

YES YOU CAN – Explore It – Programme Summary

The Explore It programme is a support programme for women at the pre-start or early-stage trading in business. The programme will commence in March with 3 weeks of workshops (2 mornings per week) which will cover all the business start-up issues that you need to know. There are 14 places in each group and the cohorts will be allocated by Council areas, (please note training will all be online until we are Covid safe). After you have completed the core training in March, we will then allocate you a Buddy to look in more detail at your 1-2-1 needs and to help you work through issues, challenges and actions. From April to June you will continue to meet as a group one evening per month to support each other and to hear tips and advice from 4 different female entrepreneurs who have been through a similar start up journey and now run a successful business. New for 2021 we also are delighted to have 3 specialist digital marketing workshops which will be delivered once per month in April, May and June. These practical sessions will help you work out the key digital tools for your business and give you the skills to put them into practice.

Your group will also have its own private Facebook group for support and discussion, and you will have ongoing support from the local Coordinator over the 4 month period.

- 6 half day workshops on business topics in March 2021
- 3 half day monthly digital marketing workshops in April, May, June 2021
- 3 monthly evening support and networking sessions with local entrepreneurs
- 8hrs of 121 Buddy support
- Closed Facebook group for the group to provide ongoing advice and support

WHAT DOES THE PROGRAMME OFFER?

1. Business Start Training

6 short training sessions online, 2 mornings per week over 3 weeks

Session 1 : Lets Get started

In workshop 1 you will get to know the group and start to think about what you want to achieve. The content will include Personal development, Goal setting and Action planning. We will consider success factors and the current environment (Covid 19) and work on your mission.

Session 2: Getting to know Your Customer

In workshop 2 we will start to look at your customers, your competitors and market research. While some individuals may already have started trading and feel they already know who they wish to target, sometimes discussion and activities will develop your thinking and even change it. You will also start to learn the power of working in a group where we can use the other participants to get their views, advice and start to create a “peer learning” environment. While the sessions are only twice a week, we hope to see development of ideas, sharing and asking questions between meetings, through our online private group.

Session 3: **Getting the Marketing right**

At workshop 3 we will look at branding, communicating, marketing and pitching. While there are lots of marketing tools available you will start to think about which are the most effective to target your key customer groups.

Session 4: **Marketing into Action**

In workshop 4 we will have an initial review of digital marketing and the key considerations to enable your business get found online, seen online and build your brand. Now that we have established clear marketing messages, we will look at how to actually get sales including selling the benefits, personal selling and telephone sales. We will also hear from a successful entrepreneur about their entrepreneurial journey and their marketing tips.

Session 5: **Getting to Grips with Finance**

In workshop 5 we will look at financial planning and financial management. While many individuals simply find an accountant and rely on them for guidance, this session aims to ensure that you, the business owner, have a strong understanding of financial concepts and that you can produce your own sales forecast and cashflow forecast. We will look at costing and pricing, breakeven and profitability.

Session 6: **Legislation, Technology and Support**

This session will start with an overview of tax law and bookkeeping methods. We will then ensure that everyone is aware of legal compliance issues related to their business and we will share advice on business processes, risk management, technology and business support. We will also work on your action plan, and discuss how to manage time and stress in self-employment.

2. Digital Marketing Training

These sessions will be delivered by Digital 24.

Digital 1: Getting found online and growing online

In Digital 1 we will advise on all the key things you need to think about to increase your online presence and improve your digital marketing including Google My Business, local SEO and gaining exposure so potential customers can find you online. We will:

- Explore how you find keywords so you can compete for a spot on page one of the Google search results.
- Plan out your content because what gets scheduled gets done.
- show you how you can work with other businesses in your niche to get more exposure and get backlinks to bolster your domain's authority.
- Amplify your content on social media, work with people of influence and partner brands so you increase your chances of getting seen.

Digital 2: Hands-on Social Media

Digital 2 will focus on practical tips primarily on Facebook and Instagram but will cover LinkedIn and Twitter too. We will look at how to best use these popular platforms, including scheduling, content, useful tools. We will cover:

- Facebook/Instagram features – live, stories
- Facebook/Instagram content best practices
- Facebook/Instagram overview – key features
- How businesses use Facebook/Instagram
- Best practices for Facebook/Instagram
- Creating posts on social media using canva
- Creating video content using free apps
- LinkedIn - Profiles – best practices, optimisation and features
- Business Pages – how they work and how to use them
- Twitter overview – key features
- How businesses use Twitter

Digital 3: How to create an advertising campaign

Digital 3 will run through an advertising campaign from start to finish, from designing your content on Canva to set up a number of adverts targeting different audiences. We will show you how to work on Canva and the best design tools. We will cover Facebook business manager and running ads on Facebook and Instagram. We will walk you through the dashboard, showing you how to set up audiences, apply Facebook pixel to your website, talk through the different objectives on the advertising platform and how you determine what is right for your business and then how to go about setting up and going live with ads.

The Digital Marketing mentor will participate in our closed Facebook group, enabling queries to be answered between sessions.

3. Meet-Ups with Entrepreneurs

There will be 3 evening meetings which will be scheduled in advance and offer you the opportunity to meet up with other participants every 3 to 4 weeks. This will help you to keep momentum on developing your idea and providing a safe space to share and brainstorm the challenges you face.

The session will be a relaxed 2-2.5hr meet up.

You will hear from a total of 4 female entrepreneurs about their journey and be able to ask their advice on your idea.

