



# BACK FOR BUSINESS

FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL  
ACTIVITY AMONG RETURNED  
IRISH EMIGRANTS



Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

This innovative initiative is funded through the  
Emigrant Support Programme by the Department  
of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

# BACK FOR BUSINESS

*“Back for Business was crucial in accessing advice for the fledgling business and in building networks.”*

Carol Banahan,  
Carol's Stock Market



## ABOUT BACK FOR BUSINESS

Back for Business is an initiative to foster and support entrepreneurial activity among returned emigrants or those returning to live in Ireland. The development programme is aimed at assisting them to start and develop a business. It addresses the challenges that all early stage entrepreneurs face, with a particular focus on the additional barriers and challenges faced by those who have been out of the country for some time.

Back for Business is based on a model of peer support, entrepreneurs supporting entrepreneurs. This approach is well proven as being effective in bringing about increased motivation and confidence among entrepreneurs and having a positive impact on their enterprise development.

The initiative will be run from January to July 2020. It will provide the opportunity for up to 48 committed early stage entrepreneurs from across the country to take part.

Back for Business has been developed and is delivered by Fitzsimons Consulting. Thanks to the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the voluntary contribution of time by the Lead Entrepreneurs, there is no charge to those who are selected to participate.

*“The programme structure, coupled with the energy from peers and business leaders, helped to shape the end result.”*

Feargal McKenna,  
MYGO Events & Entertainment



## WHO IS IT FOR?

Back for Business is for returned emigrants who have lived abroad for at least a year and have returned to Ireland within the last three years, or those currently living abroad who are planning to return to live in Ireland in the near future.

Their experience of living and working abroad will often bring significant advantages for starting a business, such as having a strong network of international contacts, fluency in foreign languages and greater cultural understanding of foreign markets.

Suitable applicants will be (i) those who have recently started a new business in Ireland, either on their own or with another business partner, (ii) are at an advanced stage of setting up a business, or (iii) are becoming/have become entrepreneurs through the acquisition of an existing business. If the business is newly established, it will not have generated sales before the end of October 2017. If acquired, it will not have been acquired before this date.

In respect of the business whether new or acquired, the returned emigrant will be a major shareholder and key decision maker in the venture. Furthermore, they will have the ambition and expectation of becoming an employer of others within three years. There is no restriction on the sector in which the new business is focussed.

**If selected, participants must be available to attend the Launch Forum and first round table session on 23 JANUARY 2020 in Dublin.**

## HOW TO APPLY

Those interested in receiving an application form should register their interest in the first instance on the website **[www.backforbusiness.com](http://www.backforbusiness.com)** and they will be sent an application form by email. The form should be completed and returned by email attachment to [info@backforbusiness.com](mailto:info@backforbusiness.com).

If there is any difficulty registering online, please phone us on (+353) 1 8450770 or email us on [info@backforbusiness.com](mailto:info@backforbusiness.com)

**Closing date for receipt of completed application forms is 7 JANUARY 2020.**

*“I always knew I would set up a business producing Irish spirits, which is part of my family heritage, and Back for Business has helped me follow my dream.”*

Laura Bonner  
The Muff Liquor Company



## SELECTION PROCESS

As it is expected that there will be many more applications than there are places available, it will be a competitive selection process. The Lead Entrepreneurs will play a key part in selecting the successful candidates. They will be seeking those who are prepared to fully engage with the initiative over its six months duration; demonstrate a determination to advance their fledgling businesses; are prepared to work hard in pursuit of their entrepreneurial goals; and expect to become employers.

There are up to 48 places available for suitable candidates.

The Back for Business Lead Entrepreneurs will meet in mid January to assess the applications received and candidates will be notified shortly afterwards.

## WHAT'S INVOLVED?

The Back for Business initiative is a tailored entrepreneurial development programme. It is based on peer support – entrepreneurs supporting entrepreneurs.

This applied learning model involves a series of round table interactive sessions that are facilitated by volunteer Lead Entrepreneurs who have experience of successfully starting and growing a business. The sessions are focused on the achievement of goals and milestones and the exploration of relevant themes. The Lead Entrepreneurs will work with groups of up to eight participants each in a series of round table sessions, supporting them to address the challenges they face in starting, developing and positioning their business for sustainability and growth.

The cycle will start with a full day Development Forum on 23 January 2020 in Dublin. This will include the first round table session.

