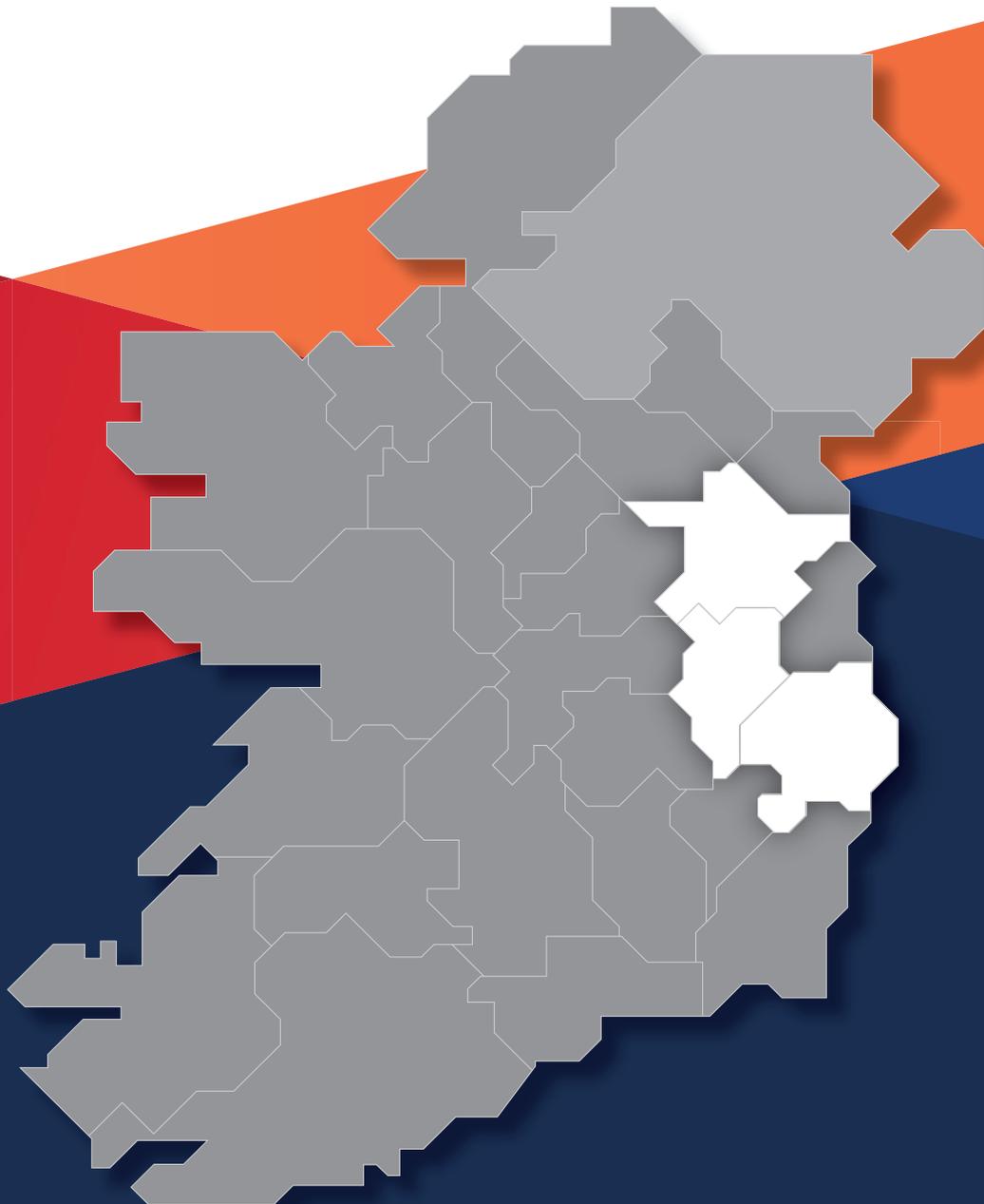




Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

MID-EAST

Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – First Progress Report



An initiative of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

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1. Introduction

The Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 is one of nine regional enterprise plans launched in early 2019 by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The Plan was developed by regional stakeholders, and as a 'bottom-up' initiative, it complements national enterprise policies and programmes. The Plan is a 'live' agenda that allows new initiatives to be considered in addition to the strategic focus it currently contains.

The principle underpinning the Regional Enterprise Plans is collaboration between regional stakeholders on initiatives that can help to realise each region's enterprise development potential, adding value to the core activities being delivered by the enterprise agencies, LEOs and other bodies in the region.

Implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 for the Mid-East is being delivered by the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee, which is chaired by Eamonn Sinnott, Vice President, Intel Ireland, Kildare. A full-time Programme Manager, Conor Sweeney, appointed jointly by the three Local Authorities in the Mid-East, is providing project management support to the initiative. The Mid-East Steering Committee has met on three occasions during 2019, and as part of the implementation process has formed smaller Working Groups to drive delivery of actions or groups of actions.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has oversight of the nine Plans nationally, and in September 2019 facilitated collective engagement between the Chairs of the Steering Committees with the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. This meeting provided an opportunity for updating on progress, sharing good practice, and identifying areas for potential inter-regional cooperation.

Climate Action Plan 2019 has tasked each of the Regional Steering Committees with considering 'Just Transition' as part of their ongoing agenda. On 14th October 2019, Just Transition was included as an Agenda item for the first time by the Mid-East Steering Committee and this facilitated a discussion on the topic. Just Transition will remain as a standing item on the Steering Committee's agenda.

The Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan is focused around 4 Strategic Objectives to positively influence enterprise and job creation in the region. The Plan aims to develop the region as a hub for screen content creation; develop a network of innovative co-working spaces; build an ecosystem framework to support the agri-food sector in the Boyne Valley; and ensure the availability of skills and talent in the region to realise its economic potential and address upskilling needs.

This Year 1 Progress Report details the progress that has been made to date on the Mid-East Plan. It also reports on the outcomes from the Enterprise Agencies and LEOs' core activities in the region during the year. Of particular significance for the region in 2019 is that in excess of €4.8 million has been secured for the Mid-East under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF). (detailed in Appendix 1).

Finally, overall employment creation and levels of unemployment continue on a positive track in the Mid-East. Since the first Regional Action Plan for Jobs was introduced in Q1 2015, 50,700 more people are in employment in the Mid-East, and the region currently has an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent, down from 9.6 percent in Q1 2015, which means that the region has already exceeded the targets set in relation to employment growth and the reduction in unemployment since 2015.

2. Enterprise Agencies and LEO activities in the Mid-East in 2019

In order to achieve the 2020 employment targets and maintain strong regional enterprise and job creation performance, the Strategic Objectives and collaborative actions identified for the Mid-East region in the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 are complemented by the ongoing core activities of the Enterprise Agencies (IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland) and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).

Representatives of the Enterprise Agencies and the three LEOs are active members on the REP Steering Committee in the Midlands and will continue to work with regional stakeholders on key regional enterprise ecosystem strengthening initiatives in the region in 2020.

