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A **Local Enterprise Office (LEO)** is Ireland's 'first stop shop' for anyone thinking about starting or growing a business, anywhere in Ireland. 31 Local Enterprise Offices across Ireland are all focused on a single mission: to provide new and existing businesses with the expert advice, tailored training and financial supports they need to help them thrive.

Since they were set up in 2014, LEOs have operated in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, Local Authorities, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

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Welcome



Leo Varadkar, T.D.,
Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise,
Trade and Employment

Our Local Enterprise Offices play a really important role in fostering enterprise across the country.

Year on year they have shown just how important they are, not only in helping entrepreneurs start new businesses, but also in guiding existing small companies through challenging times, providing them with the right advice, training and funding to ensure they endure and grow.

2019 had its challenges, with the ongoing threat of Brexit and the impact it would have on our economy and society. Our Local Enterprise Offices were to the fore in communicating with and helping

companies prepare for any eventuality and indeed, despite these challenges, saw a net increase of 3,149 jobs created.

Local Enterprise Offices will continue to be at the heart of our small business communities and are a vital part of the Government's strategy for jobs and economic growth now and into the future. I want to express my particular appreciation to all LEO staff for their professionalism and commitment. Your valuable work makes a real difference for our business community.



Damien English, T.D.,
Minister for Business,
Employment and Retail

The LEOs are an outstanding resource for any small business.

In 2019, the Local Enterprise Offices continued to offer valuable advice, leadership and support to small business owners and operators throughout the country.

The 31 offices operate at the very centre of the business community in their locality and they bring an expertise that can help companies grow strong locally, along with experience that can ensure companies who have the ability and ambition, are able to scale nationally and internationally. The LEOs are an outstanding resource for any

small business, whether you have a need for funding, a desire to upskill or simply require some sector specific guidance, the Local Enterprise Office is there for you.

The success of the LEOs is grounded in the skills and expertise of those who work within their offices, experience that has been honed by dealing with small businesses for many years. We will continue to fully support the work of the LEOs in 2020 and beyond as they help aspiring entrepreneurs and early stage start-ups reach their full potential.



Robert Troy, T.D.,
Minister of State for Trade Promotion,
Digital & Company Regulation

Local Enterprise Offices played a crucial role in helping businesses respond to Brexit challenges.

Throughout 2019, the Local Enterprise Offices were helping small businesses embrace the digital economy and explore opportunities for trade in overseas markets in record numbers.

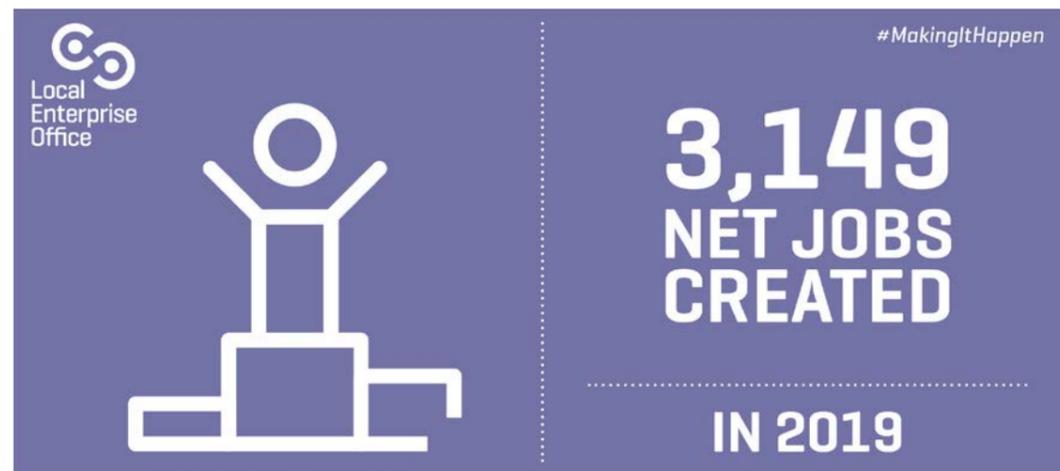
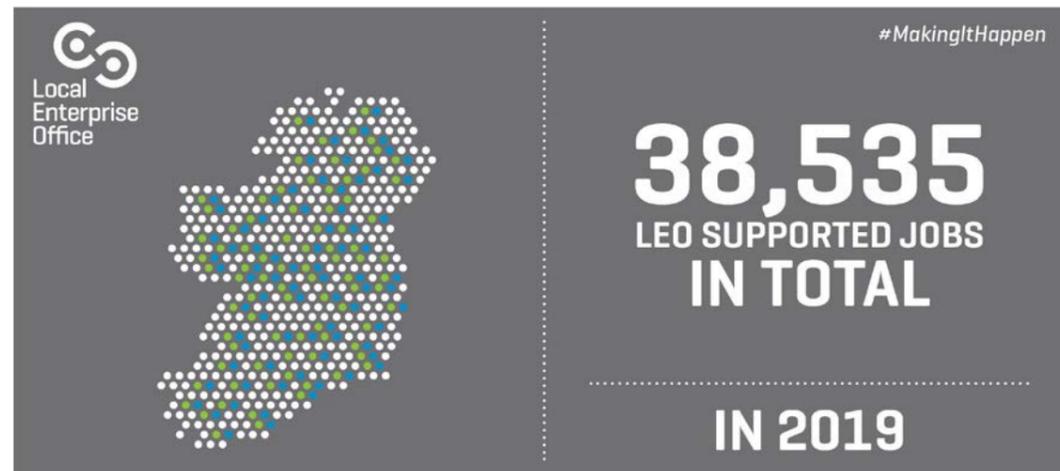
They did this primarily through the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, which is funded under the National Digital Strategy, and the Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant. Local Enterprise Offices also played a crucial role in helping businesses respond to Brexit challenges and likely customs changes, ahead of the UK leaving the EU.

