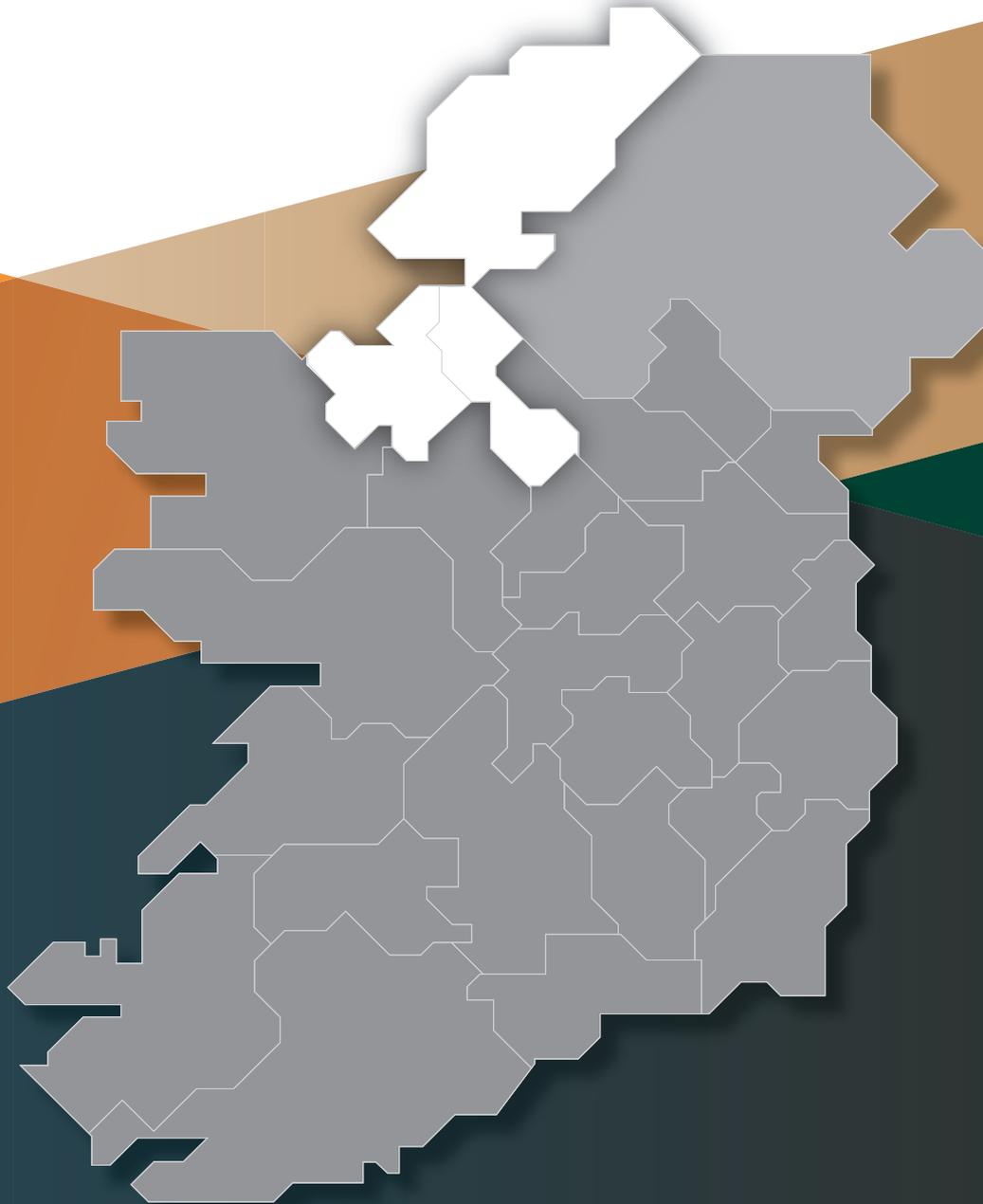




Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

NORTH-WEST

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 North-West 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 North-West is being delivered by the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee, which is chaired by Philip Martin, Cora Systems. During 2019, Ronan Denny was providing project management support to the initiative. The North-West 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 25th October 2019, Just Transition was included as an Agenda item for the first time by the North-West 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 North-West Regional Enterprise Plan is focused around 6 Strategic Objectives to positively influence enterprise and job creation in the region. The North-West Plan is looking to identify and enhance the visibility of skills available to employers and potential investors; achieve a step-change in the level of entrepreneurship; harness the potential of the blue economy and the North-West coastline as a source of new employment generation; maximise the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way and develop a regional network of landing spaces and support the digitalisation of SMEs in the North-West.

This Year 1 Progress Report details of the progress that has been made to date on the North-West 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 is that in excess of €5.6 million has been secured for the North-West to date 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 Border region. Since the first Regional Action Plan for Jobs was introduced in Q1 2015, 14,400 more people are in employment in the Border region, and the region currently has an unemployment rate of 3.9 percent, down from 8.6 percent in Q1 2015, which means that the region has still to reach the targets set out in relation to employment growth and the reduction in unemployment since 2015.

2. Enterprise Agencies and LEO activities in the North-West 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 North-West 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 North-West 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, 6,859 people were employed in the 222 Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the North-West, up 2.9% from 2018.

Recent EI announcements include:

- Abtran – 350 jobs in Sligo
- E & I Engineering – 90 jobs in Donegal

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 179 net jobs created in the North-West 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 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;

My Department will continue to work closely with the Dublin Steering Committee as they continue to implement the agenda set out and seek to realise the potential that has been recognised. I look forward to continued engagement and support of their endeavours.

