51
Cork City	193	835	199	59
Cork North & West	273	1,436	286	111
Cork South	154	929	130	63
Donegal	288	1,790	231	75
Dublin City	397	2,051	421	174
Dublin Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	275	1,233	215	56
Dublin Fingal	295	1,319	271	135
Dublin South	275	1,228	281	91
Galway County/City	270	1,426	298	76
Kerry	242	990	177	1
Kildare	288	1,485	417	152
Kilkenny	192	1,119	172	48
Laois	142	837	121	37
Leitrim	142	505	77	17
Limerick	310	2,289	531	259
Longford	258	1,392	191	35
Louth	209	1,000	219	74
Mayo	200	1,388	193	81
Meath	246	1,443	197	54
Monaghan	166	1,036	190	90
Offaly	203	1,207	206	26
Roscommon	167	1,055	170	55
Sligo	182	951	112	13
Tipperary	264	1,470	306	83
Waterford	261	1,313	261	65
WestMeath	285	1,845	316	127
Wexford	237	2,147	391	246
Wicklow	159	695	115	50
Grand Total	7,148	40,285	7,261	2,479

Supporting our clients

Direct Financial Assistance

Local Enterprise Offices can provide different types of grant assistance to eligible businesses to help fund start-up costs, expansion plans, entry into new markets, research and development and job growth.

In 2025, Local Enterprise Offices approved

€22,361,390

in grant aid to Manufacturing and Internationally Traded sector businesses for **1,067** applications/projects (**989** clients) broken down into the following types of grants:



Priming Grants
€5,441,293

186 approved applications
(**184** clients in 2025)



Business Expansion Grants
€10,996,206

340 approved applications
(**335** clients in 2025)



Feasibility Study Grants
€2,878,649

274 approved applications
(**273** clients in 2025)



**Technical Assistance for
Micro Exporters Grant**
€20,997

13 approved applications
(**13** clients in 2025)



**Market Explorer
Grant**
€1,001,526

152 approved applications
(**148** clients in 2025)



**Research, Development
& Innovation**
€620,186

6 R&D Fund applications/
clients approved in 2025



IP Start
€84,860

39 approved
applications (**37**
clients in 2025)



IP Plus
€201,709

9 approved
applications
in 2025



Green Start
€53,964

13 applications/
clients approved
in 2025



GradStart
€1,062,000

35 applications/
clients approved
in 2025

Total number of
applications in 2025:

1,067

Total amount of grant-aid
approved in 2025:

€22,361,390

Capability Development

Capability development lies at the heart of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) offer, recognising that sustainable business growth is driven not only by financial supports, but by strong entrepreneurial, managerial and leadership skills.

LEO training programmes are designed to equip business owners, managers and aspiring entrepreneurs with the practical tools, knowledge and confidence needed to start, grow and future-proof their businesses.

In 2025, LEOs delivered a comprehensive suite of high-quality, business-focused training programmes,

supporting

44,209

participants
nationwide.



Starting strong

A cornerstone of LEO's capability building provision is its Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programme.

It has helped people all over the country to take their first step on the road to business ownership.

Developed and enhanced over many years, this proven training course provides participants with the skills and knowledge they need to assess the viability of their business idea.

It includes modules on business planning, sales and marketing, employment legislation, business finance and taxation.

It is designed to equip participants with the tools they need to assess and understand their target market, their own capabilities and their chances of success.

Start Your Own Business courses are often a person's first introduction to their Local Enterprise Office. As they progress, Local Enterprise Offices offer a sign-posting service to additional supports, and to other state agencies which can help them, such as Enterprise Ireland and Microfinance Ireland.

LEO Start Your Own Business programmes are aimed at those:



5,684

participants completed
365 LEO-run Start Your
Own Business
programmes in 2025

Direct Financial Assistance

Local Enterprise Offices provide different types of grant assistance.

