

COVID-19 EQUITY INVESTMENT FUND GUIDANCE NOTES

This document provides guidance on the COVID-19 Equity Investment Fund (CEIF) including eligibility criteria, application process and evidence required. If you are considering applying for CEIF, please read this document carefully before submitting an application.

OVERVIEW

CEIF is a £5 million fund to help qualifying early stage high-growth potential businesses in Northern Ireland access financing to progress their business plans and prepare for recovery and growth.

Support, up to a maximum of 50% of the funding round, is available:

- through equity investment or convertible loan notes of up to a maximum of £700,000; and
- on pari passu terms (meaning on substantially the same terms) as other investors in the funding round.

Support in excess of £700,000 may be available by way of a commercial loan.

The fund is managed and administered by Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

CEIF is open to all early stage high-growth potential businesses in Northern Ireland unable to access sufficient funding after maximising investment from all other funding sources, including institutional investors, private investors, the [Future Fund](#) and Invest NI's [Access to Finance](#) funds.

The minimum investment round that will be considered is £50,000. The percentage of the funding round matched by CEIF will vary on a case by case basis but will not exceed 50% of the funding round, excluding funding provided by Co-Fund NI.

As an early stage high-growth potential business, you are eligible if:

- The majority of your business operation is based in Northern Ireland.
- Your business is an unlisted small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) operating in a market for less than seven years following the first commercial sale.

- Your business was not in financial difficulty or subject to insolvency procedures at 31 December 2019, but is adversely impacted by COVID-19, including its ability to raise financing.
- You can quantify the impact CEIF support will have on your business such as research and development into new products and/or helping you access new sales and marketing opportunities.
- You can demonstrate your business has innovative technology, a significant international market opportunity, export growth prospects, credible promoters and a scalable business model.
- You can demonstrate how the funding will increase the value of your business and outline potential exit opportunities.
- You have already sourced investment from other investors but still have a shortfall in what you need to achieve your business plan.

CEIF supports technology and innovative businesses typically with a focus on the following sectors:

- advance manufacturing, materials and engineering, including materials handling
- digital and creative technologies
- life and health sciences
- cyber security
- precision medicine
- big data, internet of things and analytics

Exclusions

The following businesses are not eligible to apply:

- Banking and insurance companies.
- Businesses operating in coal, steel or shipbuilding.
- Businesses involved in decommissioning or the construction of nuclear power stations.
- Manufacturing businesses associated with the processing and marketing of tobacco and tobacco products.
- Businesses investing in airport infrastructure unless related to environmental protection or accompanied by investment necessary to mitigate or reduce its negative environmental impact.

- Businesses facing difficulty within the meaning of [Article 22 of the State Aid COVID-19 Temporary Measures](#) at June 2020.
- Agricultural producers associated with the processing and marketing of agricultural products supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
- Agricultural producers in fisheries and aquaculture supported by the European Fisheries Fund.
- Businesses providing general education to children of school age.
- Businesses supporting or refurbishing retail facilities.
- Businesses working in the synthetic fibres sector.
- Businesses operating in defence and safety.

TIMESCALES

Applications for CEIF are now open.

All legal documentation must be completed by 12 noon on 31 December 2020.

Assessment timescales will differ for each case and may take up to eight weeks from the initial application for a decision.

We encourage applicants to submit proposals as early as possible. Please refer to the approximate assessment timescales outlined in this document.

HOW TO APPLY

If you have reviewed your funding needs with existing and potential funders and can confirm there is a gap as a direct result of COVID-19, please contact us to progress an application.

If you are an existing Invest NI customer, you should contact your Client Executive.

If you are not an Invest NI customer, you can email the CEIF Team at ceif@investni.com and we will assign you a Client Executive.

You will need the following information to complete your application:

- Your business name.
- Your contact name and number.
- Your business address and postcode.
- The date you established your business in Northern Ireland.

- If applicable, the group structure of your business.
- Number of people you currently employ in Northern Ireland and other locations.
- The financial year end of your business.
- The annual turnover of your business.
- The balance sheet total of your business.
- Your company registration number or CRN issued by Companies House, beginning with NI followed by six numbers, for example NI123456.

You will also need to provide the following documentation electronically:

- Your [funding proposal template](#).
- Your latest financial statements, management accounts, capitalisation tables and financial forecasts.

To attach documents to your application, please click the '**Attach Documents**' button at the relevant section. You will need to provide a description of the document to identify the document provided.

Please note the maximum size of each attachment is 20MB.

After completing your funding proposal, the online application process should take approximately one hour, providing you have all the necessary information available.

You can save a draft of your application and complete later. You will need to click on the '**Submit**' button when you have completed your application.

STATE AID CONSIDERATIONS

CEIF is available in accordance with [Article 22 of the State Aid COVID-19 Temporary Measures](#) to support the economy during the COVID-19 outbreak. This framework requires that COVID-19 related aid does not exceed £700,000 per undertaking.

This aid is awarded through direct grants, tax and payment advantages, or repayable advances, guarantees, loans and equity, provided the total nominal value remains below the overall cap of £700,000 per undertaking. The total nominal value must be gross, that is, before any deduction of tax or other charges.

As part of the application process, applicants must complete a declaration to ensure:

- The limit of £700,000 per undertaking is not breached.
- The business is not facing difficulty within the meaning of [Article 22 of the State Aid COVID-19 Temporary Measures](#) at June 2020.

ASSESSING YOUR APPLICATION

Invest NI will review your application within three working days of receipt and request any outstanding information if required.

The information you provide will be subject to due diligence and as part of this assessment, you may be asked to present your application to a panel, consisting of Invest NI staff and appointed external advisers. Once due diligence is complete, your application will be presented to an Invest NI Casework Panel to assess for an investment decision.

Assessment timescales will differ for each case. Please allow approximately eight weeks from the initial application for a decision. In all cases, Invest NI will endeavour to align its processes and timescales with the other investors in the funding round.

Once an application is approved, applicants will be informed via email that their application has been successful. If your application is approved, Invest NI will work with the private funders and legal advisers to prepare the requisite legal documentation. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Unsuccessful applicants will also be informed via email.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You are responsible for providing accurate and true information on your application.

The provision of wrong or misleading information is an offence and any such information may be used against you in any subsequent criminal investigation.

The information provided on this application form may be made available to other departments or agencies for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime.

DATA PROTECTION AND HANDLING

CEIF is managed and administered by Invest NI who will have access to the information you provide as part of your application; both as a means to assess your eligibility and to conduct any post scheme governance assessments.

As this financial support is sourced from public funds Invest NI will, in the interest of openness and transparency, proactively publish limited information on the fund including:

- name of applicant
- application title
- amount of assistance



**COVID-19 Equity
Investment Fund**



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Northern Ireland
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Invest NI will handle your data in compliance with applicable laws including the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. For further details on our data handling practices please see the [Invest NI Privacy Notice](#).

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Invest NI will determine at its sole discretion:

- Whether sufficient information has been provided to assess an application.
- Whether an application has been successful.
- The nature, amount and terms of any CEIF investment.

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

For general enquiries, please contact our Business Support Team on 0800 181 4422. Lines are open Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm.