

**Mid West Region
First Progress Report:
Actions to June 2016**

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MINISTERS' FOREWORD



The Regional Action Plans for Jobs initiative is a key element in supporting the delivery of balanced regional development, which is a key priority of Government. The Programme for a Partnership Government sets a goal to help create 200,000 additional jobs by 2020. Importantly, 135,000 of those jobs are to be in the regions outside Dublin.

The Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid West region, covering the counties of Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary, aims to build on the unique strengths of the region to support businesses to start up, grow and generate exports.

While much emphasis is placed on multi-nationals, we remain for the most part, an economy dependent on small, family business. Across the towns and villages of our regions, employment is heavily based on the SME sector. Ensuring these SMEs have access to both supports and market opportunities is vital to ensuring consistent and real recovery across the country. No matter what part of the country you are in, developing an idea with the support of the Local Enterprise Office or Enterprise Ireland and growing to scale is something we want to see happening more and more in every county. The LEO network is a great asset and my firm view is that it offers great potential to support job creation and help entrepreneurs and small businesses start up and grow.

Overall these reports demonstrate that real progress is being made on the Government ambition to ensure all regions reach their economic potential. We are nowhere near our endpoint, but we are getting better and enhancing both the employment and economic potential of the Mid West region.

From a low of 144,500 in 2014, employment levels have now reached 162,400 in this region in Q3 2016 – an increase of 12.4%. The QNHS shows that there is positive jobs growth across a range of sectors, including Industry, Health and Social Work activities, Transportation and Storage, and Professional, Scientific and Technical activities.

In tandem with strong jobs growth, the unemployment rate has reduced from a high of 17% in 2010 to 7.4% in Q3 2016. This represents real progress and a major milestone for the Mid West. Every job created has a real effect on men, women and children and the wider community. That is why we cannot be complacent about job creation but we are happy to see that we continue to move in the right direction.

Contrary to popular belief, employment recovery is not confined to Dublin – in fact 72% of the new jobs created over the last twelve months have gone to people from outside Dublin. As was the case with all regions, the downturn in employment hit the Mid West heavily in 2008 but there is potential to improve that and grow sustainable jobs in the region, based on the sectoral strengths, skills profile and innovative capacity within this region.

Every day, world-leading companies based in the Mid West, such as First Data, Regeneron, Uber, Eishtech, TTM Healthcare, and Becton Dickinson, all of which recently made new jobs announcements in the region, are showing that by investing in people and talent, global opportunities are possible regardless of the location. What we need to do is enhance the job-potential environment and ensure companies based in Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary have access to global market opportunities. What this report demonstrates is that in regions like the Mid West, with the right environment, world-leading companies, both Irish and foreign owned, co-exist and create a dynamic enterprise base. Our enterprise agencies are available to provide assistance to companies at all stages of their journey whether as start-ups, companies that are scaling or exporting, or companies seeking to invest in Ireland.

Government does not create jobs, but is an enabler of jobs. This region has rich potential in Manufacturing, ICT, Aviation, Tourism, Agri-food and Agri-Tech, Pharma and Medical Technology. We have responded to the crash, but now is the time to build resilience in the economy with a global competitive business offering.

There is no doubt but that Brexit will test our economic resilience. Many companies in the Mid West will have some exposure to the UK. Although there is still a lack of clarity as to the extent to which Brexit will impact on the businesses in the area, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and the LEOs are working with these companies to focus on talent, innovation, competitiveness and investing in people. This remains the best way to build resilience in a company.

Of course the Regional Action Plans themselves will not solve everything. A full recovery requires more than just jobs. These Plans will be complemented by other programmes the Government is working on at national level, including the Action Plan for Rural Development, infrastructure projects, the Action Plan for Jobs, skills strategies, and the Action Plan for Housing.

Employment recovery is a critical element of a wider social recovery. Now is not the time for complacency. Despite global uncertainty, the goal of full employment in the lifetime of this Government is within reach. This employment will be sustainable, built on the back of talent and innovation – something the Mid West with its excellent skills and talent base and strong education and research infrastructure, has in abundance.

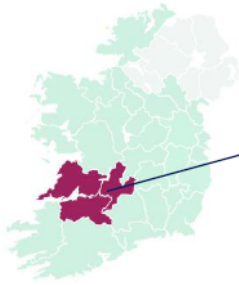
We would also like to pay tribute to Barry O’Sullivan, the Chairman, the Enterprise Champions and all members of the Implementation Committee for their ongoing commitment to the Mid West Regional Action Plan, to job creation within the region and in helping to drive the ambition of the Plan. The input which you bring to the process creates a real step-up in the level of innovation and jobs impact of this process. This is a genuine public service which will make a real impact to the Mid West region.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Mitchell O'Connor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" being the most prominent.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor, TD
Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pat Breen". The signature is cursive and clearly legible.

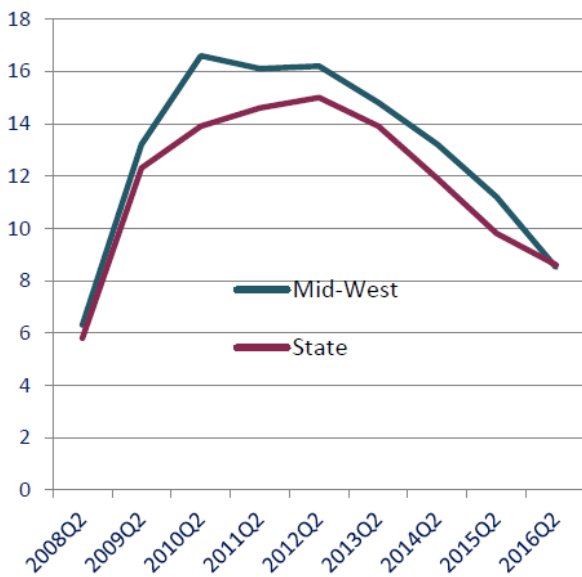
Pat Breen, TD
Minister of State for Employment and Small Business



