An Roinn Fiontar,
Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Tourism and Employment

MID-WEST

Regional Enterprise Plan 2022-2025

Final Progress Report



Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
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Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Final Progress Report on the implementation of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2025. Since its launch in 2022, the Plan has sought to drive economic growth, innovation and sustainable enterprise development across the region.

Since the Plan's inception, work has focused on unleashing the potential of the Mid-West region, covering counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, ensuring that it prospers economically and also plays a vital role in the overall Irish economy.

The Regional Enterprise Plans are bottom-up initiatives, developed and led by regional stakeholders, which focus on collaborative initiatives to strengthen the enterprise environment in each region. Each Regional Enterprise Plan is tailored to reflect regional strengths and opportunities and are aligned to the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 and national enterprise policy priorities such as decarbonisation and digitalisation.

To support balanced regional development and the implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plans, my Department, through Enterprise Ireland, has made available over €150 million in regional enterprise development funding since 2017. Schemes such as the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) have seen substantial investment in enterprise centres and hubs around the country, delivering supports to businesses in line with regional strengths. In the Mid-West, just under €17 million was allocated for seven innovation enterprise projects through the REDF. This funding was complemented by the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, launched in 2023.

Strategic sectors such as advanced manufacturing, med-tech and life sciences, marine, and financial services have been supported through targeted investment, collaborative initiatives, and innovative programmes. A defining feature of this Plan has been the spirit of collaboration. Government agencies, local authorities, educational institutions, business representative bodies and local industry have worked together to address challenges and seize opportunities, ensuring the Mid-West is well positioned to compete nationally and internationally.

Over the lifetime of the Plan, the region has strengthened its leadership in advanced manufacturing, future mobility, the bio and circular economy, renewable energy, the creative sector, and tech innovation. These achievements demonstrate the Mid-West's resilience, ambition, and capacity for innovation.

While challenges remain, the achievements documented in this report reflect the dedication and vision of all stakeholders. I have been heartened by the collaboration on display and encourage all stakeholders to continue to work together to deliver real results for the Mid-West.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Chairperson Eamonn Murphy, for his leadership and drive; he made a significant impact bringing his wealth of experience to bear in this voluntary role. I would also like to thank Programme Manager Brian Bourke and his predecessor Paraic Rattigan, the members of the Steering Committee and all regional partners whose commitment has been instrumental in delivering on the actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan.

My Department commissioned an independent review of the Regional Enterprise Plan initiative in 2025, which consulted widely with regional stakeholders and provide an opportunity to take stock of our approach. Taking on board the findings of the review, we will continue to build on what has been achieved and strengthen our support for regional enterprise development into the future.



Alan Dillon TD
Minister of State for Employment, Small Business and Retail

Chairperson's Introduction

The Mid-West region stands at a pivotal moment as global economic conditions evolve and technological innovation accelerates. In this context, the Regional Enterprise Plan 2022–2025 positions our region as a leading testbed for the development of next-generation products and services, particularly in the integration of artificial intelligence with advanced telecommunications, including emerging 5G and 6G technologies. This ambition is firmly rooted in the deep culture of partnership and innovation already evident across the region.

During the lifetime of the Plan, the Mid-West has demonstrated this strength through a series of landmark initiatives. Global technology leaders Amazon, PayPal and Stripe have come together to collaborate with the University of Limerick to deliver a pioneering immersive computing programme, reshaping how future computer scientists are educated. This initiative exemplifies the innovative spirit that characterises the region's enterprise ecosystem.

In parallel, the Catalyst initiative brought together Jaguar Land Rover, Johnson and Johnson and Analog Devices to accelerate new product development in areas such as integrated circuit design and robotics. Dell Technologies further strengthened the region's innovation capacity by expanding its immersive customer experience environment in Limerick, supporting the co-design of advanced products and services. The Mobility Campus in Shannon, working with the National Transport Authority, the Irish Aviation Authority and Clare County Council, played a central role in testing autonomous mobility solutions across land, sea and air.

A further significant milestone was the establishment of Forge Design Factory DAC, created through collaboration between the Technological University of the Shannon, the University of Limerick, the Irish Centre for Business Excellence and the Local Authorities of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary. Through the Week of Innovative Regions in Europe (WIRE), regional and European innovation will be showcased to and supported by the wider international network.

Reflecting on the lifetime of the Plan, it is clear that none of this progress would have been possible without the commitment, leadership and dedication of stakeholders at every level. I want to express my sincere thanks to our regional partners across the three Local Authorities, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices, the many education and training providers in the region and combined business community, all of whom played an essential role in advancing the Plan's strategic objectives.

I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding work of current Programme Manager Brian Bourke and the previous Programme Manager Paraic Rattigan, whose coordination, knowledge and consistent engagement were central to the successful implementation of the Plan. My thanks also extend to the Steering Committee for its strategic oversight and guidance, and to the working groups, whose dedication ensured that actions were delivered collaboratively and effectively throughout the lifetime of the Plan.

As this Regional Enterprise Plan reaches its conclusion, I reflect with pride on what has been achieved between 2022 and 2025. As I now step down from my role, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the commitment and collaboration that have defined this journey. The achievement of this plan provides a strong platform for the next phase of regional enterprise development, and I am confident that the region will continue to thrive under the leadership of its dedicated stakeholders. I warmly thank all partners for their continued engagement and support, and I look forward to seeing the Mid-West build on this momentum in the years ahead.



Professor Eamonn Murphy
Chair of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee

Mid-West Final Progress Report

This progress report documents overall implementation of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to end of 2025, building on the information in the Mid-West mid-term progress report published in April 2024. The progress report has been prepared and signed off by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee.

Mid-West Highlights

A major highlight of the Regional Enterprise Plan 2022–2025 was the opening of IDA Ireland's €40 million Digital Manufacturing Ireland (DMI) facility in Limerick in March 2023. As the national centre of excellence for digital manufacturing, DMI supports the digital transformation, productivity, and competitiveness of Ireland's manufacturing sector and aligns with IDA Ireland's Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth strategy. The project builds on long-term regional collaboration initiated under Action 1.1 of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 and progressed through successive Regional Enterprise Plans. By the end of the Plan, IDA Ireland client companies employed 27,968 people across 153 companies in the Mid-West, reinforcing the region's position as a national hub for advanced manufacturing and digitalisation.

Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI) delivered significant progress over the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan 2022–2025, building on its recognition as Proving Ground of the Year at the Automotive Testing Technology International Awards 2022. In May 2025, FMCI hosted Ireland's first all-electric flights, showcasing the ALIA electric aircraft by BETA Technologies and reinforcing the region's leadership in future mobility and decarbonised transport. Plans were also lodged for Ireland's first Advanced Air Mobility R&D hub, aimed at attracting electric aircraft manufacturing and maintenance activity. In parallel, FMCI partners, including Provizio, Bosch and the University of Limerick, secured €6.9 million through the Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund to advance radar and perception technologies, supporting innovation, digitalisation and zero-carbon mobility.

The Technological University of the Shannon was awarded €1 million in funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to develop a bioeconomy demonstrator site in Lisheen, Co. Tipperary. Supported by €1.6 million in Enterprise Ireland REDF funding, the Irish Bioeconomy Foundation expanded its national and EU partnerships. The Lisheen site has evolved into a cluster of circular and biocircular enterprises, hosting five companies with cumulative investment exceeding €50 million and supporting over 200 jobs. Through its research centres, Technology Gateways and IDEAM Industry Cluster, TUS has also become the first Irish university to lead a European University Alliance, RUN-EU.

A key strategic milestone during the Regional Enterprise Plan 2022–2025 was the publication of the independent Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce report, launched in July 2023 by the then Taoiseach in Ardnacrusha, Co. Clare. The report provides a clear roadmap for the development of offshore wind, onshore energy, enabling infrastructure and tourism across the Shannon Estuary region. It positions the Mid-West to harness Atlantic wind resources, attract supply chain investment and deliver transformative economic benefits, while ensuring strong alignment with EU Green Deal objectives and Ireland's net-zero ambitions. The REP Programme Manager played a central coordinating role in supporting the work of the Taskforce.

In line with Action 1.3, targeted supports for the creative and screen industries contributed to the continued growth of the Mid-West's film and television sector during the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan 2022–2025. Six high-end TV drama series and feature productions, along with 12 short films, were supported, strengthening the region's reputation as a competitive filming location. In 2023, Film in Limerick was awarded runner-up in the Emerging Location category at the Global Production Awards at the Cannes Film Festival. Major productions filmed in the region in 2025 included The Wayfinders, employing approximately 140 crew and 200 extras daily across Limerick, Clare and Tipperary, alongside productions for RTÉ and international broadcasters.

Under Action 3.5, a major milestone for the Mid-West region was achieved in Q4 2025 with the approval of a €30 million investment by Horse Racing Ireland for the development of an all-weather track at Tipperary Racecourse. Construction is scheduled to complete by Q3 2027 and a full winter race programme planned for 2027/28, this investment will transform Tipperary into a year-round racing destination and deliver significant economic, sporting and social benefits for the region.

In line with Action 1.7 of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, the University of Limerick secured €2.3 million in funding from Science Foundation Ireland, matched by industry partners and Limerick City and County Council, to deliver a new programme focused on low-code and no-code approaches in software engineering. The initiative supports digitalisation by enabling application development with minimal coding expertise, strengthening regional skills, productivity, and innovation capacity within the ICT sector.



Case Studies from the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan

1. Manufacturing in the Mid-West

Strategic Objective 1 of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan sought to enable innovation and position the region as a leading digital economy. Action 1.1, to strengthen the Mid-West's position as a national centre for advanced manufacturing, built on a long-term regional ambition first articulated on the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2020. Successive REPs and associated working groups provided a collaborative platform to advance this goal, aligning Government agencies, industry and education providers around a shared vision for advanced manufacturing and digital transformation.

Manufacturing is the largest employment sector in the Mid-West region, supporting almost 30,000 jobs across more than 1,700 companies. This action focused on consolidating the region's leadership in advanced manufacturing through innovation and digital transformation, aligned with Ireland's Industry 4.0 Strategy 2020–2025. Advanced manufacturing is also identified by IDA Ireland in its strategy Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021 – 2024. In December 2025, employment in IDA Ireland client companies in the Mid-West stood at 27,968 across 153 companies highlighting the sector's continued scale and importance to the regional economy.

The Mid-West's advanced manufacturing ecosystem has been strengthened through significant research, enterprise and infrastructure investments. The CONFIRM Centre, a Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Smart Manufacturing, headquartered in the University of Limerick's Digital District continues to lead enterprise-focused research in smart manufacturing. The Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (IDEAM) Cluster supported more than 70 small and medium-sized enterprises on their digital transformation journey and through the Digi Manufacturing 2.0 project delivered in August 2022, facilitated over 40 collaborative projects with a combined value of €8 million.

A major milestone in the delivery of this long-term ambition was reached in March 2023 with the official opening of Digital Manufacturing Ireland, formerly the National Advanced Manufacturing Centre. The centre, based at the IDA Ireland National Technology Park, received €40 million in

state investment. The centre provides manufacturers with access to advanced digital technologies, including a fully representative end-to-end physical and digital production line with digital twin capabilities, firmly positioning the Mid-West as Ireland's national leader in digital manufacturing.

Industry engagement and collaboration were further strengthened through events such as Manufacturing Solutions Ireland 2023, hosted by the Technological University of the Shannon in June 2023, attracting more than 1,600 delegates from Ireland, United Kingdom and Europe. IDA Ireland also continued to work closely with key client companies including, Analog Devices, Boston Scientific and Regeneron through transformation programmes focused on sustainability, research and development, talent development and digitalisation.

While the action is complete, the collaborative structures, capabilities and partnerships developed through Regional Enterprise Plans will continue beyond 2025 through Digital Manufacturing Ireland, the Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing Cluster and IDA-led programmes, ensuring the Mid-West remains at the forefront of advanced manufacturing and Industry 4.0 adoption.



New advanced manufacturing centre to open in Limerick

2. The Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce

Strategic Objective 2 of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan sought to make the region Ireland's leading sustainability and low carbon economy. A key action under this pillar, Action 2.1, which focused on the development of the Atlantic Green Digital Basin. Central to the delivery of this objective has been the establishment of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce and the implementation of its recommendations.

The establishment of Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce, chaired by Barry O'Sullivan, and the implementation of its final report is key to delivering upon that core objective. The independent Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce was established in April 2022 to make recommendations to government on the long-term economic development potential of the Shannon Estuary region. Chaired by Barry O'Sullivan, the Taskforce included representation from the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, with its Chair Prof. Eamonn Murphy, serving as a member, and the then Programme Manager Paraic Rattigan, providing secretariat support. In July 2023, the Taskforce



Minister Simon Coveney, Barry O'Sullivan Chairperson of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce, Minister Norma Foley, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister Eamon Ryan.

Final Report was published at the historic Ardnacrusha hydroelectric dam, with the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Transport Eamon Ryan, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Simon Coveney, and Minister for Education Norma Foley in attendance.