In 2025 Local Enterprise Offices approved €22,361,390 in grant aid to Manufacturing and Internationally Traded sector businesses for 1,067 applications or projects. These included:



Priming Grant

The Priming Grant is a key financial support offered by Local Enterprise Offices to assist microenterprises within their first 18 months of trading. Its primary objective is to enable early stage businesses to establish a viable operational base and progress towards sustainable growth.

The grant provides up to 50% of eligible investment costs, to a maximum of €150,000, with higher value awards (above €80,000) reserved for enterprises demonstrating clear potential to progress to Enterprise Ireland. Eligible costs include capital expenditure, first year salary supports, marketing and consultancy services, and general business overheads.

184

clients supported in 2025



Feasibility Study Grant

The Feasibility Study Grant supports startups and individual entrepreneurs in assessing the technical and commercial viability of a proposed business idea. The scheme is designed to assist promoters in undertaking structured research and analysis before committing to full business establishment.

Grant aid covers up to 50% of eligible costs (or 60% in the Border, Midlands and West region), to a maximum of €15,000. Eligible expenditure includes market research, consultancy and design costs, prototype and technical development, own labour research, and miscellaneous costs such as travel and subsistence, within specified limits.

273

clients supported in 2025

Business Expansion Grant

The Business Expansion Grant is targeted at microenterprises that have been trading for more than 18 months and are entering a growth or consolidation phase. Its purpose is to support businesses in expanding capacity, enhancing competitiveness, and generating additional employment.

Funding of up to 50% of eligible expenditure is available to a maximum of €150,000, with grants between €80,000 and €150,000 awarded only to enterprises demonstrating strong potential to graduate to Enterprise Ireland. Eligible expenditure includes capital investments, first year salary costs, marketing and consultancy services, and general overheads.



335

clients supported in 2025

Innovation Supports

Local Enterprise Offices provide specialist support for research, development and innovation.



RD&I Funding

The Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) Fund provides support to LEO client companies undertaking projects that build technological capability and drive innovation led growth.

The scheme supports activities under industrial research and experimental development, with eligible costs including salaries, consultancy and contract research, capital equipment, materials, and patent related expenditure, alongside overhead allowances.

6

approved applications in 2025



IP Start

The IP Start Grant supports LEO client companies to develop their intellectual property (IP) capability by funding short, targeted engagements with qualified external IP advisors.

It provides funding of up to 80% of eligible costs, capped at €2,160, to support activities such as IP audits, prior art searches, patent drafting and filing, and trademark or design registrations, where these activities contribute to the company's IP strategy.

39

approved applications in 2025

Sugar Plum Sweetery





GreenStart

GreenStart is a grant for a training/consultancy/advisory project of up to 7 days carried out by an external Green Service Provider directly with an eligible business. The aim of the project is to improve the environmental performance of the business thereby increasing the agility and resilience of clients to climate change impacts.

13

*approved
applications
in 2025*



GradStart

GradStart is a programme designed to help Local Enterprise Office (LEO) client companies strengthen their growth and competitiveness by supporting graduate recruitment.

It provides financial support of €30,000 (€15,000 per year) or 50% of individual graduate salary costs, whichever is the lesser, with a limit of one graduate at any one time.

35

*approved
applications
in 2025*



IP Plus Grant

The IP Plus Grant supports LEO client companies to advance their intellectual property (IP) capability by funding more substantial, implementation focused IP activities. Building on initial work undertaken through IP Start, IP Plus enables companies to work with external IP advisors while developing in-house expertise.

The grant supports consultancy costs for qualified external IP advisory services as well as salary costs for internal staff performing designated IP Champion duties. Eligible expenditure is capped at €70,000, comprising a maximum of €35,000 consultancy and €35,000 salary, with a maximum grant of €35,000 at a 50% funding rate.

9

*approved
applications
in 2025*



More than Money



Mentoring

The LEO Mentoring Programme provides small business owners and managers with access to experienced business practitioners who offer tailored, one-to-one guidance aligned to each client's specific challenges and ambitions.