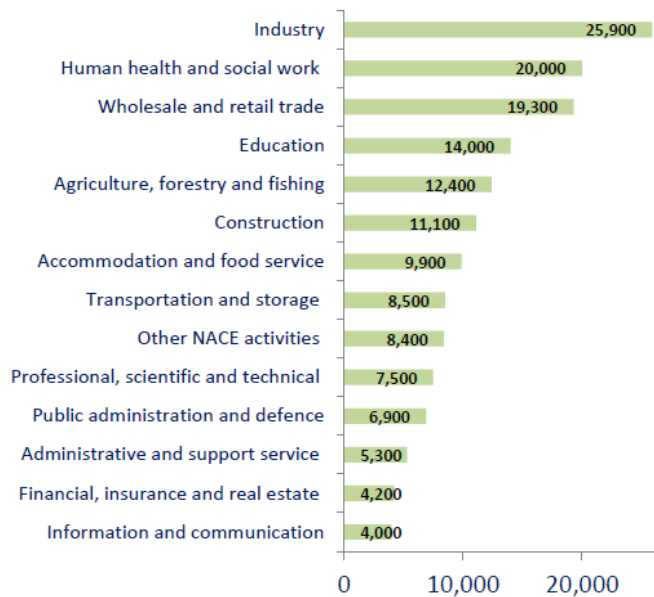
EMPLOYMENT SNAPSHOT: MID WEST REGION

	2015 Q1	2016 Q1	2016 Q2
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (,000)	148.6	153.9	157.6
Unemployed Persons aged 15 years and over (,000)	16.7	13.2	14.6
Persons aged 15 years and over in Labour Force (,000)	165.4	167.1	172.2
ILO Unemployment Rate (15 - 74 years) (%)	10.2	7.9	8.5
ILO Participation Rate (15 years and over) (%)	56.2	57.1	58.3

ILO Unemployment Rate (15 - 74 years) (%) by NUTS 3 Regions and Quarter



Sectoral Breakdown of Employment: Mid West Q2 2016



Mid West Employment/Unemployment Trends

(see graph above)

- There are currently 157,600 people in employment in the Mid West region
- At 8.5%, the Mid West Unemployment Rate is now below the State average (8.6%)
- The Unemployment Rate has declined by 1.7% since Q1 2015
- 9,000 more people are employed in the Mid West since Q1 2015, while the number of unemployed persons is down by 2,100
- The Mid West has also seen increases in the Labour Force (+6,800) and Participation Rates (+2.1%) since Q1 2015

Source: CSO QNHS Persons aged 15 years and over by NUTS3 Regions, Statistical Indicator and Quarter

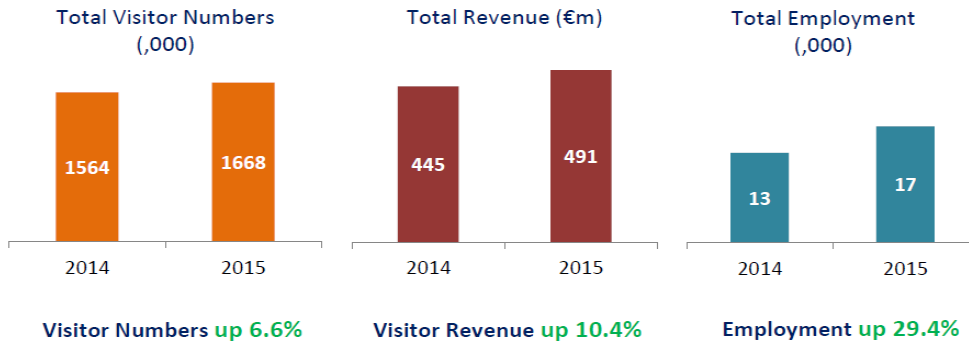
Sectoral Breakdown of Employment

(see chart above)

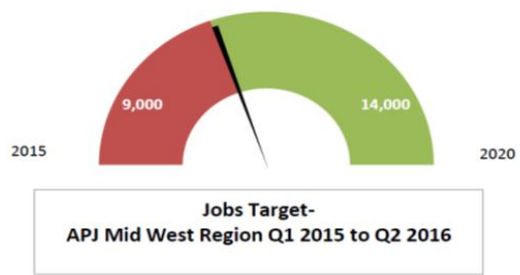
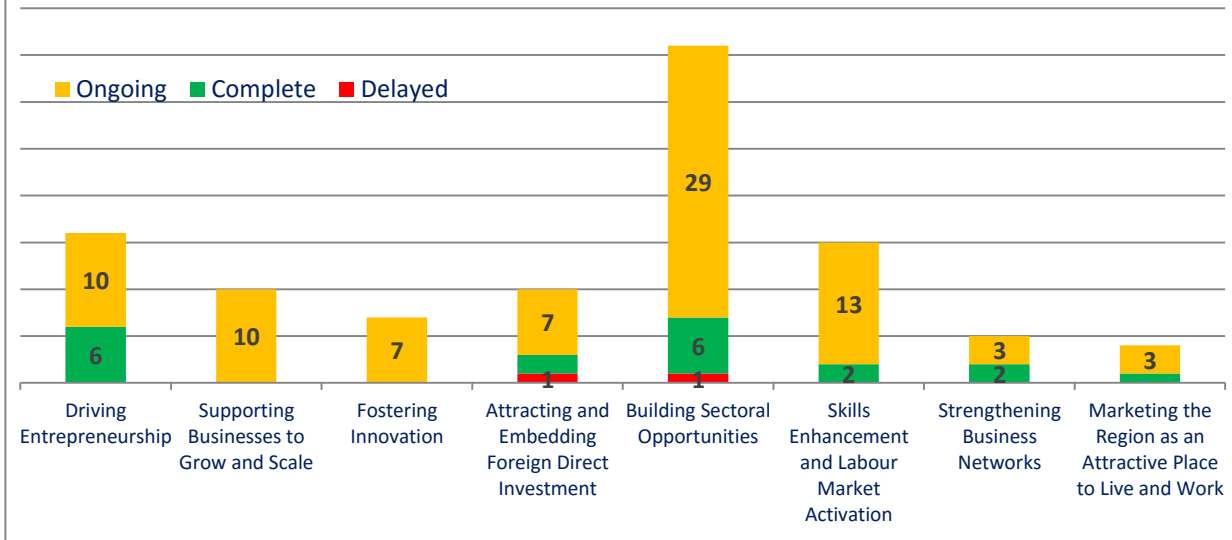
- Total **Services** account for 69% of the region's workforce; Total **Industry** for 23%; **Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing** for 8%.
- **Industry** (excluding Construction) is currently the largest sector of employment, accounting for nearly 26,000 jobs or 16% of the workforce
- **Health and Social Work Activities**, and **Wholesale and Retail**, are the next largest sectors with 20,000 and 19,300 employed
- Total **Services** employment increased by 5,600 from Q1 2015 to Q2 2016, Total **Industry** by 1,300

Source: CSO QNHS Q2 2016: Persons aged 15 and over in employment (ILO) classified by sex, region and NACE Rev. 2 Economic Sector

Tourism in the Mid West 2014 -2015



Scorecard: Actions to June 2016



ACTIONS DUE BY JUNE 2016

By the first half of 2016, Departments and Agencies have already delivered, or are on track for delivering, 101 of the Mid West Action Plan’s 103 actions that were due by June 2016. Only two actions that were due to be progressed or delivered by June 2016 will not be delivered within the intended timeframe. This represents an overall implementation rate of 98%.

