

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

Supports for Ireland's Fisheries Sector



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Introduction to this Guide

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's Seafood Development Agency helps to develop the Irish seafood industry by providing technical expertise, business support, funding, training and promoting responsible environmental practice.

This booklet is aimed at those working in the fishing sector, and anyone considering a career in the industry. It outlines what supports are available from BIM and provides an overview of other supports that may be available for those working in commercial fisheries. It is a practical guide and provides signposting to the relevant websites or agencies for further information.

The guide begins with an outline of how to access practical help, guidance and grant aid from BIM. Funding is available under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027 (EMFAF) and this guide provides details of the grant schemes available. It gives an overview of the training provided by us, including details of funding support that may be available if you undertake our courses. Section two of the booklet gives an overview of social welfare supports that you may be currently unaware of, and eligible to apply for. The final section of the document looks at other support bodies that provide services that may be of interest to the fishing community, including information on the services they offer and how to approach them.




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Supports from Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

BIM-administered Grant Aid Schemes

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021-2027 is the primary funding programme for the seafood sector. It is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the EU. There are several grant aid schemes open at different points in time, and a brief overview is provided below. For the latest information, background, eligibility requirements and how to apply, visit www.bim.ie or speak to your BIM Regional Development Officer.

BIM provide a grants support service to the fishing sector to assist with completing grant applications and providing clarification on queries related to BIM fisheries grant schemes.

 For more information or to set up an appointment call 01 2144121 or email grantsupport@bim.ie

EMFAF Small Scale Coastal Fisheries Scheme:

This scheme provides up to 80% support on approved onshore and onboard capital expenditure. It is designed to be a 'one stop shop' for small scale coastal fishing vessel owners. It supports investment in capital equipment related to:

- Selective Fishing
- Energy Efficiency
- Hygiene, Health, and Safety
- Quality
- Traceability.

Sustainable Fisheries Scheme:

Designed for owners of non-Small Scale Coastal Fishers (SSCF*) vessels, this scheme supports onboard investments, with the following objectives:

- Improve catch handling
- Enhance traceability
- Improve hygiene, health and safety
- Improve energy efficiency.

(*SSCF: Owners of vessels <12.00m overall length (LOA) and which do not fish towed gears)



Regional Development Officers for Inshore Fisheries can provide advice or refer you to the best person in relation to many matters, including **funding, licencing, environment, conservation, and technical issues.**

V Notching Scheme:

This scheme supports the conservation of lobster, and provides up to 100% of the market price for the v-notching and return to wild of female lobster by SSCF vessel owners. It provides support of up to 50% to non-SSCF vessel owners. The scheme is open to owners of fishing vessels less than, or equal to 15 meters length overall (LOA) which are registered on the Irish Register of Fishing Boats under the polyvalent segment (including polyvalent-potting).



Young Fishers Scheme:

Aimed at people under 40, looking to buy their first fishing vessel, this scheme provides support of up to 40% of the cost of vessel acquisition, proportionate to the applicant's shareholding in the vessel.

This scheme is open to individuals (or legal entities wholly owned by one or more individuals) who:

- are each under 40 years of age
- have each worked for at least five years as a fisher and fully qualified to operate the vessel being purchased
- are tax resident in Ireland.

The vessel in question, must:

- have a length overall (LOA) of less than 24 metres
- be equipped for sea fishing

- have been registered in the Union fleet register for at least five years (three in the case of SSCF) and less than 30 calendar years preceding the year of submission of the application for support
- belong to a DCF fleet segment that is identified as balanced in the most recent Irish Fleet Annual Report submitted to the European Commission (at present all segments are reported as in balance).
- on payment, the vessel must be registered in the Irish Register of Fishing Boats
- only one application can be made for any one vessel

A grant aid cap of €250,000 applies under the scheme.

Seafood Processing Capital Investment Scheme:

This scheme provides up to 50% support for capital investments in value-added processing. A grant rate of up to 30% is applied to primary processing projects. The objectives of this are to:

- support the development of the processing sector by adding value to, and fully utilising, raw material;
- support the development of operational optimisation in the processing sector; and
- improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions.

This scheme is available to owners of onshore processing Small /Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that have an SFPA approval number.

Seafood Capacity Building Scheme:

This scheme supports industry members operating in the fisheries, aquaculture or seafood processing sectors to participate in BIM-led international field missions, with the objective of increasing industry knowledge or supporting technology transfer in the following areas:

- Sustainability
- Fisheries conservation
- Innovation
- Competitiveness.

All field missions are designed and approved by BIM, and at least one BIM staff member accompanies each field mission.

Under the scheme, approved applicants may receive support of up to 50% of the following:

- Airline tickets (economy class only)
- Subsistence at a maximum of Public Service rates.

Fleet Safety Scheme:

This scheme is intended to further improve the overall safety standards onboard Irish fishing vessels. It supports the purchase of certain safety equipment on-board qualifying vessels including:

- statutory lifesaving equipment
- firefighting equipment
- navigation equipment
- communication equipment.