- 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 North-West has 44 IDA supported companies employing 6,992 people. Combined with North-East, the Border region is up 8.5% from 2018.

Recent IDA announcements include:

- Overstock – 100 jobs in Sligo
- GW Plastics – 200 jobs in Sligo
- Allstate Sales – 100 jobs in Sligo

3. North-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Progress Report

NORTH-WEST STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Identify and enhance the visibility of skills available to employers and potential investors in the North-West.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Achieve a step-change in the level of entrepreneurship in the North-West.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Harness the potential of the blue economy and the North-West coastline as a source of new employment generation.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Maximise the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way and tourism for the North-West.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:

Develop a regional network of landing spaces to support co-working.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6:

Support the digitalisation of SMEs in the North-West.

2019 Highlights



To support education providers under Springboard+ in 2019 the Sligo and Leitrim Tech Cluster Group and the Donegal ICT/Fintech Group were Established.



A series of skills audits in the Computing, Engineering and Manufacturing were completed and published in 2019 and will be used to address identified training needs in the sectors.



Funding was provided to LyIT under the Regional Technology Clustering Fund to support the establishment of the Killybegs Marine Cluster to help boost productivity, increase market share, enhance innovation and harness opportunities in renewable energies in the North-West region.



The Blue Economy Working Group has worked throughout 2019 and is in the process of preparing for a Feasibility Study on enhancing port facilities at Killybegs Harbour.



As part of their work in the North-West region, Fáilte Ireland, which includes the attraction of more international business to the region, have hired consultants to work on a Visitor Experience Development Plan for the Inishowen Peninsula.



In 2019, the North-West region received almost €21m under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for suitable projects supporting rural revitalisation.

Detailed Action Updates

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

Identify and enhance the visibility of skills available to employers and potential investors in the North-West.



Action 1:

As part of the Skills for Growth initiative the Regional Skills Forum 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:

Regional Skills Forum, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Education and Training Board, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

- Niall McEvoy, IT Sligo
- Pdraig Gallagher, Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Ann McHugh, Donegal Education and Training Board
- Tom O'Grady, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
- Peter Egan, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
- Oran Doherty, NW Regional Skills Forum Manager. (outgoing)
- Hilary McPartland, NW Regional Skills Forum Manager. (incoming)
- Mark Butler, HR Director Lotus Works. (Chairman)

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

The Milestones for 2019 were the completion & formation of:

- Skills Audit for Manufacturing & Engineering Sector in North-West.
- Sligo and Leitrim Tech Cluster Group.
- Donegal ICT/FinTech.
- Employer Information Sessions.
- Support to Guidance Teachers.

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

Skills Audit for Manufacturing and Engineering Sector in North-West:

In 2019, the RSF/REP Working Group in the North-West carried out a 6-month skills audit to determine the current and future training, education and recruitment requirements of manufacturing and engineering employers in Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. This in-depth skills audit has proved extremely informative for the main training and education providers in the region (Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB)).

Sligo and Leitrim Tech Cluster Group:

Following the publication of an ICT/FinTech skills report carried out in the North-West by the Regional Skills Forum (RSF) Manager in the NW, a cluster group comprised of Sligo/Leitrim ICT and Fintech companies was founded by the RSF/REP Working Group. The objective of this group is to promote working and studying in ICT/FinTech in Sligo, Donegal and Leitrim and enhance collaboration between industry and academia in a wide range of areas including new programme development, recruitment of graduates, placements, research and much more. A number of events took place throughout 2019.

Donegal ICT/FinTech:

The RSF/REP Working Group in the North-West coordinate the work of the Donegal ICT/FinTech group created following the publication of the RSF skills report for ICT and FinTech. This hugely successful initiative has engaged with all 27 post-primary schools in the county as well as hosting numerous public information sessions, creating video for school visits, new programme development and student placements.

The NW Skills Forum had a very productive year in 2019 – driven by the Regional Skills Forum Manager Oran Doherty. In his role, Oran engaged directly with employers and gained their trust and confidence. The Skills Audits completed were undertaken with the support of employers and addressed their issues in relation to training and development. The Skills providers addressed immediate concerns and set out a roadmap for addressing the longer-term issues via new initiatives – especially apprenticeships. The main achievement for APJ and the RSF was to engage employers and training providers to work together to help recruit and upskill staff in the face of challenges such as Brexit and automation.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The work plan for 2020 was agreed at the last Working Group meeting where the focus will be on new industry sectors such as hospitality and tourism and the marine sectors. The guiding principles for 2020 will feature an emphasis on upskilling existing employees to improve productivity and the general level of work-related education. Ireland and the Northwest have low levels of continuous education in the workplace and RSF/REP Working Group will seek to improve this situation by concentrating efforts in this area. Another action area is developing Remote Working. This will overcome the disadvantage of lack of broadband and activate a large cohort of talent - especially females seeking to return to work on a part time basis. We conducted an open session in Sligo in 2019 in conjunction with eBay and Shopify and the session was attended by in excess of 600 attendees.

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:

Regional Skills Forum, Education and Training Board

- Peter Egan, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
- Ann McHugh, Donegal Education and Training Board
- Oran Doherty, Regional Skills Forum
- Pdraig Gallagher, Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019 and will continue in 2020.

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

The RSF in the Northwest coordinates the EXPLORE initiative in the region and the milestone was to double the number of participants in 2019, over the previous year.

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

The RSF in the Northwest coordinated the EXPLORE initiative in the region during 2019. This involved visiting over 20 manufacturing employers in the region, promoting the upskilling of manufacturing operatives in relation to digital and tech skills. Almost 50 operatives received training delivered by MSLETB and Donegal ETB during this time period.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Expansion of the project in 2020.

