

IMPACT REPORT 2018

Measuring the impact
of Local Enterprise Office
supports in 2018



5 Special Feature:
2014 - 2019
5 Years of Making
It Happen

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Contact details for your Local Enterprise Office

Providing information, expert advice and practical support – locally

A Local Enterprise Office (LEO) is the ‘first stop shop’ for anyone looking to start or grow a business in Ireland.

Established in 2014, there are 31 LEOs across Ireland. All are operated on a partnership basis by Enterprise Ireland, Local Authorities, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Acknowledgments

The LEO Impact Report is published on behalf of Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities by Enterprise Ireland. This report has been produced with the assistance of the LEO Communications Committee and the Enterprise Ireland Centre of Excellence in Shannon, Co. Clare. Our thanks to all current and former LEO clients that are featured. Photography credits: Simon Burch, Joe Keogh of Keogh Photography, Mark Stedman of Stedman Photography, Photocall Ireland, Martina Regan Photography, INPHO and Cathal Noonan.

WELCOME



The Local Enterprise Offices have been making a hugely important contribution to our economy since their inception in 2014. You only have to look at the results they are generating and the calibre of businesses they are supporting to understand their importance within our entrepreneurial ecosystem. Year on year, on behalf of the Government, they have grown their client numbers and increased job creation in communities across the country. They have played a key role in the delivery of Brexit supports to small businesses across Ireland and continue to be integral to the Government's strategy for job creation. They are central to the continued growth of our small businesses and the success of our budding and future entrepreneurs. That is why I recently announced that the profile of LEOs will be enhanced under our new, whole-of-Government strategy, Future Jobs Ireland.

HEATHER HUMPHREYS T.D.

Minister for Business,
Enterprise and Innovation

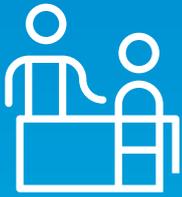


Yet again in 2018 the Local Enterprise Offices have continued to deliver new jobs and outstanding business support for small businesses the length and breadth of the country. They are the first stop shop for those who have the seed of a business in their mind or those who have a small business and need someone to turn to for advice. The Local Enterprise Office is an outstanding resource available to all small businesses, and the variety of clients in such a diversity of sectors is a testament to the expertise available through the LEOs. There is no doubt that a business that has worked closely with their Local Enterprise Office will benefit ten fold from the supports, mentoring and training they provide and this government will ensure that the LEOs continue to get the resources they need to continue to create jobs and allow Irish entrepreneurs follow their dreams.

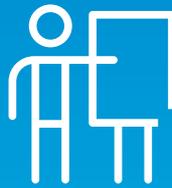
PAT BREEN T.D.

Minister for Trade, Employment, Business,
EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection

MAKING IT HAPPEN IN 2018



3,656
new jobs (net)
created by
LEO-supported
companies



31
LEOs trained
34,938
people to help them
plan, start and grow
their businesses



36,666
people in Ireland
employed by
7,164
LEO-supported
companies



171
LEO-supported
companies, employing
796
staff, transferred to
Enterprise Ireland

HIGHLIGHTS FROM

2018

A SNAPSHOT



€18.2m
in direct financial
assistance approved for
1,259
business projects



326
approved applications
for Microfinance
Ireland loans



433
companies approved
for TAME grants
(Technical Assistance
for Micro Exporters)

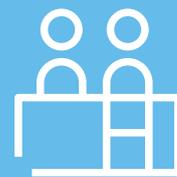


11%
Employment
Growth
Nationally

* Employment growth
in current companies
in LEO Portfolio



1,107
companies awarded
Training Online
Vouchers



9,625
mentoring assignments
completed

MAKING IT HAPPEN FOR SMALL BUSINESSES EVERYDAY

Each Local Enterprise Office is a hub of expert advice, information and practical supports. Their dedicated teams support new and existing small businesses daily through:

- > Training and development
- > Mentoring and advice
- > Financial assistance and access to microfinance loans
- > Sign-posting to other bodies and agencies
- > Networking opportunities with peers, potential suppliers and prospective customers

Making the connections that count

LEOs connect small businesses with all the organisations that can help them grow, including:

- > [Local Authorities](#)
- > [Education and Training Boards](#)
- > [Microfinance Ireland](#)
- > [Fáilte Ireland](#)
- > [Enterprise Europe Network](#)
- > [Leader](#)
- > [The Revenue Commissioners](#)
- > [InterTradeIreland](#)
- > [Enterprise Ireland](#)
- > [Skillnet Ireland](#)
- > [Credit Review Office](#)
- > [National Association of Community Enterprise Centres](#)
- > [Udarás na Gaeltachta](#)
- > [Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment](#)
- > [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#)
- > [Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland](#)

Making a mark

LEOs foster Ireland's enterprising culture through flagship initiatives such as:

- > [Local Enterprise Week](#)
- > [National Women's Enterprise Day](#)
- > [Local Enterprise Village \(Ploughing\)](#)
- > [Food Academy and Food Starter](#)
- > [Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur \(IBYE\)](#)
- > [National Enterprise Awards](#)
- > [Local Enterprise Showcase at Showcase](#)
- > [Student Enterprise Programme](#)

Find out more at www.localenterprise.ie
@Loc_Enterprise on Twitter or
@LocalEnterpriseOffices on Facebook.