The Enterprise Agencies each have corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as frameworks for bespoke regional activities that support regional enterprise investment and development potential and leverage regional assets and opportunities.

IDA Ireland is currently completing work on its new five-year strategy which will focus on attracting foreign direct investment across all regions. Enterprise Ireland launched its regional plan 'Powering the Regions' in 2019, and in 2020, will commence the preparation of a new corporate strategy, the successor to 'Build Scale and Expand Reach 2017-2020.

Over the course of 2019, the enterprise agencies and the LEOs have achieved impact in a number of areas as they continue to roll out their core activities across all of the regions. The following summarises some key results and developments during the year.

Enterprise Ireland Activities

During 2019, Enterprise Ireland published a new plan 'Powering the Regions' to accelerate growth throughout Ireland's regions. The plan is built on four key pillars, each of which support the nine Regional Enterprise Plans.

4 Key Pillars

1. Maximising growth of Enterprise Ireland clients in the regions
2. Strengthening regional infrastructure to maximise future growth of Irish enterprise in the regions
3. Support entrepreneurship in all regions
4. Work in collaboration to deliver regional growth

In 2019, 16,971 new jobs were created by clients of Enterprise Ireland in all regions with 66% of this growth delivered outside of Dublin. Enterprise Ireland clients employed a record high of 221,895 during the year.

€24m was invested in 127 startups with 42% of these located outside Dublin.

During 2019, Enterprise Ireland ran a third competition for projects under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. Minister Humphreys announced in January 2020 that under the fund 26 projects across every region were approved funding of over €40m and these will make an important contribution to the delivery of the Regional Enterprise Plans. This builds upon nearly €60m already approved under the Fund.

In December 2019, Ministers Humphreys and McHugh announced €4.6m in government funding under the Enterprise Ireland Regional Technology Clustering Fund to establish 12 technology clusters in partnership with the Institutes of Technology across the country.

In 2019, the Local Enterprise Offices also worked successfully with their clients to assist 162 companies transfer to Enterprise Ireland to help them scale.

In 2019, 21,258 people were employed in 515 Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the Mid-East, up 3.4% from 2018.

Recent EI announcements include:

- Centaur – 30 jobs in Kildare
- Crowley Carbon – 187 jobs in Wicklow
- College Group – 25 jobs in Meath

LEO Activities

In 2019, the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) continued to be the ‘first stop shop’ providing entrepreneurs with advice, guidance, financial assistance and other supports available to assist with starting or growing their own businesses, with 31 offices spread throughout the country the LEOs are truly operating at the coalface of job creation and regional development in Ireland, providing a ‘signposting’ service for all the relevant supports available through the state.

The LEOs offer grant aid to businesses employing less than 10 people in manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors which have the potential to develop into strong export entities. They approved 291 priming grants to new start-ups, 80% of the approvals were to companies regionally.

To assist in their remit of developing regional employment, the LEOs also offer ‘soft’ supports by way of training (85%) mentoring (75%) and targeted programmes such as LEAN for micro (90%)*. Participation in these has been successfully targeted by the LEO teams in each of the regions.

In particular, the LEO’s have awarded €2.5m in funding to 16 successful applicants through the LEO Competitive Fund, applications were open to individual LEOs; collaborative projects between two or more LEOs; and LEOs working with other local groups like Chambers, Community Enterprise Centres, Education or training bodies, Local Authorities or colleges. All projects are aligned with the strategic objectives in the Regional Enterprise Plans and the ambitions in Future Jobs Ireland.

The LEOs supported 38,535 jobs across 7,400 client companies in 2019 of which there was an additional 148 companies outside of the Dublin region. 3,149 net jobs were created during the year and 78% of these were produced outside of the Dublin region with an even distribution across the regions. This is the 6th year of continuous employment growth for the LEOs since their inception in 2014. LEOs saw increases across all supports in 2019 including training, mentoring and funding. The number of those trained in 2019 was up 6.4% last year with 37,306 availing of training through their Local Enterprise Office. There was also an 10.5% increase in mentoring assignments completed, with 10,756 clients benefitting from LEO mentoring.

Over €20million was invested in LEO clients and start-ups last year, up from €18.2million in 2018.

There were an additional 268 net jobs created in the Mid-East in LEO supported companies in 2019.

*Shows the regional percentage of the overall excluding Dublin.

IDA Activities

IDA Ireland is the State's inward investment promotion agency. The mission of the agency is to partner with multi-national companies to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland. Regional development is a key pillar of IDA's strategy.

Supporting the execution of the Regional Enterprise Plans across the country through our Regional Manager network and through working with strategic FDI stakeholders, has helped support and drive collaborative Regional enterprise objectives.

IDA Ireland concluded its strategy, 'Winning: Foreign Direct Investment' 2015-2019 in December 2019. The Strategy set out ambitious targets to support the delivery of its mission to win and develop Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland. These targets included a focus on;

- Winning 900 new investments for Ireland
- Supporting clients in creating 80,000 new jobs
- Growing market share and helping maximise the impact of FDI investments
- Driving greater balanced Regional Development

For the first time, ambitious investment targets were set for each region. IDA targeted a minimum 30% to 40% increase in the number of investments for each Region outside Dublin.

Following the conclusion of 'Winning: 2015 - 2019', the key highlights and impact for Regional Development in Ireland are as follows;

- 516 investments overall were won across Regions over the past five years
- 50% uplift in investments for Regions recorded over the course of the five-year strategy
- Every Region delivered the five-year Strategy target of a 30-40% uplift in investments on previous Strategy
- 54,868 jobs were created outside of Dublin over the past five years
- 33,118 additional direct jobs (net) on the ground in Regions
- 57% of total FDI employment is now located in Regional locations

To deliver on these ambitious targets IDA Ireland has;

- Worked with public bodies and the private sector on regional action plans
- Worked with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence in each region
- Increased Global Business Services and High-Tech Manufacturing investments
- Aligned IDA business sectors with regional strengths to develop sectoral ecosystems
- Worked more closely with EI and its client companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the region through the Global Sourcing Program
- Delivered property solutions in designated regional locations
- Increased IDA Ireland's regional footprint to adequately support the regional strategy

In addition to direct employment and skills transfer, IDA Ireland's client companies have a hugely positive effect on the local economy with over eight jobs being created for every 10 jobs in an FDI company. 50% of the €5.7bn in annual capital expenditure by IDA client companies occurs outside of Dublin. These investments have been won despite the demographical challenges that exist and international trends of greater urbanisation.

IDA Ireland is committed to playing its part in the economic development of Irelands regions. However, winning investments is a challenge and will require a continued collaborative effort by all national and regional stakeholders.

Regional locations must continuously demonstrate the capability to deliver on a number of exacting criteria which generally inform the location decisions of multinationals.

