



Startup Ireland Roadmap

BACKING THE NEXT WAVE
OF IRISH STARTUPS



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Jenny Melia,
CEO of Enterprise Ireland

Ireland's future economic strength will depend on our ability to create, grow and scale a new generation of Irish-owned companies. Ireland already has a strong indigenous enterprise base, underpinning employment, export growth and significant expenditure in the economy. Our ambition is to build on that strength by increasing the number of Irish companies that achieve international scale. Startups are central to this, providing the pipeline of future companies that will drive exports, innovation, high-value employment and economic growth.

Startup Ireland represents a major step change in how we support founders and build that pipeline. It will back ambitious entrepreneurs, accelerate their path to scale and help build the next generation of globally successful Irish companies. The views of founders have been central to its development, shaping an ecosystem that is more connected, more responsive and easier to navigate. Startup Ireland will provide clearer pathways, faster decisions and stronger access to finance, expertise, talent, research capability and international markets with the aim of supporting 1,000 new startups. We want to see more globally competitive Irish companies emerging and scaling, and more of Ireland's research and innovation translated into commercial success.



Peter Burke
Minister for Enterprise, Tourism & Employment

Ireland's next phase of economic development must include more Irish companies starting here, scaling here and competing successfully in global markets. Ireland has a dynamic base of innovative, export-focused Irish companies, but we need to increase the number of ambitious companies with the finance, talent, research capability and market access required to grow into global leaders. Supporting entrepreneurship, strengthening productivity and helping more Irish companies scale are central to the Government's wider focus on competitiveness and building a more resilient enterprise economy.

Startup Ireland brings a new level of national coordination and ambition to that work. As a cross-government initiative led by Enterprise Ireland, it will bring Government, investors, research institutions and industry behind a more joined-up approach to supporting founders. Through measures including the €21 million National Accelerator Programme, stronger pathways to finance and international markets, and more targeted support for companies working in areas such as AI, deep tech and health tech, we are strengthening the environment for ambitious companies to grow. Startup Ireland will help reinforce Ireland's position as a leading European location for entrepreneurship and innovation, while turning more ideas, research and entrepreneurial talent into successful companies that contribute to Ireland's long-term economic growth.

Executive Summary

Startup Ireland is a national, cross-government initiative, led by Enterprise Ireland, to make Ireland one of Europe's best places to start and scale an ambitious company. Between 2026 and 2030, it will support more than 10,000 entrepreneurs, help create 1,000 new startups, and provide founders with a single front door to support, funding, talent, mentorship and global markets.

Ireland has built a strong foundation for innovation through sustained investment in education, research and enterprise. Our success in attracting foreign direct investment has established Ireland as a global leader in talent and technology. As geopolitical shifts, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies reshape the global economy, Ireland has an opportunity to build the next generation of innovation-led,

Irish-owned companies. Startup Ireland is the Government's response, shaped by founders and the wider startup ecosystem. Through stronger coordination, clearer pathways to support and alignment with European best practice, it will help founders move faster from idea to market and strengthen Ireland's position as a leading location to start and scale globally competitive companies.

Startup Ireland is a core component of Enterprise Ireland's Delivering for Ireland, Leading Globally 2026-2030 strategy and leads the Start objective within its four strategic priorities: Start, Compete, Scale and Connect. While scaling companies and creating jobs remain the long-term ambition, Startup Ireland focuses on building capability, driving innovation and accelerating global traction at the earliest stages, building on Ireland's strengths in technology, food and agriculture while supporting opportunities in deep tech, health technologies, quantum and artificial intelligence.

Startup Ireland harnesses the power of coordinated effort between Government, educational institutions and industry to create a more connected and founder-focused startup ecosystem. It is an action under the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity, aligning with wider national priorities including the National Development Plan, the White Paper on Enterprise, the Digital and AI Strategies,

the Climate Action Plan and the forthcoming Life Sciences Strategy.

