



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Mid-Term Progress Report

North-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024



An initiative of the Department of
Enterprise, Trade and Employment

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Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to share this Progress Report on the implementation of the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan, an initiative launched in 2022 to stimulate economic growth, ignite innovation, and nurture sustainable development throughout the North-West region of Ireland.

The North-West comprises the counties of Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo. Since the Plan was launched, the focus has been on tapping into the potential of this region by aligning actions with the North-West's distinctive strengths.

Strategic sectors, including med-tech and life sciences, marine, financial services and manufacturing continue to be supported through investment, innovative programmes, and collaborative initiatives with key stakeholders. This approach is not only strengthening the competitiveness of these sectors but also spurring local innovation and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities.

Innovation is embedded in the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan. Initiatives like localised innovation hubs, research partnerships, and skills development programmes seek to propel the region into the forefront of high-value industries, contributing not only to local prosperity but also enhancing Ireland's global competitiveness.

A distinguishing factor in the success to date has been the spirit of collaboration that defines the North-West. The partnership between government agencies, local authorities, businesses, educational institutions, and others has been pivotal in seizing opportunities and overcoming challenges. The North-West has embraced a coordinated approach, harnessing collective insight and resources to address regional challenges holistically.

To assist with the implementation of Regional Enterprise Plans, my department has secured up to €145 million in funding for the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme, co-funded under the European Regional Development Fund, which will support projects aligned to the Regional Enterprise Plans. The first call of €35 million was announced in October 2023 with subsequent calls in the coming years. This funding complements the Regional Enterprise Plans and with continued collaboration, the North-West is well positioned to compete for current and future funding calls to drive enterprise development in the region.

As we reflect on the achievements outlined in this report, it is evident that the North-West is forging a distinct path of sustained growth. Challenges remain, but the progress made is a testament to the resilience, innovation, and dedication of stakeholders in the North-West. I encourage them all to continue their active engagement and support as we build upon these accomplishments into 2024.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Chairperson Séamus Hughes, Programme Manager Anne McTernan, and all the regional stakeholders who have played a role in progressing the implementation of the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan. Their

commitment has been crucial in bringing about the successes outlined in this Progress Report.

Dara Calleary TD

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation

Chair's Introduction

I am delighted to present within this report the highlights of the activities completed up to September 2023 through the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024.

Through the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan, the steering committee and I have aimed to provide additionality to the region around the objectives within the report. We have committed to doing this through both complementing the already significant and successful work achieved by the enterprise agencies in the North-West region and by promoting cohesion and working together of all of these agencies.

The writing of this plan occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was a key aim to ensure a strong recovery in a sustainable manner post pandemic. Some highlights from the first half of the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan are the grant award and completion of a study into the Atlantic region can capitalise on the growing onshore and offshore wind energy industry. This report aligns with a number of national and regional policy directions. The North-West agencies, through the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan, have held several events over the last two years to promote the development of different issues and indeed, the region itself – *Northwest in the City*, *Enterprise Enablers* and *Northwest Clusters*.

It is heartening also to see the infrastructure funding received through the Border Enterprise Development Fund and the Regional Enterprise Development Funds over the past few years begin to come to fruition at the Advanced Innovation in Manufacturing (AIM) Centre, the Strand Campus for Digital Gaming in Sligo, and the Alpha Innovation Centre in Donegal. I would like to thank the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment for their efforts, Enterprise Ireland for administering them and to all for supporting these key regional projects through the funding campaigns. As a region we continue to strive to meet the conditions to get more funding during the cost-of-living crisis and with many differing financial challenges.

May I pay compliments and thanks to the enterprise agencies in the region who have contributed their expertise to furthering the objectives North-West Regional Enterprise Plan. Additionally, the private enterprises who give their time. Also, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and senior government ministers who continue to champion the causes in the North-West.

I sincerely look forward to continuing the implementation phase of the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan and hope for more strategic activity on the objectives within the plan.

