**General Advice for Businesses during Covid-19**

Here are some practical steps you can take to safeguard your business:

* **Talk to your bank**

Collectively, the banks have announced they will offer flexibility to their customers, and have agreed to implement a payment break up to three months for business and personal customers affected by Covid-19, to be followed by ongoing reviews depending on the scale and extent of the situation. Any customer who avails of this support will not see their credit rating adversely impacted. For further information if you a customer of:

* AIB please click [here](https://aib.ie/covid19/online-forms)
* Bank of Ireland please click [here](https://personalbanking.bankofireland.com/borrow/mortgages/mortgage-repayment-covid-19/)
* Ulster Bank please click [here](https://digital.ulsterbank.ie/personal/help-and-support/coronavirus.html)
* PTSB please click [here](https://www.permanenttsb.ie/about-us/notices/2020/march/covid-19/)
* EBS please click [here](https://www.ebs.ie/covid19/concerned-about-mortgage-repayments)
* KBC Bank please click [here](https://www.kbc.ie/news-and-press/latest-news-and-press-releases/covid-19-update-a-message-for-kbc-customers)
* **Manage your cashflow. Look for scope to:**
* Lower variable costs
* Delay discretionary spend
* Extend your payables
* Expedite your receivables
* Explore supply chain financing options
* **Check if your insurance policy covers you for an interruption** in your business, or a temporary business closure, caused by COVID-19

* **Avail of Government support to meet your business’ working capital needs**

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| **Funding Lines** | **Amount** | **Requirements**  |
| **Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme** | For every employee paid between:€400 and €1,462 gross per week, the subsidy is €350€300 and €399.99 gross per week, the subsidy is €300€203 and €299.99 gross per week, the subsidy is €250€151.50 and €202.99 gross per week, the subsidy is €203. | An expected 30% reduction in turnover or customer orders between 1 July and 31 December 2020 as a result of Covid-19.Employees are eligible if they are in receipt of weekly gross wages between €151.50 and €1,462 (subject to exemptions).The EWSS is currently due to expire on 31st March 2021 |
| **COVID Restrictions Support Scheme** | Advance Credit for Trading Expenses (ACTE) is payable for each week a business is affected by public health restrictions. The ACTE is equal to 10% of the average weekly turnover of the business in 2019 up to €20,000, plus 5% on turnover over €20,000. In the case of new businesses, the turnover is based on the average actual weekly turnover in 2020. The ACTE is subject to a maximum weekly payment of €5,000.Businesses benefiting from CRSS for the weeks of 28 December 2020 and 4 January 2021 will receive a double payment up to a maximum of €5000 and should restrictions last for three weeks or more, businesses in receipt of CRSS will be eligible for payment of an additional weeks restart payment on reopening at the end of the period of restrictions. | The business must operate from a premises in a region subject to Government restrictions in the claim period;the business business must prohibit or significantly restrict members of the public from your its premises due to public health restrictionsthe business’ turnover during the period of restrictions will be no more than 25% of the average weekly turnover of the business in 2019 or average weekly turnover in 2020 in the case of a new business. |
| **Trading Online Voucher** | Up to €2,500 to help your business trade online. Businesses that have already received a Trading Online Voucher and looking to upgrade their capabilities can apply for a second voucher. | Small businesses with up to 10 employees. |
| **COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme** | Up to €2 billion earmarked for lending to eligible businesses. Loans under the Scheme range from €10,000 to €1 million, for terms of up to five and a half years. | The Guarantee is available to eligible SME and small Mid-Cap businesses, including primary producers.To qualify a business must also have experienced a reduction of a minimum 15% in actual or projected turnover or profit due to the impact of COVID-19. |
| **Covid-19 Business Loans** | Up to €25,000 per loan through Microfinance Ireland with no repayments and zero interest for the first 6 months and the equivalent of an additional 6 months interest-free subject to certain terms and conditions. Subsequent interest rate of 4.5-5.5% with typical term of 3 years. | To qualify a business must:be a micro-enterprise with fewer than 10 employees and less than €2million in turnover be unable to get finance commerciallybe experiencing a drop in turnover of at least 15% due to Covid-19 |
| **SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Scheme** | Maximum loan size of €1.5 million (first €500,000 unsecured) and the maximum interest rate will be 4%Applications can be made through the SBCI website at [sbci.gov.ie](https://sbci.gov.ie/) | **Summary of Excluded Activities**Finance of specific export operations, or finance contingent upon the use of domestic over imported products. In particular, it should not apply to financing the establishment and operation of a distribution network in other States, or current expenditure linked to the export activity.Finance of pure real estate development activityFinance of activities constituting pure financial transactions (e.g. purchase of shares)Loans to undertakings in difficultyFinance of activities forbidden by national or EU lawAgriculture (see specific SBCI Agricultural Investment Loan product), aquaculture and fisheries loansRefinance to reschedule existing loan or completed project (see specific product for Refinance Of Exiting Banks)Aid for the acquisition of road freight transport vehicles by undertakings performing road freight transport for hire or rewardPlease refer to the link above for comprehensive detail on specific exclusionsApply [here](https://sbci.gov.ie/schemes/covid-19-loan-application/) |
| **Covid-19 Business Financial Grant** | Grant of value up to €5,000 to help companies to develop a robust financial plan, including preparation for applications for external finance. | Open to Enterprise Ireland clients and manufacturing and internationally traded services businesses with at least 10 employees |
| **Lean Business Continuity Voucher** | Up to €2,500 for training or advisory services support related to the continued operation of the recipient business during the pandemic | Open to client companies of Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta. |
| **LEAN for Micro** | Unspecified amount of support for help in implementing remote working and physical distancing guidelines, as well as advice on building resiliency. | Open to small Enterprise Ireland client companies and accessible through Local Enterprise offices. |
| **E-Merge programme InterTrade Ireland** | €2,800 in consultancy support to build online sales and eCommerce solutions | Restricted to cross-border SMEs in manufacturing or internationally traded services sectors with less than 250 staff and £40 million in turnover. |
| **Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme from SOLAS** | €3,000 payment for each new apprentice |  |
| **Covid Products Scheme** | Budget of €200 million for state support to research and development as well as the upscaling of production of products relevant to the fight against Covid-19 |  |
| **Enterprise Ireland Sustaining Enterprise Fund** | Between €100,000 and €800,000 in support from EI with grants of up to 50% of the support given up to a value of €200,000. | This funding is time-limited and open to manufacturing or internationally traded services companies that employ more than 10 people and have experienced (or expect) a 15% or greater reduction in actual or projected turnover or profit, or a significant increase in costs, as a result of Covid-19. |
| **Sustaining Enterprise Fund for Small Enterprise** | €25,000 - €50,000 in working capital injections for 3-6 months up to 50% of which can be non-repayable. | Eligible applicants are manufacturing and internationally traded service companies with:between 10 and 50 full-time people on their payroll on the 29th of February 202015% or greater drop in actual or projected turnover or profit, or a significant increase in costs, as a result of Covid-19. |