Applications may be made for vessels of all sizes.

Marine Tourism Safety Scheme:

Similar to the Fleet Safety Scheme, this scheme provides grant aid of up to 40% for the purchase and installation of safety equipment on board licenced marine tourism vessels of <15m LOA.



BIM Regional Supports

BIM has six **Regional Development Officers for Inshore Fisheries** around the coast. This team provide a range of support services to the inshore sector. They can offer advice or refer you to the best person in relation to many matters, including funding, licencing, environment, conservation, and technical issues.

i Contact information for each officer and the geographical areas they cover can be found [here](#) or call 01 214 4100 and we will provide you with the name and contact number for the Development Officer in your area.

The **Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) scheme** is a fisheries local development programme, funded through EMFAF. This initiative is focused on community-led development to enhance the economic opportunities and social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture dependent areas. Funding is available through BIM for initiatives that meet certain criteria, and we have Development Officers that can provide you with more information.

More information on FLAGS in your area can be found [here](#) or to discuss an idea you may have for a project contact Brenda O'Riordan on 087 3512327 / email brenda.oriordan@bim.ie or Paul Downes on 087 1171449/ email paul.downes@bim.ie


If you are considering diversifying into the **aquaculture sector**, we have a team of **Regional Aquaculture Resource Development Officers** who may be able to help you.

i Contact information for each officer and the geographical areas they cover can be found [here](#) or call 01 214 4100 and we will provide you with the name and contact number for the Development Officer in your area.

Fisheries Conservation and Gear Technology Advice

BIM's Fisheries Conservation Section works closely with the Irish fishing industry on developing gear-based technical solutions which address key environmental issues. BIM has developed a suite of solutions which reduce unwanted catches or bycatch through improved gear selectivity and demonstration of high survival rates for some captured species after release back to sea.

This work helps the fishing industry meet legal requirements, improves fisheries sustainability and marine biodiversity. More recently, BIM developed solutions to help industry deal with climate change and the EU energy transition of the seafood sector. Relatively simple changes to fishing operations and use of accessible new technologies such as artificial lights can greatly assist vessel owners in improving their energy and carbon efficiency.

 If you want to contact the team email geartrials@bim.ie or previously published reports can be viewed at [here](#).

New Entrant Opportunities and Ongoing Training

The fishing sector offers a wide range of exciting career opportunities, both on shore and at sea. Career and training opportunities range from fishmonger skills to marine safety, radio, engineering and skipper qualifications. BIM provides training and skills development for the seafood sector through its two National Fisheries Colleges of Ireland, based in Castletownbere, Co. Cork and Greencastle in Co. Donegal. Training is also delivered in other locations in our Coastal Training Units.

There are several careers in the fishing industry that we provide bespoke training for, such as marine engineering, working on board a vessel as a deckhand or training to skipper a fishing vessel.

If you are interested in working on board a vessel, you could start with our [deckhand foundation programme](#). This course will give you the introductory skills to start a career as a deckhand, with the potential to progress to [deck officer](#) and [skipper](#).

We deliver a range of [engineering courses](#), suitable for those looking to gain entry to the sector, existing small vessel owners, or those looking to further their career in marine engineering.

A range of safety training courses for those working on board a vessel are also available, including personal survival techniques, fire fighting and medical first aid. You can also do practical sea survival techniques in our [specialist sea survival pool](#), which simulates live sea conditions.



Explore the most up to date list of courses, dates and locations at <https://bim.ie/fisheries/training/>



Ask for a copy of our prospectus
Katie Hunter, Seafood Educational Engagement Officer
T +353 87 3837585 E Katie.hunter@bim.ie



Alternatively you can contact the National Fisheries Colleges of Ireland (NFCI) directly
NFCI, Greencastle, Co Donegal
T +353 (0)74 9381068 E maria.mccarron@bim.ie
NFCI, Castletownbere, Co Cork
T +353 (0)27 71230 E della.osullivan@bim.ie

Funding Support for Training

If you are looking to undertake one of our training courses, you may be eligible for funding support from BIM under the [Seafood Training Scheme](#). The scheme is open to new entrants, as well as those currently employed in the sector, looking to upskill.

If you meet the eligibility criteria, you can receive funding support for your course fees and certain subsistence costs. A complete overview of eligible courses and costs can be found [here](#), including full terms and conditions.