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:

Regional Skills Forum, Higher Education Institutions

- Niall McEvoy, IT Sligo
- Mark Butler, HR Director Lotus Works
- John Reilly, Sligo Local Enterprise Office
- Hilary McPartland, IT Sligo

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Formation of Clusters in Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal.

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

The Group decided that progress under action 3 would best be achieved through the establishment of Cluster Groups under the Technology Clustering Scheme and also leverage existing industry networks.

Sligo and Leitrim Tech Cluster Group:

Following the publication of an ICT/FinTech skills report carried out in the Northwest by the RSF Manager, a cluster group comprised of Sligo/Leitrim ICT and Fintech companies was founded by the RSF/APJ. The objective of this group is to promote working and studying in ICT/FinTech in Sligo, Donegal and Leitrim and enhance collaboration between industry and academia in a wide range of areas including new programme development, recruitment of graduates, placements, research and much more. A number of events took place throughout 2019.

Donegal ICT/FinTech:

The RSF/APJ in the NW coordinate the work of the Donegal ICT/FinTech group created following the publication of the RSF skills report for ICT and FinTech. This hugely successful initiative has engaged with all 27 post-primary schools in the county as well as hosting numerous public information sessions, creating video for school visits, new programme development and student placements.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

- Developing Engineering & Manufacturing Clusters
- Developing Tourism & Hospitality Clusters
- Remote Working Clusters.
- Springboard +

Action 4:

Support all actions in the REP where linkages to Education and Training providers are required

Working Group Members:

- Regional Skills Forum
- Niall McEvoy, IT Sligo
- Mark Butler, HR Director Lotus Works
- John Reilly, Sligo Local Enterprise Office
- Hilary McPartland, IT Sligo

<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>2020</p> <p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 & is delayed currently</p> <p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formation of the working group and this specific initiative will be identified by the working group in 2020. • Work with Western Development Commission (WDC) to establish the state of the existing network of Hubs <p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <p>Worked with the Western Development Commission to establish the state of the existing network of hubs.</p> <p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <p>Working with employer groups and other related associations to develop focus sessions with employers.</p> <p>To work with smaller groups representing sectors and locations to explore issues in more detail</p> <p>Action 5:</p> <p>Communicate to employers the services available through the Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs.</p> <p>Working Group Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Skills Forum • Niall McEvoy, IT Sligo • Mark Butler, HR Director, Regional Skills Forum, Lotus Works • John Reilly, Sligo Local Enterprise Office • Hilary McPartland, IT Sligo
<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>2020</p> <p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.</p> <p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted an open day session in Sligo along with eBay and Shopify • Support to Guidance Teachers

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

Employer Information Sessions:

In 2019, the RSF/REP in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta hosted an information session for employers based in the Gaeltacht areas of the region. This information session provided employers with a 1 stop shop event where they could learn about the various services available from local Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), ETBs, Skillnets and Údarás na Gaeltachta. This has resulted in numerous new collaborations between industry and education.

Good progress in Sligo with an Open Day promoting Remote Working.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

- Work with WDC to connect Hubs and establish new ones
- To link hubs together to ensure coherent plans
- Conducting Employer information and engagement session across the regions.

Action 6:

Complete an audit of available skills across the North-West using AIRO methodology. This Regional Skills Register will be used to market the skills available in the Region to potential foreign and indigenous investors.

Working Group Members:

Local Enterprise Office, Local Authorities, IDA Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission

- John Nugent, IDA Ireland
- Karen Sweeney, Western Development Commission
- Michael Tunney, Donegal Local Enterprise Office
- Hilary McPartland, Regional Skills Forum Manager
- Niall McEvoy, IT Sligo
- Peter Egan, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
- Ann McHugh, Donegal Education and Training Board

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- To complete skills audits in the following sectors: Computing, Engineering & Manufacturing.
- To see how AIRO Technology could help fast track skills audits.

<p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Audits were completed and published in each of the selected sectors. • With the Audits completed the task of addressing training issues remains • Training providers are taking steps to address identified training needs.
<p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Audits will be conducted in the hospitality and tourism sectors • Skills Audits will be conducted on remote working.
<p>Action 7:</p> <p>Promote the Regional Skills Register to the Diaspora to inform them about skills needs and vacancies.</p>
<p>Working Group Members:</p> <p>Local Enterprise Office, Local Authorities, IDA Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Nugent, IDA Ireland • Karen Sweeney, Western Development Commission • Michael Tunney, Donegal Local Enterprise Office • Hilary McPartland, Regional Skills Forum Manager
<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>2020</p>
<p>Status:</p> <p>Delayed</p>
<p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing systems for suitability • Engagement with stakeholders • Design phase. • Procurement of technical providers.
<p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <p>Although a Working Group was formed and the project appears simple, the delivery of the new platform is complex. This initiative is led by WDC and the delays are mainly technical, as the project requires engagement with stakeholders, design of a new skills register system and the inevitable delays of procurement. The Project is back on track and hopefully will be piloted in early 2020 with a view to full implementation in the latter part of 2020.</p> <p>The first two milestones were achieved, but the project became more technical in the design phase.</p>
<p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <p>The workplan for 2020 is to deploy the new platform to a limited audience to test the new system.</p>

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

Achieve a step-change in the level of entrepreneurship in the North-West.

**Action 1:**

Examine the existing and new models of peer to peer mentoring programmes in the North-West Region that will result in an increased entrepreneurial outlook in the Region, while also examining how to best leverage existing programmes for peer learning.

