



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Mid-Term Progress Report

South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024



An initiative of the Department of
Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Contents

Minister’s Foreword	3
Chair’s Introduction	5
South-East Highlights	6
Smart Specialisation	7
Strategic Objective 1: Start and Grow	9
Strategic Objective 2: Green Growth	13
Strategic Objective 3: Smart Specialisation and Clustering	16
Strategic Objective 4: Innovate	20
Strategic Objective 5: Place	26
Action Status Table by Strategic Objectives	28

Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to present this Progress Report on the implementation of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan, an initiative launched in 2022 to stimulate economic growth, drive innovation and enhance the overall prosperity of the South-East region of Ireland.

The South-East region comprises the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, and Wexford. Since the launch of the Plan, the focus has been on unlocking the potential of this region, ensuring it not only thrives economically, but also stands as a vital contributor to the broader well-being of the entire country.

Key sectors, including ICT, biopharma/life sciences, food, agritech, and renewable energy, have been at the forefront of our strategic efforts. Through investment, innovative programmes, and collaborative initiatives with key stakeholders, the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan aims to bolster the competitiveness of these sectors and others, driving innovation and creating sustainable employment opportunities across the entire South-East.

Innovation has been a central theme of the approach. The Plan seeks to foster a culture of entrepreneurship, create an environment that actively supports research and development, and nurture emerging industries.

Collaboration has been instrumental to the success of the Plan to date. The partnership between government agencies, local authorities, businesses, educational institutions, and others has been a cornerstone in overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities. The South-East has embraced the collaborative approach necessary to address regional challenges.

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 aims and objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plans and with continued collaboration, the South-East is well positioned to compete for current and future funding calls to drive enterprise development in the region.

As we reflect on the progress highlighted in this report, it is clear that the South-East is on a path to growth and development. Challenges remain, but the progress made so far demonstrates the resilience, innovation, and dedication of stakeholders in the region. I encourage them all to continue their active engagement and support as we build upon these accomplishments ensuring that the South-East continues to be a location of choice for indigenous industry and FDI.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Chair Patsy Carney, acting Programme Manager Richard Hickey, and all the regional stakeholders who have played a

role in shaping the implementation of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan. Their commitment, expertise, and collaborative spirit have been critical in realising the successes outlined in this Progress Report.

Dara Calleary TD

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation

Chair's Introduction

I present this Mid-Term Progress Report for the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment on behalf of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee. The Committee is made up of the major economic stakeholders, both public and private, who have an input into economic development in the region.

The South-East Regional Enterprise Plan was launched in March 2022, so this progress report is published a year and a half into the implementation of the plan. Stakeholders within the region have been advancing projects and actions under the five strategic pillars of the plan: 1. Start and Grow; 2. Green Growth; 3. Smart Specialisation and Clustering; 4. Innovate; and 5. Place Making. In July 2022, the region secured a total of €785,000 in priming grants and feasibility study funding spread across eight projects under the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS). These South-East projects represent the wide spread of sectoral and stakeholder activity occurring under the plan, including initiatives in financial services, life sciences, engineering, ICT, agri, and sustainability. Updates of the progress of each project are detailed in the below report.

In October 2022 we welcomed the official launch of the South-East Technological University (SETU), one of the most significant events for the development of our region, both socially and economically, for many years. Our aim has been to align the Regional Enterprise Plan as closely as possible to the Technological University with a view to ensuring it can be genuinely transformative for the region. Many of the projects that secured REISS funding are led by our colleagues working at SETU.

Another significant development for our region has been the launch of Irish Rail's plans to develop Rosslare Europort as an Offshore Renewable Energy Hub for Ireland's South-East. The port secured €2.5 million in June 2023 from the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) that will support the project's full design and planning application processes. This initiative is now a key focus for the remainder of the plan to 2024 as we seek to bring participants together to maximise the wider economic opportunity presented by developing an offshore wind hub at Rosslare and understanding what the new skills requirements will be for the region.

I look forward to seeing all of these burgeoning projects advance and seek funding as we work towards the shared vision of the South-East becoming an even more thriving, innovative, and creative regional economy.