OPENING COMMENTARY

This is the first Progress Report from the Implementation Committee established by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to oversee and monitor implementation of the measures contained in the Mid West Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017. The report outlines progress made on measures due for completion up to and including the first half of 2016 as well as progress made on measures that are ongoing during the 2015-2017 period of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan for Jobs for the Mid West Region was launched on October 19th, 2015. The aim of the Plan is to deliver a key priority for Government – to deliver local jobs and to ensure every region achieves its economic potential.

The core objective of the Plan is to support the creation of an extra 23,000 jobs across the counties of Clare, Limerick, and North Tipperary by 2020 through the delivery of 159 collaborative actions. These actions focus on increasing the number of entrepreneurs/start-ups and developing the capacity of existing enterprises, with actions targeted at sectors of potential competitive advantage such as manufacturing, tourism, food and energy.

This represents an important step towards the Government's ambition of creating 200,000 extra jobs by 2020 with 135,000 of these to be outside Dublin.

The plans are monitored and driven in each region by Implementation Committees comprising representatives from the Enterprise Sector as well as the Local Authorities, Enterprise Agencies, and other public bodies in the region. The Mid West Implementation Committee is chaired by Barry O'Sullivan, General Manager of J&J Vision Care.

Progress in job creation and addressing unemployment has continued strongly in the Mid West since 2012. As of Q2 2016, the Mid West's unemployment rate, at 8.5%, is below the State average. This represents a significant improvement since Q1 2012 when unemployment in the region stood at 16%. Since the beginning of 2015, the region has seen an increase of 9,000 in numbers employed. Labour Force numbers and Participation Rates are also up, suggesting that jobs are being created locally, giving people the opportunity to live and work in the region.

The ongoing work of the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs Implementation Committee will be to continue this positive momentum, building on the excellent record of collaborative action demonstrated to date.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS



10 projects in the Mid West were successful in securing funding through Enterprise Ireland Regional Competitive Calls. (Actions 7 and 8)



Design for a **new IDA Advance Office Building in Limerick** is underway and a number of other investments in the Mid West have been announced in 2015/2016 including First Data, Regeneron, Shannon Aircraft Motor Works, and Uber. (Actions 47 & 50)



The **Regional Skills Forum for the Mid West** has been established and a Forum Manager appointed. (Action 123)



The **International Aviation Services Centre** has brought the Aviation sector together in the region to form a **cluster group** to support collaboration and growth in the sector. A directory of regional cluster members has also been published. (Action 98)



Work has commenced on the development of a **Shanonn Blueway (Multi Activity Trail)** in Clare, Tipperary, Galway, and Offaly which offers significant opportunities to grow the **outdoor adventure tourism** in the region. (Action 75)



A **capital programme and international and domestic marketing** is underway for the **Wild Atlantic Way** which includes a focus on events and festivals such as the Fleadh Ceoil, Wild Atlantic Way projects, and food and cultural events in the Mid West. (Action 72)



The Department of Applied Science at LIT launched a **new degree in Medical Technology** in September 2015. This programme that will provide graduates with diverse employment opportunities both in Healthcare and Hospital settings and in the **fast growing Bio Medical Industry sectors**. (Action 96)



A **Level 7 degree in Precision Engineering** was designed by LIT, with industry, in order to respond efficiently and effectively to the **needs of the Precision Engineering sector**. A Level 8 programme is in development. (Action 64)



Thousands of second-level students attended this year's engineering careers showcase event organised by the industry-led **Limerick4Engineering** organisation, with the support of the education and training providers in the region. (Action 39)



Lero at the University of Limerick has **promoted computing and ICT to more than 3,000 people** (including students, teachers, and the wider community) at approximately 30 events, including the Limerick for Engineering Showcase, since the launch of the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs. (Action 139)

ENTERPRISE IRELAND COMPETITIVE CALLS

€50 million is being made available to the 8 regions out to 2020 through three competitive calls administered by Enterprise Ireland. These calls are being targeted at innovative and collaborative approaches to support job creation across the regions. On June 1st 2016, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D., announced an initial allocation of €5m in competitive funding for local and regional initiatives under the LEO Competitive Fund and the Community Enterprise Initiative.

Among the 48 projects allocated funding to date are:

LEO COMPETITIVE FUND

- **LEO Wicklow, LEO Tipperary, LEO Wexford, LEO Carlow, and LEO Kilkenny**
Consolidation of a creative hub in the South Eastern region through an extensive networking and training programme for established SMEs and Start-Ups servicing the creative industries
- **LEO Wexford, LEO Tipperary, LEO Waterford, LEO Wicklow, LEO Kilkenny, LEO Carlow, LEO Kildare, and LEO Laois**
A pilot programme that will offer carefully selected micro-enterprises with growth ambitions the opportunity to benefit from concentrated support from a dedicated advisory panel of three experts per enterprise
- **LEO Tipperary, LEO Waterford, LEO Wexford, LEO Carlow, LEO Kilkenny**
A programme to explore the potential for higher levels of innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity in agricultural technology (AgTech)

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE FUND

- **Kilkee Tourism Limited**
Kilkee Geocentre Enterprise Facility will have a training facility and a hotdesk facility to foster entrepreneurs in the locality. The educational facility has the capacity to expand its educational offering beyond geology to ornithology, botany, and archaeology.
- **Tipperary Culinary Delights Company**
Assess the viability of a Food Centre of Excellence in North Tipperary.
- **Limerick City Build (Regen) Limited**
Limerick City Build Ltd (LCB) provides direct employment, bespoke training, employment placement, and enterprise incubation facilities for those who are longer term unemployed.
- **Ballyhoura Development Limited**
Development and management of a community led cluster of food enterprise activities and infrastructure.
- **Kantohar Development Group Limited**
Put in place a full-time Business Development Executive to drive economic activity around a cluster of community enterprise centres in the West Limerick area, namely Kantohar Business Park, Broadford Enterprise Centre, and the Red Door Business Incubation Centre,

with a particular focus on the opportunities that can be created in the agri-food/agri-tech sector.

