

AIB's Women in Enterprise Programme: Supporting Ambition

By AIB



In this article, AIB discusses its Women in Enterprise programme, which since its launch in 2017 has supported and celebrated the ambitions of women business owners in Ireland with Masterclasses and Growth Academies.

AIB's Women in Enterprise programme was launched by Robert Mulhall, AIB's Managing Director, Retail and Commercial Banking, in October 2017. Women in Enterprise is an accelerator business programme for ambitious, female entrepreneurs comprising of a series of Masterclasses and Growth Academies. It is aimed at women who lead or own a business and have ambitions to grow it. The masterclasses have been delivered nationwide to a diverse audience of over 250 female business owners from different sectors ranging from catering, engineering, professional services and retailers, some of whom are family owned businesses that have been passed through the generations.

The Women in Enterprise Growth Academy (grown to two in 2018), serving the Cork and Dublin regions accommodated 40 ambitious female business owners in an intensive six days of learning and planning for business growth. With the addition of insights from business leaders from departments in AIB including Analytics, Organisational Effectiveness, Digital Products and Payments and Corporate Finance.

As part of the programme, participants were informed of their ability to apply for awards based on their learnings from both the Masterclasses and Academies, and as a result there was an influx of very high calibre applications in each award category. Award winners shared in a prize fund of €40,000 with the addition of media coverage and mastermind/mentoring sessions from the Entrepreneurs Academy.

AIB's inaugural 2018 Women in Enterprise programme concluded with the AIB Women in Enterprise Recognition Awards that celebrated and recognised the achievements of programme participants in AIB Bankcentre on the 31st May 2018.

Owen Travers, Managing Director of Corporate Finance, spoke about company scaling and how the Irish SME and corporate world has changed significantly in the last 20 years. This has seen AIB widening its product offering and services to include Advisory, Alternative Capital and Equity to meet customer's needs, no matter their size or stage of development.

Speaking on the evening of the Awards, Catherine Moroney, Head of Business Banking announced that since the launch of the Women in Enterprise programme and the Women in Enterprise Loan fund the percentage of loans provided by AIB to businesses with a share of female ownership has grown significantly, from 33% to 49%. Catherine encouraged attendees to ensure their business scaling plans were fully funded to match their ambitions.

Ita Murray (As You Like It Café & Steakhouse, Ratoath, Co. Meath) won the Leadership Development Award for the best use of learnings from the Masterclass, to grow herself and her leadership skills.

Amanda Cahir O'Donnell (TIO Consulting, Newbridge, Co. Kildare) was awarded the Business Development Award for best use of learnings from the Masterclass to grow her business.

The Strategic Growth Award was awarded for the identification of significant growth opportunities with a strategic viable plan to achieve this in place. Anne Maria Moore (Beech Lodge Care Facility, Bruree, Co. Limerick) was presented with the highly commended in this category as she demonstrated how the learnings gained from the academy helped her form her growth plans for the future of her business.

Noelle O'Connor (Tan Organic, Newbridge, Co. Kildare) was identified as the AIB Women in Enterprise Entrepreneur of the Year and the winner of the Strategic Growth

Award. Noelle demonstrated the ability to identify significant growth opportunity within her business.

Owners of family businesses can find more information on AIB's Women in Enterprise programme [here](#).