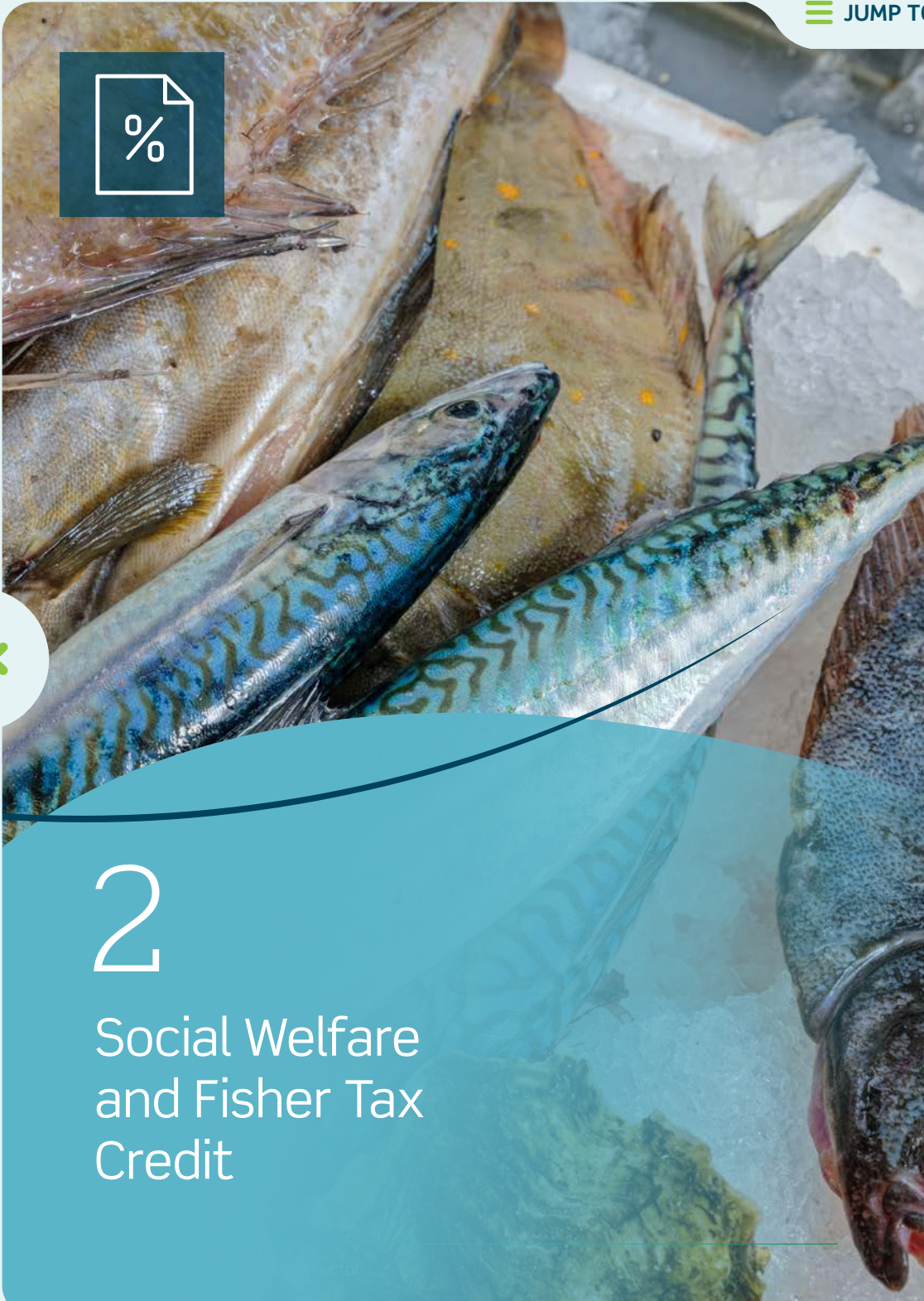
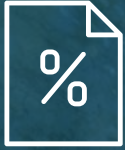
Need Assistance?

For grant-related queries, email: grantshelpdesk@bim.ie



For booking and training course queries, email: training@bim.ie

You can also call 01 2144 100 for assistance.



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Social Welfare and Fisher Tax Credit

Working in fishing, like any sector, can be challenging at times. When unforeseen circumstances arise, additional income sources may be required. This section outlines a number of social welfare supports that could be available to you or your family in addition to fishing.

Social Welfare Supports

It can be particularly challenging to try and understand the different schemes and eligibility criteria, especially if you are already under pressure. The Citizens Information Service provide clear and accessible signposting and their trained officers can help you figure things out.

i The Citizens Information Phone Service can be reached on 0818 07 4000 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm). If you are calling from outside Ireland, you should dial +353 21 229 8178. You can also visit your local centre in person – a list of centres throughout Ireland are available online at centres.citizensinformation.ie/

You can also visit your local Social Welfare Office, which is now referred to as an Intreo Centre. To find your local office go to www.gov.ie and click on the link further down the page, 'Find your local Intreo office'.



Fish Assist

A self-employed fisherman or woman on a low income may qualify for Fish Assist. Fish Assist is a provision under the [Jobseeker's Allowance](#) scheme. It is a weekly means-tested payment to help if you are engaged in fishing and on a low income.

To qualify for Jobseekers Allowance (Fish Assist) you must be aged 18 or over and under 66. You must also:

- Be fully unemployed (or work for three days a week or less)
- Be available for full-time work and genuinely seeking work
- Be capable of work
- Pass a means test
- Meet the habitual residence condition.