In 2020, it's clear that Local Enterprise Office supports – such as the 'Prepare Your Business for Customs' workshops – will become even more important to small businesses as the UK plans to exit the Single Market and Customs Union.

And of course, following the OECD Roadmap for SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland, we will continue to support the LEO network as they help more companies embrace the digital economy, adopt digital technologies and win export sales through internationalisation.

Highlights from 2019: A Snapshot

Making an impact at every stage



Every business is different but each can benefit from the right support at the right time, whether it's starting out or looking to grow.

LEOs provide just that, on a daily basis, to new and existing small businesses all over Ireland, including:

- financial assistance and access to microfinance loans
- training and development
- mentoring and advice
- signposting to relevant bodies and agencies
- networking opportunities

Celebrating and supporting enterprise

LEOs drive Ireland's entrepreneurial culture through high profile initiatives such as:

- Local Enterprise Week
- Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE)
- National Women's Enterprise Day
- National Enterprise Awards
- Local Enterprise Village (Ploughing)
- Local Enterprise Showcase at Showcase
- Food Academy and Food Starter
- Student Enterprise Programme

At the heart of Ireland's entrepreneurial ecosystem

LEOs help their clients navigate the organisations that can help their business grow, including:

- Local authorities
- Enterprise Ireland
- Education and Training Boards
- Microfinance Ireland
- Fáilte Ireland
- Enterprise Europe Network
- Leader
- The Revenue Commissioners
- InterTradeIreland
- Bord Bia
- Skillnet Ireland
- Credit Review Office
- National Association of Community Enterprise Centres
- Udarás na Gaeltachta
- Dept of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Dept of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
- Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

Find out more at:

- LocalEnterprise.ie
- [@Local_Enterprise](https://twitter.com/Local_Enterprise)
- [@LocalEnterpriseOffices](https://www.facebook.com/LocalEnterpriseOffices)
- [company/local-enterprise-offices/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/local-enterprise-offices/)
- [/LocalEnterpriseOffice](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



"It wasn't just the financial support, it was the opening of doors and the making of connections that the LEO provided, which helped us."

Sharon Cunningham,
Co-founder of
Shorla Pharma and
Ireland's Best Young
Entrepreneur of 2019

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Shorla Pharma on page 17.

Making an impact with the right support at the right time

Helping to grow employment

7,408 new jobs [gross] and **3,149** jobs [net] were created by LEO-backed client companies, with jobs growth in every LEO region, according to the LEO 2019 Annual Employment Survey.

38,535 people were employed by the **7,400** small businesses and start-ups that had received financial assistance from the Local Enterprise Offices by the end of 2019.

More than money!

These job numbers refer only to jobs recorded by those businesses that received LEO financial assistance. Thousands more jobs are created by businesses which have received non-financial LEO supports, such as expert advice, one-to-one mentoring or targeted training.

*FT stands for full-time and PT stands for part-time. The Annual Employment Survey was compiled by the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland and was published in March 2020.

Local Enterprise Office	2019 Number of LEO Clients	2019 Client All Jobs Total [FT & PT] *	2019 Gross All Job Gains [FT & PT] *	2019 Net All Job Gains [FT & PT] *
Carlow	217	1209	185	79
Cavan	202	1456	215	101
Clare	239	1384	229	120
Cork City	198	982	277	140
Cork South	202	984	225	97
Cork North & West	266	1420	300	105
Donegal	239	1331	303	57
Dublin City	451	1959	603	271
Dublin DLR	305	1785	272	140
Dublin Fingal	242	1085	168	109
Dublin South	302	1600	388	162
Galway County/City	280	1182	207	119
Kerry	276	1352	175	71
Kildare	212	1195	328	70
Kilkenny	204	1128	202	70
Laois	128	697	129	70
Leitrim	161	458	80	27
Limerick	301	1882	323	92
Longford	257	1270	127	73
Louth	240	971	199	74
Mayo	233	1327	279	134
Meath	273	1358	269	122
Monaghan	160	1188	252	121
Offaly	211	1095	240	62
Roscommon	172	897	95	64
Sligo	232	996	180	95
Tipperary	276	1379	275	87
Waterford	329	1525	298	105
Westmeath	231	1269	267	130
Wexford	221	1438	200	106
Wicklow	140	733	118	76
Total	7400	38,535	7,408	3,149