An assessment of investments delivered for regions since 2015, would confirm the strategic importance of the following key criteria in actually influencing the investment decision;

- Critical mass in population
- The ability to attract and develop appropriate skills
- The presence of Third Level Institutes
- The existence of clusters of companies in specific industry sectors
- Regional Infrastructure
- Regional Place Making Strategies
- Availability of high spec standard manufacturing and commercial office properties

To support the delivery of IDA's current strategy and the attraction of investments into different parts of the country, a €150m property investment plan was announced in 2015. IDA Ireland's approach of developing strategic sites and developing advanced buildings has proven to be hugely successful. In 2019, IDA Ireland continued its building programme with the design and construction underway of advance buildings in Sligo, Dundalk, Athlone, Waterford, Galway, Monaghan and Limerick.

IDA Ireland is currently completing work on a new five-year strategy. This strategy will take account of the changing nature of work and the impact of technology on specific sectors. Profound changes are occurring in the world of work and this is already reflected in the jobs being created by the IDA Ireland client base. We can see an increasing complexity in the roles being created, technology skills becoming ubiquitous across roles, increasing demand for business professionals and a fall in the number of low-skilled jobs including back office support and basic manufacturing. This transition is likely to impact the nature and type of roles across the regions of Ireland.

Building on the success achieved to date, IDA will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders and parties in the regions to realise the economic potential and ambition of Irelands regions under the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020.

In 2019, the Mid-East has 68 IDA supported companies employing 13,435 people, up 2.7% from 2018.

Recent IDA announcements include:

- Recent IDA announcements include:
 - PCI Pharma – 50 jobs in Meath
 - Shire plc – 400 jobs in Meath
 - INIT – 20 jobs in Kildare

3. Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Progress Report

MID-EAST STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the Screen Content Creation Sector.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop a network of innovation co-working spaces.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Build an ecosystem framework to support the agri-food sector in the Boyne Valley.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the Mid-East's future economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

2019 Highlights



Under the third call of the €40 million Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) three projects from the Mid-East region were awarded funding of over €4.8m.



Construction works have begun on the MERITS hub which is scheduled to open in November 2020.



The Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus in Rathnew secured over €1.4m in funding under the REDF Call 3. Subject to funding and planning approval, the project will commence construction in Q3 2020.



In collaboration with Enterprise Ireland, two Spotlight on Skills workshops were held resulting in the RSF Manager engaging with a number of local enterprises through the Skills for Growth initiative.



The REP Programme Manager has worked closely with the key stakeholders in the Screen Content Sector to identify skills requirements and the RSF Manager commenced an audit with the industry to determine their skills needs.



The Mid-East is on target to double the numbers on the EXPLORE Programme – positive case-studies can be viewed at www.regionalskills.ie/explore

Detailed Action Updates

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the Screen Content Creation Sector.



Action 1:

Develop and operate a Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew.

Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council/LEO Wicklow, Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

A recent report by consultants Olsberg SPI with Nordicity found that the Irish Audio-Visual Industry supported 14,370 full-time equivalent jobs in 2016; with Gross Value-Added amounting to €857 million and an estimated €191 million in export earnings for Ireland. Within the Mid-East Region, Wicklow and the East Coast has an established screen creation sector with an existing internationally recognised screen industry cluster, a long tradition of content creation for the Film and television industry, the presence of two of the major sound studios in Ireland, a large number of skilled crew and talent living in the area, and an attractive connected location. The screen creation cluster in Wicklow represents a strong best practice model. However, finding affordable business premises is a challenge for smaller companies, particularly those working in the Animation, VFX, and Games sectors. There is a current distinct lack of suitable cluster or accelerator spaces, meaning many of these companies end up with employees working from home, which has a major impact on productivity. The Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus in Rathnew will support the positioning of Ireland's East Coast region as a leader in content creation and production by facilitating content creation entrepreneurs to identify and exploit new businesses models for the creation and commercialisation of content.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

1. Preparation for an application to a funding scheme to support the development of the project
2. Appointment of a design team to support the application for funding and the application for planning permission
3. Securing Part 8 Planning Permission for the project

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

1. The project team initially made an application for the content creation hub under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund in 2018 which was not successful. Extensive Industry and stakeholder consultation was carried out in 2019 to renew support and buy-in for the Hub initiative including collaboration on screen sector business development supports from screen development and training agencies. The project team submitted a revised application under REDF 3 to Enterprise Ireland in September 2019. The application has the support of a number of stakeholders including Wicklow County Council, IT Carlow, Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) and local film industry “Champions” in Wicklow and the wider region. The hub will extend to approximately 10,000 square feet of creative pods, co-working spaces & private offices. The hub will also offer a collaborative social space, conference centre, podcast studio & screening facility. The project was successful in its application and awarded €1.43m in January 2020.
2. Following a competitive tendering process, Bluett & O’Donoghue Architects were appointed in September to provide design services that supported the funding application. They also supported the project team in their submission for Part VIII planning.
3. Wicklow County Council approved the Part VIII planning permission for the Clermont hub on 3rd February 2020.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The projected timeline for 2020 is;

- Q1-Q2 2020: Planning and Procurement
- Q3 2020: Construction Commences
- Q4 2020: Recruitment of Manager
- Q3 2021: Hub fully operational

Action 2:

Activate Content Creation and Feeder Industry Networking Events.

Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council, LEO, IT Carlow, Screen Skills Ireland, Screen Ireland, KWETB, Industry partners

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

Building on the South-Eastern Creative Corridor programme, further networking opportunities to facilitate business partnerships and collaboration will assist in the consolidation of this existing cluster. Development of a programme of Expert Voices Seminars and stand-alone networking events will also be undertaken.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Extensive Industry and stakeholder consultation to be carried out in Q1/2/3 2019 to renew support and buy-in for Hub initiative including collaboration on screen sector business development supports from screen development and training agencies.

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

The progress of this action was linked to the development of the Clermont Enterprise Hub in 2019 however the original funding application to support the hub and the networking events was unsuccessful. Wicklow LEO made a separate application to the LEO Competitive Fund in 2019 to support this activity however it was not successful.

The development of a Screen Sector Development Strategy for the region went to tender in February 2020.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

This action will be progressed and will include networking events and expert seminars in 2020 to support and build upon the South-Eastern Creative Corridor. This action will be aligned with the actions arising from the development of the Wicklow screen sector development strategy.

Q1 2020 -Working group of stakeholders established and programme of events set for 2020.

The Strategy is due in Q2 2020 and suggestions / recommendations will influence events programme.

Action 3:

Develop the talent pool through Skills, Training, and Education

Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council, LEO, IT Carlow, Screen Skills Ireland, Screen Ireland, KWETB, Industry partners

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

As outlined in the Crowe Howarth report, there are skills and training and education opportunities to address the skills gaps currently present in the industry. There are also opportunities to develop sectors associated with the screen content industry such as animation, design, construction, CGI, graphics and VR.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Engage with the industry to identify skills needs
- Collaborate with the Regional Skills Forum (RSF) on skills requirements
- Engage with Screen Skills Ireland on the action plan for skills development in the sector

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

The Regional Skills Forum Manager and the Wicklow Film Commissioner have been engaging with industry to identify skills requirements. The RSF Manager commenced an audit with the industry to determine their needs. A meeting was also facilitated between the RSF, Wicklow LEO and Kildare/Wicklow ETB to identify training courses that will support the sector.