- **International Aviation Services Centre & Shannon Commercial Properties**

Development of a facility for the setting up of the Aerospace and Aviation Enterprise & Incubation Centre in Shannon. The centre is to offer facilities and support to entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

- **Hospital Food Units Limited**

In autumn 2013 Andersen Ireland Ltd announced 169 redundancies and that the business in Rathkeale, Co Limerick was going into liquidation. Innovate Limerick are now applying to Enterprise Ireland for grant assistance towards the cost of sub-dividing the former Andersen Factory into incubation and enterprise space.

Further funding calls will be announced in early 2017.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICES

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary play an important role in job creation. They are an excellent example of a collaborative partnership between the LEOs, Enterprise Ireland, local authorities, and their parent Departments in delivering supports and signposting to start-ups, microenterprise, and small businesses. Through the efforts of the Mid West LEOs, a total of 443 jobs (gross) were created in the Mid West in 2015.

REGIONAL SKILLS FORUM

The Mid West Regional Skills Forum has been established to connect education providers with employers to build the skills of the region. The Regional Skills Forum Manager is a member of the Mid West Action Plan for Jobs Implementation Committee. The Regional Skills Forum for the Mid West is comprised of education and training provider groups namely: University of Limerick; Limerick Institute of Technology; Mary Immaculate College; The Education and Training Boards in Limerick, Clare, and North Tipperary; the Local Enterprise Offices at Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary; and Skillnets. These organisations are working in partnership with Industry Representatives Groups including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Ibec, and Chambers of Commerce to build the skills of the region.

SPRINGBOARD+

136 places have been approved on Springboard+ programmes at the University of Limerick In 2016. The Springboard+ initiative offers free higher education courses to the unemployed focused on sectors where there are employment opportunities.

Programmes At UL include:

- Specialist Diplomas in Lean Systems, Mechatronics, Supply Chain Management, Six Sigma
- Higher Diplomas in International Financial Services, Software Systems Development, Software Development, Middleware Integration and Software Development
- Graduate Diploma in International Entrepreneurship Management.

- Certificates in Digital Fabrication – Design and Manufacture, Production and Inventory Management.

EXPANSION OF LERO – THE IRISH SOFTWARE RESEARCH CENTRE

As part of a €46.4m investment, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) announced in November 2015 the expansion of Lero – the Irish software research centre, headquartered at the University of Limerick (UL). The expansion will create 136 new research positions to help Lero expand its research scope from purely software engineering to a wider range of software disciplines. These research areas will combine core research with targeted projects in up-and-coming sectors including cybersecurity, internet of things, cloud computing, medical devices, and smart cities.

This expansion will be one of the biggest in Lero’s history, with €32.6m of the investment being funded by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) with additional support from the EU Structural Funds. There is also a contribution of €13.8m coming from various players in the industry.

The additional funding will also allow for Lero’s expansion to incorporate software researchers from University College Cork (UCC) and NUI Maynooth, which now means that all Irish universities plus Dundalk IT are represented in the national centre.

NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN (PROGRESS TO JUNE 2016)

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through private investment by commercial telecommunications companies and through a State intervention in areas where commercial investment is not forthcoming.

The procurement process formally commenced in December 2015 with the publication of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and Project Information Memorandum. Five responses were received from prospective bidders to this stage of the competitive procurement process by the deadline of 31 March 2016. These responses have been evaluated by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources from a technical, financial, and legal compliance perspective. A number of companies have qualified to proceed to the next stage of the procurement process, in which qualified bidders will be invited to formally dialogue with the Department, based on detailed schedules drawn up by the Department.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIRST DATA

In January 2016, First Data, a global leader in commerce-enabling technology and solutions, announced plans to establish a research and development centre in Nenagh, North Tipperary. The centre, which will be operational in early 2017, will house up to 300 highly skilled employees to centralise work on a number of the company's leading technology platforms. This announcement will deliver significant economic benefits for North Tipperary and the wider Mid West region.

UBER CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

In January 2016, Michael Noonan, the Minister of Finance, today opened Uber's Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Thomas Street, Limerick. The Centre is to become a major hub of Uber's support organisation across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, driving innovation and service excellence for the community of users in the region. The company aims to make Limerick one of its growing network of customer service hubs across the world. Uber signed a ten year lease on a site on Thomas Street, which underwent a major redesign and refit. The Centre of Excellence officially opened with 100 employees, recruited since August 2015. The centre will house more than 300 full-time staff when fully operational.

REGENERON

On October 19 2015, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc., one of the fastest-growing global biopharmaceutical companies, announced an investment of an additional \$350 million in its Limerick Industrial Operations and Product Supply (IOPS) bioprocessing campus and will add another 200 jobs. This brings the total expected job creation in the Limerick area to 500 jobs and total investment to \$650 million by the end of 2017.

The company acquired the former Dell Computer facility in Limerick and achieved planning approval in April 2014 for its first IOPS site outside of the United States. When the investment was initially announced in December 2013, a \$300 million investment with 300 jobs was planned for delivery by the end of 2016. With this expansion of scope, the Limerick IOPS campus will house the largest-scale bulk biologics production facility in Ireland.

EISHTEC

Eishtec, the Waterford based customer service solution provider, announced in September 2015 the creation of 200 jobs in its new custom built centre in Clonmel. Eishtec started trading in May 2011 with just 9 employees, and already employs 1300 people across its sites in Waterford, Wexford and Craigavon. Eishtec supports major UK brands such as EE, the largest and most advanced digital communications company in Britain, delivering mobile and fixed communications services to the UK market. The jobs created will provide customer service support for the UK market.

LEADING IRISH COMPANIES ANNOUNCE CONTRACTS IN FRANCE VALUED AT OVER €5M

Enterprise Ireland announced in September 2015 contracts by two Irish companies responding to opportunities in the highly competitive French Cleantech and Construction sectors. Tricel (Killarney, Co. Kerry) and Wood Energy Solutions (Cahir, Co. Tipperary), announced contracts totaling over €5m with French companies at a Business Breakfast in Lyon attended by the Taoiseach. Wood Energy

Solutions (WES), based in Cahir, Co. Tipperary, manufacture biomass boilers and microCHP for the domestic and commercial sectors.