Patsy Carney

Chair of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee

South-East Highlights

- Rosslare Europort and Waterford Port are progressing ambitious plans to develop a €200 million Offshore Renewable Energy Hub. A stakeholder group has formed to support this ambition and to focus on the enterprise opportunity presented by it including future skills needs, regional supply chain, and industry requirements and opportunities.
- Funding has been secured through the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS) to advance a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East and a project manager has been appointed.
- Senan House, a state-of-the-art energy A-rated building at Enniscorthy Technology Park, has officially opened its doors housing both the GreenHub, sustainable innovation hub, and the High Performance Building Alliance along with start-up supports and companies.
- Funding was secured through REISS and the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) inflation fund to further advance the life sciences innovation, research and development eco-system in the South-East. Available space at Kinetic Labs has been expanded and is ready to welcome more clients during 2023.
- LI4, a REDF-funded project that has the vision to transform the South-East and Ireland into a productivity hub for companies through Lean Industry 4.0, is now hiring for centre manager, enterprise excellence lead, and a simulation engineer lead.
- The Engineering the South-East (ESE) cluster continues to progress and evolve, and it will again play a key role in the Toys4Engineers Expo and Conference which is scheduled for October. ESE is continuing to add to its portfolio of successful collaborations and is currently working on projects related to high purity welding and quality engineering that follow on from previous successes in high voltage systems and offshore wind training programmes.
- The Financial Times fDi Intelligence magazine selected the South-East as the #1 region for FDI Strategy in their European Regions of the Future Awards 2023 for the third year in a row.

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 (ERDF) 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 South-East Region

At NUTS 2 level, the South-East is part of Ireland's Southern region.

The South-East has strong advanced manufacturing, agri-tech and sustainability, and life sciences.

These sectors of strength align with the objectives of the South-East Regional Enterprise Plan and are being progressed through the work of South-Eastern Applied Materials Research Centre (SEAM), SETU, and a Life Science Cluster based in Kinetic Labs.

This progress report documents implementation to end of Q3 2023 and has been prepared and signed off by the South-East 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: Start and Grow

Action 1.1: Establish a South-East advisory board of established senior entrepreneurs and develop a structured programme of engagement for this group

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office

Timeframe for delivery: Q3 2022

Status: Action complete

Action Update:

A group of entrepreneurs and industry leaders met at the end of January 2023. Several of the industry leaders aligned with projects as they progressed through the REISS and SREIS schemes.

Leaders are also making themselves available to act as mentors through the various entrepreneurship initiatives being run in the region, including:

- South-East BIC's Big Pitch competition is pairing each finalist with an experienced entrepreneur who will mentor them throughout their preparation for the final.
- Experienced entrepreneurs will be utilised to provide mentoring and advice through the new South-East Technological University (SETU) pre-accelerators.
- SETU Growth Hub has provided a platform for experienced entrepreneurs to speak to student entrepreneurs.

Action 1.2: Enhance coordination of public start-up supports across the region

Action Leader: Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Enterprise Ireland has hosted in person learning sessions for client-facing team members from Enterprise Ireland, South-East BIC, the four relevant Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), and other relevant stakeholders in the region to outline what goals each organisation has, how they might cross over, and discuss how stakeholders can work together to take a "client needs first" approach.

An action list has been prepared from these sessions and is being progressed, including regular ‘Client Development Workshops’ that will examine scaling and stalled client cases and Dr Pat Lynch (RIKON Innovation Centre at SETU) will host a workshop with the client facing staff in the region to identify opportunities to work together to enhance the startup eco-system in the South-East region.

Further knowledge sharing meetings are planned for the Regional Enterprise Development Forum (enterprise development client facing staff, LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, in the region which will focus on the work of the Education and Training Boards, Skillnets, Regional Skills Forum and Chambers of Commerce as well as updates from relevant clusters).

Action 1.3: Deliver on the South-East Technological University’s objective of supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the region

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

GROWTHhub is an initiative within SETU that seeks to shape entrepreneurial competences and mindsets that deliver impact for learners, enterprise, and society through a connected student entrepreneurship education ecosystem. GROWTHhub recorded 1,812 event attendees in the academic year 2022 to 2023, and over 2,478 since commencement. Events in 2022 to 2023 included 61 ideation and enterprise related workshops, two hackathons, two bootcamps, one design sprint, one student accelerator programme, 35 sessions with guest speakers, and many one-to-one mentoring sessions with students. Engagement spans all schools and reaches from transition year in second level to postgraduate research students. GROWTHhub supports social enterprise through the Enactus student society. A SETU student entrepreneur secured the Grant Thornton prize in the Enterprise Ireland Student Entrepreneur Awards 2022, and the Enactus team were highly commended on their performance in the National Enactus competition 2023.

