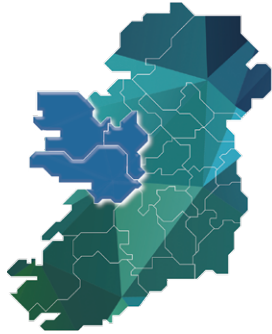




Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



# REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN TO 2024 WEST



An initiative of the Department  
of Enterprise, Trade and Employment



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# Minister's Foreword



**Robert Troy TD,**  
Minister of State for Trade Promotion,  
Digital and Company Regulation

**I am delighted to welcome the publication of this new West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024. Its preparation comes as Ireland's society and economy is emerging from one of its greatest challenges with COVID-19 and the imperative to recover strongly and in a sustainable manner.**

This recovery must and will be different. The Government's Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) provides a vision of the economy post-pandemic, which is export-oriented, digital, and green, whilst also being regionally balanced and inclusive. We need to address the economic fallout from the pandemic, but also embrace the positives of its legacy. New opportunities from pandemic-related behavioural changes such as remote working are potentially transformative – especially for our regions. We need to continue to navigate the post-Brexit complexities; and, above all, our recovery must embrace an ambitious green and digital transition. Our recently reviewed National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030, underpins this sustainable and regionally balanced post-pandemic recovery.

Within the framework of the ERP, realising the enterprise and jobs potential in all our regions and reducing disparities between them remains a core priority. My Department has an important role to play in regional development, by assisting businesses directly through the work of our enterprise agencies, and through measures to strengthen and support the enterprise ecosystem for example, capital investment in innovation and start-up infrastructures.

Critically, our Regional Enterprise Plans recognise that there are significant advantages for all if local stakeholders work together to understand their unique enterprise opportunities and challenges and collaborate on solutions. Throughout 2021 there has been intensive engagement around the country and in each region; amongst regional stakeholders, representing the Enterprise Agencies, LEOs, Local Authorities, Regional Skills, Higher and Further Education, The Regional Assembly, Private Sector, Fáilte Ireland and others. Collectively, they considered important questions about enterprise development and recovery in their region, including: enterprise resilience; place attractiveness; competitiveness; and the twin business transformation imperatives - low carbon and digital that are so critical for future business success and sustainable job creation.



This new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the West is future-focused and centred around a number of priorities including:

- Advancing the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem.
- Strengthening and harnessing the cultural and creative sector.
- Realising the Atlantic West jobs potential in renewable energy.
- Driving the scaling of a competitive life sciences sector regionally.
- Growing the AgTech and food sectors and transition to sustainable Bioeconomy.
- Expanding prospects for sustainable tourism.
- Facilitating a green and digital transformation.

With continued regional collaboration, knowledge sharing and a solutions mindset, we are confident that the actions within this Plan can make a real and lasting difference for the West, and to national economic recovery.

I would like to especially thank the Chairperson of the West Regional Steering Committee Evelyn O'Toole, for her leadership on the preparation of this new Plan, and Helena Deane, West Programme Manager for her critical role in delivering the final product. I am also very appreciative of the time and energy given by all the members of the Steering Committee, and for your ongoing commitment to the Regional Enterprise Plan.

To assist the Regional Enterprise Plans, my Department through Enterprise Ireland, has made available over €126 million in funding since 2018 to assist locally-led regional enterprise development projects. Of this, €18.8m has been approved for the West Region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund and the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme.

I'm pleased to confirm new funding of up to €180m will be available for the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative enterprise projects in the regions. Projects that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the regions to not just sustain but to add to employment at county, regional and national level. This funding complements the aims and objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plans and with continued regional collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the solutions mindset that is in evidence through this new Plan, the West Region is well positioned to compete for future funding calls to drive enterprise and employment development in the region.

I am very much looking forward to further engagement with Evelyn and the members of the West Steering Committee as implementation progresses.



# Message from the Chair



**Evelyn O'Toole,**  
Founder and CEO,  
Complete Laboratory Solutions

**It gives me great pleasure to present the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the West Region.**

**This Plan reflects a vision for Roscommon, Mayo, Galway City and Galway County that aims to provide the best value-added assistance for enterprise creation, enterprise development and job growth in the region, capitalising on our strengths here in the West.**

The development of the plan was not achieved in isolation. I want to acknowledge all the stakeholders, the vertical teams, the Project Delivery Team and each member of the Regional Steering Committee for their valuable contributions to advancing the development of this Plan, including its corresponding strategic objectives and actions, over the course of 2021. Nearly 200 individuals were consulted from all parts of the region, including industry representatives, members of the academia, researchers, enterprise agencies, professional associations and beyond, with over 100 individual and group meetings.

Based on this comprehensive consultation process, the West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 has compiled seven strategic objectives. These are building on the extensive work and successes that have been achieved under the previous plan to 2020, as well as being reflective of the future and the new opportunities and challenges presented by the changing social, economic, policy, environmental and technological trends. Together, these elements are combining to form a strong and ambitious framework for action.

The objectives to 2024 seek to further enhance and develop both sectors in the West Region that are already well established, as well as a number of sectors that are nascent, yet show immense potential, while also creating a vibrant, integrated and strongly supportive environment for businesses to grow and prosper. These objectives also build on the comprehensive set of natural resources and physical assets the region has to offer, and harness the wealth of expertise, knowledge, and skills available, as well as acknowledging the potency of collaboration and open innovation to enable the region to thrive.



To just name a few – the region benefits from:

- i. It's recognised strength in life sciences, with a robust cluster,
- ii. A growing creative economy,
- iii. Significant developments in the agri-food and AgTech sectors,
- iv. Opportunities based around ocean resources, such as offshore energy and the blue bioeconomy and
- v. Further prospects through digital and green transformation actions, including green hydrogen,
- vi. Encouraging adoption of smart technologies and
- vii. The circular economy business models.

The plan also identifies a number of critical enablers for the region, including the ability to develop and retain talent and the role general, strategic and specialised infrastructure has to play in fulfilling its ambition for growth. Placemaking has an important role to play in ensuring that the region is not only a location for enterprises to flourish, but also an attractive place to live in, to work at, and to visit. It is therefore important, as we look forward, to recognise that this is a 'region in transition', with a need to resolve critical longstanding investment shortfalls to maximise its performance.

Equally, under this Plan, the funding awarded to projects across the region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund is recognised, as well as funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. The Plan action implementation teams will assist these projects to ensure that they progress and scale so that their impact can be maximised, and synergies captured and utilised.

Finally, I welcome the appointment of Helena Deane, from the Western Development Commission, as the Programme Manager who will buttress the working groups and action leaders in the implementation of the Plan and I want to thank the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for their support to the Regional Enterprise Plans.

I as the Plan's Chair, the Programme Manager, the Regional Steering Committee, as well as the Project Delivery Team, look forward to working with the Department as we move to the implementation stage.



# West Regional Profile

**The West Region consists of the territory of Galway City, as well as the counties of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. It spans 13,801 km<sup>2</sup> (20% of the total area of the state) with a population of 453,109 in 2016, which is projected to grow to up to 524,00 in 2026. It is administered by four Local Authorities – Galway City Council, Galway County Council, Mayo County Council and Roscommon County Council, as well as the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA). The West neighbours the North-West, Mid-West and Midlands and has close collaborations with those regions.**

The West is a geographically, culturally, and industrially diverse region, with many individual characteristics, with differentiation in heritage, language (with the significant presence of the Gaeltacht), natural assets, industrial assets, infrastructure, and as defined by its distinct urban, rural, and coastal communities. This versatility and diversity of strengths and challenges is reflected in the strategic objectives and actions of this Regional Enterprise Plan.

In terms of employment, there is a notable concentration in high value-added activities in the Pharma, MedTech, Agri and Food Production, Marine, Hospitality and Tourism, Machinery and Equipment, as well as Construction and Engineering sectors in the West, with a strong Research and Development base. Since the launch of Regional Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) in 2015, 51,100 more people are in employment in the region, in Q3 2021 relative to Q1 2015. This is an increase of 28.3%. During this time, the enterprise development agencies through their core activities have been instrumental in job creation across the region. In 2021, some 346 Enterprise Ireland client companies supported 14,688 jobs in the West with 120 IDA Ireland companies supporting 27,695 jobs. LEO supported companies accounted for some 3,210 jobs across 697 companies.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032 for the West identified major potential for growth. Galway is the fastest growing city in Ireland over the past 50 years, with a future population projected increase to at least 120,000, as identified in the National Planning Framework (NPF) – a 50% increase. This rapid growth comes with many challenges, as reflected in the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, in terms of provision of housing, infrastructure and services.

Galway County is exhibiting multiple centres of growth, including in the metropolitan County Galway (Baile Chláir, Bearna, Oranmore), key towns (Ballinasloe, Tuam), location of strategic potential (Athenry), and small growth towns (Clifden, Headford, Maigh Cuilinn, Oughterard, Portumna). An important economic development corridor has been identified between Oranmore – Athenry with its alignment based around the Galway to Dublin railway line and the M6 road corridor and encompassing the strategic Carnmore site, at former Galway Airport, identified as a key growth enabler in the National Planning Framework (NPF).

Mayo and Roscommon are predominantly rural counties with a dispersed settlement pattern. The economic development of Mayo will be further enhanced through the development of economic growth clusters for Castlebar-Westport; Ballina and its catchment; and the Ballinrobe-Ballyhaunis-Claremorris cluster. These economic growth clusters seek to harness and develop the complementary strengths and synergies between the settlements and their functional hinterland, to create highly connected centres of scale, with the necessary critical mass, in terms of population and employment, to enable them to compete and grow to fulfil their potential.

Roscommon exhibits several centres of growth, with ambitious innovation and smart specialisation strategies developed for Roscommon town, Boyle, Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen, and significant growth potential existing within the metropolitan area of Athlone, the townlands of Monksland, with Athlone being a designated regional growth centre that straddles lands within the combined functional area of the two Local Authorities of Westmeath in the Midlands and Roscommon in the West.





The West is a major centre for Life Sciences and Digital (ICT) industries. The arrival of Boston Scientific and Medtronic to Galway marked the origins of the med-tech cluster in Galway in partnership with Galway's third level institutions and the various industry specialists, which has led to a growth in indigenous firms to serve the market. This has also resulted in Galway being recognised as specialising in the development and manufacture of coronary and cardio-vascular medical devices. Prevalence of pharmaceutical and MedTech is also seen in Mayo and Roscommon with for example Allergan, Baxter, Hollister operating out of Mayo and Jazz Pharmaceuticals and Alexion out of Roscommon. Other industries that make a significant contribution to the local economy include biomed and ICT – Galway city and county are home to four of the five leading global ICT companies – IBM, SAP, Oracle and Cisco, and there is a solid presence of ICT companies in Mayo and Roscommon, e.g. Lionbridge in Ballina and Sidero in Monksland.

The West benefits from many natural assets, which give the region some unique attributes. Counties Mayo and Galway have an extensive and varied coastline along the Atlantic, providing a valuable wealth of marine resources including fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and offshore energy resources such as wind and wave. Both counties are strategically located to grow the 'blue economy' not only regionally, but also at a national level. Strategic assets on the coast include the Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS) near Belmullet, County Mayo, the Smart Bay project in Galway, ports in Galway City and Rossaveal, as well as the offshore gas pipeline infrastructure maintained by Shell in County Mayo and the Marine Institute Newport Research Cluster in County Mayo. Galway Port is a designated Port of Regional Significance under the National Ports Policy which provides shipping links to the UK and Europe. This is complemented by a significant diverse land base available for the development of onshore renewable energy and other land-based industry projects across all three counties for example greenfield and brownfield developments.

The agri-food sector is undoubtedly a major industry within the West. This sector is entering into a period of radical transformation underpinned by smart farming practices, growth in global demand, consumer sophistication and driven by transition to a sustainable bioeconomy. The soon to be launched BIA Innovator Campus led by Galway County Council and Teagasc is a new departure in food infrastructure in Ireland, which has the benefit of multi-food sector facilities and infrastructure in one location. Additional R&D and enterprise infrastructure is planned for Páirc na Mara, a marine industry hub over nine hectares, with a focus on aquaculture research. Studies on fish farming, as well as seaweeds to enhance biodiversity and reduce environmental impacts are planned at the Connemara site, managed by Údarás na Gaeltachta. The potential for development is further enhanced by the presence of some large food companies (e.g. Kepak and Aurivo) in Roscommon, mostly involved with primary processing, as well as a comprehensive array of smaller added-value food producers and artisans in all three counties.

Tourism is also a vital sector in the West. The Wild Atlantic Way has been an important initiative that has showcased how the natural beauty of the local landscape can contribute to the economic development of this coastal corridor, including linked destinations such as Connemara. Roscommon is a land of lakes, with the river Shannon and Lough Ree along the eastern border and several large lakes scattered throughout the county, with many nature walkways and parks exhibiting vast potential for tourism development, along the emerging destinations in East Galway. The Hidden Heartlands East brand can help realise the potential of this part of the region over the coming years.

Furthermore, the West is a strong epicentre for creative and cultural industries. Galway City is home to the world-renowned Druid Theatre as well as a thriving Arts Festival and Film Fleadh, is a designated European Capital of Culture and a UNESCO City of Film, with a growth in film production studios, animation, immersive technologies, and other digital creative media across the county. Mayo has a strong concentration of artists and crafters with some development in the media, film and audio-visual sector, and Roscommon has a nascent animation and immersive technology base. The cultural and creative potential of the region is further strengthened by the recent establishment of CREW – 'Creative Enterprise West'. CREW's focus will be on the development and scaling of creative digital entrepreneurs, job creation, incubation and accelerator programmes, training, and outreach services in the West and along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.



In terms of third level education, the region benefits from the presence of NUI Galway, which is ranked among the top 1% of universities in the world and offers courses and research opportunities across a wide range of disciplines, alongside the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, a multi-campus college based in five locations in the West of Ireland – Galway city (two campuses), Letterfrack and Mountbellew in County Galway and Castlebar in County Mayo. Along with IT Sligo and IT Letterkenny, GMIT is in the process of a joint bid to become the Atlantic Technological University (ATU). Both institutions collaborate extensively regionally, nationally, and internationally in the area of research, innovation, and enterprise, in addition to providing a vital educational function.

Road transport links to and within the West Region have improved considerably over recent years, although some intra-regional linkages remain weak. The region is well served by air through Ireland West Airport, Knock (IWAK). Ireland West Airport Knock is key in attracting people and investment to County Mayo and the region, driving existing and new economic activity, as well as helping grow tourism and travel. The airport acts as an international gateway to the West of Ireland as well as the North, North-West, and Midland's areas. The role of IWAK as a county and regional driver has been further enhanced through its designation as an economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ). The SDZ secures the future development and expansion of the airport and surrounding lands and will form an enterprise and employment hub for the region.

Shannon Airport adds to the connectivity of the West, as an intercontinental gateway, in the neighbouring Mid-West Region. Local connectivity by air and sea to the offshore Aran Islands is also important both for residents of the islands and for tourists. Further key capital infrastructural projects under Project 2040 and the potential future reopening of the Western Rail Corridor will all help consolidate the potential in the West, especially in terms of the development of the Economic Atlantic Corridor and development of towns of scale.

In conclusion, the region has many attributes and assets that give rise to immense development potential, which is reflected in the high level of ambition in this plan. However, the realisation of this potential is subject to constraints that are critical enablers for enterprise and job growth – fundamentally these require extensive investment in infrastructure, people and skills. Housing, transport and adequate water and waste-water infrastructure, such as required for Galway East, are just some of the areas that are critical blockers to expansion and growth of strategic towns and villages and an obstacle to attracting people to live and work here while eliminating net negative migration.