Startup Ireland will deliver through three interlinked pillars:

- Building a High-Performance Ecosystem:**
 Uniting founders, Government, industry, academia and investors through the Startup Ireland brand, supported by a digital platform that makes the ecosystem faster and easier to navigate. A coordinated, cross-government approach, anchored by a Startup Ireland Strategic Advisory Forum, will keep founders' needs at the centre, while a National Incubator and Accelerator Network will raise quality and consistency nationwide. Ireland's startup ecosystem performance will be benchmarked against leading European ecosystems and emerging EU startup standards to drive continuous improvement and competitiveness.
- Accelerating Startup and Scaleup Creation:**
 Expanding founders' access to finance, talent and markets through new National Accelerator Programmes, a refreshed New Frontiers Programme, inclusive supports and sector-specific accelerators. These programmes will strengthen IP-rich and export-focused ventures, translate world-class research into new companies and support faster pathways to market. Activity will be aligned across three complementary pathways, entrepreneur, venture and deep tech, reflecting the different routes through which high-potential companies emerge and scale.
- Connecting Irish and International Ecosystems:**
 Establishing a flagship National Startup Hub, operating as a national platform anchored in Dublin and connected to regional ecosystem partners across Ireland. Co-located with Enterprise Ireland's Global HQ, it will provide founders with a single front door to the startup ecosystem. Through international accelerator partnerships and global Soft-Landing Zones, Startup Ireland will embed Irish startups in the networks, supply chains and investment flows that turn ambition into global success.

Strategic Context

The world is being reshaped at extraordinary speed by technology and geopolitics, and the countries that respond decisively will shape the next era of growth. Dynamic startup ecosystems have become one of the most powerful engines of innovation, competitiveness and economic renewal, and around the world, nations are adopting deliberate strategies to strengthen their ecosystems and win the global race for high potential founders, talent and investment. Recent reports from the OECD and the European Commission confirm this shift and set out clear recommendations to sharpen Europe's and Ireland's competitive edge. Startup Ireland is Ireland's response: an ambitious, coordinated initiative to connect and strengthen our startup ecosystem in line with European best practice. Ireland's success in attracting global investment has created a deep pool of talent, expertise and international connections. Startup Ireland seeks to convert these advantages into greater levels of indigenous startup and scaleup creation.

- The **2024 OECD report, Supporting Startup Globalisation in Ireland through Incubation and Acceleration**, highlighted a number of challenges within Ireland's startup ecosystem, including fragmentation, gaps in internationalisation support, coordination and connectivity challenges, limited sector-specific supports and a lack of consistent performance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The report also made a series of recommendations to address these challenges, including stronger coordination, higher-quality mentorship, sector-focused programmes, overseas soft-landing supports, and the development of a flagship entrepreneurial hub. These findings have informed the development of Startup Ireland and are reflected in the priorities set out in this roadmap.
- The **Draghi report, The Future of European Competitiveness**, highlighted the need to make it easier for innovative companies to scale across Europe. Startup Ireland aligns with the **EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy** and will help more Irish companies leverage emerging European initiatives, including the Scaleup Europe Fund and the **European Commission's EU Inc.** proposal, which aim to simplify starting, operating and growing businesses across the EU while enhancing international mobility.
- The **Europe Startup Nations Alliance (ESNA)** champions founder-friendly reforms that speed up company formation, widen access to finance, and attract the talent that drives innovation-led growth. These principles are embedded throughout this roadmap.
- Across Europe, leading startup nations have adopted nationally coordinated approaches to supporting startup growth. Initiatives such as **La French Tech, Startup Estonia, Startup Portugal and Germany's Startup Strategy** demonstrate the value of clear strategic coordination, strong ecosystem connectivity and a recognised national identity. Startup Ireland has drawn on lessons from these international models in shaping its approach.
- Ireland already performs strongly on institutional quality and the business environment. While these strengths provide a strong foundation, Ireland is currently ranked 18th on the Global Innovation Index, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen human capital, research intensity, innovation capacity and national R&D investment, enhancing Ireland's position as a global innovation leader.