The Regional Skills Forum Manager and the Wicklow Film Commissioner also attended the Screen Industry Education Forum which was hosted by Screen Skills Ireland and brought together industry stakeholders, education providers and policy influencers to focus on the skills development challenges and opportunities related to the screen sectors in Ireland. Screen Skills Ireland have also developed a ten-point action plan.

This plan has been put in place to assist the development of the Irish screen industry and is underpinned by sufficient investment in people and skills development that respond to the changing needs of the sector. Screen Skills Ireland is also supportive of Clermont hub and will seek to collaborate with the hub on hosting skills development courses and events.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

- Work with the industry in the Mid-East and Screen Skills Ireland to identify actions from the ten-point action plan that supports their needs.
- Collaborate with education providers and Screen Skills Ireland to identify training needs and creates responses for the industry.

Action 4:

Encourage and assist in the growth and scaling up of the existing content creation industry in the Mid-East.

Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council, Industry partners, Fáilte Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

This action involves engaging with the existing key stakeholders in the industry in Wicklow to determine the needs/supports that can be put in place to ensure the Mid-East is in a prime position to be a key location of international content creation.

In implementing this action, the key stakeholders will collaborate to assist the content creation industry to scale upwards in the Mid-East region.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Engage with existing stakeholders to identify infrastructural and training requirements for the industry.

Develop a Screen Sector Development Strategy for County Wicklow 2020-2025 that will outline practical recommendations that will ensure County Wicklow and the region will be to the forefront of benefitting from the projected expansion of the screen sector and job creation in Ireland over the next five years.

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

Wicklow County Council, Wicklow LEO and the Wicklow Film Commissioner engage on a regular basis with industry stakeholder on their needs and requirements. Ashford Studios was granted planning permission this year for a significant expansion of its current studio space in Co. Wicklow. The expansion will see the creation of four new film studios of 40,000 sq ft each, a TV studio, offices and support space. Ardmore Studios have also submitted planning permission for the construction of a new 4000 sqm film studio building.

Wicklow County Council tendered for the development of a screen sector development strategy in February 2020.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

- **Quarter 2:** Host a roundtable forum with key industry stakeholders that will assess the current status of the indigenous industry at present and propose actions that will ensure there is sufficient infrastructural and skills capacity to meet their requirements
- The publication of the Wicklow screen sector development strategy
- **Quarter 2 and 3:** Two regional network events will be held to facilitate business partnerships and collaboration.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

Develop a network of innovation co-working spaces.

**Action 1:**

Develop and operate the Mid-East Regional Innovation Think Space (MERITS) in Naas County Kildare.

Working Group Members:

Kildare County Council; Enterprise Ireland; Kildare, Meath and Wicklow LEOs; Maynooth University; Kildare County Chamber; KWETB; Skillnet Ireland; other industry representatives

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

MERITS is a purpose built co-working space, housing over 100 people, that will be aimed at tech entrepreneurs and those involved in the digital economy. The hub will work closely with Maynooth University and MaynoothWorks, the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland in providing the necessary supports that will allow entrepreneurs and startups to scale up. MERITS vision is to serve the emerging technology sector by connecting organisations and people and acting as a centre of excellence in supporting innovative companies across the region. It will facilitate access to real business opportunities and to the region's research and innovation system of Universities, R&D centres, etc. The project was awarded €1.9m in funding under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

1. Official launch of MERITS
2. Tender for construction works
3. Commence construction works

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

1. Minister Humphreys officially launched MERITS in February 2019
2. Following a competitive tender process, Duggan Lynch were appointed as the contractor for construction works in October 2019
3. Construction on site commenced on the 11th of November 2019

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

- Construction on the project will continue throughout 2020 and the hub is scheduled to open in November 2020
- A manager for the MERITS hub will be appointed in Quarter 2 2020

Action 2:

Develop ten flexible working spaces to facilitate remote workers and drive entrepreneurship in the region based on the MERITS model.

Working Group Members:

Regional Enterprise Plan Committee (with other stakeholders).

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

A significant number of people living in the Mid-East region are commuting into Dublin on a daily basis. Many of these commuters are experiencing journey times in excess of one hour each way. Recent commuter surveys carried out by Kildare, Meath and Wicklow County Councils have identified a considerable dissatisfaction amongst the population with their daily commute and an ambition to work closer to where they live. The ambition in the Mid-East is to develop a connected network of innovative workplaces which workers in the Mid-East can relocate to. These spaces also offer supports and networks that technology entrepreneurs and businesses need to start, internationalise, and grow their businesses, and provide access to shared co-working space. The three local authorities will identify the hubs and pipeline projects that will form the Mid-East network.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

1. Identify appropriate projects and hubs that will form the network
2. Support the projects applications under the appropriate funding streams
3. Progress funded projects through planning, design, procurement and construction phases
4. Seek funding for the post of a Manager to co-ordinate the network

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

1. The project delivery team have identified a number of hubs at various stages of pre funding, design, planning and construction across Kildare, Meath and Wicklow that would provide the connected network for the region.
2. A number of projects made applications for funding under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, Rural Regeneration Development Fund and the Town and Village Scheme.
3. The following projects are being progressed through the various stages to form the Mid-East network.

Kildare Hubs:

- **Maynooth Works:** MaynoothWorks business innovation centre (BIC) supports a vibrant community where entrepreneurs develop their ideas and maximise their company's potential. As companies journey through the different stages of development, MaynoothWorks BIC provides a range of business supports and a mix of flexible facilities including bright modern offices, hot desk space, wet labs and meeting rooms.

- **MERITS (Mid-East Regional Innovation Think Space):** The project is supported with funding from Kildare County Council and was successful in receiving €1.9m under REDF from Enterprise Ireland. The tech hub in Naas will offer a dynamic workspace with state of the art digital and tech facilities. The project commenced construction in November 2019 and is due to open in November 2020.
- **Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub:** Kildare County Council plans to convert the historic Model School in Athy into a centre for educational and entrepreneurial excellence for the food sector. In addition to offering fresh approaches to food and culinary skills training, this hub will provide a space for food producers in Kildare and the wider region to access high class facilities to enable them to develop innovative food concepts and to commence small scale production. There will also be office and co-working space provided. The hub has received funding of €500,000 from Coca Cola and the project team applied for REDF funding in September 2019. The project was not successful under the REDF funding stream and alternative funding streams are currently being explored. The project team is currently preparing a tender for architectural services to progress Part 8 planning. Subject to funding and planning, the project will commence construction in 2020.
- **Equine Tech Innovation Hub:** Located on the grounds of the Irish National Stud in Kildare Town, the 14 desk co-working space will act as a sectoral stimulus to develop an equine innovation hub of enterprise, innovation, applied research, commercialisation and learning. An application for funding to Kildare LEADER will be made in Q1 2020 and subject to funding and planning, construction will commence in Q2 2020.
- **Agri Tech Innovation Hub:** NovaUCD, the Centre for New Ventures and Entrepreneurs at University College Dublin (UCD), has been awarded €3 million under the REDF to develop an AgTech Connector Innovation Hub at the UCD Lyons Farm in Co. Kildare. The goal of the AgTech Connector Innovation Hub is to bring together the AgTech ecosystem in Ireland to accelerate the launch and scaling of AgTech companies by providing them with access to on-farm research collaboration opportunities, a location to test and trial their products and services in a real-world environment; along with access to dedicated acceleration programmes and incubation facilities.