Séamus Hughes

Chair of North-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee

North-West Highlights

- *The Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind – Atlantic Region Wind Energy & Supply-Chain Feasibility Study* on how the Atlantic region can develop its supply chain to support the growing wind energy industry, both onshore and offshore, was undertaken with funding from Enterprise Ireland, the Western Development Commission (WDC) and the local authorities of Donegal, Leitrim, Mayo and Limerick.
- In February 2023, the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan and Donegal Local Enterprise Office (LEO), hosted an event called *Enterprise Enablers* aimed at developing a sustainable enterprise ecosystem in the North-West.
- In March 2023, the Killybegs Marine Cluster hosted the *North-West REP Clusters and Best Practice* event with global cluster leaders exploring best practice in an effort to inform North-West cluster development.
- €158,000 was invested across two initiatives to develop the immersive technology enterprise and design industry across the Atlantic region. These initiatives, Immerse and Atlantic TIDE, are led out by Donegal LEO and Sligo LEO, respectively. These projects are aligned with Action 1.5 within the NW REP
- IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the WDC and the North-West Regional Enterprise Programme hosted the *North-West in the City* event in Dublin in February 2023 to promote the North-West, connect with the professional diaspora and spotlight the many positive transformational changes made in recent years.
- Capital investment, funding and grants awarded in the region over the last five years are coming to fruition including, amongst others, Advanced Innovation in Manufacturing (AIM) Centre Sligo, Alpha Innovation Donegal, Strand Digital Gaming Campus, Carrick Campus Leitrim and Drumshambo Food Hub.
- ATU Sligo established the regional Data2Sustain European Digital Innovation Hub consortium which is a unique partnership approach across the Northern and Western region, aiming to be a leading provider of digitalisation services in the areas of circular economy, operations and sustainability.

Smart Specialisation

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment published Ireland's *National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 (S3)* in July 2022, which embraces a regional approach to addressing Ireland's Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) challenges. It provides a bridge between regional and national innovation strategy building and decision making, bringing coherence to RD&I planning for the benefit of enterprise and advancing the RD&I agenda regionally and nationally.

Smart Specialisation is a key component of the economic element of each of the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for delivering balanced regional development in Ireland aligned with the objectives of *Project Ireland 2040*. S3 is also fundamental to developing smarter more competitive regions, one of the key strategic outcomes under Ireland's European Regional Development Fund Programmes 2021-2027.

The Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme has a very particular focus on supporting the Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs). It aims to accelerate economic growth in all regions by working with regional stakeholders to deliver on their potential regional enterprise strengths and opportunities, and by strengthening the regional enterprise innovation system. The scheme opened for applications on 12 October 2023.

Each of the Regional Assemblies sit on the National S3 Implementation Group which has overall responsibility for the delivery of S3 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 North-West Region

At NUTS 2 level the North-West Region is part of Ireland's Northern and Western Region.

The North-West Region has strong advanced manufacturing, marine and blue economy and renewable energy sectors.

These sectors of strength align with the objectives of the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan and are being progressed through the work of the Advanced Innovation in Manufacturing (AIM) Centre in Sligo, the Killybegs Marine Cluster in Donegal, and the work of the Sligo Leitrim Energy Agency, which was formally established in 2022.

This progress report documents implementation to end of Q3 2023 and has been prepared and signed off by the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee.

Action Status Key

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

Action on target: The Steering Committee has deemed that these actions are on target for completion by the deadline.

Action not on target: The Steering Committee notes that delivery of these actions has been delayed but is still being progressed.

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

New/Amended action: The Steering Committee has agreed to create a new action or revise an existing action.

Strategic Objective 1: Harness the potential of micro, small and medium indigenous businesses in the North-West Region through encouraging entrepreneurship and scaling of existing businesses

Action 1.1: Develop regional initiatives to assist scaling of micro to large businesses within the North-West

Amended Action 1.1: Develop regional initiatives to assist in identifying startups and scaling of micro to large businesses within the North-West

Action Leader: Údaras na Gaeltachta, Donegal Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

As historically the North-West region has had the lowest levels of startups across the regions, the Steering committee saw the need to address this issue in order to create a pipeline for companies to then scale.

One of the recommendations of the *North-West Barriers to Entrepreneurship Report* is to reach into rural North-West towns and villages to engage underserved communities or those that typically do not avail of enterprise courses, to explore their reasons for starting a business.

Agencies in the North-West are exploring a suitable pilot course with Catalyst Northern Ireland to engage with those who traditionally do not engage with entrepreneurship courses (new international arrivals to Ireland, farmers, other rural dwellers and sole traders). The pilot would have two geographical areas, one in the Gaeltacht, and one in south Donegal, Sligo or Leitrim. This is still in the exploratory phase and if the pilot is successful, would potentially be rolled out across the wider region in multiple locations.

Action 1.2: Continue with a working group post-publication of the *North-West Barriers to Entrepreneurship Report* to action the recommendations coming from the report

Action Leader: Donegal LEO

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Post publication of the *North-West Barriers to Entrepreneurship Report*, a Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) working group was established comprising key agencies and select entrepreneurs in the region to consider the output from the report.