COVID-19 has had an immense impact on rural towns, with particular challenges to small businesses in retail, as well as parallel closure of banks and other facilities, with Mayo and Roscommon exhibiting the highest commercial vacancy rates of an average of 17% and 17.3% respectively, compared to the national average of 13.6%. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in a monumental shift in working patterns with new hybrid and blended remote working models, which offer an immense opportunity for a more balanced regional development. The roll out of the National Broadband Plan along with the implementation of the Government's rural development policy, *Our Rural Future* and the National Remote Work Strategy, will increase the potential for retention of talent in the region and reversing the decline of towns, which must not get wasted.

While acknowledging that certain capital decisions and external resources are outside the capabilities of the regional stakeholders and this can be seen as a significant risk to growth, the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the West has aimed to identify objectives and actions, based on partnerships and collaboration, that will enable the region to significantly advance economically, while undergoing a significant digital and low-carbon transformation.



# Overview of Strategic Objectives and Actions



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Advance the development of the regional entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem

- Action 1.1** Expand availability of incubation, acceleration and sector-specific start-up infrastructure and programmes.
- Action 1.2** Expand access to early stage and scaling capital.
- Action 1.3** Drive forward the development of People and Skills.
- Action 1.4** Harness the Connected Hubs and Grow Remote initiatives to assist placemaking and talent retention.
- Action 1.5** Advance the Enterprise Strategy for the Strategic Development Zone at the at the Ireland West Airport Knock.
- Action 1.6** Continue to champion gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity in innovation and entrepreneurship.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Strengthen and harness the cultural and creative sector to attract new investment, commercialisation, and collaboration opportunities

- Action 2.1** Build-up and scale the activities of CREW REDF project, to act as hub and spoke across the region, developing creative centres of excellence such as An Bealach, Roscommon.
- Action 2.2** Develop clustering of the Creative and Cultural Sector, by creating new linkages and new collaborative opportunities and expand creative assets (e.g., film studio, production facilities) and capitalise on emerging development in immersive technology and animation.
- Action 2.3** Further the collaboration between the industry, the academia, and the researchers, thereby assisting the development and commercial exploitation of creative and cultural intellectual property.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Realise the Atlantic West Region's potential for enterprise and job creation in the Renewable Energy sector

- Action 3.1** Engage in inter-regional collaboration for development of the supply-chain and upskilling programmes, in particular in offshore renewable energy.
- Action 3.2** Develop smart specialisation of the region in the field of renewable energy, linked to natural and physical assets, e.g. AMETS while identifying suitable locations and investment opportunities for further development, including green hydrogen.
- Action 3.3** Form a task force with the goal of assisting development and removing barriers to progress of critical infrastructure.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Drive the global competitiveness of the Life-Sciences sector underpinned by an expanded regional footprint and coordination

- Action 4.1** Further develop coordination activities and integration of the diverse elements and actors in the ecosystem.
- Action 4.2** Scale and diversify sector specialisms and specialism-specific initiatives across the region, including access to necessary infrastructure in liaison with Strategic Objective 1.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Grow the AgTech and Food sector in the West, underpinned by an integrated innovation network, facilitating the transition towards a sustainable Bioeconomy

- Action 5.1** Utilising the BIA Innovator Campus as a central engine for development of Agri-food and Ag-Tech, develop an integrated regional platform for innovation in conjunction with national and regional partners, ensuring proactive, joined-up approaches to identify and address ecosystem needs.
- Action 5.2** Encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the sector to enable clustering and intra-company collaboration.
- Action 5.3** Expand the innovation, educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for AgTech.
- Action 5.4** Develop industry-HEI collaboration and research further to facilitate transition to circular Bioeconomy, championing cross-sectoral, low-carbon and smart approaches.
- Action 5.5** Further the development of enterprise and innovation in the Blue Bioeconomy.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6: Expand prospects for sustainable entrepreneurship, employment and upskilling in Tourism

- Action 6.1** Develop a pilot accelerator programme based around the experience economy, underpinning companies with sector-specific initiatives and growth funding.
- Action 6.2** Build out integrated, networked approaches for smarter, greener, connected, and a more sustainable tourism offering.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7: Facilitate an equitable digital and green transformation in the West

- Action 7.1** Leverage the European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) ecosystem to progress adaptation of the artificial intelligence, High Performance Computing and cybersecurity technologies by the industry and public sector.
- Action 7.2** Develop initiative to encourage emergence of 'born sustainable, born circular' start-ups.
- Action 7.3** Develop further capacity to stimulate circular economy adaptation by enterprise in collaboration with the public bodies, industry and HEIs.
- Action 7.4** Develop the region as a 'Living Lab' to help address challenges associated with the Digital and Green Transformation.
- Action 7.5** Develop a shared regional enterprise strategy to harness the potential of Decarbonising Zones.

## 1

# The Regional Enterprise Plans Initiative

## Introduction

In early 2019, nine Regional Steering Committees established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), finalised and commenced implementation of the first *Regional Enterprise Plans*. This 'bottom-up' collaborative mechanism, involves the enterprise agencies, local enterprise offices, local authorities, higher and further education bodies, private sector and others, within each region, chaired by a senior figure from industry. The Committees were formed initially in 2015 to drive the Regional Action Plans for Jobs until 2018.

The Regional Enterprise Plans each contain agreed 'Strategic Objectives' for enterprise development, accompanied by a time-bound set of actions that deliver to the objectives. Progress Reports on implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 are available on the Department's website.

## Policy Context

Delivering balanced regional growth through a coherent policy approach to the enterprise needs of every part of Ireland is a stated objective within the Programme for Government (PfG) and more recently emphasised in the *Economic Recovery Plan 2021*.

DETE contributes to this agenda in a number of ways, including through the enterprise agencies; the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs); and direct investments in strengthening the enterprise ecosystem (incl. Regional Enterprise Development Fund, IDA property programme etc.), guided by our national enterprise policy. This work takes place in the context of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which provides the vision and holistic future planning framework for Ireland's spatial development across society and economy over the longer-term, and its translation through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and the aligned Local Authority County and City Development Plans.

The NPF and the three RSES provide a statutory long-term framework for the spatial, economic and social development of all regions in Ireland, offering an ambitious and sustainable proposition to delivering balanced regional development in Ireland. Smart Specialisation (S3) represents one of the key economic principles adopted in each of these high-level statutory frameworks, with a key enabling condition for funding interventions under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) also being the development of and alignment with the Member State's S3. By placing Smart Specialisation as one of the thematic areas of the Regional Enterprise Plans, we can ensure that regional enterprise priorities identified and supported in these plans are aligned with the long-term vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES.



Other pertinent national policies include the *National Skills Strategy 2025*, *Innovation 2020* (with a new innovation strategy forthcoming); and *Making Remote Work* amongst others. Also, as part of the Shared Island initiative, there will be added impetus to delivering balanced regional growth by leveraging the potential to grow the all-island economy, while driving growth and job creation North and South.

Ensuring that all regions can realise their enterprise development potential and that regional disparities are reduced therefore requires that the Department works closely with relevant partners across Government to strengthen the enabling conditions for investment and business growth.

The Regional Enterprise Plans recognise that enterprise policy coherence and collaboration at the national level needs to be mirrored from the 'bottom up', to enable:

- a place-based perspective on needs, capabilities and opportunities to inform national enterprise and other policies;
- economies of scale through joined up actions and investment;
- effective targeting at national initiatives to areas of opportunity and greatest need; and
- development and delivery of a programme of collaborative actions that can drive better outcomes in terms of regional job creation

Although the Plans themselves are focused and timebound, the Steering Committee mechanism also maintains a live agenda at regional level, responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges, for example: Brexit, COVID-19 pandemic impacts, remote working opportunity for regions, climate action/just transition, and regional shocks requiring joined up responses.

## Developing new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024

The outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) concluded at the end of 2020. Final Progress Reports from the nine Steering Committees show that the model has impact and that actions delivered are complementary and add value to the mainstream interventions of the enterprise agencies and other bodies working to enable enterprise development at a regional level.

The new Plans to 2024 build on the first iteration of the REPs and each Steering Committee had a clear mandate to deliver a new Plan to 2024 that would:

- complement and translate national enterprise policy in a regional context;
- facilitate collaboration regionally to address prioritised ecosystem gaps and opportunities, and help achieve Agency and LEO investment and jobs targets in each region; and
- use collective insight and resources in each region, and available regional funding, to progress initiatives to enable enterprise growth and job creation in each region.

The Department highlighted a number of national policy challenges that each of the Regional Committees were asked to consider as part of the preparation of the new Plans: enabling recovery and building enterprise resilience in the context of COVID-19 and other external shocks; the twin transition imperative for enterprises to digitalise and contribute to a carbon neutral economy; improving competitiveness through effective placemaking, including enabling flexible work patterns; and capitalising on existing and emerging sectoral strengths and capabilities through smart specialisation.

The development of Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 has for the first time been done in parallel with the creation of Ireland's forthcoming new Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3). The stakeholder consultation events undertaken as part of the development of these Regional Enterprise Plans has acted as an entrepreneurial discovery process which has contributed valuable insights to the S3 for Ireland.

The final appendix summarises the various stages that has led to the publication of the Regional Enterprise Plans. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the development of the nine new Plans to 2024 was undertaken in a virtual environment. The Regional Enterprise Plans and Initiatives Unit, within DETE, will oversee the implementation of the new Plans at the national level, while roll-out of the process in each region will be driven on the ground by the existing Regional Steering Committees, assisted by Programme Managers appointed by the Local Authorities in each region.

Finally, to help drive delivery of the new REPs to 2024, drive best practice across regions, and encourage cross-regional collaboration on areas of common interest and opportunity, the Department has established a National Oversight Group (NOG) for the REPs, chaired jointly by Minister Robert Troy and Minister Damien English. This grouping includes the Chairpersons and the Programme Managers of the Regional Steering Committees, national level representatives of the enterprise agencies and other relevant bodies, as well as relevant Government Departments. The Group will meet over the lifetime of the new Regional Enterprise Plans.



# 2



# West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

## Strategic Objective 1:

### Advance the development of the regional Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystem

#### Context and Vision to 2024

The synthesis of innovation and entrepreneurship produces the high-impact enterprises that are a critical engine for long-term job creation, and ultimately economic prosperity and social impact. This objective builds on existing strengths in the region. It aims to evolve and integrate the strengthening models for entrepreneurship, growth, scaling, internationalisation, and innovation further, while strengthening linkages between academia, researchers, and the industry.

This strategic objective links with the recommendations of the Report of the SME Taskforce: National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan (2021) and the ambition laid out in the National Research and Innovation Strategy 2021-27 Consultation Paper, Enterprise Ireland's Strategic Priorities 2021, Enterprise 2025 Renewed – Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025, the Strategic Planning Framework 2040, as well as the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022.

The desired outcome of this strategic objective is to develop an integrated, vibrant innovation and entrepreneurial Ecosystem in the West, reinforced by appropriate infrastructure and private capital, as well as physical and digital support systems, thereby creating an optimised and inclusive environment for start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs to thrive, collaborate, innovate, co-create and internationalise in the post-COVID, post-BREXIT environment.



## Actions to 2024

### Action 1.1: Expand availability of incubation, acceleration, and sector-specific start-up infrastructure and programmes.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
NUI Galway and Enterprise Ireland	ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)), Galway City Innovation District (GCID) at Portershed, WestBIC, Western Development Commission (WDC), Galway Technology Centre (GTC), Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás Na Gaeltachta.	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

Strong general models for development of technology start-ups already exist in the West Region e.g., New Frontiers, incubation centres such as NUI Galway Business Innovation Centre, Atlantic Technological University (ATU) (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) iHubs, the Galway Technology Centre (GTC) etc. Other enterprise assistance includes Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, WestBIC, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Galway City Innovation District at Portershed and others. Examples of sector-specific ‘smart specialisation’ of entrepreneurship and innovation help and infrastructure include Health Innovation Hub Ireland, Bioexel, BIA Innovator Campus, gteic Hubs and CREW. These initiatives are lowering barriers to access knowledge and specialised facilities. However, further models of industry-Higher Education Institutes (HEI) co-location and collaboration for provision of general technology and sector-specific infrastructure and programmes are needed to cater for current and emerging needs. This includes a review of strategic sites (e.g. Carnmore site as a part of the Oranmore-Athenry Strategic Economic Corridor, industry and enterprise zoned lands), locations offering close links with the HEIs, such as Nun’s Island in Galway City, or close links with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), such as capitalising on clustering opportunities (e.g. replication of the Bioexel and Bioinnovate models), as well as developing shared and open access models for the facilities, such as offered by WAPG (We Are Pioneer Group) for Life Sciences.

#### Action Outcome:

1. Need for a significantly improved life-science incubation and innovation facilities provision. This could be in the Nuns’ Island innovation district (currently being master-planned by NUI Galway and Galway City Council) or other locations around the region. A dedicated working group established to articulate, develop, and explore the full proposition.
2. Sector-specific/other infrastructure and initiatives (e.g., acceleration, scaling) and land assets identified, scope and sustainable business/funding model defined and strategic locations and target timescales for implementation confirmed.
3. Academy West will create a new collaborative model of innovation and enterprise scaling at GTC, led by a team of commercially focused executives whose understanding of global entrepreneurship, technology and regional collaboration across the enterprise ecosystem will assist rapid scaling of client companies, while demonstrating the west region as a place for dynamic technology led investment that hatches and grows indigenous tech ventures.
4. Galway City Innovation District at PorterShed will expand their footprint with the addition of two new buildings: increasing their membership to 330 desks and driving inputs into the tech funnel in the West of Ireland through early-stage start-up programmes.





**Action 1.2: Expand access to early stage and scaling capital.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
WestBIC	Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission, Local Enterprise Offices, WestBIC/Halo Business Angel Network (HBAN), National Digital Research Centre (NDRC), Galway City Innovation District at Portershed, Local Authorities, Galway Technology Centre (GTC).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q2 2023</li> <li>2. Q4 2023</li> </ol>

**Rationale:**

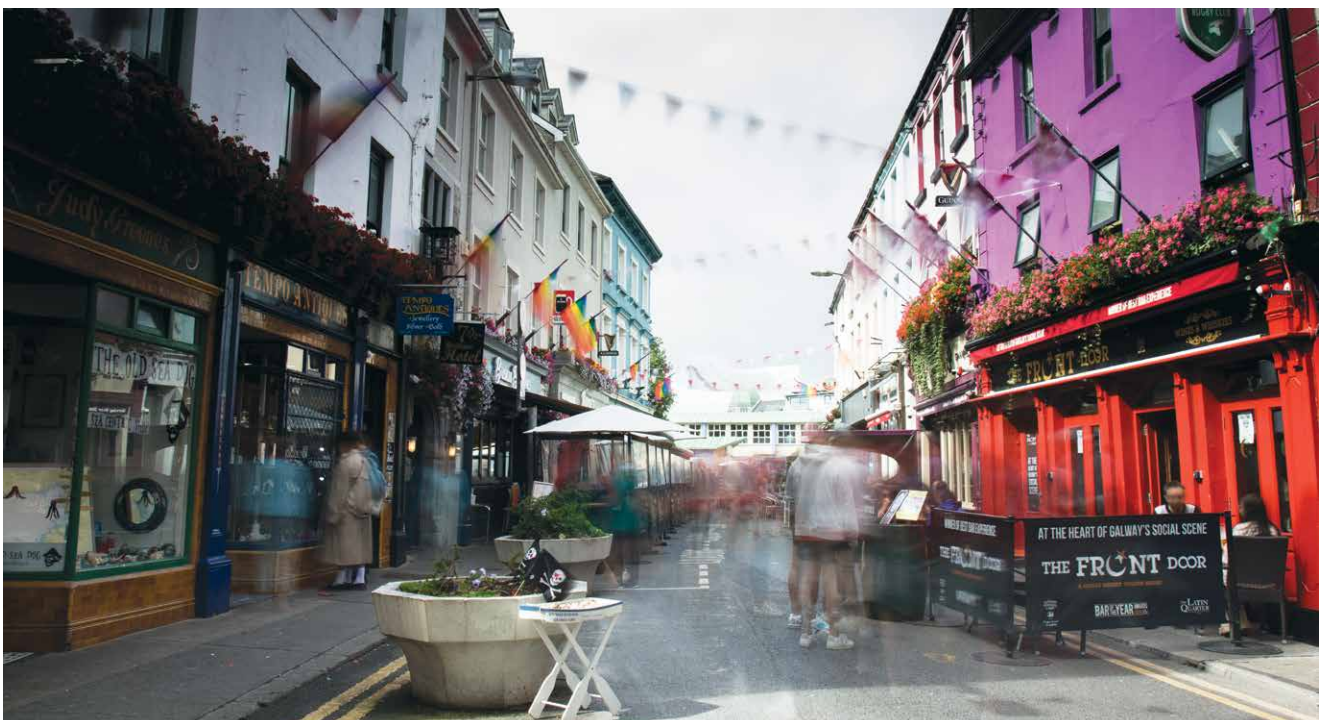
The provision of a broad spectrum of finance options, matching the different stages of an enterprise's development, is essential. A stable and appropriate supply of capital promotes growth, encourages start-ups, and enables SMEs to expand by exploiting growth opportunities.