These priorities are equally reflected in Ireland's national policy framework. The White Paper on Enterprise 2022–2030, the National Development Plan and the new Programme for Government all call for stronger startup pathways, better scaling supports, and wider access to talent and capital. Startup Ireland responds directly to these priorities by providing the coherent national framework needed to harness Ireland's existing strengths, address persistent gaps, and strengthen our position among Europe's most competitive startup ecosystems.

The Systemic Challenges Facing the Irish Ecosystem

In 2025, Enterprise Ireland embarked on a nationwide Founders Listening Tour to identify barriers which limit startup creation and scaling. The findings reveal common issues across the ecosystem that must be addressed to build a high-performance, founder-first ecosystem. Startup Ireland will respond to these challenges through its three pillars, ensuring that policy and programme changes translate directly into better outcomes for founders.

Challenge	Founder Need / Priority
Ecosystem navigation and efficiency	Streamlined processes and clear signposting of supports; reduced duplication and bureaucracy; a single 'front door' for domestic and international founders to engage with Ireland's startup ecosystem.
Internationalisation support	Stronger links to customers and investors overseas; simpler visa and talent pathways, and structured mentorship and soft-landing programmes to enable global expansion.
Sector-focused support and funding	Tailored programmes and funding options for capital-intensive or regulated sectors such as deep tech, health and sustainability, including advisory supports to access investment and navigate regulation.
Talent and inclusion	Enhanced talent attraction and retention measures; greater university startup output; inclusive pathways for female and under-represented founders.
Risk mitigation and education	Training and guidance to help founders manage economic and geopolitical risks and overcome fear of failure through entrepreneurship education.
Mentorship quality	Access to experienced founders with relevant domain and scaling experience who can provide credible strategic advice.
Corporate venture and commercialisation	Easier routes to pilot projects and reference customers through corporate partnerships and innovation procurement frameworks.
Strategic partnerships and resources	Opportunities for trials with public and private partners; access to specialised facilities such as wet labs, hardware prototyping spaces, high performance computing zones, regulatory sandboxes and academic collaboration zones.
Attracting international investment	The development of a flagship national campus and the hosting of international events to promote Ireland as a destination for global investors, researchers, and entrepreneurs.
AI capability gaps	Founders report growing capability needs in areas such as digital competitiveness and AI adoption, which increasingly influence their ability to scale internationally.

Startup Ireland: A Strategic Response

Startup Ireland is the national framework that brings Ireland's startup ecosystem together, providing a more coordinated approach to supporting startup creation, growth and international scaling.

Led by Enterprise Ireland, it connects Government, investors, academia and industry behind a shared ambition: to build a stronger, more connected ecosystem that turns Irish innovation into sustainable growth and quality jobs.

Startup Ireland builds on a strong foundation. Enterprise Ireland has decades of experience supporting founders, investing in high-potential startups as one of the world's most active seed investors, and helping Irish companies compete and grow in international markets.

Startup Ireland is informed by the European Startup Nations Alliance (ESNA) Standards, which identify the core characteristics of strong startup and scaleup ecosystems across Europe:

- **Speed:** Fast company creation and smooth, frictionless market entry.
- **Capital:** Direct financial support through grants, equity, seed funds and pension-fund investment.
- **Smart policy:** Startup-friendly rules and dramatically less red tape.
- **Talent:** Strong attraction, retention and labour mobility.
- **Innovation:** Room to experiment, regulatory sandboxes and meaningful IP incentives.
- **Guidance:** High-quality business support and advisory services.

By benchmarking Ireland's startup ecosystem against leading European startup ecosystems and continuously adopting international best practice, Startup Ireland will help strengthen Ireland's competitiveness and support the development of world-class startup and scaleup businesses.



Strategic Ambitions: 2026 - 2030

Enterprise Ireland's Purpose

Enterprise Ireland accelerates Irish businesses to start, compete, scale, and connect nationally and globally. We support Irish companies to grow jobs and exports, and nurture innovative startups to be the global successes of the future.