Meath Hubs:

- **Kells Tech Hub:** This facility was funded under REDZ and is supported by Meath Enterprise and Meath County Council. The Kells Tech Hub offers high quality, modern, fully serviced and affordable accommodation to start-ups and SME's such as offices, co-working space's, hot desks and meeting rooms to help them to start, scale and go global. There is also a mini conference and expo centre and several flexible training spaces to support entrepreneurship education and the delivery of world class enterprise training and innovation programmes that can help Irish Start-ups and SME's to scale and go global.
- **Boyne Valley Food Hub:** This is the flagship project of the Boyne Valley Food Innovation District. The hub will provide infrastructure for food businesses to start, grow and scale. The hub secured €1.58m from REDF funding in December 2018. It will deliver 9 Food Grade units available for start-up and scaling food businesses, a Timeshare Community Kitchen, a food specific co-working and knowledge lab to create higher levels of connectivity, collaboration and innovation in the food and drink sector. Planning permission was approved in November 2019. The tender process will commence in Q1 2020 and a contractor will be appointed in Q3 2020. Construction will be complete by Q4 2020.

- **Food R&D Lab and Digital Media Hub:** Meath Enterprise is currently developing a new Food R&D Lab in the Meath Enterprise Centre (MEC) that will consist of a new product development kitchen, a sensory testing lab and a food innovation training and events hub. Meath Enterprise is also currently developing a Digital Media Hub in the MEC that will consist of a state of the digital media and video production studio with broadcast quality equipment for rental, training, events and promotions. Both these projects are being funded under the Community Enterprise Initiative (CEI) and match funded by Meath County Council. All building works (phase 1) are complete and its expected that phase 2 (equipment purchase and fitout) will commence in Q1 2020 and be completed by Q2 2020.
- **Dunshaughlin Enterprise Hub:** The hub, located in the county council building in Dunshaughlin, will consist of a flexible co-working area capable of supporting up to 40 entrepreneurs, meeting / office rooms for hire and an event space that will be used to deliver business training and networking events. Construction on the hub commenced in October 2019 and is due to be completed by Q3 2020.
- **Meath Digital Innovation and Smart Agri Hub:** This hub is a new build project (28,000 sq ft) that will be developed by Meath Enterprise to the front of the Meath Enterprise Centre in Navan. The ground works and services development for this project have already been funded under REDF-2 and the feasibility study, which is being developed by Momentum Consulting, is being funded under REDF-3. Once the feasibility work is complete Meath Enterprise will explore options for funding the new build which will be match funded by Meath County Council. It is expected that the necessary preparations for a planning application will commence in Q2 2020 followed by funding applications under REDF, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and any other potential sources in Q3 2020.
- **Meath Enterprise Centre:** The MEC is an 85,000 sq ft enterprise centre in Navan that is home to over 30 different organisations providing almost 250 direct jobs to the community. Through ongoing development, the MEC will be creating additional new and improved office and coworking facilities and services to support Startups, SMEs and Remote Workers from across the region.

Wicklow Hubs:

- **Clermont Content Creation Enterprise Hub:** The Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus in Rathnew will support the positioning of Ireland's East Coast region as a leader in content creation and production by facilitating content creation entrepreneurs to identify and exploit new businesses models for the creation and commercialisation of content. The Hub will extend to approximately 10,000 square feet of creative pods, co-working spaces and private offices. The Hub will offer a collaborative social space, conference centre, podcast studio and screening facility. The project team submitted an application for funding to REDF in September 2019. The project was awarded €1.43m in January 2020. The part VIII (Local authority own development) was presented for decision at the February meeting of Wicklow County Council and approved for planning. Site clearance works and Procurement documents will be prepared in Q1 2020. The project will commence construction in Q3 2020.
- **Digital Hub @ Arklow Courthouse:** The hub will be located on the first floor of the redeveloped Arklow Courthouse and will comprise hot desks, office space and a meeting room for 26 people. Funding for the hub was awarded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and following the completion of the tender process, a contractor has been appointed to carry out construction works. The hub is due to open in Q3 2020.
- **Digital Hub @ Baltinglass Courthouse:** The Courthouse Renovation Project is at the heart of the economic regeneration of Baltinglass. The digihub will be housed in the old library and will offer space for 20 people across individual offices and co-working space. The hub received initial funding under Town and Village Scheme and has recently received additional funding under RRDF. The project went to tender in Q1 2020 and it is anticipated that the hub will be complete by Q3 2020.

The project delivery team have also had early stage discussions with a number of other hubs who may comprise part of the wider network.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Each of the identified hubs that will form part of the Mid-East network will continue to progress through the various stages of funding, design, planning and construction throughout 2020. As the hubs progress, subject to approval of the post, a Mid-East Network Manager will engage with the hub managers and boards to formally establish the network and agree a memorandum of understanding for the region. It is envisaged that network will allow for networking, mentoring and academic and business support opportunities.

Action 3:

Provision of a support structure for the development of the Talent Pool for technology start-up and expansion businesses in the Mid-East.

Working Group Members:

Kildare County Council (Maynooth University)

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

The vision is to support this activity in collaboration with Maynooth University, to see the tech ecosystem grow on a regional level, and with positioning in the global marketplace.

The pillars of MERITS include:

- Supporting emerging tech companies to start and grow internationally
- Collaboration with external providers (MaynoothWorks, consultants, etc) to grow regional strengths and global positioning
- Networking and connectivity amongst emerging tech companies across the region
- Creating an environment for critical thinking in order to stimulate innovation and enterprise
- Up-skilling regional companies with the provision of on-site training in innovative thinking and processes

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Development of skills and training support structure for technology businesses in the region.

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

The first Mid-East regional innovation conference was held in October 2019 which highlighted the various training supports available to tech companies in the region.

The inaugural Global Ambition training programme for the region, aimed directly at tech companies who wish to adopt a global mindset and put strategies in place to scale and reach new export markets took place in September 2019. Following the success of the programme, Enterprise Ireland hope to roll it out across the country.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Kildare Local Enterprise Office and Maynooth University are currently developing an Innovation Training Programme that will be offered to clients of MERITS.