There is a need to attract more angel and international venture capital investors and continue to enhance the venture capital options and to leverage entrepreneurial alumni networks regionally. This could build on strengths of existing initiatives in the region, such as the HBAN's West by North-West syndicate (WxNW), Western Development Commission's Western Investment Fund (WIF), InterTradelreland's equity clinics and Seedcorn competition, and the NDRC pre-accelerator (delivered through regional partner Galway City Innovation District at Portershed), in addition to mainstream aids.

Further transparency on options for innovation and growth finance, as well as scaling is also needed to address the knowledge asymmetry among entrepreneurs and integrate the funding journey between different regional actors, while also building the knowledge of underutilised options such as IPOs (Initial Public Offerings).

**Action Outcome:**

1. Five Workshops on Alternative Funding delivered.
2. Study on alternative funding models compiled (e.g., regional competitive fund, regional crowdfunding model, IPO etc), exploring the option of developing discriminatory discount models for companies in the West.



**Action 1.3: Drive forward the development of People and Skills.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Regional Skills Forum West	Educational Training Boards, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Western Development Commission, Grow Remote, Local Authorities, Skillnets, SOLAS, IDA Ireland.	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>Advances in technology, emerging market trends and changing demographics are driving new up-skilling requirements for the industry. Furthermore, disruptors such as immersive technology, artificial intelligence, big data, advanced manufacturing and cleantech are accelerating the need to develop different training programmes that are flexible and responsive to the needs of enterprises. Providing the right opportunities of reskilling and upskilling (including apprenticeships) to correspond to the regional needs is key.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist local enterprises to identify skills needs to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to enable economic and social prosperity. Once skills needs have been identified, link companies with regional education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills needs.</li> <li>2. Identification of key skills-related bottlenecks to growing of talent in the region and, where possible, assisting regional stakeholders to expedite their resolution.</li> </ol>		

**Action 1.4: Harness the Connected Hubs and Grow Remote initiatives to assist Placemaking and Talent Retention.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Western Development Commission	The National Hub Network, Grow Remote, National Bodies responsible for infrastructure implementation, Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Local Authorities, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), NUI Galway.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q4 2024</li> <li>2. Q4 2022</li> </ol>
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>Over the years, much potential value of people and skills to the region has been lost through a persistent brain drain through out-migration. Population growth is occurring but is associated particularly with the larger towns. The region is predominantly rural, with only three towns with population of more than 10,000 and a further five with more than 5,000. There is great potential for remote work to transform and revitalise rural communities, while harnessing the connected hubs network. Under the rural Development Policy – <i>Our Rural Future and the National Remote Working Strategy – Making Remote Work</i> – opportunities under the Connected Hubs Fund will be available in 2022 and 2023. The fund assisted close to €9m worth of remote working sites and broadband connection points in 2021.</p> <p>Reinforcing this requirement to prevent brain drain, is a necessity to create the optimal conditions for retention of talent, by creating attractive places to live and work in, in terms of revitalised towns and villages, and including adequate access to housing, local services (including water, wastewater, broadband and roads), and transport. This area has been identified as a barrier to enterprise development and economic growth by the stakeholders, with dependency on decision-making by national plans and agencies, including Irish Water, National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, ESB Networks, National Broadband Ireland and Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ), as well as the relevant national Departments.</p>		



**Action Outcome:**

1. Identification of region-specific actions required to maximise the potential of Grow Remote and Connected Hubs initiatives, including continuation of placemaking and promotional activities, such as the 'More to Life' campaign.
2. Identification of key critical infrastructure-related bottlenecks to placemaking and growing of talent retention in the region, producing 'actionable insights'.

### Action 1.5: Advance the Enterprise Strategy for the Strategic Development Zone at the Ireland West Airport Knock.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Mayo County Council and Ireland West Airport Knock	Local Authorities, IDA Ireland, Western Development Commission, Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Enterprise Ireland.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q1 2022</li> <li>2. Q3 2022</li> <li>3. Q1 2023</li> </ol>

**Rationale:**

In May 2017 by order of the Government (S.I No 266 of 2017) Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) received approval for the designation of lands as an area for the establishment of a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ). The airport is a critical piece of enterprise enabling infrastructure for the region and the SDZ designation has the potential to significantly enhance the airport's role as a driver of regional economic development. Development of the SDZ requires diversification of the airport's landbank and expansion into complementary enterprise realms including aviation-related technology development, research, tourism, and maintenance operations. The vision for IWAK SDZ is that of a dynamic regional airport and business campus that grows and promotes its established travel and tourism sectors in tandem with a vibrant business and enterprise hub that will become an economic gateway to the West and North-West.

**Action Outcome:**

1. Work to establish a stakeholder group including input from relevant agencies both regional and national in order to advance the enterprise element of the SDZ designation.
2. Review and progress the options for the funding and development of a phased Masterplan.
3. Develop a funding and development strategy for the SDZ that sets out a phased project development approach. This strategy should include an analysis of possible sources of funding at regional, national and EU levels including for the provision of enabling infrastructure and development in the first instance.



**Action 1.6: Continue to champion gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity in innovation and entrepreneurship.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), iHub Mayo	Local Development Companies, Local Enterprise Offices, WestBIC, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, NUI Galway, Western Development Commission, Interregional partners.	Q4 2023

**Rationale:**

Despite national recognition of female entrepreneurs, Ireland suffers from a relatively low number of women engaged in business start-ups. Female entrepreneurs face higher barriers to entrepreneurship and accessing finance. This has been recognised regionally by the EMPOWER Programme, run by ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) iHubs and W-Power initiative, managed by WestBIC, in parallel with national and all-island initiatives such as Going for Growth, Acorns and Awaken Hub. An example of success of the tailored measures from surveying 90 participants from the EMPOWER Programme, showed that 162 full time jobs have been created and 65 part-time jobs. 70% of participants increased their products or services with 48% entering new markets. An interesting result of championing female entrepreneurs is the increase in innovation with 33% availing of innovation vouchers. More comprehensive data is needed to guide future decision-making and strategy if we are to continue to champion gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity in entrepreneurship.

- Action Outcome:**
1. Common datasets and KPIs to measure, monitor and benchmark gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity as a 'gender index' of entrepreneurial initiatives developed, which will be used to inform and define interventions needed.
  2. Identify gaps in provision and suggest new models of furthering female entrepreneurship.



## Strategic Objective 2:

### Strengthen and harness the Cultural and Creative Sector to attract new investment, commercialisation, and collaboration opportunities

#### Context and Vision to 2024

Cultural and creative sectors comprise all sectors whose activities are based on cultural values, or other artistic individual or collective creative expressions. On the other hand, cultural and creative industries focus on the further stages of the value chain, including the production and dissemination stages of industrial and manufacturing operations. In economic terms, they show above-average growth and create jobs, particularly for young people, while strengthening social cohesion. The creative economy is a major international sector with a 4.4% share of EU-28 GDP, equalling €643 billion in turnover and employing 7.6m. Across Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, the creative economy is valued at €478m and employs over 7,400 people across more than 3,130 companies (2018) with significant growth year on year. PWC had forecast that industry revenues would rise 6.5% in 2021, despite the COVID-19 challenges to the industry.

The Regional Enterprise Plan West aligns with the strategic ambitions of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for the sustainable development of the creative and cultural economy. The plan also aligns with the ambitions identified by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in *Enterprise 2025 Renewed* and with the plans for the development of a creative industries roadmap by Creative Ireland, as outlined in *Future Jobs 2019*.

The desired outcome of this strategic objective is to build a dynamic cultural and creative sector that champions cross-sectoral collaboration, is resilient, more connected and harnesses a unique innovation model for regional competitiveness leading to sustainable employment opportunities.



## Actions to 2024

**Action 2.1: Build-up and scale the activities of CREW REDF project, to act as hub and spoke across the region, developing creative centres of excellence such as An Bealach, Roscommon.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
CREW	Local Authorities, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Western Development Commission, Local Development Companies, NUI Galway, Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta.	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

CREW *Creative Enterprise West* is a collaborative initiative that will champion enterprises in areas such as design, film and TV production, animation, gaming, content development and Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality from its base at the ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) campus at Cluain Mhuire, Galway. CREW aims to develop an ecosystem and a suite of business and technical support services in the West for the digital creative sector initially in Galway and then scaling these – such as provision of co-working spaces, incubation and accelerator programmes, training, and outreach to other locations within the region and beyond, starting with An Bealach in County Roscommon with the goal to increase enterprise development and job growth in the West of Ireland.

**Action Outcome:**

CREW models of assistance and associated skills and knowledge scaled to satellite locations utilising 'hub and spoke model', including An Bealach in County Roscommon, Letterfrack in County Galway and Castlebar in County Mayo.

**Action 2.2: Develop clustering of the Creative and Cultural Sector, by creating new linkages and new collaborative opportunities and expand creative assets (e.g., film studio, production facilities) and capitalise on emerging development in immersive technology and animation.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Western Development Commission	ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Local Development Companies, Local Enterprise Offices, NUI Galway, Industry Representatives, Educational Training Boards, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Regional Skills Forum West, IDA Ireland, CREW	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q4 2023</li> <li>2. Q4 2024</li> <li>3. Q4 2024</li> </ol>

**Rationale:**

The West is home to 20% of Ireland's large-scale audio-visual studios, 20% of Ireland's leading animation studios and there are plans for commercial immersive tech studios and music enterprises within the next 18 months in the region. Immersive technology in creative and cross-sector industries, while nascent, is on the rise with companies in the West/Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) moving to establish studios and pivot services for cross- sectoral purposes. This includes games/Audio-Visual/animation/design crossing over with MedTech, pharma, tourism, and education. Over 40% of Ireland's postgraduate software engineering underpin this growing ecosystem in the West offering opportunities for Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) in creative tech and cross-sectoral innovation, which is also championed by the ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) Centre for Creative Arts and Media (CCAM). There is also a unique set of assistance available through CREW and the WRAP Fund that is backed up with regional data on the sector and policy research work undertaken by Western Development Commission and NUI Galway.



**Action Outcome:**

1. Baseline survey of the creative industries sector in the region that will provide data and highlight opportunities carried out. This survey will build up a model of the ecosystem and highlight the interdependencies and opportunities and provide enhanced data and mapping information available to build a network of practice to develop better linkages and collaboration.
2. Creative innovation activated as enabler in other sectors (industry demonstration project) and scope out cross-sectoral project of scale and ambition.
3. Visibility of regional success stories and role models enhanced.

### Action 2.3: Further the collaboration between the industry, the academia, and the researchers, thereby assisting the development and commercial exploitation of creative and cultural intellectual property.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology)	NUI Galway, Industry representatives, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Local Enterprise Offices, Western Development Commission, Knowledge Transfer Ireland, Regional Skills Forum West	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q4 2024</li> <li>2. Q4 2022</li> <li>3. Q4 2023</li> </ol>

**Rationale:**

Innovation in creative industries is often a collective process that involves many heterogeneous actors whose objectives and needs differ. It also involves informal knowledge communities that have very specific Intellectual Property (IP) needs. Those actors often combine different types of IP rights, including copyright, patents and trademarks. Infringement of IP in the creative industries is a challenge, particularly since copying is easy and cheap in the digital era. Firms in creative industries also use more traditional IP strategies, open source and other creative commons types of licenses. The creativity, skill, and talent of literary and artistic creators is their main means of creating wealth and jobs. By creating the optimal framework conditions in which there is compensation and reward for creators' effort and creativity, IP can act as an incentive for further creation and creative collaboration, as well as assisting economic growth in an amplified manner. This action demands scale and coordination and will be based on interregional collaboration. In addition to addressing the IP issues, sector-specific incubation and innovation frameworks need to be developed.

**Action Outcome:**

1. Creative innovation vouchers employed enabling SME collaboration between creative and non-creative SMEs and/or creative innovation with HEIs.
2. In conjunction with Action 1, Creative Entrepreneurship programmes will be delivered by ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) and CREW focused on digital creatives, integrating ideation, innovation and enterprise development and developing local/regional IP through collaboration within networks of practice (including academia and researchers).
3. Establishment of North-South collaborative HEI projects involving the University of Ulster, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), the University of Limerick, and NUI Galway for the promotion of a Creative Economy Atlantic Innovation Corridor.



## Strategic Objective 3:

### Realise the Atlantic West Region's potential for enterprise and job creation in the Renewable Energy sector

#### Context and Vision to 2024

The Atlantic region, comprising of the North-West, West and Mid-West Enterprise Plan counties, has an abundance of natural resources along its coastline with verified power resources of 35GW-75GW; enough clean energy to decarbonise Ireland's entire economy while also leaving scope for new economic opportunities and/or energy export. The region has an established onshore wind industry to back the significant potential for major offshore wind project delivery in the medium term (5- 10 years). A supply chain has developed to cater for the onshore wind industry, and in some cases to further offshore wind projects in other jurisdictions. Furthermore, a variety of complementary sectors (engineering, technology, construction, maritime, etc) are well placed to champion this economically significant opportunity. For Ireland and the West to realise the full potential of our wind resources, thereby facilitating private investment and job creation, this supply chain must be encouraged to both develop further, complementary to other forms of renewable energy, such as solar, and to harness new opportunities for energy distribution, such as green hydrogen. Location- specific infrastructure assets and other strengths should be considered to enable smart diversification.

This strategic objective is aligned with several national policies on climate change and sustainable energy. Ireland has agreed to cut emissions from electricity generation, buildings, and transport by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels, with a 57% contribution of renewable energy towards the energy mix. It is also aligned with the National Strategic Outcome No. 8 'Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society' as well as with the goals of Enterprise 2025 Renewed and the ambition of the National Research and Innovation Strategy 2021-27 Consultation Paper. Other relevant policy documents include the forthcoming *Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II* and the revised *National Ports Policy*, currently under review.

The desired outcome in relation to this objective by 2024 is to mature and develop the emerging renewable energy sector with particular focus on offshore and green hydrogen developments, capitalising on the technological, natural, and physical assets, thereby realising the regional economic and green potential.