A commitment under the Programme for Government, the Taskforce undertook extensive consultation with regional, national, and international stakeholders including industry, Government, local authorities, elected representatives, and the wider public. Its report set out 89 recommendations relating to national policy development and targeted initiatives across offshore and onshore renewable energy, particularly the enabling of large-scale floating offshore wind in the Atlantic through the Shannon Estuary. Alongside measures to enhance security of energy supply and energy cost competitiveness, as well as initiatives spanning the transport, logistics, connectivity, and tourism sectors.

Consistent with the Taskforce's recommendation, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment has published two implementation updates, the most recent in July 2024. This update confirmed that, 21 recommendations have been completed, 40 are in progress, 13 are under consideration, and 15 will not be progressed as originally recommended.

Significant national policy developments aligned with the Taskforce's recommendations have been delivered since the launch of the report. These include the establishment of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), the publication of a National Hydrogen Strategy and the publication of Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy. In addition, Government has approved the development of a national Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) for offshore wind, which will accelerate offshore renewable energy development by identifying suitable sites across Ireland's maritime area capable of delivering at least 15 gigawatts (GW) of offshore renewable energy (ORE) by 2040. It is expected that this national DMAP will be completed by the end of 2027.

See: Taoiseach launches Shannon Estuary Taskforce Report to transform region into Ireland's Green Digital Corridor | Limerick.ie

3. Regional University Network European University (RUN-EU)

RUN-EU, coordinated by the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) since January 2023, is a European University Alliance that has secured over €14 million in European funding. The alliance brings together like-minded higher education institutions from regional urban and rural areas outside of capital cities, along with associated partners including Limerick City and County Council, Innovate Limerick and the Irish Bioeconomy Foundation. RUN-EU spans across nine European countries -Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Finland, Austria, Czechia and Romania -and forms part of the European Universities Initiative, a flagship action of the European strategy for universities. As a transnational alliance of higher education institutions, with 115,000 students and almost 12,000 staff, RUN-EU is helping shape the universities of the future, with regional development placed at the core of education, research and innovation.

The Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) prioritises innovation, skills, and enterprise collaboration across all its strategic objectives. Partnering with Run-EU directly supports these pillars by fostering regional innovation, strengthening education-enterprise linkages, promoting Smart Specialisation and supporting internationalisation.



Through the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, RUN-EU has been embedded as a strategic platform connecting higher education, enterprise and regional development, ensuring that the alliance delivers tangible benefits for the Mid-West economy. The REP has actively supported Irish enterprises in availing of RUN-EU opportunities by promoting awareness of the alliance across the regional enterprise ecosystem, facilitating connections between enterprises and RUN-EU partners, and ensuring enterprise representation at RUN-EU events and associated partner forums. Irish enterprises have contributed to RUN-EU thematic activities, working groups and innovation discussions, while also benefiting

from access to European networks, research and innovation collaboration, talent pipelines and international engagement opportunities enabled through the alliance. The REP has provided a coordination and governance framework through which enterprise agencies, higher education institutions and industry can align their engagement with RUN-EU to regional priorities.

This engagement was further reinforced in October 2025, when the Mid-West Programme Manager, Brian Bourke, attended the RUN-EU General Assembly hosted by IPCA in Barcelos, Portugal (see photograph above). The event brought together stakeholders from education, innovation, and regional development through thematic sessions, working groups, and networking opportunities designed to strengthen regional innovation ecosystems. The Associated Partners Events form a key component of the General Assembly, bringing together non-academic stakeholders – regional authorities, enterprise agencies, and industry representatives. At this forum, the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Programme Manager presented on the Mid-West REP, ensuring that Mid-West REP priorities are reflected in RUN-EU's strategic direction and that opportunities arising from the alliance are aligned with regional economic development objectives.

Through RUN-EU, and supported by the Mid-West REP, higher education institutions, enterprises and regional stakeholders are collaborating to deliver futurefocused skills, support enterprise innovation, and respond to green, digital and socioeconomic transitions. This partnership approach is strengthening the international connectivity of the Mid-West, enhancing opportunities for Irish enterprises, and reinforcing the role of higher education as a driver of sustainable regional growth.

Overview of the Regional Enterprise Plans

Balanced regional enterprise development is a Government priority. The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and its agencies contribute to this agenda in several ways, including through the nine Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs).

The Regional Enterprise Plans 2022-2025 were bottom-up plans developed and led by regional stakeholders, which focused on collaborative initiatives to strengthen the enterprise ecosystem in each region. They were considered complementary to the ongoing work of key enterprise stakeholders including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. The REPs aimed to help drive economic growth and sustain better standards of living throughout Ireland. Each plan was underpinned by an understanding of the unique local strengths and assets in that region.

The REPs were aligned to national policy priorities including the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027, green growth and digitalisation. Each plan included several strategic objectives and actions under each of these. Some REP actions focused on delivery of enterprise centres and hubs in the regions, and associated programmatic supports to businesses. Since 2017, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment has allocated over €150 million to regional enterprise development through a range of schemes administered by Enterprise Ireland, some of which have funded key REP projects.



The nine REP regions are the North-East (Cavan, Monaghan, Louth), North-West (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim), West (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon), Mid-West (Limerick, Clare, Tipperary), South-West (Cork, Kerry), South-East (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford), Midlands (Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath), Mid-East (Meath, Kildare, Wicklow) and Dublin.

The REPs evolved from the Regional Action Plans for Jobs in place from 2015 to 2017. The first set of REPs launched in 2018 and covered the period to 2020.

The latest plans launched in 2022 and were originally to run until the end of 2024; following a one-year extension to support implementation and enable an independent review of the REP initiative, the plans came to an end in December 2025. Mid-term progress reports for each of the REPs were published in April 2024 and are available on the Department's website. At regional level, each REP is implemented by a Steering Committee made up of regional stakeholders and chaired by an enterprise champion, typically a senior private sector businessperson. A full-time REP Programme Manager, hosted in a local authority, drives implementation on the ground. The Department oversees implementation of the REP initiative at the national level; this includes hosting the REP National Oversight Group (NOG), co-chaired by the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, and Ministers of State. The NOG provides overall strategic direction for the REP initiative and typically met twice annually to review progress, share insights and guide future planning.



Smart Specialisation

In July 2022, the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE) published Ireland's National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022–2027 (S3). Its goal is to drive innovation-led and sustainable regional growth by leveraging local sectoral strengths and emerging opportunities through collaboration among businesses, research institutions, public authorities, and civil society. S3 links DETE's Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) and the Regional Assemblies' Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) with national innovation strategies, ensuring alignment in Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) policy and planning both regionally and nationally.

Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy fulfils a European Commission requirement for Ireland to access structural funding under European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Policy Objective 1: A Smarter Europe. The preparation of the strategy itself represents a key strategic outcome under Ireland's ERDF Programmes 2021-2027.

Launched in November 2022, the Regional Development Monitor (RDM) is a joint initiative of Ireland's three Regional Assemblies and the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO). The RDM provides an online mapping viewer with socio-economic and environmental indicators, enabling stakeholders to track progress under themes such as:

- Green Region
- Liveable Region
- Creative and Innovative Region

This tool supports evidence-based decision-making and promotes transparency in regional development. The Regional Development Monitor also includes a Smart Specialisation dashboard to enable better monitoring of progress.

The first progress report on Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy was published in March 2025 and progress under the eight goals of the strategy were highlighted.

- Goal 1: Linking national and regional enterprise and innovation policy
- Goal 2: Enabling "A Smarter Europe"
- Goal 3: Improving research and innovation capacity in Ireland's regions
- Goal 4: Encouraging more regionally dispersed RD&I
- Goal 5: Advancing the twin green and digital transformation
- Goal 6: Skills for innovation
- Goal 7: Reinforcing sectoral strengths
- Goal 8: Monitoring progress on regional innovation, and building international connections

Each of the Regional Assemblies sit on the National Smart Specialisation Implementation Group which has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy's national and regional strategic priorities. In ensuring delivery of regional priorities, the Regional Assemblies also sit on the steering committees for the REPs. Working with the REPs is an important vehicle in translating S3 into regional and local impact.

Smart Specialisation in the Mid-West Region

In June 2024, Ireland's three NUTS 2 regions were designated as Regional Innovation Valleys, joining a network of 149 regions across Europe. This initiative aims to harness the full innovation potential across Europe, connecting less and more innovative regions, addressing social challenges through cutting edge technology, and strengthening collaboration between research, industry and public bodies.

A concerted effort has been made to monitor S3 implementation. In December 2024 the Progress Report 2024 for the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 was published. The Regional Assemblies have led on the creation of a Smart Specialisation dashboard within the Regional Development Monitor to enable better monitoring of progress.

Key highlights with regards to the Mid-West Region which aligned with Smart Specialisation include:

- Digital Manufacturing Ireland (DMI), Limerick – national centre of excellence for digital transformation in manufacturing, launched in 2023.
- Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI), Shannon – a centre of excellence for advanced on-road and in-air mobility solutions opened in 2022.
- Irish Bioeconomy Foundation campus, Tipperary – offers services including bioprocess design and scale up, access to financing, and promotion and outreach.
- Centre for Applied Bioscience Research (CABR), Munster Technological University (MTU) and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West (TUS) – a commercially focused, state of the art, Research Centre and Technology Gateway.
- IDEAM Research Institute and Cluster, Limerick – supports SMEs and entrepreneurs with digitalisation and green transformation.
- Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme: European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) co-funded scheme launched in 2023 to support local enterprise infrastructure, innovation clusters, SME services and feasibility studies.
- TU RISE Programme: builds research capacity in Technological Universities, fostering industry-academic collaboration, including in TUS.
- Knowledge Transfer (KT) Boost: programme to enhance technology transfer and spinouts from Higher Education Institutions, benefiting regional SMEs.
- Technology Gateways: connect local industry with research expertise in Technological Universities (TUs) and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) including TUS in the Mid-West.

The Southern Region has a strong innovation ranking and scored 130 on the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2025, ranking 63rd in Europe, behind the Eastern and Midland and the Northern and Western Regions. The Mid-West Region has received €54.9 million in Horizon Europe Funding (2021-2024). The Southern Region received €259.6 million over this period, representing approximately 30 percent of total funding received by the state. Total Research and Development (R&D) expenditure in the Southern Region amounted to €1.05 billion (27%) in 2021 and €0.75 billion (or 10.6%) in 2023, indicating strong research activity but with room for growth compared to the Eastern and Midland Region.



Strategic Objective 1: Enable innovation to make the Mid-West a leading digital region

Action 1.1: Strengthen the position of the Mid-West as a national centre for advanced manufacturing

Action Leader: IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Confirm Centre and the Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (IDEAM) Cluster

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Manufacturing is the largest employer in the Mid-West, supporting almost 30,000 jobs across more than 1,700 companies. This action aimed to consolidate the region's leadership in advanced manufacturing through innovation and digital transformation, aligned with Ireland's Industry 4.0 Strategy 2020–2025. IDA Ireland in its strategy Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024 identified advanced manufacturing as a key opportunity area for Ireland. In December 2025, there were 27,968 people employed in 153 IDA Ireland client companies in the Mid-West region.

The Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing Cluster (IDEAM) Cluster brings together industry, academia, government and society to represent the needs of the digital engineering and advanced manufacturing ecosystem in Ireland. In August 2022, the cluster delivered the Digi Manufacturing 2.0 project, fostering over 40 collaborative projects with a combined value of €8 million. It has also supported more than 70 small and medium-sized enterprises on their digital transformation journey.

Positioning the Mid-West as a national centre for advanced manufacturing has its origins in the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020, with successive Regional Enterprise Plans and associated working groups providing a strong collaborative platform to advance this ambition. A major milestone was achieved in March 2023 with the official opening of Digital Manufacturing Ireland, formerly the National Advanced Manufacturing Centre. The centre, based at the IDA Ireland National Technology Park, received €40 million in state investment and provides manufacturers with access to advanced digital technologies, including a fully representative end-to-end physical and digital production line with digital twin capabilities. This facility now serves as a national showcase for advanced manufacturing technologies and provides collaborative spaces for industry-led problem-solving, firmly positioning the Mid-West as Ireland's national leader in digital manufacturing.

Industry engagement was strengthened through events such as Manufacturing Solutions Ireland 2023, hosted by the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) in June 2023, attracting more than 1,600 delegates from Ireland, United Kingdom and Europe. IDA Ireland continued to work closely with client companies—including Analog Devices, Boston Scientific and Regeneron—through transformation programmes focused on sustainability, research and development, talent development and digitalisation. The Smarter Factory Technology Gateway at TUS provides technological solutions via research projects, access for industry to its Digital Hub with both the latest in automation, robotics and specialised industry focused training.

While the action is complete, work will continue beyond 2025 through Digital Manufacturing Ireland, the Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (IDEAM) Cluster and IDA-led programmes, ensuring the Mid-West remains at the forefront of advanced manufacturing and Industry 4.0 adoption.

Action 1.2: Development and expansion of advanced mobility technology capabilities at Future Mobility Campus Ireland

Action Leader: Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

This action aimed to position the Mid-West as a leader in advanced mobility technologies by developing and expanding capabilities at Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI). The rationale recognised the importance of creating a testbed for autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicles, alongside pioneering work in advanced air mobility. These initiatives were designed to attract investment, enable collaborative research, and support the transition to next-generation transport systems.

