

# Summary of products and services by company size

	Pre-Start	SME (up to 249 employees)	Large firm (250+ employees)
<b>▶ Business Finance</b>			
Access to Finance	◆	◆	
Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme		◆	◆
Small Loans for Business	◆	◆	
Grant for Business Investment	◆	◆	◆
Venture Capital and Loan Fund	◆	◆	
Northwest Business Angels	◆	◆	
<b>▶ Innovation and Efficiency</b>			
Innovation Advice and Guidance	◆	◆	◆
Innovation Vouchers		◆	
Knowledge to Innovate		◆	
Grant for Research and Development	◆	◆	
Improving Your Resource Efficiency		◆	◆
Knowledge Transfer Partnerships		◆	◆
Manufacturing Advisory Service		◆	◆
<b>▶ Advice for New and High Growth Business</b>			
Starting a Business	◆		
Intensive Start Up Support	◆		
Enterprise Coaching	◆		
High Growth Programme	◆	◆	
<b>▶ International Trade</b>			
Developing Your International Trade Potential		◆	◆
Accessing International Markets		◆	◆
Export Credit Guarantee		◆	◆
<b>▶ Training and Development</b>			
Skills Brokerage Service		◆	◆
Apprenticeships		◆	◆
Train to Gain – People Development		◆	◆
Train to Gain – Leadership and Management Advisory Service		◆	◆
Mentoring	◆	◆	
Leading Enterprise and Development (LEAD)		◆	
<b>▶ Sector Development</b>			
Sector Development		◆	◆

To access any of these products and services and confirm your eligibility contact:



**Business Link Northwest**

**0845 00 66 888**

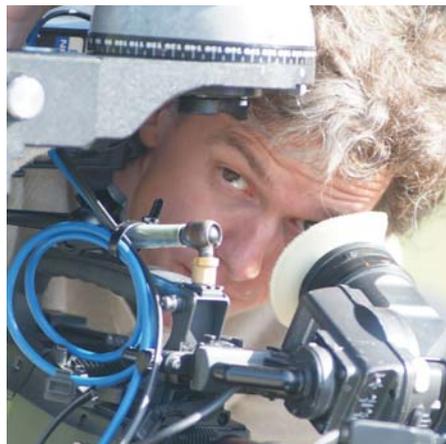
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# Support for Northwest Businesses



May 2009

# Support for Northwest Businesses

**This is the second publication outlining the support provided by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and partners for businesses in the region. In December 2008, we outlined details on some of our key support services, all of which can be accessed through Business Link Northwest. This document provides updated information on these as well as a summary of national assistance recently announced by the Government.**

## The Role of the NWDA

The strategic role of the NWDA is to lead public sector investment in the region's economy and support private sector investment. We do this by engaging the public, private and voluntary sectors to identify the key priorities for the region through the Regional Economic Strategy.

Our key objective is to support businesses in the Northwest. In the current economic climate, we are focused on providing effective business support to help companies weather the downturn and emerge stronger. This includes helping small and medium-sized businesses access finance through the management of over £50 million of grants, loans and equity finance each year. You will find a summary of the NWDA and our partners' business support products and services in this brochure.

The Agency is also working to simplify the provision of business support in the region and make it easier for businesses to find and access the support they need.

The Agency is supporting and leading longer term developments to improve the physical infrastructure of the region and enhance its competitiveness. Often, these developments are based around growing key sectors of the economy. For instance, the MediaCityUK development in Salford Quays will help grow the region's digital and creative sector, whilst large-scale investment at Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus in Merseyside has provided workspace for high-end technology businesses.

The Agency is also advising the Government on economic conditions in the region and is a key member on the Joint Economic Commission for the North West (JEC). Chaired by the Regional Minister and the NWDA Chairman, the JEC's role is to ensure the region's economy emerges from the current downturn stronger than before.

## The Role of Business Link Northwest

Business Link Northwest is an NWDA service which provides businesses with an impartial gateway to all of the business advice and support available in the region. This includes all the products and services in this brochure as well as support from the private sector.