Startup Ireland Vision

To strengthen Ireland's future economy by building a world-class startup ecosystem.

Startup Ireland Mission

To create a world-class, founder-first startup ecosystem by building a national platform that connects founders to funding, support, and global opportunities, enabling Irish entrepreneurs to realise their full potential and scale internationally.

Startup Ireland Goals

Startup Ireland's ambitions are built around the startup journey: By catalysing new entrepreneurs and scaling high growth companies, we will deliver measurable economic returns.

Startup Ireland will build a stronger pipeline of startups, help them scale globally, and maximise their contribution to Ireland's economy and society.

- Back 10,000 new entrepreneurs nationwide
- Support 1,000 new startups through equity investment
- Grow the proportion of women-led startups supported by Enterprise Ireland to 35%
- Significantly increase the number of university spinouts and startups emerging from Ireland's research ecosystem
- Increase the number of startups reaching €1m turnover by 20%
- Invest €150m in direct early-stage funding
- Deliver specialist accelerators in priority and emerging sectors—including Quantum, Deep Tech, AI, FoodTech and Digital Health—to fast-track scaling potential
- Achieve 40% participation in Startup Ireland programmes by under-represented groups
- Strengthen Ireland's position as a globally connected innovation hub

Measuring our progress

Startup Ireland will strengthen how we understand and evaluate the performance of the startup ecosystem. By improving the collection and use of data and insights, we will be better equipped to assess what is working, identify gaps, and focus investment on initiatives that deliver the greatest impact.

Startup Ireland will be delivered through three interlinked pillars which are set out in more detail in the following pages:

PILLAR ONE

Building a High- Performance Ecosystem



PILLAR TWO

Accelerating Startup & Scaleup Creation



PILLAR THREE

Connecting Irish & International Ecosystems



1 Building a High-Performance Ecosystem

Startup Ireland will bring greater alignment across Ireland's startup ecosystem, connecting Government, industry, academia, investors and support organisations around a shared goal: helping founders start, grow and scale successful businesses.

Founders often tell us that the ecosystem can be difficult to navigate, with multiple organisations, programmes and funding supports operating across different stages of the startup journey. Startup Ireland will help make that journey clearer, creating stronger connections between organisations, improving coordination and making it easier for founders to access the right support at the right time.

This pillar focuses on strengthening how the ecosystem works behind the scenes. It will improve collaboration across support providers, create more consistent founder experiences nationwide and ensure that startups can access high-quality supports regardless of location.

Founder feedback, improved data and international benchmarking will play an important role in shaping future improvements. Together, these measures will create a more connected, responsive and founder-focused ecosystem that helps ambitious startups succeed.



What Founders Told Us	How Startup Ireland Responds	What It Means for Founders
There's no clear "front door"	Startup Ireland Brand & International Campaigns Establish Startup Ireland as a unified national brand and platform, creating a recognisable identity for founders, investors and ecosystem partners, supported by coordinated national and international campaigns and events.	A national startup identity, making it easier for founders to access support, connect with opportunities and gain visibility at home and internationally.
The ecosystem is fragmented and complex	Startup Ireland Digital Platform Develop a founder-centred digital platform that provides tailored guidance, connects founders to the right supports, and evolves to include AI-enabled navigation and smart matching to mentors, investors and ecosystem partners.	A simpler way to navigate the startup ecosystem, with tailored guidance and connections to the right supports, mentors and investors at the right time.
Need for greater alignment between policy and the startup ecosystem	Startup Ireland Strategic Advisory Forum Establish a minister-chaired Strategic Advisory Forum to ensure founder perspectives continue to shape the development of the startup ecosystem. Bringing together founders, investors, industry representatives and Government stakeholders, the Forum will provide ecosystem insight, monitor emerging trends, and strengthen coordination. It will inform policy development across government, agencies and partners, while providing advice on issues affecting startup growth, including talent, infrastructure, access to finance and taxation.	A more connected and responsive startup ecosystem, where founder voices help shape decisions and coordination is strengthened across the organisations that support startups.
Incubators and accelerators don't join up	National Incubator and Accelerator Network Create a national network connecting incubators, accelerators, universities, Local Enterprise Offices and ecosystem partners through shared standards, performance measures and strengthened collaboration.	A more consistent founder experience nationwide, with clearer pathways, stronger support quality and better connections.
It's hard to see what's working across the ecosystem	Standardised Data Collection & Benchmarking Introduce a common approach to data collection and benchmarking aligned with EU and OECD standards, providing national and regional insights on startup formation, participation, scaling and investment outcomes.	Support programmes that are continuously improved using evidence and international benchmarks, helping founders access more effective services over time.
Getting support takes too long and online processes could be streamlined	Streamlined Founder Journey Improve access to supports through simplified application processes, faster decision-making, stronger coordination between Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Ireland, and AI-enabled tools that reduce administrative burden.	Faster access to supports, simpler processes and clearer progression from idea to scale, with less administration and fewer delays.