Income from work is assessed as means and can affect your Jobseekers Allowance payment. The Citizens Information Board provide a [worksheet](#) that will help you find out how taking up part-time or casual work will affect your weekly Jobseeker's Allowance.

If you qualify for Jobseekers Allowance, you may also qualify for other social welfare supports that are not specific to the fishing sector. These include:

Fuel Allowance

This is a payment to help with the cost of heating your home during the winter months. To get Fuel Allowance you must:

- Live alone (or only with certain people listed below)
- Be getting a qualifying payment (unless you are 70 or over)
- Satisfy a means test.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

This allowance is to help families with the cost of school uniforms and shoes. It is often paid automatically if you qualify for certain social welfare payments, but you can also apply if you if you don't receive it automatically. Check with your local Intreo or Citizens Information office for more information or guidance on how to apply.

Medical Card

A medical card entitles you to certain health services free of charge. To qualify for a medical card, you will be means tested, meaning your weekly income must be below a certain figure for your family size. Cash income, savings, investments and property (except for your own home) are taken into account in the means test.

If you don't meet the threshold for a medical card, you may be entitled to a [GP Visit Card](#).

A GP Visit Card entitles you to free visits to a participating family doctor (GP). Unlike the medical card, it does not cover prescribed medicines, but they may be covered by the [Drugs Payment Scheme](#).

Under the Drugs Payment Scheme, you and your family only have to pay a maximum of €80 each month for approved prescribed drugs and medicines, and certain appliances. You apply to the Drugs Payment Scheme through www.mydps.ie



Working in fishing, like any sector, can be challenging at times.

When unforeseen circumstances arise, additional income sources may be required. This section outlines a number of social welfare supports that could be available to you or your family in addition to fishing.



Christmas Bonus

The Christmas Bonus is an extra payment for people getting a long-term social welfare payment. You do not need to apply for the Bonus, if you qualify, you'll automatically get it.

Rural Social Scheme

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) is aimed at low-income farmers, fishermen and fisherwomen. To qualify for RSS, you must be getting a social welfare payment, such as Jobseekers Allowance. People participating in the Scheme provide services that benefit rural communities.

The Rural Social Scheme provides a supplementary income for low-income farmers and fishermen and women who are unable to earn an adequate living.

You must meet one of the following criteria to be eligible.

- You are self-employed on a fishing boat that has been entered in the Register of Fishing Boats.
- You are self-employed and your boat has been issued with a pot fishing licence.
- You are self-employed and you have been issued with a commercial salmon fishing licence from Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- You are self-employed and you have been issued with a commercial eel fishing licence from Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- You are self-employed and you have been issued with a dredging licence for shellfish from Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- You have an aquaculture licence.
- You have a permit for shell fishing issued by a registered cooperative.

Social Welfare Supports during Illness

Your health and wellbeing is crucial and BIM has also published a Fisherman's Health Manual giving practical advice to fishermen on ways to stay healthy and well. Contact us if you would like to receive a copy, or find it on www.bim.ie

However, if you do get sick, you can apply for a social welfare payment from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to support you. To qualify for a social welfare payment because you are sick or have a disability, you must be certified as sick or disabled by a doctor.

Illness Benefit

Illness Benefit is a weekly payment that you may get if you cannot work because you are sick or ill. You should always apply for Illness Benefit if you are medically certified as unfit for work.

Even if you don't qualify for the weekly payment, you may get PRSI credited contributions which can help you qualify for future social welfare payments.

To qualify for Illness Benefit you must:

- be under pension age
- satisfy the PRSI conditions.

If you are self-employed and pay Class S PRSI contributions, you do not qualify for Illness Benefit.

If you don't qualify for Illness Benefit, you can apply for a [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#). More information on this allowance is below.

Other payments that you may apply for if you cannot work are:

Invalidity Pension – if you cannot work because of a long-term illness or disability and are covered by social insurance (PRSI). Self-employed people who have paid enough Class S PRSI contributions can also get Invalidity Pension.

Disability Allowance – if you become disabled. To qualify, your injury, disease, or physical or mental disability must be expected to continue for at least one year and it must substantially restrict you from working. Disability Allowance is a means-tested payment.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

This is a weekly allowance paid to people who do not have enough income to meet their basic needs, or the needs of their family. It is designed to assist people who find themselves with no income and you can apply for it if you are turned down for other social welfare payments or are waiting on a decision in relation to a payment.

Who can get Supplementary Welfare Allowance?

If you have no income, you may get a basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) if:

- your weekly income is below the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your family size, a payment may be made to bring your income up to the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your family.
- you applied for a social welfare payment or pension but it has not yet been paid and you have no other income, you may get SWA while you are waiting for your payment. However, the amount paid while you are waiting will be deducted from the arrears of your social welfare payment.
- you have returned to work, you can claim the basic SWA for up to 30 days while you are waiting for your wages.

How to apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance

You should apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance to the Department of Social Protection's Community Welfare Service at your local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Office.