Local Enterprise Offices provide a range of grant assistance to eligible businesses. Known as Measure 1 Supports, these are designed to help fund start-up costs, expansion plans, entry into new markets and jobs growth.

€20,077,189 was approved in grant aid by Local Enterprise Offices for **1,341** applications in 2019 [see breakdown of grant types in the table below]

Training and Development

Local Enterprise Offices provide high-quality training and development designed to meet specific business requirements. **37,306** people were trained by LEOs in 2019 across **2,411** different programmes and initiatives.

Start Your Own Business

LEO Start Your Own Business programmes help prospective entrepreneurs to assess their business idea and its viability, to help them decide whether or not to proceed. **4,351** aspiring entrepreneurs took part in **296** LEO-run Start Your Own Business programmes.

Mentoring

LEO Mentoring matches small business owners with experienced business practitioners to provide practical and strategic one-to-one guidance. **10,756** mentoring assignments were managed by LEOs.

Lean for Micro

The Lean for Micro programme helps small businesses become more competitive and productive by adopting 'lean' business principles. A Lean expert works with the small business to undertake a specific cost reduction project and assists the company in benchmarking its performance. **278** companies were supported through the Lean for Micro programme.

Pathway to Enterprise Ireland

LEOs work with small companies looking to export or trade internationally, helping them to grow to a point where they can avail of Enterprise Ireland supports. **162** LEO clients were supported to transfer into the Enterprise Ireland portfolio to avail of further services.

Measure 1 Supports	Grant Aid Approved in 2019
Priming Grants [295 approved applications in 2019]	€8,028,790
Business Expansion Grants [325 approved applications in 2019]	€8,269,703
Feasibility Study Grants [203 approved applications in 2019]	€1,940,761
Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant [506 approved applications in 2019]	€910,831
Research, Development & Innovation [12 applications approved in 2019]	€927,102
Total number of applications approved in 2019: 1,341	Total amount of grant-aid approved in 2019: €20,077,189



"In business, you have to keep innovating or you go backwards. The Local Enterprise Offices get that."

Brendan McGrath, founder of Merris Engineering.

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Merris Engineering on page 20.

Making an impact on entrepreneurship

Local Enterprise Offices promote entrepreneurship across all stages, sectors and regions. One way they do this is by working together in national committees to co-ordinate a series of flagship programmes and events.

Local Enterprise Week

370 enterprise initiatives were collectively organised by LEOs to mark Local Enterprise Week in March 2019, which saw over **12,000** entrepreneurs and small business owners take part. This high profile annual initiative showcases the full range of enterprise supports LEOs can offer existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, as well as providing networking and training opportunities to small businesses locally.

National Women's Enterprise Day

17 LEO-run regional events took place on National Women's Enterprise Day 2019 (October 17th), designed to promote female-led businesses under the theme of 'Making It Happen'. **1,681** attendees took part in events which featured advice and insights from some of Ireland's most successful female entrepreneurs.

Local Enterprise Village

31 small businesses were supported by their Local Enterprise Office to exhibit their products and services inside the Local Enterprise Village at the National Ploughing Championships in Ballinrane, Fenagh, Co Carlow.

A record breaking **297,000** visitors attended the Championships in 2019*.
*source: National Ploughing Association

Local Enterprise Showcase

80 small craft and design businesses were supported to take part in the LEO 'Local Enterprise Showcase' in January 2019, as part of Showcase - Ireland's international creative expo.

An initiative of the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, Showcase takes place annually in the RDS and is promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland. It's an invaluable opportunity for LEO client companies to connect with national and international trade buyers.



National Productivity Challenge

200 Productivity Challenge Vouchers, valued at **€2,500** each, were approved in 2019, to the value of **€500,000**. The National Productivity Challenge was a competitive initiative, designed to help small businesses become more productive, efficient and streamlined.

National Enterprise Awards

31 companies were shortlisted by LEOs for the National Enterprise Awards in 2019, the culmination of a high profile series of country-wide competitions. The final took place in Dublin's Mansion House where 12 winning companies shared a **€40,000** prize fund.