Mentoring engagements are practical, action-focused and outcomes-driven, addressing issues such as scaling, cashflow management, market development, organisational structure and leadership.

In 2025, LEOs supported **16,628** participants through mentoring.



Lean for Business

Lean for Business supports productivity and competitiveness, enabling client companies to embed lean principles at the core of their operations. The programme helps businesses to work smarter, eliminate inefficiencies, reduce costs and enhance overall performance—delivering tangible, measurable results.

Through Lean for Business, LEO clients gain access to expert one-to-one consultancy from a qualified lean practitioner.

In 2025, **479** LEO clients were supported by Lean for Business.



InterAgency Transfers

Inter-agency transfers are a critical element of the LEO–Enterprise Ireland continuum of supports, ensuring that high-potential and scaling businesses receive the right support at the right stage of their development.

Through proactive engagement, joint client assessments and structured referrals, LEOs play a pivotal role in identifying “Enterprise Ireland-ready” companies and preparing them for the next phase of their growth journey.

In 2025, Local Enterprise Offices supported **145** clients to successfully transfer into the Enterprise Ireland client portfolio.

Promoting Entrepreneurship

Local Enterprise Offices co-ordinate a series of enterprise programmes and events nationally that promote entrepreneurship. These include:



Local Enterprise Week

Local Enterprise Week showcases the range of enterprise supports on offer and provides networking and training opportunities to small businesses within their regions.

Events, which take place across every local authority area, cover all aspects of business from getting started and accessing funding to exporting and sustainability.

The week gives budding entrepreneurs, as well as those who have been in business a while, the opportunity to improve their business and find out what supports are available to them.

In 2025 more than **320** enterprise events took place to mark Local Enterprise Week

Student Enterprise Programme

Local Enterprise Offices support youth entrepreneurship to nurture the next generation of business owners and leaders.

The Student Enterprise Programme, which began in September 2024, encourages students to research, set-up and run their own businesses with the help of student enterprise co-ordinators from the Local Enterprise Offices.

In the 2024/2025 season, **29,265** students from **493** secondary schools took part

National Enterprise Awards

The National Enterprise Awards are an annual celebration of the very best small businesses from across the country and highlight the work that Local Enterprise Offices do with up-and-coming enterprises in every local authority area.

Finalists feature a diverse mix of sectors and founders hoping to secure the overall National Enterprise of the Year Award, with regional awards and awards for Innovation, Best Exporting company, Best Start Up, Green / Sustainability and One to Watch also up for grabs.

In 2025, the awards' 25th year, **31** finalists were chosen by their Local Enterprise Office to represent them and their area at the awards.



National Women's Enterprise Day

Ireland's largest female enterprise event promotes, encourages and stimulates female entrepreneurship across Ireland.

Local Enterprise Offices take the opportunity to showcase a wide range of supports, incentives, and training and development programmes to female entrepreneurs.

Events feature a range of successful businesswomen, up and coming female entrepreneurs and expert speakers in areas of sustainability, innovation, networking and marketing.

In 2025, its 19th iteration, Local Enterprise Offices organised **15** events nationwide



Local Enterprise Showcase at Showcase

Showcase, an initiative of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, which is promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland, is Ireland's international creative expo and takes place each January in the RDS.

In 2025 Local Enterprise Offices supported more than **100** companies in the design and craft sector to exhibit at the 'Local Enterprise Showcase', connecting with national and international trade buyers.

Partnering for Success

Microfinance Ireland

Microfinance Ireland (MFI), is a not-for-profit lender, established to deliver the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund. It provides loans of between €2,000 and €50,000 to commercially viable businesses that employ fewer than ten people, with an annual turnover of less than €2 million. Local Enterprise Offices assist client companies with their MFI loan applications, which attract a discount on standard loan rates.