The three local enterprise offices (Kildare, Meath and Wicklow) are developing a suite of programmes and supports for tech companies for delivery in 2020.

Action 4:

Branding and Promotion - establish the MERITS initiative as the premier tech location in Ireland and continue to provide assistance to tech workers.

Working Group Members:

Kildare County Council, Enterprise Ireland, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow LEOs, Maynooth University, Kildare County Chamber, KWETB, Skillnet Ireland, other industry representatives

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

One of the biggest challenges for co-working spaces, also one of the biggest opportunities, is knowing how to extract co-worker’s talent, experiences and stories and turn them into a source to attract new members, encourage the community to grow and provide added value to existing members.

Furthermore, given the recognised 'quality of life' and 'affordability' of the region, the Think Spaces aim to be an attractive location for enterprise development for entrepreneurs outside the region (inward 'migrating' entrepreneurs) – particularly from Dublin.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Official launch of MERITS
- Host the Mid-East Regional Innovation Conference to showcase MERITS and the connected network

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

MERITS was officially launched by Minister Heather Humphreys in Naas in February 2019.

Kildare Local Enterprise Office partnered with Meath, Wicklow and Carlow Enterprise Offices to host the Mid-East Regional Innovation conference in October which highlighted the thriving culture of innovation existing throughout the region. Over 80 companies and stakeholders attended the event. Speakers included David Rowan, a renowned innovation expert and Seanie Walsh, a social media entrepreneur and creative innovator. There were also presentations from IT Carlow, Nova UCD, Enterprise Ireland and Grant Thornton outlining the supports available to assist companies in creating an environment for innovation, and in creating that competitive edge.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Following the appointment of the MERITS manager in Q2 2020 they will ensure;

- The delivery of an effective marketing and communication strategy for MERITS
- The creation of a central website and blog

Delivery of a regional networking and training events schedule in conjunction with the academic and training providers in the region.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

Build an ecosystem framework to support the agri-food sector in the Boyne Valley.

**Action 1:**

Hub development – deliver nine units available for start-up and scaling food businesses.

Working Group Members:

Meath Enterprise; Meath County Council

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

Boyne Valley Food Innovation District is a smart specialisation collaborative for the Mid and North-East regions that nurtures food and drink SMEs and talent to achieve their commercialisation and scaling potential. It is a leading- edge cluster that is fuelled by collaboration with the unique potential to spur productive and sustainable regional economic development, leveraging the power of intercompany linkages to drive innovation and sales growth nationally and internationally. The Boyne Valley Food Hub in Navan will see the development of 9 individual food units and production labs in a continuum of sizes to choreograph opportunities for food entrepreneurs and their staff to interact with each other; facilitating relationships and creating critical mass between businesses and institutions to generate, sharpen and accelerate the advancement of ideas.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Secure REDF funding for the Boyne Valley Food Hub
- Secure planning permission for the hub

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

Following a competitive application process, the Boyne Valley Food Hub secured €1.58m from REDF funding in December 2018 to proceed with the project.

The Boyne Valley Food Hub made an application for planning permission to Meath County Council in June 2019 and full planning permission was granted in November 2019.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Following the successful application for funding and planning permission, the project team will proceed to construction in 2020. The tender for a technical team for the project will be published in Q1 2020. It is expected that a contractor will be appointed by Q3 2020 and construction will be complete by Q4 2020.

Action 2:

Development and delivery of 'knowledge centre' training activities.

Working Group Members:

Meath Enterprise and Meath County Council

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2019

Status:

Delayed

Peer to peer learning is fundamental to the district. The co-working and networking hub will facilitate 50 SMEs and emerging food entrepreneurs to immerse themselves in a stimulating food sector environment.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Recruitment and appointment of Business Development Manager and Innovation Specialist Development
- Delivery of 'knowledge centre' training activities

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

This action is being progressed in parallel with the construction of the Boyne Valley Food Hub.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

A business development manager will be appointed in the first half of 2020 to support the project team through the construction phase. They will be charged with championing the development of the food innovation centre and creating and nurturing a collaborative, innovation fuelled environment which encourages collaboration and synergies among tenant businesses and food businesses in the Mid and North-East.

The Food Innovation Specialist will be appointed once the hub is operational in Q4 2020 and will assist companies to realise a pipeline of new product development. This includes helping companies access the appropriate skills, service providers and processing technologies available in the companies and stakeholder organisations.

A full schedule of knowledge centre training activities will be developed and delivered in the hub once it is operational in Q4 2020.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

Ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the Mid-East's future economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

**Action 1:**

As part of the Skills for Growth initiative the RSF will assist local enterprises identify their skills' needs through a variety of audit tools to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity. Once skill needs have been identified, Regional Skills Fora will link companies with the education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need.

Working Group Members:

RSF, and partners including EI, IDA Ireland, ETB, and DEASP

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

Skills for Growth is an initiative whereby the RSF assist local enterprise through their skills needs through a variety of audit tools. When the skills needs have been identified, the RSF links companies with the relevant education and training providers.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Continue to assist local enterprises through the Skills for Growth Initiative
- New partners to be identified

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

In collaboration with Enterprise Ireland, two Spotlight on Skills workshops were held resulting in the RSF Manager engaging with a number of local enterprises through the Skills for Growth initiative. These enterprises are across a variety of sectors in the region.

Údarás na Gaeltachta and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection have joined the Department of Education and Skills as partners in the Skills for Growth project to further enhance engagement with enterprise.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The RSF will continue to assist local and regional enterprises identify their skills needs through the Skills for Growth initiative and continue to collaborate with new Skills for Growth partners.

Action 2:

Double the number of participants on the EXPLORE programme over the 2018 figure. The EXPLORE programme is designed to address the need for enhanced digital skills among older workers in manufacturing sectors within the region.

Working Group Members:

ETB and RSF.

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020

EXPLORE is a Regional Skills initiative developed to help address the issue of Ireland's low level of participation in lifelong learning, particularly targeting persons over 35 years of age in manufacturing employment.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Address the lack of digital skills in this cohort
- Provide a novel approach to overcome barriers to participation in lifelong learning
- Address the key issue of skills obsolescence which is a significant concern for employers
- Showcase the benefits of collaboration between local Education and Training Providers and Industry

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

The action is on target to double the number of participants. Positive case studies show-casing the success of the initiative in the Mid-East can be viewed at <https://www.regionalskills.ie/explore/>

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

To continue to roll out this initiative in 2020 and address the need for enhanced digital skills amongst older workers.

Action 3:

Support education and training providers in preparing applications under Springboard+ 2019 in collaboration with local enterprise in order to increase provision of programmes for upskilling and reskilling within the region.

