



Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS) General Conditions

(January 2016)

(a demand-led employment support for people who have acquired a disability whilst in employment)

- Companies spend time, effort and money in recruiting, training and developing staff.
- Companies appreciate the value of experienced staff and also realise the economic benefits of both maintaining staff loyalty and retaining staff expertise and experience.
- Employers are aware of the time and cost of recruiting replacement staff and training them to full productivity.

The Employee Retention Grant is a grant available to private sector employers, should an employee acquire an illness, condition, or impairment, which may undermine his/her continued employability. The Employee Retention Grant aims to assist employers in retaining such employees. The cause or nature of the illness, condition or impairment is not relevant for the purpose of this grant. The Employee Retention Grant Scheme will enable employers to identify the continuing potential of such staff to be productive and valuable employees. It will assist in enabling the retention of the employee in his/her current position or in retraining the employee for another position in the company for the benefit of both the employer and the employee. The grant assists in maintaining the employee by providing funding to:

- 1. Identify accommodation and/or training to enable the staff member to remain in his/her current position,**
- or**
- 2. Retrain the staff member so that he/she can take up a different position within the company.**

How does it work?

The Employee Retention Grant Scheme recognises that many private sector employers lack the necessary internal resources to develop and implement a retention strategy for an employee who acquires an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on his/her ability to carry out his/her job. The scheme facilitates employers by enabling them to buy in the specialist skills and knowledge to develop and implement a Retention Strategy for such an employee.

Who is eligible to apply?

Employers within the private sector may apply for grant aid for eligible employee(s).

Who is an eligible employee?

Any existing employee could be eligible for this grant if he/she acquires an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on his/her current ability to do the job. The employee may be 'disabled' as a result of an accident (occupational or otherwise), or may have acquired a chronic or progressive illness such as Multiple Sclerosis (MS), or a condition such as diabetes or epilepsy.

The Employee Retention Grant Scheme consists of two stages.

STAGE 1

Development of Retention Strategy

In the first stage, funds are available to the employer towards the development of an individualised written Retention Strategy, devised by an appropriately qualified Specialist (*hereafter referred to as the 'Specialist'*)¹, which ensures safe and timely return to work. The resulting Retention Strategy outlines what the employer needs to do to accommodate, and if necessary train, the employee to remain in his/her existing role. Alternatively, if this is not an appropriate option, the Retention Strategy should outline where the person may be re-deployed in the company and what accommodation and/or retraining is required.

¹ *Appropriately qualified 'Specialists' include the following: Occupational therapist, Occupational psychologist, Occupational physician, Occupational health nurse or other occupational health services professional, Rehabilitation nurse, Ergonomics Specialist, Chartered physiotherapist, Employment advisor attached to a relevant Disability Organisation, that is, an organisation that provides specific employment advice or resources to a dedicated client base, for example, NCBI, DeafHear, CRC, Headway Ireland, Brainwave, etc.*

STAGE 2

Implementation of the Retention Strategy

In the second stage, grant assistance is provided towards the cost of re-training the employee, hiring a Job Coach² and/or a Specialist to support and/or manage the implementation of the Retention Strategy. Funding for the Job Coach and/or the Specialist is limited to a set number of hours. Stage 2 payment will not be made without the support of an individualised written Retention Strategy and *is subject to the employer initiating and completing Stage 1.*

What does the grant fund cover?

Funding is available for the following:

STAGE 1

(Subject to a maximum of €2,500 or 90% of eligible programme costs per employee)

- To hire a Specialist(s) to evaluate the employee's occupational capacity and conduct a workplace/job assessment to develop an individualised written Retention Strategy.

STAGE 2

(Subject to a maximum of €12,500 or 90% of eligible programme costs per employee)

- To train the employee for his/her current position or to retrain him/her for another position within the company;
- To hire a Job Coach to offer support to the employee and liaise with his/her line-manager for a maximum period of 300 hours; and/or,
- To hire a Specialist to manage the Retention Strategy on an on-going basis until reintegration is complete for a maximum period of 60 hours.

² A Job Coach is an employment-training specialist who works with people who have disabilities. Job Coaches specialise in helping workers with disabilities to perform the tasks of their jobs successfully. This includes providing intensive training and support to workers with disabilities and facilitating healthy working relationships between them and their management and co-workers.

The Application Process

STAGE 1

Development of the Retention Strategy

When should the application be made?