2 Accelerating Startup and Scaleup Creation

Startup Ireland will strengthen Ireland's pipeline of high-potential startups and scaleups by helping founders access the capital, talent, expertise and networks they need to grow.

While founders share many common needs, startup journeys can vary significantly depending on the nature of the business model, growth pathway and level of innovation involved. Startup Ireland will reflect these differences through clearer founder

pathways, stronger access to mentorship and investor networks, and tailored supports for different types of ventures. At the same time, founders will continue to benefit from shared access to funding, expertise and opportunities across the wider ecosystem.

The goal is simple: help more founders start businesses, build successful companies and compete internationally.



What Founders Told Us	How Startup Ireland Responds	What It Means for Founders
Access to high-quality accelerators varies by region and sector	National Accelerator Programme Establish a national accelerator programme comprising a National Company Accelerator, National Talent Accelerator, regional pre-accelerators and specialist sector programmes, providing founders with clearer pathways to start and scale.	Founders can access high-quality accelerator supports regardless of location, with clearer pathways to develop ideas, build companies and connect with investors.
There aren't enough mentors who have scaled a company	Founder Mentor Network Launch a founder mentor network connecting entrepreneurs with experienced founders, CEOs and investors from Enterprise Ireland's international network, with stronger sector and domain matching.	Founders gain access to practical advice, sector expertise and global networks from people who have successfully built and scaled companies.
Some groups remain underrepresented in entrepreneurship	Inclusive Entrepreneurship Action Plan Launch an Inclusive Entrepreneurship Action Plan to expand participation among underrepresented founders, including women, persons with disabilities, migrants, new Irish communities, young people and seniors, while embedding accessibility across startup supports.	More people can access startup supports, regardless of background, helping create a more inclusive and accessible entrepreneurial ecosystem.
Startup supports can be difficult to navigate and progression routes are unclear	Redesigned Startup Pathways Align and redesign startup programmes and funding, including New Frontiers, accelerator programmes and funding supports, to create clearer progression routes from early-stage support through to scaling, while strengthening connections with Local Enterprise Offices and Irish BICs. Startup Ireland will deliver three complementary pathways: Entrepreneur Pathway, Venture-Driven Pathway and Deep Tech & IP-Intensive Pathway.	Founders have clearer pathways to progress from idea to scale, with the right supports, funding and programmes available at each stage of growth.
Accessing growth capital remains challenging	Seed & Venture Capital Expansion Maximise the impact of the Seed & Venture Capital Scheme and related funding programmes, strengthening access to follow-on investment, later-stage capital and international investor networks.	Founders have greater access to follow-on funding, international investors and the capital needed to scale globally.
Research-led and Deep Tech ventures face additional barriers to scaling	Sector-Specific Accelerators Strengthen commercialisation and spin-out pathways through sector-focused accelerator programmes and the Innovators' Initiative. These initiatives will provide specialist technical and regulatory mentoring, targeted funding, and greater access to testing, piloting and research infrastructure. We will collaborate with partners across the research and innovation ecosystem, including Research Ireland and universities, to expand and scale these initiatives.	Research-led founders receive specialised support, industry connections and access to infrastructure that helps bring innovations to market faster.
Funding decisions take too long	Fast-Track Startup Funding Introduce faster funding pathways for early-stage startups, reducing decision times and enabling founders to access support and investment when it is needed most.	Founders can access funding more quickly, helping them maintain momentum, seize opportunities and accelerate company growth.