FMCI, located in the Shannon Free Zone, delivered significant progress throughout the plan. The campus evolved into a fully operational testbed equipped with sensor networks, high-accuracy location systems, and autonomous vehicle infrastructure. Collaborative projects were initiated with global industry partners, supported by funding from the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. Key milestones included a €7 million EU award for the Éalú-Aer project in June 2022 to develop a Digital Sky Demonstrator for unmanned traffic management, and REISS funding to scope an advanced air mobility hub. FMCI hosted major industry events such as Motion by Electronomous and workshops on connected autonomous vehicles and battery technologies. In 2023, FMCI received international recognition as Proving Ground of the Year at the Automotive Testing Technology International Awards.

By 2025, FMCI achieved further breakthroughs. The campus hosted Ireland's first all-electric flights in May 2025, showcasing the ALIA electric aircraft by BETA Technologies. Plans were lodged for Ireland's first Advanced Air Mobility Research and Development Hub and aimed at attracting electric aircraft manufacturing and maintenance capabilities. FMCI partners, including Provizio, Bosch, and University of Limerick, secured €6.9 million under the Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund to advance radar and perception technologies. Additional grants supported automotive data services for SMEs and start-ups.

FMCI has established itself as a world-class mobility innovation hub, enabling research and testing across road and air transport technologies. The campus has attracted significant investment, fostered collaboration between industry and academia, and positioned the Mid-West as a key player in global mobility innovation.

Work will continue beyond the Plans completion. In addition to FMCI's ongoing projects, a proposed Department of Transport initiative will further strengthen this ecosystem. This includes an interim governance and funding arrangement, a Memorandum of Understanding with FMCI and local authorities, and development of a national strategy for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles. The proposed plan, business case, and stakeholder engagement supported by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, will underpin future testbed expansion and legislative frameworks, ensuring Ireland remains at the forefront of mobility innovation.

Action 1.3: Create a sustainable Regional Film Industry in the Mid-West

Action Leader: Regional Film Manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 1.3 aimed to establish a sustainable regional film industry in the Mid-West, leveraging the success of Troy Studios and emerging creative enterprises to create jobs, attract inward investment, and develop a skilled crew base.

The region set ambitious targets, including the creation of 500 jobs by 2024, training and placement of 440 crew members, and development of studio facilities to attract large-scale productions. A feasibility study, funded by Limerick Clare Educational Training Board (LCETB) and Local Enterprise Office Limerick, was commissioned to explore a regional film and TV investment fund, projected to attract five productions annually and deliver €7.5 million in regional spend. Progress accelerated during the plan period. Six high-end TV dramas and feature films were produced across the Mid-West, employing approximately 120 local crew and providing funded placements for new entrants.

Training capacity expanded significantly, with 157 individuals completing Crew Academy courses. The region's short film output grew, with twelve short films produced and entered into festivals, supporting 130 jobs and winning awards at the Belfast Film Festival and Catalyst International Film Festival. Industry engagement deepened through visits from major studios including Amazon, NBC Universal, and HBO. Film in Limerick's reputation was recognised internationally when it received the Runner-Up Prize for Emerging Location at the Cannes Film Festival in 2024.

Talent development initiatives included the Accredited Creative Producing Programme (24 producers trained) and the Writers Factory (60 emerging screenwriters graduated). By 2025, Film in Limerick was firmly established as the regional film office, delivering the National Talent Academy – Crew Academy for Munster and placing hundreds of new crew on productions. The Engine Shorts Scheme continued to serve as a pipeline for new intellectual property, commissioning up to six short films annually.

Film in Limerick's global profile was reinforced through two nominations at the Global Film Awards and a major win at the 2024 Makers and Shakers Awards at BAFTA London for Best Film Commission. Training and outreach scaled up, with fourteen Crew Academy courses delivered to 208 participants, nine industry events attracting nearly 700 attendees, and Next Gen outreach programmes engaging more than 1,000 young people.

In total, 1,976 individuals participated in programmes, events, and productions during 2025. Funding included €400,000 in core support and €150,000 for regional training initiatives. Major productions filmed in the region during 2025 included The Wayfinders, a US-Irish fantasy series shot across Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary, employing 140 crew and 200 extras daily.

Key outcomes include the establishment of Film in Limerick as a dedicated film office, significant expansion of the crew base, and delivery of flagship training programmes. The region attracted major productions, generated millions in economic impact, and achieved international recognition for its film commission work. The combination of infrastructure, talent development, and industry engagement has positioned the Mid-West as a leading destination for film and TV production.

The regional film sector will continue to grow beyond the completion of the plan. Priorities include advancing feasibility work on a regional investment fund, expanding studio infrastructure, and developing the animation sector.

Action 1.4: Collaborations to solve healthcare problems and challenges using digital solutions

Action Leader: Engine Collaboration Centre

Timeframe for delivery: N/A

Final Status: Action Discontinued

Action Update:

Action 1.4 was conceived to foster collaboration between healthcare professionals, technology experts, and industry partners to address healthcare challenges through innovative digital solutions. The plan envisioned a Healthcare Innovation Centre within Innovate Limerick's Engine Collaboration Centre, providing a space for design thinking, prototyping, and testing of new solutions aimed at improving patient outcomes and operational efficiency in hospital and community settings.

Initial progress demonstrated strong regional ambition for healthcare innovation. In July 2022, Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) funding was awarded for a feasibility study into a Life Sciences Hub for Limerick, which was completed and progressed to the next stage. In March 2023, three healthcare innovation projects from the region secured support under the Public Sector Innovation Fund: a Healthcare Drone Delivery project led by Limerick City and County Council and Innovate Limerick; Healthcare Bed Management Solution project; and University Hospital Limerick initiative to develop 3D-printed bespoke breast prostheses for post-mastectomy patients. Additionally, in August 2023, the University of Limerick hosted the Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre Technology Showcase, bringing together industry experts to explore advancements in digital cancer research. One of the most notable undertakings was the healthcare drone delivery pilot, which secured national funding and reached pilot development stage. Although the project was ultimately discontinued due to the withdrawal of the lead delivery partner from the market, it validated the region's capacity to design and secure funding for innovative healthcare solutions. All funds were responsibly returned, reflecting strong governance and financial oversight. Despite these achievements, the broader initiative to establish a Healthcare Innovation Centre did not progress to implementation. Constraints in funding, staffing, and technical resources made it difficult to sustain momentum and deliver the envisioned collaborative hub.

While the core objective of creating a Healthcare Innovation Centre was not realised, the action delivered significant preparatory work and related projects that advanced healthcare innovation in the region. Feasibility studies, pilot projects, and technology showcases demonstrated the Mid-West's potential to lead in digital health solutions. These efforts provided valuable insights and laid the groundwork for future initiatives in healthcare innovation.

Although this action was discontinued, the learnings and partnerships developed during the plan period will inform future strategies. Opportunities remain to progress the Life Sciences Hub and explore collaborative models for healthcare innovation. Continued engagement with healthcare providers, academic institutions, and technology partners will be essential to realise the region's ambition to become a leader in digital health solutions.

Action 1.5: Establish the region as a national leader in the sports-tech and eSports sectors

Action Leader: SportsTech Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action partially complete

Action Update:

This action sought to position the Mid-West as Ireland's leading hub for sports technology and eSports, capitalising on global market growth and the region's strong sporting heritage. The rationale recognised the potential of emerging technologies such as data analytics and Internet-of-Things (IoT) to transform sports performance and fan engagement, while major projects like the Ryder Cup 2027 offered unique opportunities to showcase innovation.

SportsTech Ireland led the development of a national cluster, supported by local authorities, enterprise agencies, and academic partners. Key steps included the appointment of a dedicated cluster manager and delivery of a new website and industry research publication to strengthen Ireland's sports-tech value proposition. Community engagement was advanced through events such as the One Zero SportsTech conference at ENGINE and EY's Data in Sport event at Thomond Park in 2023, which brought together start-ups, investors, and global thought leaders.

In 2024, SportsTech Ireland hosted an Innovators Event to promote collaboration and entrepreneurship. Talent development initiatives were introduced in partnership with Technology Ireland Digital Skillnet, including a Postgraduate Diploma in Sports Analytics, Technology and Innovation to build sector-specific skills. While the planned accelerator programme did not progress during the plan period, significant groundwork was laid to support future incubation and scaling opportunities.

The Mid-West has established a strong foundation for leadership in sports technology, with an active cluster, enhanced industry visibility, and dedicated talent development pathways. The region is now recognised as a focal point for sports-tech innovation, supported by flagship infrastructure and a growing network of enterprises and research partners.

Work will continue beyond the completion of the plan to advance accelerator initiatives, expand cluster membership, and deepen collaboration with global partners. Upcoming opportunities, including the Ryder Cup at Adare Manor in 2027, will provide a platform to showcase the region's capabilities and attract further investment, ensuring sustained growth in the sports-tech and eSports sectors.

Action 1.6: Progress regional data centre projects with an emphasis on innovation and sustainability

Action Leader: Clare County Council, Limerick City and County Council and Shannon Foynes Port Company

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

Data centres are critical to a digital economy, but their significant energy demands require strategic planning to ensure sustainability. Irelands' data centres are primarily concentrated in the Dublin region however the Mid-West region offers a compelling alternative to support a more balanced and sustainable data centre industry.

In August 2022, planning permission was granted for a major data centre campus in Ennis, Co. Clare. The proposed development includes six modular data halls and a vertical farm across 145 acres, designed to integrate sustainability principles. This decision was subsequently appealed to An Bord Pleanála, and

legal challenges have delayed progress. The Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029 reinforces support for this project, including requirements for strategic environmental assessment, appropriate assessment, and greenhouse gas emissions analysis.

The final outcomes achieved under this action include planning permission secured for Ennis data centre campus with legal challenges ongoing. While construction has not commenced, data centre projects remain priorities for regional development, with strong alignment to Ireland's twin transition goals of digitalisation and decarbonisation.

Action 1.7: Innovation in education – inclusive, immersive, enterprise-focused education programmes

Action Leader: Regional Skills Forum, University of Limerick (UL) and Technological University of the Shannon (TUS): Midlands Mid-West

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Despite the sun-setting of Human Capital Initiative (HCI) funding, Action 1.7 has delivered strong and sustained outcomes by embedding enterprise focused education within mainstream provision. As UL@Work transitioned into its mainstreaming phase, it continued to work closely with the Mid-West Renewables Education and Training Cluster, chaired by UL, to establish an Enterprise Advisory Panel. This panel supports the co-design of programmes aligned with industry needs, particularly in the wind and renewable energy sector. UL@Work now delivers a range of flexible online programmes developed in partnership with industry to support upskilling and reskilling. The use of industry-based lecturers, including Professors of Practice, has been prioritised, supported by established procurement, promotion and funding frameworks to strengthen co-delivery between academia and enterprise.

Applications to the Masters of Professional Practice (MPP) rose by 71 per cent in autumn 2025, demonstrating the programme's growing regional and institutional impact. The MPP has expanded access to lifelong learning, provided flexible progression routes into higher education, and supported career advancement. New MPP pathways are being developed in Applied Economics and Energy Analysis, enabling learners to gain expertise in climate change economics and energy market analysis.

Progress has also been achieved in widening participation and inclusion. In December 2022, the Coding for Women programme, delivered by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board in partnership with the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum, celebrated its first graduates. Supported by the Limerick for IT industry cluster, the programme caters for up to 40 participants annually and provides accessible pathways into the digital economy.

Immersive education models have continued to expand. The Immersive Software Engineering degree, now in its third intake, blends academic study with real-world industry experience and is supported by leading technology employers. The programme offers non CAO entry routes through QQI pathways in collaboration with LCETB, broadening access to higher education. Student numbers have grown steadily from 12 in the first intake in 2023 to 62 students in the fourth intake.

In autumn 2025, UL welcomed the first intake to the Immersive Bioscience and Biotherapeutics (iBio) programme, a four year BSc/MSc designed in partnership with the biopharma and life sciences sectors. The programme focuses on skills for medicine development and discovery and reflects a strong industry academic collaboration. Applications have been strong, and two major international employers in the Mid-West, Eli Lilly and Company and Analog Devices Inc., are confirmed as significant partners.

Overall, Action 1.7 has successfully delivered inclusive, immersive and enterprise aligned education models that support digitalisation, the zero carbon transition, and longterm skills development across the Mid-West region.



Strategic Objective 2:
Make the Mid-West Ireland's leading sustainability/low carbon region

Action 2.1: The Atlantic Green Digital Basin – decarbonising industry by developing the Shannon Estuary as a renewable energy hub

Action Leader: Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, Shannon Foynes Port Company, Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and Tipperary County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

This action aimed to position the Shannon Estuary as a world-class renewable energy hub, leveraging its unique natural advantages to drive decarbonisation and economic growth. The rationale recognised the Estuary's potential to deliver up to 70 GW of offshore wind energy, supported by deep-water port facilities, existing grid infrastructure, and a skilled workforce. The ambition was to create an Atlantic Green Digital Basin, coupling renewable energy generation with industrial development to attract high-value industries and ensure Ireland's leadership in the green transition.

