



Tech-Check






County and City Enterprise Boards *Supporting Enterprise*

ICT – VN Seminar 17th June 2011




County & City Enterprise Boards | Boird Fiontar Contae agus Cathrach








Who are the County & City Enterprise Boards (CEBs)?

- Regional Enterprise Agencies set up in 1993 to promote entrepreneurship and support micro-enterprise (up to 10 employees) at local level.
- Local, autonomous, flexible.
- Funded by EU, Irish Government, & Own Resources
- Boards have cross sector representation.
- To foster an enterprise spirit / culture





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35 Local CEBs

Dublin (4)
Cork (4)
Limerick (2)
Waterford (2)
Tipperary (2)





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Services to Business

- First stop shop for business supports
- Advice and information
- Management Development Training
- Mentoring
- Financial assistance
- Business Networking
- Enterprise Events



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Training Programmes

- Pre-enterprise workshops,
- Start Your Own Business Programme,
- Management Development Training,
- Specific Skills Training e.g. Sales & Marketing, HR, Finance, Getting paid on time, eCommerce, Communications, Exporting etc.

Financial Supports

Three types:

1. Innovation / Feasibility Study

(new or growing businesses) – up to €20,000 or 60% of cost

2. Business Priming Grant

(businesses <18 months in existence) – up to €30,000 or 50% of eligible investment

3. Business Expansion Grant

(businesses >18 months in existence) – up to €30,000 or 50% of eligible investment

Financial Assistance Application assessment

Each application for funding is independently assessed on various criteria, including the following:

- ✓ Employment prospects (all approvals are linked to job creation)
- ✓ Viability and sustainability of the business
- ✓ Ability/Experience of promoter
- ✓ Track record (promoter/business)
- ✓ Funding in place / accessible
- ✓ Prospects for development & growth
- ✓ Prospects for internationalisation
- ✓ Innovativeness
- ✓ "Displacement" – will the business displace local competitors

Enterprise Initiatives

Other CEB initiatives include:

- Enterprise Awards (open to businesses that have been financially assisted);
- Student Enterprise Awards;
- Exhibitions (e.g. Showcase for craft businesses);
- National Women's Enterprise Day
- Other e.g. ICT Audits & Tech-check etc.

Enterprise Awards



Pictured are Michael Tunney, Chair of Network of County and City Enterprise Boards
 Joe O' Donovan, Co-Founder Callan Technology Ltd
 Paul O' Beirne, Co-Founder, Callan Technology Ltd



Enterprise Education



National Women's Enterprise Day



Key Outputs from 2010

- Approved €14.6M in grant aid to 1,037 businesses
- 23,732 participants on management development, and training programmes in 2010
- Over 3,000 received one-to-one advice/mentoring
- 12,000 students participating in Student Enterprise projects and competitions.



Background to ICT audits

- Suggestion from Small Business Forum
- Government focus on 'Smart economy'
- Benefits of I.T. to Small Business not maximised
- Not seen as a priority among many businesses
- Microenterprise sector – IT shy, don't know the questions to ask, & time poor
- Business owners unsure of cost and benefits
- Government wanted SMEs to use technology to improve productivity /invest time & money in IT

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The solution



- Proposed : an audit of use of technology to result in recommendations to help business.
- No homework/groundwork. 1 page application
- Minimum Fee - €150. subsidised.
- Face to face meeting with owner/managers on site. Opportunity to ask questions.
- Audit of: *use of existing technologies, technology planning, security & maintenance, automation, supply and purchasing, internet marketing, people, & future readiness = review and recommendations*

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Selling Tech-Check

Selling the benefits

Save money / greater productivity / allow greater mobility / get into e-commerce / get better broadband / software to improve service delivery or reduce administration burden

Solve a current issue

Can't get broadband / thinking of upgrading equip.

Selling the fear

Data security / back-up / email & internet policies

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What is Tech-Check?
Tech-Check is a new programme where small businesses like yours can access independent expert advice on the most effective use of your existing technology as well as practical suggestions for appropriate development of technology use.

Is this just about computers?
No. It is primarily about your business and how it can be improved using all sorts of technology. Computers are important of course but so are other kinds of electronic technology. Things like the internet also represents a huge area of opportunity for business development.

How does it work?
An Adviser is assigned to your business and will arrange to visit you. The Adviser will spend time with you to discuss your business in detail and what your overall plans are for its development. Together, you and your Adviser will examine your existing technology using a diagnostic tool (usually a type of questionnaire) to identify opportunities for improving your business. This is used to develop a brief action plan based on the best of these opportunities.

Who is it for?
Tech-Check is for every small business no matter what sector it operates in. Whether your business is a long-established technology firm and already using the best and newest technology, there is always a benefit to businesses where you are slow and planning where you need to get up to speed.

What do I get out of it?

- The most valuable benefit is the advice of the Adviser as he or she works through the process with you.
- The end result of the exercise is a basic written plan for the improvement of your business using technology. It will be given to you in writing and in electronic format. You can develop this plan further and even incorporate it into your main business plan.
- The process of reviewing every aspect of technology as it applies to your business can be very useful in itself.

How long does it take?
For most businesses, the process can be completed within a day. This can be split into two half-day sessions. Breaking it down further is not a good idea because momentum is lost and costs are increased.

How much does it cost?
The advised fee is €150.
This price is very heavily subsidised by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and represents only a fraction of the actual cost of the service.

I want it. What do I do now?
Apply to Carrick County Enterprise Board. You will find their contact information at www.ceboard.ie.

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EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Tech-Check - the rollout in 2007

- Pilot - €3m budget over 2 years / 1,000 per year
- Diagnostic tool developed to provide uniformity and Comprehensive coverage.
- Mentors - invited to tender, selected, & briefed
- Code of practice & client sign off.
- Application form & conditions
- Promotion – local & national radio, targeted direct mail, local & national websites (www.techcheck.ie), mentors.

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EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Results

- Over 1,500 Tech-checks conducted
- All clients got a written report with practical recommendations
- Positive feedback
- Showed CEB as a support in IT area
- Encouraged businesses to look at IT as a way to improve their business
- Built up a list of IT mentors nationwide.

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EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Lessons

- Allows clients to ask the questions, remove the mystery, and want more.
- Use to solve immediate problems
- Take time to choose mentors—min. Criteria
- 2 half days work best
- Follow up with support for implementation?
- All CEBs did it their own way!
- Fee – needs to represent value for money
- Marketing – give business the form to sign.

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Thank You

Any Questions?

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