Participants will then meet with their groups and Lead Entrepreneurs in four separate round table sessions between March and June. The dates and locations of these three and a half hour sessions will be agreed with the Lead Entrepreneurs on the first day.

A full day support workshop will take place on 14 February 2020 in Dublin.

A finance and tax workshop, which will be facilitated by KPMG, will take place on 24 March 2020 in Dublin.

The cycle will finish with a full day, which will include a final round table session, in Dublin.

**Selected candidates are expected to attend all events.**

***“Back for Business has given me confidence and support to aim higher with my new businesses”***

Barra Kelly  
*XUSA Properties and  
Structural Home Design*



Areas covered in the course of the programme will include: Establishing Good Foundations; Checking the Fundamentals; Knowing and Reaching Your Customer; KPIs and Financial Management, Management, Leadership and Building a Team; and Roadmap to Progress your Business.

The support workshop in March will provide an opportunity for participants to meet representatives of the development agencies and to take part in relevant mini workshops.

Networking opportunities at the launch and final events and at the Support Workshop will have the additional benefit of increasing participants' professional and personal networks.

**If you have any queries contact [info@backforbusiness.ie](mailto:info@backforbusiness.ie) or phone (+353) 1 8450770.**

## THE BENEFITS

Back for Business participants will:

- Have a strong network of peers and role models from whom to draw inspiration and guidance.
- Have a reduced sense of isolation.
- Experience the benefits of 'good' peer pressure.
- Be motivated and have increased confidence to execute their plans for their business.
- Have a SMART Action Plan for their business, setting out a six-month roadmap to move the new business forward.
- Have practical ideas and solutions to help them overcome key challenges facing them as they settle back into Ireland and start their new business.
- Have a repository of information about supports, which may be available to their business.
- Have free membership of the Irish International Business Network (IIBN) for 2020.



# THE LEAD ENTREPRENEURS

**T**he Lead Entrepreneurs who facilitate the round table sessions are the backbone of the Back for Business initiative. They are not, and cannot be, experts in every area of business, but they bring valuable and personal experience of starting and growing a business. Several of them have returned to Ireland having lived abroad for a number of years before starting their own business.

They believe strongly in the principle of entrepreneurs supporting entrepreneurs and are giving their time on a voluntary basis. Their open and full involvement gives the participants an opportunity to get to know and learn from successful role models and to benefit from their wide and varied entrepreneurial experience.



## ÁINE DENN

Áine Denn co-founded Altify, now Upland Altify, in 2005. Upland Altify is the Customer Revenue Optimization (CRO) company, helping businesses generate value and grow revenue. Upland Altify customers include Autodesk, BT, GE, Workday, HP Enterprise, Johnson Controls, United Healthcare and Salesforce. A key contributor to the direction of the company since its inception, Áine's insight is informed by more than 25 years' experience in enterprise software, business development, operations and customer engagement. Prior to Altify, Áine has served in senior executive positions in public and private companies including The SCO Group, NewworldIQ, Prudential UK, and Accenture. Altify was recently acquired by US technology company Upland Software (UPLD) in a deal worth nearly €76 million. [www.altify.com](http://www.altify.com)



## BRIAN CROWLEY

Brian Crowley is the COO of Broadlake Capital, an Irish owned family of companies. He is the founder of one of Ireland's largest recruitment companies, TTM Healthcare, and its service delivery subsidiary Resilience Healthcare, one of Ireland's largest providers of complex home care. Employing over 500 permanent staff and over 2,000 contractors, TTM Group are projected to generate revenues in excess of €95m in 2019. TTM Group operate internationally, through offices in the UK, Germany and the Middle East, supplying temporary and permanent workforce solutions to both the private and public sector. Brian is a member of the judging panel for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur ([www.ibye.ie](http://www.ibye.ie)) and also sits on the implementation committee for the Government's Entrepreneurship Strategy. He was a finalist in the international category of the EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2014. [www.broadlake.ie](http://www.broadlake.ie)



## GILLIAN O'DOWD

Gillian O'Dowd is co-founder and director of Azon Recruitment Group, a recruitment agency specialising in multiple industry sectors, including accounting and finance, financial services, taxation, legal and construction. Since establishment in 2014, the award-winning recruitment agency has grown year on year. With offices in Dublin, Limerick, London and Manchester, they now employ 40 and service many national and international clients. With over 18 years' experience working on the financing and investment portfolios of Irish and International businesses, Gillian O' Dowd has extensive experience from start-up to exit, from growth to M&A across investments, property and recruitment sectors. Gillian holds a Bachelor of Commerce from UCC and a Masters in Financial Services from the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, UCD. [www.azon.ie](http://www.azon.ie)