Taking Care of Business: Athlone 2019

25 State bodies and agencies, including the Local Enterprise Offices, took part in Taking Care of Business, an initiative of the Government of Ireland, and run by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, in October 2019.



"The Productivity Challenge helped me bring in the right advisors to analytically and critically look at what we were doing."

Brian Egan, founder of Purpledecks in Longford

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Purpledecks on page 19

Making an impact through collaboration

An ability to collaborate with key partners underpins Local Enterprise Office success. In 2019, LEOs worked closely with a range of stakeholders to build out its enterprise supports.

Microfinance Ireland

Microfinance Ireland (MFI) is a not-for-profit lender established to deliver the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund.

It provides loans of between **€2,000** and **€25,000** to commercially viable businesses that employ fewer than 10 people, with an annual turnover of less than **€2 million**.

Local Enterprise Offices assist client companies with their MFI loan applications, which attract a discount on standard loan rates. **327** LEO client companies were assisted to apply for Microfinance Ireland loans. Of these, **159** were successful in securing loan approval, supporting the creation of **327** jobs.

www.microfinanceireland.ie

Making an impact by preparing for BREXIT

Brexit Seminars

Local Enterprise Offices organised Brexit information events in 2019 for both existing and potential clients. These sessions enabled small businesses, start-ups and micro-enterprises to learn about the potential impacts and opportunities posed by the UK's imminent departure from the EU. They encouraged businesses to engage in a process of strategic planning to ensure their companies had a robust Brexit strategy in place. Thousands availed of the LEO Brexit SME Scorecard, an online readiness-check, and participated in the Enterprise Ireland Brexit Roadshow, a series of regional events.

2,986 participants attended Brexit Information events in 2019.

Customs Training

As businesses readied themselves for Brexit, getting to grips with its implications on customs procedures, tariffs and taxation as well as the possibility of regulatory divergence became increasingly pressing for small businesses in 2019. The Local Enterprise Offices created the 'Prepare Your Business for Customs' training workshops, which were open to every business across every sector. **1585** participants attended customs training in 2019.



Trading Online Voucher Scheme

Many businesses revisited their online strategy in 2019, to help diversify into new markets after Brexit. The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is designed to get small firms trading online, opening up markets at home and abroad.

The initiative involves training, advice and financial assistance. Designed under the National Digital Strategy to assist small businesses to increase their online trade, the scheme is funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and delivered by Local Enterprise Offices. In 2019 it was based on 50-50 matched-funding, where the maximum amount payable was either **€2,500** or **50%** of the eligible cost, whichever was the lesser.

1,218 approvals were secured by LEOs under the Trading Online Voucher Scheme

www.dccae.gov.ie/tradingonlinevoucher

Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Exporters

Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Exporters (TAME) incentivise LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities, especially after Brexit. These grants, worth **€2,500**, are used to part-fund the cost of investigating and researching export markets.

It can include expenditure incurred by exhibiting at trade fairs, preparing marketing materials, or localising websites for export markets. In 2019 the purpose of these grants was to increase the number of LEO clients developing new export opportunities, in particular supporting those clients with high levels of exposure to Brexit risks.

506 clients were approved for TAME grant assistance in 2019.



"Customs training helped me figure out all eventualities so that, from best case to worst case scenarios, I knew what I needed to plan for. As a result, my business is more robust."

Pamela Laird
of Moxi Loves
in Dublin City

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Moxi Loves on page 18.

Making an impact by building for the future



Local Enterprise Offices support youth entrepreneurship through two national programmes, each designed to foster Ireland's next generation of business owners and leaders.

Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE)

This **€2 million** investment competition was open to existing and aspiring entrepreneurs aged between **18** and **35**. It was run by the LEOs and supported by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and Enterprise Ireland.

From **24** national finalists, three category winners were selected across: Best Business Idea; Best Start-up Business and Best-Established Business, with one overall winner.

1,644 applications for IBYE across all three categories.

www.ibye.ie

Student Enterprise Programme

Helping to seed the idea of entrepreneurship in secondary schools, the Student Enterprise Programme encourages young people to research, establish and run their own businesses, with the help of student enterprise co-ordinators from their Local Enterprise Office.

Running over the course of a school year, professional rugby player Josh Van Der Flier - a former participant in the programme while a student in Wesley College in Dublin - was ambassador for the 2018/19 Programme, which culminated in a National Final in Croke Park in May.

25,531 students from **515** secondary schools took part in the 2018/19 Student Enterprise Programme.

www.studententerprise.ie

Making an impact on national objectives

LEO Competitive Fund 2019

The **€2.5m** LEO Competitive Fund was designed to encourage LEO projects that align with the pillars of Ireland's Future Jobs Strategy and the Regional Enterprise Plans.