Examples of new entrepreneurship initiatives include:

- In 2022 to 2023 the HEA’s Entrepreneurship Education Initiative provided funding to run the SETU TEAM Academy. This one-month programme provided an experiential learning process to 22 postgraduate students where they explored and developed their entrepreneurial and personal skills in a business-driven environment.
- SETU is a partner in ‘Enter to Transform’, which is a €2.14 million part-funded Interreg North-West Europe social enterprise project to help increase the entrepreneurial capacity of recognised refugees.

- SETU continues to underpin the entrepreneurship support system in the South-East through the New Frontiers programme and the supports provided through ArcLabs and Enterprise & Research Incubation Campus (ERIC) Innovation Centres.
- SETU has provided significant funding to lead four new pre-accelerators linked closely to the region's Technology Gateways.

Action 1.4: Increase investment in RDI support structures to maximise opportunities for enterprises to effectively engage, access and exploit knowledge and IP

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

SETU has been successful in securing funding (KT Boost) for Knowledge Transfer and Technology Transfer activities from 2024 to 2029 which will result in additional headcount to provide supports both internally and externally to stakeholders. The key activity in this KT Boost Programme will be to drive impactful outputs ultimately leading to the creation of jobs through High Potential Start Ups (HPSUs), underpinning the strategic mission of SETU. SETU will develop a state-of-the-art integrated multi-campus sustainable Technology Transfer Office (TTO) which will provide professional services to stakeholders including academics, researchers, entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial students. SETU will be a focal point for businesses across the South-East, furthering connections, engagements, and integration across HPSU support agencies in the region - chambers of commerce, LEOs, regional Enterprise Ireland offices, South-East BIC, Industry Research and Development Group (IRDG), and Ibec.

SETU has submitted an application to TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (TU RISE), which will enhance regional partnerships through post-doctoral and doctoral engagement and training programmes to assist Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in accessing EU funding.

Action 1.5: Build on EU-funded pilot South-East Intrapreneurship Report to support local companies realise new opportunities

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

***Original timeframe extended**

Status: Action not on target

Action Update:

Time frame for delivery of this action has been extended to Q4 2024 to allow for further work to take place.

Workshops have been offered by researchers to SMEs in the region over the past year. Sanofi are also trialling an intrapreneurship project with their employees. Results from this will be monitored to examine if their template can be used to encourage other multi-nationals to participate. Discussions are now underway to explore whether Centre4Design can build on a previous project on intrapreneurship funded under the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument.

The new South-East Technological University pre-accelerator startX (applications due February 2024) also has an intrapreneurship component built into it where an SME with an innovative idea can attend the programme to further develop the concept.

Strategic Objective 2: Green Growth

Action 2.1: Position the South-East as an offshore and onshore wind energy hub

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office, Rosslare Europort, Port of Waterford, and Industry

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Rosslare Europort and Waterford Port are progressing ambitious plans to develop a €200 million Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Hub. The hub will service the emerging offshore wind industry and help support the government's offshore wind target of seven gigawatts of power from ORE by 2030. Representing an estimated €200 million investment, the proposed plans have the potential to transform the economy of the South-East region via new industry and job creation. Rosslare recently secured €2.5 million in EU Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding to support the project's full design and planning application processes.

A stakeholder group has been formed to support this ambition and to focus on the enterprise opportunity presented by it including future skills needs, regional supply chain, and industry requirements and opportunities.

Action 2.2: Develop a strategic approach to regional green skills at further and higher education level

Action Leader: Regional Skills Forum, South-East Technological University and Education and Training Boards.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Engagement has been held with key stakeholders on green skills including SETU School of Engineering, Regional Skills Forum, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the Engineering the South-East Cluster. A baseline assessment of green skills requirements based on 2030 targets has been undertaken.