Working Group Members:

RSF and HEIs

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2019

<p>Status:</p> <p>Work commenced and completed in 2019</p> <p>The springboard+ upskilling initiative in higher education offers free courses at certificate, degree and masters level leading to qualifications in areas where there are employment opportunities in the economy.</p>
<p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <p>The Regional Skills Forum Manager for the Mid-East in collaboration with local enterprise, will support education and training providers in preparing applications under Springboard+ 2019 in order to increase provision of programmes for upskilling and reskilling within the region.</p>
<p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <p>Springboard+ 2019 provided for 9,151 places on 275 courses across the country, including applications for the Mid-East region.</p>
<p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <p>To continue to support education and training providers in preparing applications under Springboard+ 2020 in collaboration with local enterprise</p>
<p>Action 4:</p> <p>Support all actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.</p>
<p>Working Group Members:</p> <p>RSF</p>
<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>Q4 2020</p>
<p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 and continuing in 2020</p> <p>Specific linkages to Education and Training Providers in supporting actions in the Regional Enterprise Development plans were detailed in collaboration with the Programme Manager and the main responsible stakeholders for each strategy.</p>
<p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <p>Work with the key stakeholders under each objective to identify their skills requirements and anticipate the required responses from the education and training providers.</p>

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

Objective 1: Worked closely with the key stakeholders in the Screen Content Sector to identify skills requirements. The RSF Manager commenced an audit with the industry to determine their needs. A meeting was also facilitated between the RSF, Wicklow LEO and Kildare/Wicklow ETB to identify training courses that will support the sector. The Regional Skills Forum Manager and the Wicklow Film Commissioner also attended the Screen Industry Education Forum which was hosted by Screen Skills Ireland and brought together industry stakeholders, education providers and policy influencers to focus on the skills development challenges and opportunities related to the screen sectors in Ireland. Screen Skills Ireland have also developed a ten-point action plan.

Objective 2: Facilitated engagement between education and training providers who will work closely with the various hubs across the region as they are developed. This allowed the hubs and the education and training providers to prepare their education and training programmes in advance of the hubs opening in 2020.

Objective 3: The RSF Manager has engaged on a regular basis with the Boyne Valley Food Hub to ascertain their requirements in advance of the hubs completion in 2020.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Objective 1: Continue to facilitate the collaboration between the industry and the education and training providers. Continue to analyse the requirements of the industry and assist the stakeholders in future proofing the industry.

Objective 2: Collaborate with the various stakeholders involved in developing the co-working spaces to ensure relevant responses from the education and training providers.

Objective 3: Continue to assist the Boyne Valley Food Innovation District in analysing current and emerging skills needs for the food sector.

Action 5:

Communicate to employers the services available through Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs.

Working Group Members:

RSF and other stakeholders

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

The Mid-East Regional Skills Forum provides a cohesive structure for employers and the education system to work. The forum helps companies to identify skills needs, focus on upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning and links employers to education and training providers.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Modes of communication include website updates, events attended by the Regional Skills Forum Manager, ongoing communications with employers through the Explore initiative, Skills for Growth skills audits and sectoral sub groups in the Screen sector and Advanced Manufacturing sector as well as Education and Training Provider sub groups and working groups.

What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?

All of the above activities were carried out throughout 2019. The Regional Skills Forum Manager and the Programme Manager met on a regular basis to ensure that the objectives and actions of the Mid-East REP continued to align. Recent development of a promotional video on the EXPLORE initiative increased the ongoing communication of the services of the Forum to employers. Other versions of this video include more detailed cases studies, Explore from the 'HR Perspective', Explore and other offerings from the ETBs, and a podcast about Life Long Learning can be viewed on <https://www.regionalskills.ie/explore/>

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The RSF will continue to communicate the services available through Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs in 2020.

The Explore video series will be updated to include content showcasing career progression.

Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the Mid-East supported by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF)

The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) was launched in May 2017 with the overarching aim of driving enterprise development and job creation in each region throughout Ireland.

Administered by Enterprise Ireland, it supports new collaborative and innovative initiatives that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the region/across regions, or nationally. Just under €100m has been approved across 68 projects nationally.

Over the three calls under the REDF, the Mid-East Region secured funding of just over €8.3 million across five projects:

REDF Call	Project	Location	Description	Grant amount
1	County Kildare Community Network	Kildare	Co-working space and advance landing zone for FDI (MERITS)	€1,917,200
2	Boyne Valley Food Innovation District DAC	Meath, Cavan, Monaghan, Louth	Food enterprise incubation centre	€1,580,640
3	Clermont Enterprise Hub CLG	Wicklow	Enterprise Hub	€1,434,000
3	UCD Nova DAC	Kildare	AgTech Innovation Hub	€3,002,441
3	National Association of Community Enterprise Centres CLG (NACEC)	Meath	The NACEC Regional Transformation Programme	€369,600
			Call 1 Total	€1,917,200
			Call 2 Total	€1,580,640
			Call 3 Total	€4,806,041
			Grand Total	€8,303,881

Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) successful Call announcement dates:
 REDF Call 1: 4th December 2017
 REDF Call 2: 3rd December 2018
 REDF Call 3: 8th January 2020

Appendix 2: Other Funding approved for the Mid-East

Project Ireland 2040 Funds

In 2018, the Government launched Project Ireland 2040 and committed €4 billion in funding under the Rural regeneration and Development Fund, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and the Climate Action Fund.

The four funds are a major innovation in Project Ireland 2040 and rather than allocating funding in a 'business as usual' way to Government Departments, money was allocated competitively to the best projects, which leverage investment from other sources thereby ensuring that the impact of this investment goes further.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) over the period 2019 to 2027. Initial funding of €315 million is being allocated to the Fund on a phased basis over the period 2019 to 2022. The Fund will provide investment to support rural renewal for suitable projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. It will be administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The new Fund provides an unprecedented opportunity to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland, to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, and to address de-population in small rural towns, villages and rural areas. It will be a key instrument to support the objectives of the National Planning Framework, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

Call	Project	Location	Grant amount
RRDF Call 1	Ernest Shackleton Project, Athy	Kildare	€2,707,500
	Monasterevin Town Centre	Kildare	€78,000
	Kells Town Centre	Kildare	€80,000
	Boyne Navigation & Greenway	Meath	€845,250
	Enfield Community Facilities	Meath	€726,000
	Trim Castle	Meath	€262,500
	Kells Heritage Development	Meath	€210,000
	RRDF Call 2	Trim Library and Cultural Centre	Meath
Kells Creative Placemaking – Phase 1		Meath	€992,834
Making Baltinglass the Hub for South-West Wicklow		Wicklow	€2,675,226
Call 1 Subtotal			€4,909,250
Call 2 Subtotal			€7,386,730
Call 1 & 2 Total			€12,295,980
Shared RRDF	International Mountain Biking Project	Limerick, Cork, Sligo, Dublin, Wicklow, Offaly Laois	€10,262,900
	National Parks	Clare, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Mayo, Wicklow	€3,915,000
	National Parks	Clare, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Mayo, Wicklow	€1,466,250
Total Shared RRDF			€15,644,150
Grand Total RRDF (including shared)			€27,940,130

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) successful Call announcement dates:
RRDF Call 1: 14th February 2019
RRDF Call 2: 6th November 2019

