**Press Release Wednesday, March 25th 2020**

**New Business Continuity Voucher Goes Live through Local Enterprise Offices**

***Minister Humphreys introduces new measure as part of COVID-19 Business Supports Package***

The new Business Continuity Voucher is now available through Local Enterprise Offices and is open to sole traders and companies across every business sector that employ up to 50 people, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys T.D. has announced today (March 25).

The voucher is worth up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs and can be used by companies and sole traders to develop short-term and long-term strategies to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. The goal is to help business owners make informed decisions about what immediate measures and remedial actions should be taken, to protect staff and sales.

Making the announcement, Minister Humphreys T.D. said: “I know this is still a very worrying time for all businesses. And as part of the package of supports that I announced earlier in the month, I am making a €2,500 voucher available through the Local Enterprise Offices from today to enable enterprises to avail of vital business continuity advice, to assist them with developing short-term and long -term strategies to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. “

She added: “The voucher will give companies access to contingency planning advice that will help them continue trading through this crisis and to be ready for the recovery phase, when it comes. This voucher will also assist enterprises to prepare a business case for application to emergency financial interventions that are available through the Banks, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland or through Microfinance Ireland”.

The scheme is open to all types of businesses, across all industries and sectors that employ up to 50 people. To apply, companies or sole traders fill out a short application form and submit it directly to their Local Enterprise Office by e-mail. When a company is issued with a voucher for third party consultancy, they begin working directly with a qualified expert, selected from existing Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland panels.

Oisin Geoghegan, Chair of the network of Local Enterprise Offices, welcomed the launch of the new support, saying: “For a huge number of small businesses, survival is the over-riding objective at this time so making the right decisions is crucial. There is where the new Business Continuity Voucher can help. The kind of areas that the voucher will help will vary, depending on the needs of each business, but it will include very important measures such as preparing a business case for application to emergency funding, developing a business continuity plan, reducing variable costs, reviewing and exploring supply chain financing options, implementing remote working processes or procedures, and leveraging expertise in HR and ICT.”

To apply for the Business Continuity Voucher, companies submit a short application form to their Local Enterprise Office. Forms are available to download from [www.LocalEnterprise.ie/Response](http://www.LocalEnterprise.ie/Response)

Details of other business supports available from the Department of Enterprise, Business and Innovation can be found at <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/>

**ENDS**

**About the Business Continuity Voucher (through Local Enterprise Offices)**

Sole traders and businesses\*, employing up to 50 staff, are eligible to apply for a Business Continuity Voucher to the value of €2,500 towards third party consultancy costs to assist with developing short-term and long-term strategies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the voucher is to provide contingency planning advice to assist enterprises to continue trading through the crisis.

The primary aim of the scheme will be to support companies make informed decisions on the immediate measures needed to continue trading in the current environment while securing the safety of all employees and future business viability through identification of remedial actions.

The Business Continuity Voucher is available to support businesses:

1. Develop a business continuity plan
2. Assess current financial needs in the short term to medium term
3. Reduce variable costs, overheads and expenses,
4. Review and explore supply chain financing options
5. Implement remote working processes or procedures
6. Leverage HR expertise
7. Leverage ICT expertise
8. Prepare a business case for application to emergency financial interventions available through Banks, SBCI (Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland) and Microfinance Ireland.

**Application forms** are available from www.LocalEnterprise.ie/Response and completed forms are submitted to Local Enterprise Office Dublin City info@leo.dublincity.ie

**Please note:** The Business Continuity Voucher is available to all businesses employing up to 50 across all sectors. The applicant must be an Irish-owned enterprise with up to 50 employees. An application must be submitted in the name of a company registered with the Companies Registration Office and incorporated in the Republic of Ireland at the time of application. Applications will also be accepted from Sole Traders and Partnerships.