## Actions to 2024

### Action 3.1: Engage in inter-regional collaboration for development of the supply-chain and upskilling programmes, in particular in offshore renewable energy.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
WREP Programme Manager	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Údarás na Gaeltachta, Western Development Commission, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Enterprise Ireland, Industry Representatives, Local Enterprise Offices, Marine Institute, Educational Training Boards, Local Authorities, Regional Skills Forum West	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q4 2022</li> <li>2. Q4 2024</li> <li>3. Q4 2023</li> </ol>

#### Rationale:

Offshore wind has many benefits, for climate, the economy, for communities, for the supply chain and for jobs. It is estimated that offshore wind energy could create 2,500 jobs over the next ten years and attract over €42 billion in lifetime investment. For this to become a reality, some key challenges must be overcome not least in relation to developing and nurturing the local supply chain as well as creating valuable education and training opportunities to ensure a skilled workforce is ready to operate Irish offshore wind farms. By establishing a local indigenous supply chain, companies in the West and wider Atlantic Region will be in a position to develop the skills and experience needed to compete in a global market and maximise the regional and national economic gain.

#### Action Outcome:

1. Feasibility study to establish the methodology for supply chain development and pilot upskilling initiative completed.
2. Animation activities implemented to stimulate diversification of enterprise into the sector and help create active supply chains, enhance knowledge-sharing, promote the development of specific resources such as standards, and help establish linkages among companies.
3. Panels of mentors and experts with relevant skills and expertise established.

### Action 3.2: Develop smart specialisation of the region in the field of renewable energy, linked to natural and physical assets, e.g., AMETS while identifying suitable locations and investment opportunities for further development, including green hydrogen.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
WREP Programme Manager	Local Authorities, SEAI, Údarás na Gaeltachta, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Enterprise Ireland, Industry Representatives, NWRA, Western Development Commission, Atlantic Marine Energy Test Site (AMETS), Port of Galway, Rossaveal Port, Marine Institute.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Q4 2023</li> <li>2. Q4 2023</li> </ol>



**Rationale:**

The lifetime of an offshore wind farm can be greater than 30 years, from the initial design work to the final decommissioning of a wind farm. There are different stages to this work, and different skills and companies involved at each of these stages. Alongside this, the technology in this sector is advancing at a fast pace, creating new opportunities in AI, big data, robotics, etc., while circular economy approaches dealing with end-of-life solutions are also emerging as an area in its own right. The strategic development of the supply chain and services should build on existing strengths, assets, and potential for development. The strategic positioning of the West needs further examination in order to optimally leverage local strengths and assets, while acting in a complementary and synergistic way with other developments in the Atlantic Region and Ireland, thus developing its signature USP.

**Action Outcome:**

1. Based on outcome of feasibility study in Strategic Objective 3: Action 1, a strategy towards regional specialisation will be defined.
2. Advocate for a national Green hydrogen policy to be formulated. Potential regional user or demand demonstration cases identified, in collaboration with large energy users.

**Action 3.3: Form a task force with the goal of enabling development and removing barriers to progress of critical infrastructure.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Western Development Commission	Local Authorities, SEAI, Údarás na Gaeltachta, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Enterprise Ireland, Industry Representatives, Port of Galway, Rossaveal Port, AMETS, National Bodies responsible for infrastructure implementation.	Q2 2022

**Rationale:**

The Climate Action Plan and the Programme for Government have committed Ireland to meeting 70% of its electricity needs with renewable energy by 2030. This equates to the delivery of 5GW from offshore wind. To set us on the road to achieving that target they have also committed an interim target of 1GW of offshore wind by 2025, just a few years away. Macquarie's Green Investment Group (GIG) has acquired Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta, the developer of the Sceirde Rocks offshore wind farm, off the Galway Connemara coast. Sceirde Rocks is a proposed 400 MW offshore wind farm, capable of generating enough energy to power the equivalent of up to 295,000 homes. The Galway- based renewable energy project has been designated as one of seven 'Relevant Status' developments by Ireland's Department of Environment, Climate Action, and Communications. This designation positions the Sceirde Rocks development to be in the first wave of offshore wind projects in Ireland for delivery by 2030. To assist the development becoming operational within this timeframe, it is time- critical to prioritise the investment in, and to progress, critical infrastructure such as ports, transmission routes, roads etc during the lifetime of this REP. This action will be a vital enabler for job and enterprise creation and supply chain mobilisation.

**Action Outcome:**

Regional task force formed with roadmap for critical infrastructure development defined that will act as 'actionable insights' for relevant national bodies responsible for infrastructure implementation.



## Strategic Objective 4:

### Drive the Global Competitiveness of the Life Sciences sector underpinned by an expanded regional footprint and coordination

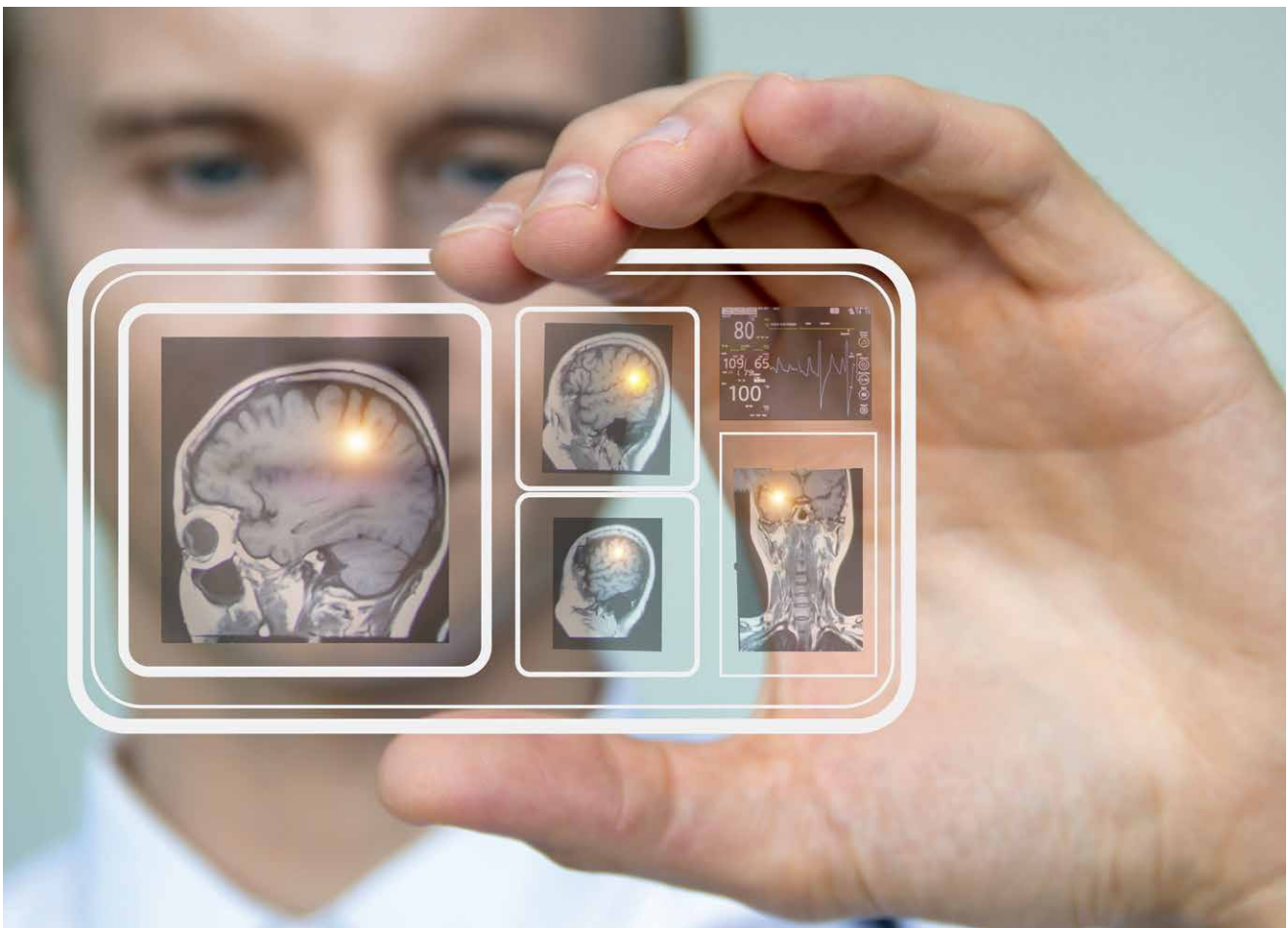
#### Context and Vision to 2024

The West Region has a globally recognised cluster of Life Science multinationals, including Boston Scientific, Baxter, Harmac, Allergan, Hollister, Jazz Pharmaceuticals and Medtronic. 50,000 people work in 400 companies, of which 50% are indigenous to Ireland. Both NUI Galway and ATU collaborate closely with industry and have successful research centres, such as the National Centre for Biomedical Engineering Science (NCBES); Regenerative Medicine Institute; Network of Excellence for Functional Biomaterials (NFB); Centre for Chromosome Biology (CCB), Medical and Engineering Technologies (MET) Gateway and CÚRAM, an SFI Research Centre designing the next generation of 'Smart' Medical Devices.

The sector is further bolstered by many start-ups, that are in particular active in the medical devices and cardio-vascular applications. The sector is underpinned by specialised programmes and initiatives, including Bioexel, Bioinnovate, EIT Health and Health Innovation Hub Ireland and strong clustering is exhibited especially in the Galway area, with solid potential for clustering in Mayo and Roscommon. A new Digital Health Industries Cluster based in ATU and funded by Enterprise Ireland, is facilitating inter-company and inter-agency collaboration in the digital health sector. However, this sector is extremely vulnerable to disruptive technologies and rapidly changing global trends, as well as competition from emerging economies, e.g., in Asia. Therefore, action is needed to futureproof the sector and ensure a framework is in place to promote resilience of indigenous start-ups and encourage their scaling in the region.

This strategic objective aligns with *Enterprise Ireland's Strategic Priorities 2021*, with *Enterprise 2025 Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025* and the *National Research and Innovation Strategy 2021-27 Consultation Paper*, as well as with the priorities identified under the forthcoming Smart Specialisation strategy.

The desired outcome in relation to this objective by 2024 is to secure the global competitiveness of the region's Life Sciences ecosystem, powering high-value R&D and indigenous scale-ups, aided by leading-edge science, workforce, and skills.



## Actions to 2024

### Action 4.1: Further develop coordination activities and integration of the diverse elements and actors in the ecosystem.

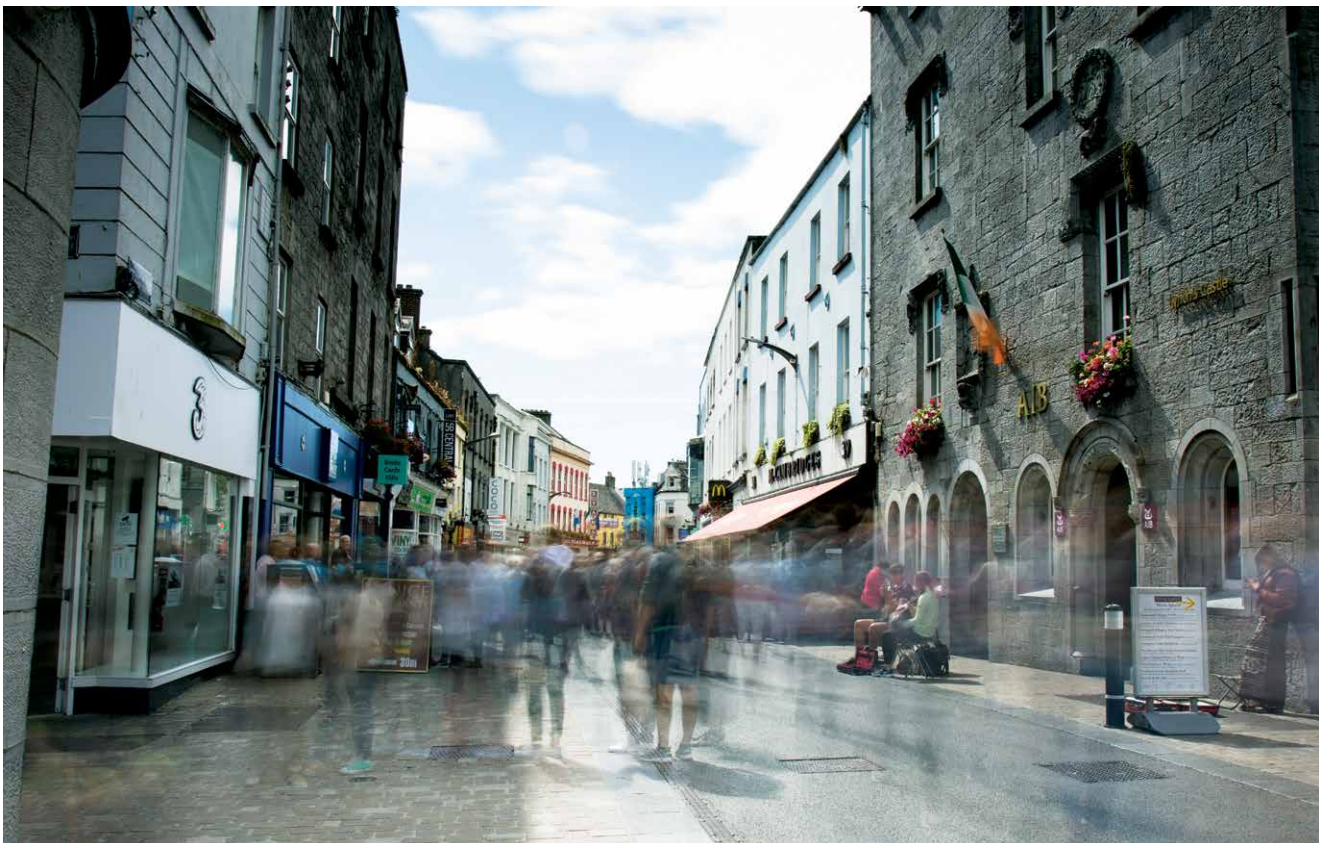
Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Enterprise Ireland and Private Sector Lead	Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, WestBIC, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), IDA Ireland, Galway City Innovation District, Regional Skills Forum West.	Q4 2022

#### Rationale:

Stakeholders within the sector have expressed the view that more formal coordination is needed, beyond networking and informal linkages, to raise the level of ambition, stimulate additional entrepreneurs and provide additional structures. Innovation ecosystems can emerge and grow organically, but the process should also be managed through conscious intervention. In the long-term, the lack of alignment and coordination between actors could have a negative influence on the development of the innovation ecosystem. Initially, networks are simpler and thus the coordination issues are less difficult. However, as the ecosystem evolves and the complexity of the networks increases, a more sophisticated strategy, such as orchestration or choreography, is needed, to maintain the vibrancy, vitality, and wealth creation of the regional Life Sciences ecosystem. Whenever possible, examples of global best practice and 'best in class' benchmarks need to be employed.

#### Action Outcome:

A forward-looking strategic body/working group established that coordinates strategic activities aimed at futureproofing and securing global competitiveness of the regional cluster.



## Action 4.2: Scale and diversify sector specialisms and specialism-specific initiatives across the region, including access to necessary infrastructure in liaison with Strategic Objective 1.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Údarás na Gaeltachta (TBC)	Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, WestBIC, IBEC, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), IDA Ireland, Local Authorities.	Q3 2024

### Rationale:

As the number of entrepreneurs in the sector expands, their needs become more complex and wide-ranged – augmented by new technology and methods. The specific infrastructure to underpin their successful developments and maintain the West as a key place to start-up and scale in Life Sciences was identified as a bottleneck. Examples identified include access to clean rooms, wet labs, bio labs – and also, access to more innovation pathways, sector specific assistance and programmes, etc.