MAKING IT HAPPEN FOR EMPLOYMENT

Local Enterprise Offices are delivering on jobs

The LEO 2018 Annual Employment Survey shows 8,007 new jobs (gross) and 3,656 jobs (net) were created by LEO-backed client companies, with jobs growth across every LEO area.

At the end of 2018 there were 36,666 people employed by 7,164 small businesses and start-ups that had received financial assistance from the Local Enterprise Offices.

| Local Enterprise Office | 2018 Number of LEO Clients | 2018 Client All Jobs Total [Ft & Pt]* | 2018 Gross All Job Gains [Ft & Pt]* | 2018 Net All Job Gains [Ft & Pt]* |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Carlow | 219 | 1,153 | 150 | 57 |
| Cavan | 202 | 1,374 | 231 | 146 |
| Clare | 239 | 1,270 | 248 | 104 |
| Cork City | 164 | 810 | 250 | 88 |
| Cork South | 208 | 957 | 212 | 120 |
| Cork North & West | 274 | 1,393 | 345 | 68 |
| Donegal | 214 | 1,294 | 360 | 203 |
| Dublin City | 394 | 1,736 | 490 | 343 |
| Dublin DLR | 292 | 1,695 | 260 | 145 |
| Dublin Fingal | 223 | 1,031 | 179 | 125 |
| Dublin South | 303 | 1,491 | 400 | 153 |
| Galway County/City | 263 | 1,116 | 188 | 111 |
| Kerry | 263 | 1,295 | 167 | 104 |
| Kildare | 199 | 1,239 | 436 | 285 |
| Kilkenny | 210 | 1,257 | 317 | 103 |
| Laois | 122 | 635 | 125 | 67 |
| Leitrim | 161 | 437 | 82 | 24 |
| Limerick | 301 | 1,926 | 430 | 213 |
| Longford | 254 | 1,195 | 133 | 70 |
| Louth | 250 | 982 | 210 | 98 |
| Mayo | 234 | 1,224 | 340 | 130 |
| Meath | 255 | 1,255 | 231 | 143 |
| Monaghan | 152 | 1,164 | 252 | 134 |
| Offaly | 201 | 1,063 | 224 | 68 |
| Roscommon | 172 | 857 | 219 | 80 |
| Sligo | 236 | 920 | 160 | 33 |
| Tipperary | 258 | 1,295 | 366 | 168 |
| Waterford | 331 | 1,447 | 306 | 100 |
| Westmeath | 225 | 1,172 | 254 | 66 |
| Wexford | 227 | 1,308 | 302 | 33 |
| Wicklow | 118 | 675 | 140 | 74 |
| TOTAL | 7,164 | 36,666 | 8,007 | 3,656 |

* FT stands for full-time and PT stands for part-time. The Annual Employment Survey was compiled by the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland and was published in February 2019.

Local Enterprise Office Network



Good to Know!

These job numbers only refer to jobs recorded in businesses that have received financial assistance from their Local Enterprise Office. Thousands of other jobs are created every year by businesses that have received expert advice and enterprise training from their Local Enterprise Office.

MAKING IT HAPPEN FOR CLIENTS

With direct financial assistance...

Local Enterprise Offices can provide a range of grant assistance to eligible businesses. Known as Measure 1 Supports, these are designed to help fund start-up costs, expansion plans, entry into new markets and jobs growth.

- > In 2018, Local Enterprise Offices approved €18,211,040 in grant aid for 1, 259 applications (see breakdown of grant types in the table below).

... and with training and development

Local Enterprise Offices provide a wide range of high-quality soft supports tailored to meet specific business requirements.

- > In 2018, LEOs trained 34,938 participants across 2,029 different programmes and initiatives.

Start Your Own Business

LEO Start Your Own Business programmes enable prospective entrepreneurs to better assess their business idea and its viability, to help them decide whether to proceed or not.

- > In 2018, 3,944 participants took part in 285 LEO-run 'Start Your Own Business' programmes.

Mentoring

LEO Mentoring matches the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business practitioners - the mentor - with small business owners and managers who need practical and strategic one-to-one advice and guidance for their business.

- > In 2018, LEOs managed 9,625 mentoring assignments.

Lean for Micro

The Lean for Micro programme assists small businesses to adopt 'lean' business principles that boost performance and increase competitiveness. A Lean expert works with the small business to undertake a specific cost reduction project, and assists the company in benchmarking its performance.

- > In 2018, LEOs supported 221 companies through the Lean programme.

Helping companies with #GlobalAmbition to grow

LEOs work with small companies looking to export, helping them to grow to a point where they can avail of Enterprise Ireland supports.

- > In 2018, Local Enterprise Offices supported 171 clients to transfer into the Enterprise Ireland portfolio, to avail of further services.

How my LEO helped my business...