It supported LEOs to collaborate within their network, and their enterprise eco-systems, to deliver projects that variously:

- Embrace innovation and technological change
- Improve SME productivity
- Enhance skills and develop and attract talent
- Increase participation in the labour force
- Transition to a low carbon economy

In 2019, it fostered Regional Enterprise Plan-focused projects that promoted increased collaboration, networking and a joined-up approach to national, regional and local micro-enterprise capability building, growth and job creation.

It sought to strengthen microenterprise locally, regionally and nationally in order to create jobs, grow enterprise and support the progression of LEO clients to Enterprise Ireland.

Priority was given to new approaches that built on and strengthened the entrepreneurial ecosystem throughout the country.

A prerequisite for proposals, which were made online, was the need to demonstrate innovative solutions to supporting and creating employment.

30 applications were received with **16** projects approved

Successful examples included:

€230,375 for the Food Coast project to increase the number of added value food producers in Donegal, in conjunction with Letterkenny IT, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, Failte Ireland, Donegal County Council, Bord Iasca Mharaigh and Teagasc.

€191,392 to a training project aimed at established SMEs to enable them conduct an 'Innovation Audit', in partnership with Dublin Business Innovation Centre, Guinness Enterprise Centre and Futurescope.

€250,000 for the Engenuity Engineering Midlands Project, to enhance competitiveness and resilience as well as respond to market opportunities arising out of Brexit. It included Education Training Boards, the Regional Skills Forum, Enterprise Ireland, Athlone IT, the Irish Manufacturing Research Centre, Irish Centre for Robotics and the National Cleanroom Training Centre.



"LEOs understand the mindset of the entrepreneur."

Sonia Deasy,
Co-founder of Pestle & Mortar and National Enterprise Award winner

Read the full story about how Local Enterprise Offices helped Pestle & Mortar on page 16

Making an impact on start-ups

The country's **31** Local Enterprise Offices are the first port of call for Ireland's aspiring entrepreneurs.

The LEO's flagship Start Your Own Business course has helped individuals all over the country to take their first steps on the road to business success.

Honed over many years, this highly accessible training course provides participants with the skills and knowledge they need to assess the viability of their business idea.

It includes modules on business planning, sales and marketing, employment legislation, business finance and taxation. Undertaking it equips participants with the tools they need to assess and understand their target market, their own capabilities and their chances of success. SYOB courses are many people's first introduction to their Local Enterprise Office. As they progress with their venture, LEOs offer an invaluable sign-posting service both to other LEO supports, and to those of other state agencies which can help them.

For many participants the SYOB programme is the first step on a proven path from start up to growth and even internationalisation.

LEO Start Your Own Business programmes are aimed at those:

- with a business idea they want to develop, or
- who are looking at self-employment as a realistic career option, or
- who have recently started a business

4,351 people took part in **296** LEO-run Start Your Own Business programmes in 2019.

Helping businesses in 2019....

from idea

€1,940,761 approved for Feasibility Study Grants

to start-up

€8,028,790 approved for Business Priming Grants

to growth

€8,269,703 approved for Business Expansion Grants

€20m+ approved in grant aid in 2019

Client success stories



Disin Geoghegan,
Chair of Network of Local Enterprise Offices

Again in 2019, the Local Enterprise Offices went above and beyond for their clients and you can read a selection of these client stories in this section.

2019 saw an increase in supports provided and a record investment of funding in small businesses.

It was not a year without its challenges as Brexit loomed large over the Irish economy but the Local Enterprise Offices worked with companies to provide mentoring, training and workshops to ensure small businesses were as prepared as they could be for any outcome.

As we move forward, the Local Enterprise Offices continue to build trust in town and cities across the country as the key resource for anyone looking to start or grow a business. In these uncertain times,

this continues to be true as we provide that reassuring voice and additional business experience to help small businesses in the good times and the bad.

In 2020, we aim to go even further in our support for small businesses. If there is an entrepreneur out there with a great idea, a start-up looking to grow or a small company needing to overcome new challenges, we will continue to help them make it happen.

In mean-time, take a look at how the Local Enterprise Offices have been helping to 'make it happen' for these companies....

- 16** **Pestle & Mortar:** why awards and supports can help realise global ambition
- 17** **Shorla Pharma:** how start-up supports are a springboard for success
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Client success story

“LEOs understand the mindset of the entrepreneur”



EXPANSION SUPPORTS & NATIONAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS

How a Local Enterprise Office helped Pestle & Mortar grow worldwide

Winning the National Enterprise Award was a highlight of 2019 for Sonia Deasy, founder of Kildare based global skincare brand Pestle & Mortar.

“We won €10,000 in a cash prize for the business and we also got loads of press and PR coverage, which was really good,” says Sonia.

Going through the awards process brought additional benefits and the exposure she received led to an immediate bounce in sales.

“Every bit of exposure we got led to an increase in business, whether direct from consumers or from stockists.”

