



# SME and State Bodies Group Terms of Reference

**Date:** 22 February 2023

## Background

The SME and State Bodies Group was formed out of the *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future*, with the stated objective of coordinating the Government’s response to COVID-19 for SMEs. It was envisaged to work alongside other fora, such as the Retail Forum and the Enterprise Forum, and the SME Growth Taskforce, which was tasked with designing a National SME Growth Plan that would map out an ambitious long-term strategic blueprint beyond COVID-19.

The Programme recognised the central role that Ireland’s small and medium enterprises had to play in determining the strength of the recovery for the economy and for jobs from the shock of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It acknowledged that “central to our recovery will be our SME community. They are the backbone of our economy and support many jobs across the country”.

The Programme for Government identified a number of groups to be led by Government to support the formulation of the policy responses at the different stages of the COVID-19 recovery. This included an SME and State Bodies Group.

The SME & State Bodies Group has since provided a platform for dialogue on the challenges currently facing Irish SMEs, not only as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic but due to other crises such as the ongoing War in Ukraine.

## Objective

The objective of convening the SME and State Bodies Group is to provide a platform for dialogue on the current and future challenges facing our SMEs which will inform Government’s ongoing response to crises such as the Covid-19 Pandemic and the War in Ukraine.

## Group Members

The SME and State Bodies Group is jointly chaired by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Finance.

This Group consists of representation from a range of invited business representative bodies and the existing membership of the State Bodies Access to Finance Group.

## List of Member Organisations

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Department of Finance
- Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Credit Review Office
- Enterprise Ireland
- European Investment Bank (EIB)
- Fáilte Ireland
- Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF)
- Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)
- Microfinance Ireland (MFI)
- Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI)
- Euronext
- Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPF)
- Dublin Chambers
- Family Business Network Ireland
- Restaurants Association of Ireland
- Irish Hotel Federation
- British Irish Chamber of Commerce
- Irish Tourism Industry Confederation
- Scale Ireland
- Irish Venture Capital Association
- Chambers Ireland
- Small Firms Association
- Irish SME Association
- IBEC

## Meeting Structure

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment may identify a specific theme or topic for discussion ahead of each meeting.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Finance will provide opening addresses to the Group.

The Irish SME representative bodies, or other invited representative bodies, will be invited to respond to any topic assigned for the meeting or may be asked to provide broader insights on the issues and challenges facing SMEs.

Representatives of state bodies will be called on as appropriate to respond to specific issues or concerns raised in the course of these meetings.

## Outcomes

The dialogue will support Government in developing informed policy responses for SMEs to crises as they may arise, such as the COVID-19 Pandemic and the War in Ukraine.