With the guidance of the REP working group, it was decided to host an *Enterprise Enablers* forum to get the enterprise agencies in the region to tackle some of the issues in the document. In February 2023, the event took place in Sligo with the aim of developing a sustainable enterprise ecosystem in the North-West.

The North-West REP explored existing frameworks for enterprise support in the region and looked at the region's strengths and weaknesses. The North-West REP reviewed the supports under the theme of innovation, startups and micro enterprises and SMEs and existing businesses.

A second event in the *Enterprise Enablers* series is forecast to be hosted in Q1 2024 to benchmark our region against other regions and address our challenges.

Action 1.3: Improve linkages between SMEs and multinational/large enterprise in the North-West

Action Leader: ATU Sligo

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The Chair of the working group for this action and the North-West Programme Manager are currently assessing the volume of interactions between indigenous and multinational companies (MNCs) in the region. The North-West REP Steering Committee are assessing how well utilised and effective existing initiatives which try to encourage interactions.

Action 1.4: Encourage the development of clusters in the region

Action Leader: ATU Sligo

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The working group for this action is chaired by the Vice President of ATU for regional development and includes networks, clusters in the region and policy analysts.

- In March 2023, there was an event held in Killybegs, Donegal, entitled *NWREP Clusters and Best Practice* to explore best practice and inform North-West cluster development. Following this event, it is intended to explore future funding opportunities to work with formal/informal clusters in the region and look at key areas of concern e.g. data, skills requirements.
- Within the region, there are a number of well-established clusters – BORMAC (border manufacturing), the Killybegs Marine Cluster, the Cyber North-West Donegal Food/Engineering/ICT Cluster, as well as a number of informal well-established groups (TechNW).
- In September 2023, the ATU launched a project for a network/cluster in the North-West of Ireland to co-lead an all-island research and innovation response to the challenges outlined in the EU Chips Act.
- The North-West Regional Enterprise Plan Programme Manager represented the North-West and the programme manager network in the national steering committee in the establishment of the national cluster policy. The North-West working group gave input into this policy through the Programme Manager and remain connected to the national level work.

Action 1.5: Explore opportunities to grow strategically the creative economy

Action Leader: WDC Creative Economy Programme Manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

- The chair of the Working Group for this action is the creative economy programme manager of the WDC who is looking at the strategic growth of the creative economy in the Atlantic region including the North-West.
- The five key areas of focus for the creative economy industry in the Atlantic region are:
 - Enabling infrastructure for the industry;
 - Assembling evidence of companies and industry in the region by gathering key data;
 - Talent attraction and retention;
 - Enterprise development and services to enable growth;
 - Marketing and visibility.

- The Donegal LEO, in collaboration with the WDC, applied for and were successful in receiving funding through Creative Ireland to complete workshops along the Atlantic region on virtual and augmented reality (the IMMERSIVE project) involving existing companies, their potential customers and the enterprise agencies which would support them.
- The Strand Campus in Sligo, which received Regional Enterprise Development Funding (REDF) – concentrating on the digital gaming industry, has completed construction and is currently focusing on recruiting a project manager.
- The Sligo LEO was awarded funding for the Atlantic TIDE (Transforming Ireland’s Design Economy), collaborative project. This was funded by Creative Ireland and in partnership with Sligo County Council, WDC, Innovate Limerick, Ludgate Hub, CREW Digital, An Chroí Digital Hub and FutureCast. The project is aimed at boosting design enterprise and impact along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Strategic Objective 2: Ensure that the North-West capitalises on the enterprise opportunities posed by the advancement of the wind industry (onshore/offshore wind) and the continued growth of the ocean economy

Action 2.1: Encourage the growth of the wind energy industry (onshore/offshore wind) in North-West industry and along the Atlantic coast, through regional collaboration, regional supply chain diversification and assistance of the public agencies and educational bodies

Action Leader: North-West Regional Programme Manager, Leitrim Local Authority, WDC

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

A collaboration between Donegal Local Authority, Leitrim Local Authority, Mayo Local Authority, Limerick Local Authority and the WDC led to a report being commissioned and completed entitled, ‘*Growth of Onshore to Offshore Wind – Atlantic Region Wind Energy & Supply-Chain Feasibility Study*’. This report was co-funded by Enterprise Ireland and completed by Dublin Offshore Consultants. The report was completed in Q3 2022.