Significant progress was achieved through collaboration between Shannon Foynes Port Company, Local Authorities, and regional stakeholders. The launch of Vision 2041 in November 2022 set out a strategic roadmap for offshore wind development. The establishment of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce (SEET) in 2022 marked a turning point, culminating in its Final Report in July 2023. This report outlined a comprehensive plan to deliver up to 30 GW of offshore wind by 2050, create 50,000 green jobs, and establish an Atlantic Green Digital Corridor.

Key initiatives included publication of SEET recommendations on floating offshore wind, green hydrogen, and industrial clustering; engagement in national policy consultations on offshore renewable energy and grid planning; hosting industry events such as Energy on the Estuary and Marine Ireland networking sessions; and formation of the Mid-West Green Digital DAC to progress SEET actions.

The Taskforce's work provided detailed proposals for enabling infrastructure, strategic land planning, and the creation of a National Floating Offshore Wind Development Agency. It also highlighted opportunities for research, skills development, and international collaboration.

DigiWind is an EU and Enterprise Ireland funded project established to address the Wind and Energy Systems sector needs for increased digitalisation. Working with highly experienced academic and industry partners from Ireland, Norway Denmark, Poland and The Netherlands, it facilitates upskilling within the sector by developing digital education programmes with advanced skills including AI, Operations and Maintenance, High Performance Computing, and Cybersecurity for STEM professionals and those seeking careers within the green transition.

The Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) plays a key role by delivering specialised courses, including research Masters programmes and lifelong learning activities, focusing on practical digital expertise for Ireland's growing offshore wind industry, offering scholarships and industry-aligned training. TUS also leads the management of DigiWind's Lifelong Learning initiatives across the consortium, also running events and industry discussions to unlock the Mid-West's potential in offshore wind in Ireland and further afield, linking academia with industry leaders.

The Shannon Estuary is of strategic national importance as a location for offshore renewable energy and green industrial development. The region has a clear roadmap to harness Atlantic wind energy, attract supply chain investment, and deliver transformative economic benefits. The groundwork laid by SEET ensures alignment with EU Green Deal objectives and positions the Mid-West as a critical driver of Ireland's net-zero ambitions.

Work will continue beyond the completion of the plan through the implementation of SEET recommendations. Priorities include accelerating offshore wind deployment, developing green hydrogen and biomethane projects, and creating shovel-ready industrial sites. The Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce provides a robust vehicle for delivery, ensuring a coordinated approach to infrastructure, policy, and investment. These efforts will secure Ireland's place as a global leader in renewable energy and sustainable industry.

Action 2.2: Build regional research, education and training capacity for emerging renewable energy opportunities

Action Leader: Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, Shannon Foynes Port Company, Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council, Tipperary County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

The Mid-West region has the potential to become an area of strategic importance for offshore renewable energy development in Ireland, with deep-water port infrastructure, strong academic capability and a growing offshore wind industry. This action aimed to build research, education and training capacity to support emerging opportunities in offshore wind, hydrogen and related green technologies.

The Mid-West Renewables Education and Training Cluster was established by the University of Limerick (UL) and Shannon Foynes Port Authority as a subgroup of the Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce. The cluster brings together higher education institutions, further education providers, industry and government agencies to develop a robust talent pipeline. Activities include creating a live inventory of regional climate and wind energy courses, reviewing and renewing education offerings, and aligning programmes with national skills strategies.

Education and training initiatives expanded significantly during the plan period. UL partnered with Skillnet Ireland to deliver industry-led, accredited programmes, including eight new micro-credentials since 2024. Modules such as Environmental Impact Assessment and Energy Economics and Policy have run multiple times with strong industry uptake. Additional courses in sustainability, energy management and circular economy were introduced under Springboard+ and Human Capital Initiative funding.

Research capacity was strengthened through projects such as HybridLabs, a Dutch-Irish collaboration to accelerate offshore renewable technologies, and through UL's Bernal Institute and AMPEiRE Centre, which advanced research in energy storage and battery technologies. A Memorandum of Understanding between UL and ESB formalised collaboration in research, education and commercialisation.

Industry engagement was showcased through major events, including the OCEANS 23 international conference hosted at UL, attracting over 1,000 delegates. UL also joined the national Expert Advisory Group on Offshore Wind Skills and Workforce, advising the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce on skills requirements for Ireland's 2030 renewable energy targets.

The cluster will continue to expand course offerings, strengthen industry partnerships and secure funding for new programmes. Research collaborations and micro-credential development will remain central to supporting Ireland's renewable energy ambitions.

Action 2.3: Grow circular bioeconomy capacity, leveraging the National Bioeconomy Campus

Action Leader: Irish Bioeconomy Foundation (IBF)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

The circular bioeconomy is a cornerstone of Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy, offering opportunities to add value to biological resources, reduce waste and create sustainable products. The National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen, Thurles, has been leveraged to build capacity for research, innovation and commercialisation in the sector.

Significant progress has been made in developing the BioScaleUp facility, which will provide piloting and innovation capabilities for scaling bio-based processes. The facility is supported by €4.6 million from Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund, plus additional funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Just Transition Fund (JTF) with the official launch expected in June 2026. Procurement of specialised fermentation, filtration and drying equipment

is underway, with full operationalisation targeted for Q4 2026. Tipperary County Council also secured JTF funding for master-planning and infrastructure development of 10 acres adjoining the facility, with completion scheduled for Q1 2026.

The Irish Bioeconomy Foundation has expanded its national and international network, mapping over 600 stakeholders and securing funding for multiple EU projects, including Bioeconomy Ventures, MPowerBio, Biobec, AGREFINE and Rural Bio Up. In August 2022, Trifol Resources, supported by IBF, received €3 million in EU funding and €1.5 million from the Climate Action Fund for its PLASTIC2WAXLIFE project. In February 2023, the Technological University of the Shannon was awarded €1 million to develop a bioeconomy demonstrator at Lisheen. UL coordinated the €4.9 million BIOFIN project to address biodiversity finance barriers.

Operational activity on campus has increased, with three projects—Revive Environmental, AQS Environmental Solutions and Naringtech Biorefinery—already active. Construction of an anaerobic digester by Heygaz/Ormond Organics is also underway.

The next phase will focus on commissioning the BioScaleUp facility, operationalising funded projects and launching a national communication programme to showcase capabilities in resource efficiency, sustainability and carbon utilisation. These efforts will position the Mid-West as a hub for bioeconomy innovation over the next decade.

Action 2.4: Develop a centre of excellence for sustainable energy

Action Leader: Tipperary County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

Action 2.4 was conceived to establish a Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, as a flagship project for Ireland's energy transition. The centre is designed to act as an anchor for the Martyr's Road Regeneration Quarter, delivering a collaborative hub for public agencies, research institutions, and low-carbon enterprises. Its ambition is to become Ireland's first Net Zero Embodied Carbon Building, producing more energy than it consumes, and to serve as a national destination for learning, innovation, and demonstration in sustainable energy technologies.

The project secured €9.5 million in funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) in March 2021, marking a significant milestone in its development. Approval in principle was granted by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in November 2022, enabling progression to design stages. By March 2025, an Integrated Design Team had been appointed, and comprehensive stakeholder engagement was completed. Work commenced on detailed design, with a Part 8 planning application scheduled for submission in Q1 2026. Throughout the plan period, the strategic vision for the centre has been refined to ensure alignment with emerging sustainability priorities. The facility will be designed to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum standards and will incorporate active and smart grid technologies, positioning it as a demonstrator for energy-positive and carbon-neutral construction. In addition to the building itself, the project will deliver enhanced public realm infrastructure, civic spaces, and connectivity improvements to Nenagh town centre.

While construction has not commenced within the lifetime of the completed plan, significant preparatory work has been completed. Full planning permission was previously secured, and the project now has an appointed design team, a clear architectural vision, and a roadmap for delivery. The associated business plan is under development to support future funding applications under Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) or Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). These steps ensure that the Centre of Excellence remains a viable and strategically important initiative for the region.

The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy will continue as a priority beyond the current plan period. A Part 8 planning application is expected in early 2026, and the business plan will underpin applications for additional funding to advance construction. Once operational, the centre will host over 130 professionals and researchers, deliver pilot projects in sustainable energy technologies, and act as a catalyst for low-carbon enterprise development. Its completion will consolidate Nenagh's role as a national hub for sustainability and innovation.

Action 2.5: Deliver initiatives and projects to promote sustainability in the built environment

Action Leader: Technological University of the Shannon (TUS): Midlands Mid-West, Tipperary County Council, Limerick City and County Council (LCCC), Limerick and Clare Education Training Board (LCETB)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 2.5 sought to position the Mid-West as a national leader in sustainable construction, retrofit, and low-carbon innovation by mobilising local authorities, further and higher education providers, and industry stakeholders. The action focused on developing new training and education pathways, delivering demonstrator projects, and strengthening regional collaboration across retrofit, digitalisation, and traditional-building conservation. Progress achieved between 2021 and 2025 shows that these objectives have been largely realised.

A central achievement has been the rapid expansion of education and skills provision. The Digital Academy for the Sustainable Built Environment (DASBE), funded under the Higher Education Authority and delivered by TUS and partners, has emerged as a flagship initiative. DASBE now offers more than 48 accredited programmes and 35 micro-credentials across energy efficiency, the circular economy and digital construction. Since 2021, over 2,250 learners were upskilled. Investment in Digital twin labs, virtual-reality training tools and a regional digital learning platform have strengthened industry-aligned, flexible learning (www.dasbe.ie), in line with national green-skills priorities articulated by the National Training Fund, the Green Skills for Retrofit Roadmap) and the EU Skills Agenda.

Third provision has been complemented by the launch of Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) and Retrofit Centres of Excellence by LCETB in 2022, with Tipperary ETB also delivering this initiative. Together, these centres have the capacity to train up to 1,500 learners annually in practical retrofit skills, directly supporting Ireland's national target of retrofitting 500,000 homes by 2030. The centres significantly enhance regional workforce readiness and align closely with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's National Retrofit Plan.

Major progress has also been achieved through European-funded innovation and demonstration projects. The +CityxChange project delivered pioneering methodologies for Positive Energy Blocks in Limerick, supported citizen-engagement mechanisms and advanced digital governance for energy management, positioning the city as a national exemplar for heritage-sensitive energy renovation.

The Mid-West region has also delivered substantial outputs under projects focused on the energy renovation of historic buildings. These include the development of enhanced renovation methodologies, cost–benefit analyses, policy recommendations and a national training programme that upskilled more than 400 participants in hybrid format. Collaboration between TUS and LCETB continues initiatives such as the Inside-COVE project, while TUS is also developing training materials for public building retrofit through the TRESS initiative.

At a national level, the Build Up Skills initiative strengthened policy impact by producing a roadmap for construction-sector upskilling and preparing the follow-on BUSUnited project, which commenced in September 2025. This reflects the Mid-West's leadership role in shaping Ireland and Europe's green construction skills ecosystems.

Applied research and policy engagement activities including a study and training programme on retrofitting multi-unit developments, have generated influential recommendations for regulatory reform and industry practices, addressing a key bottleneck in Ireland's decarbonisation pathway. Additional research is on-going in relation to demonstration sites where multiple partners can collaborate. While large-scale infrastructure investments, such as the proposed Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy planned for Nenagh, have experienced delays, these ambitious projects continue to be actively pursued by the partners involved.

Collectively, these achievements demonstrate that Action 2.5 has delivered a comprehensive, collaborative and future-oriented ecosystem for sustainable built-environment transformation. The Mid-West now hosts one of Ireland's strongest clusters of green-construction innovation, skills development and demonstrator activity, with impacts that will continue well beyond 2025.

Action 2.6: Upskilling of small businesses for the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy

Action Leader: Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and Clare, Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) Limerick and Tipperary

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 2.6 aimed to equip small businesses in the Mid-West with the skills and resources needed to transition to a low-carbon, sustainable economy. With climate change, regulatory pressures, and rising resource costs, this action focused on enabling SMEs to adopt greener practices, improve efficiency, and enhance competitiveness through targeted training, consultancy, and financial supports.

The Local Enterprise Offices delivered a suite of programmes, including Green for Micro, later rebranded as Green for Business, which provided tailored consultancy to help businesses identify and implement sustainability measures. LEO Clare complemented this with Lean and Digital for Business supports, alongside collaboration with the Mid-West Sustainability Network. Over the lifetime of the plan, 101 enterprises in Clare engaged with these initiatives, and by Q3 2025, 32 businesses accessed more than €300,000 in Energy Efficiency Grants to invest in carbon-reducing technologies.

LEO Tipperary exceeded its Green for Micro target, achieving 153 percent of the goal, with 26 businesses versus a target of one. It also supported the DigiEco pilot programme, delivered by the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and TUS, which helped 30 companies integrate sustainability and digital practices. LEO Limerick reported strong engagement, with 45 businesses approved for Green for Business and 20 for Energy Efficiency Grants in 2025. Additionally, 47 businesses accessed feasibility and expansion grants funded by Enterprise Ireland, and LEO-supported enterprises created 178 net new jobs in 2024, demonstrating the broader economic impact of these initiatives.

Regional collaboration was further reinforced through events such as the Mid-West Building Better Business conference in May 2023, which focused on low-carbon strategies and digital transformation for SMEs.