In 2025, LEOs assisted client companies, with **608** applications for loans. Of these, 281 applications were successful in securing loan approval, supporting the creation of **609** jobs.

Local Enterprise Offices work closely with numerous stakeholders to support entrepreneurship, including Microfinance Ireland



Microfinance Ireland

Small Business Loans

Supporting Digitalisation

Digitalisation is a core priority of the LEO Policy Statement, recognising that strong digital capability is essential to improving SME productivity, resilience and competitiveness. LEO's continuum of digital supports—beginning with Digital for Business and progressing to investment through the Grow Digital Voucher—ensures businesses build capability first and invest strategically for maximum impact.

Digital for Business

Digital for Business is the first step in LEO's continuum of digitalisation supports, providing small and medium-sized enterprises with a structured, expert-led starting point for their digital transformation journey.

The initiative ensures that businesses build a clear understanding of their digital needs. Delivered at no cost to the business, Digital for Business provides access to an independent, qualified digital consultant who works with the business to review existing digital systems and processes; identify gaps, inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement; develop a practical, prioritised Digital Action Plan tailored to the business's objectives and capacity.

This approach enables businesses to make informed, targeted decisions about future digital investments—ensuring that any subsequent funding under the Grow Digital Voucher is strategic, appropriate and impact-driven, rather than ad-hoc.

1,134
clients were
approved in 2025



Grow Digital Voucher

The Grow Digital Voucher was introduced to provide small businesses (with between one and 50 paid employees) with a more ambitious and future-focused digital support. Its aim is to help clients build capability, improve productivity, expand market reach and compete more effectively in an increasingly digital economy.

The scheme provides a 50% grant contribution towards eligible costs, with awards ranging from a minimum of €500 to a maximum of €5,000.

Funding supports the purchase and implementation of new digital software subscriptions for up to 12 months, including ecommerce platforms, CRM systems, accounting and financial management software, and cyber security solutions.

Crucially, the scheme also recognises that digital investment must be matched with capability building. As such, training and configuration costs are eligible, up to 50% of the overall project cost, ensuring businesses can fully embed and maximise the value of their new systems.

The Grow Digital Voucher replaced the Trading Online Voucher, which provided grant aid of up to €2,500 to support small and micro-businesses to develop or enhance their online trading presence.

While the Trading Online Voucher played an important role in building early digital engagement, the Grow Digital Voucher represents a step change in scope and ambition—moving beyond website development to support end-to-end digital adoption across business operations.

The Trading Online Voucher scheme closed to new applications on Friday, 13 December 2024 with a total of 620 applications submitted before the closing date approved in 2025.

318
clients had Grow Digital
Vouchers approved in 2025

Supporting International Growth

Local Enterprise Offices provide a range of supports to help businesses internationalise

Customs Training

Local Enterprise Offices run Prepare Your Business for Customs training too. These one-day online workshops provide businesses with a better understanding of trading with countries outside the EU Single Market, including import/export procedures and tariffs.

In 2025

**70
people**

took part in these
online workshops



Market Explorer Grant

The Market Explorer Grant is designed to help businesses identify, validate and pursue new international market opportunities.

It provides up to 50% funding of eligible costs, up to €10,000 per application, with businesses eligible to make up to three applications over a period of up to 18 months.

This scale and flexibility allows enterprises to take a strategic, phased approach to internationalisation.

The grant supports a broad range of strategic market development activities, including in-depth market research, in market consultancy, attendance at international trade fairs, and overseas travel and subsistence costs directly related to market exploration.

The Market Explorer Grant is aimed at businesses with demonstrated export intent to enter into new geographic markets, diversify into new sectors of distribution channels, or introduce new products or services to existing markets.

In 2025, a total of 148 LEO clients were approved for assistance under the Market Explorer Grant.

The Market Explorer Grant replaced the Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant in January 2025. The previous scheme offered grant aid of up to €2,500.

In 2025, **13** Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant applications, submitted in 2024, were approved.