PHIL CONE
of Academy Crests,
Cork City

"If you are a micro business, you can learn how to do something that will make your business more effective, make you more money and enable your staff to work smarter. It's all down to my local LEO."

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Academy Crests on page 20

| Measure 1 Supports | Grant Aid Approved |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Priming Grants [273 approved applications in 2018] | €6,379,733 |
| Business Expansion Grants [349 approved applications in 2018] | €9,186,927 |
| Feasibility Study Grants [165 approved applications in 2018] | €1,491,729 |
| Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant [463 approved applications in 2018] | €801,528 |
| Research, Development & Innovation [9 applications approved in 2018] | €351,123 |
| Total number of applications in 2018 | 1,259 |
| Total amount of grant-aid approved in 2018 | €18,211,040 |

MAKING IT HAPPEN FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Local Enterprise Offices work together in national committees to co-ordinate a series of enterprise programmes and events. These initiatives promote entrepreneurship across all sectors and regions.

Local Enterprise Week

300 enterprise events were collectively organised by LEOs to mark Local Enterprise Week in March 2018. The initiative showcased the full range of enterprise supports LEOs can offer small businesses, and provided them with networking and training opportunities within their own region.

National Women's Enterprise Day

16 LEO-run regional events took place on National Women's Enterprise Day 2018 (October 18th) with the theme - 'from local to global' - designed to encourage more female-led businesses to explore export opportunities. 1,400 attendees took part in events which featured advice and insights from 60 successful female entrepreneurs.

Local Enterprise Village

30 small businesses were supported by their Local Enterprise Office to exhibit their products and services inside the Local Enterprise Village at the National Ploughing Championships in Tullamore, Co. Offaly. The three-day event in September 2018 attracted 240,700 visitors*. LEO clients were also supported with specialist training and photography services, to enable them to maximise selling and marketing opportunities during the Ploughing Championships.

*Source: National Ploughing Association

Local Enterprise Showcase at Showcase

LEOs supported more than 100 small craft and design businesses, enabling them to exhibit at the 'Local Enterprise Showcase' in January 2018, as part of Showcase - Ireland's international creative expo. An initiative of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, Showcase takes place annually in the RDS and is promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland. At the event, LEO client companies connected with national and international trade buyers.



National Enterprise Awards: 20 Years of Winners

To celebrate the achievements of Ireland’s micro-enterprises, 31 companies were shortlisted by the Local Enterprise Offices for the National Enterprise Awards in 2018 after a series of county-wide competitions. 12 winning companies shared a €40,000 prize fund at an awards ceremony in the Mansion House in May 2018.

A LEO survey was undertaken in 2018 to mark ‘20 Years of Winners’ in the National Enterprise Awards. Key findings showed that previous winners had employed 832 people and generated over €131 million in turnover, €58 million of which was generated from exports to 52 countries in 2018. Since winning, 11 companies had scaled-up their businesses to become Enterprise Ireland clients.

Taking Care of Business: Limerick 2018

An initiative of the Government of Ireland, and run by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Taking Care of Business in September 2018 brought together more than 25 State bodies and agencies, including the Local Enterprise Offices.

How my LEO helped my business...



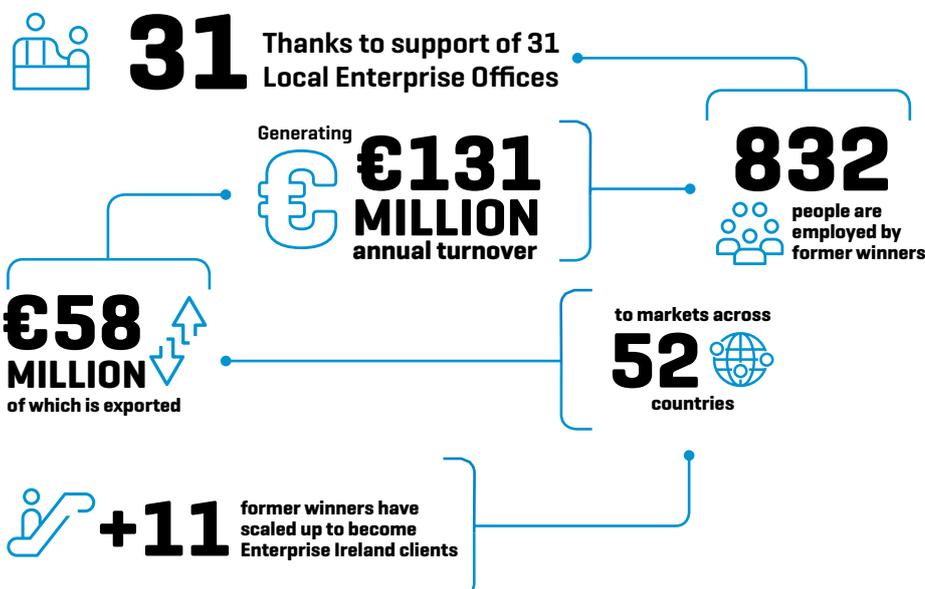
NIAMH SHERWIN BARRY

Co-founder of the Irish Fairy Door Company, South Dublin

“Sometimes I think people don’t realise the power of the Local Enterprise Offices. If you have a good idea, your Local Enterprise Office is where you go. They are incredible and they can help you build to a point where you move on up to Enterprise Ireland.”