Business Link Northwest has specialist advisers who work directly with businesses to identify their needs and access relevant solutions. This includes advisers with specialism in specific business disciplines, including:

- Finance
- Innovation
- Resource Efficiency
- Skills and Training.

It also includes advisers with expertise in the following sectors:

- Advanced Engineering and Materials
- Biomedical
- Digital and Creative
- Energy and Environmental Technologies
- Food and Drink
- Financial and Professional Services
- Other growth sectors.

Business Link Northwest also offers a free web and telephone service with a vast range of information, guides and tools, including checks to help improve business performance.



## Recent Government Announcements

The Government has recently announced a national package of financial measures aimed at supporting businesses. These include:

- An **Enterprise Finance Guarantee** scheme securing up to £1.3 billion of additional bank loans to small firms with a turnover of less than £25 million who are currently unable to secure the finance they need. This will enable viable businesses to secure loans of between £1,000 and £1 million. Banks who will lend to eligible businesses under this scheme include HSBC, Barclays, Clydesdale/Yorkshire Bank, HBOS, Lloyds TSB and RBS/Natwest. All lending decisions are at the discretion of the bank supplying the loan.
- A £75 million **Capital for Enterprise Fund** to invest in businesses who are looking to fund business development by selling debt in exchange for an equity stake. The fund will provide equity of between £250,000 and £2 million for companies with turnover of up to £50 million in need of long term capital, who have viable business models and growth potential.
- A £5 billion **Trade Credit Insurance** scheme which provides temporary top-up insurance by matching private sector funds for those small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) suffering reductions in their cover.
- A **Business Payment Support Service** run by HM Revenue & Customs aimed at helping businesses facing difficulties with their tax bills.

# Business Finance

## Access to Finance

Free advice and support from specialist advisers at Business Link Northwest to help businesses and entrepreneurs understand the options available for accessing the finance required for business start-up, development and expansion.

Includes a diagnosis of financial needs, provides relevant skills/expertise to secure funding and facilitates introductions to the most appropriate finance providers.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs.

## Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme

A guarantee facility for small businesses to improve the availability of working capital through term loans and the consolidation of overdrafts. Supports lending for business growth and development in cases where a sound proposition may otherwise be declined due to a lack of security.

Loans of between £1,000 and £1 million are available via banks.

The guarantee can be used to:

- Support new loans
- Refinance existing loans where the loan is at risk due to deteriorating quality of security
- Convert an existing overdraft into a loan to release capacity to meet working capital requirements.

### ► Eligibility

Businesses with an annual turnover of up to £25 million unable to secure the finance they need.

## Small Loans for Business

Loans to help small business owners, entrepreneurs, charities and social enterprises start up, develop and expand their businesses.

Loans of between £3,000 and £50,000 are available at commercial rates of interest and a five-year maximum term. They can be used to fund activities including:

- Premises and equipment
- Working capital
- Marketing activities
- Product development.

### ► Eligibility

Individuals starting a business and SMEs with a viable business plan, growth potential, and evidence that they have been unable to secure finance from traditional commercial sources.

## Grant for Business Investment

Grants providing help for major business investment projects which increase productivity, skills and employment.

The maximum level of grant is 10% - 45% of the project's total cost depending on business location and size. The minimum size of the overall project is approximately £100,000.

The grants can be used to:

- Launch a new business
- Modernise, expand or reorganise an existing business
- Introduce innovative new technology or processes
- Take a new product, service or process from the development stage to production.

### ► Eligibility

All SMEs in the region. Also available to large companies in 'Assisted Areas' - Liverpool City Region (excluding Halton), North Manchester, Blackburn, Skelmersdale and West Cumbria. Businesses must show they have been unable to secure finance from traditional commercial sources.

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## Venture Capital and Loan Fund

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A combination of loan, equity and mezzanine funding to support business growth.