A range of courses on sustainability have now been developed in response to this assessment, which are being delivered by a range of providers including SETU, ETBs, Skillnets, and Veri Connect.

South-East stakeholders have also engaged with the national Offshore Wind Energy Expert Advisory Group being coordinated by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; representatives from SETU, Waterford and Wexford ETB and the South-East Regional Skills Manager are on this group.

Action 2.3: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food, Forestry and Marine Innovation in the South-East

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

SETU's Department of Land Sciences received funding under REISS in 2022 for the Agro-Systems Innovation and Growth Lighthouse. The feasibility project has selected five independent consultants to engage with local and national stakeholders in five key areas: (1) agriculture (2) food (3) forestry (4) horticulture and (5) marine. The lighthouse will encourage advanced engagement with industry in several key areas of strategic importance across the university.

To date, SETU is compiling all the individual reports (agriculture, food, forestry, horticulture and marine). The purpose of this report will be to identify the future opportunities and needs of the sectors, individually and collectively, in a 2023 context.

The proposed release date for this document will be mid-October 2023 (with non-proofed versions available for interested stakeholders before).

Action 2.4: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence for High Performance Buildings in Wexford

Action Leader: Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board and Wexford County Council

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The High-Performance Building Alliance (HPBA), a UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Centre of Excellence, plans to open its new headquarters and enterprise centre in Q1 2024 in Enniscorthy Technology Park. The project has been funded, in part, through Enterprise Ireland's REISS grant and the space will be fitted out in an entirely sustainable

manner, which will provide an opportunity for tenants to showcase new products and services. The first tenant has committed to an eight-person office and discussions are underway with further potential tenants. A Business Development Manager has also been put in place to drive this action forward. The building is poised to become a national landmark in the landscape of sustainability innovation.

It will house the HPBA UNECE Centre of Excellence and the Green Hub. The Green Hub project received funding from Enterprise Ireland under a REISS Grant and will provide training, start-up support, and incubation space to companies engaging in green markets and the development of green products.

Action 2.5: Green Awareness – Promotion of Industry Best Practice in Sustainability and Green Opportunities

Action Leader: South-East LEOs, Ireland South-East Development Office and the 3 Counties Energy Agency (3CEA)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The South-East LEOs continue to roll out the 'Green for Business' and the new 'Energy Efficiency Grant' to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across the South-East. As part of Local Enterprise Week 2023, Carlow LEO, on behalf of the 31 LEOs, hosted 'The Green Panel' which aimed to inform, inspire, and engage owner managers and their key staff in how they can implement green technologies, processes and products to their business in order to be more competitive.

In September 2023, LEO Kilkenny, in association with the South-East Energy Agency, ran a comprehensive 'Green for Business' event, where best practice case studies and all relevant support agencies showcased the range of support for businesses for green action in their business.

The South-East Energy Agency and LEOs are directly supporting company decarbonisation initiatives and a key element will be around the communication of best practice via a range of social media channels.

LEO Waterford hosted the inaugural Waterford Glas Awards in October 2023. The Awards aim to recognise and celebrate micro and small businesses in Waterford City and County that have made significant progress integrating green principles into their business framework.

Strategic Objective 3: Smart Specialisation and Clustering

Action 3.1: Develop a coherent approach with industry-driven governance to strategic development of key South-East clusters

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2022

Status: Action discontinued

Action Update:

This action has been discontinued as activities are being pursued under Action 1.1.

Action 3.2: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Engineering Cluster

Action Leader: Sector industry champion and cluster manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The engineering cluster continues to progress and evolve, and it will again play a key role in the Toys4Engineers Expo and Conference scheduled for October 2023. Engineering the South-East is continuing to add to its portfolio of successful collaborations and is currently working on projects related to high purity welding and quality engineering that follow on from previous successes in high voltage systems and offshore wind training programmes. Niche initiatives designed to address more specific industry problems are also gaining traction such as the introduction of a new South-East automation sub-group, which has had excellent early engagement from regional companies.