To help process your claim, you should have the following:

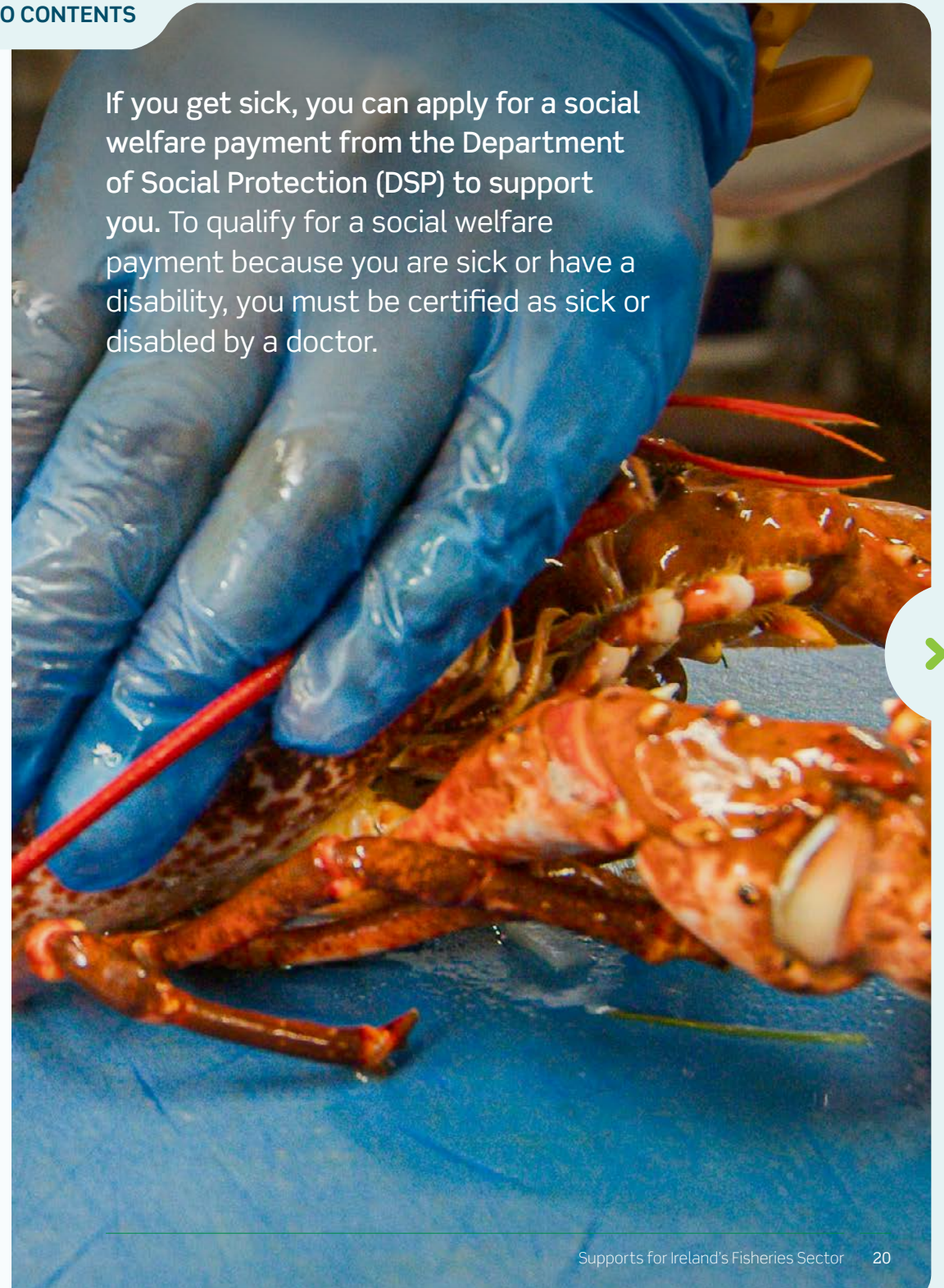
- Personal Public Service (PPS) numbers for yourself, your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant and your children
- Proof of residency
- Proof of identity, for example, a Public Services Card (if you have one), a passport, driving licence, work permit, Irish Residence Permit or (GNIB card), etc.
- Proof of any household income
- PPS numbers (or Birth Certificates) for any children you include in your application
- Documents to show your income and financial situation, such as, pay slips, tax statements, bank statements, etc.

Fisher Tax Credit

If you have fished on a registered fishing vessel for at least 80 days in a tax year you can claim an income tax credit of €1,270 per annum. The tax credit can be claimed through revenue and more information can be found under personal tax credits, reliefs and exemptions on their website, www.revenue.ie



If you get sick, you can apply for a social welfare payment from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to support you. To qualify for a social welfare payment because you are sick or have a disability, you must be certified as sick or disabled by a doctor.