Loans range from £50,000 to £250,000. Equity and Mezzanine finance is up to £2 million.

Appropriate for all SMEs looking to grow. Includes finance for starting up, seed money for proof of concept or more established businesses seeking equity finance to expand operations.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs with a viable business plan, growth potential, and evidence that they have been unable to secure finance from traditional commercial sources for the project.

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## Northwest Business Angels

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A network of private equity investors who invest in new or expanding businesses.

The level of investment ranges from £10,000 to £500,000.

The network matches potential high growth companies with high net worth individuals looking for business investment opportunities. It also helps companies seeking finance become 'investment ready' and prepared to meet with investors.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and individuals starting a business.

Financial support is also available as part of other products and services including:

#### **Innovation and Efficiency**

- Grant for Research and Development
- Innovation Vouchers
- Improving Your Resource Efficiency

#### **International Trade**

- Accessing International Markets
- Developing your International Trade Potential

#### **Training and Development**

- Apprenticeships
- Train to Gain - People Development
- Train to Gain - Leadership and Management Advisory Service

To access any of these products and services contact:



**Business Link Northwest**

**0845 00 66 888**

**[businesslink.gov.uk/northwest](https://businesslink.gov.uk/northwest)**

# Innovation and Efficiency

## Innovation Advice and Guidance

Free advice and support from specialist advisers at Business Link Northwest to provide businesses with specialist technical and advanced skills to enable them to innovate and improve performance.

Includes a diagnosis of innovation needs and facilitates introductions to the most appropriate support.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and large firms.

## Innovation Vouchers

Funding to enable businesses to purchase research and development support from universities, colleges or private sector research establishments in the region.

Vouchers are valued at £3,000. They can be 'pooled' with other businesses which share a common interest to create a large research project up to a maximum of 10 organisations.

Vouchers can be used towards the cost of any kind of innovation project to address business problems or to exploit new ideas including:

- Market research projects
- Prototype development and testing
- Software development
- Use of university research facilities
- Innovation/technology audits
- New service development
- Product and service testing
- Efficiency audits.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs including social enterprises.

## Knowledge to Innovate

Free, intensive support to introduce new or improved products or services.

Provides specialist advice and practical assistance to implement innovative ideas or processes. This can also include the development of leadership skills, organisational change and supply chain improvements. Delivered by innovation experts via bespoke in-house and topic-led company workshops. Between two and eight days free support is available.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs with 20+ employees where innovation can add value. Businesses with 10+ employees with clear growth potential will also be considered.

## Grant for Research and Development

Grants to assist businesses to introduce innovative products and processes including research trials, product testing, and demonstration of low carbon technologies. The grants are used to develop and exploit new ideas, overcome technical barriers and scientific risk as well as increase R&D activity.

Different types of project are supported, depending on the scale with grant amounts ranging from £5,000 to £500,000. The level of grant provided ranges from 35% - 60% of the project costs.

Eligible costs include:

- Pay of personnel
- Overheads
- Consultancy
- Capital equipment
- Market assessment
- Trials and testing
- Intellectual property.

### ► Eligibility

Individuals starting a business and SMEs.

## Improving Your Resource Efficiency

Advice and support to help businesses become more resource efficient, reduce their carbon impact and increase competitiveness.

Businesses can access on-site support from a professionally qualified adviser on a range of issues including:

- Assistance with legal compliance
- Development of environmental policies and action plans
- Corporate responsibility reporting
- Identification and implementation of working practices that minimise the use of raw materials, water and energy.

Grants towards the cost of capital purchases, that can demonstrate CO<sub>2</sub> reductions are also available, ranging from approximately £10,000 to £200,000. The level of grant provided is up to 50% of the costs.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and large firms at initial level. Further specialist support is available for those with significant potential to reduce their environmental impacts. Grants - SMEs only.

## Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

Subsidised support for the placement of a recently qualified person (for example degree or post-doctorate) in a business. It allows businesses to work collaboratively with knowledge base institutions to exploit knowledge through new products, services and processes.