SHANNON AIRCRAFT MOTOR WORKS

In September 2015, United Technologies Corp., a company providing high-technology systems and services to the building and aerospace industries, announced the addition of 20 new jobs at a maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) centre in Shannon for its UTC Aerospace Systems business as part of a €6m investment. Shannon Aircraft Motor Works, a unit of UTC Aerospace Systems, will service the next generation of Smart Probe Air Data Information Management Systems and sensors for the commercial aircraft market in Europe.

TTM HEALTHCARE

A 'Start Your Own Business' course and some funding from the former Clare County Enterprise Board (now Local Enterprise Office) laid the foundations of TTM Healthcare. This healthcare recruitment company that now employs 1,500 healthcare professionals. Headquartered in Ennis, TTM has announced 500 new jobs over the next five years. The company currently employs 80 staff at its headquarters in Ballymaley and there are plans to expand the workforce at the site. TTM is recognised as one of Europe's leading specialist recruiters of healthcare staff with offices in Dublin, Cork, the UK, Germany and Poland as well as a large network of international partners across Europe, Africa, and Asia.

BREXIT (POSITION AT END-JUNE 2016)

The UK decision will not take effect for some time and the precise implications of the referendum result will now depend on the period of negotiation ahead, involving the UK and our EU partners.

Government has a clear plan in place to respond to the referendum outcome and has a Contingency Framework which maps the key issues that will be most important to Ireland in the coming weeks, months and years, including the future changing trading relationship between the UK and Ireland, and the protection of jobs here, both of which are of course interlinked. The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation is fully engaged in the risk analysis and contingency planning work that is being undertaken at cross-Government level, led by the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Government, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the enterprise agencies are fully committed to supporting business in this period of heightened uncertainty; however, this is being done against the background of a strong economy and a highly competitive enterprise sector.

There have been multiple contacts already between IDA and Enterprise Ireland and their respective senior business clients. Enterprise Ireland, has already set up a helpline and email address to provide assistance to its clients, and will implement a range of plans to assist Irish exporters. In addition, EI will fine-tune existing support tools to address new UK market conditions. The IDA will continue to market Ireland across the globe as the number one location for foreign direct investment.

ACTIONS NOT DELIVERED AS PLANNED BY H1 2016

As stated above, 2 of the actions due for delivery by June 2016 have not been delivered on schedule:

Action 62: Connect Ireland's 'Connectivation' competition has been postponed due to contractual issues. A further update will be provided in H2 2016.

Action 92: Due to a re-assignment of staff resources in Tesco, delivery of the Tesco Taste Buds project (with Bord Bia) has been delayed until H2 2016.

ACTION UPDATES

DRIVING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND START-UPS

Action 1: Drive and encourage entrepreneurship in the Mid West Region through initiatives such as Enterprise Start workshops and New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Regional enterprise development and start-up formation is supported by a range of players at a regional level, such as the Local Enterprise Offices, the Local Authorities, the BICs, the Higher Education Sector and Enterprise Ireland. To contribute to supporting start-up creation nationally, Enterprise Ireland provides a range of supports which are available regionally. For example:

Enterprise Start Workshops: These workshops target people who have an idea for an innovative and ambitious start-up business that has the potential for exporting and growth in International Markets. The objective of these workshops is to explore key business areas of focus, such as, customer, market and funding needs. Enterprise Ireland generally runs two Enterprise Start Programmes in the Mid West each year. The next Enterprise Start is planned for the second half of 2016.

New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme: New Frontiers is Enterprise Ireland's national entrepreneur development programme for innovative early-stage start-ups. It is a three-phased programme based in 14 campus incubation centres across the country. Nationally, each year, New Frontiers funds approximately 150 companies. In the Mid West Region, New Frontiers is delivered by the Limerick Institute of Technology in the Hartnett Centre, in partnership with the University of Limerick and Enterprise Ireland. In 2015 approx 40 people participated in Phase 1 (6 weeks part-time); 10 projects progressed to Phase 2 (6 months full time); and 6 progressed to Phase 3 (3 months full time approx). In 2016 Enterprise Ireland's Board approved the funding of a revised New Frontiers programme for 2016. With this approval in place LIT has commenced delivery of Phase 1 of the programme with Phase 2 planned for September.

Through Springboard, 10 places have been made available on the Graduate Diploma, International Entrepreneurship Management at the University of Limerick.

Competitive Feasibility Fund: Enterprise Ireland ran a programme in Q4 2015 with 6 companies successful in getting funding of up to €25k against a €50k spend (50% max). Enterprise Ireland plans to run the next programme in Q4 2016.

Competitive Start Fund: The purpose of the Competitive Start Fund is to accelerate the growth of start-up companies that have the capability to succeed in global markets through the provision of €50,000 seed capital per company against a €5,000 matched funding. Enterprise Ireland has a number of targeted CSF initiatives each year occurring approximately every two months with funding of 10 to 15 projects per initiative. These initiatives have targeted specific sub-groups e.g. Female Entrepreneurs; Graduate Entrepreneurship; Regionally Based Entrepreneurs; and sectors like Agri-tech and ICT in the past year.

Action 2: Run a Competitive Feasibility Fund for the Mid West in 2015 to assist new start-up companies. Approximately 10 innovation-led projects will be approved under this call.

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

Enterprise Ireland offers feasibility funding for business start-ups in various sectors and geographic regions. The objective of the Competitive Feasibility Fund for the Mid West Region was to assist new start-up companies or entrepreneurs, to investigate the viability of a new growth-orientated business proposition which has the potential to become a High Growth Potential Start-Up in counties Clare, Limerick, and North Tipperary. A Competitive Feasibility Programme was delivered in December 2015 with 6 projects approved for funding.

Action 3: Each of the Local Enterprise Offices in the Mid West region will aim to increase employment in its baseline through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Annual Business Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in their region. Key aggregate targets for the Mid West LEOs for 2015 are:

- €1.907 million will be available in grant assistance and enterprise development supports;
- 20 Start Your Own Business courses will be run, for over 220 participants;
- 3 Export Awareness Initiatives to be delivered to approx. 25 participants;
- 150 clients will be assigned Start-up/ Business Development mentors;
- Over 100 women will participate on core LEO training programmes (Start Your Own Business, Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, Mentoring);
- 43 schools to participate in Student Enterprise programme;
- Over 68 new applications for Online Trading vouchers;
- Assist over 24 MFI loan applications.