In particular it has been established as the sector grows in other parts of the region outside Galway city (e.g., emergence of more entrepreneurial activity in Mayo, establishment of Life Sciences hub in Monksland, gteic@An Spidéil digital hub with wet lab facilities), further efforts to provide complementary infrastructure and support systems is required. This will enable further diversification beyond medical devices and cardio-vascular innovations and boost growth of start-ups and innovation in the digital health arena.

### Action Outcome:

1. Feasibility study undertaken exploring complementary developments within the region to expand the footprint of the sector.
2. Roadmap established for development of sector-specific infrastructure and of assistance based on identified current and future demand.



## Strategic Objective 5:

### Grow the AgTech and Food sector in the West, underpinned by an integrated innovation network, facilitating the transition towards a sustainable Bioeconomy

#### Context and Vision to 2024

With the world's population rising year-on-year – and set to reach a staggering 10 billion by 2050 – the pressure on the agriculture sector for food production continues unabated, weighed against growing environmental demands, and demands on the producers. AgTech – using scientific and technological innovations to increase food yields and ensure greater efficiency in production – will play a vital role in the coming years and this is an emerging sector in Ireland. For example, MagGrow ([www.maggrow.com](http://www.maggrow.com)) raised €6m in a venture capital fund raising round led by Astanor Ventures, with WakeUp Capital and various other smaller participants. In the West, a scoping exercise was undertaken under the auspices of WREP to 2020 to identify the AgTech potential, which demonstrated the nascent nature of the sector, but also highlighted a realm of opportunities. In parallel, food innovation in the West has been given a huge boost with the BIA Innovator Campus REDF project and other initiatives, such as the Castlerea Food Hub, as well as the Mayo Food and Drink Network. AgTech and Food both have significant potential for research, innovation and job creation and further diversification into other areas of the Bioeconomy.

This objective is linked to the Agri-Food Strategy 2030, in particular objective 4, to become 'An Innovative, Competitive and Resilient Sector, driven by Technology and Talent'. This strategic objective aligns with Enterprise Ireland's Strategic Priorities 2021, with Enterprise 2025 Ireland's National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025 and the *National Research and Innovation Strategy 2021-27 Consultation Paper*, as well as with the priorities identified under the Smart Specialisation strategy. Finally, it also reflects on Food Vision 2030 'A World Leader in Sustainable Food Systems' which launched in 2021. This ambitious and innovative roadmap for the agri-food sector aims to increase agri-food exports from €14bn to €21bn by 2030 and *The Economic Impact of the Irish bioeconomy – The Bioeconomy Input Output Model: Development and Uses (2015) Report*.

The desired outcome in relation to this objective by 2024 is to achieve a modern, innovative, digitally, and technologically enabled, resource-efficient and profitable AgTech and Food sector in the West for the benefit of the farmers, the producers, the consumer, the regional economy, and the environment – based on an integrated innovation network strengthened by all relevant regional stakeholders.



## Actions to 2024

**Action 5.1: Utilising the BIA Innovator Campus as a central engine for development of Agri-food and Ag-Tech, develop an integrated regional platform for innovation in conjunction with national and regional partners, ensuring proactive, joined-up approaches to identify and address ecosystem needs.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
BIA Innovator Campus	Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc, Western Development Commission, Local Enterprise Offices, Local Authorities, Castlerea Food Hub, Mayo Food and Drink Network, Bord Bia, Local Development Companies, Regional Skills Forum West, NUI Galway.	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>BIA Innovator Campus will deliver unprecedented regional access to multi-strand food incubation, skills, scaling, and innovation assistance in one location, that can drive innovation from Farm to Fork and connect the various stakeholders seamlessly through regional and national partnerships. This includes delivery of new industry solutions based on quadruple helix stakeholder collaboration, harmonization of access to information, skills development, infrastructure and network of supports in the region (such as collaboration with An Chistín in Castlerea, Roscommon, the Mayo food and drink network and Drumshanbo Food Hub), contribution to policy development, championing collaboration to build capacity, and accelerate food entrepreneurs while also building an Innovation and Entrepreneurship network in the region. This approach will facilitate regional leadership on critical industry developments including sustainability and climate change, low carbon and ethical production and supply chains, digitalisation, female entrepreneurship, development of key regional niche areas of expertise, food tourism, a healthy food region, as well as mitigating Brexit, pandemic impacts and global supply chain issues.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <p>Scaled knowledge, expertise, and skills in the region, and optimised, harmonised, coordinated, and networked assistance and access to facilities for entrepreneurs based on integrated regional action led by BIA Innovator Campus in conjunction with partners and stakeholders.</p>		

**Action 5.2: Encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the sector to enable clustering and intra-company collaboration.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Enterprise Ireland	IDA Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Local Authorities, Western Development Commission, Bord Bia, Údarás na Gaeltachta.	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>The food sector makes a major contribution to Ireland's economy in terms of exports and employment both directly and indirectly. A number of Irish owned firms are among the world's 50 largest food and beverage multinationals. Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the development of FDI attracting greenfield and expansion investments from foreign owned companies operating in the Agri-food sector and other natural resource-based activities. The strong ecosystem in the West and natural advantages, a high quality in sustainable production and food science expertise, underpin the potential to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in food processing, which is currently not present in the region. Such FDI would be of strategic importance to the sustainability and growth of the food production cluster and would help optimise inter-firm connections.</p>		



**Action Outcome:**

At least two potential sites identified in the region and at least five potential Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) companies to target for FDI.

**Action 5.3: Expand the innovation, educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for AgTech.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
West Regional LEOs	IDA Ireland, Local Authorities, Western Development Commission, Bord Bia, Local Development Companies, Galway City Innovation District, NUI Galway.	Q2 2024

**Rationale:**

This action builds on the scoping exercise for the AgTech sector in the West Region which examined the supply side of the sector (what is out there and what do companies need?), and the demand side (what opportunities exist in the marketplace?) as a basis for developing a 'plan of action' for the sector under the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. The scoping exercise has identified the emerging nature of this sector and highlighted opportunities for the sector on a regional and national basis.

The next step is to examine the possibilities of programme development to increase scale in existing companies and encourage start-ups in the AgTech space.

**Action Outcome:**

A 'plan for action' for the sector developed based on the outcomes of the scoping exercise.

**Action 5.4: Develop industry-HEI collaboration and research further to facilitate transition to circular Bioeconomy, championing cross- sectoral, low-carbon and smart approaches.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Mountbellow)	Enterprise Ireland, NUI Galway, Teagasc, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta.	Q2 2023

**Rationale:**

The agri-food sector is a key industry in Ireland and is the basis for Ireland's future bioeconomy. Many agricultural bodies are active in the bioeconomy, including dairy co-operatives like Dairygold, who developed a wastewater AD plant to recover resources and generate biomethane to produce steam in its own plant. Glanbia is leading the AgriChemWhey project, which is developing a state-of-the-art biorefinery turning by-products of the dairy industry into high value bio-based products. The potential for development of bioeconomy projects in the West is high and the first step towards realisation of this ambition is to establish stronger industry-HEI collaboration and establish research and innovation links.

**Action Outcome:**

1. At least two demonstration bioeconomy projects in the region identified, based on industry-academic collaboration.
2. Framework for collaboration with start-ups on technology validation and R&D activities established in collaboration with regional enterprise development stakeholders.





**Action 5.5: Further the development of enterprise and innovation in the Blue Bioeconomy.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Marine Incubation and Development Centre	Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, ATU, NUI Galway, Marine Institute, Teagasc, SFI, Local Enterprise Offices, An Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Educational Training Boards, Skillsnet.	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

The Atlantic is a key natural asset in the region and an integral part of the coastal economy. The blue bioeconomy encompasses economic activities and value creation based on sustainable and smart use of renewable aquatic resources and the related expertise – transforming the resources into a wide variety of products and services such as food, feed, biobased materials, and bioenergy. Fisheries, aquaculture, and algae culture are crucial to increase sustainable production in Ireland and the West. A marine research cluster furthering the goals of the blue bioeconomy is planned to incorporate the Údarás na Gaeltachta facility at Páirc na Mara, currently under development in Cill Chiaráin, NUI Galway Carna Campus Laboratories, and an aquaculture site in Beirtreach Buí near Carna. This cluster will form part of a national aquaculture research cluster which includes the Marine Institute facilities at Newport, Co. Mayo. The Marine Innovation and Development Centre (MIDC) will provide specialist training and business development aids, along with world class research, testing and enterprise development facilities for the marine sector provided by ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) and NUI Galway.

**Action Outcome:**

New enterprise assistance initiated, collaborative network established, and specific action plan formulated around key obstacles for blue bioeconomy start-ups to thrive, including promoting a positive image with the general public, influencing policy and regulatory issues (e.g., licensing timelines) and formulating incentives to encourage commercialisation of seaweed-related research.



## Strategic Objective 6:

### Expand prospects for sustainable entrepreneurship, employment and upskilling in Tourism

#### Context and Vision to 2024

Pre-COVID-19, the West attracted nearly 4m domestic and foreign visitors and took in over a billion euro in tourism revenues. The tourism industry is hugely important in providing employment across a wide range of services, including accommodation, hospitality (food and drink), visitor experiences, tours and transport, entertainment etc. The region also benefits from being part of the Wild Atlantic Way – possibly the most celebrated, high-profile tourism initiative to be launched in Ireland in recent years. It consists of a defined touring route along the western seaboard, one of the most scenic, remote, and sensitive stretches of Irish landscape. However, according to one study, a number of significant issues exist, such as insufficient or inappropriate infrastructure, heightened traffic problems, increased pressure on local facilities and the perception of imbalance with regard to the dispersal of economic gain from the route. Furthermore, coastal destinations benefit more from tourism while inland destinations have to compete harder, which is recognised also by the Hidden Heartlands initiative. More work is needed to enable a more balanced and dispersed economic benefit from tourism, for example, 'off the beaten path', in emerging destinations, and taking into account the post-COVID-19 realities which include – changing habits and expectations of tourists – both domestic and foreign – as well as new and diverging trends, including digitalisation.

This strategic objective is linked to the *Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021*, *People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025*, as well as *Our Rural Future Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* and the *Fáilte Ireland Tourism Development and Innovation – A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022*, as well as the *Tourism Recovery Plan 2020-2023*.

The desired outcome in relation to this objective by 2024 is to enable regenerative, connected, creative, experience-driven placemaking that is considerate of resources, sustainability, heritage, and seasonality, while offering attractive prospects for entrepreneurship, employment, and upskilling in a geographically balanced and distributed way.



## Actions to 2024

### Action 6.1: Develop a pilot accelerator programme based around the experience economy, underpinning companies with sector-specific assistance and growth funding.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Regional Chambers, led by Galway Chamber of Commerce	IBEC, WestBIC, Galway City Innovation District at Portershed, Fáilte Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon College of Hotel Management, Industry Representatives.	Q2 2024

#### Rationale:

The concept of the Experience Economy encompasses hospitality, retail, travel, food, drink, tourism, entertainment, technology, events, and organisations in the arts, cultural, sporting and heritage sectors. It reaches deep into the supply chain assisting businesses and employment encompassing critical elements of the economy and society: young people, small medium enterprises, regional and rural development.

The pilot accelerator based around the experience economy would aim to provide targeted funding and assistance to benefit the selected programme participants. It would help them achieve their commercial objectives, improve their sustainability goals, provide productivity gains, and cost savings, facilitate personalised experiences, dynamic forecasting, and reducing payment barriers. It would also help deepen insights on visitors and increasing customer satisfaction and engagement, expand the understanding and integration of aspects such as 'Off the beaten track', 'Slow Travel', 'Less frequent but longer travel', 'Local travel', 'Good travel', 'Self-guided travel', 'Personal and flexible', harnessing experience as a cross-disciplinary innovation-tool, which can help revitalize companies' products, services, communication, organization, sales etc., as well as other concepts.

#### Action Outcome:

Pilot Accelerator model developed, and funding model identified.



**Action 6.2: Build out integrated, networked approaches for smarter, greener, connected, and a more sustainable tourism offering.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Fáilte Ireland	Local Development Companies, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, Shannon College of Hotel Management.	Q3 2024

**Rationale:**

There is increasing recognition that tourism growth must be sustainable, environmentally as well as commercially and socially. In 2015, the United Nations published 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which address the global challenges we face, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNWTO define sustainable tourism as: “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”. In the post-COVID era, the sustainability of tourism offering in the West has come even more sharply into focus, in particular in the area of achieving a more regionally dispersed tourism model while extending the season, capitalising, inter alia, on the Hidden Heartlands initiative and emerging destinations in the region, such as Lough Derg in East Galway, North Mayo/Erris and Roscommon.

**Action Outcome:**

Prepare and implement Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) for Lough Derg (existing – launched in 2021), for North Mayo (commence 2022), for the wider destinations around the Upper Shannon (commence 2022) and Mid Shannon (commence 2023) and for East Galway (commence 2023). These plans will seek to develop tourism in a sustainable manner in these lesser visited destinations, resulting in benefits to local communities through the creation of jobs, while ensuring the protection of the environment.



## Strategic Objective 7:

### Facilitate an equitable digital and green transformation in the West

#### Context and Vision to 2024

Digital transformation is a key component for business success. For a business to succeed, it needs to constantly evolve, adding new products or services to respond to changes in the market. The adoption of technology allows businesses to do this and to perform core processes with a higher quality and a lower cost. Companies that will excel will be those that create smart experiences and customer journeys, seek to benefit from new AI technologies and take advantage of data to anticipate trends in demand and make decisions. Similarly, the green transformation will become imperative. Incorporating sustainable practices into the day-to-day running of their business and better environmental performance leads to improved resource efficiency and direct cost savings and can also increase access to customers who are increasingly demanding more environmentally friendly products and services. Better environmental performance will also increase the agility and resilience of companies to climate change impacts.

This objective is linked to the National Digital Strategy (2020), which focuses on digital engagement and how Ireland can benefit from a digitally engaged society. It sets out a clear vision and a number of practical actions to help increase the number of citizens and businesses engaging online through industry and enterprise, citizen training, schools and education. It also aligns with the National Climate Policy which establishes the national objective of achieving a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

The desired outcome in relation to this objective by 2024 is to facilitate an equitable digital and green transformation in the West, by encouraging the use of smart advanced technologies to improve energy and resource efficiency, promote the circular economy, lead to a better allocation of resources; reduce emissions, pollution, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

## Actions to 2024

### Action 7.1: Leverage the European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) ecosystem to progress adaptation of the artificial intelligence, High Performance Computing (HPC) and cybersecurity technologies by the industry and public sector.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Western Development Commission	WestBIC, Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Local Enterprise Offices, NWRA, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology, Letterkenny Institute of Technology), ERNACT, Galway Technology Centre (GTC).	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) will function as one-stop shops that help companies dynamically respond to the digital challenges and become more competitive. European Digital Innovation Hubs will have both local and European functions. The Digital Europe Programme will increase the capacities of the selected hubs to cover activities with a clear European added value, based on networking the hubs and promoting the transfer of expertise. It will be important to, in parallel to developing the regional EDIH Data2Sustain (subject to European designation and funding) with NUI Galway and Atlantic Technological University (locally through Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), establish an international reference framework of network of practice and enable connections to technological and market expertise around Europe for enterprise based in the West. This is timely as the capacity building within the region in the area of adaptation of advanced digital technologies advances and new resources become available (e.g., ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology) becoming an academic partner with the Lero, the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Software, alongside existing SFI centres at NUI Galway Insight Data and Analytics and ICHEC (Irish Centre for High-End Computing).