Action 3.3: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Financial Services Cluster

Action Leader: Sector industry champion and cluster manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The South-East Financial Services Cluster has been active throughout 2023, and there are presently more than 70 cluster members and growing. Activities included were:

- A regional showcase event, aligned with the Department of Finance’s Ireland for Finance Action Plan.
- The Jobs Board on the cluster website launched, with hundreds of regional opportunities in financial services and fin-tech advertised.
- A property solution resource launched, serving businesses from startups to scale-ups to large MNCs.
- The cluster manager awarded a place on the European Commission Cluster Booster Academy and visited Strasbourg to benchmark other cluster business models.
- A FinTech Centre of Excellence feasibility study grant awarded and work on the study underway.
- Future cluster services expansion dependent on funding in accordance with the upcoming National Clustering Policy.

Action 3.4: Assess and progress the South-East ICT Cluster

Action Leader: Sector industry champion and cluster manager

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Funding was secured through Enterprise Ireland’s REISS to further advance the ICT innovation, R&D eco-system in the South-East. The Accelerated Technical Skills (ATS) Academy is being developed in direct response to industry needs to help with hiring and building a sustainable pipeline of talented ICT professionals in the South-East. The project aims to be in position to move forward with an application for the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme.

Action 3.5: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Life Sciences Cluster

Action Leader: Chair of Ireland South-East Development Office, IDA Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Funding has been secured through Enterprise Ireland's REISS to develop a Life Sciences cluster for the South-East and for a cluster manager to be based at Kinetic Lab. The relevance of the cluster is now being discussed with key stakeholders in the region and feedback is being collated on industry need and challenges.

Action 3.6: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Agri-food, Forestry and Marine Cluster

Action Leader: Industry chair to be identified with South-East Technological University

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action discontinued

Action Update

Action discontinued as activities are being pursued under Action 4.8.

Action 3.7: Local Enterprise Offices to develop four regional micro-clusters in pharma, lean manufacturing, green and digital marketing

Action Leader: Four Local Enterprise Offices of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The LEOs have researched the development of clusters in the South-East and will initially focus on a green cluster activity in 2023 (led by LEO Wexford). Further activities will be developed to support the development of clusters in pharma (led by LEO Waterford), lean manufacturing (led by LEO Kilkenny), and digital marketing (led by LEO Carlow).

The Green Cluster and Digital Marketing Cluster progressed in 2023 and inaugural events will be held in November to create awareness.

LEO Wexford held a 'Sustainability Seminar' in January 2023 covering energy supports and sustainability practices with speakers from SEAI, tax consultancy, and business case studies. In June 2023, LEO Wexford held a workshop on green procurement.

LEO Wexford is organising a Green event in November 2023 to encourage the uptake of sustainability supports via the LEO and SEAI, to encourage the business community in the South-East to urgently integrate sustainability as a KPI for their business, and to generate a pipeline of clients who will become members of a green cluster for the region.

The LEAN Cluster (LEO Kilkenny) will progress a LEAN for business event in Spring 2024.

LEO Waterford worked with Kinetic Labs to develop a database of pharma and life science businesses in the South-East region. This database is now complete and will allow South-East LEOs to reach out to firms operating in the region and commence the gathering of insights and requirements to develop the future intentions of the cluster.

Strategic Objective 4: Innovate

Action 4.1: Explore a feasibility study for a SETU multi-disciplinary research centre of excellence

Action Leader: South-East Technological University (SETU) and Ireland South-East Development Office

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

***Original timeframe extended**

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

SETU's strategic plan 2023-2028 sets out clear objectives and actions relating to increasing the volume, focus and impact of the university's research and innovation activities. Critical to this plan is the development of a second research institute, the consolidation and growth of research activity in other areas of critical mass, and the facilitation of greater opportunities for interdisciplinary activity. To underpin this plan, SETU recently submitted an application under the HEA RISE scheme, an ERDF co-funded scheme of €83 million for the five TUs and the two Institutes of Technology, aimed at enhancing research and innovation capacity and resources within the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and enable greater engagement with their regions. The results of this will be announced in December 2023.

Multi-disciplinary research activity is occurring between centres within SETU. For example, work is being conducted by researchers from the Walton Institute and the Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre (PMBRC) operating under the VistaMilk umbrella. This pioneering molecular communication research is 'programming' common bacteria to receive and send valuable information inside the body of an animal.