Working Group Members:

Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

2020

Status:

Delayed

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Models identified and assessed for impact in the North-West context.

Feasibility on introducing new programme completed

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

At first meeting of the REP working group, Sligo IT requested that they would be interested in taking the lead on this action and this was agreed

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Examine the models identified and assessed the potential impact in the North-West to increase the entre.

Action 2:

Commission a research project to identify the drivers and barriers to entrepreneurialism and start-ups within the region to include a comparative study with national trends.

Working Group Members:

Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, Connaught Ulster Alliance

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

<p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.</p>
<p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of TOR. • Identify possible funding mechanism. • Tender to be posted on e.tenders.
<p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft tender request was prepared and shared among the working group. A revised tender request was published on e.tenders on 2nd December 2019. Response date is 3rd January 2020 and contract for allocation by 31st January 2020. • Funding from the LEOs and EI has been agreed. • Action 2, Strategic Objective 3 relating to the feasibility of New Frontiers programme for the blue economy has been incorporated into this research request (as per the decision at the first meeting of the REP committee).
<p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <p>Carrying out of the contract as per the tender between February to May 2020. Presentation of draft research and recommendations in May and finalisation of same by end of July 2020.</p>
<p>Action 3:</p> <p>Develop and implement marketing and communication plans to promote, encourage and celebrate entrepreneurs in the North-West Region.</p>
<p>Working Group Members:</p> <p>Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland</p>
<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>2020</p>
<p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.</p>
<p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <p>Content developed.</p> <p>Programme of communication in place and underway.</p>
<p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <p>As agreed at first meeting – this is ongoing work of the enterprise agencies and in particular the LEOs at local level on an on-going basis. As well as LEO national campaigns to promote entrepreneurship each LEO actively promotes entrepreneurship and their local entrepreneurs throughout the year through events such as Enterprise Week, IBYE, local enterprise awards and engaging them in the Schools Enterprise Competition.</p>

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Continue with programme as initiated in 2019.

Action 4:

Develop more opportunities between LEO, EI and IDA clients with Enterprise Ireland/IDA Ireland Global Sourcing Events.

Working Group Members:

Local Enterprise Office, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Seek agreement from Enterprise Ireland to host a Global Sourcing event in 2020

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

2 Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) 'Meet the Buyer' events were held in the in 2019:

- EENGINEX Engineering Meet the Buyer & Matchmaking Event, held in Monaghan
- FOOD eir-EEN Meet the Buyer & Matchmaking Event, held in Drogheda

(Enterprise Ireland co-ordinates the Enterprise Europe Network in Ireland in partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices and the Chambers in Dublin & Cork. The EEN helps Irish businesses innovate and grow internationally.)

Agreement, in principle, has been secured to host an EI/IDA Global Sourcing event in 2020.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Work with successful REDF and RTCF Cluster projects that help drive competitiveness, innovation and resilience among industry sectors in the Region.

In 2019, a Global Sourcing event took place in Cork and Dublin and EI/IDA have agreed to host to another event in mid-2020 in the Border Region.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

Harness the potential of the Blue Economy and the North-West coastline as a source of new employment generation.

**Action 1:**

Support and grow the collaborative potential of the existing informal network of companies in Killybegs Harbour by establishing a formal network that can avail of existing LEO and EI supports.

Working Group Members:

Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Establish a formal network of companies.

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

An application to facilitate the development of a cluster network, to a value in excess of €300,000 over a 3-year period, was submitted to the EI Regional Technology Cluster Fund in Q3 2019, with the application being led by LyIT. An approval was announced by EI for this in early December 2019. On receipt of formal Letter of Offer the project will proceed with the cluster evolving from the existing Harbour User Group of businesses.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

A Cluster Manager will be appointed who will lead in the development of a Workplan for 2020 - 2022.

Action 2:

Examine the feasibility of developing a Marine focused New Frontiers Programme, working in conjunction with the industry to explore bespoke options.

Working Group Members:

Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Enterprise Ireland, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology

Timeframe for delivery:

2019

Status:
Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.
What were the milestone(s) for 2019?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility assessment complete • Action plan in place to deliver (subject to feasibility)
What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?
The action was delayed pending the outcome of Action 1- Cluster established.
What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?
The Workplan for the Regional Technology Cluster Network will include this action in 2020.
Action 3:
A Working Group will be formed to explore future development and potential leveraging of funding supports under Project Ireland 2040 funding streams. The Steering Group will be comprised of representatives of LEO Donegal, Killybegs businesses, Enterprise Ireland, LyIT and others as appropriate.
Working Group Members:
Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Enterprise Ireland, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Donegal LA
Timeframe for delivery:
2019
Status:
Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.
What were the milestone(s) for 2019?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group in place • Projects identified and proposals under development
What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?
Donegal County Council initiated a collaboration between Killybegs Harbour Users Group businesses (KHUG), Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine, LyIT, KFO, EI & LEO in April 2019, with 4 meetings taking place up to November 2019. The collaboration is currently focussing on strategic investment options and opportunities to maximise the leading-edge expertise within the marine engineering services and associated business in Killybegs. A TOR for a detailed feasibility study, incorporating technical, legal and regulatory issues and revolving around the establishment of additional infrastructure in the Killybegs Harbour area to better position the sector is nearing completion, with agreement in principle that this will be co-financed through a fund contributed to by Donegal County Council, KHUG and EI. The Blue Economy Working Group is in place and meetings were held in 2019. LEO Donegal engaged Gavin & Doherty Geosolutions – Belfast to aid the Killybegs Harbour Development Group to prepare a Terms of Reference and scope for a Feasibility Study examining the technical, regulatory and financial requirements of enhancing port facilities at Killybegs Harbour. The Terms of Reference will be finalised and the tender for the Feasibility study should issue before end of 2019.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The work scheduled for 2020 will include

- Appointment of Consultants to complete the Feasibility Study
- Feasibility Study Complete
- Development Projects Identified and Funding sought/secured.