**Action Outcome:**

Data2Sustain will undertake regular technology scouting, in order to map the innovation ecosystem. A systemic gap analysis cycle established to progress identification of European collaboration linkages and enable adaptation of advanced digital technologies to build capacity among regional partners.

**Action 7.2: Develop initiative to encourage emergence of ‘born sustainable, born circular’ start-ups.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
West Regional LEOs	Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, WestBIC, NUI Galway, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Regional Skills Forum West.	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Looking towards the next generation of indigenous enterprise, it is needed to embed the green mindset into the start-up development journey, to ensure that they have the zero-carbon environmental operational practices and business models embedded as they grow and scale. It is anticipated that this will become a standard part of entrepreneurial education in the long term and obviate the need to ‘retrofit’ measures to reduce or eliminate environmental and climate impacts, in an effort to mainstream circularity and sustainability.

**Action Outcome:**

A programme or entrepreneurial module and design and structure to assist start-ups in weaving in the circular approaches and environmental aspects within their business, for example through a ‘green’ lean canvas, design thinking and other methods. Such a programme or module would take account of the latest thinking in this area and consider international best practice.

**Action 7.3: Develop further capacity to stimulate circular economy adaptation by enterprise in collaboration with the public bodies, industry and HEIs.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
NUI Galway	Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, Local Authorities, ATU (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), IBEC.	Q1 2024

**Rationale:**

An effort to help enterprise become greener through the green transformation is well underway, with initiatives such as GreenStart, the Climate Action Voucher, EPA Green Enterprise, Green Plus as well as Green for Micro, an initiative run by the Local Enterprise Offices. These focus in the main in addressing inefficiencies and decarbonisation of established processes, such as in manufacturing. Further capacity building in bolstering adaptation of the circular economy processes is needed to address the needs of SMEs and the complexity of the climate impact challenge. The circular economy and the implementation of legislation is expected to have an impact on Irish business bringing requirements such as improved waste management, reduced use of hazardous substances and improved design and re-usability of goods and services.

**Action Outcome:**

Capacity building achieved for regional public body representatives involving knowledge transfer from practices from advanced European Regions, involving follow-up collaboration around specific identified topics with the HEIs.



### Action 7.4: Develop the region as a 'Living Lab' to help address challenges associated with the Digital and Green Transformation.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Western Development Commission	Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, WestBIC, Local Authorities, Industry Representatives, Local Development Companies, Galway Technology Centre (GTC).	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

A regional Living Lab would champion experimental approaches in real-life context, encourage participation and user involvement and enhance collaboration and co-production of knowledge. Research shows that living labs with network structures based on extensive knowledge and information exchange and collaboration between multiple actors lead to radical innovations. This is of particular relevance to the ambition to become a 'smart' region, i.e., where smart technologies have been deployed to benefit the economic growth, quality of life and wellbeing of citizens in the territory. The Living Lab will encourage greater understanding of complex problems the region is facing, and enable prototyping, validating and refining solutions, potentially within the context of smart villages and smart towns. Best practice in this area already exists internationally (e.g., Ile De France) and should be integrated into local approaches. The aim would be to achieve strategy development through action, build a network around the region or a project, collect, and use information, and co-creation of knowledge within the network resulting in a guided strategy change.

#### Action Outcome:

Scope out the Living Lab regional concept and identify and implement at least one demonstration project based around a digitalisation challenge.

### Action 7.5: Develop a shared regional enterprise strategy to harness the potential of Decarbonising Zones.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Climate Action Regional Office (CARO)	Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Enterprise Ireland, Western Development Commission, Industry Representatives, Local Development Companies.	Q2 2023

#### Rationale:

A Decarbonising Zone (DZ) as a "spatial area identified by the local authority, in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and action owners are identified to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets". The DZ Plans will be used to develop low carbon town projects for future calls under the Climate Action Fund and to progress demonstrator projects harnessing a range of technologies and initiatives, such as nature-based concepts and energy-based initiatives. Enterprise will play an important role in this process and a shared approach will benefit the achievement of the goals set for the region.

#### Action Outcome:

Joint, networked plan formulated for decarbonisation of enterprises and enterprise-related activities within the selected Decarbonising Zones. At least one case-study enterprise development opportunity identified, suitable for replication.



## 3

# Implementation

The consultation process to develop the West Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2024 was enhanced by an understanding amongst stakeholders of the importance of ownership, collaboration, and the definition and delivery of specific measurable actions that could add value to the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant bodies involved in supporting enterprise development. These priorities are reflected in the implementation structure for the West REP to 2024.

Implementation of the REP will be overseen by a Regional Enterprise Steering Committee. The Steering Committee for the West Region will continue to be chaired by Evelyn O'Toole, and this is welcomed by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The functions of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Oversee and drive delivery of the REP.
- Nominate and secure Public and Private Sector leads, where appropriate, to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives.
- Oversee the formation of working groups as necessary to drive implementation of actions.
- Explore and propagate new ideas and opportunities for collaborative projects and funding opportunities.
- Provide a forum for the sharing of updates and information by members on key enterprise development initiatives including those set out by the Agencies and LEOs in this Plan and other pertinent updates (incl. REDF, RSES, URDF, RRDF Project Ireland 2040 etc.).
- Oversee, contribute to and sign off on Progress Reports to the Department.

The Chairperson will convene at least two meetings of the Steering Committee per year and will present a progress update on the implementation of the Plan. The Chairperson will also lead the Committee in the preparation of both a mid-term and a final progress report, to be submitted to the Department. These reports will be the subject of a meeting between the Chairperson and/or the Steering Committee and the Minister during one of the biannual meetings.

The West Regional Steering Committee will oversee the formation of five working groups to drive delivery of each of the strategic objectives and their list of actions in the REP. Working Groups will convene as frequently as is required and will report on progress to the Chairperson and the Regional Steering Committee.

The Department will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of the REPs at national level. A National Oversight Group (NOG), which all Chairpersons attend, will oversee implementation of the new REPs. This group will be chaired by Ministers of State Robert Troy and Damien English and will provide a fora for the Chairs to share good practice and identify potential areas for inter-regional cooperation.





# 4

## West Enterprise Agencies and Local Enterprise Offices

The Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 are based on a collaborative approach to regional enterprise development. The Strategic Objectives and actions identified are set alongside and complement the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). Each Agency has corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as activities that support specific regional enterprise development potential. This Chapter provides an overview of those Agency activities and that of the LEOs in the West Region to 2024.



### 4.1 Enterprise Ireland: Focus to 2024

Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Enterprise Ireland work in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and achieve international growth. In this way, Enterprise Ireland support sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment.

Balanced regional development is central to Enterprise Ireland's remit. Enterprise Ireland manage a number of regional development funds on behalf of Government and work in collaboration with key stakeholders in all regions to deliver regional enterprise infrastructure, strengthen the enterprise base and deliver regional growth.

Strengthening regional enterprise development is a key focus in the new *Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2022-2024*, reflecting the varying needs and opportunities of enterprise across the different regions.



## Recent developments in the West Region

**Enterprise Ireland supported 14,668 jobs in the West Region during 2021 across a total of 346 Enterprise Ireland client companies.**

**Enterprise Ireland West Region will focus on the following sectors over the next three years, as this is where the current SME strength and capability lie: Medtech and Life Sciences; Technology and Food; Agri-Tech.**

In 2021 Enterprise Ireland client companies supported 14,668 jobs across 346 companies in the West Region.

The impact of Brexit has added to the challenge for Irish indigenous SMEs exporting to the UK, and more than 70 Enterprise Ireland client companies across the West Region have been supported to the value of €1.172m through Brexit specific initiatives including Market Discovery Funding and strategic planning grants. This is in addition to the tailored advice and mentoring provided from both the dedicated Brexit team and the two UK offices in London and Manchester.

New innovative companies and focused entrepreneurship is key to effective regional development and value creation. Six High Potential Start-Ups (HPSU) and 6 Competitive Start Fund (CSF) projects were funded in the West Region to the value of €5.8m in 2020. 5 HPSUs plus 3 CSF projects were approved to end of August 2021 with a total investment of €1.55m.

Enterprise Ireland is central to the New Frontiers entrepreneurship programme, managed by GMIT, to aid early stage founders. 14 participants undertook Phase 2 of the West Region Programme in October 2021. The Bio-Innovate Programme between NUIG and UCHG has been successful in assisting 22 companies since 2011 providing innovative, ground-breaking healthcare solutions. The NDRC has a regional accelerator operating in the West in a partnership with Galway City Innovation District.

In addition to a myriad of smaller capability and capacity building aids, six companies in the West availed of R&D funding, the lifeblood of innovation and technical development, to the value of more than €500,000 in the first half of 2021.

Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) funding has been approved for nine infrastructure projects in the region, totalling more than €16.7m since the inception of the REDF Scheme in 2017, and these projects are progressing well despite delays due to COVID-19. Examples include BIA Innovator on the Teagasc Campus in Athenry and the Portershed in Galway City. GMIT's iHub building was completed in 2020 and provides incubation space and assistance to medical and digital technology businesses.

In response to the challenges that Community Enterprise and Innovation Centres were facing because of the pandemic, Enterprise Ireland opened the Enterprise Centre Scheme in 2020. €1.2m was allocated to 14 centres in the West to allow these centres to help entrepreneurs, micro and small businesses including assisting a growing demand for remote working.

Innovative businesses across the West, as well as researchers within the 3<sup>rd</sup> level sector, have been successful in the Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund, with 9 projects across the West leading consortia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> call to the value of more than €30m in 2021.

## Enterprise Ireland objectives for the West Region to 2024

An effective region includes various layers of foci and, for the West Region, these include:

- helping established SME's across a myriad of sectors to internationalise.
- encouraging and nurturing new start-up businesses by providing a supportive eco-system.
- aiding regional groups to develop strategic and sustainable enterprise infrastructure.
- investing in innovation and research with 3<sup>rd</sup> level partners and sector cluster groups.

Enterprise Ireland West Region will collaborate with regional and national stakeholders to develop and deliver relevant assistance, funding, and advice to benefit the business and enterprise eco-system across all counties: Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.

Notwithstanding that entrepreneurs can generate businesses in any and all sectors, Enterprise Ireland West Region will focus on the following sectors over the next three years, as this is where the current SME strength and capability lie: Medtech and Life Sciences; Technology and Food; Agri-Tech.



The Creative industry is synonymous with the region and provides a significant driver for the digital technology sector including animation, immersive technologies, and media entertainment. The recently funded Creative Enterprise West (CREW) project will help and enhance businesses and founders through its creative hub and network.

The West Region is optimally placed to benefit from wind, wave, and marine energy projects, although the contribution to the national and international energy grids may be post the three-year timeframe of this Plan. However, ongoing research and development and strategic guidance is critical to these areas as they progress, and Enterprise Ireland will continue to assist this growing sector.

Enterprise Ireland will continue to work with the New Frontiers partners and other entrepreneurship programmes to ensure that a strong pipeline of new companies is developing across the region, with a particular emphasis on Women in Business.

Ongoing advice, help and encouragement will be provided to the existing nine REDF projects as they progress to building completion. Plans include helping groups to scope and assess potential in new strategic enterprise infrastructure projects across the region.

Enterprise Ireland is a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan. This will be a continuation of the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the region of Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon.



## 4.2 IDA Ireland: Focus to 2024

IDA Ireland's mission is to partner with multi-national companies (MNCs) to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland. IDA Ireland works with key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors to deliver on this mandate. IDA Ireland partners closely with Enterprise Ireland across the regions on multiple initiatives, including under the Regional Enterprise Plans and in relation to the provision of property solutions to the indigenous base, where appropriate.

IDA Ireland's strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024* was developed in the context of the Government's *National Economic Recovery Plan* and positions IDA Ireland to respond to the emerging trends that are accelerating as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

It identifies the opportunities for sustainable growth among IDA Ireland's established base of clients through a focus on transformative investments to increase the productivity of Irish operations and their workforce through RDI, digitisation, training, and actions on sustainability. Crucially it also maintains a focus on attracting the next generation of leading MNCs to locate in Ireland, further driving sustainable growth and maximising the impact of FDI in Ireland to 2024 and beyond. The Strategy has five pillars:

- 1 **Growth pillar** – win investment to support job creation and economic activity
- 2 **Transformation pillar** – partner with clients for future growth in Ireland
- 3 **Regions pillar** – win investment to advance regional development
- 4 **Sustainability pillar** – embrace an inclusive and green recovery; and
- 5 **Impact pillar** – maximise FDI's positive impact on local businesses and communities

Regional development is at the centre of IDA Ireland's strategy. Although FDI cannot be the sole contributor in addressing the challenges facing Ireland's regions – from Brexit to COVID-19, digital transformation to the climate transition, it can have a significant impact in propelling economic recovery and realising more balanced growth. IDA Ireland is targeting half of all investments (400) from 2021-2024 to regional locations and is maintaining the same high level of investment as targeted in IDA Ireland's previous strategy for each region of the country.

Under the Regions pillar of *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth*, IDA Ireland will:

- Win investment to propel recovery and assist development in each region;
- Partner with existing regional clients to transform through innovation and upskilling;
- Develop clusters to help transformation, spill overs and linkages;
- Collaborate with clients and stakeholders to facilitate remote working opportunities; and
- Continue to roll-out IDA Ireland's regional property programme, including delivery of 19 Advanced Building Solutions (ABS) to regional locations over the course of the strategy.



The global competition for FDI is intense as countries compete for investment to enable economic recovery. It is in this context – of greater competition for potentially fewer projects – that IDA Ireland wins investment for Ireland and engages with MNCs on the benefits of choosing regional locations for their investment projects. Key to IDA Ireland's success in the past and essential to success in the future is strategic collaboration with national and local stakeholders to ensure that each region has the necessary conditions in place to foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. The delivery of necessary infrastructure and property solutions, the availability of a skilled and future ready workforce, and an emphasis on quality of life and placemaking in each region are pre-requisites to winning continued investment from MNCs.

### Regional Economic Impact of FDI

IDA Ireland client companies directly employed almost 145,000 people outside of Dublin in 2020. Combined with indirect employment of 116,000, an estimated 260,000 jobs in the regions were helped by FDI in 2020. Clients in regional locations had an annual spend of €7.9bn on payroll, €2.7bn on Irish services and €2.2bn on Irish materials in 2019. They contributed a further €1.3bn on in-house R&D. These linkages enable diverse, innovative, and vital local economies.

### Over the period 2021-2024 IDA Ireland will:

- Win 800 total investments to enable job creation of 50,000 and economic activity
- Partner with clients for future growth through 170 RDI and 130 Training investments
- Win 400 investments to advance Regional Development
- Embrace a green recovery with 60 sustainability investments
- Target a 20% increase in client expenditure in Ireland to maximise the impact of FDI

Read more about IDA's 2001-2024 Strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth* at [www.idaireland.com](http://www.idaireland.com).

## IDA Ireland objectives for the West Region to 2024

There are 120 IDA Ireland client companies in the West Region (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon), employing 27,695 people. FDI performance in the region has been strong over the past five years with employment among IDA Ireland clients increasing by 35%.

There is a significant ecosystem of well-established Life Sciences companies, which has helped drive strong regional cluster development. The number of people employed in software engineering, technical support, global business services and R&D in the West has also grown considerably in recent years.

Under its *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth* strategy IDA Ireland will target 76 investments for the West Region in the period 2021 to 2024. IDA Ireland will assist the existing base of IDA Ireland client companies, engaging with and assisting them on their growth, training, and transformation agendas. Along with the help of local stakeholders IDA Ireland will continue to build on the competencies of the West with a focus on technology, high value manufacturing, services, and RD&I to market the region internationally, emphasising its unique strengths as a location in which to work and live.