National Accelerator Programme

To strengthen Ireland's startup ecosystem and provide founders with clearer routes to growth, Enterprise Ireland is establishing a new **National Accelerator Programme**, delivering on a commitment in the Programme for Government.

The programme will create a nationally connected accelerator system supporting entrepreneurs from early idea development through to startup creation and international scaling. Combining regional access, specialist expertise and global connectivity, it will build on existing ecosystem strengths while providing clearer pathways at every stage of the startup journey.

Developed through engagement with founders, investors, accelerators and ecosystem partners, the programme will remain responsive to evolving technologies, markets and entrepreneurial needs.

The National Accelerator Programme will comprise four connected strands:

- Regionally-Based Pre-Accelerators & Early Stage Supports
- National Company Accelerator
- Talent Accelerator
- Sector & Specialist Accelerators

Inclusive entrepreneurship is a core design principle across all four strands of the programme. Supports for women entrepreneurs will be embedded throughout, ensuring high-potential founders can access the networks, capability development and growth opportunities needed to start, scale and succeed in international markets.

Regionally-Based Pre-Accelerators & Early Stage Supports

We will deliver venture-oriented, growth-focused pre-accelerators that prepare founders for pre-seed investment readiness. These will be delivered regionally by experienced operators, to ensure genuine coverage across all of Enterprise Ireland's nine regions, and will be designed to build on existing local ecosystem activity. Early-stage interventions will engage founders right from ideation, while structured training, mentorship and investor engagement will support concept development, business validation, and readiness for pre-seed investment, including eligibility for Enterprise Ireland's Pre-Seed Start Fund (PSSF).

National Company Accelerator

Working with experienced operators, we will position Ireland as a global leader in scaling startups to international export markets by delivering a National Company Accelerator with high-touch, founder- focused support, powered by Enterprise Ireland's international network. We will build globally scalable, venture-backable companies through strong corporate, international and investor connectivity, and readiness for seed investment, including High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) funding and follow-on investment.

Equity & Access to Finance

Startup Ireland will improve founders' access to finance by aligning all programmes to its PSSF and HPSU financial instruments, including streamlined pathways to early-stage funding, increased startup equity investment levels, and enhanced follow-on funding to support scaleups. Programmes will deepen international VC connectivity to help founders access European and global capital.

Talent Accelerator

The Talent Accelerator will support high-potential individuals with the ambition and capability to establish globally scalable startups but who have not yet formed a company. Working with experienced operators, we will support high potential aspiring entrepreneurs to build globally scalable, venture backable startups from pre-idea and pre-company stage, selected based on individual technical and commercial potential. The Talent Accelerator will deliver high touch, founder friendly support through co-founder matching and early product development, supported by mentorship from experienced founders and access to international investors. The programme will build strong corporate and international connectivity, company formation capability, and investment readiness, including eligibility for Enterprise Ireland's Pre-Seed Start Fund (PSSF).

Sectoral & Specialist Accelerators

Recognising that startup journeys vary across industries and technologies, Enterprise Ireland will support a portfolio of specialist accelerators focused on areas of strategic importance and high-growth potential.

These programmes will provide access to sector-specific expertise, industry networks, commercialisation supports, research capability and investment-readiness assistance tailored to the needs of particular sectors and founder communities.

By connecting founders with researchers, investors, corporates and ecosystem partners, specialist accelerators will support startup creation, growth and international expansion while strengthening capability in priority areas of the economy.