Action 4.2: Create a LEO South-East virtual Innovation Hub

Action Leader: South-East Local Enterprise Offices

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Funding was secured under Enterprise Ireland's REISS for the development of a Regional Export and Innovation Campus located in Carlow, which is the proposed vehicle for the delivery of the South-East Innovation Hub in partnership with the LEOs.

This project is now moving forward with an application to the Smart Regions Enterprise Innovation Scheme.

Action 4.3: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the life sciences innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East

Action Leader: Pharmaceutical and Molecular Biotechnology Research Centre (PMBRC), South-East Technological University (SETU) and Kinetic Labs

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Funding was secured through Enterprise Ireland's REISS and REDF addendum fund to further advance the life sciences innovation, research, and development eco-system in the South-East. Clients are not actively using the lab space at Kinetic Labs with more clients anticipated for 2024.

Action 4.4: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in advanced manufacturing innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East

Action Leader: South-Eastern Applied Materials (SEAM) and South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

SEAM initiated 3DWIT, a Designated Activity Company (DAC), which has enticed two local businesses, Marli Injection Moulding of Waterford and Inmasoll of Tramore, to adopt a new 3D printing technology that streamlines production of injected plastic and silicone parts with a dramatic reduction in the product design and development cycle time and cost, thus overcoming the main inhibitors of innovation. Their venture termed 'UFIM' (Ultra Fast Injection Moulding) will soon provide services to local industries, with production of injected parts with final materials delivered in days up to no more than three weeks at one third of the cost in a significant boost to Irish industries.

Action 4.5: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the ICT innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East

Action Leader: Walton Institute and South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

SETU's Walton Institute has developed an RD&I funding roadmap for companies of any size. This documents how organisations can leverage a multitude of national and international financial supports to grow their RD&I capabilities in collaboration with academic institutions. The Walton Institute has presented this roadmap to a significant cohort of clients over the past number of months.

The Walton Institute continually seeks to engage with the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and industry community in the South-East, including offering Enterprise Ireland innovation vouchers for companies to work with them to explore how digital twin technology could revolutionise how a business operates.

Action 4.6: Position the South-East as a destination for design-led thinking, design innovation, education, and training

Action Leader: Walton Institute and South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Based on campus in SETU Carlow, Design+ has a proven track record in knowledge transfer and delivering innovation solutions to industry. With a primary focus on design strategy and product design, Design+ has the resources onsite for R&D support in the form of additive manufacturing capabilities, rapid prototyping, 3D printing, and electronic prototyping. Design+ engages with companies on a one-to-one basis and through programmes; companies from multiple sectors including engineering, ICT and bioscience, can access a vast range of research expertise and development support.

Design+ is focused on supporting industry through a design-led approach to encourage and increase growth and innovation. Efforts are ongoing to explore the viability of the Centre 4 Design REDF-funded project and to incorporate it into the existing design ecosystem of the region.

Action 4.7: Explore opportunity to develop a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East

Action Leader: INC DAC, Ireland South-East Financial Services Cluster, CIRDAS with collaborative industry partners from these networks, and Funds Academy with collaborative industry partners

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2023

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Funding was secured through Enterprise Ireland's REISS to advance a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East. A project manager to scope out the feasibility of the project was appointed in May 2023 and the project is currently ongoing and progressing very well.

Action 4.8: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the agri-food, forestry innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East

Action Leader: EIRC, Envirocore and South-East Technological University (SETU)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

SETU's Department of Land Sciences received funding under Enterprise Ireland's REISS in 2022 for the Agro-Systems Innovation and Growth Lighthouse. The feasibility project has selected five independent consultants to engage with local and national stakeholders in five key areas: (1) agriculture (2) food (3) forestry (4) horticulture (5) marine. The Lighthouse will encourage advanced engagement with industry in several key areas of strategic importance across the university. A key element of this feasibility will be to assess the viability and key requirements of a cluster.

To date, SETU is compiling all the individual reports (agriculture, food, forestry, horticulture and marine). The purpose of this report will be to identify the future opportunities and needs of the sectors, individually and collectively, in a 2023 context.

Action 4.9: Advance Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board's Further Education and Training College of the Future

Action Leader: Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The approval of a Further Education and Training (FET) College for Kilkenny was announced by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris in December 2022. Since then, KCETB has completed a site selection report and considered a number of available sites in Kilkenny. KCETB is currently preparing a business plan for submission to SOLAS.

