



**BACK FOR  
BUSINESS**

**FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL  
ACTIVITY AMONG RETURNED  
IRISH EMIGRANTS**



**Irish Abroad Unit**



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

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

# BACK FOR BUSINESS

*'Back for Business has been invaluable for my business since returning home. I highly recommend the programme and strongly encourage recently returned entrepreneurs to apply'.*

Kevin Finn, *KF Physio*



## 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 the development of their new business.

The initiative will be run from February to July 2021. It will provide the opportunity for up to 40 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 the voluntary contribution of time by the Lead Entrepreneurs, there is no charge to those who are selected to participate.

*'Back for Business continues to be a constant source of support for our business since we started. Networking, learning, and meeting entrepreneurs with shared experiences and ambitions are at the core of the programme'.*

Tracy Armstrong, *KO Kombucha*



## 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 and expect to have sales in the next six months; 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 2018. 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.

## HOW TO APPLY

Those interested in receiving an application form should register on the website **[www.backforbusiness.com](http://www.backforbusiness.com)** and they will be sent a link to an application form.

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 25 JANUARY 2021.**

*'Back for Business and being surrounded by ambitious individuals and supported by the great entrepreneurial experience of the Lead Entrepreneurs were hugely beneficial both to me personally and for my business'.*

Brian Fitzpatrick, *BF Sports Analysis*



**ALL PROGRAMME ARRANGEMENTS WILL TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS AND WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO DELIVER A QUALITY PROGRAMME APPROPRIATE TO PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES.**



Coronavirus  
**COVID-19**  
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Advice

## 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 40 places available for suitable candidates.

The application process is straightforward, however. No interview or pitch is involved. The Lead Entrepreneurs will meet after the closing date in 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.

The 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 about nine 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 Launch Forum in February held either remotely or in Dublin.

Participants will then meet with their groups and Lead Entrepreneurs in six separate round table sessions between February and June. All sessions will be held either remotely or at a location convenient to the Lead Entrepreneur. The dates and locations of these three and a half hour sessions will be agreed with the Lead Entrepreneur on the first day.

A finance and tax workshop, which will be facilitated by KPMG, will take place in March 2021 in Dublin.

A workshop will also be organised which will provide an opportunity for participants to hear from representatives of the development agencies about various supports available.

**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  
SHD Chartered Engineers



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.

Developing new networks on their return to Ireland is a key challenge for returned and returning emigrants. Accordingly, whenever possible, we will provide networking opportunities to participants. In addition, participants will be offered free membership of the Irish International Business Network (IIBN) for 2021.

The cycle will finish with a celebration in late June 2021, held either remotely or in Dublin depending on prevailing conditions.

**If you have any queries contact [info@backforbusiness.com](mailto:info@backforbusiness.com) 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 2021.

# 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

A technology entrepreneur and advisor, Áine is adept at the art and science of B2B selling. In 2005 Áine co-founded Altify (now Upland Altify), a leading Customer Revenue Optimization (CRO) cloud solution for sales and extended revenue teams. Áine has exited the company to pursue other interests. Áine's insight is informed by many years' experience in enterprise software, business development, operations and customer engagement. Prior to Altify, Áine served in senior executive and board director positions in public and private companies, including The SCO Group, NewworldIQ, Prudential UK and Accenture. Áine believes in adding value to growing companies, while investing in people and being kind.



## HEATHER REYNOLDS

Heather Reynolds was the CEO and co-founder of Eishtec DAC, an indigenous company established in 2011 that now employs 1,500 people. Eishtec was sold to Infosys in 2019 and Heather is currently a Senior Director responsible for growth and strategic direction within UK and Ireland. She is also an Associate Lecturer for Carlow IT lecturing across two masters programmes. Heather has over 25 years industry experience in the services sector in a number of blue chip organisations including KAO Corporation, AOL Inc, Dell UK and TalkTalk Group, where she held a number of senior global roles including Customer Experience Director, General Manager and Director of Operations. Heather holds a Business Degree and an Executive MBA.