Such positive publicity opens doors. “It’s very good if you are going on the investment trail. If you are calling somewhere, people are more likely to know you and you are more likely to be seen.”

It can even facilitate entry to overseas markets. “We are in 32 countries now and, when it comes to meetings with distributors, we find that in countries such as China, they love awards, so it’s a huge help.”

Pestle & Mortar’s export success has also been assisted by a grant from Local Enterprise Office Kildare. “We used it to send a team of four people abroad, four times to Australia, eight times to China and eight times to Dubai. These on the ground trips enabled us to do our due diligence on distributors. We are now seeing the benefit of all that work starting to land.”

The Kildare company’s success last year put it on a pathway to becoming an Enterprise Ireland client.

“Enterprise Ireland concentrates on global expansion and has offices in places such as London, New York and Dubai. The experts in their overseas offices speak the language and put you in touch with people who can help you.” Its international success was built on strong foundational support from LEO Kildare.

Deasy admits she was initially hesitant about seeking out LEO support. As a busy entrepreneur, she was afraid it would involve “too much red tape” and possibly even slow her progress down.

Now she feels differently. “LEOs understand the mindset of the entrepreneur. They make sure you aren’t bogged down with paperwork, they take the headache out of it, and point you in the right direction for funding and supports.”

Find out more about Pestle & Mortar at: www.pestleandmortar.com

Client success story

START UP SUPPORTS & IBYE

How a Local Enterprise Office helped Shorla Pharma get a winning start

It’s a long way to Tipperary but the Local Enterprise Offices showed one start-up it’s a short way from there to the world. Sharon Cunningham and Orlaith Ryan had the idea to improve existing treatments for women and children’s cancers while working together in the pharmaceutical sector.

They set up Shorla Pharma in 2018 and, just over two years later, raised Series A investment funding of €7.5m to support the launch of their first product in the US in 2021, for the treatment of leukaemia. From the very beginning the pair leveraged start up supports.

“We went to our Local Enterprise Office in Clonmel, just up the road from us, and built a really great relationship with them,” said Orlaith.

“We received a Priming Grant which helped support our own employment. In the early days cash flow was a huge issue for us and every cent was really helpful in enabling us to keep moving forward.”

A Trading Online Voucher helped develop their online trading presence. “Starting out, cash is tight and you might not have the resources to put into a professional website but having one is massively important because it’s your calling card. When you meet people internationally they check you out online. It’s something that seems small but can have a huge impact on your progress,” she continues.

Technical Assistance for Micro Enterprise (TAME) grants enabled them to participate in key medical conferences in the US, to build networks with clinical oncologists. “Those trips were fundamental to our progress,” says Sharon who, in 2019 won the top prize in the Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) awards.



“The IBYE win was huge for us but the prize money was only half of it. It also led to massive exposure nationally and internationally, which was invaluable. As a globally focused pharma company, the IBYE win put us on the map,” says Sharon.

It also put Shorla on a pathway to becoming an Enterprise Ireland client company and start up assistance from Local Enterprise Office Tipperary helped them get to that point.

“It wasn’t just the financial support, it was the opening of doors and the making of connections that the LEO provided, which helped us. At one stage we were struggling to find a connection to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and the Local Enterprise Office had one, which was incredibly helpful,” says Sharon.

“In the early days the targeted one-to-one assistance you get from LEO advisors is key while, from a branding and image perspective, the exposure we got from IBYE was something money couldn’t buy.”

Orlaith agrees: “For the stage our business was at in 2019, the LEO was an invaluable resource that helped us execute our business plan and achieve all the milestones we had set for ourselves. It’s just a great support.”

Find out more about Shorla Pharma at: www.shorlapharma.com

“It wasn’t just the financial support, it was the opening of doors and the making of connections that the LEO provided, which helped us”

Client success story

How a Local Enterprise Office helped Moxi Loves prepare for Brexit

“LEO Customs Training helped me figure out all eventualities so that, from best case to worst case scenarios, I knew what I needed to plan for”



CUSTOMS TRAINING & BREXIT PREPAREDNESS

Beauty brand found the route to export success - through Brexit and beyond

Moxi Loves is a much-loved beauty brand that has succeeded by innovating clever products at an affordable price. For founder, Pamela Laird, 2019 was a big year. Not alone did she star on hit BBC TV show The Apprentice but she got her business ready for Brexit.

The brand sells hit products such as facial cleansers and dry shampoo sheets into the UK, as well as to Spain, Germany and the US. Along with being stocked in bricks and mortar stores such as Boots, she sells online through platforms such as Amazon and Ocado.

Starring in a hit TV show helped boost her in market profile in the UK, “it gave the media a huge appetite for our press releases”. Prepare your Business for Customs workshops from Local Enterprise Office Dublin City helped her protect her UK business success.