The new college will play a critical role in enabling KCETB to substantially increase its capacity to deliver apprenticeships and traineeships catering for students, from both Kilkenny and Carlow, in modern industry-standard facilities not currently available.

Action 4.10: Complete the development of the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) Wexford Further Education and Training (FET) College

Action Leader: Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB)

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action complete

Action Update:

The 52,000 sq. ft Wexford College of FET is presently in the opening phase. By the end of September 2023 all further education programmes were fully operational. The training element will commence in October and November including craft apprenticeship programmes in electrical, plumbing, and so on. Staff have been recruited and this is a historic commencement of the 'College of the Future' model as envisaged in the SOLAS FET strategy. Approximately 350 FET learners will be in attendance in the Wexford College of FET daily. The commitment from SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to WWETB over ten years for this project will be in excess of €10 million.

The 50,000 sq ft extension to Waterford Training Centre, in the adjacent former Techniform building, is being opened in phases. Some of the craft apprenticeship workshops are now open and one electrical programme is now operating. At least four other craft apprenticeship workshops will open, and classes are presently being scheduled with SOLAS for commencement. Activity such as agricultural mechanics apprenticeships will commence early in 2024.

Action 4.11: Position the South-East as a productivity and process improvement hub for companies through increased engagement in enterprise excellence research, innovation, training, and clustering

Action Leader: RIKON and South-East Technological University

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

Work is near complete on building a dedicated Productivity and Process Improvement Hub at WorkLAB Waterford, including specialised Lean Industry 4.0 training space. The first phase of 3D simulation modelling and analytical technology is currently being implemented. A recruitment campaign for specialised lean and simulation modelling is progressing with a planned opening for the first quarter 2024.

Strategic Objective 5: Place

Action 5.1: Implement the Ireland's Ancient East South-East Tourism Action Plan to enhance visitor experiences in activity tourism; food and drink tourism; history and culture tourism; and castles, houses, and gardens

Action Leader: Fáilte Ireland and County Councils

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The regional food tourism initiative titled 'South-East Food Stories' is a collaboration among service and accommodation providers in the region with the support of the local authority tourism officers and Fáilte Ireland. A trial phase of this initiative, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the local authorities, has now been launched and can be viewed at: <https://southeastfoodstories.com>.

For this action to move beyond the trial phase, one of the relevant stakeholders will have to take full ownership of it.

Action 5.2: Strengthen upskilling opportunities in hospitality and customer service in the South-East

Action Leader: Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the South-East Regional Skills Forum

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The challenge under this action is to improve the low levels of participation in the range of upskilling opportunities available to the hospitality and customer service sectors. Enrolments in higher education full time courses are currently low. Participation on part time FET courses is also low, yet the range of provision is quite good.

Kilkenny and Carlow ETB and Tipperary ETB are now delivering the Commis Chef Apprenticeship which is serving the region well. Also, there are two part time programmes in SETU funded by Springboard:

- Certificate in Culinary Skills (Waterford) Level 6 60 credits 100% funded which started in September 2023 and
- Diploma in Restaurant Management (Waterford) Level 7 60 credits 90% funded – to start in January 2024

In response to the Unified Tertiary System Policy, efforts are underway to offer SETU's Bachelor of Business in Tourism and Hospitality Services L7 three years full time – jointly between KCETB (year 1) and SETU (year 2 and 3).

Action 5.3: Scale up the Ireland South-East marketing campaign for the region

Action Leader: South-East Marketing Stakeholder Group to be established by Ireland South-East Development Office, Enterprise Ireland, and IDA Ireland

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

The Financial Times fDi Intelligence magazine selected the South-East as the #1 region for FDI Strategy in their European Regions of the Future Awards 2023. A digital marketing campaign to celebrate this award took place in Q1 2023, garnering thousands of impressions on LinkedIn. A short campaign was also trialled to attract ICT talent into the region in light of job losses at major ICT companies in Dublin.

Marketing activity has been ongoing during 2023 with significant interaction on LinkedIn. The Ireland South-East LinkedIn account achieved 389,000 organic impressions during the 12-month period from December 2022 to December 2023. A small, sponsored campaign achieved an additional 25,000.