These targets will be further developed in 2016 and 2017.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Local Enterprise Office Mid West Region Annual Employment Survey Results for 2015

LEO	2015 No of LEO Clients	2015 Client All Jobs Total (FT & PT)*	2015 Gross All Job Gains (FT & PT)	2015 Net All Job Gains (FT & PT)
Clare	194	1,433	170	111
Limerick	245	1,475	360	210
Tipperary (all county)	282	1,319	201	122
Grand Total	721	4,227	731	443

In 2015, the following were provided / delivered by the Mid West LEOs:

- €2.238m approved to 100 projects for priming, feasibility and business expansion grants.
- 30 Start Your Own Business (SYOB) programmes were run with over 330 participants.
- Export Development workshops organised by the EI PED (Potential Export Division) and LEO clients attended as required.
- Over 360 participants in mentoring assignments completed
- Over 2,200 female participants in all 287 training programmes completed.
- Over 100 schools participated in schools entrepreneurship programmes, with 1,485 participants.
- Total of 118 TOV's (Trading Online Vouchers) were awarded.
- MFI submissions amounted to 50, with 28 approvals completed.

Action 4: The Local Enterprise Offices will maximise collaboration with the Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In North Tipperary, the Local Enterprise Office assists Community Enterprise Centres (CECs) to fill vacancies as they arise and in most cases provides a pipeline of tenants. CECs feature in the new suite of marketing materials being produced for the County's five Municipal Districts. In Q1 2017, Tipperary LEO will establish a benchmark for each centre and set targets for each to achieve at least 80% occupancy by end 2017. They will also continue to monitor the need for and initiate investment in incubation space. Based on work space deficits identified Tipperary LEO can draw up a work programme to address same. The Local Enterprise Office updates the county database of zoned land, enterprise centre space and brown field space on a biennial basis and is working with Roscrea Chamber to assess the viability of developing an Enterprise Centre in the town. LEO staff are represented on the boards of some centres and regularly attend meetings to provide support and direction as required. The LEO also provides marketing support and technical assistance grants aid to Centres as required. In addition, LEO Staff are supporting LIT to achieve full occupancy in Questum Acceleration Centre and TCEC on an ongoing basis.

A significant number of CEC tenants are LEO Measure 1 clients. LEO staff market CEC space to potential entrepreneurs and in some cases (e.g. the Food Works, Rearcross) all tenants over the past 6 years were LEO referrals and M1 grantees.

Action 5: Enterprise Ireland will implement the findings from the review of the New Frontiers Entrepreneurial Development Programme in order to evolve the programme to maximise its positive impacts on entrepreneurship in the region.

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

In the Mid West Region, New Frontiers is delivered by the Limerick Institute of Technology in the Hartnett Centre, in partnership with the University of Limerick and Enterprise Ireland. In 2015 approx 40 people participated in Phase 1 (6 weeks part-time); 10 projects progressed to Phase 2 (6 months full time); and 6 progressed to Phase 3 (3 months full time approx). In 2016 Enterprise Ireland's Board approved the funding of a revised New Frontiers programme for 2016. With this approval in place LIT has commenced delivery of Phase 1 of the programme with Phase 2 planned for September.

Action 7: Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the €5 million Community Enterprise Initiative

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

Incubation space for start-ups and entrepreneurs in the Mid West region is a key piece of the start-up ecosystem. In mid-2015 Enterprise Ireland launched the Community Enterprise Initiative. The scheme focussed on three elements - Collaboration Initiatives; Renovation Projects; and support for Business Development Managers. Via a national competitive call process this initiative aims to provide supports for Community Enterprise Centres and other enterprise centres, such as those in the Mid West, to collaborate to utilise and promote their infrastructure to assist in driving start-ups and entrepreneurship in the region.

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD, announced the results of this call in June. Seven applicants were successful in the Mid West:

- Kilkee Tourism Limited
- Tipperary Culinary Delights Company
- Limerick City Build (Regen) Limited
- Ballyhoura Development Limited
- Kantoher Development Group Limited
- International Aviation Services Centre & Shannon Commercial Properties
- Hospital Food Units Limited

Action 8: Enterprise Ireland will evaluate proposals under the €5 million Competitive LEO fund

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

In June 2016, the Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD, announced the results of the recent LEO collaborative. Mid West LEOs are involved in 3 projects:

- LEO Wicklow, LEO Tipperary, LEO Wexford, LEO Carlow, and LEO Kilkenny secured funding to consolidate a creative hub in the South Eastern region through an extensive networking and training programme for established SMEs and start-ups servicing the creative industries.
- LEO Wexford, LEO Tipperary, LEO Waterford, LEO Wicklow, LEO Kilkenny, LEO Carlow, LEO Kildare, and LEO Laois secured funding for a pilot programme that will offer carefully selected micro-enterprises with growth ambitions the opportunity to benefit from concentrated support from the dedicated advisory panel of 3 experts per enterprise
- LEO Tipperary, LEO Waterford, LEO Wexford, LEO Carlow, and LEO Kilkenny secured funding for a programme to explore the potential for higher levels of innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity in agricultural technology (AgTech).

Action 9: Run a national pilot competitive entrepreneurial development programme to target up to 50 female entrepreneurs based outside of urban centres.

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine rolled out the female entrepreneur development programme (ACORNS) in 2015 for aspiring rural female entrepreneurs, to help them achieve their business growth ambitions and help provide beneficial outcomes for rural areas. This programme ran up to April 2016. It was very successful with 44 of the 48 participants (92%) completing the programme.

Action 11: The five Local Development Companies in the region will provide an area-based response to long-term unemployment and deliver a range of programmes to support entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The Local Development Companies will work with the LEOs with a view to progressing clients to the LEO services.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The five Mid West companies currently deliver a range of rural enterprise, social inclusion, and community development initiatives in Clare, Limerick, and North Tipperary. Under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Local Development Companies provide a free, confidential, one-to-one service to people who are seeking employment and may need support in relation to building confidence and motivation; understanding what an employer wants; exploring and addressing barriers to employment; identifying pathways to employment; and referrals to other support services.

A recent (end 2015) review of the Programme, which is funded and overseen by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, noted that 'there is strong collaboration and engagement of Programme Implementers with local stakeholders as a large number of referrals come from government bodies, state agencies, and Local Community Groups.'

<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/SICAP%20End%20of%20Year%20Report%202015%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

The five Mid West Local Development Companies also engage in an ongoing dialogue with the region's three Local Enterprise Offices to provide supports to business creation and sustain existing small enterprises.