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped the Irish Fairy Door Company on page 19

Celebrating 20 Years of #NEAwards Winners



MAKING IT HAPPEN FOR FOOD AND DRINK SECTOR

Food Academy: Fifth Anniversary

Food Academy, which marked its fifth anniversary in 2018, is a training programme to nurture early stage food businesses. It's run by the Local Enterprise Offices in partnership with Bord Bia and SuperValu. Since the programme's inception in 2013, Food Academy graduates, supported by LEOs, have sold €78 million worth of produce in SuperValu stores and the 329 suppliers involved have grown to provide approximately 1,500 jobs.

Food Starter

The new Food Starter programme was launched in 2018 by LEOs and Bord Bia. Run across two days, the programme provides new and emerging food businesses with all the information they need to start up. Topics covered include product research, identifying gaps and opportunities in the food market, branding and brand building, production costs and distribution.

Digital School of Food

Led by LEO Fingal on behalf of the four LEOs in the Dublin region, a new 'Digital School of Food' e-learning initiative was launched in August 2018, aimed at attracting a new stream of food start-ups and helping them succeed. An initiative of the Dublin Food Chain, the online programme is the first of its kind in Europe, giving food entrepreneurs access to expert advice from their own home or office. Supported by Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and Technological University Dublin, 128 food producers benefitted from the online platform from September to December 2018.

www.digitalschooloffood.ie



MAKING IT HAPPEN THROUGH COLLABORATION

Collaboration with key partners is central to Local Enterprise Office success. In 2018 LEOs worked closely with its stakeholders to roll out a range of enterprise supports.

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 €25,000 to commercially viable businesses that employ fewer than 10 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 2018, LEOs assisted client companies with 1,024 applications for loans. Of these, 326 applications were successful in securing loan approval, supporting the creation of 294 jobs.

www.microfinanceireland.ie/success-stories

Trading Online Voucher Scheme

Designed under the National Digital Strategy to assist small businesses to increase their online trade, the Trading Online Voucher Scheme offers training, advice and financial assistance of up to €2,500. The scheme is funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and delivered by Local Enterprise Offices. It is based on matched-funding, where the maximum amount payable is either €2,500 or 50% of the eligible cost (whichever is the lesser). In 2018, 1,107 approvals were secured by Local Enterprise Offices under the Trading Online Voucher scheme.

www.dccae.gov.ie

Co-Innovate and Interreg

The Co-Innovate Programme (supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA funding) is designed to support SMEs and micro-businesses in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland, and Western Scotland to deliver success through innovation. The aim of the programme is to develop the innovation capability of the local businesses and increase the number actively participating in cross-border research.

It brings together key development agencies to deliver a programme aligned with each government's strategic priorities. In the border region of Ireland this support is delivered by Local Enterprise Offices in Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. In Northern Ireland, key elements will be delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland and its member agencies.

How my LEO helped my business...



NIALL MCALLISTER
QuickCrop, Sligo

"We knew that if we were to move the business on to the next level, we needed to invest in a proper ecommerce website, so we got a Trading Online Voucher from Local Enterprise Office Sligo."

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped QuickCrop on page 22.

Regional Enterprise Development Fund

The Government's Regional Enterprise Development Fund is about supporting every region in Ireland to build on its unique strengths and ultimately create sustainable jobs. Collaboration among the public and private sectors, within and across regions, is at its core. In 2018, the Fund, which is delivered for the Government through Enterprise Ireland, launched a new open national competitive call to support regional projects.

Age Friendly Business

The LEO Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme is an approach to doing business that recognises and addresses the market opportunity afforded by a society in which people are leading healthier lives, for longer. Older people own 75% of the wealth in the EU and account for 50% of consumer spending. The number of older consumers is estimated to double in the next 30 years, and those aged over 80 will quadruple. Not only are older people typically loyal customers, they outspend younger shoppers and tend to spend locally.

CATALYST

The CATALYST Ireland Wales INTERREG-funded pilot programme began in 2018. Irish partners, led by Local Enterprise Office Carlow, included Carlow County Council, IT Carlow and LEO Tipperary. Over 40 companies have been engaged from the food, drink and life sciences' sectors to develop innovation within their businesses. Welsh partners included: University of Wales, Trinity St David and WRAP Cyrmu and they have brought a wealth of design expertise to this collaborative project.

BUCANIER

BUCANIER (Building Clusters and Networks in Innovation Enterprise and Research) aims to support small businesses on the Irish Sea border over the next three years. The project works in key growth sectors of both the Irish and Welsh economies: food and drink, life sciences and renewable energy. It seeks to increase innovation capacity within small businesses by collaborating with Higher Education institutions and other public bodies to boost productivity across Ireland and Wales. LEO Wexford, Wexford County Council, the Institute of Technology Carlow and Bord Iascaigh Mhara are partners in Ireland. Welsh partners include Pembrokeshire County Council, Swansea University and Carmarthenshire Council. 57 companies across Ireland and Wales participated in 2018.