Supporting Sustainability

Local Enterprise Offices provide a structured continuum of sustainability supports, enabling SMEs to transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy

Green for Business

Green for Business provides small businesses with free access to expert sustainability consultancy.

The programme is designed to help businesses understand their environmental impact and identify practical, achievable actions to prepare for the low-carbon, resource-efficient economy.

Through it, an independent, qualified consultant works with the business to assess its resource and energy efficiency, developing a Sustainability Action Plan.

Delivered at no cost to the business, Green for Business builds critical sustainability capability and provides the evidence needed to support targeted, high-impact investment decisions under subsequent grant supports, particularly the Energy Efficiency Grant.



1,094
*clients were
approved in 2025*

Energy Efficiency Grants

The Energy Efficiency Grant enables SMEs to implement tangible sustainability and energy efficiency improvements, following completion of Green for Business, Green Start, or an SEAI Energy Audit.

The grant supports businesses to reduce energy consumption, emissions and operating costs, while also driving innovation, resilience and long-term competitiveness. Eligible projects include energy-efficient equipment and machinery upgrades; smart energy monitoring and control systems, and waste reduction and resource efficiency solutions.

The scheme provides a 75% grant contribution, with funding levels ranging from **€750** to **€10,000**.

715 *clients were approved in 2025*

Dial A Chef



The Business of Food

To strengthen Ireland's position as a 'food island'
Local Enterprise Offices offer particular supports

Food Starter

The Food Starter programme acts as a feeder to Food Academy and is delivered regionally by LEOs to meet local demand.

In 2025 multiple programmes were run to support early-stage food businesses preparing for onward progression to Food Academy.

Digital School of Food

The Digital School of Food is a free online learning hub supporting food manufacturing businesses from start-up through growth. Content is organised across six themes including planning, routes to market, finance, sales, scaling the business and access to expert supports.



100+
*businesses applied
for the Food Academy
programme in 2025*



*In 2025,
27
businesses
successfully completed
the Food Academy
programme.*

Food Academy

Food Academy is a collaboration between the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and SuperValu, designed to support the growth of Ireland's artisan food sector.

It helps small food businesses prepare for retail, including the opportunity to pitch products to a panel of SuperValu representatives and local store owners. Participants receive tailored mentoring and expert guidance to refine their products for a competitive market.

On successful completion, participants may trial their products in local SuperValu stores for up to 20 weeks. Food Academy is now accredited by Technological University Dublin and awards a Certificate in Food Entrepreneurship.

Helping businesses in 2025

from idea...

€2,878,649

approved for Feasibility
Study Grants



to start-up...

€5,441,293

approved for
Priming Grants



to growth...

€10,996,206

approved for Business
Expansion Grants

€22,361,390

was approved in LEO
grant aid in 2025

FUNDING SUPPORT – GROW DIGITAL VOUCHER

How a Grow Digital voucher flagged up the value of automation for Flynn Signs & Display

Flynn Signs & Display is a family business that has been supplying signs and associated products and services nationwide for more than 60 years.

Based in Dunboyne, Co. Meath, it combines decades of experience with the latest in modern processes and equipment, providing a first-class service and a wide range of sign and display products.

From traditionally crafted to modern digitally printed signage, it offers a one stop shop that includes design, manufacture and, if required, fitting of signs, taking pride in creative and eye-catching solutions to meet all needs.



Originally founded to supply signage to the new American Embassy in Dublin, Flynn Signs & Display has supplied signage all over the world and customers range from one-man operations to the largest, IT, pharma, food and film production companies in the world.

“I could see that the market was changing so I called the Local Enterprise Office”

In 2025 Paul Flynn got in touch with his Local Enterprise Office, Meath, to talk about his business.

“I could see that the market was changing so I called and someone from the Local Enterprise Office came to see me two days later,” he recalls.