Action 2.6 has substantially delivered on its objectives. Green for Business and DigiEco are now embedded in the regional enterprise support framework, and uptake of Energy Efficiency Grants and digital transition vouchers exceeded expectations. More than 100 businesses across the region have advanced their sustainability journey, supported by consultancy, training, and grant funding. These efforts have positioned the Mid-West as a strong regional exemplar in SME green transition.

The momentum generated by Action 2.6 will continue through ongoing delivery of green and digital transition programmes by LEOs and regional skills partners. Future priorities include scaling participation in Green for Business and DigiEco, expanding access to grant supports, and deepening collaboration with national and EU initiatives. These actions will ensure that the Mid-West remains at the forefront of sustainable enterprise development.



Strategic Objective 3:
Enable Enterprise growth in regional towns and rural areas

Action 3.1: Create an efficient and sustainable regional network of enterprise centres and remote working eHubs

Action Leader: Clare County Council, Innovate Limerick, Tipperary County Council and Limerick City and County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 3.1 aimed to develop a connected network of enterprise centres and remote working hubs across the Mid-West, supporting balanced regional development and revitalising towns and villages. This initiative aligned with the national Our Rural Future strategy and sought to future-proof the region by attracting remote workers, enabling relocation, and fostering entrepreneurship through high-quality co-working spaces and enterprise infrastructure.

Significant progress was achieved throughout the plan period. In Clare, the DigiClare network expanded to 11 hubs, including Ennis, Ennistymon, Cross, Kilrush, Miltown Malbay, Kilkee, Shannon, Sixmilebridge, Flagmount, Inagh, and Feakle, with construction underway on a 12th hub in Scariff. DigiClare also introduced community-focused programmes such as Our Kids Code, digital skills training for seniors, and the Learning in the Hubs initiative in partnership with TUS.

In Limerick, Innovate Limerick played a pivotal role in scaling enterprise infrastructure. The Engine Collaboration Centre opened in 2022 as the city's only dedicated collaborative workspace and reached full occupancy shortly after opening. With support of €408,250 from the Connected Hubs Fund, seven hubs across Limerick were upgraded to expand remote working capacity. Additional facilities including Workbase Abbeyfeale and the N21 Enterprise Facility in Rathkeale, supported over 150 jobs and hosted more than 15 businesses at near-full occupancy. The Engine Hubs Network grew from three hubs to 20 by 2025 and is now fully integrated with the national Connected Hubs framework. New additions included Ballybrown/Clarina Community Centre, Doon Social Hub, and The Phoenix in Tralee. Collectively, the network now provides over 19 enterprise spaces, supporting networking, scaling, and remote working across the region.

In Tipperary, the Tipperary Innovation Engine opened in Q1 2024, providing a 4,000 sq. ft. serviced office facility under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. The centre secured Nephin Renewable Gas as an anchor tenant, reinforcing its role as a hub for green enterprise. While shared booking systems and integrated services were not implemented due to the presence of a single anchor tenant, the centre continues to provide enterprise support and collaboration opportunities. Tipperary is also served by a strong network of facilities including the Questum Acceleration Centre in Clonmel, Thurles Community Enterprise Centre, Stable Lane Digital Hub in Carrick-on-Suir, and the Green Enterprise Centre in Cloughjordan.

The action has delivered a robust network of enterprise centres and remote working hubs across Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary. These facilities have contributed to the revitalisation of rural towns, supported job creation, and attracted new businesses to the region. Integration with the national Connected Hubs framework underpins long-term sustainability, while community-focused initiatives such as digital skills training and learning programmes have reinforced the social and economic impact of the hubs.
The National Hub Summit continues to bring together hub teams, representative bodies, state agencies and government departments to discuss the future of the National Hub Network in Ireland. The expansion of enterprise hubs will remain a strategic priority beyond the lifetime of the plan. Future efforts will focus on scaling the DigiClare and Engine networks, enhancing collaboration between hubs,

and introducing shared services to improve efficiency. Continued investment will ensure the Mid-West remains a location of choice for remote workers, start-ups, and multinational corporations seeking second-site opportunities.

Action 3.2: Undertake a skills mapping exercise to identify employment trends and needs across the region

Action Leader: Clare County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q1 2022

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Understanding the availability and distribution of skills is critical to attracting investment and supporting enterprise growth in regional areas. This action aimed to deliver a skills mapping exercise to identify employment trends and gaps across the Mid-West, providing insights for workforce planning and education strategies.

In 2021, Clare County Council partnered with technology company Abodoo to pilot a skills mapping initiative. The project commenced in July 2021 and concluded in February 2022, during a period of significant disruption caused by the pandemic. Data was collected using AI-driven tools, online surveys and social media engagement.

This exercise attracted 934 participants and 77 businesses across 22 industrial sectors. Analysis focused on identifying labour shortages, mapping talent and skills, and exploring strategies to attract and retain talent.

Findings from the skills mapping pilot were presented to the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee in June 2022. The analysis identified construction (16.9%), hospitality (13%), wholesale and retail (11.7%) as the most prominent business sectors among respondents, while employment was concentrated in ICT (16.9%), customer service (14.3%) and administration (12.4%). Key skills gaps were identified in sales and customer service, basic technical skills, engineering and management.

The pilot highlighted significant recruitment challenges, with 82 percent of businesses reported shortages of one and five employees and 81 percent experiencing difficulty hiring suitably qualified talent. The business profile showed that 78 percent of participating businesses were micro-enterprises with 53 percent located in Ennis. Workforce trends indicated a strong appetite for skills development, with 67 percent of respondents expressing interest in reskilling or upskilling, alongside a clear preference for hybrid work models (46%).

Reported average earnings among respondents were €35,870 per annum, and commuting patterns pointed to a high reliance on private car travel. The study also identified opportunities for DigiClare hubs to support remote and hybrid work.

While the pilot delivered valuable insights, limitations were noted regarding data integrity and scope. Future exercises should leverage broader datasets, such as LinkedIn job analytics, to provide more representative and dynamic insights. No further regional rollout is planned under this action.

Action 3.3: Support the regional agrifood sector through the development of food hubs

Action Leader: Innovate Limerick

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 3.3 was designed to strengthen the agri-food sector in the Mid-West through the development for food hubs and associated infrastructure to support artisan producers and food entrepreneurs. While the Government's *Food Wise 2025* strategy projected significant growth for the sector, many small producers continued to face barriers in accessing food-grade facilities that meet stringent health and safety standards. The food hub model addresses this challenge by providing affordable, shared access to production facilities, enabling start-ups and small businesses to scale without prohibitive capital investment.

Throughout the plan, several initiatives were advanced to deliver on this action. A Regional Food Mapping project, funded under the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS), identified gaps in food infrastructure and made recommendations to support enterprise development. REISS funding also enabled a feasibility study for a food hub in Tipperary town, with next stage planning now under consideration.

Several food hubs and centres became operational or progressed significantly during the plan. The Bruree Food Unit in County Limerick emerged as a dynamic centre for food innovation and enterprise. The 5,000 sq. ft. purpose-built facility supports food manufacturing, research and development and in Q3 2024, was leased to Food Quest Ltd, a company specialising in transforming beverage and culinary concepts into commercial products. Food Quest provides end-to-end support for entrepreneurs, including recipe refinement, ingredient sourcing, packaging design and regulatory compliance.

Further expansion occurred in 2025 when Global Sauces Ltd acquired a site adjacent to the Bruree Food Unit from Innovate Limerick. Plans are underway to develop a 20,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility, significantly increasing production capacity and creating new employment opportunities. Other projects progressed across the region, including the North Tipperary Food Centre in Newport, the Tradaree Food Hub in Newmarket-on-Fergus, the Ballyhoura Food Centre in Hospital, and a food hub at the Milk Market in Limerick City. A feasibility study was also completed for a Food Centre of Excellence at Rockwell College in Tipperary.

These facilities, supported by culinary and hospitality training programmes delivered by LCETB and Tipperary ETB, have created a robust ecosystem for food enterprise development across the Mid-West.

Overall, Action 3.3 successfully delivered a network of food hubs and complementary training initiatives, significantly enhancing the region's capacity to support agri-food enterprises. Facilities such as the Bruree Food Unit and associated expansions have positioned the Mid-West as a hub for food innovation, enabling both start-ups and established businesses to scale production and access new markets. The combination of infrastructure investment, skills development, and enterprise support has strengthened the region's agri-food sector and created pathways for sustainable growth.

The development of food hubs will remain a strategic priority beyond the lifetime of the plan. Future efforts will focus on scaling existing facilities, advancing feasibility projects such as the purposed Tipperary food hub, and deepening collaboration between industry, education providers, and local authorities. Continued investment will ensure that the Mid-West remains a leading region for agri-food innovation and enterprise development.

Action 3.4: Increase through digitalisation the visibility of the region's tourism offerings

Action Leader: Fáilte Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Tourism is a cornerstone of the Mid-West economy, contributing over €600 million annually prior to the pandemic. The region attracts more than 1.4 million overseas visitors and 900,000 domestic tourists each year, supported by iconic experiences such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Shannon Estuary Way, Limerick Greenway and Burren Food Trail. However, a national audit in 2020 revealed significant gaps in the digital presence and eCommerce capabilities of attractions and activity providers, limiting their ability to compete internationally and respond to changing consumer expectations.

To address these challenges, Fáilte Ireland launched the Digital that Delivers programme, a strategic initiative designed to transform the digital capabilities of visitor experiences. The programme provides technical and financial support to enable businesses to secure direct bookings, distribute products via third-party channels, enhance websites and optimise digital marketing performance.

In the Mid-West, numerous businesses participated in the programme, including the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, Loop Head Lighthouse, King John's Castle and Barnagh Greenway Hub. These businesses have also implemented improvements such as online booking systems, enhanced digital content and integrated payment solutions. In addition, four Tipperary businesses—Hayes Hotel, Noan Country House Bed and Breakfast, Tipperary Tourism and Holycross Abbey—engaged in the EU Just Transition Digital Transformation Programme.

Complementary initiatives included the launch of dedicated tourism websites for Clare VisitClare.ie and Tipperary Time for Tipperary, and the introduction of the Discover Limerick Pass in 2023, offering convenient access to top attractions. The pass is now promoted through Online Tour Operators, significantly increasing visibility for Limerick's tourism offering.

Fáilte Ireland also supported ongoing digital upskilling through its LearnFI platform, enabling businesses to sustain improvements and adapt to evolving consumer trends. While the action is complete, digital capability building will continue through LearnFI and ongoing promotion of the Discover Limerick Pass. These initiatives will ensure the region remains competitive and responsive to visitor expectations.

Action 3.5: Build on the region's equine heritage to develop equine tourism and enterprise products

Action Leader: Tipperary County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

The Mid-West region, Tipperary in particular, is internationally recognised for equine excellence. This action aimed to leverage that reputation to develop equine tourism products and experiences, creating a unique destination offering for domestic and international visitors.

In November 2021, the Thoroughbred Country Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) was launched as a five-year strategy to position Kildare and Tipperary as the world's leading thoroughbred visitor destination. The plan focuses on making the thoroughbred story accessible to visitors and embedding equine heritage into the region's tourism proposition.

Significant progress has been made under the DEDP. In July 2023, 20 new equine-focused visitor experiences were introduced following a multi-module development programme. These experiences, which include stud farm tours and interactive equine activities, are now available for booking through HorseCountry.ie, a dedicated platform developed to support sales and promotion. In April 2025, the initiative was rebranded as Horse Country during its official launch at the Punchestown Festival.

Industry engagement has been strengthened through Fáilte Ireland's Growing Sales through Destination Development Programme, which delivered training and destination discovery trips to build knowledge among hospitality and tourism businesses. Additionally, the Horse Country Festivals and Events Strategic Action Plan (2025–2030) was completed, providing a cohesive approach to integrating festivals and events into the destination offering.

A major milestone for the region is the approval in Q4 2025 of a €30 million investment by Horse Racing Ireland for the development of an all-weather track at Tipperary Racecourse. Construction is scheduled to commence in Q1 2026, with completion by Q3 2027 and a full winter race programme planned for 2027/28. This investment will transform Tipperary into a year-round racing destination, delivering significant economic, sporting and social benefits.

Work will continue beyond 2025 to complete the racecourse development, implement the festival strategy and expand equine tourism offerings, ensuring the region remains a global leader in thoroughbred experiences.



Strategic Objective 4:
Initiatives to support SME, Start-ups and Microbusiness

Action 4.1: Develop existing and new industry clusters in strategic sectors

Action Leader: Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 4.1 sought to strengthen the Mid-West's enterprise ecosystem through the development and expansion of industry clusters in strategic sectors. Significant progress was achieved over the lifetime of the plan, with strong collaboration across enterprise agencies, higher education institutions and industry partners.

Local Enterprise Office Clare led the Moving Towards Aerospace Interreg project, supporting engineering firms to engage with the Emerald Aero Cluster and position themselves for participation in international aerospace supply chain. At the same time, the Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (IDEAM) Cluster, based at Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), played a central role as a national cluster supporting manufacturing SMEs to advance digitalisation and green transition.

Building on the success of its Digi Manufacturing 2.0 project, IDEAM leveraged European initiatives such as FactoryXChange, XBuild, InTransit, EEnergy, and Up2Circ to accelerate the adoption of digital and circular manufacturing practices. Cluster membership increased by 42 percent between 2024 and 2025, with five additional fee-paying members joining in 2025, strengthening both the technical capability and financial sustainability of the cluster.

