**PRESS RELEASE**

Monday, 15th June 2020

**Programme for Government measures to protect SMEs welcome but concern over lack of major grant scheme to recover small businesses**

[SME Recovery Ireland](https://www.smerecovery.ie/), has today expressed its disappointment over the lack of a major grant scheme in the Programme for Government signed-off today (15.06.20) by the leaders of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party to help small businesses recover in the aftermath of Covid-19. The introduction of a scheme to recapitalise small businesses was one of three key asks put forward under the groups National Small Business Recovery Plan.

Commenting, Chair of SME Recovery Ireland John Moran said: “While we are encouraged to see today’s Programme for Government document acknowledge the vital role SME’s will play in reigniting and renewing Ireland’s economy, there appears to be a commitment to only back sectors and businesses which the Government deems viable. It is disappointing to see little in the way of supports to recapitalise small businesses for the costs incurred in voluntarily closing their doors to protect staff and customers back in March

“However, the major economic stimulus package which is expected to be unveiled next month as part of the Programme will hopefully provide a much needed boost to enable our small businesses to return to capacity where possible and more broadly to strengthen SME’s resilience, productivity and innovation. Attention must now turn to delivering this package as a matter of urgency if we are to prevent our small businesses from failing, many of whom face real liquidity and cashflow issues.

Additional measures contained within the Programme for Government which SME Recovery Ireland are welcoming include:

* The immediate introduction of an SME Taskforce as part of the July Stimulus to coordinate the SME response to the Covid crisis.
* An expanded mandate for the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI).
* A simplified examinership commitment.
* A National Recovery Fund with investment commitments for the SME sector.
* A commitment to consider further grant support to SME’s as part of the National Economic Plan.
* The establishment of an SME Growth Taskforce to deliver an SME Growth Plan.
* A commitment to public procurement simplification for SME’s.
* Strong business financing for SME’s under the proposed National Economic Plan.

Mr Moran added: “SME Recovery Ireland was initially established due to the fear that the cries for help form small business owners were not being listened to. The intention to convene an SME and State Bodies Group to coordinate the Government’s ongoing response to COVID-19 for small businesses as well as an SME Growth Taskforce shows some commitment to ensure these voices are listened to. However, this commitment can only be fully demonstrated through the delivery of the correct supports. It is vital that Government use these new platforms to listen to what the SME sector needs recover as the backbone of our economy and drive employment in our town, villages, and local communities.

“The details revealed today mark an important move to managing the predictable impacts of small business closures, but this is only a first step. SME’s must remain key to the policies adopted by Government over the coming years and there needs to be more joined up thinking and simplification around accessing the supports available to SMEs. The secondary impacts on jobs in different sectors from this crisis will be harder to predict. The SME Growth Taskforce must now build and maintain momentum, but above all be innovative and ambitious. The Taoiseach and the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation must now personally lead this effort and put in place bespoke strong governance to drive implementation.”

For full details of SME Recovery Ireland’s National Small Business Recovery Plan, visit: [www.smerecovery.ie](http://www.smerecovery.ie).

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

* Chair of SME Recovery Ireland, John Moran is available for interview upon request.
* SME Recovery Ireland’s National Small Business Recovery Plan is available to download [here](https://www.smerecovery.ie/documents/National%20Small%20Business%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf).
* Follow SME Recovery Ireland on social media:
  + Twitter: [@SMERecoveryIrl](https://twitter.com/SMERecoveryIrl)

**About SME Recovery Ireland**

SME Recovery Ireland is an umbrella platform established by business representative groups and small business owners to develop and advocate for a recovery plan for the small business sector for implementation as part of the Government’s Covid-19 National Recovery Plan. The National Small Business Recovery Plan published by SME Recovery Ireland is a dynamic plan that allows us to continue to identify policies and interventions that will help a broad population of SME’s. The plan focuses on key generally applicable principles and corresponding key policy interventions that are required to stabilise and recapitalise the small business sector so that employment and economic activity can be restored. More detailed sector specific matters will continue to be identified and advocated for by sectoral representative groups.