Going North Initiative

In 2018, Local Enterprise Offices in Laois, Westmeath and Offaly delivered the Going North Initiative in association with Full Circle Management Solutions. The initiative was designed to provide participants with the tools, confidence and resources to identify, target and exploit new business opportunities in Northern Ireland. The key elements were: pre-launch promotion and recruitment, a workshop around preparing to do business in the Northern Irish Market, bespoke sales prospecting with each participating business along with a group visit to Northern Ireland for pre-arranged business meetings. Twelve LEO clients participated in a total of 61 meetings with prospective customers.



MAKING IT HAPPEN NOW...

Starting

The flagship Local Enterprise Office Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programme gives aspiring business owners an opportunity to assess whether - or not - their business idea is viable.

It helps de-risk business start ups through capacity-building, including identifying, understanding and researching their target market.

Participating on an SYOB course helps aspiring entrepreneurs develop a business plan and provides them with practical advice in areas such as tax, law and insurance, sources of funding and finance, sales and marketing.

Preparation is the single most important thing nascent entrepreneurs can do to support their new business.

The LEO SYOB programme caters for:

- > Anyone with a business idea they want to develop
- > Anyone looking at self-employment as a realistic career option
- > Anyone who has recently started a business

Did you know?

LEO Laois won a European Commission European Enterprise Promotion Award in November 2018 for its Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programmes.

These included a programme aimed at people aged 55 and above, the first SYOB programmes delivered in both the Midlands Prison and Portlaoise Prison as well as the first SYOB programme delivered in a direct provision centre for asylum seekers in Ireland. LEO Laois came runner-up in the Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship category.

How my LEO helped my business...



GILLIAN DOYLE
Cerebreon Technologies, Donegal

“For anyone with a business idea, the best thing you can do is walk in the door of your local LEO and sign up for this SYOB course.”

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Cerebreon Technologies on page 21.



... AND BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Local Enterprise Offices are helping develop the entrepreneurialism that will power Ireland into the future. LEOs run two national programmes designed to support and nurture the next generation of business owners and leaders.

Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur [#IBYE]

Aimed at 18 to 35 year-olds, Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) is a €2 million investment competition from the Local Enterprise Offices which is an initiative of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and is supported by Enterprise Ireland. There were 1,472 applications for IBYE in 2017 (for the 2018 competition) across three categories:

- > [Best Business Idea](#)
- > [Best Start-Up Business](#)
- > [Best Established Business.](#)

24 finalists reached the IBYE National Final in April 2018, where winners shared a €100,000 investment fund.

www.ibye.ie

Student Enterprise Programme [#studententerprise]

LEOs are supporting the development of entrepreneurship in secondary schools throughout Ireland. Some 26,542 students from 492 secondary schools took part in the 2017/2018 Student Enterprise Programme, which began in September 2017. The programme encourages students to research, set-up and run their own businesses with the help of student enterprise co-ordinators from the Local Enterprise Offices. Teacher materials and resources are distributed to schools, free of charge, by Local Enterprise Offices. The National Final for the 2017/2018 Student Enterprise Programme took place in May 2018 in Croke Park, involving 230 teenage entrepreneurs from 77 student enterprises.

In December 2018, professional rugby star, Josh Van Der Flier, was confirmed as the 2018/2019 ambassador for the Student Enterprise Programme. Van Der Flier took part in the Student Enterprise Programme when he was a student at Wesley College in Dundrum.

www.studententerprise.ie



MAKING IT HAPPEN WHATEVER HAPPENS AROUND BREXIT

Brexit uncertainty posed a significant challenge for many small businesses in 2018. Local Enterprise Offices designed, developed and delivered a range of supports to help them to rise to this challenge.

Brexit supports

Working in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, Local Authorities, and other state agencies and bodies, Local Enterprise Offices offered a range of programmes to help micro-enterprises and small businesses prepare for the issues posed by Brexit. In 2018, these supports and programmes were focused on innovation, export market diversification, competitiveness - and information sharing.

www.localenterprise.ie/brexit

Brexit facts and figures around LEO supports in 2018

- > 433 small companies availed of the Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant, which is an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities.
- > 221 small companies availed of the Lean for Micro programme, which helps small businesses boost their competitiveness.
- > 479 small companies availed of one-to-one Brexit Mentoring with an experienced mentor
- > 4,054 representatives from small companies attended Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/Information Events in 2018.
- > All clients were contacted directly by LEOs, to offer Brexit supports and advice.
- > In 2018, LEOs collaborated with Enterprise Ireland to promote the Prepare for Brexit Scorecard (www.prepareforbrexit.ie), Brexit Advisory Clinics and the Agile Innovation Fund.
- > LEOs worked closely with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to promote the Getting Ireland Brexit Ready Roadshows

Lean for Micro: Brexit Support

The Lean for Micro initiative was developed by the Enterprise Ireland Lean Department in collaboration with Local Enterprise Offices, tailoring the existing programme to micro-enterprises.