- The collaborating team hosted an online webinar available to all to share the findings. Additionally, a publication campaign was rolled out afterwards, highlighting the contents of the report to a wider audience. There are a number of recommendations within the report which are being considered by the network of programme managers and groups within the North-West.
- The North-West Steering Committee will continue promoting this issue on several fronts:
 - Connecting with the DETE Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce and ensuring North-West groups are connected into this process;
 - Considering upcoming funding options to further the recommendations coming out of the report;
 - Continuing to roll out the findings of the report at government and public sessions.

Action 2.2: Continue to assist the on-going development of the regional blue economy encompassing our full North-west coastline and additionally the development of the marine cluster centred in Killybegs

Action Leader: Killybegs Marine Cluster manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The Killybegs Marine Cluster (KMC) currently comprises several blue economy industries, including commercial fishing (base industry), fish processing, marine engineering, aquaculture, renewable energies, offshore marine services, and marine tourism. Enterprise Ireland have recently confirmed an additional year of funding up to 1 February 2025.

- The blue economy opportunities fall into three priority themes – sustainable proteins (pelagic, aquaculture, demersal, shellfish, algae etc.), renewable energy (floating offshore wind (FOW), fixed bottom installations, green hydrogen etc.) and growing our start up culture (fostering a new blue economy-focused startup culture, Incubation Hub, Ocean Innovation Centre (OIC) etc.).
- The KMC concentrates on four strategic development activities including internationalisation, scale and competitiveness; fostering skills and talent; research development and innovation (RDI); and development of the cluster itself and its ecosystem.
- To date, KMC has hosted several visits from Minister Charlie McConalogue, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Minister Dara Calleary, Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation as well as several other significant visitors including CEO of HEA, CEO of Enterprise Ireland and CEO of BIM North-West. These visits have assisted the Killybegs cluster to grow its international attractiveness status, assisted our clients to grow their networks and had demonstrated the opportunity available in Killybegs to a wider audience.
- The KMC has established a healthy pipeline of potential domestic and international members. This will require the KMC to rebrand, perhaps to the Atlantic Marine Cluster or Ireland's Ocean Cluster. It will need to move towards a registered CLG with clearly defined governance structures, membership fees etc. This agenda will be progressed in 2024.
- With the support of key stakeholders, KMC has the potential to position the North-West region as a globally recognised Innovation centre of excellence for marine related activities. KMC's recent activities have helped elevate the profile/potential of Killybegs and the North-West region.
- In order for Killybegs and the North-West region to fully deliver on its potential, the region requires a holistic ambitious strategic plan carried out by an independent consultancy who could develop a roadmap to delivering on the opportunities in a detailed phased implementation plan.

Strategic Objective 3: Support the offering of the North-West Region as a place to work and invest high value jobs in

Action 3.1: Work collaboratively with regional and national stakeholders in addressing infrastructural deficits in the North-West

Action Leader: ATU Sligo

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

A Working Group has been established to further this issue in the North-West consisting of ATU staff, policy analysts and business representatives.

- The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is considering infrastructure needs across the areas of energy, water services, transport and waste to support enterprise development. The North-West Regional Enterprise Plan submitted a paper to the department after consultation with the Working Group and wider region consisting of data, graphics and local knowledge of needs.
- The Working Group has applied for funding from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to commission a consultant to provide a singular summarised report with case studies on the key messages and areas of focus for the status of infrastructure development in the North-West as it relates to enabling sustainable enterprise development across the North-West. This report will be socialised with all key stakeholders in the region and nationally to ensure the unique infrastructure challenges in the North-West continue to be highlighted. Additionally, new media products (video, infographics) will be commissioned through ATU, using data from this report, to be used whilst highlighting this report.

Action 3.2: Develop a messaging campaign for the North-West to encourage working and investment in the region. This messaging is to be focused on enterprise and economic attributes whilst addressing our designation as a 'region in transition'.

Action Leader: IDA North-West

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

- IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, WDC and the North- West Regional Enterprise Plan hosted the *North-West in the City* event in Dublin in February 2023. This event aimed to promote the North-West, connect with the professional diaspora and spotlight the many positive transformational changes made in recent years. This event is a repeatable model and could be used on an ongoing basis to raise the enterprise profile of the region, connect to mid to senior level diaspora contacts and communicate the value proposition of the North-West.
- There were senior executives representing more than 20 global employers across all sectors, with the event being well attended by the public on the day.

Action 3.3: Utilise the shift to remote working to attract and retain high quality talent in the region

Action Leader: IDA Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2023

Status: Action discontinued

Action Update:

Upon evaluating all the considerable work being completed regionally and nationally, the North-West Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee feels its efforts are better spent adding additionality elsewhere. Hence the decision to remove this objective from the plan was taken.