IDA Ireland will deliver Advance Building Solutions in Mayo and Galway over the 2021-2024 period, while also working closely with the private sector in the West to secure the provision of appropriate and cost-effective building and property solutions for client companies. Additional upgrade works, and investment are planned for IDA Ireland Parks in the region to ensure a robust value proposition for clients.

IDA Ireland client companies in the West include Baxter, Allergan, Meissner, Hollister, Alkermes, Harmac, SAP, Medtronic, Boston Scientific, Merit Medical, Fidelity and Diligent. Continued growth of the technology ecosystem in Galway has seen recent first-time investments by Globalization Partners, Triggerfish, Oomnitza, A-LIGN and Poly and significant expansions by Genesys, HID Global, Fidelity Investments and HPE. The region continues to build on its strength in Life Sciences, Medical Technologies and Engineering with recent excellent investment announcements by existing client companies including Penn Engineering, Otsuka, Thermo King and Integer in Galway, Harmac Medical in Roscommon, and Charles River Laboratories in Ballina, Co. Mayo.



The West Region is well positioned to continue to attract new FDI investment. The presence of third level institutes, the National University of Ireland Galway NUIG and the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology GMIT in Castlebar and Galway and a number of key SFI assisted Research Institutes are key to nurturing and producing the talented graduates required to help maintain and attract FDI and foster greater industry collaboration and partnerships.

IDA Ireland client companies continue to innovate and there is strong collaboration with the Higher Education Institutions in the West. The recent Thermo King announcement of a collaboration with the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology GMIT to develop a Bachelor of Engineering in Automation and Robotics is an example of this.

IDA Ireland is a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the West Region.

## Local Enterprise Office

### 4.3 Local Enterprise Office: Focus to 2024

The Local Enterprise Offices aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high quality initiatives for your Business ideas.

The Local Enterprise Office is the *First Stop Shop* for anyone seeking information and assistance on starting or growing a business in Ireland. Entrepreneurs and Businesses are encouraged to:

- Increase exports
- Build resilience
- Increase productivity
- Prepare for the Low carbon economy
- Embrace the Digital economy
- Innovate
- Be managed by ambitious & capable individuals
- Fuel regional growth

### Recent developments in the West Region

Regions	Client Numbers 2021	Total Jobs 2021	Net Job Change 2021
West	654	3,291	298

Focusing on the strategic priorities for the region, and leveraging on the key strengths of the region, important recent developments include:

- BIA Innovator Campus
- Mayo Food and Drink Programme
- Roscommon Food Strategy and Castlerea Food Hub
- GMIT Start-up and Innovation Galway Campus Extension
- EMPOWER female entrepreneurship programmes
- Shannon Masterplan Development for Tourism
- REBOOT training programme to help businesses recover from COVID-19
- An Bealach Cultural Programme
- Explore Training Programme
- Future Skills Need Analysis Survey

### Local Enterprise Office objectives for the West Region to 2024

Galway/Mayo/Roscommon LEOs, in concert with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Enterprise Ireland and other state agencies in the sector are focused on meeting the challenges and opportunities to business startups and existing business growth posed by economic impact of COVID-19, Green agenda and Brexit.

The Local Enterprise Offices have sought to ensure that Micro Enterprises and small business service delivery continues with significant local input within a national/regional micro enterprise policy framework. LEOs have established themselves as the focal point for enterprise development and are central to nurturing an enterprise culture locally.

LEOs deliver on their core objective of fostering entrepreneurship by operating as a First Stop Shop to deliver help and services to start, grow and develop micro and small businesses. In addition, they promote awareness and work to develop an enterprise culture and contribute to the general economic development of their respective area.



In addition, we have identified the following areas of focus 2021-2024:

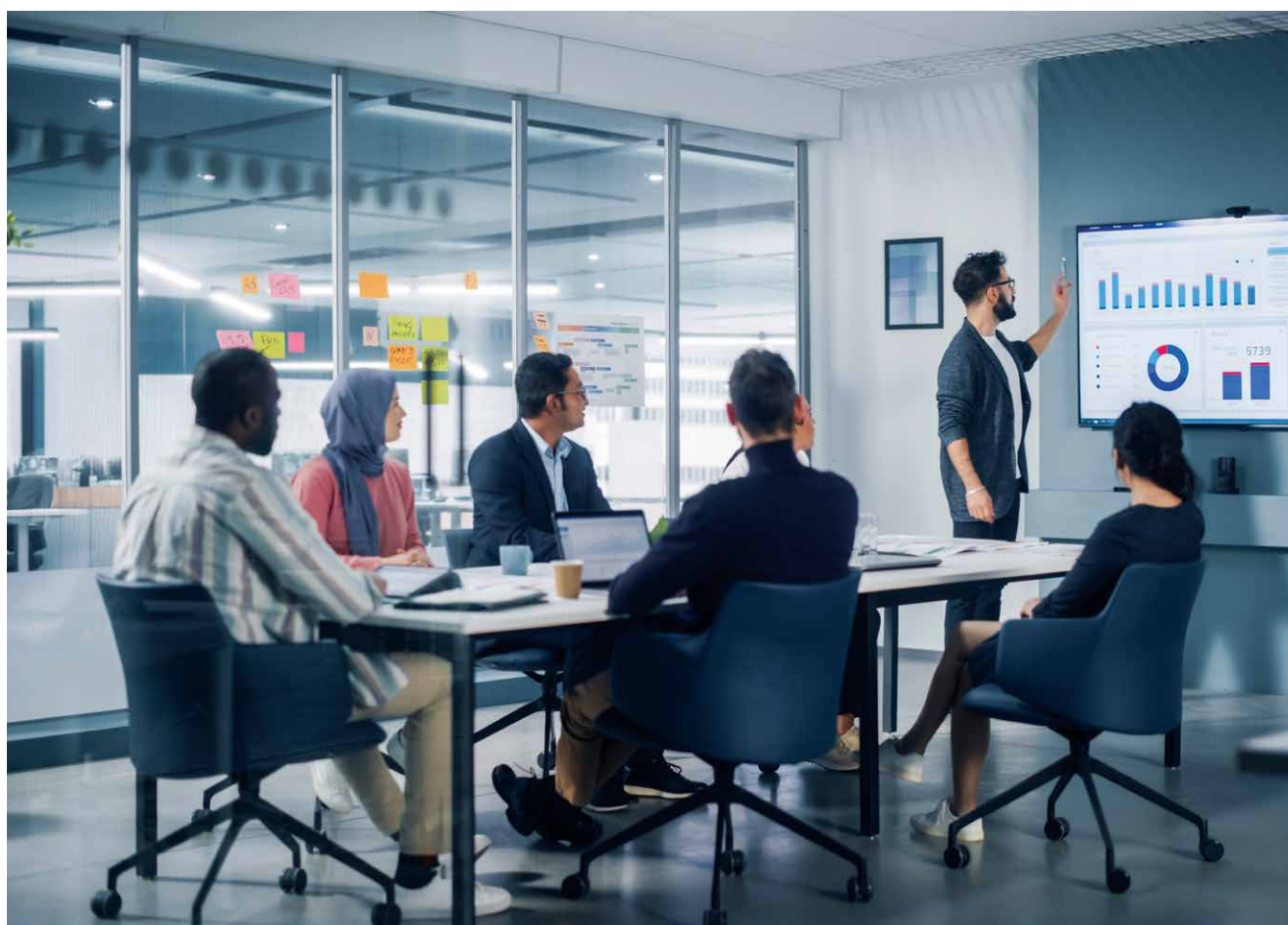
- Promote Green agenda.
- Increase the level of innovation within micro and small businesses.
- Improve the competitiveness and productivity of small and micro enterprises.
- Enhance the confidence, ambition and leadership skills of small and micro enterprises.
- Increase the export capabilities of small and micro enterprises, in particular beyond the UK.
- Promote economic development at local level.

### Programmes to Support Objectives:

- BIA Innovator campus to aid food start-ups and NPD
- Build-up and scale the activities of CREW REDF project, to act as hub and spoke across the region, developing creative centres of excellence
- Significant URDF announcements for Mayo include the Ballina Innovation Quarter and the Castlebar Historic Core and Military Barracks projects. Each of these will provide circa 20,000 sq. ft. of enterprise space and will deliver transformational economic & social change to our key towns.

- AcademyWest will have a particular focus on start-ups and innovation driven enterprises, as well as growing ICT businesses.
- The Data2Sustain initiative is the submission from the Border and Western (NUT2) region as a candidate European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH). Using a data-driven innovation approach, the EDIH aims to achieve disruptive digital transformation of the region's smart specialisation target sectors, with a focus on circular economy and smarter and greener processes, systems, products, services and business models. Target sectors are: Agri and Bio-based Food; Marine and Aquaculture; Meditech and Lifesciences; Manufacturing and Engineering; Construction; Tourism; Public Services.
- Monksland Digital Hub 14,000 sq ft of space to promote remote working, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Galway/Mayo/Roscommon LEOs are members of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the West Region and look forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the West Region.



5

# Complementary Strategies and Initiatives



## 5.1 Fáilte Ireland: Focus to 2024

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the long-term sustainable growth in the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of tourism to Ireland. In addition to helping to develop destinations, Fáilte Ireland also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business aids and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fáilte Ireland's mission over the next three years is to enable the survival and drive the recovery of the sector in order to maximise the sustainable economic, environmental, cultural and social contribution of tourism to Ireland. It is also Fáilte Ireland's objective to spread the benefits of tourism more evenly around the country.

The West Region is served by two of Fáilte Ireland's regional tourism brands, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands (Roscommon) and the Wild Atlantic Way (Galway and Mayo). Fáilte Ireland is currently preparing a suite of four Regional Tourism Strategies (one for each of the four Regional Tourism Brands), which will be published in early 2022.

Through these regional brand development initiatives, Fáilte Ireland has worked closely with a wide range of industry and stakeholder partners towards the sustainable development of tourism in the West. Since March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the tourism industry went through a series of prolonged shutdowns, Fáilte Ireland has been focused on supporting the survival of the industry through a series of significant business initiatives, by way of direct grant-aid, mentoring and training. Destination Recovery Task Forces were established in key destinations which sought to co-ordinate the recovery and provide targeted assistance at a local catchment level.

Fáilte Ireland has remained focused on the medium-to-long term strategic initiatives that are necessary to facilitate the future sustainable recovery and development of tourism in the West Region; for example: the launch of the Limerick Gateway; Implementing Destination/Visitor Experience Development Plans in Connemara and the Aran Islands; the Burren; the preparation of a new Destination and Experience Development Plan for the Cliff Coast; and the preparation of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan (led by Waterways Ireland).



## Fáilte Ireland's objectives for the West Region to 2024

The overall tourism objective for the West Region continues to be to increase visitor numbers by raising awareness of the region as a visitor destination through sustained domestic marketing and sales promotion, and by substantiating the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand propositions with exciting saleable visitor experiences that appeal to our target audiences. We will also work with colleagues in Tourism Ireland to ensure its market-based teams are aware of all that's new in the West Region such that it informs their international marketing activity as well.

Priority areas of focus for Fáilte Ireland over the coming three years in the region include:

- Continuing to raise awareness of the region as a visitor destination and of the range of things for visitors to see and do in the domestic and international markets.
- Providing a range of business initiatives focused on meeting the particular needs of tourism businesses in the region in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic over the next three years.
- Implementation of the findings of the Wild Atlantic Way Route Review.
- Implementation of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan.
- Implementation of the Beara Breifne Way Development Plan.
- Working with a range of industry and stakeholder partners to implement the series of Destination Development Plans that will agree the shared development priorities that will improve both the destinations' appeal and the experience they offer on the ground; and by extension, help to increase visitor dwell time and spend in the region.
- Helping tourism providers to secure new business by introducing them to new markets and buyers and helping them to secure incremental sales. In particular, helping them to hone their saleable experiences to ensure they are picked up by domestic consumers and international tour operators.
- Unlocking the potential of the Gaeltacht areas and island communities for tourism through strategic partnerships with Údarás na Gaeltachta and working with island tourism businesses and networks to maximise the commercial and community development opportunities from the business of tourism.
- Liaising with Local Authorities and other State Agencies such as NPWS, OPW, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, in optimising the benefit of state assets and attractions for tourism, in particular through the development of infrastructural products which can be leveraged by tourism enterprises to create new jobs.
- Complete the investment programmes through capital investment from strategic partnerships at Connemara National Park (NPWS), Dun Aonghasa (OPW).
- Assist the enhancement of existing, and development of new, visitor attractions in the Connemara and Islands DEDP area under the New Horizons Small grant scheme 2018 which are due for completion by 2023.
- Ensuring that the potential of existing strategic tourism infrastructure, assets and facilities is fully explored and that they are fully leveraged by tourism businesses in order to create new enterprises and jobs and water-based facilities aided by our Platforms for Growth Programme.
- Galway City will see a significant investment in Galway City Museum as a strategically important large-scale visitor attraction which will unlock its potential to become a cultural centre and destination anchor for the wider region and Roscommon is currently seeing investment in the National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park House.
- Establishing and assisting a range of effective commercially-focused tourism business networks throughout the region and helping them to cross-promote and cross-sell one another.
- Target continued growth in international Business Tourism through our Meet in Ireland team working in partnership at local levels in Galway with Galway Convention Bureau and in Limerick with Shannon Convention bureau to drive incremental business tourism revenue to the regions, through Association Conferences, corporate meetings and incentive groups.
- Aiding the digital transformation of the tourism industry in the region through a 'Digital that Delivers' initiative, aimed at providing improved online presence and bookability for tourism businesses, enhancing their connected distribution and improving their digital skills.
- Develop and execute a sustained strategy for Tourism Skills and Careers to both attract and retain staff within the tourism industry – the absence of staff represents an existential crisis as businesses' capacity to trade is being restricted.

As a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the West Region Fáilte Ireland looks forward to continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on its ambition for the West Region.







## 5.2 Regional Skills Forum: Focus to 2024

The National Skills Strategy to 2025 provides a framework for skills development that drives Ireland's growth both economically and societally. One of the key elements of the Strategy was the development of a National Skills Council (NSC) and nine Regional Skills Fora (RSF). The Fora structure fosters engagement and collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies, the education (Further and Higher) and training system, and enterprise.

The RSF seek to bring people together at local and regional level, to identify, interrogate and validate skills needs, and to ensure that employers and enterprise are linked with the appropriate resources across the education and training system. The RSF provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The RSF work to ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the region's economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

The Regional Skills Forum leads a number of key activities in each region:

- acting at local and regional level, to drive forward the National Skills Strategy;
- assisting local enterprises identify skills needs to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to assist economic and social prosperity;
- linking (once skills needs have been identified) companies with regional education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need; and
- assisting with actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.

The West Regional Skills Forum (WRSF) has fostered effective working relationships with all of the key participants involved in the successful realisation of the National Skills Strategy in the region. This includes ongoing participation and engagement with the West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee, and the enterprise development agencies (such as IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland); along with the LEOs, ETBs, Skillnets, and other agencies serving the third level sector.

Skills development will be a key 'enabler' of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 and the ongoing work of the WRSF will be of relevance across all of the Strategic Objectives within the West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024.

Developing pathways in response to identified skills needs across all enterprise sectors in the region will be a key focus for the WRSF, especially in helping regional businesses develop the requisite skills to facilitate digitalisation and their low carbon transformation.