Potential projects identified for further consideration in the Feasibility Study include;

- Dry dock facility for vessels of up to 100m LOA; 20m beam; 9m draught; 4,500 GRT (gross registered tonnage) to enable ship repair, fabrication, inspection and painting.
- The existing synchrolift arrangement should be reviewed and assessed to determine if its capacity could be readily upgraded or the available throughput of vessels increased – particularly for those smaller vessels that it can currently accommodate.
- Quay extension of circa 250m with a minimum berth depth of circa -10mCD (but preferably -12mCD) with associated reclamation to support a container storage area. Quayside loading to be generally UDL = 75kN/m² and also accommodate typical crane outrigger pads for container handling and ongoing similar harbour usage.
- Storage space for a weekly container service to the near continent based upon 8,000 to 10,000 TEU annually but concentrated usage may require circa 400-500 TEU per week throughput. Also assessment of area required for container storage based on various types of appropriate container handling equipment that could be adopted.
- Offset layby berthage for vessels up to circa 25m LOA if any reclamation is proposed adjacent to the inner Blackrock Pier that would restrict the current layby berthage there.
- In conjunction with pier extension works and dry dock provision, investigate synergies to provide future additional lay-by berths at sheltered locations in the harbour for typical fishing vessels up to 70m LOA.
- Investigate the existing port entrance configuration with gates and security cabin and propose efficient measures to facilitate improved access for turbine blades and large/long cargo.
- to provide future additional lay-by berths at sheltered locations in the harbour for typical fishing vessels up to 70m LOA.
- Investigate the existing port entrance configuration with gates and security cabin and propose efficient measures to facilitate improved access for turbine blades and large/long cargo.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

Maximise the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way and tourism for the region.

**Action 1:**

Fáilte Ireland will continue to offer training programmes which specifically assist businesses in the North-West winning more international business. Fáilte Ireland will also continue to offer programmes to help businesses to develop their experiences and explore the financials of extending the tourism season. In addition Fáilte will offer the following business supports in 2019/2020

Working Group Members:

Fáilte Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Training needs identified across region

Training workshops scheduled and delivered

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

Training requirements were gathered from industry via meetings and surveys. All training workshops and in-house training received were well attended.

Fáilte Ireland will continue to offer training programmes which specifically assist businesses in the North-West winning more international business. Fáilte Ireland will also continue to offer programmes to help businesses to develop their experiences and explore the financials of extending the tourism season. In addition, Fáilte Ireland will offer the following business supports in 2019/2020.

- Business Operations Excellence
- Sales Skills and Marketing Excellence
- Brexit Response Programme
- New Emerging Markets Readiness
- Fáilte Ireland Accredited Service Excellence

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Fáilte Ireland continues to respond to industry training and capability building in 2020 and adapt to the industry requirements and economic conditions.

- Q1 – identify training needs analysis
- Q2 – schedule and deliver workshops/mentoring
- Q3 – n/a
- Q4 – schedule and deliver workshops/mentoring

Business Supports to include:

- Business Operations Excellence
- Sales Skills and Marketing Excellence
- Brexit Response Programme
- New Emerging Markets Readiness
- Fáilte Ireland Accredited Service Excellence

Action 2:

Fáilte Ireland will develop a sustainable management development model to oversee marketing.

Working Group Members:

Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland meet quarterly for progress update on marketing campaign, new products and experiences
- International Publicity familiarisation visits scheduled and media familiarisation itineraries agreed
- Meitheal and other in-Ireland Buyer platforms scheduled
- Overseas trade shows calendared
- Taste the Island program launched

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

Increase in focus by Fáilte Ireland on the North-West for media and other family trips. Meitheal familiarisation visits delivered into the region and engaged with industry. Increase in from the region attending opportunities to meet buyers and contract business.

Taste the Island programme had a series of food experience marketed in the region, many of which were new. Good attendance from visitors in all events scheduled.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Build on partnership between Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to continue focus on the region and get prominence in marketing campaigns, advertising and media/social media.

Increase in funding for new domestic marketing campaign in 2020 announced.

Action 3:

Implement a series of Visitor Experience Development Plans and other developmental plans aligned to the Wild Atlantic Way. These are 3 to 5-year commercial development plans for an area, which will unlock the economic growth potential.

Working Group Members:

Fáilte Ireland. Local Authorities

Timeframe for delivery:

2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Q2 2019 – Inishowen Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) commences

Q4 2019 – Sligo VEDP commences

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

Consultants recruited for Inishowen project

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Consultants for Inishowen to produce first draft of VEDP by end of 2020. Implementation team identified and all VEDP Activation training scheduled.

Sligo VEDP commences with community and stakeholder workshops and working group in place. Sligo VEDP launched by end of 2020

Action 4:

Fáilte Ireland will rollout nationally a Large Capital Grants Scheme in order to develop brilliant visitor experiences and enhance the visitor experience around the country. These developments will be in line with 4 experience brands.

