

Innovation Officer

Belong to Something Amazing...

Catalyst is recruiting Innovation Officers to deliver a major, cross-border innovation programme funded through PEACE PLUS. These roles are key to supporting 955 SMEs across Northern Ireland and the border counties to build innovation capability, drive change and create impact.

This is a unique opportunity to shape the region's innovation landscape by enabling SMEs to build capabilities, introduce new products and services, and contribute to a more connected, resilient innovation ecosystem.

About the Project

This four-year programme is about enabling innovation where it is needed most. We will be working with SMEs from all sectors and backgrounds to assess capability, co-design innovation plans and connect them to the right supports which will include training and internships.

The approach is hands-on. SMEs will be grouped into cohorts, supported through their journey, and encouraged to collaborate, share learning and grow together.

Catalyst is one of the core delivery partners and will lead engagement on the ground. Our job is to bring SMEs into the programme, help them navigate their innovation journey and ensure they get the support they need to make progress. We bring years of experience working with founders, innovators and scale-ups.

About Catalyst

We are a non-profit organisation that supports science and technology innovation in Northern Ireland with buildings and hubs in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry where companies can use our flexible workspaces to operate from. We use the profits generated from our property portfolio to deliver entrepreneurial support programmes, facilitate funding, inform policy and accelerate technology-based research and development, by linking with academia and government.

Working at Catalyst

A certified Great Place to Work® and recognised as one of the top 100 Workplaces in the UK for 2024, receiving awards for Best Place to Work, Best Workplace for Development, Best Workplace for Employee Wellbeing, and Best Place to Work for Women, Catalyst is one of Northern Ireland's most exciting employers.

With a strong vision of Opportunity for all from world-leading innovation, this is a workplace brimming with ambition to create social, cultural, and economic advantage. We are a force for good, bold in our approach with integrity at our core and passion in everything we do.

Diversity and Inclusion at Catalyst

Diversity and inclusion aren't boxes to tick on a CSR list. At Catalyst, they are part of our DNA, lived, breathed, seen, and heard across our community, projects, and co-working spaces.

We not only want to foster and empower a culture of innovation, but also an environment where people can be their true, authentic self and thrive, and we are proud to be recognised by the Diversity Charter for achieving silver status, with ambitions to progress to Gold.

As an equal opportunity employer, we recruit based solely on the individual's ability to perform the role, and that's allowed us to create an inclusive workplace which celebrates the diversity of our teams and community.

Key Information

- Full time, fixed term 4-year contract ending September 2029
- Attractive benefits package – including flexible working options
- Competitive salary between £30, 000 - £34,000 depending on qualifications/experience
- Based in either Belfast or Derry-Londonderry.
- Reporting to Innovation Lead.

Employee Perks

- Competitive Benefits Package including Private medical insurance for you and your dependents

- Generous pension contribution
- Generous life assurance policy
- Enhanced parental leave packages
- Hybrid working options available
- Free open access to company organised events.

What are we looking for?

We're looking for proactive and organised individuals with strong project management skills who thrive in fast-paced, outcome-driven environments. This role is ideal for someone who enjoys connecting the dots between people, support, and systems to drive meaningful results. You'll be working on a cross-border innovation programme aimed at building capacity for SMEs in Northern Ireland and the border counties, coordinating across sectors, regions, and delivery partners. The ideal candidate will be an excellent communicator, confident engaging a wide range of stakeholders, and skilled at managing multiple workstreams, tracking progress against targets, and adapting swiftly to shifting priorities. If you're motivated by delivering impact through collaboration in a purpose-led setting, this role is for you.

Responsibilities

1. Business Development & Funnel Building

- Actively identify, engage, and recruit eligible SMEs across NI and the border counties.
- Work closely with Councils, Enterprise Partners and Catalyst Network to support strong regional participation.
- Build a high-quality funnel of 955 SMEs, ensuring diverse sector and regional representation.
- Lead or support engagement activities including info. sessions, outreach events and road show to drive interest and participation.

2. Innovation Capability Assessment

- Signpost and guide SMEs towards the right supports based on need whether that is internships, training or collaboration.
- Conduct structured assessments to evaluate SME readiness and innovation maturity.
- Co-design Innovation Management Plans that align with each SME's growth priorities and stage of readiness.

3. Programme Delivery

- Act as a key contact for participating SMEs and support them through their time on the programme.
- Manage and support SME journeys through Catalyst's innovation pathway.
- Co-ordinate delivery of tailored support and track progress.

4. Cluster & Cohort Engagement

- Group SMEs into innovation cohorts based on shared challenges, sectors or technology themes.
- Organise and deliver collaborative sessions that support peer learning, cross-border exchange and shared innovation outcomes.

5. Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

- Work with wider team to gather insights and feedback that will inform ongoing delivery.
- Track engagement, outcomes, and key performance indicators (KPIs) using internal tools.
- Feed accurate and timely data into dashboards and funder reporting requirements.

Essential:

- Demonstrated experience in business development, stakeholder engagement, or SME advisory roles.
- Understanding of SME innovation challenges and growth journeys.
- Excellent relationship-building, coordination, and communication skills.
- Ability to work across sectors, technologies, and regions with ease.
- Self-motivated, organised, and comfortable working to targets in a collaborative environment.

Desirable:

- Experience delivering innovation support programmes or similar capacity-building initiatives.
- Familiarity with cross-border funding mechanisms (e.g., INTERREG, PEACE IV/PLUS).
- Knowledge of the Northern Ireland and/or Republic of Ireland innovation ecosystem.

Special Requirements

- Proof of right to work in the UK
- On occasions to work evenings and weekends
- Full current driving licence

Criteria may be enhanced to aid shortlisting. Exceptional candidates who do not meet the criteria may be considered for the role provided they have the necessary skills and experience