Invest NI is delivering the Ambition to Grow Supporting Women programme to assist in addressing the gender imbalance that exists in entrepreneurship. The programme will support 20 businesses to each create at least two new good jobs and grow sales into markets outside Northern Ireland. Grant assistance of up to £30,000 will be offered to each recipient business. Support will be offered on a competitive basis with eligible business applying via the online MYINI portal. Marketing of the programme will target women led businesses who will participate in a series of six leadership development workshops.



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*(Revised) April 2018*

Appendix 1 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

Template

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

Ambition to Grow Supporting Women October 2025, a programme being delivered to assist in delivery of the Invest NI Business Strategy 2024-2027.

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Developing a Policy Strategy Plan

Adopting a Policy Strategy Plan

Implementing a Policy Strategy Plan

Revising a Policy Strategy Plan Designing a Public Service

Delivering a Public Service

x

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Ambition to Grow Supporting Women October 2025

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Invest Northern Ireland

1A. Name of Public Authority.

**SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016**

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N/A

*Reasons why a definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.*

N/A

*Rationale for using alternative definition of ‘rural’.*

N/A

*Details of alternative definition of ‘rural’ used.*

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition). Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.

x

1F. What definition of ‘rural’ is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

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2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas *differently* from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

x

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

**SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service**

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Ambition to Grow Supporting Women will be open to businesses in all areas of Northern Ireland with budget not being ringfenced by area. The top scoring 20 applications will be supported with location not being part of the scoring criteria.

Applications for the proposed Ambition to Grow programme will be accessed online via the Invest NI website. This is not expected to negatively impact rural businesses/ dwellers as we currently deliver ongoing services in this manner, and these are being accessed by rural businesses/ dwellers currently without issue.

If rural businesses/ dwellers experience any issues accessing online Invest NI resources, they can call our Business Support Team or the Programme Management Team who can provide suitable alternatives, such as hard copy application forms.

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

Rural Businesses Rural Tourism Rural Housing

Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas Education or Training in Rural Areas

Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas

Poverty in Rural Areas Deprivation in Rural Areas

Rural Crime or Community Safety Rural Development

Agri-Environment

Other (Please state)

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

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3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders Published Statistics Consultation with Other Organisations Research Papers Surveys or Questionnaires Other Publications

Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

x

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

**SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas**

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Ambition to Grow Supporting Women is designed to support businesses to increase employment levels and generate new sales from customers outside Northern Ireland. The scheme will provide grant support to 20 eligible companies and is designed to attract a spread of applications from throughout all areas of Northern Ireland.

The programme is unlikely to negatively impact businesses, organisations and people in rural areas, no actions were taken to identify additional social and economic needs beyond those established in RNIA guidance. However, we considered the following:

• Is appropriate infrastructure in place to enable businesses/ dwellers in rural areas to access the service? Yes, currently many rural based people and businesses successfully access INI support already and the regional nature of this programme further enhances this access.

• Will people in more remote rural areas be able to access the service? Yes

• Could it cost people in rural areas disproportionately more to access the service? No

• Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who rely on public transport services? No

• Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who don’t have access to high quality broadband? No as we will offer alternative means of application if required.

• Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas whose access to mobile communications is variable or limited in areas? No as we will offer alternative means of application if required.

• Could there be a disproportionate effect on people operating businesses in rural areas? No

• Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who have to travel longer distances to avail of employment opportunities? No

• Could there be a disproportionate effect on people in rural areas who require access to childcare facilities? No

• Will the policy, strategy, plan or public service affect certain groups of people in rural areas disproportionally e.g. seasonal workers, farmers and farm families or older people, younger people or people with disabilities who do not have access to transport? No

• Are there pockets of hidden poverty or deprivation within rural areas which need to be taken account of in determining the effects of the policy, strategy, plan or public service on people in rural areas? No and this programme aims to enhance economic opportunities.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

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The proposed Ambition to Grow Supporting Women programme will be available to businesses across NI regardless of geographical location. See section 3E.

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

**SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas**

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If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A.

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

Yes No If the response is NO GO TO Section 5C.

x

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

**SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service**

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*(Revised) April 2018*

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:

Ronan Trainor

Position/Grade:

Head of Regional Competitions – Grade 7

Division/Branch

Regional Business Group

Signature:

Ronan Trainor

Date:

23/9/2025

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

Pamela Marron

Position/Grade:

Deputy Principal

Division/Branch:

Performance, Compliance and Coordination

Signature:

Pamela Marron

Date:

23/09/25

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

x

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

**SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording**

While the Ambition to Grow Supporting Women programme will have some benefits to rural businesses and people, they were not created for the sole benefit of rural dwellers.

Invest Northern Ireland has launched the Ambition to Grow Supporting Women programme to support businesses to increase employment levels and generate new sales from customers outside Northern Ireland. The scheme will provide grant support to eligible companies to help them create new full time permanent positions within the business as well as assisting them with the costs of targeting customers outside Northern Ireland, technical development activities, as well as upskilling existing and new employees.

It is designed to attract a spread of applications from throughout all areas of Northern Ireland and we believe it will provide positive economic impact within rural areas.

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.