Working Group Members:

Fáilte Ireland

<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>2019</p> <p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020</p> <p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q2 2019 – Platforms for Growth – Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions launched • Q2 2019 – Stage 1: Expressions of Interest • Q3 2019 – Stage 2: The Project Idea • Q4 2019 – Stage 3: The Business Case <p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <p>Information Workshops scheduled and delivered across the region which were well attended. Expression of Interest and project ideas submitted to Fáilte Ireland by end of 2019. Successful projects moved to Stage 3.</p> <p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <p>Successful applicants will move to Stage 4: Development Phase and Stage 5: Delivery Phase in 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>Action 5:</p> <p>A range of supports will be available to businesses to help them to develop their digital skills with a focus on the effective use of social media for business and website optimisation and working effectively with OTAs (online tour operators). We will also continue to offer our Grow Digital programme which provides a practical approach to help owners/operators develop a more effective online profile for their business.</p> <p>Working Group Members:</p> <p>Fáilte Ireland</p>
<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p> <p>2020</p> <p>Status:</p> <p>Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.</p> <p>What were the milestone(s) for 2019?</p> <p>Digital mentoring delivered to some businesses. Leitrim as part of Ireland Hidden Heartlands launched a scheme for industry to apply for funding to assist the development and improvement of digital footprint.</p> <p>What progress was made in reaching the milestone(s) in 2019?</p> <p>Applications received and evaluated for the Digital Scheme delivered in Irelands Hidden Heartlands (Leitrim)</p> <p>What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?</p> <p>Roll out the full suite of supports for the Digital Scheme in Ireland Hidden Heartlands.</p>

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

5

Develop a regional network of landing spaces to support co-working.

**Action 1:**

Through engaging with the work of the Atlantic Economic Corridor, develop and publish a central list of information on enterprise space availability in the Region. The results will be published on the Local Authorities' websites and information will be updated quarterly.

Working Group Members:

Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeframe for delivery:

2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Undertake work to identify existing Co-working hubs in the North-West in 2019
- New proposals to be developed for Co-working spaces under REDF 3
- Market and list all co-working spaces on Local Authority websites

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

A number of agencies undertook to research and list all potential co-working facilities within their region and funding spheres in 2019. UnaG, WDC, IDA, EI and the Local Authorities have come together under the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) to include all co-working spaces within one centrally managed database that will be made available to the public for a live booking system in 2020. 101 Co-working Hubs identified and next phase in connecting these under one booking system.

A workshop organised by WDC was held in Sligo in November to discuss the plan. Donegal Local Authority were awarded RRDF funding to re-develop an existing Harbour building into a Digital Hub with co-working space.

Work was undertaken by a number of stakeholders to develop projects for the REDF Call 3 that included co-working spaces. A total of 4 projects from the North-West included co-working spaces as part of their submissions.

Effort to design and develop projects that incorporate co-working space for REDF call 3 have been undertaken with a number of Local Authorities and groups in the North-West in 2019.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Work will continue to identify towns and regions to develop co-working hubs for future RRDF and REDF calls to ensure the North-West region is competitively placed to take advantage of these opportunities.

Marketing of Hubs and making these available to professional workers based in the Region and seeking to re-locate to the Region will be prioritised.

Action 2:

Work with enterprise centre owner/managers to enhance the standard of provision, facilities and services available and maximise opportunities for economies of scale through sharing of best practice, networking and join initiatives.

Working Group Members:

Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeframe for delivery:

2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Common standard framework agreed, and gaps addressed.

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

While various groups begin initiatives in isolation, the Atlantic Economic Corridor programme will bring all these centres and stakeholders together in a coordinated response. WDC/Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative developing guides and advice which will include infrastructure, business development, technology, promotion and marketing, funding and sustainability, remote working and others.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

Development of a detailed plan and guidelines to ensure these Hubs are operating to the highest standards and connected under one umbrella.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

6

Support the digitalisation of SMEs in the North-West.

**Action 1:**

Provide support, where possible, to the NWRA in their development and implementation of a project plan to incentivise SMEs to adopt digital solutions and that will result in increased competitiveness and increase efficiency, as part of the DEVISE project.

Working Group Members:

Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Working group established with Key Stakeholders

Two meetings held on the 30th May and 25th October 2019

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

Working group established with Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, IT Sligo and LyIT. Two meetings held on the 30th May and 25th October 2019

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The Working Group will continue to meet in 2020 to deliver the actions outlined on the REP. With the DEVISE project, the working group also plans to organise an intersectoral networking event between technology providers and businesses in manufacturing, marine and engineering sector.

Action 2:

Undertake a Supply and Demand Analysis which will map the sectors that could increase their competitiveness by utilising digital services offered by SMEs and start-ups in the region.

Working Group Members:

Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

- Finalise the format and questions in questionnaire with the working group.
- Questionnaire issued to client companies of the Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, IT Sligo and LyIT
- Total of 58 responses received from technology business and business in the Manufacturing, Engineering and Tourism sector
- Working group reviewed the results of the Supply and Demand Analysis questionnaire.

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

Two questionnaires were sent out to businesses in the region to assess the digitalisation of businesses in the region. One Questionnaire was sent to businesses in the Manufacturing, engineering, marine and Tourism sector. The second was issued to technology companies. A total 58 businesses responded to the questionnaires giving the working group an insight into the current challenges and opportunities facing businesses with digital transformation. The questionnaire was sent out to client companies of the Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, IT Sligo and LyIT. The working group agreed that while the results give an insight into the current challenges facing companies with digital transformation, the group agreed that more intuitive/intuitive/diagnostic questionnaire is required to give companies results in the form of a benchmarking score and suggested actions for companies to take to increase their level of digitalization. The results of the questionnaire would also signpost companies to specific supports from state agencies and the third level sector.