“We started selling into the UK in 2019,” she says. “It’s easy to assume that because the UK is a neighbour and a similar market that it will be alright, but there is far more to it than that and the LEOs are brilliant at preparing you. In the end we decided to go with a wholesale and distribution partner.”

It means she will have ample stock in the country, should Brexit speed bumps emerge. “It means our stock will be reliable, so we are prepared for a hard Brexit. In fact, we have no Brexit issues at all.” LEO Prepare your Business for Customs helped get her to that point.

“I wanted to know what was going to happen. Customs training helped me figure out all eventualities so that, from best case to worst case scenarios, I knew what I needed to plan for. As a result, my business is more robust,” she says.

She also received support from the Local Enterprise Office mentoring programme. “I had great LEO mentors, people who were an amazing help with things like distributor agreements and margin calculations. These were people who can give you a deep look into how to build out your export strategy, right down to pallet sizes and how to build palleting costs into your margins.”

Moxi Loves also received a TAME [Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters] grant which supported the cost of her travel to international trade fairs, to build up a network of international retailers.

“Travelling to a trade fair would have been out of my reach as a small business starting out, not without that cushion of support from the LEO behind me. It’s terrific to know that support is there when you need it.”

Find out more about Moxie Loves at: moxiloves.com

Client success story

PRODUCTIVITY CHALLENGE VOUCHER

How a Local Enterprise Office helped Purpledecks get lean and punch above its productivity weight

When Brian Egan moved home to Longford to start his software technology business, Purpledecks, in 2012 one of his first ports of call was his Local Enterprise Office. “I wanted to see how they could help me. I’m a software engineer, a techie, I needed to learn how to run a business,” he said.

Today, Purpledecks helps international enterprise clients with their digital transformation, including Musgrave Group, ResMed and Sage. Since that first visit, LEO Longford has supported Purpledecks to continually “punch above our weight”, he says.

“It gave me a Business Priming Grant which allowed me to take on my first member of staff and we have grown ever since. We have a great relationship with LEO, they have helped me with various projects all along the way.”

In 2019 that included a Productivity Challenge Voucher. At the time the business was exploring new strategic directions, including areas such as connected health.

“Connected health brings certain compliance and regulatory standards. We needed assistance to explore what our core technical direction should be and the expertise it would require. The Productivity Challenge Voucher helped me bring in the right advisors to critically and analytically look at what we were doing. I found it immensely valuable.”

The business also benefited from the Lean for Micro programme. “It looked at absolutely everything we do, from the way we are set up, to how we make decisions, to the workloads we manage, the way



we sell, our management structures, decision making processes and business continuity plans. It was about boosting the efficiency of the whole business.”

The Productivity and Lean programmes helped him put in place the systems and processes to support growth. “When you are a start-up founder you tend to do everything and juggle a lot of balls. That’s okay for a while, but at some stage, it has to stop.”

The company also benefited from a Trading Online Voucher. “Everybody thinks that going online is just about building a website or starting ecommerce. But everybody is on the internet now, so you need to target the right people. We’re not a marketing company. We are a software technology company. To build out our digital marketing strategy we needed help.”

All along the way LEO Longford has provided just that.

“What I like about the LEOs is that they are available. I can pick up the phone or call in and have a chat, to see if they can help us with some issue we’re having and get a bit of advice. But what I really like is that with the LEOs you are dealing with someone local, ‘someone who knows who you are and what your business does. That sense of familiarity is really important.”

Find out more about Purple Decks at: www.purpledecks.com

“The Productivity Challenge Voucher helped me bring in the right advisors to critically and analytically look at what we were doing”

"In business, you have to keep innovating or you go backwards. The Local Enterprise Offices get that."

AGILE INNOVATION FUNDING



How a Local Enterprise Office engineered a new direction for Merris Engineering

Brendan McGrath bought a business in the UK and brought it home to Ireland in 2009. Based in Galway, today Merris Engineering provides mixing, shaking and vibrating machines for everything from paint manufacturers to laboratories.

In recent years, the business responded to the entry into the market of low cost competitors from China by developing premium, specialist products. While that created a strong niche business, it didn't provide an opportunity for exponential growth, and "I'm hungrier than that," he says.

It was watching the demolition and construction of new houses near his office four years ago that prompted a new departure for the business. He saw how time consuming, costly and wasteful it was to have the buildings demolished and the rubble carted off for landfill.

It occurred to him that a mobile crushing machine would allow demolition material be recycled and used on site in the construction of sub-base and roads.

"The EU wants to ensure that 70% of demolition material is recycled into construction, to reduce the use of virgin sand or rocks. Being able to do so would offer huge savings to contractors too. While crushing machinery does exist, it is too largescale for SME type contractors."