Having discussed the business and its sector, his Local Enterprise Office representative suggested he consider automating his systems and processes for greater efficiency.

His LEO representative signed Paul up for Digital for Business, which provided him with a digital mentor who worked with him to identify the steps that would benefit his business most.

Once a report was drawn up, Paul applied for a Grow Digital Voucher. These are worth up to €5,000 and can be used by a business to invest in software, training and IT configuration, for new tech tools to boost efficiency, reach new customers, or otherwise stay competitive.

That enabled him to invest in a custom-developed bot that harvests information from the business’s accounts package and integrates it with a customer relationship management package, enabling him to see his entire workflow on a single dashboard.

The business has now progressed from the bot to a more integrated system giving much better oversight into all aspects of the business’s performance, enabling him to take actions earlier.

“I remember the Local Enterprise Office suggested I look at digitising the business and, when I asked what I’d have to do to achieve that, she said, ‘No, we’ll do that for you’. I was really surprised,” says Paul, “and at how straightforward it all was.”

Now he regularly recommends other business owners get in touch with their Local Enterprise Office too. “I wish we had done so earlier. It’s a no brainer,” he says.

FUNDING SUPPORT – PRIMING GRANT



How a Priming Grant helped renewable nappy brand EcoKinly take those important first steps

Kate Doyle set up The Nappy Market in 2022. The business specialises in reusable nappy and sanitary care products, supporting the circular economy.

She had the idea for the business after the birth of her first baby, and couldn't understand why cloth nappies, which are both an economical and greener choice for families, weren't more widely available.

She started out by setting up an online marketplace dedicated to selling and buying reusable nappy products, and providing the information people needed to help get them to choose reusable.

Two years later, in 2024, she launched a challenger brand of her own, a range of nappies, wipes and period products called EcoKinly. These offer even greater access and affordability to families without any compromise on quality.

“It would have taken me years longer to get to this point without the Priming Grant”

EcoKinly's nappies are moulded to conform to baby's body and so can be applied easily with no folding, and no safety pins - they use Velcro closures. They are ready to go straight from the wash. They are highly absorbent, with a patent pending for their composition.

It was while reaching out to her Local Enterprise Office, Wexford, about the possibility of participating in the Local Enterprise event at Showcase, the craft and design trade fair that takes place in the RDS each January, that she first heard about the Priming Grant.

“My LEO contact said we have all these supports and services to help you, so I actually started with six sessions of mentoring,” says Kate.

“That helped me to flesh out my idea and the product concept. I then quickly realised I needed graphic design, packaging and branding, as well as salary support, so my mentor said I was now in a place where I should look at the Priming Grant.”

A LEO Priming Grant is a startup business grant offered to micro-enterprises within their first 18 months of trading. It provides up to 50% of eligible investment costs (typically up to €80,000, or up to €150,000 in exceptional cases) to help new businesses grow, specifically targeting manufacturing or internationally traded services.

Kate was also able to use a portion of the Priming Grant she received for warehouse equipment, including racking and safety stairs. Now ready to go, she is already in negotiations with one of Ireland's best-known supermarkets.

“It would have taken me two years longer to get to this point without the Priming Grant, and possibly I wouldn't have got here at all, because I've a two and a four-year-old as well,” she says. “It would either have been a non-runner, or it would have taken me years more.”

FUNDING SUPPORT – ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANT



How an Energy Efficiency Grant helped 8A Brasserie serve up energy savings

8A Brasserie is a much-loved, family-run boutique restaurant located in the heart of Monkstown. Known for its warm and inviting atmosphere, the neighbourhood restaurant offers a diverse menu of modern European cuisine, alongside a carefully selected wine list.

Open for just over a decade, the 100-seat brasserie offers both indoor and outdoor seating, and caters for everything from casual meals to special celebrations. Every dish is crafted with care, reflecting owner Donal Gilligan and his team's commitment to quality and flavour.