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

The working group have agreed to review the questionnaire and develop a digital diagnostic tool for companies in 2020. The digital diagnostic would give a benchmark score for their level of digitalisation but also signpost companies to supports from Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, IT Sligo and LyIT. Examples of supports which companies would be signposted to are:

- Operational Excellence Offer from Enterprise Ireland
- Trading Online Voucher from the Local Enterprise Offices,
- The network of Technology Gateways at the Institute of Technologies.

The digital diagnostic could be built on existing diagnostic platforms such as the Brexit Scorecard used by Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices.

Action 3:

Identify good practices case studies in the North-West or support mechanisms which enable businesses to adopt digital technologies to increase their competitiveness.

Working Group Members:

Northern and Western Regional Assembly

Timeframe for delivery:

Q3 2019

Status:

Work started in 2019 & continuing in 2020.

What were the milestone(s) for 2019?

Identify good practice examples of effective business supports and share with project partners on the EU DEVISE project.

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

A total of three good practices have been identified to date which offer incentives for companies to increase their capacity for digitalisation and innovative tech-based projects. The working group met and discussed potential Good Practices and 3 Good Practices from the region have been documented and shared with project partners in the EU project DEVISE. The three Good Practices are

1. Operational Excellence Offer from Enterprise Ireland,
2. Technology Gateways at the Institute of Technology,
3. Small business Innovation Research Programme from Enterprise Ireland

What will the Workplan for 2020 contain?

At the next Working Group meeting, the group will review the current Good Practices and review other Good Practices from other EU regions provided through the DEVISE project. The DEVISE project will offer stakeholders the opportunity to travel to partner regions to learn about business support measures in other countries so they can improve knowledge here in Ireland and businesses will benefit indirectly through improved policies and support mechanisms offered by the Local Enterprise Office and Enterprise Ireland.

Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the North-West 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 North-West Region secured funding of over €5.6 million across five projects:

REDF Call	Project	Location	Description	Grant amount
1	Donegal Digital Innovation CLG	Donegal	Innovation Ecosystem/ Enterprise Capacity Building Programme	€1,119,640
1	Leitrim County Enterprise Fund	Leitrim/Cavan/ Longford	3 Digital and innovation Hubs	€1,284,000
2	Leitrim Food Enterprise Zone	Leitrim, Cavan, Sligo, Donegal	Development of a Food Enterprise Zone	€953,640
2	Sligo County Enterprise CLG	Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim	Campus for Digital Gaming and Associated Tech	€1,906,640
3	The Leitrim Design House CLG	Leitrim	Development of a creative cluster	€371,600
Call 1 Total				€2,403,640
Call 2 Total				€2,860,280
Call 3 Total				€371,600
Grand Total				€5,635,520

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

Regional Technology Clustering Fund

Under Project Ireland 2040 Government identified an ambition to build sectoral clusters of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) at regional level. This ambition will be delivered through initiatives supporting the development of business-led clustering of competitive advantage.

As one of the Government initiatives in this area, a multi-annual fund for Regional Technology Clustering was announced in Budget 2019.

An initial €2.75 million budget will be administered by Enterprise Ireland on behalf of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to support this initiative. This will be in the form of a competitive fund open to the Institutes of Technology (IoT) / Technological Universities (TU).

Applicant Name (Correct Legal Entity Name)	Stream	Project Summary	Fund awarded (€)
Sligo IT	1	A Border Regions Manufacturing Cluster initiative will increase the engagement and connectivity of the three border IoTs – Sligo, Dundalk and Letterkenny. – with the economy and industry overall, and with manufacturing SMEs and micro/small companies throughout Counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. It will help to strengthen productivity, competitiveness and internationalisation in this exposed manufacturing sector, which is facing the urgent issues of Brexit, internationalisation, automation/industry 4.0 and digitalisation, new technologies and the low carbon economy.	€297,314
Letterkenny IT	1	The establishment of the Killybegs Marine Cluster will help boost productivity, increase market share, enhance innovation, and harness the opportunities that the bountiful renewable energy resource off the North-West coast presents.	€297,314
Total			€594,628

Regional Technology Clustering Fund successful announcement date:
4th October 2019

Funding under LEO Competitive Fund

The LEO Competitive Fund is to encourage LEO projects aligned with the pillars of Future Jobs Strategy and the Regional-Enterprise-Plans. It supports LEOs to collaborate within the network and enterprise eco-system.

Project & Summary	Lead Local Enterprise Office	Partners collaborating in the project	Funding
The overall objective of the Food Coast project is to increase the number, ambition of added value food producers in Donegal, enhance their competitiveness, sustainability and increase their employment creation potential.	Donegal	Letterkenny IT, Údaras na Gaeltachts, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Donegal County Council, BIM	€230,375
This project will establish a Mobile Fabrication Laboratory for SMEs, enterprise hubs and schools to access digital technologies and design methodologies to increase innovation, develop products and increase skills.	Leitrim	Leitrim, Roscommon Longford and Cavan County Councils, Digital and Enterprise Hubs across the four counties, Manorhamilton FabLab	€141,340
Total			€371,715