Action 5.4: Position the South-East as Ireland's top remote working location

Action Leader: Ireland South-East Development Office

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2024

Status: Action on target

Action Update:

A component of the ongoing Ireland South-East digital marketing campaigns described in Objective 5, Action 1, is to position the region as a great place for remote working. Available remote working locations have been promoted on www.irelandsoutheast.com along with value propositions relating to this objective.

Several successes have been achieved in attracting second site teams to set up within hubs in the South-East. These have the potential to expand to bigger size teams over time.

Individual County Councils have also promoted hubs within their own county boundaries and new hubs have been opened across the region.

Action Status Table by Strategic Objectives

*Updated timeline agreed by Steering Committee

Strategic Objective 1: Start and Grow	Status	For completion by
Action 1.1: Establish a South-East advisory board of established senior entrepreneurs and develop a structured programme of engagement for this group.	Action complete	Q3 2022
Action 1.2: Enhance coordination of public start-up supports across the region.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.3: Deliver on the South-East Technological University's objective of supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the region.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.4: Increase investment in RDI support structures to maximise opportunities for enterprises to effectively engage, access and exploit knowledge and IP.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 1.5: Build on EU-funded Pilot South-East Intrapreneurship Report to support local companies realise new opportunities.	Action not on target	Q4 2024*

Strategic Objective 2: Green Growth	Status	For completion by
Action 2.1: Position the South-East as an Offshore and Onshore Wind Energy Hub.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Action 2.2: Develop a strategic approach to regional green skills at further and higher education level.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 2.3: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food, Forestry and Marine Innovation in the South-East.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 2.4: Support the growth of a National Centre of Excellence for High Performance Buildings in Wexford.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 2.5: Green Awareness – Promotion of Industry Best Practice in Sustainability and Green Opportunities.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Strategic Objective 3: Smart Specialisation and Clustering	Status	For completion by
Action 3.1: Develop a coherent approach with industry-driven governance to strategic development of key South-East clusters.	Action discontinued	Q4 2022
Action 3.2: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Engineering Cluster.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 3.3: Expand and enhance industry engagement with the South-East Financial Services Cluster.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Action 3.4: Assess and progress the South-East ICT Cluster.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 3.5: Explore potential to start and grow an industry-led South-East Life Sciences Cluster.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 3.6: Explore potential to start a South-East AgriFood, Forestry and Marine Cluster.	Action discontinued	Q4 2024
Action 3.7: Local Enterprise Offices to develop four regional micro-clusters in pharma, lean manufacturing, green and digital marketing.	Action on target	Q4 2024

Strategic Objective 4: Innovate	Status	For completion by
Action 4.1: Explore a feasibility study for a SETU multi-disciplinary research centre of excellence.	Action on target	Q4 2024*
Action 4.2: Create a LEO South-East virtual Innovation Hub.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.3: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the life sciences innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.4: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the	Action on target	Q4 2024

advanced manufacturing innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East.		
Action 4.5: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the ICT innovation, research and development ecosystem in South-East.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.6: Position the South-East as a destination for design-led thinking, design innovation, education, and training.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.7: Explore opportunity to develop a Financial Services Centre of Excellence in the South-East.	Action on target	Q4 2023
Action 4.8: Identify opportunities to scale and increase enterprise engagement in the agri-food, forestry innovation, research and development ecosystem in the South-East.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.9: Advance Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board's Further Education and Training College of the Future.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 4.10: Complete the development of the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) Wexford Further Education and Training (FET) College.	Action complete	Q4 2024
Action 4.11: Position the South-East as a productivity and process improvement hub for companies through increased	Action on target	Q4 2024

engagement in enterprise excellence research, innovation, training, and clustering.		
---	--	--

Strategic Objective 5: Place	Status	For completion by
Action 5.1: Implement the Ireland's Ancient East South-East Tourism Action Plan to enhance visitor experiences in activity tourism; food and drink tourism; history and cultural tourism; and castles, houses and gardens.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 5.2: Strengthen upskilling opportunities in hospitality and customer service in the South-East.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 5.3: Scale up the Ireland South-East marketing campaign for the region.	Action on target	Q4 2024
Action 5.4: Position the South-East as Ireland's top remote working location.	Action on target	Q4 2024