The Smarter Factory Technology Gateway at TUS provided applied research, automation and robotic solutions, alongside access to its Digital Hub and specialised industry-focused training. Through FactoryXChange.ie, a European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH), Smarter Factory and the IDEAM Research Institute, under the auspices of TUS, acted as active delivery partners, supporting SME engagement in innovation programmes and collaborative research. To date, almost 100 projects have been delivered, many of which were supported or co-funded through Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and FactoryXChange innovation schemes.

Key activities included the delivery of Funding for Growth finance event to support SMEs in accessing national and EU funding, participation in international benchmarking exercises in Austria, and knowledge exchange site visits under the Xbuild project, including engagement with King Saud University to foster collaboration in advanced manufacturing.

IDEAM further supported its members through Factory XChange EDIH services, enabling 15 companies to accelerate digital transformation, and engaging 15 member companies in a green-transition PhD project focused on reducing carbon footprint. The cluster also secured EU cascade funding for member companies, including €120,000 under InTransit, €70,000 under Xbuild, and €10,000 through EEnergy.

Education and outreach initiatives were strengthened through events such as Explore Engineering at Shannon Airport, participation in TUS Research Week panels, and contributions to EU-in-My-Region and Manufacturing Solutions 2025. The launch of the IDEAM Industry Cluster Newsletter in Q1 2025, further enhanced communication and membership engagement.

In parallel, the Irish Bioeconomy Foundation continued to expand its national and international network and progressed strategic EU projects supporting bioeconomy development. At Lisheen, County Tipperary, the site evolved into a growing cluster of circular and bio circular companies, hosting five companies, with cumulative investment of over €50 million and employment for more than two hundred people. These developments were reinforced through knowledge-sharing forums, including IDEAM-led finance sessions and participation in the TCI Global Conference in Dublin in October 2025, highlighting clustering as a key all-island enterprise development approach.

Overall action 4.1 substantially delivered on its objectives, with existing clusters demonstrating strong growth, new clusters emerging in priority sectors, and collaborative projects generating meaningful economic and innovation outcomes. The Mid-West now hosts a diverse cluster ecosystem spanning aerospace, smart manufacturing, engineering, sports technology, social enterprise, and bioeconomy, positioning the region as a strong exemplar of cluster-driven enterprise development.

Action 4.2: Increase the numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships

Action Leader: Mid-West Regional Skills Forum, Limerick Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB), Tipperary Education and Training Board and Regional Skillnets

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 4.2 of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan's sought to significantly expand apprenticeships and traineeships between 2022 and 2025, in line with the national ambition to make these pathways more accessible and attractive to both learners and employers. The objective was to increase the number, diversity and relevance of programmes, responding to emerging industry skill needs and contributing to the Government's target of 10,000 new apprenticeship registrations annually by 2025.

A strong regional partnership was established through the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum, bringing together Limerick, Clare and Tipperary Education and Training Boards, the University of Limerick (UL), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), and a range of industry clusters. A series of round table future skills sessions took place across the region to identify skills gaps, create new programmes, and strengthen employer engagement.

Key outcomes were achieved over the lifetime of the plan. The Mid-West Apprenticeship and Traineeship Showcase became a flagship annual event, attracting over 2,500 attendees from 2022 onwards and providing a direct platform for learners and employers to engage. The Access to Apprenticeship programme at TUS, piloted in 2022, expanded to 96 participants in 2025, supporting young people from under-represented backgrounds to progress craft apprenticeships while helping employers access new talent.

Several new apprenticeship programmes were introduced during this period, including hairdressing, commis chef, sales and cyber security, while additional programmes in baking and software testing are at an advanced stage of development, with planned launches in 2026. Work-based learning is now embedded as a key talent development option for businesses with partners committed to responding to evolving industry needs through ongoing programme development.

The University of Limerick has played a significant role offering seven apprenticeship programmes focused on executive and higher-level skills development. These include programmes in supply chain management, cybersecurity, engineering, lean sigma and doctoral level study. All apprenticeships are structured around a 70:30 on-the-job to off-the-job training model, minimising time away from the workplace. Apprentice numbers increased by 20 percent between 2023 and 2024, and by a further 57 percent between 2024 and 2025.

In January 2024, the first graduates of the doctoral-level Principal Engineer apprenticeship completed their studies. This represents a world first, with University of Limerick (UL) hosting the only doctoral-level apprenticeship globally. UL also contributed to the Consortia Led Apprenticeship with The Wheel, supporting the development of a Level 6 apprenticeship in Nonprofit Organisation Studies. In addition, the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences collaborated with Community Enterprise Association Ireland on a proposed Masters level Community and Social Economy Manager apprenticeship, which was submitted to the National Apprenticeship Office for consideration in November 2025. In early 2025, UL also partnered with 20FIFTY Partners in a successful bid to develop a level 9 Sustainability Manager apprenticeship.

Overall, Action 4.2 has delivered substantial progress in expanding apprenticeship and traineeship provision across the MidWest. Through strong collaboration between education providers, industry and regional stakeholders, the region has strengthened pathways into employment, supported workforce upskilling and positioned apprenticeships as a central component of its longterm talent strategy.

Action 4.3: Expand the Explore Engineering Alliance

Action Leader: Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB), TUS: Midlands Mid-West and UL.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Collaboration is the Mid-West's strongest proposition. By establishing networks across all major industry sectors ensures an agile response to new and emerging skill needs. With manufacturing accounting for 17 percent of all regional employment, the Explore Engineering initiative has focused on strengthening the region's engineering talent pipeline and deepening collaboration between industry, education, and training providers.

Explore Engineering, formerly known as Limerick for Engineering, is an industry-led initiative supported by education and training providers in the Mid-West. Its core objective is to increase both the quality and quantity of engineering talent in the region, while also promoting diversity and inclusion in engineering careers. Under this action, the initiative expanded the alliance, strengthened industry and education collaboration, and introduced new pathways for skills development aligned to employer demand.

As part of this evolution, Explore Engineering rebranded to reflect its broader regional remit and launched a range of flexible learning programmes, including Maintenance Skills Technology (Level 6), Professional Skills for Industry (Level 9) and Theatre Skills for Business. These programmes were developed in direct response to industry demand for both technical and transferable skills.

Two flagship events were delivered annually throughout the plan period. The Explore Engineering Showcase, held each March at Shannon Airport, continued to grow in scale and impact, attracting over 2,000 attendees in 2025, including students, parents and career changers, and featuring more than 60 industry and education exhibitors. The INSPIRE Women in Engineering event, held each December, also expanded significantly, with over 700 female students attending in 2025 to hear from female leaders about careers in engineering.

To ensure longterm sustainability, structural changes were implemented during the plan period. September 2025, Explore Engineering was formally established as a Company Limited by Guarantee, enabling access to new funding streams, including the Smarter Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme. A business and funding plan is nearing completion and founding directors have been appointed.

Regional expansion was achieved through the creation of Explore Engineering West, which held its inaugural Showcase in Athenry in May 2025 with participation from over 20 exhibiting companies. This franchise model strengthens regional outreach and ensures consistent branding and messaging across the wider region.

Overall, the action delivered strong outcomes, including record attendance at Showcase and INSPIRE events, the launch of new flexible learning programmes, the formal establishment of Explore Engineering as a CLG, regional expansion through Explore Engineering West, and increased female participation in engineering outreach initiatives.

While the action is complete, activity will continue beyond 2025 through the Explore Engineering CLG, regional franchise development, and ongoing delivery of flagship events and training programmes. Together, these initiatives will ensure the Mid-West remains a leader in engineering talent development and industry collaboration.

Action 4.4: Deliver management and financial training and upskilling initiatives

Action Leader: Public Sector Education and Training Providers

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

This action aimed to strengthen the management and financial capabilities of small and micro businesses in the Mid-West region, recognising their vulnerability to economic shocks and limited access to financial expertise. The focus was on building resilience through targeted training, flexible learning pathways and advisory supports, combining academic innovation with practical enterprise engagement to foster a culture of strategic planning and continuous development.

Delivery was underpinned by strong collaboration between public sector education and training providers, the University of Limerick, the Technological University of the Shannon, Local Enterprise Offices, and Enterprise Ireland. Together, these partners delivered a comprehensive suite of initiatives designed to meet the evolving needs of small businesses.

Professional education provision was expanded with the University of Limerick introducing new programmes in financial analytics, taxation, and applied economics, alongside micro-credentials in areas such as energy economics. These courses were designed to be modular and flexible, enabling learners to upskill without disrupting business operations.

The promotion of micro-credentials played a central role, offering short, accredited courses that delivered immediate, practical skills while also providing pathways to full qualifications. A dedicated national platform was launched to improve visibility and uptake to these opportunities.

Enterprise-focused advisory supports complemented formal learning. Innovate Limerick's Pathway to Innovate programme delivered hands-on sessions that supported small and medium-sized enterprises to embed innovation thinking and develop actionable growth roadmaps. In parallel, the Local Enterprise Offices continued to provide a range of supports, including Lean for Business and Digitalisation for Business, and management development programmes tailored to the needs of the small and micro-enterprises. Awareness and engagement were further strengthened through regional events and targeted outreach campaigns, ensuring that business owners were informed of available supports and funding opportunities.

The combined efforts of education providers and enterprise agencies have significantly advanced the region's capacity for management and financial resilience. Businesses now have improved access to flexible, accredited learning options and practical innovation supports, contributing to a stronger culture of strategic planning, improved financial literacy, and enhanced competitiveness among small and micro-enterprises.

While this action is now complete, work will continue beyond the lifetime of the plan. Education providers are committed to expanding micro-credential and professional programme offerings, while enterprise agencies will maintain advisory supports and innovation clinics. These ongoing efforts will help sustain resilience and growth across the Mid-West enterprise ecosystem, ensuring that businesses remain agile and competitive in an evolving economic landscape.

Action 4.5: Build an ecosystem for start-ups and entrepreneurs

Action Leader: Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

This action aimed to strengthen the Mid-West's entrepreneurial ecosystem by creating a supportive environment for start-ups and scaling businesses. The rationale recognised entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic and social development, requiring targeted infrastructure, funding pathways, and skills development to foster innovation and competitiveness across the region.

Significant progress was achieved through collaboration between Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, Innovate Limerick, and education partners. Innovate Limerick completed the Digital Collaboration Centre in December 2022, funded through the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), and progressed plans for a dedicated accelerator building, with initial Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) funding secured. The Engine campus continued to evolve as a focal point for enterprise growth, hosting advisory clinics and mentoring supports. Under an extension of their Service Level Agreement with Enterprise Ireland in 2024, the services of AxisBIC were extended to start-ups and entrepreneurs across Limerick and Clare.

The University of Limerick further expanded its entrepreneurship programmes through the Nexus Innovation Centre and Technology Transfer Office. Key initiatives included delivery of the New Frontiers accelerator, participation in the national Student Inc. programme, the CreateHER for female founders, and annual entrepreneurship bootcamps for second-level students. UL also appointed a dedicated venture manager to support research commercialisation.

Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) delivered extensive supports across the region, including training, mentoring, and funding schemes. LEO Clare piloted a female entrepreneurship programme, while LEO Tipperary hosted National Women in Enterprise events and delivered a highly successful Student Enterprise Programme, engaging 27 schools. LEO Limerick worked closely with regional partners to strengthen the ecosystem and promote innovation-led enterprise development.

The Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) played a central role in delivering Action 4.5, aligned with the RDI Strategy 2025–2029. TUS operates the Hartnett Enterprise Acceleration Centre in Limerick, Thurles Chamber Enterprise Centre and Questum Acceleration Centre in Clonmel, it supports Croom Community Enterprise Centre at Board level, and is a partner in Forge Design Factory, currently in development with UL and partners.

TUS also co-delivers Enterprise Ireland funded New Frontiers with UL and LEOs, alongside HEA-funded initiatives including TUS Works, Student Inc, Empower and Empower AI. Additional supports include AgriNext, mentoring clinics, Entrepreneur-in-Residence programmes, EDIH FactoryXChange, and flagship annual startup events. During 2024-2025, TUS supported over 200 entrepreneurs, hosted 78 companies, including multiple national and global award-winning companies and delivered over 600 ecosystem engagements.

The region now benefits from a more integrated and dynamic start-up ecosystem with accelerator programmes, mentoring networks, and targeted funding supports enhancing opportunities for early-stage enterprises. Initiatives focused on female entrepreneurship and student-founders have broadened participation, while collaboration between enterprise agencies and education providers has strengthened innovation capacity.

The EmPower Summer Camps delivered by Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and TUS continue to be a successful component of the ecosystem. These HEA-funded programmes, free to secondary-school transition year and 5th/6th year students, that focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, problem-solving using AI, blending fun with future skills, and involve hands-on projects and networking with leaders.

While this action is now complete, work will continue beyond the lifetime of this plan. Innovate Limerick will advance the development of the accelerator centre, while UL, TUS and LEOs will expand entrepreneurship programmes and maintain advisory supports. Together, these efforts will ensure the Mid-West remains a competitive and inclusive environment for start-ups, fostering sustainable growth and innovation.