- > In 2018, €852,620 was allocated to Local Enterprise Offices, funding the participation of 221 LEO client companies in the programme.

Read how Lean for Micro helped Academy Crests to boost competitiveness and save money on page 20.

Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grants: Brexit Support

Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters grants (TAME) provide an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. These grants, with a maximum value of €2,500, are used to part-fund the cost of investigating and researching export markets. This can include costs incurred exhibiting at trade fairs, preparing marketing materials or developing websites specifically for export markets. The purpose of these grants is to increase the number of LEO clients developing new export opportunities, with a focus on supporting those clients with high levels of exposure to Brexit risks.

- > 433 LEO clients were approved for assistance under TAME in 2018.

Brexit Seminars

Local Enterprise Offices organised Brexit information events in 2018 for both existing and potential clients. These enabled small businesses, start-ups and micro-enterprises to learn about the potential impacts and opportunities posed by Brexit and to engage in a process of strategic planning to ensure their companies had a robust strategy in place. Local Enterprise Offices also encouraged clients to take part in the Brexit SME Scorecard initiative online and to participate in Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics in 2018.

- > 4,054 participants attended LEO-run Brexit Information events in 2018.

MAKING IT HAPPEN THANKS TO FUNDING

How my LEO helped my business...



LIAM TUTTY
founder of Dead
Centre Brewing,
Westmeath

“I can honestly say I would not be where I am at all today without the help of my Local Enterprise Office.”

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Dead Centre Brewing on page 23.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The Local Enterprise Offices are co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union through Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020 under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Ireland has two ERDF co-funded Regional Operational Programmes:

- > [The Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 managed by the Southern Regional Assembly](http://www.southernassembly.ie)
- > [The Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 managed by the Northern & Western Regional Assembly](http://www.nwra.ie)

Local Enterprise Offices are co-funded under the “SME Support, Promotion and Capability Development” priority of the two Regional Operational Programmes. Under the 2007-2013 Regional Operational Programmes, €52.7m was recouped by the Irish Exchequer from the European Regional Development Fund.

In 2018

A total of €33,398,000 in funding was allocated to the Local Enterprise Offices in 2018. This funding was provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, through Enterprise Ireland.



The Local Enterprise Offices have truly been ‘Making It Happen’ in 2018. In a year where we launched our first national brand advertising campaign, the Local Enterprise Offices across the country delivered the results to highlight why they are instrumental in stimulating enterprise at a local level, nationwide.

This was supported heavily by the Government with the allocation of additional funds to help the work of the Local Enterprise Offices in Budget 2019. In line with the whole-of-Government Future Jobs strategy, the LEOs’ profile will be enhanced. These are clear signals that what the LEOs are doing is having a significant impact on micro-enterprise across the country and working alongside Enterprise Ireland and our Local Authorities, this is only going to grow.

Since the inception of the Local Enterprise Offices in 2014, the impact has grown year-on-year and we now help over 7,000 companies which, in turn, are responsible for almost 37,000 jobs at the heart of communities and local economies all over Ireland. Over the course of those 5 years, over €80 million has been invested by Local Enterprise Offices to help these small businesses to plan, start and grow.

So, my congratulations to all Local Enterprise Office teams, committees and client companies across the country.

When it comes to ‘Making It Happen’, we are only getting started!

OISÍN GEOGHEGAN

Chair of Network of Local Enterprise Offices



Special Feature: 5 Years of Making It Happen

Local Enterprise Offices have been helping to create jobs, support entrepreneurs and grow businesses all across Ireland since they were established by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in 2014.

In the five years from 2014 to 2018, the country's 31 Local Enterprise Offices have helped thousands of businesses to start and grow. They have helped build management capacity through training, skills development and soft supports and, in the process, facilitated the creation of thousands of jobs.

Here's a snapshot of what they have achieved in the past five years:

Client Success Stories: read how Local Enterprise Offices have been 'Making It Happen' for clients all over the country on pages 18 to 23.



18,640
Net new jobs created by LEO-supported companies



5,080
Number of business projects approved for funding



€81.5m
Value of direct financial assistance approved by LEOs



17,587
Took part in a Start Your Own Business programme



144,830
Participated in LEO-run training courses



7,371
Entries to Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition*



752
TAME grants approved



40,577
Received business mentoring



5,227
Approvals under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme



24,245
Average number of Student Enterprise Programme participants every year, from
483
schools**



1,687
Applications submitted for Microfinance Ireland loans



432
Businesses undertook Lean for Micro programme

* This figure includes entries from IBYE 2019 (fifth year of entrant recruitment).
** These figures are an average of participation rates in the SEP programme over the last three years.

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CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

#GLOBALAMBITION

“We got funding for employment and working capital, assistance which put us in a totally different league. It gave us a proper start.”



www.theirishfairydoorcompany.com

How a Local Enterprise Office helped a start-up reach their #GlobalAmbition

When Niamh Sherwin Barry co-founded the Irish Fairy Door Company with her husband and two friends, one of the first things she did was talk to Local Enterprise Office South Dublin. “It was our first port of call,” she says.