- There is considerable work ongoing in the region towards promoting remote work. Additionally, the remote working message has been weaved into all counties' overall messaging while promoting themselves for example County Leitrim has promoted itself as a slow retreat destination for teams who work remotely and who wish to get together in a unique environment.
- Initiated by the WDC, ConnectedHubs.ie is operated by The National Hub Network, a Government of Ireland initiative that provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working. The National Hub Network has the support of government, remote working advocacy groups and industry representatives. In this way, ConnectedHubs.ie also encompasses a range of key features that deliver significant benefits to member hubs, hub clients, employers, local communities and the wider economy.

Strategic Objective 4: Support the North-West’s enterprise to mainstream climate action and transition to a low carbon future in their business planning

Action 4.1: Identify and implement opportunities to promote and expand the regional circular economy

Action Leader: Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

A Chair has been appointed to lead the Working Group for this action and the needs of the region are being assessed. Other activity includes:

- The North-West REP Programme Manager and Chair are exploring implementing some Enterprise Ireland supported initiatives in the region to encourage the circular economy.
- The circular economy is part of the core business that LEOs and Enterprise Ireland administer nationally. The LEOs offer a Green for Business voucher and Enterprise Ireland have Climate Action Voucher. Efforts are ongoing in the North-West to look at what additionality the North-West REP can provide in this domain.
- The four European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) are now operational in Ireland as part of the European Commission’s Digital Europe Programme to shape digital transformation over the 2021-2027 programming period. Data2Sustain led by Atlantic Technological University Sligo, aims to increase the transformation capacity of SMEs in the Northern and Western region with a focus on circular economy, operations and sustainability areas.

Action 4.2: Develop a suite of targeted initiatives to enable enterprise in the region transform and meet their decarbonisation requirements

Action Leader: Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

A North-West region Chair has been appointed to the working group for this action and the needs of the region are being assessed. There is a target to roll out new initiatives in Q4 2024.

- The North-West hosted the first *Building Better Business* event in March 2023 – an in-person event organised by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to help businesses navigate the green journey and boost business performance through digital transformation. The event was well attended and featured panel discussions with experts and businesses on the opportunities and challenges presented by digital transformation and the transition to a low carbon economy.

Strategic Objective 5: Recognising the North-West’s strategic border location, encourage the ongoing development of cross-border relationships and Shared Island initiatives to further the enterprise agenda in the North-West

Action 5.1: Encourage the development of cross-border relationships in order to further enterprise growth and mitigate Brexit impacts in the North-West through new initiatives which can provide additionality or assist existing initiatives e.g. Cross-border Smart Industry forum

Action Leader: Donegal County Council Economic Development Group

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

A range of activity with regard to this action has been progressed.

- There is strong collaboration between Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and Donegal County Council in terms of promoting strong and compelling propositions for inward investment in the North-West City Region (NWCR). This includes the development of an Inward Investment Strategy and place branding collateral for the NWCR, including a market NWCR event in London in November and a Trade and Investment Mission to the US in November.
- The Irish Embassy in London hosted a North-West Investment event in December 2023.
- The North-West Reg Tech Initiative, with partners Donegal County Council, DCSDC, ATU, Catalyst Northern Ireland and other key stakeholders, seeks to position the North-West region as a centre for excellence for regulatory technology – a feasibility study and business case is being undertaken.
- Navigating the Future of Regulation, a North-West RegTech Conference was held in October 2023 in Letterkenny. The conference brought together policy makers, regulators, experts and regulated organisations from around the world to discuss the future of regulation. It provided an opportunity for partners to share their vision of creating the world’s first multi-sector regulatory supercluster, building on the unique multi-jurisdictional advantages of the North-West cross-border region, to position key stakeholders at the forefront of solving complex global regulatory challenges.
- Donegal County Council, working with Omagh and Fermanagh District Council, have commissioned a study to explore the potential of a cross-border Food Innovation Plaza between Ballyshannon and Irvinestown.

- The work of North-West Smart Industries Board, led by ATU Letterkenny and other education and training providers and industry is ongoing.
- The North-West Education Tertiary Cluster comprises four tertiary education providers in the NWCR collaborating to enhance cross-border education and training opportunities for people in the NWCR.