Action 4.6: Deliver Research and Development, competitiveness and internationalisation initiatives to support export sales growth in SMEs

Action Leader: Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Supporting SMEs to innovate, compete and expand internationally is critical to sustaining regional economic growth. This action focused on delivering research and development, competitiveness and internationalisation initiatives to drive export sales growth for Mid-West enterprises.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) implemented a comprehensive programme aligned with the Government's SME Growth Plan and Global Ireland 2025 strategy. Through its network of 40 overseas offices, EI supported Mid-West companies through trade missions, inward buyer visits and International Markets Week in September 2025, enabling Mid-West companies to engage directly with market advisors and explore new international opportunities.

Export performance exceeded expectations during the period of the plan. In 2024, EI supported companies achieved €36.75 billion in national exports, surpassing the €30 billion target. Employment in EI supported companies in the Mid-West reached 21,213, while €37.98 million in research and development and other financial supports was provided between 2022 and 2024.

Innovation capacity was further strengthened through EI investment in Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) projects. A total of 23 Mid-West companies were supported under DTIF, alongside eight University of Limerick led projects. In 2025, a further €22 million was approved for DTIF projects led by regional companies. UL's Technology Transfer Office and Nexus Innovation Centre strengthened collaboration with SMEs, establishing 40 new research relationships in 2024 and facilitating licensing agreements, consultancy and laboratory access. UL also hosted eight IDA-led FDI visits during 2024.

EI continued to invest in regional technology infrastructure, supporting initiatives such as the Irish Digital Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (IDEAM) Cluster, the Dairy Processing Technology Centre, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre and the Shannon ABC Gateway. These initiatives enhanced competitiveness and supported advanced manufacturing and life sciences sectors.

To build export readiness among SMEs, EI launched the Get Exporting programme in 2024, complemented by Local Enterprise Office supports such as Lean for Business, Digital for Business and New Market Explorer grants. Start-up development was further supported through the New Frontiers Programme, led by TUS, assisting up to 12 entrepreneurs annually, while AxisBIC services were extended to Limerick and Clare to enhance access to early stage supports.

While this action is now complete, DTIF projects, technology centre development and export capability programmes, will continue beyond 2025 to sustain innovation and international growth for the Mid-West enterprises.

Action 4.7: Supporting growth in the Creative Economy Sector

Action Leader: Mid-West REP, WDC and LEO Limerick

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:
This action sought to strengthen the creative economy in the Mid-West by fostering design-led innovation, supporting creative enterprises, and developing enabling infrastructure to position the region as a hub for creativity and entrepreneurship. The rationale recognised the potential of creative industries to drive economic growth, enhance competitiveness, and retain talent through collaboration, research, and enterprise development.

Delivery was supported through collaboration between the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, the Western Development Commission, Local Enterprise Offices, and higher education institutions to deliver a series of initiatives. The Atlantic TIDE project, funded under the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund in 2022 and 2023, explored new approaches to collaboration across the design sector, while the IMMERSE project, funded in 2023, assessed opportunities for the adoption of immersive technologies in creative SMEs.

A major milestone under this action was the securing of €6.5 million in funding through the THRIVE scheme to develop Forge Design Factory at Nicholas Street. This design and innovation hub will provide studios, exhibition spaces, and networking facilities, creating a vibrant destination for makers and

entrepreneurs. Forge Design Factory, part of a global network of 40 design factories, launched the Design Futures CULTIVATOR programme in July 2023 with TUS, UL, and LEO Limerick to support early stage creative entrepreneurs.

Talent development and research collaboration were further advanced through joint initiatives led by UL and TUS, including internal pitching competitions for product design students and initiatives for undergraduates in creative disciplines. Regional talent achieved international recognition, with UL student Olivia Humphreys winning the Dyson Award in 2024. Research activity expanded through projects such as THREADs (textile reuse), ADDTEX (digital and green innovation in textiles), and Horizon circular design initiatives.

The Mid-West has established a strong foundation for growth in the creative economy. Forge Design Factory will serve as a flagship hub for design-led innovation, supported by international networks and regional partnerships. Enhanced talent development, research collaboration, and targeted enterprise supports have positioned the Mid-West region as a leader in creative industries and sustainable design.

Work will continue beyond the lifetime of the plan to operationalise Forge Design Factory, expand creative industry programmes, and deliver initiatives in digital transformation and circular design. These efforts will strengthen the region's innovation ecosystem, attract investment, and ensure long-term competitiveness in the creative economy.



Strategic Objective 5: Develop Social Enterprises and Job Creation Initiatives for Areas of High Unemployment

Action 5.1: Develop, support and scale social enterprise

Action Leader: Social Impact Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Social enterprise plays a vital role in addressing societal challenges and creating inclusive economic opportunities. This action aimed to strengthen the social enterprise ecosystem in the Mid-West through targeted capacity building, accreditation, and collaborative initiatives, supporting enterprises to scale their impact and operate sustainably.

Social Impact Ireland (SII) delivered a comprehensive programme of supports across the region, including incubator programmes, one-to-one business advice clinics and stakeholder consultations. In July 2022, SII secured funding under the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme to address gaps between commercial businesses and social enterprises. A key milestone was SII's partnership with Social

Enterprise Mark CIC, which introduced an internationally recognised accreditation in Ireland. The first awards were made in November 2022, providing independent assurance that recipient organisations operate as genuine social enterprises committed to social and environmental impact.

SII also piloted the 360 Impact Project, which addressed challenges such as diversity of participation, sustainability of hubs and community engagement. Supports delivered under the project included virtual workshops, consultancy support, peer networks and proactive cluster development. In December 2022, SII hosted the Social Enterprise Regional Stakeholder Consultation event on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

Complementing these efforts, the University of Limerick advanced social enterprise development through education, research and incubation. UL Engage promoted civic innovation through initiatives such as the UL Citizens' Assembly, awarding €10,000 grants to community-led projects aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals.

UL also delivered lifelong learning programmes, entrepreneurship mentoring and incubation support through the Kemmy Business School and Nexus Innovation Centre. Curricular innovations integrated social entrepreneurship and sustainability, while proposals for new apprenticeship programmes in nonprofit management were submitted to the National Apprenticeship Office in 2025.

A major development during the plan period was the establishment of the More for Limerick Fund, a €1 million social enterprise start-up and scale-up fund launched in partnership with Rethink Ireland. In October 2025, Limerick City and County Council committed €333,333 from the Mayoral Fund, leveraging philanthropic and government match funding to triple the fund's impact. The fund will provide cash grants, accelerator programmes and tailored non-financial supports to early-stage and scaling social enterprises, reinforcing the region's commitment to inclusive growth and innovation.

Overall, the action delivered meaningful outcomes, including the expansion of social enterprise supports, strengthened capacity-building programmes and launch of More for Limerick Fund, ensuring continued momentum beyond 2025. The legacy of Social Impact Ireland's work, alongside UL-led initiatives, regional hubs and dedicated funding mechanisms, will continue to drive social innovation and enterprise development into the next decade.

Action 5.2: A connected jobs strategy for Limerick's unemployment blackspots

Action Leader: Limerick City and County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Limerick City contains eight of the top ten unemployment blackspots nationally, with some areas recording unemployment rates above 27 percent. This action sought to deliver a connected jobs strategy to tackle long-term unemployment through community engagement, skills development and employer collaboration.

The Outreach to Employment Programme, led by Limerick City and County Council, expanded across four regeneration communities – Ballinacurra Weston, Southill, Moyross and St Mary's Park. The programme focused on building trust, addressing barriers and creating sustainable pathways to employment.

Annual Skills Fairs were introduced in partnership with Technological University of the Shannon and Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. Delivered in community facilities and local schools, these events connected residents with employers and training providers. Over 40 employers participated, including Johnson and Johnson, Takumi Precision Engineering, An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces and LCETB, with over 800 residents engaging with Skills Fairs since 2022 to explore opportunities in apprenticeships, traineeships and further education.

Junior Careers Fairs, delivered in collaboration with Junior Achievement Ireland, engaged primary school students and parents, supporting early awareness of career pathways. Employers such as Analog Devices, Irish Rail and Atlantic Aviation facilitated site visits, giving young people first-hand exposure to workplace environments.

To support individuals furthest from the labour market, the Community Employment Mentors project was launched in 2023, co-funded by Limerick City and County Council, Limerick Clare Educational Training Board, and Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership. Two dedicated mentors provided intensive one-to-one support, engaging 332 young people across regeneration areas. Fifty-four percent of participants progressed into employment or further education and training, demonstrating the effectiveness of this targeted approach.

Jobs Fairs complemented these initiatives, with events delivered in St Mary's Park, Moyross and Ballinacurra Weston, and Southill. More than 20 employers participated, offering real job opportunities and reinforcing inclusive recruitment practices.

The Outreach to Employment Programme will continue beyond 2025, sustaining partnerships and expanding initiatives to further reduce long-term unemployment and support inclusive economic growth.

Action 5.3: Community Based Organisations creating employment pathways for the economically marginalised and socially excluded

Action Leader: Limerick City Build and Moyross Youth Academy

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

Action 5.3 aimed to create structured employment pathways for individuals experiencing social exclusion and long-term unemployment in Limerick City. Led by Limerick City Build (LCB) and Moyross Youth Academy (MYA), the initiative sought to deliver tailored training, mentoring, and enterprise development programmes aligned with regeneration priorities and local economic needs. The overarching objective was to enable participants to access sustainable employment and contribute to inclusive growth across the region.

Limerick City Build (LCB) relocated to Grove Island, establishing a dedicated hub for training and enterprise incubation. From this base, LCB delivered City and Guilds-aligned construction skills training in carpentry, plumbing, wet trades, and Nearly Zero Energy Building techniques. LCB also introduced Building Bridges, a pre-release support service for individuals in prison, providing a safe transition into education and employment. Beyond technical skills, LCB offered creative programmes in music and arts to build confidence and emotional resilience and partnered with the University of Limerick to deliver an Enterprise Development Programme supporting aspiring entrepreneurs.
Moyross Youth Academy (MYA) expanded its facilities though the addition of 5,000 square feet of workshop space, creating an onsite training centre supported by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. MYA delivered twelve jobs fairs across regeneration areas since 2022, culminating in the first Regeneration Community Skills Fair in 2025, which attracted over forty employers and agencies. The Pathways to Construction Programme evolved into a forty-week accredited course and became

oversubscribed, while Access to Apprenticeship modules delivered in partnership with Technological University of the Shannon enabled up to forty-eight young people annually to progress toward skilled trades.

The Community Mentors Programme, scaled citywide, engaged over three hundred young people between 2022 and mid-2025, with more than half progressing into employment or further education. Co-funded by Limerick City & County Council, Limerick Clare Educational Training Board, and Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership, the programme was expanded to include two Community Mentors based on the city's north and south sides, working intensively with those who were marginalised. Additional outreach initiatives, include gym instructor qualifications linked to community service, delivering over three hundred hours of fitness programmes within local communities.

These actions were supported by significant investment through the Limerick City Regeneration Economic and Social Intervention Fund, which allocated €500,000 in 2023 and €330,000 in 2025 to employability projects, including programmes delivered by LCB and MYA. The initiatives strengthened community-based organisations and expanded programmes to meet growing demand for training and employment pathways.

Overall, this action has delivered tangible progress in addressing long-term unemployment and supporting inclusive economic growth across Limerick's regeneration areas. Both LCB and MYA have ambitions to scale their services and replicate their models across other regeneration areas. Continued investment will be critical to sustaining programmes such as Pathways to Construction, Access to Apprenticeship, and enterprise incubation initiatives. The combined strength of these partnerships ensures that employment pathways for marginalised communities will remain a priority beyond the lifetime of the Regional Enterprise Plan.

Action 5.4: Establish a multi-functional Creative and Innovative Industries Centre of scale at LEDP

Action Leader: Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership (LEDP)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Partially Complete

Action Update:

Action 5.4 aimed to establish a multi-functional Creative and Innovative Industries Centre at the Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership (LEDP) site. The initiative was rooted in LEDP's mission to support social and economic inclusion in disadvantaged communities, following the closure of the Moulinex-Krups factory in 1999.

The proposed centre was intended to leverage a vacant 33,000 sq. ft. unit within LEDP's 169,000 sq. ft. facility to create Ireland's first virtual production studio and a cluster of creative industry SMEs. The project was conceived as a regional flagship intervention that would position the Mid-West as one of Europe's best equipped areas for film production, while generating employment opportunities and fostering indigenous enterprise growth.

The project was formally incorporated into LEDP's Strategic Plan 2021–2026, reflecting institutional commitment to its delivery. In 2022, LEDP completed a comprehensive feasibility study funded through the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS). The study confirmed strong demand for such a facility and identified significant potential economic and social benefits for the region. It projected the creation of approximately 200 direct and indirect jobs over a five-year period, with a commitment that 20 percent of employees would be recruited from local regeneration areas. The study highlighted the potential for the centre to act as a catalyst for the development of a sustainable film and creative industry SME cluster in the Mid-West.

Following completion of the feasibility study, LEDP secured priming funding under the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) to explore the project requirements further. However, as the project progressed, a number of significant challenges emerged, creating a level of risk to the project that was deemed too high for LEDP to carry independently. In the absence of a secured delivery partner and a shared governance and funding framework, LEDP made the decision to discontinue its involvement. As a result, the project did not advance beyond the feasibility stage.

