

Expert knowledge programme from National Export Hub

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Photo: Mary Mitchell O'Connor (centre) with Suzanne Clarke of Clarkes of Dublin and Robert Hallam.

(Pic: Jason Clarke)

The **National Export Hub** has graduated its first ever class from its **Expert Knowledge Programme**, an educational programme aimed at supporting twenty SMEs to improve their exporting capabilities. Enterprise minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor conferred the graduates at a ceremony in the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin.

The programme takes participants through an educational and support programme to improve their ability to export into existing and new markets, and 20 companies from sectors such as food and drink, manufacturing and pharma graduated yesterday.

The 20 companies graduating as the Class of 2016 are:

- **250Kal**
- **Chimney Draught Stop**
- **Clarkes of Dublin**
- **Episcan**
- **Hederman, Belvelly SmokeHouse**
- **Incus Power**
- **Irish Rollforming**
- **Kellys Mountain Brew**
- **Lir Analytical Ltd**
- **Newell Roofing Ltd**
- **OPSH**
- **OVVO**
- **Ventac**
- **Smart Glass International**
- **The Cool Bean Company**
- **Vanguard Beer Collective**

The National Export Hub, which is an initiative of the **Irish Exporters Association**, is recruiting a further 20 companies to participate in the next term of the programme in association with InterTradeIreland, with commences in the autumn. The key partners are ABP Food Group, AIB, DHL, Euler Hermes, and PwC, along with Bord Bia and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Mitchell O'Connor said: "Research shows that 74% of small businesses on the island take their first export steps cross border. I consider this an excellent partnership and I look forward to hearing how the participants grow their exports in the future."

Robert Hallam, director of 250Kal, commented: "As with all startups, 250KAL Foods has great ambitions to make an impact in domestic and international markets. Turning ambitions into results requires experience, expertise and support, all of which have been hallmarks of the HUB programme.

"During the programme we have had access to the programme partners/sponsors, who have shared knowledge and experience which will enable us to make more informed decisions as we continue on our path to open up new channels, create jobs and secure our position in the market."

HOW THE EXPORT KNOWLEDGE PROGRAMME WORKS

Phase 1 – Export Readiness Assessment

An initial Export Readiness Assessment is carried out on each business application. The purpose of this process is to ensure that the business has the required organisational structure, culture and resources to support growth and entry into new export markets or expand in existing export markets.

Subject to a successful outcome of the Export Readiness Assessment, the business will be selected to participate in Phase 2 of the programme. If the business is not chosen to participate in Phase 2, it will

receive a report with an assessment of its export readiness, together with advice and action points on how to improve its ability to enter export markets at a future date.

Phase 2 – Export Workshops

This phase comprises of the educational and mentoring component of the programme. hich time they learned about:

Workshop 1:

Selection and Management of Channel Partners/Distributors

Trading Safely in New and Existing Markets

Workshop 2:

Knowledge of International Legal, Contract and IP Issues

Workshop 3:

International Financial Management

Economic Overview

Financing Growth

Foreign Exchange Management

Tax, Structure and Finance for Business Development

Workshop 4:

E-commerce skills and social media skills, marketing mix skills

Workshop 5:

International Logistics (air, sea, rail, road)

Workshop 6:

Researching Markets and Finding Opportunities to Grow Business Internationally

Tendering – All Island Public Sector Opportunities

Students also participated in themed roundtable discussions providing an opportunity for networking and knowledge sharing amongst the various businesses.

Phase 3 –Export Progress Report

The final phase will take place following the graduation which will measure and evaluate the knowledge gained through the programme of workshops. This process establishes what stage of the export glide path each business is at, the potential for future export growth and the increase in sales in current or new export markets.