
The Export Knowledge Programme is a new educational programme to help SMEs get ready for exporting

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The Export Knowledge Programme was developed by The Irish Exporters Association's National Export Hub in partnership with InterTradelreland.

The idea behind the programme is simple, to take selected SMEs and improve their ability to export.

Twenty businesses will be selected in early 2016 to start a seven month educational workshop programme covering "every aspect of the export journey".

"Exporting is a critical sector in the Irish economy with headline figures dominated by the multinationals. This initiative brings together the best support from the public and private sectors to grow the existing SME export base," says Simon McKeever, CEO, Irish Exporters Association

"Cross-border trade is currently valued at around €3bn – so substantial opportunities in the opposite jurisdiction still exist. Helping small companies to identify new cross-border export markets is a core part of our remit," says Thomas Hunter McGowan, CEO, InterTradelreland.

What's involved in the Export Knowledge Programme?

Phase one – export readiness assessment

An initial export readiness assessment will be carried out on the business. 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.

If successful, the business will be selected to participate in phase two of the programme. If the business is not chosen to participate in phase two, 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 two – export workshops

This phase involves teaching and mentoring. Each business will participate in six/seven full day export workshops where they will learn about:

Workshop one: Selection of channel partners and distributors.

Workshop two: Knowledge of international legal, contract and IP issues.

Workshop three: International financial management, cost control, quality assurance, and financial risk management.

Workshop four: eCommerce skills and social media skills, marketing mix skills.

Workshop five: International logistics (air, sea, rail, road), order administration.

Workshop six: Awareness of customer needs in different markets, knowledge of international design standards and codes.

Workshop seven: Awareness of all-island public sector tendering opportunities.

Phase three – review and final evaluation

The final phase will measure and evaluate what the SMEs learned on the programme. This process will establish 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.