While the study confirmed a clear demand for a Creative and Innovative Industries Centre in the region, the absence of a robust partnership and shared risk model prevented implementation. No physical development occurred at LEDP, and the intended outcomes, such as job creation, SME clustering, and enhanced film production capacity, were not realised under this action.

Notwithstanding this outcome, the work undertaken through Action 5.4 has left a positive legacy. The feasibility study provides a valuable foundation for future efforts. Regional stakeholders, including Film in Limerick, continue to explore alternative approaches and locations to deliver a creative industries hub. The demand identified through the study suggests that, with stronger alignment and multi-agency support, similar initiatives could still play a transformative role in the Mid-West's creative economy.

Action 5.5: Establish a world class Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change Centre in Kilrush

Action Leader: Clare Maritime Economic Zone DAC led by Clare County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Partially Complete - Project remains ongoing pending funding being secured

Action Update:

Clare Maritime Economic Zone (Clare MEZ) is an initiative by Clare County Council to provide specialist infrastructure and development space for a range of maritime related niche businesses within County Clare. The project aligns with and delivers on the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary, which sets over a coordinated framework for development along the Shannon Estuary and seeks to realise the objectives specifically relating to the maritime industry, renewable energy, tourism and research.

A central component of the Clare MEZ is the delivery of the Kilrush Maritime Training Centre, a specialist facility designed to provide mandatory safety training for non-seafaring personnel who take up positions at sea. Clare County Council has successfully secured significant capital funding for the project, including €1.7 million from Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and €3.5 million through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund towards the overall cost of the project.

It had been anticipated that an application to the Smart Regions Innovation Scheme would be pursued in 2024 to address the remaining funding gap. However, to date, the scheme's eligibility criteria have not permitted this. Clare County Council remains actively engaged in identifying and securing an alternative funding source to enable the project to proceed to construction and delivery.

The Kilrush Maritime Training Centre is intended to build upon Kilrush's tradition of maritime development and its established relationship with Moneypoint ESB Power Station by developing a suite of specialist training programmes that respond directly to industry needs. These programmes are expected to support sectors including offshore renewable energy, particularly offshore wind and the broader marine and maritime economy. In doing so, the centre enables participants, graduates and the local workforce to realise employment opportunities and economic potential associated with the offshore renewable energy sector and marine industry in the region.

As the offshore renewable energy sector develops along the West Coast, the maritime training facility is envisaged as a critical enabling asset, capable of supporting manufacturing, assembly, and operation and maintenance phases of offshore wind projects. Each of these phases is expected to generate distinct training requirements and a diverse cohort of trainees, positioning the Kilrush Maritime Training Centre as a key regional and national resource.

As outlined in the *Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind - Atlantic Region Wind Energy and Supply Chain Feasibility Study, July 2022*, as well as the Shannon Foynes Port Company's Vision 2041 report and the *Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce Report* - offshore wind projects off the west coast of Ireland are seen as a solution to Ireland's climate change commitments as well as presenting an enormous export opportunity. It is expected that the forthcoming Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) process will play a key role in informing the infrastructure required to support offshore renewable initiatives.

In this context, the Kilrush Maritime Training Centre remains strategically well aligned with the long-term growth trajectory of the offshore renewables sector. Clare County Council continues to support the project, while recognising that progress is contingent on a combination of factors, including infrastructure and grid readiness, regulatory processes and prevailing market conditions.
Despite these challenges, the project remains strongly aligned with long-term national energy policy objectives, regional economic development priorities, and the transition to a low-carbon economy. Once funding is fully secured and policy certainty in relation to offshore wind development is achieved, the Kilrush Maritime Training Centre has the potential to play a pivotal role in supporting skills development, employment creation, and sustainable economic growth in County Clare and the wider Atlantic region.

Action 5.6: Task force-led regeneration of regional towns – Pilot Scheme at Tipperary Town

Action Leader: Tipperary Town Task Force

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2025

Final Status: Action Complete

Action Update:

The Tipperary Town Revitalisation Task Force (TTRTF) was established in 2020 following an announcement in 2019 by the then Minister of State for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Damien English TD.

Tipperary Town Revitalisation is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at tackling socioeconomic challenges and improving the town's infrastructure, economy, and social fabric. Working with statutory bodies, community groups, and businesses, the programme has delivered significant progress across three key areas: economic development; education and social inclusion and public realm and housing, as set out in the Tipperary Town Strategy and Action Plan to 2035.

In the area of enterprise and economic development, a major achievement is the Tipperary ENGINE Digital Hub, funded by Enterprise Ireland though the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, and supported by Tipperary County Council. Completed in early 2023, it now operates at full capacity, with startup Nephin Renewable Gas (NRG) as anchor tenant. NRG has ambitious plans to develop a nationwide biogas network from its new base in Tipperary Town and has already secured planning consent for projects in Mayo and Waterford.

Enterprise space within the town is set to expand further with a private development of seven unit light industrial development of approximately 18,000 sq. ft. on the Bansha Road receiving planning approval. Existing local businesses have also benefited from a range of business supports delivered through Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office, and South Tipperary Development CLG (STDC). Ryans of Tipperary bakery has created 30 new jobs following LEADER funding supports and signalled further growth plans, while Brodeen Engineering, a specialist fabrication business, is progressing the development of a new manufacturing facility at Knockanrawley within the town.

Separately the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) has established a new office in Tipperary town that will accommodate up to 20 staff for a ground-breaking Water European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Project for Ireland.

In 2022, Tipperary Education and Training Board opened a new Construction Skills Training Centre, providing pre-apprenticeship and Nearly Zero Energy Building courses. Two further major projects are advancing, each of which has secured €4m under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) these include a Youth and Further Education Centre at Dan Breen House, and a specialist Training Hub for adults with intellectual disabilities, in partnership with MooreHaven and Tipperary County Council.
A Social Inclusion Coordinator was appointed in 2022, supported by inter-agency structures and a Social Inclusion Network since 2023. Initiatives include the Creative Places programme, funded by the Arts Council with an allocation of €500,000, now in its third year with an extension recently approved. More recently the Engage in Energy project, funded as a pilot under the Child Poverty Plan is being delivered by EcoVision, addressing energy poverty through education, minor upgrades, and grant support.

Significant public realm improvements include the Market Yard, River Ara Walk, and enhancement to the 20-acre Tipperary Hills Park, completed in 2023. A €100,000 Painting and Enhancement Scheme improved the town centre's appearance. Efforts to tackle building vacancy are ongoing, a 2022 workshop highlighted 84 vacant buildings in the town centre, with Croí Cónaithe grants and other measures beginning to show results. Vacancy is currently being remapped with the expectation that rates have fallen significantly.

Private investment has refurbished landmark properties like the Irish House and former Glove Factory under the Historic Towns Initiative. Additionally, Tipperary County Council acquired a major vacant Main Street property for regeneration, with early design work underway.

While significant challenges remain, the pilot programme through Tipperary Town Revitalisation has made visible progress and has ambitious plans to build on progress to date.

Action Status Key

Action complete: *The Steering Committee has deemed that these actions have been fully completed.*

Action discontinued: *The Steering Committee has agreed that these actions are no longer being pursued.*

Action partially complete: *The Steering Committee notes that this action is partially completed; work may continue to progress beyond the finalisation of current plans.*

Action could not be completed: *The Steering Committee has determined that this action could not be delivered as originally envisaged.*

This final progress report documents implementation to end of Q4 2025 and has been prepared and signed off by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee

Action Status Table by Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: Enable innovation to make the Mid-West a leading digital region.	Status	Completion Date
Action 1.1: Strengthen the position of the Mid-West as a national centre for advanced manufacturing.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.2: Develop and expand advanced mobility technology capabilities at Future Mobility Campus Ireland.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.3: Create a sustainable Regional Film Industry in the Mid-West.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.4: Collaborations to solve healthcare problems and challenges using digital solutions.	Action Discontinued	Q4 2025
Action 1.5: Establish the region as a national leader in the sports-tech and eSports sectors.	Action Partially Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.6: Progress regional data centre projects with an emphasis on innovation and sustainability.	Action Partially Complete	Q4 2025
Action 1.7: Innovation in education - inclusive, immersive, enterprise-focused education programs.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 2: Make the Mid-West Ireland's leading sustainability and low-carbon region.	Status	Completion Date
Action 2.1: The Atlantic Green Digital Basin – decarbonising industry by developing the Shannon Estuary as a renewable energy hub.	Action Partially Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.2: Build regional research, education, and training capacity for emerging renewable energy opportunities.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.3: Grow circular bioeconomy capacity, leveraging the National Bioeconomy Campus.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.4: Develop a centre of excellence for sustainable energy.	Action Partially Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.5: Deliver initiatives and projects to promote sustainability in the built environment.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 2.6: Upskilling of small businesses for the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 3: Enable Enterprise growth in regional towns and rural areas.	Status	Completion Date
Action 3.1: Create an efficient and sustainable regional network of enterprise centres and remote working eHubs.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 3.2: Undertake a skills mapping exercise to identify employment trends and needs across the region.	Action Complete	Q1 2022
Action 3.3: Facilitate the regional agrifood sector through the development of food hubs.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 3.4: Increase through digitalisation the visibility of the region's tourism offerings.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 3.5: Build on the region's equine heritage to develop equine tourism and enterprise products.	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 4: Initiatives to provide for SMEs, Start-ups, and Microbusiness.	Status	Completion Date
Action 4.1: Develop existing and new industry clusters in strategic sectors.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.2: Increase the numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.3: Expand the Explore Engineering Alliance.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.4: Deliver management and financial training and upskilling initiatives.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.5: Build an ecosystem for start-ups and entrepreneurs.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.6: Deliver R&D, competitiveness, and internationalisation initiatives to encourage export sales growth in SMEs.	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 4.7: Supporting growth in the creative economy sector [New Action]	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Strategic Objective 5: Develop Social Enterprises and Job Creation Initiatives for areas of high unemployment.	Status	Completion Date
Action 5.1: Develop, encourage, and scale social enterprise	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.2: A connected jobs strategy for Limerick's unemployment blackspots	Action Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.3: Limerick City Build - creating employment pathways for the economically marginalised and socially excluded	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Action 5.4: Establish a multi-functional creative and innovative industries centre of scale at Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership	Action Partially Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.5: Establish a world class Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change Centre in Kilrush	Action Partially Complete	Q4 2025
Action 5.6: Task force-led regeneration of regional towns – pilot scheme at Tipperary Town	Action Complete	Q4 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1 Membership of Regional Steering Committee

Chairperson of Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan
Eamonn Murphy, Professor Emeritus at the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Limerick
Programme Manager of Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan
Paraic Rattigan (October 2020 – March 2024), Brian Bourke (March 2025 to Present)
Membership of the Committee
Tipperary County Council
Clare County Council
Limerick City and County Council
University of Limerick
Technological University of the Shannon
Limerick Clare Educational Training Board
Tipperary Educational Training Board
Mary Immaculate College
Enterprise Ireland
IDA Ireland
Local Enterprise Office Limerick
Local Enterprise Office Tipperary
Local Enterprise Office Clare
Innovate Limerick
Shannon Foynes Port Company
IBEC - Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
Southern Regional Assembly

Appendix 2 Statistical Snapshot

Constituent counties	Clare, Tipperary and Limerick
Mid-West Population[1]	539,400
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment[2]	273,000
ILO Participation Rate[3]	64.7%
ILO Unemployment Rate[4]	5.2%
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)[5]	141,900
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)[6]	131,100
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment in Q1 2019[7]	219,900
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment in Q3 2025[8]	273,000
Actual Increase in Employment from Q1 2019 – Q3 2025	53,100
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2019 – Q3 2025	24.1%
Persons aged 25 years and over on Live Register in the Mid-West region at 01/12/2025[9]	13,465
Irish-owned Companies – Agency Assisted Employment in the Mid-West - Jobs 2019[10]	16,553
Irish-owned Companies – Agency Assisted Employment in the Mid-West - Jobs 2025[11]	20,840
Change between 2019 -2025[12]	4,287
Foreign-owned Companies – Agency Assisted Employment in the Mid-West - Jobs 2019[13]	25,108
Foreign-owned Companies – Agency Assisted Employment in the Mid-West- Jobs 2025[14]	29,043
Change between 2019 -2025[15]	3,935

Endnotes

1 CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) - https://data.cso.ie/table/PEA08

2 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08

3 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08

4 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08

5 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

6 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

7 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

8 CSO - Labour Force Survey - https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF01

9 CSO Persons on Live Register https://data.cso.ie/table/LRM17

10 DETE Annual Employment Survey - CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) Annual Employment Survey 2024 - DETE

11 DETE Annual Employment Survey - CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) Annual Employment Survey 2024 - DETE

12 DETE Annual Employment Survey - CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) Annual Employment Survey 2024 - DETE

13 DETE Annual Employment Survey - CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) Annual Employment Survey 2024 - DETE

14 DETE Annual Employment Survey - CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) Annual Employment Survey 2024 - DETE

15 DETE Annual Employment Survey - CSO - Estimated Population (Persons in April) Annual Employment Survey 2024 - DETE

An Roinn Fiontar, Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
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