“We got funding for employment and working capital, assistance which put us in a totally different league. It enabled us take on two people, someone for dispatch and a carpenter, which was a complete game changer. It gave us a proper start.”

The founders also received business mentoring. “We literally exhausted every support our LEO could offer, and we reaped the reward.”

Before long the business had a range of more than 40 fairy related products. To help it grow internationally, Local Enterprise Office South Dublin supported the company to become an Enterprise Ireland client.

That helped them raise the funds they needed to grow. “Our business has now completely transformed. As well as our products we are now also partnering with a Canadian animation company - the long-term possibilities of that are literally endless,” she says.

All the assistance along the way has led the business to where it is today. “Entrepreneurship is really nurtured in Ireland,” says Sherwin Barry.

“Sometimes I think people don’t realise the power of the Local Enterprise Offices. If you have a good idea, your Local Enterprise Office is where you go. They are incredible and they can help you build to a point where you move on up to Enterprise Ireland.”

Today The Irish Fairy Door Company sells in over 80 countries worldwide. Starting and growing a business is challenging, even when you do it with your husband and two close friends, as she did.

“With LEOs you feel you are part of something and that’s really important when all you have at the beginning is an idea,” says Sherwin Barry. “Being an entrepreneur can be a lonely road. Get yourself down to your LEO – you will not go wrong.”

“Entrepreneurship is really nurtured in Ireland.”

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

LEAN FOR MICRO

“We moved every single piece of machinery around and it has transformed the way we do things. We are now between 55% and 70% more efficient.”



www.academycrests.ie

When one business owner wanted to boost efficiency and save money, Lean for Micro delivered.

Cork based embroidery and printing business, Academy Crests, was started by Phil Cone's parents, Stephen and Mary in the 1980s. Phil moved home from London to take it over in 2006.

He helped grow it to a point where, in 2015, it moved into new premises in Northpoint Business Park.

When he heard about Lean for Micro from LEO Cork City, he signed up. It provided him with a series of one to one consultations with Lean experts who helped him reconfigure the business to maximise efficiencies.

“With my first consultant we concentrated on reporting, such as sales reports and cash reports, helping me look at the information I had. As a company we had invested in business management software so it was about getting the correct data out of it and into a document format for me, which was massively helpful,” says Phil.

“With my second consultant we concentrated on the factory floor. We moved every single piece of machinery around and it has transformed the way we do things. We are now between 55% and 70% more efficient. Everything we do is localised, it's all at people's fingertips. In fact we work so much more efficiently now that we were able to sub-let out one part of our unit. It is saving us a massive amount of money and we couldn't have done it without Lean for Micro.”

Not all the benefits are quantifiable. “There are certain things we can't put a value on, such as the change in employee mindset it has given us. Staff members are coming to me making suggestions about better ways to do things,” says Cone.

He now recommends Lean for Micro to other business owners.

“If you are a micro business, you can learn how to do something that will make your business more effective, make you more money and enable your staff to work smarter. It's all down to my local LEO. It has fundamentally transformed the way this factory is run and, with any luck, will add to our business longevity too.”

“Staff members are coming to me making suggestions about better ways to do things.”

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS PROGRAMME

“When you’re starting out, it’s comforting to know you’re not the only one. The course helps keep you on the right track.”



www.cerebreon.com

A ‘start your own business’ course helped one couple turn a good idea into a great business.

Prior to setting up award winning fintech company Cerebreon Technologies in 2016, Co-Founders Gillian Doyle and Ken Doherty worked in renewable energy and credit management respectively.

It was Gillian’s role predicting the recovery of debt that gave the couple the idea for Cerebreon.

Her idea was to bring machine intelligence to the insolvency sector, increasing efficiencies and reducing debt default levels.

“I felt it would be really good to develop an industry solution around the area of managing data, at a time when the technology for image recognition was really improving,” says Gillian.

Both are educated to PhD level, Gillian in nanophysics and Ken in applied maths. But they knew nothing about starting a business.

They signed up for a Start Your Own Business Course at Local Enterprise Office Donegal. “It cost €100 for six weeks’ business planning and mentoring and was the best investment I’ve ever made,” says Gillian.

“It introduced us to all sorts of ideas. For example, I’d never even heard of a business angel before I walked through the door of a LEO. If you’ve worked for a company, you wouldn’t be aware of them, or fundraising, or venture capital.”

Meeting other SYOB participants helped too. Says Ken: “When you’re starting out, it’s comforting to know you’re not the only one. The course helps keep you on the right track.”

The SYOB programme introduced them to branding, sales and marketing. Says Gillian: “In our previous jobs neither of us was ever out in front of customers, so it helped us understand how to approach that and what our expectations should be. It also covered financial projections and investment.”

Now they encourage others to sign up for Start Your Own Business.

“Ireland is an amazing place for start-ups, there is so much help out there. You just need to be willing to ask for it,” says Gillian.

