

COVID-19 – E-COMMERCE SUPPORTS FOR CO-OPERATIVES

9th April 2020

The current restrictions on trade and commerce imposed by the Irish Government in order to protect public health during the COVID-19 emergency presents some challenges to co-operatives that operate a retail function which has been curtailed as a result of being deemed non-essential.

The COVID-19 emergency restrictions may be prompting these co-operatives to explore whether an online platform would be an appropriate tool to maintain their retail business and keep serving their customers. Set out below is the range of supports available to co-operatives seeking to develop an e-commerce capability.

ICOS Skillnet may be able to assist your co-operative should your staff require training to equip them for online trading.

COVID-19 RETAIL ONLINE SCHEME

On April 8th 2020, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) announced a new COVID-19 Retail Online Scheme which will be administered by [Enterprise Ireland](#) and will be open to **retailers employing over 10 people**. The DBEI has proposed this Scheme in response to the COVID-19 crisis and the urgent need for retail co-operatives and other enterprises to scale up their online capability to achieve business continuity and set themselves up for recovery and growth.

- The objective of the Scheme is to support co-operatives and other enterprises in the retail sector with a pre-existing online presence (e.g. a website or social media) to respond to consumer demand for a competitive online offer.
- Co-operatives and other enterprises who apply for this scheme must have a retail outlet and **derive the majority of their revenue from the retail outlet(s)**.
- Successful applicants will be awarded funding to support a maximum of 80% of the project costs.
- Grants ranging from €10,000 to €40,000 will be awarded under the Scheme.
- The scheme is **not open to**:
 - Enterprises active in the **primary production** of agricultural products, fishery and aquaculture.
 - Franchisees of retailers for whom the **franchisor provides material online support**.

Please see the [Enterprise Ireland](#) website for the complete set of criteria.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY VOUCHER

For co-operatives and other enterprises requiring broader support, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation have announced a Business Continuity Voucher which is available through Local Enterprise Offices. The Voucher is available to co-operatives and other enterprises that employ up to 50 people.

- The voucher is worth up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs and can be used by co-operatives to develop short-term and long-term strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The goal is to help co-operatives and other enterprises make informed decisions about what immediate measures and remedial actions should be taken, to protect staff and sales.
- If your application is successful, a qualified expert will be selected by your Local Enterprise Office to work with you on your business continuity plans, which may go beyond trading online. The value of this service is up to a maximum of €2,500.

It is important to note this scheme is not suitable for clients of Enterprise Ireland, IDA or Údarás na Gaeltachta. Clients of Enterprise Ireland, IDA or Údarás na Gaeltachta should contact their relevant agency, which have other suitable supports in place. This is a restricted scheme with ordinarily one voucher available per business.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICES (LEOs) €2,500 TRADING ONLINE VOUCHER

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) €2,500 Trading Online Voucher is a Government grant scheme, designed to assist small co-operatives and other enterprises (**less than 10 staff**).

- It offers financial assistance of up to €2,500 along with training and advice to help your business trade online.
- The Trading Online Voucher grant scheme is administered by the LEOs on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.
- The grant is available to cover 90% of the costs of an online initiative and recipients can be awarded up to two grants of €2,500 to co-operatives and other enterprises which have successfully implemented an initial grant offer. See: localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports

It is important to note that ICOS Skillnet will not be able to assist co-operatives who avail of this scheme.



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An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
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