SMEs are required to contribute approximately one third of the costs, large companies are required to contribute half of the costs.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and large firms.

## Manufacturing Advisory Service

Specific support for manufacturing companies in the form of free and subsidised practical advice to help businesses reduce costs and improve productivity and efficiency.

Support includes:

- A manufacturing review to improve operational performance
- Low-cost factory visits to develop knowledge in best practice tools and techniques
- Events and masterclasses covering a range of subjects
- On-site, practical project support from experienced manufacturing specialists.

### ► Eligibility

All manufacturing businesses. SMEs are also entitled to funded support at both review and project stage.

To access any of these products and services contact:



**Business Link Northwest**

**0845 00 66 888**

**[businesslink.gov.uk/northwest](https://businesslink.gov.uk/northwest)**

# Advice for new and high growth businesses

## Starting a Business

Free telephone and web-based advice from Business Link Northwest to support new business start-ups as well as individuals and groups actively considering starting a business.

Covers essential subjects required to successfully start a business including:

- Compliance and regulatory reform
- Business strategy and business planning
- Finance (including getting paid)
- Business idea development, market research and market understanding
- Employing people
- Managing and running a small business
- Advice on premises, Health & Safety
- Information Communication Technology (ICT).

### ► Eligibility

Individuals and groups starting a business including social enterprises.

## Intensive Start-Up Support

Free advice and intensive assistance (in addition to that provided by Business Link Northwest) for under-represented individuals to help start their own business.

Provides help and ongoing support from six months before start of trading to 36 months post start-up including:

- Personalised support from an adviser, coach or mentor to overcome specific barriers
- One-to-many workshops covering the range of business issues encountered at start-up.

### ► Eligibility

Prioritised based on locality and the needs of the individual. This includes, but is not restricted to, women, people with disabilities and black and minority ethnic communities. Business Link Northwest will provide guidance regarding eligibility.

## Enterprise Coaching

Flexible one-to-one support at a local level to stimulate interest amongst people with the desire and potential to start their own business. Includes talks, visits, presentations and mentoring support.

### ► Eligibility

Prioritised based on locality and the needs of the individual. This includes, but is not restricted to, women, people with disabilities and black and minority ethnic communities. Business Link Northwest will provide guidance regarding eligibility.

## High Growth Programme

Free dedicated support to help new and existing businesses with the desire and potential to achieve significant growth.

Provides intensive and customised one-to-one coaching from experienced mentors supplemented by workshops, networks and online resources, to enable entrepreneurs to improve their business knowledge and expertise.

### ► Eligibility

Individuals starting a business with the potential to create a turnover of £500,000 within three years as well as SMEs with a turnover of under £10 million and capable of achieving at least 20% growth per annum.

To access any of these products and services contact:



**Business Link Northwest**  
**0845 00 66 888**  
[businesslink.gov.uk/northwest](https://businesslink.gov.uk/northwest)

# International Trade

## Developing Your International Trade Potential

Advice and funding for businesses to support preparation and entry into overseas markets.

Provides tailored training, workshops and networking to help businesses prepare to trade internationally. Also includes market research advice and support and a review of company communications to ensure the business presents itself appropriately to overseas clients.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and large firms.

## Accessing International Markets

Specialist and in-depth market research and advice on identifying opportunities for businesses considering exporting into new overseas markets. Provides an overview of the chosen market, access to relevant contacts as well as comprehensive market research reports.

Also includes financial support towards the costs of overseas trade fairs and missions. The level of support varies according to the market.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and large firms.

## Export Credit Guarantee

Insurance policies for contracts involving the export of capital equipment and project-related goods and services. Insurance is provided to UK exporters against risks such as non-payment by overseas buyers.

It also guarantees banks who make loans available to overseas buyers to purchase goods and services from UK-based companies as well as insuring UK investors in overseas markets against political risks.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs and large firms.