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Other Grant Aid and Advisory Services

Údarás na Gaeltachta Support

Introduction to Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for economic, social, and cultural development in Gaeltacht areas of Ireland. It supports businesses and communities in these regions, promoting job creation, sustainable development, and the use of the Irish language.

i. Supports Offered by Údarás na Gaeltachta

Financial Assistance

The **Capital Grant** supports businesses with initial investments in capital assets, such as setting up new establishments, expanding existing ones, diversifying production, or fundamentally changing processes. It covers both material assets (land, buildings, machinery) and immaterial assets (patents, licenses, technical knowledge). The grant applies if the investment involves acquiring assets from a closed or potentially closing establishment by an independent investor, but not merely purchasing company shares.

The **Feasibility Study Grant** supports groups, organizations, businesses, or individuals in assessing the viability of a business idea. It covers a significant portion of costs such as personnel salaries, consultant fees, travel expenses, and additional overheads directly related to the study. This grant is aimed at helping applicants evaluate the potential success of their business proposals.

Research and Development (R&D) Grants help businesses create innovative products, processes, and services to stay competitive. Eligible costs include R&D salaries, project-specific overheads, capital assets, contractual research, patents, and other operational expenses related to research activities. This support is designed to enhance business performance in competitive markets.

The **Trading Online Scheme** by Údarás na Gaeltachta provides up to €2,500 (50% of eligible costs) to help Gaeltacht microenterprises develop or upgrade e-commerce capabilities. It supports activities such as website development, online payment systems, digital marketing strategies, and app development. Eligible businesses must have up to 10 employees, be trading for at least six months, and have an annual turnover of less than €2 million. Brochure websites and non-internet-related software are ineligible. Approval is required before expenses are incurred.

Trade Fair Participation Scheme is for small to medium business developing, expanding or located in a Gaeltacht region. It provides for a grant to cover some of the cost of exhibiting, such as: Stand rental fee, Costs of setting up and running the stand, Travel expenses and subsistence and can be used for exploring new market opportunities to increase sales

The **Technical Assistance for Micro-Exporters Grant (TAME)** supports small to medium businesses in Gaeltacht regions engaged in manufacturing or internationally traded services. It provides up to €2,500, covering 50% of eligible expenses, for activities like export research, trade fair participation, marketing material creation, and website development targeting international markets. The grant can also be used to explore new processes for export growth. Payments are made after proof of qualifying expenses.

The **Development of Market Research Skills Scheme** provides financial support to small to medium businesses in Gaeltacht regions for developing marketing skills and exploring new market opportunities. It covers costs like employee wages, travel, and expenses related to market trials for products and services.

The **Equity Investment Funding Scheme** provides financial support to small to medium businesses in Gaeltacht regions during their expansion phase in exchange for an equity share. Eligible businesses must have a comprehensive business plan and be engaged in development or expansion.

The **Employment Grant** provides financial assistance for small to medium businesses in Gaeltacht regions to cover costs associated with hiring new staff, either full-time or part-time. It supports wage costs over the first two years of job creation. Half of the grant is paid when the job starts, and the rest is paid after six months.

Other Supports

With the **GreenPlus Sustainability Grant**, fishers can make their business a greener one by developing an environmental policy that is in line with international standards. This helps businesses to play their part in creating a sustainable future. www.neh.gov.ie/business-supports/greenplus-udaras

LeanStart is an introductory, short-focused training programme that introduces your company to Lean thinking. Lean thinking is a set of business principles that can help staff learn new ways of working and identify inefficient processes that do not add value to a business.

<https://www.neh.gov.ie/business-supports/lean-start-udaras>

The **Digital Transition Fund** will drive transformative digitalisation of enterprise in Ireland, particularly amongst SMEs. The programme will help companies at all stages of their digitalisation journey. <https://udaras.ie/en/digital-transition-fund/>

The aim of the **Market Discovery Fund** is to incentivise companies to undertake market research and develop viable and sustainable market entry strategies in new geographic markets. Fishers can apply for support for Market Discovery Fund more than once provided each application considers a new market for an existing product or existing market for a new product.

<https://udaras.ie/en/business/how-we-help/brexit/market-discovery-fund/>

Additional assistance

Údarás na Gaeltachta also offer supports for Advisory and Mentoring programs and services, Research & Development Support. It further provides for opportunities to collaborate with other industry stakeholders and potential partners, and customers. It also encourages businesses to use Irish in branding and operations, fostering cultural identity


ii. How to Engage with Údarás na Gaeltachta

- Contact: Visit local offices or the Údarás website for consultations and support applications.
- Online Resources Access information on funding schemes, eligibility criteria, and application processes.

i Údarás na Gaeltachta provides comprehensive support to the fishing industry, promoting sustainable growth and innovation while preserving the cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht. For more information please visit www.udaras.ie

Advice for dealing with Údarás na Gaeltachta

For those businesses within Irish speaking regions, Údarás na Gaeltachta should be viewed as “your first stop shop” for supports and advice.



There are a wide range of grants and other supports available. Each has its own eligibility criteria which you need to research in advance to ensure your business reaches these criteria.

Intertradelreland Support

Introduction to InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland is the all-island economic development agency. It connects and helps businesses across the island to trade cross-border, collaborate, innovate and attract investment. It also identifies opportunities for North-South collaboration that accelerate economic growth and help deliver shared policy priorities.