Action 12: Local Development Strategies for the delivery of the LEADER programme over the period 2015-2020 will be developed

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Limerick Local Development Strategy was submitted in Autumn 2015 and approved on 29th December 2015.

Clare Local Development Strategy was published in January 2016.

<http://cldc.ie/home/leader/>

Tipperary Local Development Strategy was published in April 2016.

<http://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/Publications/FINAL%20REDACTED%20LDS%20-%20Sept%20%202016.pdf>

Action 13: As part of the Start-Up Gathering initiative to promote and encourage an increase in entrepreneurship and start-up. A Start-Up Gathering event will be held in Limerick in October 2015

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

The Limerick event of the Start-up Gathering took place on October 8th 2015 at Limerick School of Art & Design. More than 150 attendees participated in the event. The keynote speaker was Chris Bryne, CEO of SensorPro who co-founded Cashbook.com in 1992 which pioneered electronic payment and reconciliation solutions on the IBM AS/400 and Microsoft platforms. His presentation offered an insight into the opportunities that exist for Limerick in becoming an International hub for start-up success by thinking big.

The 'Accelerating Momentum towards 2020' panel included Liam Sheedy, Head of Sales and Revenue at Bank of Ireland; Dr. Maria Hinfelaaar, President of LIT; Dermot O 'Connell, Executive Director and GM of OEM Solutions, EMEA Dell; Kieran Harte, GM of UBER; and Denis Hayes, Managing Director of IRDG.

The Entrepreneurs and their Supporters Panel featured inputs from Adrian Fleming, Founder and CEO of Accuvio; Colm O'Brien, Founder and CEO of Carambola Kidz; Hannah Wrixton, Founder and CEO Last Minute Minders; Shane McCarthy, Founder CEO and COO of Bluechief Social; Sallyann Hynes of IDA; and Kevin Sherry of Enterprise Ireland.

Action 14: Mid West Region CEO Forum, working in close collaboration with each Chamber of Commerce in the region and enterprise agencies, will establish a Mid West Enterprise Engagement Platform to increase awareness and take up of national and regional enterprise supports (public and private). The platform will act as a conduit and communication channel for existing businesses to learn about relevant supports, services, and opportunities that are available to them. Each Chamber will be directly involved in communicating with existing businesses in its area as it already has an established relationship with them as Chamber members.

The platform will:

- Offer online information and business events
- Provide referrals to Local Enterprise Offices in the first instance and then, if required, referrals can be directed to particular Agencies and Departments
- Allow organisations/providers to upload their respective grants, incentives, programmes and competitions onto a centralised system
- Connect businesses with appropriate enterprise supports

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

A key element of this work, which is ongoing, involves establishing what currently exists and how this can be integrated into any new platform to avoid duplication. At present each organisation continues to direct any queries to an appropriate platform or person to allow them to discuss the national and regional enterprise supports available.

Action 15: Communicate to business the opportunities that exist from EU funds

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Promotion of the existing opportunities from Horizon 2020 is ongoing through collaborative events with LIT, the University of Limerick, Ibec, Southern Regional Assembly, etc. In addition, there are linkages for business with Horizon 2020 National Contact Points based in Shannon and Dublin for 1:1 support in progressing with applications for national and Horizon 2020 supports.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

Action 17: InterTradelreland will run its annual Seedcorn Competition on a regional basis to give companies the opportunity to improve their investor readiness and greatly increase their chances of raising equity. Local companies will have the opportunity to compete on a regional basis for a prize of €20,000. The regional winner can go on to compete for overall prizes of €50,000 and €100,000.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Seedcorn competition is aimed at early and new start-up companies that have a new equity fund requirement and has a total cash prize of €280,000. A Seedcorn promotional workshop was held in Nexus University of Limerick on 14 April 2016 followed by a second workshop in the Harnett Centre in Limerick IT.

In 2015, Nexus Innovation Centre-based Ocean Survivor, founded by UL Product Design Graduate Kieran Normoyle founder, was crowned the Overall Winner of the 13th annual InterTradelreland Seedcorn competition, winning a cash prize of €100,000 at the grand final. Ocean Survivor, manufactures a range of safety equipment aimed primarily at the off-shore oil industry.

Action 18: Promote national supports available to provide access to finance to start-ups and existing businesses

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Clare LEO, Tipperary LEO, and Limerick LEO are actively promoting supports and financing opportunities to their client base. Formal protocols are in place between LEOs and Revenue, MFI (MicroFinance Ireland), the Department of Social Protection and the Companies Registration Office to ensure LEO clients have access to all Government supports.

Information on schemes is being made available in LEO offices and is also being promoted on LEO websites and through one to one business advice sessions.

Action 19: InterTradelreland will host eight workshops under their “Funding for Growth” initiative in the Mid West region to promote all traditional and non-traditional sources of finance to local businesses, as well as providing an opportunity to meet with a corporate finance expert (target: 200 participants). InterTradelreland will also deliver a series of equity awareness events at regional level including the unique equity advisory clinics where companies can meet with an equity expert, business planning workshops and venture capital case studies

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

InterTradelreland's Funding for Growth programme is aimed at SMEs who are looking for new or alternative sources of funding to finance business growth. Regional workshops and clinics provide attendees with an overview on potential suitable sources of finance for growth and provide them with an opportunity to engage with relevant finance providers, whilst also hearing directly from funding experts. Depending on the stage the company is at, a one-to-one advisory session with a corporate finance expert may then be set up with those who are in a position to secure funding and who meet relevant criteria.

In May 2016, a Funding for Growth workshop was held in Limerick (29 attendees) and this was followed by a Funding for Growth clinic on 21 June.

An equity advisory clinic was held in Limerick on 11 February 2016 and a second clinic is scheduled for Limerick in H2 2016.

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO GROW AND SCALE

Action 22: Enterprise Ireland will run one 'Get Export Ready' workshop in the Mid West Region in 2015 to outline supports available to drive development of local enterprises who are considering an export agenda

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Enterprise Ireland runs Get Export Ready Awareness Events throughout the country. The purpose of these events is to help companies thinking about exporting for the first time, now, or in the future, to understand the steps that are required to drive their export potential. In addition, information is presented on programmes available to support new and early stage exporters. As part of this event, the Local Enterprise Offices also outline their available supports.

EI ran an Export Awareness event in the Mid West in June 2015 and will run a further Get Export Ready Event awareness event in the Mid West Region in H2 2016.