## MICHAEL HOYNE

Michael began his career by founding a plumbing distribution business in his home town of Kilkenny. He subsequently launched Somerby, a shower tray business, and Image Showering, before founding MERLYN SHOWERING. Michael's ultimate goal was to challenge the existing traditional manufacturers with an innovative quality range of products, supported by leading customer service. MERLYN BATHROOMS grew to be No 1 in UK and Ireland, and designed ranges for markets across Europe and Middle East. It subsequently became one of the most innovative and progressive bathroom companies in Europe, and won numerous awards over the years for quality, design and customer service. Michael was a finalist in the EY Entrepreneur of the year 2015. MERLYN BATHROOMS was sold in 2017 to Norcross PLC for €70 million.



### NIKKI EVANS

Nikki worked in the IT industry in Australia before completing an MBA in London Business School, and subsequently working as a Strategy Consultant in the banking sector in London for high profile clients such as Visa. Moving home in 2005, she founded PerfectCard, a retail gift card for shopping centres, using pre-paid debit cards to eliminate the need for costly software installations at checkout. Refocusing their strategy on the corporate market, they launched PerfectIncentive, a new type of pre-paid debit card product, that uses PerfectCard technology to bring the next generation of employee rewards and incentives to businesses all over Ireland, and beyond. PerfectCard has recently become part of the EML Group, an Australian based PLC. [www.perfectcard.ie](http://www.perfectcard.ie)



### THOMAS ENNIS

Thomas Ennis, founder and CEO of the Thomas Ennis group, is an award-winning Irish retailer, recognised for his innovative approach to convenience food. Thomas has over 30 years' experience working in all aspects of Irish food retailing. He headed up Superquinn's foray into the Convenience World - Superquinn Select, before opening his first store in 2005, the award-winning flagship Spar on Merrion Row, Dublin. Since then Thomas has opened eleven more stores spread across Convenience, Forecourts and Artisan Delicatessens. He currently employs over 200 and is committed to staff development, with his senior management team recruited internally. Seeking to be continually innovative in the food offerings within his stores, Thomas has welcomed Irish franchises into the stores.

## ADVISORY PANEL



### CHRIS WINNING

Chris Winning set up relocation services company Corporate Care in 1997, offering multinationals operating in Ireland the chance to make the relocation of their employees as smooth as possible. Corporate Care's focus is to look at the individual needs of the clients. Today 90% of Corporate Care customers are based outside of Ireland. For these corporate clients the company provides an extensive range of relocation and immigration services throughout Ireland and, through their extensive network of carefully selected partners, manages the relocation process for their clients as they expand globally. Chris sold Corporate Care Relocation as a going concern in 2018 and set up Winning Solutions to continue her Global Mobility consultancy business.



### JULIE CURRID

With a background in sales and marketing, returning from London in 2012 Julie set up GoContractor with her business partner, Sean Fennell. GoContractor is a contractor management software company headquartered in Dublin, with offices in London, Madrid, New York, California, Texas, and Toronto. GoContractor's product focuses on the challenge of delivering inductions to large numbers of short-term workers. Their customers are typically companies which use a large number of contractors and operate in heavy industries such as construction, energy and mining. Their client base now includes Sisk, ESB, CBRE and five of the top 20 construction companies in the world. The company employs 30 people and is set to double headcount through 2020. [www.gocontractor.com](http://www.gocontractor.com)



### MARY MCKENNA

Mary McKenna is a well-known Donegal based Irish technology entrepreneur and angel investor. She co-founded successful Northern Irish e-learning company Learning Pool, following a long public sector career and a spell as a Silicon Valley dotcommer. She is one of the Entrepreneurship Experts with the Entrepreneurship Centre at Saïd Business School (University of Oxford), Entrepreneur in Residence at Catalyst Inc (the Northern Ireland Science Park in Belfast), an advisor to government, a trustee of the Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology and an active member of Tech London Advocates. Mary was awarded the MBE by Her Majesty the Queen in the 2014 New Year's Honours for services to digital technology, innovation and learning.

# PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

Following the successful completion of two cycles of Back for Business, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is once again supporting the initiative in its drive to promote entrepreneurial activity among the community of returned and returning emigrants.

