**Invest Northern Ireland: Equality Action Plan**

Reviewed Annually

Invest NI’s business is to encourage economic development in Northern Ireland within the economic policy context determined by the Minister for the Economy and the framework of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government and Economic Strategy.

 In line with our statutory equality duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Equality Commission’s April 2010 revised Guide for Public Authorities, Invest NI has mainstreamed equality considerations fully into its corporate planning process. In the first instance, we have undertaken an audit of inequalities to identify the range of key inequalities upon which the work of Invest NI might impact. In doing so, we have carefully considered the organisation’s range of current and developing policies and programmes in order to highlight those priority areas where we are most likely to contribute to promoting better equality of opportunity and good relations.

As part of our role and working with the Department for the Economy (DfE), Invest NI monitors labour market and employment trends closely. The sections below outline what we consider to be the priority areas for attention. We have outlined the key information available on equality-related issues in those areas of work and provided a brief overview of action already being taken to address those issues together with future plans to tackle inequality and disadvantage.

This Action Plan is predicated on previous research following the numerous EQIA’s conducted by Invest NI, most recently the Draft Business Strategy 24-27.

Each of these EQIA’s is available to view on our website page: http://www.investni.com/equality.

We believe that these documents demonstrate Invest NI’s commitment to equality to date and provide a firm foundation for our work going forward. Data contained within these EQIA’s have been used to inform the Action Plan as presented below.

**Programme for Government / Economic Strategy**

The Department for the Economy has recently launched its Economic Mission aiming to position Northern Ireland as a leader amongst the small-advanced economies of the world whilst ensuring that the benefits of future economic growth are shared more equitably across NI and our people.

Invest NI will work collaboratively with the Department, business, stakeholders and partners to identify the opportunities and enhanced support needed to achieve these aims. We will be a convener to draw together, target and optimise available support across partners in a holistic way to maximise outcomes for the benefit of all our citizens.

The overarching goal of our approach is to improve the economic competitiveness and productivity of the NI economy through a focus on export led growth and targeting clusters, technologies and sectors that offer the best outcome opportunities.

Invest NI will continue to integrate Section 75 obligations within our business and strategic planning process. We will outline our equality commitment in our new Business Strategy for 2024/27.

The measures outlined in the action plan below demonstrate our overarching goals going forward and give an indication of our intended timescales. These overarching goals, indicators, measures and timescales reflect on all core business of Invest NI in line with DfE economic strategy.

**Invest NI Equality Action Plan**

**Revised Annually**

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| **Overarching Goals** | **Key Indicators** | **Measures** | **Timescales** |
| Mainstream equality and diversity within Invest NI Core Business | Awareness of equality within organisation as indicated by annual staff survey. | 100% of Invest NI staff trained in Equality and Diversity, Attendance and Evaluation (compulsory). | Annually |
|  | Integration of Section 75 within Corporate Planning process | 100% of programmes and policies subjected to Section 75 screening and consultation. Reviewed through Annual Progress report to the Equality Commission | Ongoing process through screening of initiatives and business planning. |
|  | Ongoing engagement with staff regarding Section 75 through internal communication channels. | Communication via ‘Newsweekly’ | Quarterly |
|  | Ongoing engagement of Divisional Equality Coordinators. | Refresher training provided to all Co-ordinators. | Annual training and quarterly outreach by equality manager. |
| Address inequalities within NI labour market, within Invest NI remit. | Positive action towards addressing inequalities attached to Section 75 categories, including the Women in Business and Women’s Enterprise networks which have, through the development of pathways into enterprise, improved the accessibility of business support to women.Improve awareness of support available for employers relating to their employees who have a disability, this is driven by nibusinessinfo.com | Engagement with stakeholderswithin economically inactive groups such as people with disabilities and women. For example ,supporting networks of women who can share their experience of business with prospective female entrepreneurs and who understand their needs. Development of relevant programmes to assist these groups, such as ‘Yes You Can’ and Female Founders Techstart funding, as well as Female only calls for the Ambition to Grow programme.Involvement in the Belfast Regional City Deal working group, specifically as regards the needs of female and neuro diverse entrepreneurs.Development of disability related pages on nibusinessinfo.com, with a focus on case studies. | Ongoing on annual basis, depending on programme. See Annual Progress Report for more detail.Traffic to nibusinessinfo.com disability related pages monitored annually to refresh and add to popular articles and case studies. |
| Promotion of Good Relations and Equal Opportunities across the business sector. | Positive action in relation to social inclusion of marginalised groups and communities. Including:• Increasing economic opportunities for our most deprived communities • Reducing underemployment • Increased shared space | Management of the Regional Economic Recovery Plan and other initiatives which are being developed as a response to the conclusions of the Independent Review.A number of short-term and medium term regionally focussed actions have been proposed to support the recovery and rebuilding of the NI Economy following the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.The primary strategic aims of the regionally focused ERAP interventions (Regional ERAP) are to help protect and stabilise employment, build a high skilled and agile workforce, pursue and deliver better jobs, and create a more regionally balanced and greener economy.  | It is hoped that these programmes will be in place during 2023/24.All new initiatives being developed will be subjected to screening to fully address equality and rural needs considerations.Further initiatives have been put in place to encourage minority groups to engage with Invest NI on a regional basis and support our duty to promote equal opportunities. We have met with a variety of groups, including those representing entrepreneurs from ethnic minority backgrounds in order to make our services more accessible.Numerous regional events have been held to highlight the support available to groups such as ‘Join Her', ’Working with Pride’ and the Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship Network |
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