The application should be made, in consultation with the employee and line-manager, either when the employee has been absent for a minimum period of four weeks or, in the case of a chronic illness (e.g. MS - Multiple Sclerosis) or medical condition (e.g. Epilepsy), when it begins to impact on his/her employability. The application must be approved by the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal, as per the Contacts list below:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>

prior to the development of the Retention Strategy (See **General Conditions – Claim Requirements (ii)** on page 10).

How does it work?

The employer should contact a Specialist(s) who will evaluate the employee's occupational capacity and perform a job/workplace assessment (See *Appendix for contact details of relevant representative organisations*). Once the occupational capacity evaluation and job/workplace assessment have been completed, the Specialist will develop a written Retention Strategy.

The Specialist must develop the written Retention Strategy in collaboration with the employer, the employee and his/her advocate or representative³ (if appropriate) and line-manager (if appropriate), using the findings of these assessments and individualised to meet the needs of both the employer and the employee.

The written Retention Strategy should incorporate all actions needed to implement the Retention Strategy, including itemised costing, timeline for implementation and personnel responsible for its implementation (if applicable), for example, Job Coach, Specialist, etc.

The written Retention Strategy should accompany any claim for funding for Stage 1 and must have been received before an application for Stage 2 can be considered.

³ *An advocate or representative might be a Union representative or member of a workers' committee or any other person designated by the employee.*

Application Procedures

The employer completes and returns the ERGS Application Form Stage 1 (ERG1), which is available from the Department's website or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (*See Contacts List of APs with responsibility for Disability Employment Supports* here:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>).

The application form must be accompanied by:

- References for the Specialist(s) from two companies which have previously availed of their services;
- Copies of the Specialist's qualifications and, where applicable, professional memberships;
- The employer's current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN);
- A current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) for each Specialist or his/her employer(s).

The employee, the employer (or nominee), the employee's line manager (if appropriate), the employee's representative (if appropriate), and the Specialist(s) responsible for providing the service should sign the application form.

What are the grant limits under Stage 1?

Ninety per cent (90%) of the costs of performing an occupational capacity evaluation with the employee, conducting a workplace/job assessment and developing a written Retention Strategy are available to companies up to a maximum of €2,500 per employee.

When will the grant be paid?

A claim for Stage 1 payment may be made once the employee has undergone an evaluation of his/her occupational capacity, the job/workplace has been assessed and the written Retention Strategy has been developed and agreed. The grant will be paid once the employer has submitted a completed ERG Claim Form and it has been processed by the Case Officer and the Case Officer's AP. To ensure prompt payment, it is essential that all of the documentation required is included with the claim form.

Claim procedures

The employer completes the parts of the common ERG Claim Form relevant to Stage 1. This form is available from the Department's website or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (*See Contacts List of APs with responsibility for Disability Employment Supports* below: <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>) and should be returned to the employer's local DEASP Intreo Centre or to the Case Officer/Assistant Principal who dealt with the application.

The claim form must be accompanied by:

- Detailed invoices and receipts as outlined in **General Conditions – Claim Requirements (iii)** (*see page 10*);
- A copy of the written Retention Strategy including a detailed costing and proposed timeframe in which the various actions associated with the implementation of the Retention Strategy are scheduled to take place;
- A copy of the employer's current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or their electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN), if not previously submitted;
- A copy of the current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or an electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) for each Specialist(s) or his/her employer.

The employer (or nominee) should complete and sign the declaration on the claim form.

Providers

Specialists must have a track record in the area of occupational capacity evaluation, job/workplace assessment and the development and implementation of retention or return to work interventions. Where applicable, the Specialist(s) should be registered with a relevant professional body, such as the Association of Occupational Therapists, Irish Association of Rehabilitation Professionals, etc.

STAGE 2

Implementation of the Retention Strategy

When should the application be made?

Application for Stage 2 funding may be made once Stage 1 has been completed. The application for Stage 2 funding must be approved by the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal, as per the Contacts list below:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>

prior to the implementation of the Retention Strategy (See **General Conditions – Claim Requirements (ii)** at page 10).

Application Procedures

The employer completes and submits ERGS Application Form Stage 2 (ERG2), which is available from the Department's website or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (*See Contacts List of APs with responsibility for Disability Employment Supports* here:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>).

The application form should be accompanied by:

- References for the Specialist(s)/Job Coach(es) from two companies which have previously availed of their services;
- Copies of the Specialist(s)/Job Coach(es) qualifications and, where applicable, professional memberships;
- The employer's current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) (if not previously submitted);
- Current Tax Clearance Certificates (TCC) or electronic Tax Clearance Access Numbers (TCAN) for all external personnel involved in the implementation of the Retention Strategy (if not previously submitted).