In terms of responding to specific education and training needs of industry across the region, a number of areas have been prioritised by the WRSF over the period of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 and beyond. These include:

- an expansion of the cross-sectoral Sales Professionals Network industry skills group in the West;
- driving the Industry 4.0 and green skills agenda through active engagement with the Manufacturing Excellence Network;
- formation of an industry-led Creative Industries skills working group for the West;
- creation of upskilling and reskilling opportunities for regional food SMEs and start-ups at the flagship BIA Innovator Campus at Athenry, Co. Galway; and
- working with the West Chapter of the Cyber Ireland Cluster on identifying and responding to cyber related skills needs across a range of relevant businesses in the West Region.



## 5.3 The Regional Assembly

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) covers eight counties containing nine Local Authorities namely – Cavan, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon and Sligo County Councils and Galway City Council.

One of the principal functions of the Assembly is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which sets out the strategic regional development framework for the region. The primary aim of the RSES is to assist the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP) – and to assist the economic policies of the Government, by providing a 12 year strategic planning and socio-economic framework for the development of the region.



The Region's priorities for investment are identified in the RSES, which includes the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plans for Sligo, Letterkenny and Athlone (partially within the Northern and Western region). The RSES provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development to sustainably grow the Region. Its vision is for a region that is smarter, greener, more specialised and connected, with a stronger and more compact urban network, focusing on placemaking.

The RSES for the Northern and Western region also aims to develop a sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient regional economy. Key to delivering this vision is ensuring the region develops a strong and diverse economic base and with immediate challenges such as COVID-19, Brexit, and potential vulnerabilities for Ireland's enterprise base.

Alignment of the Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) with the socio-economic and spatial principles of the RSES is critical to underpin the achievement of national strategic outcomes at the regional and local level and actions identified through the REP shall give regional assistance for the implementation of the RSES and Project Ireland 2040. This is also of key relevance for EU cohesion funding in Ireland for the period 2021-2027 and the development of priorities under the ERDF 2021-2027 Programme. The Regional Assembly is the managing authority for this programme which will have a focus on smart cities and a smart region, lower carbon emissions, climate resilience and urban regeneration, themes that underpin priorities and actions under the REP.

The RSES for the Northern and Western region can be found here: [www.nwra.ie/rses](http://www.nwra.ie/rses)



## 5.4 Local Authorities – Local Economic and Community Plans

Local Authorities are the key agents of government responsible for local and community development at local level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 strengthened the role of Local Authorities towards economic, social and community development.

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and assist the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has statutory responsibility for the LECPs overall and additional responsibility for the Local Community Development Committees who are charged with the development and the delivery of the Community elements of the LECP. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) have statutory responsibility for the Economic elements of the LECP. The local authorities are responsible for the development and implementation of the economic elements of the LECP through the relevant Strategic Policy Committee.

The purpose of the community elements of the LECP is to promote local and community development and to ensure the coordination of relevant public funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where they are most needed and maximises benefits for communities. The focus of the community elements of the LECP should be on the social and economic issues that have relevance and can be addressed at a community level.

The development of the economic elements of the LECP is part of the wider role of economic development in local government. Revised guidelines on the development of LECPs to assist with the development of local area plans were published in November 2021.

As the framework for the economic and community development of the local authority area, the LECP is also the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Membership of the Regional Steering Committee

<b>Chair Regional Enterprise Plan:</b>
Evelyn O'Toole, Founder and CEO, Complete Laboratory Solutions (CLS)
<b>Programme Manager:</b>
Helena Deane
<b>Membership of the Committee:</b>
Roscommon County Council
Galway County Council
Mayo County Council
Galway City Council
Galway Chamber
Athlone Chamber
Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)
Western Development Commission (WDC)
NUI Galway
GMIT
Regional Skills Forum
Education and Training Boards
Enterprise Ireland
Local Employment Offices (LEOs)
IDA Ireland
Intertrade Ireland
Northern and Western Regional Assembly
Údarás na Gaeltachta
Bord Bia
Teagasc
Waterways Ireland
Marine Institute
WestBIC
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Rural and Community Development
Department of Social Protection



## Appendix 2: West Regional Statistical Snapshot

Constituent counties	Galway, Mayo and Roscommon			
West Population	453,109 <sup>1</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment	231,600 <sup>2</sup>			
ILO Participation Rate	63.8% <sup>3</sup>			
ILO Unemployment Rate	4.7% <sup>4</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)	123,400 <sup>5</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)	108,200 <sup>6</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q1 2015 <sup>7</sup> – Q3 2021	Q1 2015	Q3 2021		
	180,500	231,600		
Actual Increase in Employment between from Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	51,100			
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	28.3%			
Persons on Live Register in the Border at 01/12/2021	39,672 <sup>8</sup>			
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 07/12/2021 in the West	4,207 <sup>9</sup>			
Unemployment blackspots <sup>10</sup>	8 <sup>11</sup>			
Irish-owned Companies – Total Employment in the West, 2015-2020 <sup>12</sup>		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	15,442	18,308	+2,866
Foreign-owned Companies – Total Employment in the West, 2015-2020 <sup>13</sup>		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	21,069	28,195	+7,126

1. 2016 CSO Census

2. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (West Region)

3. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (West Region)

4. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (West Region)

5. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (West Region)

6. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (West Region)

7. Launch of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs

8. CSO Live Register

9. <https://www.gov.ie>

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

11. Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Galway County (2), Mayo (5) and Roscommon (1)

12. Annual Employment Survey 2020

13. Annual Employment Survey 2020



## Appendix 3: Other State Agencies and Bodies Supporting Enterprise Development

### Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body that was established in 1997 to promote social and economic development in the Western Region (the counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare).

It has a statutory obligation to advise the government on issues that impact on the Western Region and to promote government policy directed at improving social and economic standards here. It manages the WDC Investment Fund, which provides loans and equity to businesses and local communities in the region.

The work of the WDC is outlined in their 'Work Smarter, Live Better' strategy. Published in 2019 it sets out the roadmap of the organisation for the following five years. The strategy is built on three pillars: regional promotion; regional leadership; and sustainable enterprise, reflecting the organisation's strategic goals in the short, medium and long terms.

In the short term, the focus of the WDC is to raise the profile of the region and reach a wider audience, particularly those seeking to live or work here. The western region is an area of remarkable physical beauty, situated on Ireland's Atlantic coast, Europe's western edge and a natural entry point from the US, Canada and the Americas.

In terms of regional leadership this includes medium-term goals to build cohesion across the region, through significant projects such as the Atlantic Economic Corridor. It also shows support for the shift to remote and distributed work, which offers significant scope for rural and regional growth. This pillar of the WDC's strategy also covers both national and EU projects that explore and assess new ways of working and collaborating and provide the platform for forward thinking and regional resilience.

### Bord Bia

Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, is responsible for the development of new markets and the promotion of Irish food, drink and horticulture, reporting to the Department of Food, Agriculture, and the Marine. The agency's mandate covers trade development, promotion, quality programmes, information provision and marketing assistance especially for export markets. Bord Bia operates in thirteen overseas locations. Its Origin Green programme is the only sustainability programme in the world that operates on a national scale, uniting government, the private sector and food producers.

### InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland has been helping small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready for over two decades. Based in Newry, their services include initiatives for sales growth and innovation, plus funding and business insights for SMEs across the island who are looking to grow their business.

Through their dedicated Brexit-advisory service they also help companies to manage the new trading relationship between Britain and the EU, via a range of initiatives and services. They have also introduced specific COVID-19 assistance focused around funding and recovery. As a cross-border body, InterTradelreland is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department for the Economy (DFE) in Northern Ireland.

### Atlantic Economic Corridor

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is a consortium of geographical, sectoral and thematic interests, with a singular goal to transform the Atlantic Economy encompassing the 9 western seaboard counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway, Clare, Limerick and Kerry. The consortium is driven by business representatives and communities, and supported by national and local government and State agencies.



The region represented by the AEC has a total population of 1.7 million people and is home to a number of higher education institutions and a wide range of successful businesses, including ambitious start-ups, established multinationals, and indigenous Irish firms prospering in global markets. The AEC seeks to bring together and better harness State and private sector resources to strengthen the region's economic contribution, and to create an attractive place to seize opportunities both in life and work.

The Irish Government has recognised the importance and potential of the AEC in Project Ireland 2040, the over-arching national policy that provides a framework for long-term planning and investing in Ireland's future. The development of the AEC is also central to both the Northern and Western Region and the Southern Region Economic and Spatial Strategies and features prominently in both the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan. Each of the 10 Local Authorities within the AEC has appointed an AEC Officer to support and progress the work of the AEC initiative.

The Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative aims to lay a strong foundation for the region's economic growth through a broad programme of innovation-led initiatives, with a particular focus on building on the region's natural resources. The AEC partnership aims to grow our entrepreneurial and innovation culture, encourage infrastructural investment, attract foreign direct investment and support indigenous companies with global ambitions. The initiative seeks to consolidate and align the State capital investment programme with the potential investment of the private sector to strengthen the region's economic contribution and make the Atlantic region a better place in which to live and work.

## Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

The purpose of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. SEAI provides a range of programmes and services to homes, businesses, schools and communities. It is a key actor in providing research and advice to Government on sustainable energy policy, including renewables and energy efficiency.

## Údarás na Gaeltachta

The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations.

They endeavour to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community-based activities.

They can offer qualifying businesses and companies from various sectors a range of incentives and assistance to start up, develop, expand or locate in a Gaeltacht region. Hundreds of companies have established businesses in the Gaeltacht with our help.

## Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement in 1999. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, promotion and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes. The waterways under the remit of the Body are the Shannon-erne Waterway, the Shannon, the Erne Navigation, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Lower Bann, and the Royal Canal.



## Appendix 4: Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

### Introduction

Our *Rural Future-Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* is the most ambitious and transformational policy for rural development in Ireland for decades.

The vision of the policy is for a thriving rural Ireland which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, which is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment.

The policy contains more than 150 commitments for delivery across the whole-of-Government for both short-term recovery and longer-term development. It has a five-year timeframe, with updates on delivery provided by a series of Progress Reports. Annual work programmes allow for the review and revision of priorities contained in the measures for delivery.

### Policy Objectives

The policy aims to bring about improved opportunities and a better quality of life for people who live and work in rural areas, through balanced regional development, benefitting individuals, families, communities and businesses.

We want to see more people living and working in rural Ireland, rural towns as vibrant hubs for commercial and social activity, reduced regional income disparities, improved access to public services such as transport links, rural Ireland benefitting from the transition to a more sustainable future and rural communities – especially young people – having an active role in shaping their future.

### Funding streams

The level of activity across Government in recent months highlights delivery of the Policy's ambition. The Government's commitment to rural Ireland is also evidenced in the unprecedented capital investment of €850m provided under the revised *National Development Plan* for rural development projects to 2025, across a range of areas such as remote working facilities, rural regeneration projects and outdoor amenities. This includes huge levels of assistance for important projects under the Department of Rural and Community Development's (DRCD) Rural Development Investment Programme.

### DRCD supports include:

- Revitalisation of rural town centres through the €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Investment of €220m through the LEADER Programme.
- Provision of funding for other programmes such as the Small-Scale Rural Projects (CLÁR), Town and Village Renewal, Local Improvement Scheme for non-public roads, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and Connected Hubs Fund.





## Appendix 5: Regional Enterprise Development Funding

### Regional Enterprise Development Fund and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) assists the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can enable and sustain enterprise and employment growth in the regions. Under the RETS and the three calls of the REDF to date, the West has secured over €18.8m in funding for 12 enterprise projects.

#### Projects approved for West Region

Projects approved award	County	Project description
BIA Innovator Campus CLG	Athenry	Workspace for a dynamic regional food and drink innovation center.
Galway City Innovation District CLG	Galway	Co-working and event space for technology and MedTech scale-up companies.
Mídc Páirc Na Mara	Galway	Development of a Marine Innovation and Development Centre (MIDC).
The Burren Lowlands CLG	Galway, Clare	An enterprise platform to provide a focal point to create and attract additional jobs to this area.
Comhoibriú CLG	Galway	Centre of Excellence providing co-working space, incubation, accelerator programmes, training and outreach services to the creative sector
Galway City Innovation District (GCID)	Galway	New space to help export oriented fast-growth tech companies.
Galway Technology Centre DAC	Galway	Expansion of the Centre and to develop 'Academy West' to assist scaling enterprise across the West.
SCCUL Enterprises CLG	Galway	Enterprise centre helping Start-ups, SMEs and Social Enterprise across the region including scaling and expanding their 'Bizmentors' programme.
Grow Remote CLG	Galway	Fostering community chapters of remote workers using their ChangeX platform to provide education and assistance to hubs.
Galway City Innovation District (Bowling Green)	Galway	Enhancements to the proposed development at the Warehouse building to mitigate the issues that COVID-19 has caused for shared workspaces. Additions include higher specification ventilation system, improved furniture and shared spaces as well as 2 additional employees. Funding was sought for a Return to Work Manager and a Technical Manager, Consultancy, Promotional expenses, Structural changes to improve access to the facility with COVID in mind, including improved HVAC systems and ventilation, partitions and hot desk facilities.
Galway Technology Centre	Galway	This development of the Cube provides the appropriate space within a section of the GTC for remote, hybrid and blended workers as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. These changes will assist existing and new tenants of the GTC. Funding is for Promotion, Consultancy to project manage the rapid build and for Renovation and fit out costs
BIA Innovator Campus CLG	Galway	Funding for this project is mainly sought for Building and Equipment fit out works to expand the originally approved 1,008 sq.m. centre by 242 sq.m. For the existing centre funding is also sought to improve COVID-19 ventilation systems, enhanced systems, showcasing manufacturing 4.0 practices and additional entrepreneurship programmes and assistance. This funding will help the centre in its requirement to provide not only a COVID safe environment and best practice for its clients and a safe place from where to host its training programs.
<b>Total West REDF and RETS Funding</b>		<b>€18,889,243</b>



## Appendix 6: Methodology

The process to develop these Regional Enterprise Plans involved the following steps:

<b>January 2021</b>	A round of initial consultations with key stakeholders was undertaken by the Department including the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees, Agency representatives, Programme Managers, and other key organisations represented on the Regional Steering Committees. The bilateral discussions focused on what worked/didn't work well over the period of the outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans.
<b>February-March 2021</b>	In February 2021 the Tánaiste wrote to the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees formally setting out the Department's intention to develop new Plans to 2024.
<b>February-May 2021</b>	The Tánaiste and Ministers of State formally launched the commencement of the process to develop Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 with meetings of the nine Regional Steering Committees in virtual sessions around the country. Each Committee established a Project Delivery Team for the process, led by the Steering Committee chairperson.
<b>March-May 2021</b>	Each of the Project Delivery Teams met to review the outgoing Regional Plans and considered future thematic areas of focus and agreed an approach for a formal stakeholder consultation with the wider Steering Committee members and other relevant stakeholders.
<b>May-August 2021</b>	An online facilitated Stakeholder Consultation event was held in eight of the nine regions; with a series of bilateral stakeholder engagements and focus group discussions undertaken in the South-East Region. Participants considered topics including: enterprise resilience, smart specialisation, placemaking, transition-climate, digitalisation.
<b>July-October 2021</b>	The Project Delivery Teams re-grouped to consider the consultation outcomes and further develop emerging themes into Strategic Objectives and to identify suitable actions for delivery in the period to 2024.
<b>November-December 2021</b>	The Draft Final Regional Enterprise Plans were signed off by the Project Delivery Teams and Steering Committees.
<b>February 2022</b>	Memo for Government considered by Cabinet and noted the Department's intention to publish the nine Regional Enterprise Plans.



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