“I’d say to anyone, if you’ve an idea, spend the money just to see – you can do the course while you work. Give yourself the opportunity to figure out if your idea is viable or not, otherwise you’ll always be wondering. Honestly, for anyone with a business idea, the best thing you can do is walk in the door of your local LEO and sign up for this course.”

“Ireland is an amazing place for start-ups, there is so much help out there. You just need to be willing to ask for it.”

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

TRADING ONLINE VOUCHER SCHEME

“The Trading Online voucher enabled us to quickly build a website that could compete with the best in the UK.”



www.quickcrop.ie

Great ecommerce has grown a bumper crop of customers for QuickCrop

Niall McAllister and Andrew Davidson started their ‘grow your own’ gardening business, QuickCrop, in 2009. Both were ‘necessity entrepreneurs’ who lost their jobs in the recession.

“I was working in commercial artwork and Niall in office furniture, both sectors that got wiped out. We were hobby gardeners and were looking for a business that might do well in a recession,” says Davidson.

“Growing your own veg was about security, and helping people whose homes were possibly in negative equity to turn their gardens into something positive. We also wanted a business that would enable us to continue living in Sligo, which both of us love.”

A grant from Local Enterprise Office Sligo helped them build a polytunnel for seedlings. It was, literally, seed funding. “That made us feel like a proper business because we had physical infrastructure,” said Davidson, who built their first website himself.

“We knew that if we were to move the business on to the next level, we needed to invest in a proper ecommerce website, so we got a Trading Online Voucher from Local Enterprise Office Sligo,” he says.

The voucher enabled them invest in bespoke features such as Growmatic, a project management tool that provides customers with an events timeline for each plant, reminding them when to sow, water, fertilise and transfer it, among other things.

A good website drives sales. Growmatic can suggest particular products, with links to purchase. “At the end of the day we want our customers to grow the best veg possible, and we recommend the products that can help,” he says.

“The Trading Online voucher enabled us to quickly build a website that could compete with the best in the UK. It also made us look a lot bigger than we were starting out,” says Davidson. They entered the UK in 2009 and it now accounts for more than half of sales.

The pair received LEO assistance to travel to UK trade fairs and Brexit has encouraged them to look further afield too. With LEO assistance they are now looking at the German market. The pair has received assistance towards their warehouse and office, plus mentoring.

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR MICRO EXPORTERS GRANT

“The TAME grant is designed to get you in front of the right people and gives you the means to do it.”



www.deadcentrebrewing.com

When a craft brewery wanted to grow its overseas networks, TAME opened doors

When Liam Tutty was made redundant from his marketing job in a brewery in 2016, his ambition was to set up his own craft brewery. Local Enterprise Office Westmeath helped turn it into a reality.

His love of home brewing goes back a long way. “My Grandmother had apple trees and in my late teens, I’d press them to make cider,” says Tutty.

He set up Dead Centre Brewing in Athlone in December 2016, the same month he first visited Local Enterprise Office Westmeath. By the following year he was making beer.

“One of the first ways my LEO helped was to suggest I enter Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur, an awards scheme. I won best idea in Westmeath, for which I got € 7,000. I used the money to buy promotional glassware for the beer, a terrific way to drive brand recognition.”

An €85,000 Business Priming Grant enabled him to secure a long lease on a former pub overlooking the Shannon in the centre of Athlone, which had been closed for two years. He used the money to develop a microbrewery, putting in glass walls and a copper brew house. The grant also enabled him take on staff.

The Business Priming Grant opened the door to angel investors too. “Having LEO approval feels like a recommendation.”

The microbrewery and pub opened in February 2019 and provides the revenues he needs to grow sales and distribution of Dead Centre Brewing’s beers.

His plan was always to export, initially to the UK. Brexit meant he needed to look further afield too. In 2018 he applied for a Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters (TAME) grant which enabled him take a stand at the country’s main craft beer trade fair, Alltech.

Using the money for top notch marketing materials, including technical product sheets of importance for buyers and distribution partners, was invaluable in helping him find suitable distribution partners, including which he hopes will see him sell into China.

“The TAME grant is designed to get you in front of the right people and gives you the means to do it. Having the right marketing materials – nicely designed and printed – allows you put your best foot forward when you do,” he says.

“The market I’m in is very competitive. Being able to take a three metre by two metre stand at Alltech got me in front of international industry buyers and distributors. I would not have gone to it without TAME. In fact I can honestly say I would not be where I am at all today without the help of my Local Enterprise Office. I simply wouldn’t have gotten anywhere without it.”

“Having LEO approval feels like a recommendation.”

MAKING IT HAPPEN – TOGETHER!

There are 31 Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities all over the country. You'll find contact details for them here, with dedicated teams on hand to help.

The national website for the Local Enterprise Offices is www.localenterprise.ie, the Twitter account is @Loc_Enterprise and the Facebook Account is @LocalEnterpriseOffices.



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Local Enterprise Office

Making It Happen

TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE,
PLEASE VISIT: WWW.LOCALENTERPRISE.IE

#MakingItHappen