With 25 years' experience of working alongside businesses of every size in every county on the island, InterTradelreland's trade, innovation and entrepreneurship pathways help businesses to access funding, advice, experts and networks across the island to maximise exports, productivity and growth.

To date it has supported over 57,000 businesses and generated €1.8bn/£1.6bn in business development value.

i. Supports available for your business

InterTradelreland can help you to grow your business by identifying new sales and sourcing opportunities on the island, providing information, practical advice and tailored support. For many businesses, the cross-border market is the springboard to exporting off the island to international markets.

The flexible and tailored supports include the **Trade Export Pathway**, offering bespoke, funded support tailored to specific needs. It offers support for small to medium businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland to grow cross-border exports. It provides vouchers for market research, export planning, and implementation activities. Eligible businesses must have fewer than 250 employees, a turnover of €50,000-€40 million, and at least 12 months of trading history.

Whether you're a first-time exporter or an advanced exporter, InterTradelreland can also help you fund and recruit a sales professional through the **Acumen** programme. It supports small to medium-sized businesses in targeting new cross-border markets. It offers up to €21,562/£17,250 for a full-time sales staff member or up to €11,500/£9,200 for part-time. The programme helps with sales strategy, market research, recruitment, and training to develop cross-border trade.

In addition to sales supports, its **Go-2-Tender** initiative offers practical workshops and company specific mentoring supports which can help SMEs improve the odds of tendering successfully for public sector contracts.

The InterTradeIreland **Trade Hub** is a dedicated digital service that provides up-to-date, relevant, free trade information and tailored consultancy advice (Customs, VAT, Regulation and Employment). It's aim is to support businesses to engage in efficient and effective trade between Ireland, Northern Ireland and GB.

Together from ideas to innovation

Rethinking your products and services is the key to unlocking commercial success. InterTradeIreland has a number of support structures in place for business innovation and growth.

The **Business Explorer** programme provides support by funding a suitable academic professional or industry specialist to work with an SME to explore innovative solutions to business challenges or innovative techniques to develop an idea further.

Innovation Boost can provide further support by helping to fund a high calibre science, engineering or technology project manager and partnering you with a third level institution with specific expertise. The *Innovation Boost program* by InterTradeIreland provides funding of up to €67,900 to support SMEs in developing innovative products and solutions. It helps companies by funding the recruitment of a highly qualified project manager and partnering with academic institutions for expert guidance. The project typically lasts 12-18 months, focusing on technology, engineering, or science-based innovations. It also offers support for collaborative cross-border partnerships between businesses to address common challenges or develop new products.

The **Thrive SME Innovation Programme** by InterTradeIreland is a 12-month initiative aimed at enhancing the innovative capabilities of SMEs. It involves a 10-step learning process with a mix of face-to-face sessions, one-to-one meetings, and group engagements. The program is designed for MDs/CEOs and those responsible for innovation within businesses and is delivered in partnership with four major universities in Ireland. It also includes a series of webinars offering practical advice on innovation and networking opportunities with industry experts.

The SEIS & EIS Grant helps small, high-risk companies raise finance by offering tax relief to investors who buy new shares. It provides part-funding for specialist consultants to secure SEIS/EIS advanced assurance from HMRC and manage compliance. Eligibility includes being a registered limited company in a qualifying trade.

Synergy is an InterTradeIreland programme that's designed to increase SME participation in innovative networks of entrepreneurs, academics, policy makers, corporates and third sector participants. It aims to scale cross-border collaboration, using cluster and network development supports to increase the impact of programmes with economic benefit to Ireland and Northern Ireland.

InterTradeIreland also has a variety of equity supports available for those that want to grow and scale their business. For more information see:

<https://intertradeireland.com/>

There is a wide range of grants and other supports available. Each has its own eligibility criteria which you need to research in advance to ensure your business meets these criteria.

ii. How to Engage with InterTradeIreland

- Contact: Reach out through the InterTradeIreland website www.intertradeireland.com
- Online Resources: Access guides, application forms, and program details on the InterTrade Ireland website.

InterTradeIreland offers a comprehensive suite of supports to help the fishing industry in both Ireland and Northern Ireland where the business is looking to achieve growth and innovation through cross-border trade and collaboration.

Advice for dealing with InterTradeIreland

This agency has a wide array of supports especially if your project has a cross-border aspect to it. They have a strong range of grants and supports surrounding product development.

Local Enterprise Office Support

Introduction to the Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network comprises 31 Local Enterprise Offices. Each Local Authority has a LEO to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in each county. LEOs provide a range of services to help local businesses start, grow, and develop, with a focus on innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability.

Key Functions of LEO:

- Offer advice, information, and support to SMEs.
- Provide financial assistance through grants and funding schemes.
- Facilitate training programs and business development workshops.
- Support networking and mentoring opportunities.
- Assist with navigating regulatory requirements and compliance.

i. Supports Available

There is a range of grants and other supports available. It is important to engage initially with the LEO to determine eligibility. The focus on the grant assistance is for added value further processing. Grants applications must be submitted and approved before the business spends any money. Grant claim can be submitted with proof of expenditure.

