**Business Expansion Grant:**

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

Business Expansion grants may be awarded to sole traders, partnerships or limited companies that fulfil the following criteria:

* Enterprises in the manufacturing or internationally traded services sector which, over time, can develop into strong export entities and graduate to Enterprise Ireland.
* Unique tourism service enterprises that target generating revenue from overseas visitors; these tourism services should not displace business from other existing players in the market or give rise to deadweight. With regard to restrictions, retail enterprises, personal services, professional services or construction and local building services are not eligible for grant aid.
* Employ up to a maximum of 10 people and be going employment.
* Be established, registered, and operate within the area of the Local Enterprise Office; Kilkenny
* Operate in the commercial field;
* Show there is a market for the product or service;
* Have potential for growth in domestic or export markets; and
* Have potential for job creation without affecting existing local business.

The maximum Business Expansion Grant payable shall be 50% of the investment or €150,000 whichever is the lesser. This maximum grant would be linked to the creation of 10 new full-time jobs. All grant awards are linked to the creation of new full-time employment.

Expenditure may be considered under the following headings:

* Capital items
* Salary costs
* Consultancy/Innovation/ Specialised Marketing costs

Grants over €80,000 and up to €150,000 shall be the exception and shall only apply in the case of projects that clearly demonstrate a potential to graduate to Enterprise Ireland and/or to export internationally. In all other cases, the maximum grant shall be 50% of the investment or €80,000 whichever is the lesser. Subject to the 50% limit, a maximum grant of €15,000 per full time job created shall apply in respect of any employment support granted.

All grants of a value greater than or equal to €50,000 or with a cumulative value of €100,000 over three years require Enterprise Ireland approval.

A business that had availed of a Priming Grant will be ineligible to apply for a Business Expansion grant until 12 months after approval/drawdown date of Priming Grant whichever is the later except in cases of exceptional merit and where less than the maximum Priming Grant was drawn down, and subject to the provisions in respect of 'De Minimus state aid'.

**What is ‘De Minimis’ aid?**

Business Expansion grants are provided under the European Commission Regulation on ‘De Minimis’ aid. De Minimis aid is limited amounts of State aid – up to €200,000 in any three-year period to any one enterprise.

De Minimis aid is regarded as too small to significantly affect trade or competition in the common market. The amounts of grants are regarded as falling outside the category of State aid which is banned by the EC Treaty and, therefore, they can be awarded without reference to the European Commission.

However, a Member State must track De Minimis aid and make sure that combined aid payments from all sources to one enterprise in any three-year period respect the €200,000 ceiling.

Therefore, you need to provide details of all other grant aid that has been awarded to you or your company within the past three years. Please note that a false declaration to show a figure under the threshold of €200,000 could later mean that you would have to pay back the grant aid with interest.

**If you wish to apply for a Business Expansion Grant please contact us on 056 7752662 or email us at** **info@leokilkennycoco.ie** **where our Business Advisor can discuss your businesses, your investment plans and how to progress an application if appropriate.**