Initial sectoral accelerators will include:

- **AI & Deep Tech:** Supporting founders developing frontier technologies through access to specialist expertise, commercialisation supports, investment readiness and international market opportunities.
- **Agri-Tech & Food-Tech:** Building on Ireland's strengths in food, agriculture and sustainability by supporting innovation-led companies to develop, commercialise and scale solutions with global market potential.

Initial Inclusive Entrepreneurship specialist programmes will include:

- **Founder Financial Capability:** Practical and accessible financial literacy and commercial capability sprints to help founders strengthen financial confidence, commercial decision-making and strategic planning as they prepare for growth and funding decisions.
- **Talent Activation:** Flexible programmes to support individuals affected by workforce displacement, graduates, researchers, experienced professionals and individuals exploring new career pathways to develop ideas, assess opportunities and engage with startup creation.

The sectoral and specialist portfolio will remain responsive to founder needs, emerging technologies, market opportunities and national priorities. Additional accelerators may be introduced over time to reflect evolving opportunities and strengthen Ireland's pipeline of innovative, high-growth startups.

Strengthening New Frontiers

The New Frontiers Programme has played a central role in supporting entrepreneurs and startup creation in Ireland for more than a decade. From 2026, it will be delivered as part of the Startup Ireland framework and adopt the Startup Ireland brand, providing founders with a clearer and more connected pathway through Ireland's national startup support system.

Following external review and stakeholder engagement, the programme has been refreshed to reflect the evolving needs of founders and the wider startup ecosystem. Enhancements include an updated curriculum incorporating emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, strengthened founder

supports, and an increased participant stipend of €17,500, up from €15,000, contributing to an overall support package valued at approximately €40,000.

As a key entry point within the Startup Ireland entrepreneur pathway, New Frontiers will continue to support entrepreneurs in developing and validating business opportunities, strengthening commercial capability and preparing for growth. Participants will be supported to progress towards opportunities including the National Accelerator Programme, the Pre-Seed Start Fund (PSSF), High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) supports and other Enterprise Ireland programmes.

National Reach

The 2026-2030 programme will be delivered through seven institutional partnerships across the Technological University, Institute of Technology and university sectors, ensuring nationwide access through 18 regional locations.

Over the lifetime of the programme, delivery is expected to include:

- 122 Phase 1 programmes, supporting approximately 2,700 participants
- 62 Phase 2 programmes, supporting approximately 811 founders
- Nationwide delivery across all Enterprise Ireland regions

Why it Matters

New Frontiers helps aspiring entrepreneurs progress from idea to investable business through structured training, mentoring, incubation supports, financial assistance and access to research, industry and investment networks.

As a core component of the Startup Ireland ecosystem, the programme strengthens Ireland's pipeline of innovation-driven startups while providing accessible pathways into entrepreneurship across all regions.

Since its launch in 2012, New Frontiers has supported more than 6,500 participants and over 2,000 founders. The programme has established a strong track record of progressing entrepreneurs towards Enterprise Ireland supports, with alumni represented among recipients of the Pre-Seed Start Fund and High Potential Start-Up investments. Over more than a decade, it has helped founders develop innovation-led businesses with international growth potential, creating pathways to investment, business growth, employment and regional economic development.

Three Founder Pathways into Startup Ireland Programmes

Startup Ireland delivers three complementary pathways for founders at the earliest stages of developing a company. Each pathway reflects the different ways new businesses emerge and scale:



Local Enterprise Office supports for early-stage and pre-revenue founders: feasibility grants, priming grants, mentoring and training. The local first point of contact that helps founders validate an idea and prepare for growth.

PSSF (Pre-Seed Start Fund): Enterprise Ireland equity investment for early-stage, high-potential startups yet to raise significant external capital. Provides initial funding to develop the product, validate the market and prepare for the full investment round.

HPSU (High Potential Start-Up): Enterprise Ireland's designation for companies with the potential to sell an innovative product or service internationally and create 10+ jobs within three years. HPSU designated companies can access a full suite of investment, scaling and market-development supports.

3 Connecting Irish and International Ecosystems

Building a successful startup increasingly depends on access to customers, investors, talent and international networks. Startup Ireland will help founders make those connections faster and earlier in their journey.