Thirty eight participants completed Back for Business 2. They had spent an average of six years out of Ireland. Networking and re-establishing contacts was the barrier most frequently cited by applicants, when asked to identify what for them constituted the main barriers that posed a challenge to them returning from abroad to develop a business in Ireland. This barrier is very unique to this group of entrepreneurs.

In recognition of this situation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through Back for Business, is making available membership of the Irish International Business Network (IIBN) for a year to each of those selected for Back for Business 3.

The progress made by participants over the course of the programme gives a flavour of their experience and of their progress.

- All who completed Back for Business 2 were very positive in their end of cycle feedback. Virtually all felt nearer to achieving their ambitions and would recommend the programme to others.
- At the start of the cycle, half were pre-revenue. Over the six months of the programme a further nine began to trade. At the end of the cycle the majority were trading (73%) with others planning to generate sales in the coming months.
- At the start of the cycle, the combined turnover of the group was just over €756,000. By the end of the cycle, the combined turnover had increased to €1.3 million, an increase of 71% over the six-month cycle.
- Forty-one were employed by the participants at the start of the cycle. This number had risen to 89 by the end of the cycle.
- One of the advantages of time spent out of Ireland is contacts developed internationally. At the start of Back for Business seven of the participants already had some export sales. There were a further seven first time exporters over the course of the cycle. The strong export orientation is evident with the great majority expecting to have customers in export markets in three years time.



Minister Ciarán Cannon T.D., Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development, is pictured with Julie Currid, GoContractor, Advisory Panel Back for Business, Eoin McGloughlin, Memfies, Sligo, and Teresa Roche, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese, Loughrea, Co Galway

***“Back for Business is a fantastic initiative to support returned Irish emigrants and help them develop their business concept.”***

Ciara McGuane, *Rahoo*



***“I was delighted to have been part of the Back for Business cohort. It’s an extremely useful initiative for all returning emigrants.”***

Shayne Murphy, *SDM Performance*





# SPONSORS

The Back for Business initiative is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Its objective is to encourage a greater level of entrepreneurial development among emigrants who have recently returned or are returning to live in Ireland in the near future. Following a competitive tendering process, the Back for Business initiative, as developed by Fitzsimons Consulting, was selected as most suitable to achieve the stated objectives. It is designed to positively and effectively tap into the entrepreneurial talent of returned and returning emigrants and to equip these early stage entrepreneurs with the knowledge, confidence and networks to successfully start and develop sustainable businesses.



Welcoming the return of Back for Business, Minister Coveney said: “I welcome the launch of a new round of the Back for Business programme. My Department’s continued funding of this initiative is an important contribution in supporting the entrepreneurial skills of our well-educated and well-connected returning Diaspora. Their experience of working and living internationally, assisted by the Back for Business programme, can bring the benefits of new investment and employment opportunities across Ireland.”

SIMON COENEY T.D., TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE



Minister Cannon also welcomed Back for Business, saying: “Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy, is aimed at supporting the successful return to Ireland of our Diaspora. Back for Business is a practical measure to implement this commitment. This programme can make a real difference to returned and returning emigrants, who want to establish new businesses in Ireland. The successful delivery of this programme will enable these entrepreneurs to build new businesses and contribute to our economy and society.”

CIARÁN CANNON T.D., MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE DIASPORA & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## ABOUT FITZSIMONS CONSULTING

Fitzsimons Consulting ([www.fitzsimons-consulting.ie](http://www.fitzsimons-consulting.ie)) specialises in areas related to entrepreneurship and growth. Paula Fitzsimons, founder and managing director of Fitzsimons Consulting, is a recognised expert on entrepreneurship. She has been the national coordinator for GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) for Ireland since 2000, a former President of the consortium of GEM national teams, and a former Director of GERA, the governing body for the Global Entrepreneurship Research Association. Fitzsimons Consulting has been central to the design and development of award winning initiatives, which focused on specific demographic groups to maximise their entrepreneurial potential: Going for Growth ([www.goingforgrowth.com](http://www.goingforgrowth.com)), Senior Enterprise ([www.seniorenterprise.ie](http://www.seniorenterprise.ie)), and ACORNS ([www.acorns.ie](http://www.acorns.ie)). Fitzsimons Consulting developed and delivers Back for Business in response to an open call by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Fitzsimons Consulting is most grateful to KPMG who on a voluntary basis are hosting and facilitating workshops on Finance, Tax and KPIs for participants of Back for Business.

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