GUIDING SMEs THROUGH THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT LANDSCAPE

Shauna Fenton
Essential information, support and services to help you **start, maintain or grow** your business.

Simple to use, up-to-date and practical, nibusinessinfo.co.uk is the first place to go to find **guidance on regulations** and to **access government services**.

It also has **online tools, calculators**, and best practice **case studies**; and provides access to **funding options, mentoring and networking opportunities**, as well as **wider support**.
CUSTOMER VISITS AND INTERESTS IN 2016-17

3.7m VISITS

6.0m VIEWS
NIBUSINESSINFO.CO.UK CUTS ACROSS ORGANISATIONAL SILOS
THE SITE’S SUCCESS IS BUILT UPON COLLABORATION

Business in the Community
Craft Council
Creativity NI
Crown Solicitors Office
Councils
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Department of Education (DE)
Department of Finance (DoF)
Department of Health (DoH)
Disability Action
Carbon Trust
Central Procurement Directorate
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland
FSB Northern Ireland
Halo NI
Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (DfE)
HM Revenue & Customs
Housing Rights Service

Information Commissioner’s Office
Insolvency Service (DfE)
Land & Property Service (DoF)
NI Chamber of Commerce
NI Consumer Council (DfE)
NI Courts & Tribunals Service (DoJ)
NI Hotels Federation
NI Independent Retail Trade Association
Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Social Enterprise NI
The Landlords Association of NI
The Prince’s Trust
Tourism NI (DfE)
Trading Standards (DfE)
Universities and Colleges
InterTrade Ireland
Travelwise (DfI)
UK Trade & Investment
Women in Business NI
Young Enterprise Northern Ireland
TOP TEN RESOURCES

1) Guides: 800 across 21 themes
2) Tools and templates: Over 130 business tools and templates
3) Case studies: Learn from other businesses
4) e-Learning: Covering key start-up themes
5) Support finder: Finance and advisory services
6) Resources: Company search, property, business idea
7) Events: Networking, workshops, seminars
8) Business news: Changes as they happen
9) Questions answered: Email, telephone, social media
10) Free registration: Newsletter, event alerts, grant updates, regulation changes
Guides by theme
Starting a business
Finance
Taxes
Employment and skills
Health and safety
Efficiency and environment
Business premises and rates
Innovation and R&D
Sales and marketing
IT
Exporting and importing
Grow your business
Buy or sell a business

Guides by sector
Tourism
Creative industries
Food and drink
Property management
Construction
Manufacturing
Retail
Transport
How to start a business in Northern Ireland

Introduction

Your local council will provide you with support designed to help you start your own business. It includes tailored guidance from a business advisor to develop your business plan. This free help is available to anyone interested in starting a business in Northern Ireland.

Some council areas may offer additional support. You can find out what specific help is available by contacting your local council directly.

This guide highlights the importance of a business plan and provides contact details for your local council.

Get help to develop a business plan through your local council

In this guide:
Introduction
Get help to develop a business plan through your local council
Contact your local council for start a business support
Starting a business in Northern Ireland - Learning Space (video)

Market research and market reports

Five tips for effective market research

A business that understands its customers and their buying habits can sell more effectively, compete with other suppliers, target new customers and identify new opportunities. Follow these five tips for better market research.

1. Identify the information you need - Understanding market trends is important if your business is to make the most of its opportunities and remain competitive. You also need to understand your competitors and be aware of what they are doing in order to predict their next moves and exploit any weaknesses. See understand your customers' needs and understand your competitors.

2. Use market reports and other data - Support is available from a range of sources. For example, Invest NI's Business Information Centre offers free access to extensive market research through company databases and worldwide market reports.

3. Use field research - Popular methods of field research include surveys, interviews and direct observation. The way that you conduct your field research will have a significant impact on the quality of the results - ask the right questions, talk to the right people, talk to enough people and keep research impartial. See difference between qualitative and quantitative research.

4. Interpret the information - Be careful how you interpret readily available market information. External data might not be in a format that's easy to use - it may have been collected for other purposes or be from a range that doesn't tally with your target market. Also beware of out-of-date market information. See avoid market research pitfalls.

5. Consider using a market research agency - If you don't have the time or skills to carry out research yourself, and if budget is available, you could consider using a market research agency. Always provide the agency with a thorough and clear brief. You should include the project's business objectives, what the research should uncover, and details on how you will use the results. See should I use a market research agency?

Distance and online selling rules

Distance selling is to sell goods or services through digital TV, by mail order, online or by phone or text message. If you are a distance seller there are certain rules that you must follow, including extra rules if you are selling goods or services online.

Providing Information before an order takes place

Before selling to a customer at a distance (including online), you must provide them with certain information.

This includes:
- your business name, contact details and address
- a description of your goods or services, including what digital content does (for example, the language it's in or how to update software)
- the total price, including all taxes and how to pay
- delivery arrangements, costs and how long goods will take to arrive
- the minimum length of their contract and billing period
My New Business content will adopt a task-based approach to maximise engagement and conversion:

1. THINKING ABOUT STARTING
2. TIME TO GET STARTED
3. RUNNING YOUR START-UP
• Developing step-by-step journeys for users doing complex tasks.

• ‘Learn to drive’ beta version offered users a step-by-step journey from the first to the final step.

• Hosted six Lab Days to validate and refine their approach using task-based usability lab sessions.

• ‘Starting a business’ pilot is currently under development.
Interested in enterprise?
Take a look around to get inspired by others, learn about business and develop a big idea. Find the right support, advice and inspiration for your future business.

Thinking about starting

1. What’s the big idea?
   Maybe you have a great business idea or maybe you need some inspiration. Either way, use our Business Idea Profiles to get tips and detailed information on starting different types of business.

2. Make your plan
   The business plan. It’s not as daunting as you might think, but it’s an important starting point. It should help you understand the finances your start-up might need and the scale of your project in the initial phase.

+ Use our pre-start checklist
   There’s a lot to think about before you take steps to start your business. Find out what other people have done, get more information on business structures, research your market and find tools to refine your idea.

Ten steps to a successful start-up
Discover what it takes to get ahead and stay ahead
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Time to get started

1. Structure your business
   The three main business types are sole trader, partnership and company. Each one has advantages and disadvantages and rules to follow. Take the time to choose the right form for your business.

2. Name your business
   Picking a name for your business is a little bit more involved than you might think. It's important for your branding and marketing but there are also special rules depending on how you've structured your business.

Use our start your business checklist
   You're ready to take the plunge to get your business going. Use our guidance and tools to help you through the tricky phase of getting your business established and draw inspiration from other local entrepreneurs.
Running your start-up

1. Taxes and regulations
   Running a business means a whole new world of rules. Thankfully support is available to make your life easier when managing taxes for the first time and keeping your business on the right side of the law.

2. Marketing your products or services
   Starting a business means making your mark on the world – but how big a splash can you make? Tools to make customers aware of your products and services run from traditional advertising to social networking.

Use our running your business checklist
Changing from a start-up to an established business means moving up through the gears and accelerating sales and growth – use our guides and find out how other local entrepreneurs have made the transition.
Dedicated promotions for the ‘Running your business checklist’

- The spirit of success
  How David and Fiona Boyd-Armstrong made it with Shortcross Gin

- Selling goods and services
  Stay on the right side of the law and know the rights of customers

- What you need to know about health and safety
  Follow the rules that apply to you and ensure compliance

- Employing staff for the first time?
  Eight things you should know if you’ve never hired an employee before

- How to use social networks to increase sales and improve brand awareness

Latest events

- Leading equality, diversity and inclusion
  Mallusk Business Park, Newtownabbey, 9 Jan 2018

- Tourism and recreation trade clinics
  Riada House, Ballymoney, 9 Jan 2018

Business support

- Go For It
  Local council support to start a business
Latest events

Leading equality, diversity and inclusion
Malloch Business Park, Newtownabbey, 9 Jan 2018

Tourism and recreation trade clinics
Rialto House, Ballymoney, 9 Jan 2018

Business support

Go For It
Local council support to start a business

Explore Enterprise Programme
Unemployed support to start a business

Get start-up help

Business support
Latest events
Sign-up
Speak to a business adviser
0800 027 0639
Start your business checklist

You're ready to take the plunge to get your business going. Use our guidance and tools to help you through the tricky phase of getting your business established and draw inspiration from other local entrepreneurs.

1. Structure your business.
   Show

2. Name your business.
   Show

3. Find the money.
   Show

4. Choose your premises.
   Show

5. Hire some staff.
   Show

6. Protect your business ideas.
   Show

7. Avoid common mistakes.
   Show

How other local entrepreneurs got started.
Start your business checklist

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6. Protect your business ideas.
7. Avoid common mistakes.

Expandable task list page Lays out the whole end-to-end process - the numbered sections expand to show links to everything you need to complete that step
Choose the right name for your business

Choosing a business name to create the right impression

When generating ideas about a business name, you may initially focus on personal preference. However, an objective approach will enable you to consider the customer first.

Your business name will be the cornerstone of your brand. It is something that you have to get right to create the right impression for potential customers and to market your business. See branding: the basics.

Points to help you decide on a name for your business

When choosing a name for your business, you need to ask:

- Do you want the name to reflect what your business does - moving, cleaning, building? Would something more abstract be suitable?
- Would it be a good idea to include your own name?
- Do you want a traditional-sounding name, conveying durability and old-fashioned values, or a modern name, suggesting a fresh, innovative approach?

Note that there are rules that could affect your choice of business name.

For more information on business names, see rules for naming your business.

Further guidance can be found on the Companies House website, with an overview of the controls and restrictions when choosing a company name.

The National Business Register website provides data on 10 million UK businesses, companies, trade marks and brands to help you research and choose the right name for your business.