Financial Supports

The **Feasibility Study Support** provides up to 50% funding, up to €15,000, to help small businesses assess the viability of new ideas through market research, business planning, and product development. It covers costs like surveys, competitor analysis, consultant fees, and prototype development.

The **Priming Start-Up Grant** helps new businesses with initial costs, covering up to 50% of eligible expenses. The maximum Priming Grant payable shall be 50% of the investment or €150,000 whichever is the lesser. It supports essential costs like equipment, marketing, and operational fees for companies with up to 10 employees operating for less than 18 months.

The **Business Expansion Grant** supports small to medium businesses that have been operating for at least 18 months and need assistance to grow. It covers up to 50% of eligible expenses, with a maximum grant of €150,000. Eligible costs include capital items, salary, training, marketing, and general overheads.

The **Grow Digital Voucher** offers small and medium businesses with up to 50 employees financial support to embrace digital technology. A digital for business project report must be completed within the previous two years by the applicant's business. Funding of up to €5,000 is available to invest in software and training/IT configuration to help streamline operations and enhance productivity with new digital tools, connect with a wider audience online, bridge the digital gap and compete effectively in today's marketplace.

The **Market Explorer Grant** is open to small enterprises (with between 1 and 50 paid employees) and will support first time and small-scale exporters to undertake essential market research and to support the development of viable and sustainable market entry strategies in new geographic markets for businesses. Funding of up to a maximum of €10,000 or 50% of eligible cost is available to provide support towards costs incurred in researching new market opportunities for products and services.

LEO also offers various supports for Advisory and Mentoring Services, Training and Development and Networking and Market Development.

ii. Sustainability and Innovation Initiatives

LEO also provide bespoke supports in these areas:

The **Green for Business Programme** by LEO helps small businesses adopt sustainable practices through a free consultation with a green consultant. It focuses on cost savings, resource efficiency, and reducing environmental impact. Eligible businesses may then qualify for the Energy Efficiency Grant or GreenStart scheme to further support sustainable investments. The programme is open to enterprises with 1-50 employees, with specific eligibility criteria.

Lean for Business is a programme to help businesses improve performance and competitiveness through LEAN principles. It focuses on identifying problems, improving operations, and eliminating waste. It is open to micro-enterprises with up to 10 employees and non-Enterprise Ireland/IDA clients with 10-50 employees. Start-ups trading for at least 6 months and earning over €30,000 may also be eligible.

The **Digital for Business Initiative** by LEO offers support to small businesses to enhance their digital capabilities. It includes expert analysis of current digital systems, identification of gaps, and guidance on implementing new or improved solutions. The programme aims to streamline business processes, reduce administrative workload, and improve overall business performance. It is open to small enterprises with 1-50 employees, meeting certain eligibility criteria, and provides access to digital consultants for personalized support. Businesses may qualify for the Grow Digital Voucher to support implementation of new digital systems have completed a Digital For Business assignment. This scheme replaces the Trading Online Voucher Scheme.

iii. How to Engage with LEO

Visit www.localenterprise.ie to find your Local Enterprise Office contact details. Alternatively, your BIM Regional Development Officer can provide you with the details.

Advice for dealing with LEO

Your Local Enterprise Office can be viewed as 'a first-stop shop' for advice and information located in your own county or region, and offers enterprise supports, knowledge and, if your business is eligible, grants.




National Enterprise Hub

The National Enterprise Hub is a single source where you can easily find and learn about the range of government support programs available to Irish businesses. The Hub makes it easier than ever to access the resources and guidance you need to succeed. It is a dedicated government initiative designed to provide tailored support, funding, and resources to key sectors of the Irish economy, including the fishing industry. Recognising the critical role of the fishing sector in Ireland's coastal communities, the Hub offers a range of programs and services to help enterprises thrive in a competitive and sustainable environment. These include:

- Financial Assistance and Grants
- Business Development and Advisory Services
- Sustainability and Compliance Support
- Digital and Innovation Supports
- Community and Wellbeing Supports.

How to Access Support

Businesses can access these supports through the National Enterprise Hub's online portal. Dedicated advisors are available to guide applicants through the process and help them maximise available opportunities.

 For more information, visit www.neh.gov.ie.

Other Supporting Agencies

There are some other agencies, who also provide supports, but some of these have qualifying criteria like minimum turnover, geographical location or sector specific focus. Each have their own grant supports which are set out on the individual websites.

These agencies include:

Bord Bia

www.bordbia.ie

Enterprise Ireland

www.enterprise-ireland.com

LEADER

www.ildn.ie/directory

Fáilte Ireland

www.failteireland.ie

Notes

The information contained within this booklet may be subject to change from time to time and is therefore provided for information and assistance purposes only.

Information is correct at time of going to print, March 2025.



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