



Access to specialist knowledge

Non-Executive Director

Leadership and Capability Development



Non-Executive Director



Accessing expertise through a Non-Executive Director (NED) can be an effective way to accelerate business growth, ensure competitiveness and lead to higher productivity and growth.

What is a Non-Executive Director?

A NED is a member of the board of directors, but is not part of the executive management. NEDs have the same legal duties, responsibilities and potential liabilities as their executive counterparts.

What is the role of a NED?¹

NEDs use their experience and expertise to provide independent advice and objectivity and have a role in monitoring executive performance.

Essentially the NED's role is to make a creative contribution to the board by providing oversight and constructive challenge to the executive directors.

NEDs are expected to focus on board matters and not stray into 'executive direction'. They provide an objective view of the company that is removed from the day-to-day running of the business.

What can a NED do for your business?

A NED is normally someone who has a great deal of entrepreneurial business experience and can bring an objective view to your board of directors.

NEDs will have expert knowledge or skills and can provide contacts or access to certain sectors or markets.

They can be invaluable in improving your corporate governance and business direction through mentoring and coaching your existing leadership team.

¹<https://www.iod.com/services/information-and-advice/resources-and-factsheets/details/what-is-the-role-of-the-nonexecutive-director>



Non-Executive Director scheme

The Invest NI Non-Executive Director scheme provides Invest NI customers with financial support to engage an experienced NED, who will work with you to accelerate growth and to overcome specific barriers.

The NED will provide independent advice, guidance, challenge and knowledge transfer at board level², which will help your business to compete successfully and maintain competitive advantage over the longer term.

To be eligible for the scheme you must be a limited company registered in NI. In general, companies should have turnover of at least £500k and above with 25% export sales to avail of NED support.

Support

Up to £15,000 or 49% of eligible costs (whichever is the lesser) over two years to engage with an experienced NED.

For more information about the scheme please contact your Invest NI Client Executive.

You can source your own NED or access Invest NI's Service Provider Database³.

²If you do not currently have board structures in place, Invest NI will seek assurances the Non-Executive Director will help you to establish this.

³Invest NI maintains a database of people who have expressed an interest in performing a NED role for SMEs. These people are not endorsed, vetted or approved by Invest NI, but we can filter the database by sectoral and functional knowledge and provide you with a list of names and contact details of people who may be suitable for the role. Please speak to your Client Executive if you wish to access the database.

Out There case study

The company

Based in Ballyclare, The Landscape Centre was established as a small family landscaping business in 1981.

In 2016 the company was rebranded as Out There and now offers services including landscape design and installation, grounds maintenance and environmental management to public and private sector organisations across Northern Ireland.

The challenge

In 2016 the directors were keen to implement their plans for growth. They realised that they could benefit from bringing in independent expertise to strengthen the company board, develop the strategic direction of the company and improve corporate governance.

The solution and benefits

With financial assistance from Invest NI, the company engaged a NED with the following results:

- ✓ Strengthened board operation and focus on KPI's.
- ✓ Improved corporate governance.
- ✓ Provided constructive challenge and support to the directors.
- ✓ Improved turnover, profitability and employee numbers.
- ✓ Increased employee engagement.
- ✓ Led to acquisition by Europe's largest landscaping and grounds maintenance contractor *idverde*.

'We are delighted with the success of the NED project for our company and look forward to taking the business to the next level.'

It is probably fair to say that, prior to engagement, we did not appreciate the benefit that a NED could bring. As well as the disciplines now used within the business, our senior management team has grown in both capability and confidence.

We received such a massive benefit from this process and it truly enabled us to move the business on to a much more robust platform to grow forward with.'

Steven Thompson
Managing Director, Out There

Hear how Out There Services benefitted from taking part in Invest NI's NED Scheme.



Aurion Learning case study

The company

Established in 2000, Aurion is a trusted full service digital learning company.

The company designs custom eLearning courses, assessments and simulations and designs, configures and supports a number of industry-standard learning management systems. Aurion now has three locations to service its public and private sector customers in NI, Scotland and RoI.

The challenge

Following a Business Health Check in 2015 the directors wanted to improve corporate governance, director performance measures and communication at board level.

The solution and benefits

With financial assistance from Invest NI, the company appointed a NED with the following results:

- ✓ A five year roadmap has been defined.
- ✓ Better aligned management team.
- ✓ Improved staff morale.
- ✓ Improved resource planning has reduced blockages.
- ✓ New Product Development process established.
- ✓ Increased revenue and export sales.
- ✓ Expertise developed in business planning, resource planning and financial management.

'The NED scheme has been really influential in the continued success of Aurion. The new board membership has provided a real impetus to steer the business into new markets, whilst maintaining good governance. This will ensure we remain profitable and continue to meet the needs of our expanding customer base internationally.'

Dr Maureen Murphy
Managing Director, Aurion Learning

Hear how Aurion Learning has benefitted from taking part in Invest NI's NED scheme.



Dowds Group case study

The company

Established in 1978, Dowds Group is a national mechanical, electrical and specialist contractor with offices in Ballymoney, Belfast and London. The company specialises in quality building services installations to a diverse range of clients across the UK and Ireland and offers a full service approach for build, fit out and maintenance.

The challenge

Following a period of significant growth in 2016, the directors were keen to improve corporate governance, resolve succession matters and focus on strategic direction.

The solution and benefits

With financial assistance from Invest NI, the company appointed a NED with the following results:

- ✓ Restructuring has positioned the company for significant growth.
- ✓ Improved management and leadership skills.
- ✓ Improved communication throughout the business.
- ✓ Expansion of Dowds Integrated Services department.
- ✓ Established an office in an external market to expand business development activities.

'Taking part in the Invest NI NED Scheme has been invaluable for Dowds Group. As a direct result of the scheme we have improved the structure, communication and governance within our business.'

We have developed an on-going working relationship with an industry professional, who provides a valuable external perspective and continually challenges what we are doing.'

He helps the Senior Management team concentrate on strategy and stick to our business plan, keeping us focusing on the big picture! We highly recommend this programme to any SME.'

James Dowds
Managing Director, Dowds Group



If you require this leaflet in an alternative format (including Braille, audio disk, large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact:

Invest NI Equality Team

T: 028 9069 8273

Text Relay Number:

18001 028 9069 8273

E-mail: equality@investni.com

Bedford Square,
Bedford Street,
Belfast,
BT2 7ES

T: 028 9069 8000

F: 028 9043 6536

Text Relay Number:

18001 028 9069 8000

investni.com

nibusinessinfo.co.uk