To access any of these products and services contact:

	<b>Business Link Northwest</b>
	<b>0845 00 66 888</b>
	<b><a href="https://businesslink.gov.uk/northwest">businesslink.gov.uk/northwest</a></b>

# Training and Development

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## Skills Brokerage Service

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Free support from specialist advisers at Business Link Northwest to help businesses identify their workforce training needs in order to meet business requirements - from basic skills through to university degrees.

The service also helps arrange necessary training and provides advice on funding to help businesses meet the cost of training.

### ► Eligibility

All businesses.

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## Apprenticeships

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Funding to train apprentices to work alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills. Covering all age groups above 16, apprentices also receive training with a local training provider such as a college, usually on a day-release basis.

There is no cost to the trainee or the employer for Apprenticeship training. The trainee is employed by the business who is responsible for the trainee's salary.

### ► Eligibility

All businesses.

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## Train to Gain – People Development

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Funding towards accredited employee training and development. Includes full or partial funding of vocational qualifications up to NVQ Level 4, equivalent to a professional qualification, subject to specific eligibility criteria and existing skills of the employee. Also includes in-depth support to assess businesses' training needs and assistance to source appropriate provision.

### ► Eligibility

All businesses.

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## Train to Gain – Leadership & Management Advisory Service

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Funding towards the cost of relevant training and development for leaders and managers to improve the performance and competitiveness of a business.

Support of up to £1,000 per individual is available for up to seven individuals per business. Funding can be used towards workshops, masterclasses, coaching, textbooks and other training and development programmes. A personal development plan must be completed for each person.

### ► Eligibility

Businesses with between five - 999 employees.

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## Mentoring

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Free mentoring support for leaders, managers and individuals to develop their ability and potential to optimise business performance and growth.

Provided by experienced and credible mentors who share their wealth of knowledge and experience over 6 - 12 months. Support ranges from business-to-business, group, one-to-one and online mentoring.

### ► Eligibility

Individuals starting a business and SMEs.

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## Leading Enterprise and Development (LEAD)

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A leadership programme designed specifically around the needs of SME Owner/Managers to encourage leadership skills and improve business performance. The programme combines active teaching with practical tasks, masterclasses, coaching, action learning, business shadowing and exchanges.

### ► Eligibility

SMEs with less than 20 employees.

# Sector Development

## Sector Development

Regional sector organisations providing information, networking, supply chain and business development opportunities. Available to companies in the following sectors:

### **Advanced Flexible Materials**

Northwest Textiles Network  
[nwtexnet.co.uk](http://nwtexnet.co.uk)

### **Aerospace**

Northwest Aerospace Alliance  
[aerospace.co.uk](http://aerospace.co.uk)

### **Automotive**

Northwest Automotive Alliance  
[nwautoalliance.com](http://nwautoalliance.com)

### **Biomedical**

Bionow  
[bionow.co.uk](http://bionow.co.uk)

### **Chemicals**

Chemicals Northwest  
[chemicalsnorthwest.org.uk](http://chemicalsnorthwest.org.uk)

### **Contact Centres**

Call Northwest  
[callnorthwest.org.uk](http://callnorthwest.org.uk)

### **Digital and Creative**

Northwest Vision and Media  
[visionandmedia.co.uk](http://visionandmedia.co.uk)

### **Energy and Environmental Technologies**

EnviroLink Northwest  
[envirolinknorthwest.co.uk](http://envirolinknorthwest.co.uk)

### **Financial and Professional**

Pro-Manchester  
[pro-manchester.co.uk](http://pro-manchester.co.uk)

Professional Liverpool  
[professionalliverpool.com](http://professionalliverpool.com)

### **Food and Drink**

Food Northwest  
[foodnw.co.uk](http://foodnw.co.uk)

### ► Eligibility

All businesses in relevant sectors.

To access any of these products and services contact:

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	<b>0845 00 66 888</b>
	<b><a href="http://businesslink.gov.uk/northwest">businesslink.gov.uk/northwest</a></b>