The employee, the employer (or nominee), the employee's line manager (if appropriate), the employee's representative (if appropriate), and the Job Coach and/or Specialist responsible for supporting and managing the implementation of the Retention Strategy must sign the application form.

Where the value of any one application exceeds €5,000 and a single Specialist/Job Coach/Trainer is to provide these services the applicant company will need to obtain three independent quotations and make these available to DEASP. Where the lowest quote is not selected, it will be necessary to state the reason(s) for the selection.

What are the grant limits under Stage 2?

Ninety per cent (90%) of the eligible costs associated with the implementation of the Retention Strategy, up to a maximum of €12,500 per employee, is available for all elements of Stage 2 (within the limits outlined below):

- Funding for a maximum of 300 job-coaching hours;
- Funding for a maximum of 60 hours external co-ordination of the Retention Strategy by a Specialist, including case management meetings;
- 90% of the cost of external training is available where redeployment of the employee requiring retraining is indicated by the Retention Strategy.

When will the grant be paid?

A claim for Stage 2 payment may be made once the Retention Strategy has been implemented. The grant will be paid once the employer has submitted a completed ERG Claim Form and it has been processed by the Case Officer and the Case Officer's AP. To ensure prompt payment, it is essential that all of the documentation required is included with the claim form.

Claim Procedures

The employer completes the parts of the common ERG Claim Form relevant to Stage 2. This form is available from the Department's website or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (*See Contacts List of APs with responsibility for Disability Employment Supports* below:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>)

and should be returned to the employer's local DEASP Intreo Centre or to the Case Officer/Assistant Principal who dealt with the application.

The claim form must be accompanied by:

- Detailed invoices and receipts as outlined in **General Conditions – Claim Requirements (iii)** (see page 10);
- A copy of the employer's current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or their electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) if not previously submitted;

- A copy of the current Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) or an electronic Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) for each Specialist(s) or his/her employer if not previously submitted;
- An original EFT Bank Mandate, if the employer's bank details have changed.

The employer (or nominee) should complete and sign the declaration on the claim form.

Providers

Job Coaches (or "life coaches") and those with responsibility for the external co-ordination of the strategy (Specialists) must have a track record in the area. Contact the Irish Association of Supported Employment for further information on Job Coaches (*See Appendix*).

Non-supported Activities

The following activities are not eligible for funding under the Scheme:

- Attendance at Seminars and Workshops;
- Company-wide disability management assessments;
- Development of company-wide disability/absence management policies.
- Capital expenditure associated with training. However, the cost of appropriate assistive technology for the employee may be recouped through the DEASP Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant (*see Other Initiatives at page 12*);

General conditions

Grant Limits

There is a maximum grant limit of €15,000 payable to an employer for the purpose of retaining any one employee; that is, the total funding available for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 must not exceed this amount.

Claim Requirements

i) The employer and those contracted for service must not be in receipt of funds from any other source in respect of the development or implementation of the Retention Strategy, including the delivery of (re-)training, which is the subject of a claim under this scheme. The employer is not precluded from applying for other DEASP funding which may assist in the successful implementation of the Retention Strategy, such as the Workplace Equipment/ Adaptation Grant. They are, however, required to declare this on the application for Stage 2 of the Employee Retention Grant Scheme.

ii) Application must be submitted for approval to the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (*See Contacts List of APs with responsibility for Disability Employment Supports* below:

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>)

on the relevant application forms prior to the development (Stage 1) and implementation (Stage 2) of the Retention Strategy. Ideally the application should be made at least three weeks prior to the commencement of each stage. **Approval for funding for either stage of the grant must be obtained prior to the commencement of the stage. A Case Officer or Assistant Principal will communicate notice of approval in writing to the Employer.**

iii) Before a grant is paid, the employer must complete an ERG Claim Form and return it to the DEASP Case Officer or Assistant Principal who sent them written approval of the application, together with:

Proof of payment, that is, a copy of the original receipted invoice(s) from the Specialist(s) and/or Job Coach(es) (as appropriate), accompanied by:

(a) A written receipt(s) that includes the cheque number; or

(b) A copy of the bank statement indicating the payee, the date of payment and the amount. These details must correspond with those listed on the receipt(s) issued by the Specialist(s) and/or Job Coach(es); or

(c) A copy of the bank draft, in the case of foreign currency, or a copy of the bank statement in the case of an electronic transaction in a foreign currency. These details must correspond with those listed on the receipt(s) issued by the Specialist(s) and/or Job Coach(es).

DEASP reserves the right to withhold any grant payable if there is any outstanding debt owed to DEASP by the employer.