In 2025 Donal got in touch with his Local Enterprise Office, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, to take part in the Green for Business programme, a free consultancy

initiative helping small businesses to become more sustainable, cut costs, and reduce their carbon footprint.

It provided him with two days of expert, onsite mentoring, resulting in a tailored sustainability plan.

“It’s good to be green, and it’s also good when it is cost effective as well”

Having completed the process, Donal then applied for an Energy Efficiency Grant. Worth up to €10,000, it supports businesses to invest in the technologies and equipment identified in their Green for Business report.

In Donal's case, that meant putting his Energy Efficiency Grant towards the cost of installing a biodigester, something he was keen to introduce to the business as a way of managing waste food more sustainably.

“I had known about biodigesters and when I saw the availability of the Energy Efficient Grants, I thought, that’s a good route to go,” he explains.

Though he has always worked to reduce waste of all kinds, by the nature of its business, some food waste is inevitable, he explains. “Previously food waste went out into our brown bins. Now we simply empty the food waste into the biodigester and, overnight, it turns that food waste into usable compost,” he explains.

This compost is then taken away by the same company that provided the biodigester, saving him on waste bills as well as ensuring the food is repurposed as a fertiliser. “It’s just much better from a sustainability perspective,” he says.

Donal was helped through the Energy Efficiency Grant application process by his Local Enterprise Office expert mentor. “The whole thing went very smoothly, no hiccups whatsoever and everyone was very pleasant, easy to deal with and business friendly,” he recalls.

The entire process has led him to continue seeking out further efficiencies, and he hopes to change to more energy efficient lighting too.

Overall, such efficiencies are a win win. “It’s good for the future, and it’s good for our books,” says Donal. “It’s good to be green, and it’s also good when it is cost effective as well.”

FUNDING SUPPORT – BUSINESS EXPANSION GRANT

How a Business Expansion Grant helped Sugar Plum Sweetery to scale up sweetly

Denise Buckley and David Quirke opened the Sugar Plum Sweetery in Mullingar in 2022, right next door to The Wholesome Kitchen, the award winning casual style restaurant the couple had opened a few years previously.

For Denise in particular, the new store was a long-held dream come true, to open a Wonka-esque sweet emporium that quickly became a destination retail space for families from far and wide.

The business did well from the start, both with retail customers, online and for corporate gifting. When their Dubai style chocolate bars went viral, the store became a household name nationwide, accelerating the business's rapid growth.



Since then their culinary creativity has seen everything from Chocolate Bombs to Florentine Clusters build up a wide and loyal following.

“It puts you in a position to buy something you mightn’t otherwise be able to afford”

To help the business keep pace with demand, Denise, who had already previously been granted a Priming Grant from Local Enterprise Office, Westmeath, was subsequently awarded further support, in the form of a Business Expansion Grant.

The Business Expansion Grant is designed to assist a business in its growth phase, after the initial 18-month start up period.

Worth up to 50 per cent of the investment, or €150,000, whichever is the lesser, it can be used for the purchase of capital items, salary costs, consultancy, innovation or marketing costs, as well as to contribute to general overhead costs.

“Getting the Business Expansion Grant enabled us to invest in new machinery to grow the business,” says Denise.

“The way it works, you get up to 50 per cent of the cost of the equipment back which means that we can buy machinery we need. It’s great because, as a business owner, it puts you in a position to buy machinery that you mightn’t otherwise have cash flow in your account to buy.”

Some of the machinery she required cost up to €30,000 apiece, which means the net cost to the business is €15,000, she points out, a huge saving. “That’s a massive discount, putting the business in a position to buy something you mightn’t otherwise be able to afford,” she says.

The Business Expansion Grant enabled their business to invest in enormous melting tanks, holding up to 350 kilos of chocolate. It also enabled them to build a cooling room. “Instead of having fridges everywhere, which we had before, we now have a whole cooling room to set the chocolate in, which is so much more efficient, consistent, and better for the environment too,” she says.

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