LEO Competitive Fund successful announcement date:
4th October 2019

Appendix 2: Other Funding approved for the North-West

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 depopulation 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	Yeats Trail	Sligo	€500,000
	Surfing Centre of Excellence	Sligo	€615,752
	Swan Park restoration, Buncrana	Donegal	€1,728,042
	Gaoth Dobhair Enterprise Hub	Donegal	€1,500,000
	Smart Green Mohill	Leitrim	€37,500
	The Cliff Bath House	Sligo	€131,250
	Ocean Innovation Centre Ireland	Donegal	€293,436
	Call 1 Subtotal		
RRDF Call 2	Killybegs 2040 – Town Centre Regeneration Project	Donegal	€3,631,758
	Ailt an Chorráin (Burtonport)/ Oileáin Árainn Mhór (Arranmore Island) – Harbour to Island Regeneration	Burtonport/ Arranmore Island	€3,089,199
	The Junction Ballinamore – Regeneration of Ballinamore	Leitrim	€1,728,075
	Manorhamilton Public Realm Improvement works	Leitrim	€1,613,250
Call 2 Subtotal			€10,062,282
Shared RRDF Call 1 projects	Ireland’s National Parks (tourism interpretative master plan)	Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Kerry, Wicklow	€1,466,250
	National Parks (upgrading)	Donegal, Clare; Galway, Kerry, Mayo, Wicklow	€3,915,000
	DigiWest	Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon	€644,734
Shared Total			€6,025,984
Call 1 and 2 Total			€14,868,262
Grand Total (incl shared)			€20,894,246

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	Eastern Garavogue Bridge and approach roads	Sligo	€3,300,000
	O'Connell Street enhancement	Sligo	€1,236,000
	Sligo cultural plaza	Sligo	€750,000
	Carrick-on-Shannon -Public realm improvement	Leitrim	€2,899,000
URDF Cat A&B	Letterkenny 2040 (public realm and site acquisition)	Donegal	€1,000,000
Total			€9,185,000

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
Public realm upgrade of Clonmany to enhance and maintain the village in line with the Village Plan.	Clonmany	Donegal	€100,000
Upgrading of the car park and streetscape enhancement.	Dunfanaghy	Donegal	€100,000
Preparation of a development & operational plan for the village of An Caiseal and public realm works.	Glencolmcille	Donegal	€100,000
Installation of carpark, provision of recycling facilities and signage adjacent to a new outdoor play area.	Killea	Donegal	€100,000
Provision of a suite of innovative amenities which will promote adventure and activity tourism.	Maghery	Donegal	€64,400
Public realm upgrades and town enhancement measures.	Raphoe	Donegal	€200,000
Redevelop an underutilised car park in the village into a focal point with various community amenities.	Rossnowlagh	Donegal	€100,000
Donegal Total			€764,400
Construction of a footpath, car parking and public lighting in the village centre.	Ballinaglera	Leitrim	€29,864
Development of a village plan.	Dromahair	Leitrim	€24,000
Infrastructural improvements around Dromod harbour and Wildlife Area.	Dromod	Leitrim	€79,847
The construction of a footpath and ancillary works, connecting the village centre of Drumkeeran to Windmill Park housing estate.	Drumkeeran	Leitrim	€100,000
Establish 20 additional SMART working spaces and upgrade communal areas in the Mohill Enterprise Centre.	Mohill	Leitrim	€90,800
Leitrim Total			€324,511
Upgrade of the Field Study Centre and the provision of trailhead facilities and links to a walking trail	Ballinafad	Sligo	€100,000
Establish a new Village Park and public realm works.	Bunnanadden	Sligo	€100,000
Upgrade of the Culfadda Community Hall.	Culfadda	Sligo	€64,000
Resurface car park at Carrowhubbock, landscaping, footpaths, development of amenity area, upgrade of reception at Waterpark	Enniscrone	Sligo	€100,000
Enhancement of the Peace Garden, refurbishment of public toilet facility and improvement of local pedestrian links	Mullaghmore	Sligo	€100,000
Upgrade of Sligo Folk Park heritage museum.	Riverstown	Sligo	€100,000
Sligo Total			€564,000
North-West Grand Total			€1,652,911

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

Appendix 3: Brief profile and statistical snapshot – North-West

Constituent counties	Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim	
Regional Population & change (1996-2016)	210,872 (1996): 256,771 (2016) increase of 45,889*	
GVA ¹ per person 2000 and 2015	€16,147: €19,060*	
Total in employment	183,900 ²	
Labour Force Participation rate	59.3% ³	
Unemployment rate	3.9% ⁴	
Unemployment blackspots ⁵	6*	
Percentage employed in Manufacturing: Services: Public sector	14%: 13%: 28% ⁶	
Educated to third level in North-West: State	36%: 45%*	
Third Level Students (full-time & part-time)	4,970*	
Number of enterprises ⁷ (micro: small: medium: large) (2016)	11,612: 790: 117: 8*	
Number of Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-Ups ⁸ (HPSUs) North-West: State (2019)	2: 91	
EI supported employment & no. client Companies (2018 – 2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 6,667	Jobs: 6,859
	Companies: 400	Companies: 222
IDA supported employment & no. client companies (2018 -2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 6,720	Jobs: 6,992
	Companies: 43	Companies: 44
LEO supported employment & no. client companies (2018 - 2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 260	Jobs: 179
	Companies: 611	Companies: 632
ÚnaG supported employment & no. client Companies (2018 – 2019)	2018	2019
	Jobs: 2,278	Jobs: 2,326
	Companies: 255	Companies: 254
Number of LEO Priming Grants ⁹ North- West: State (2019)	33: 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. Labour Force Survey Quarterly Series Q4 2019

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

Target for North-West 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 Border 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
Border	169,200	183,900	14,400	8.4%	8.6%	3.9%
State	2,014,400	2,361,200	346,800	17.2%	10.5%	4.5%

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, Q4 2019

The Border region has reached the target of having an unemployment rate reduced to within one percentage point of the State average but is still to reach the target of having employment growth of between 10 and 15 percent.

An Roinn Gnó, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

23 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 TD30
23 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 TD30

T +353 (0)1 631 2121, 1890 220 222

www.dbei.gov.ie

www.gov.ie

info@dbei.gov.ie

An initiative of the Department of
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