Strategic Objective 6: By harnessing the partnerships available to the REP’s Steering Committee, assist the Regional Skills Forum and other agencies in addressing the skills issue encountered by enterprises in the North-West

Action 6.1: Through the networks available to the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee, create a ‘skills working group’ to assist in addressing the enterprise issues in the North-West around skills shortage, talent retention (where it pertains to skills), talent development and upskilling, ensuring the working group bolsters existing initiatives and offers additionality to the overall issue

Action Leader: North-West Regional Skills Forum Manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Activity relating to this action is continuing.

- The North-West Education Tertiary Cluster comprises four tertiary education providers in the NWCR collaborating to enhance cross-border education and training opportunities for people in the NWCR.
- The *North-West Cyber Security Skills Audit Report* was launched in May 2023. The recommendations from the study are grouped under three overarching thematic areas and action is being taken to progress these areas:
 - Promoting the North-West region’s cybersecurity sector;
 - Creating a strong cybersecurity culture;
 - Building a cyber talent pipeline.
- The possibility of producing a similar skills audit report for the Killybegs Marine Cluster is being explored.
- The PeacePlus Theme 2.3 – area-based skills development – call was open in summer 2023 and support was provided to the North-West Tertiary Education Cluster and other regional stakeholders.
- A cross-government Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce has been established as a way of coordinating activities in this space across government departments and the Regional Skills Forum is represented on this national group.

- ATU and the three Educational Training Boards in the North-West and West region have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to increase collaboration and degree completion in ETBs.

Action Status Table by Strategic Objectives

*Updated timeline agreed by Steering Committee

Strategic Objective 1: Harness the potential of micro, small and medium indigenous businesses in the North-west region through encouraging entrepreneurship and scaling of existing businesses.	Status	For completion by
Action 1.1: Develop regional initiatives to assist scaling of micro/large businesses within the North-West. [Amended]	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.2: Continue with a working group post publication of the North-West Barriers to Entrepreneurship Report to action the recommendations coming from the report.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.3: Improve linkages between SME's and multinational/large enterprise in the North-West.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.4: Encourage the development of clusters in the region.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.5: Explore opportunities to grow strategically the creative economy.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Strategic Objective 2: Ensure that the North-West capitalises on the enterprise opportunities posed by the advancement of the wind industry (onshore/offshore wind) and the continued growth of the ocean economy.	Status	For completion by
Action 2.1: Encourage the growth of the wind energy industry (onshore/offshore wind) in North-West region and along the Atlantic coast, through regional collaboration, existing supply chain diversification and work with the public agencies and educational bodies.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 2.2: Continue to assist the on-going development of the regional blue economy encompassing our full Northwest coastline and additionally the development of the marine cluster centered in Killybegs.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Strategic Objective 3: Support the offering of the North-West Region as a place to work and invest high value jobs in	Status	For completion by
Action 3.1: Work collaboratively with regional and national stakeholders in addressing infrastructural deficits in the North-West.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 3.2: Develop a messaging campaign for the North-West to encourage working and investment in the region. This messaging is to be focused on enterprise and economic attributes whilst addressing our designation as a 'region in transition'.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 3.3: Utilise the shift to remote and blended working to attract and retain high quality talent in the region.	Action discontinued	Q4 2023

Strategic Objective 4: Assist the North-West's enterprises to mainstream climate action and transition to a low carbon into their business planning and delivery.	Status	For completion by
Action 4.1: Identify and implement opportunities to promote and expand the regional circular economy.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.2: Develop a suite of targeted initiatives to enable enterprise in the region transform and meet their decarbonisation requirements.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Strategic Objective 5: Recognising the North-West's strategic border location, encourage the ongoing development of cross-border relationships and Shared Island initiatives to further the enterprise agenda in the North-West.	Status	For completion by
Action 5.1: Encourage the development of cross-border relationships in order to further enterprise growth and mitigate Brexit impacts	Action on target	Q4 2024

<p>in the North-West through new initiatives which can provide additionality or assist existing initiatives e.g. Cross-border Smart Industry forum.</p>		
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<p>Strategic Objective 6: By harnessing the partnerships available to the REP's Steering Committee, assist the Regional Skills Forum and other agencies in addressing the skills issue encountered by enterprises in the North-West.</p>	<p>Status</p>	<p>For completion by</p>
<p>Action 6.1: Through the networks available to the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering committee, create a 'skills working group' to assist in addressing the enterprise issues in the North-West around skills shortage, talent retention (where it pertains to skills), talent development and upskilling, ensuring the working group backs existing initiatives and offers additionality to the overall issue.</p>	<p>Action on target</p>	<p>Q4 2024</p>