You will discuss how you are progressing in small breakout groups of 3 or 4 participants

At each meet up we will endeavour to allocate you to a different entrepreneur (role model mentor) for the group session.

We may also integrate some pitching practice into the sessions, if there is demand within your group.

4. Buddy Support

Each individual will be allocated a Buddy to support them and will be offered 8 hours of support. This usually equates to 3-4 meetings. Your Buddy will have experience of enterprise and have good knowledge of other support available. They will help you look at how to develop your business idea, how to put into practice what you learned on the training and to develop your action plan. They may support you with market research, marketing plans, social media, financial analysis, financial forecasts or business planning.

5. Ongoing Support over 4 months

As part of the programme the Coordinator will set up an online group for the 14 participants to discuss your business issues. By creating a small forum of people you know, you will have a way to share your developments, challenges, business tips and work together as a team. The Coordinator will also be available throughout the duration of the programme to support you.

WHAT IS THE STYLE OF DELIVERY?

All trainers, mentors and buddies engaged in delivery are women who are passionate about female enterprise and who aim to support you to make progress with your idea, no matter how early you are with it. But this is not just about learning key business topics. We want to create your own “tribe” with the other participants in the group. We will work as much as possible in small groups using “Breakout rooms”. So don’t expect to work on just your own idea – its about you helping others with their ideas too!. Innovation and creativity happens when we work in teams.

WHO IS THE PROGRAMME FOR?

Women with an idea at the pre-start stage, who have not yet tried to sell their product or service. You may have more than one idea and need help to work out where to focus or which is the most viable.

Women who have started trying to get business by selling a product or service but it is low scale and they need more support to make it into a full time business.

Women who may be selling a product or service for a while, but they have been doing it more as a hobby or a small sideline and would like to try and make a living from it.

Women who feel they may have a good product or service to sell, but lack confidence or business skills and feel they would benefit from belonging to a group.

Essential criteria, you must:

- Have a business idea and wish to create a business from your idea (the business can be part time)
- Be at pre-start/idea stage (ie no sales yet) OR early stage trading (e.g started in past 6 months or trading a longer time period but more as a hobby or sideline)
- Be able to attend all 6 daytime training sessions (starting on 16th March running 2 mornings per week for 3 weeks)

Other criteria:

- Participants must be over 18 years of age
- Participants must be the business owner
- You must reside or have a business address in the relevant Council area
- Other criteria may be added if there is a high level of applicants

HOW WILL I BENEFIT?

From past programmes we have found participants have benefited as follows:

- Knowledge about business topics and tools to use in your business
- Increased confidence about business skills
- Reassurance about knowledge you may already have and updates on changes
- Perspective on what is important now and what is more important later in your business journey
- Time to reflect, brainstorm and action plan
- Direction and coaching from a “Buddy”
- Goal setting and action planning
- Business friendships that can support you on your journey ahead, and sometimes partnerships or joint working can emerge
- A sense of achievement for those who implement actions following workshops
- Personal confidence in your skills and networking
- Reduced isolation for starting up or running your business
- Awareness of other support available in your area and next steps

WHAT DOES IT COST?

The Yes You Can programme is jointly funded by the 11 local Councils, Invest NI and Women in Business. There is therefore no direct cost to you to participate. However, the programme does cost money to run, and we would ask you to be committed to full attendance and not waste the place. If you drop out after 1 session, we cannot allocate that place to someone else and the money is wasted. This is our 3rd year running the programme and the only time participants have dropped out, was when they were offered a job or when they had committed to too many programmes at the same time!! There will be 7 places available per Council area and each programme will be run over 2 Council areas. The exception is Belfast where there are 14 places for 1 programme.

WHEN DOES IT START?

Explore It Delivery Schedule 2021						
All training will be half day morning						
Council Area	Belfast City Council	Ards & North Down	Antrim & N'abbey	Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon	Causeway Coast & Glens	Omagh & Fermanagh
		Lisburn&Castlereagh	Mid & East Antrim	Newry, Mourne & Down	Derry City & Strabane	Mid Ulster
Delivery Manager	Seed Mentoring	Directus	Mallusk	CIDO	Causeway	OEC
Business Start Training by:	Roisin McDermott	Rosemary Morrison	Sandra Young	Cara Dallat	Anna Logan	Mary McCrory
Workshop 1	16th March	16th March	16th March	16th March	16th March	16th March
Workshop 2	18th March	18th March	18th March	18th March	18th March	18th March
Workshop 3	23rd March	23rd March	23rd March	23rd March	23rd March	23rd March
Workshop 4	25th March	25th March	25th March	25th March	25th March	25th March
Workshop 5	30th March	30th March	30th March	30th March	30th March	30th March
Workshop 6	31st March	31st March	31st March	31st March	31st March	31st March
	Easter break					
Digital Marketing by:	D24	D24	D24	D24	D24	D24
Digital 1	12th April	13th April	14th April	19th April	20th April	21st April
Digital 2	4th May	5th May	6th May	10th May	11th May	12th May
Digital 3	1st June	2nd June	3rd June	8th June	9th June	10th June
Buddying 8 hrs starts April	All commence after Easter break and complete by end of June. Flexible and to be arranged between the Buddy and the participant.					
Role Model Entrepreneurs	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed	To Be Confirmed
Evening Session 1	21st April	22nd April	22nd April	27th April	27th April	28th April
Evening Session 2	13th May	13th May	18th May	18th May	19th May	19th May
Evening Session 3	16th June	17th June	17th June	22nd June	22nd June	23rd June