This pillar focuses on opening doors for founders, both in Ireland and internationally. It will strengthen connections between startups, scaleups, investors, researchers, industry and public-sector partners while creating new opportunities to access markets,

secure customers and attract investment.

Ireland already benefits from significant strengths, including Enterprise Ireland's international network, a strong multinational presence, globally connected diaspora communities and recognised industry clusters. Startup Ireland will build on these advantages to help founders expand internationally, access global capital and grow internationally competitive businesses.



What Founders Told Us	How Startup Ireland Responds	What It Means for Founders
It's difficult to know who to connect with as the business grows	National Startup Hub Establish a National Startup Hub, anchored in Dublin and co-located with Enterprise Ireland HQ, serving as Ireland's national gateway and convening point for startups, scaleups, investors, industry, regional startup communities and international partners.	A clear national gateway that makes it easier for founders to connect with investors, partners, customers and opportunities across Ireland and internationally.
The ecosystem is fragmented and it's hard to find the right support at the right time	Connected Startup Support Create a clear and accessible entry point for founders through the National Startup Hub, connecting them to the most relevant supports, services, expertise and ecosystem partners at the right stage of their journey.	Simpler and faster access to the right supports, reducing complexity and helping founders move more efficiently from idea to growth.
Going global is hard without the right connections	International Market Access Support founders to expand globally through co-location of Enterprise Ireland and the National Startup Hub, international accelerator partnerships in key markets, and Soft-Landing Zones that provide access to talent, visa support, investors and new customers.	Earlier access to international customers, investors and growth opportunities, helping founders scale globally with greater confidence.
Ireland has no national showcase to put me in front of global investors	National Startup Showcase Position the National Startup Hub as Ireland's flagship venue for investor summits, international showcases and ecosystem engagement, raising the visibility of Irish innovation with global stakeholders.	Greater visibility with international investors, partners and customers, creating more opportunities to attract investment and grow internationally
I can't easily access specialist facilities such as labs, prototyping and sandboxes	National Innovation Infrastructure Access Connect founders to specialist facilities, including dry labs, prototyping spaces, AI infrastructure (including the Irish AI Factory Antenna), shared test environments, regulatory sandboxes and university facilities, while strengthening links to regional clusters and fast-tracking access to public procurement opportunities.	Easier access to the facilities, infrastructure and expertise needed to develop, test and commercialise products more quickly.
It's hard to reach FDI and multinationals for R&D and first customers	Startup-Industry Collaboration Make the National Startup Hub a focal point for structured startup-corporate collaboration involving IDA Ireland, Research Ireland, DFHERIS, EDIHs and sector clusters, creating opportunities for startups, scaleups and multinational companies to generate value together through innovation and R&D partnerships.	More opportunities to collaborate with major companies, researchers and industry partners, helping founders commercialise innovation, win customers and accelerate growth.
Ireland isn't visible enough as a startup destination	International Founder Attraction Programme Target internationally mobile founders through Enterprise Ireland's overseas teams, Team Ireland partners (including the Department of Foreign Affairs via the Global Ireland Initiative) and the Department of Justice, leveraging the EU 28th Regime and improved visa pathways.	A stronger and more internationally connected startup ecosystem, bringing founders greater access to talent, expertise, investment and global networks.
It's hard to secure a first customer or pilot with larger, established companies	First customer connections programme Leverage Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland client bases, connecting startups with larger Irish companies and multinational enterprises for customer pilots, proof-of-concept projects and early commercial adoption.	Earlier access to pilot projects, proof-of-concept opportunities and reference customers that help validate products, build traction and accelerate growth.
It's difficult to access public procurement opportunities	Public Sector Innovation Procurement Work with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), the HSE and other public bodies to expand innovation procurement opportunities and create clearer pathways for Irish startups and SMEs to engage with public-sector customers.	A clearer route to public-sector customers, creating new revenue opportunities, valuable reference contracts and stronger foundations for scaling.