* **Business Rates and tax measures**

The Government has further extended the existing **commercial rates waiver until 31st March 2021**. However, in Q1 2021, the waiver will apply only businesses most severely affected by restrictions. The categories of business eligible for the waiver will be determined in line with Government decisions on level five restrictions. Further guidance will be issued once this determination has been finalised.
A **Reduction in the standard rate of VAT** from 23% to 21% applies for 6 months from 1 September 2020.
**VAT rate reduction from 13.5% to 9%** applies from 1 November 2020 for businesses in the hospitality and tourism sector.

* **Revenue**

**Revenue is currently 'Warehousing' deferred tax debts** associated with the COVID-19 crisis.
**If you have concerns about your ability to pay your tax liabilities** speak to the Revenue Commissioners.

Separately, Revenue's [COVID-19 information and advice for taxpayers and agents](https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/communications/covid19/index.aspx) provides information on tax and customs measures implemented due the COVID-19 pandemic including information on tax returns and interest suspension arrangements.

* **Selected sector-specific supports and guidance**

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| **Sector** | **Support** |
| Food, drink and horticulture sector | [Bord Bia's 'Navigating Change' COVID-19 Response programme](https://www.bordbia.ie/industry/covid-19/) offers a range of supports to relevant businesses impacted by Covid-19.[Amendments to Planning and Development Regulations](https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/covid-19-coronavirus/government-action-planning-during-covid-19-crisis) have been made to allow restaurants to operate on a takeaway basis without applying for planning permission. |
| Tourism sector | Fáilte Ireland offers a Covid-19 Business Support Hub and the agency has a €26m Covid-19 Adaptation Fund |
| Culture Sector | The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has developed [guidance on the latest COVID-19 protocols for the cultural sector](https://www.chg.gov.ie/guidance-on-the-latest-covid-19-protocols-for-cultural-events/). Employment supports in the creative industries include the [Live Performance Support Scheme](https://www.chg.gov.ie/arts/creative-arts/grants-and-funding/) and the [Music Stimulus Package](https://www.firstmusiccontact.com/misphomepage). |
| Design Sector | The [Design & Craft Council Ireland](https://www.dccoi.ie/) offers development programmes, including webinars in response to the impact of COVID-19. |

* **Employee Support**

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| **COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment** | Until 1st February 2021 the PUP is paid at four rates depending on the last weekly income of the person concerned. | Available to working-age persons who have lost employment or who have seen their self-employed income drop severely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. |

* **Support for Renters**

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|  | Eviction bans are in place whenever Government restrictions prevent people from travelling beyond 5km from their home (Level 5 of restrictions) |
|  | Persons who have experienced financial difficulty due to Covid-19 may not have their rents raised before 10 January 2021. |
|  | Rent Supplement is also available as a short-term income support to those in the private rented sector who are experiencing difficulty paying their rent |
|  | The Government has developed a voluntary Code of Conduct between landlords and tenants for commercial rents |

* **Support for Utility Bills**

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|  | Moratorium on disconnections of domestic customers for non-payment to the gas and electricity suppliers applies during periods of level 5 restrictions |

* **Public Health Measures**

The Government has introduced a 5-level framework of public health restrictions the levels of which can be applied at a county or national level. The Government at times issues specific guidance at variance with the standard definitions of the 5 levels.

* **Useful resources**

See below

[HSE Information on the Coronavirus](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html)