Access to Employer's Records

The employer shall grant officials of the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, and the Comptroller and Auditor General's office, or any other person appointed on behalf of any of them, immediate access to all records, financial or otherwise, maintained by the employer in connection with this Scheme. Records must be held for a period of six years. The employer shall comply promptly with all reasonable requests for information relating to this Scheme from DEASP, and any of the other agencies specified herein. It is recommended that the employer retain copies of all documentation for reference.

Internal Specialists

Retention Strategies developed or implemented by a parent or associate company or by a member of the employer's own staff are not eligible for funding under this scheme.

Freedom of Information Act, 2014 (FOI)

The DEASP undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold confidential any information provided by your company (correspondence/forms/tenders, etc.), subject to the DEASP's obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. Should you wish that any of the information supplied by your company not be disclosed because of its sensitivity, you should, when providing the information, identify the same and specify the reasons for its sensitivity. The DEASP will consult with the company's representative about this sensitive information before making a decision on any Freedom of Information request received. Please note, however, that if no information is identified as sensitive, with supporting reasons, then it can potentially be released in response to an FOI request.

Equality Legislation

Under this scheme, and in line with the provisions of the Employment Equality Act, 1998 (amended by the Equality Act, 2004), and of the Equal Status Act, 2000 (amended by the Equal Status (Amendment) Act, 2012), employers are encouraged to initiate actions that focus on achieving equality and eliminating discrimination.

Other Initiatives

Private sector employers participating in this scheme may also avail of other grants supporting the employment of people with disabilities.

These are:

- The **Disability Awareness Support Scheme** for the purpose of providing Disability Awareness training to staff. Further details are available from the local DEASP INTREO Centre or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (See *Contacts List of APs with responsibility for Disability Employment Supports* below:
<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>)
- Where the productivity of a new employee (who is in the process of being recruited into the company for the first time) is affected by disability (80% or less of normal levels), the employer may apply for the **Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)** which incentivises the employment of people with disabilities who are unemployed. ***However, the WSS is not available to existing employees who have acquired a disability.*** Further details are available from the local DEASP INTREO Centre or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (see above).
- The **Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant**, a grant towards the cost of adapting premises or purchasing equipment to accommodate an employee with a disability. Further details are available from the local DEASP INTREO Centre or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (see above).
- The **Personal Reader Grant** is available for up to 640 hours per year towards the cost of hiring someone to read relevant documents or training manuals to someone who is blind or visually impaired or onto audiotape. Further details are available from the local DEASP INTREO Centre or from the nominated DEASP Assistant Principal (see above).

The DEASP reserves the right to vary the conditions of the Employee Retention Grant Scheme and to amend the grant limits to ensure that 'cost effective' interventions are provided in accordance with prevailing norms.

Appendix: Resources

Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland

Suite 2.2, Smithfield Business Centre,
Distillers Building,
Smithfield,
Dublin 7

www.aoti.ie

Email: info@aoti.ie

Tel: 01 874 8136

Irish Association of Supported Employment

Unit 1, Údarás Industrial Estate,
Belmullet,
Co Mayo

www.iase.ie

Email: info@iase.ie

Tel: 097 82894

Ibec

84/86 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2

www.ibec.ie

Email: info@ibec.ie

Tel: 01 605 1500

Further Reading

The following publications are all available from the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission**

16-22 Green Street

Dublin 7

www.ihrec.ie

Email: info@ihrec.ie

Lo-call: 1890 245 545

Tel: 01 858 9601

Reasonable Accommodation of people with disabilities in the provision of goods and services

www.ihrec.ie/publications/list/reasonable-accommodation-of-people-with-disabiliti/

Disability Resource Pack

www.ihrec.ie/publications/list/disability-resource-pack/

Framework for the Development of Equal Opportunities Policies at the Level of the Enterprise

www.ihrec.ie/publications/list/framework-for-the-development-of-equal-opportuniti/

Guidelines for Employment Equality Policies In Enterprises

www.ihrec.ie/publications/list/guidelines-for-employment-equality-policies-in-ent/

Guidelines for Equal Status Policies in Enterprises

www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/guidelines_for_equal_status_policies_in_enterpris.es.pdf

The following publication is available from the **National Disability Authority**
25 Clyde Road,
Dublin 4

<http://nda.ie/>

Email: nda@nda.ie

Tel: 01 608 0400

Fax: 01 660 9935

Retaining Employees who acquire a disability

<http://nda.ie/publications/employment/employment-publications/retaining-employees-who-acquire-a-disability-a-guide-for-employers.pdf>