## NIKKI EVANS

Nikki worked in Australia and New Zealand in the 1990s in the burgeoning IT industry before moving to London where she completed her MBA in London Business School. She worked as a Strategy Consultant in the banking sector in London and as a consultant for high profile clients such as Visa before returning to Ireland in 2005. She founded PerfectCard, a fintech company focused on providing employers with payment solutions for rewarding employees and also handling corporate expenses. With a growing client list including Dell, Salesforce, Dublin Bus, Allergan Pharmaceuticals, AWP Health and Life, and 123, global ambitions and a growing team in Dublin and Galway, PerfectCard became part of EML Payments in 2018. EML Payments is an Australia PLC aiming to disrupt the payments sector. Nikki has remained with the business in the role of CEO EML Europe.





## SUSAN SPENCE

Susan Spence is Co-founder and President of SoftCo, one of Ireland's most successful software companies. With offices in Ireland, US, UK and Finland, and a million users worldwide, SoftCo is a leading global provider of finance automation solutions that increase productivity, reduce costs and ensure that organisations meet their compliance obligations. SoftCo is a Microsoft Gold Partner, an AWS Advanced Technology Partner, and its customers include Primark, Irish Life, Lloyd's Bank, Argos, and Bulmers. Susan is the Irish Tatler Entrepreneur of the Year 2018 and is a former recipient of the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year and Irish Exporter of the Year awards. SoftCo sponsored the Irish women's hockey team that won silver in the World Cup in the summer of 2018. SoftCo is a Starting Strong Supporter. Before co-founding SoftCo, Susan held senior management positions with Hewlett Packard, McDonnell Douglas, and Phillips BV. [www.softco.com](http://www.softco.com)



## 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.

## 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, supported by Enterprise Ireland and KPMG ([www.goingforgrowth.com](http://www.goingforgrowth.com)) and ACORNS, supported by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine ([www.acorns.ie](http://www.acorns.ie)), among others. Fitzsimons Consulting developed and delivers Back for Business in response to an open call by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Paula Fitzsimons was appointed by the Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, to the SME Growth Taskforce in 2020. Paula is also on the advisory panel for WEgate, an EU initiative.

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.



**CONTACT US: Email: [info@backforbusiness.com](mailto:info@backforbusiness.com) or Tel: (+353) 1 845 0770**  
Fitzsimons Consulting, 6 James's Terrace, Malahide, Co. Dublin, K36 Y972 Ireland.

# PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

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

Thirty four participants completed Back for Business 3. They had spent an average of seven 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, 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 4.

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 3 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, 55% were pre-revenue. Over the course of the programme a further six began to trade. At the end of the cycle almost two in three were trading (64%) with others planning to generate sales in the coming months.
- By the end of the cycle, the combined turnover of the group had increased threefold.
- One of the advantages of time spent out of Ireland is contacts developed internationally. At the start of Back for Business six of the participants already had some export sales. There were a further nine first time exporters over the course of the cycle. The strong export orientation is evident with the majority expecting to have customers in export markets in three years time.

Up to 10 previous Back for Business participants that successfully completed a cycle will be offered the opportunity to take part in a round table facilitated by a Lead Entrepreneur and focussed on the further development of their business.



Back for Business former participants Barra Kelly, SHD Chartered Engineers and Shane Bourke, Irish Office Space with Áine Denn, Lead Entrepreneur

*'Being part of Back for Business has helped me focus on my key business goals, the factors that ensure success'.*

Nicholas Ryan,  
Limerick Spirits Company



*'Our Back for Business Lead Entrepreneur proved a great source of guidance in this very difficult Covid period. I highly recommend this programme to returning emigrants to meet other like-minded businesspeople'.*

Michelle Lawlor, The Nude Wine Company



# SPONSORS

The Back for Business initiative is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs. 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 COVENEY TD**  
*MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS*



“I am proud of the achievements of the many start-up businesses which have participated in the Back for Business programme. Returning emigrants bring a wealth of experience and ideas on their return to Ireland, many of which are hugely beneficial to us. The Government is committed to supporting our citizens who are coming back to Ireland, and I welcome the contribution they can make to our national prosperity. Back for Business has been a great success in developing new businesses throughout Ireland in recent years, supporting start-up enterprises which provide investment and employment across the country. I welcome this opportunity for Irish citizens returning to Ireland to participate in this programme and look forward to their future success.”

**COLM BROPHY TD**  
*MINISTER OF STATE FOR OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AID AND DIASPORA*

*‘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



*‘Back for Business gives you real practical insights that you put in place in your business plan and that will have an impact. In addition, the network of Back for Business is absolutely invaluable’.*

Kayleigh Breen, *The Wedding Wizard*





## BACK FOR BUSINESS

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