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

The €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) is intended to drive regeneration and rejuvenation of strategic and under-utilised areas within Ireland's five cities, key regional drivers and other large towns. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has responsibility for implementing the fund, which has €100m available for expenditure in 2019 and an overall allocation of €550 million allocated to the fund up to the end of 2022. The fund will operate on a competitive, bid-based Exchequer grant basis, with proposals being required to demonstrate that they will be:

- Innovative and transformational urban regeneration projects;
- Public-sector led and with the option of community and/or private sector partners;
- Matched by at least 25 percent direct funding from other public and/or private sources;
- A minimum bid of €2m;
- A catalyst for development that would not otherwise occur; and
- Likely to leverage significant further public and private sector investment

Call	Project	Location	Grant amount
URDF Cat A	Bray public transport bridge	Wicklow	€3,450,000
	Naas Library	Kildare	€1,500,000
	Arklow Historic Town Core	Wicklow	€1,645,000
	Wicklow Town	Wicklow	€1,626,000
	Ashbourne Road and public realm improvement	Meath	€1,370,500
	Navan Active Land Management project	Meath	€3,675,000
		Total	€13,266,500

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) successful Call announcement date:
URDF Call: 26th November 2018

Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2019

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is an initiative under the Action Plan for Rural Development and is part of a package of national and local support measures to rejuvenate rural towns and villages throughout Ireland through the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme. The Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and administered by the Local Authorities.

Local Authorities will be required to advertise for expressions of interest from towns/villages in their area and can select up to 12 proposals for development into detailed applications to be submitted to the Department by the end of June. Selection of projects will be by means of a competitive process, with the final project selection being made by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Project & Summary	Town	County	Funding
Assess and draft a restoration plan for the second Tanyard building.	Ballitore	Kildare	€20,000
Enhance Kilcock town gateways on four principal approach roads.	Kilcock	Kildare	€100,000
Repair and improve access to Kildangan Village Hall.	Kildangan	Kildare	€92,164
Enhance Prosperous town gateways on three principal approach roads.	Prosperous	Kildare	€100,000
Kildare Total			€312,164
Develop a community facility in a former church.	Ballivor	Meath	€179,200
Create a village gateway, footpaths, landscaping and traffic calming measures.	Kilbeg	Meath	€21,600
Improve access, parking and facilities in village.	Kilmainhamwood	Meath	€100,000
Upgrade interior of Nobber Hall.	Nobber	Meath	€63,200
Upgrade a footpath to facilitate access to Summerhill village and redefine parking area.	Summerhill	Meath	€21,792
Develop a local amenity park.	Wilkinstown	Meath	€200,000
Meath Total			€585,792
Development and upgrade of the age friendly amenities in Aughrim.	Aughrim	Wicklow	€95,600
The installation of new lighting and handrails in the community field.	Coolkenno	Wicklow	€24,000
Development of a Greenway Feasibility Study and a Public Realm Urban Design Plan.	Delgany	Wicklow	€29,600
Creation of a walking trail along the historical route within the Village of Dunlavin and local area.	Dunlavin	Wicklow	€20,973
Enhancement of the streetscape of Redcross Village.	Redcross	Wicklow	€80,000
Wicklow Total			€250,173
Mid-East Grand Total			€1,148,129

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme successful announcement date:
1st November 2019

Appendix 3: Brief profile and statistical snapshot – Mid-East

Constituent counties	Kildare, Meath and Wicklow	
Regional Population & change (1996-2016)	347,407 (1996): 559,973 (2016) increase of 212,566*	
GVA ¹ per person 2000 and 2015	€21,637: €36,091*	
Total in employment	345,600 ²	
Labour Force Participation rate	63.8% ³	
Unemployment rate	4.3 ⁴	
Unemployment blackspots ⁵	3 ⁶ *	
Percentage employed in Manufacturing: Services: Public sector	12%: 24%: 26%	
Educated to third level in Mid-East: State	47%: 45%*	
Number of enterprises ⁷ (micro: small: medium: large) (2016)	25,666: 1,671: 236: 37*	
Number of Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-Ups ⁸ (HPSUs) Mid-East: State (2019)	10: 91	
EI supported employment & no. client Companies (2018 – 2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 20,565	Jobs: 21,258
	Companies: 781	Companies: 515
IDA supported employment & no. client companies (2018 - 2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 13,206	Jobs: 13,435
	Companies: 69	Companies: 68
LEO supported employment & no. client companies (2018 - 2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 502	Jobs: 268
	Companies: 572	Companies: 625
Number of LEO Priming Grants ⁹ Mid-East: State (2019)	40: 291	

1. Gross Value Added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

2. Labour Force Survey Quarterly Series Q4 2019

3. Labour Force Survey Quarterly Series Q4 2019

4. Labour Force Survey Quarterly Series Q4 2019

5. Unemployment Blackspots are defined as Electoral Districts with at least 200 people in the labour force and an unemployment rate of 27% or higher

6. Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Kildare (1), Meath (1) & Wicklow (1)

7. A Small Enterprise is defined as: an enterprise that has fewer than 50 employees and has either an annual turnover and/or an annual Balance Sheet total not exceeding €10m: A Medium Sized Enterprise is defined as: an enterprise that has between 50 employees and 249 employees and has either an annual turnover not exceeding €50m or an annual Balance Sheet total not exceeding €43m: A large Enterprise is defined as: an enterprise that employs greater than 250 employees, has either an annual turnover of greater than €50m or an annual balance sheet of greater than €43m

8. HPSUs are start-up businesses with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale on international markets and the potential to create 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 years of starting up.

9. A Priming Grant is a business start-up grant, available to micro enterprises within the first 18 months of start-up.

* Latest available update

Appendix 4: Employment creation and unemployment - Progress against targets set to 2020

Targets for the Mid-East Region to 2020

Since the launch of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs (RAPJ) there has been an increase of 346,800 people in employment across the State since Q1 2015 to Q4 2019, with 222,600 people in the regions outside of Dublin entering employment in that period.

The RAPJ initiative was a central pillar of the Government's ambition to create 200,000 new jobs by 2020, 135,000 of which are outside of Dublin.

The new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 continue the focus on delivery to these targets:

- employment growth of between 10 and 15 percent; and
- an unemployment rate reduced to within one percentage point of the State average.

Utilising data from the CSO Labour Force Survey (LFS), the rate of growth and unemployment rates achieved for the Mid-East region during the period Q1 2015 up to Q4 2019 are as follows:

	Numbers Employed				Unemployment Rate	
	Q1 2015	Q4 2019	Change Q1 2015 to Q4 2019	Growth Q1 2015 to Q4 2019	Q1 2015	Q4 2019
Mid-East	294,900	345,600	50,700	17.2%	9.6%	4.3%
State	2,014,400	2,361,200	346,800	17.2%	10.5%	4.5%

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, Q4 2019

The Mid-East is currently performing ahead of the targets to end of 2020.

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