He got in touch with LEO Galway which advised him to apply for research and development support through Enterprise Ireland's Agile Innovation Fund, to help him turn his idea into a reality.

"We started with a clean sheet of paper, designed the product, and the Agile Innovation Funding allowed me to build a prototype and get it tested."

TAME funding supported the cost of bringing the prototype to a trade fair in Munich in 2019, which proved invaluable. "We got a terrific response which validated the market opportunity and complemented our research. We came away with over 80 enquiries and were able to use the suggestions we got at the fair to redesign the product."

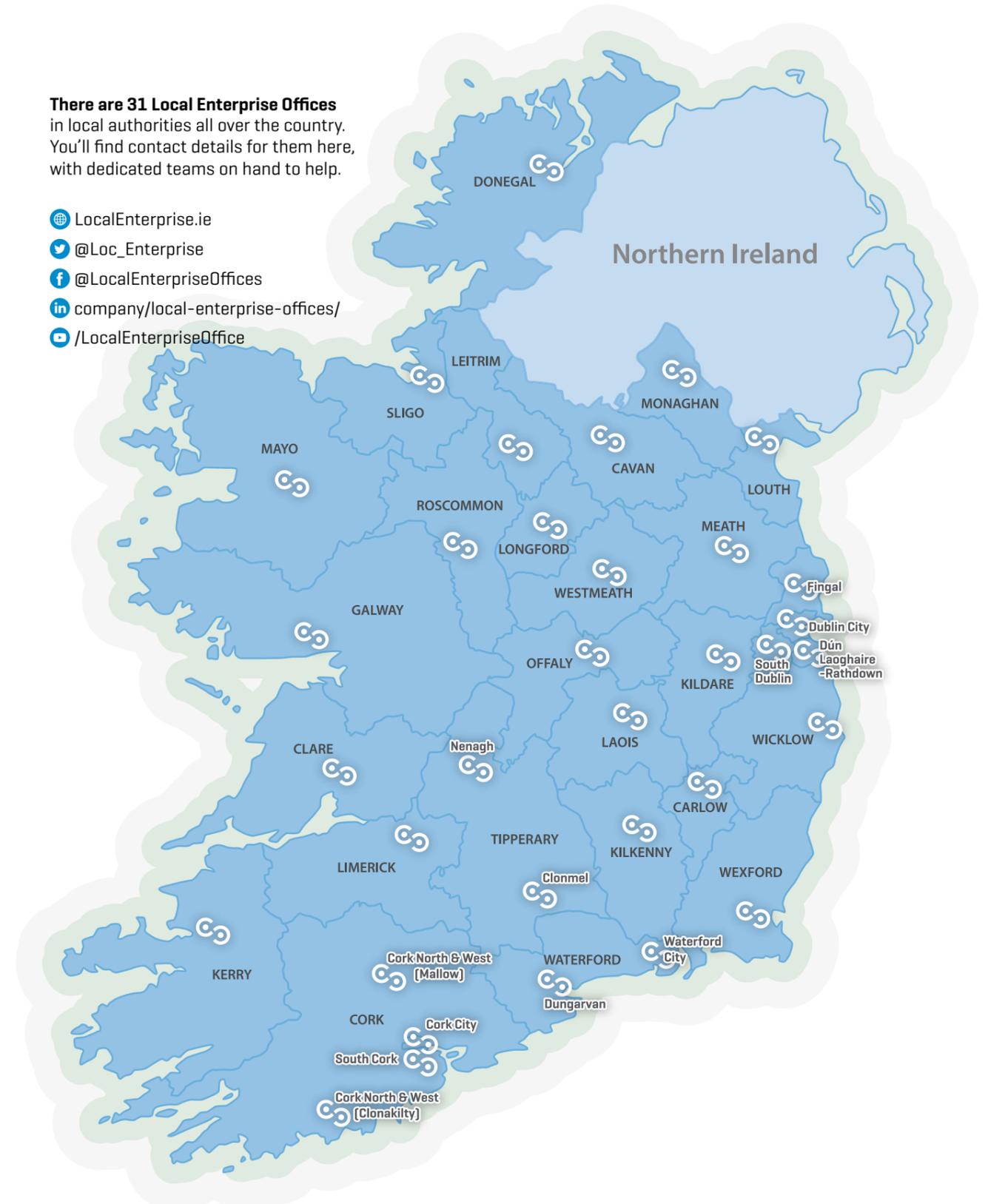
"The people in my Local Enterprise Office are helpful and proactive. When I went to them they understood exactly what I was trying to do and they were as enthusiastic about it as I was. It's so nice to have that behind you."

They understood too how innovation was critical for his business. "In business, you have to keep innovating or you go backwards. The LEOs get that."

Find out more about Merris Engineering at: merris-international.com

There are 31 Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities all over the country. You'll find contact details for them here, with dedicated teams on hand to help.

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