Action 24: The LEOs will utilise and make available a number of online resources such as local and national LEO websites, Nubie.com, and SME online tool

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Local Enterprise Offices utilise a number of online resources to make information available to clients including: www.localenterprise.ie, "Irish Point of Single Contact", "Enterprise Europe Network" and the Supporting SMEs online tool, which is part of the Irish Government's Supporting SMEs campaign, to increase awareness of the range of Government supports for start-ups and small businesses.

In addition, the Local Enterprise Offices in Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary have teamed up with nubie.com to offer clients a cloud based online business planning portal to start up businesses. This initiative is free to everyone with an idea and is brought to the attention of clients at every engagement.

It eliminates the need to look in various different locations for information and has tools and applications in relation to starting, funding, managing and growing your business. This cloud based system effectively means that all information and the service that the Mid West LEOs provide is stored in the cloud and can be accessed from any device, anywhere in the world. It makes life easy for people with an idea and leading fast paced lives.

These resources are available on the following websites:

LEO Clare website: <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Clare/Start-or-Grow-your-Business/>

LEO Tipperary website:

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Tipperary/Start-or-Grow-your-Business/Find-the-right-support-for-you/>

LEO Limerick website:

<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Limerick/Publications-Resources/Useful-Business-Links/>

Action 25: Build on the Global Sourcing & Collaboration initiative and increase activity in this area

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Enterprise Ireland & IDA Ireland, in collaboration with DJEI, ran a series of workshops in Athlone and Sligo on the 18th May and in Thomond Park, Limerick on the 19th May. During the course of the two days the EI Global Sourcing Team had delivered 365 1:1 meetings between 180 Enterprise Ireland clients and 64 IDA clients. The mission was led by Minister Mitchell O'Connor.

In Limerick, 72 EI clients and 26 IDA client companies participated, with over 140 company personnel involved.

The events aim to grow the linkages between strong indigenous EI technology companies who can fulfil the supply chain needs of the IDA companies and help differentiate their product offering and improve their plant and R&D efficiencies within their corporate groups.

Action 26: InterTradeIreland will promote its Acumen and Elevate programmes in the Mid West region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

InterTradeIreland have engaged with all the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to promote the programmes to their clients. Contact has been made with each of the LEOs and other stakeholders in the region to update them on the programmes available to SMEs to help them identify new cross border sales.

Action 28: InterTradeIreland will set a target of at least 9 Acumen approvals to investigate and pursue export opportunities in Northern Ireland

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Acumen programme assists businesses to source the right expertise and people to target new markets effectively and increase cross-border sales. The programme offers three support options: support towards employing a full or part-time sales person, or specialist consultancy support of up to £4,000/€5,000 to research cross-border opportunities and implement a cross-border strategy. To date 12 companies in the Mid West region have been approved for Acumen support.

Action 29: Support the development of early-stage ICT businesses by establishing mentorship and support

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Seven ICT related businesses were supported under M1 funding by LEO Tipperary between Q4 2015 and Q2 2016. The total value of grants approved in Tipperary was €172,750. During the first half of 2016 nineteen companies in North Tipperary were provided with ICT mentoring.

In the period January to June 2016 LEO Limerick approved grant aid for 23 companies totalling €490,2249 of which 39% were ICT related businesses i.e. 9 businesses totalling €198,850 with a job creation potential of 17 new jobs in the sector. In the first 6 months of 2016, 89 clients attended ICT related training at LEO Limerick including social media, getting online and ICT Clinics.

LEO Clare funded five companies in the ICT sector during the first half of 2016. This included three priming grants totalling €87,284 and two business expansion grants totalling €27,662 giving a total of €114,946. Mentoring was provided to one ICT Company and ICT courses were provided (55 attendees) including a 'Should I Start a Technology Business' course (9 attendees).

Work on this initiative is ongoing through the LEO Mentor and Company Development supports (see action 32) in addition to dedicated ICT training initiatives.

Action 30: Through its Trade Accelerator Voucher scheme, InterTradeIreland will help companies to identify and break down barriers to trade leading to new export opportunities in Northern Ireland

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

InterTradeIreland have been proactively engaging with the LEOs and other stakeholders in the Mid West region to promote the Trade Accelerator Voucher Scheme, along with the full suite of trade programmes available to SMEs to help them identify new cross border sales opportunities.

Action 32: Implement the National Mentoring Strategy in the region by supporting networks and increasing the provision of mentoring sessions for businesses on the region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Business Mentoring Programmes operated by Clare, Limerick and Tipperary Local Enterprise Offices are open to both new and existing businesses located within the Mid West. The Mentor Programme is designed to match up the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business practitioners with small business owner/ managers who need practical and strategic one to one advice and guidance. The mentor contributes independent, informed observation and advice to aid decision making.

In addition, Enterprise Ireland is working closely with DJEI to implement the National Mentoring Strategy, with key areas of focus currently being (1) merging of EI and LEO mentor panels, (2) setting up a volunteer mentoring portal and (3) delivering the current Microsoft Volunteer Mentoring Pilot with EI and LEO clients.

Enterprise Ireland's Mentor Network is regularly refreshed with CEOs and senior executives, from the Mid West and other regions, with high levels of achievement and with proven skills in marketing, strategic development, organisational development, R&D, funding and first-time exporting across the software, services, life sciences, environment, food and consumer products sectors.

Action 33: InterTradelreland will deliver 4 public tendering workshops for SMEs in the Mid West over the period 2015-2016 and will provide relevant training for local small businesses in the region. (Target 100 participants)

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

InterTradelreland delivered three workshops in the region, from 2015 to June 2016, to over 100 SMEs. A further workshop is planned in H2 2016. These workshops provide a comprehensive review of public procurement markets on the island, where to find tender opportunities, e-tender portals, and how to complete tender documentation.

Action 34: InterTradelreland will promote public tendering opportunities to SMEs in the region including cross border public sector opportunities, consortia building for larger contracts and below threshold contracts

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Go-2-Tender, ITI's award winning tender workshops, are aimed at SMEs new to public tendering, giving them the confidence, knowledge and practical skills to tender successfully for public sector contracts across the island. The workshops take place over two days with a half day mentoring for every company taking part. Eligible participant companies can also apply for up to a further three days of mentoring from an experienced consultant to help with tender development, scoping potential markets and tailored advice and guidance.

ITI's Consortia support service ran a workshop in the Mid West in partnership with LEOs for SMEs considering developing consortia tendering opportunities.

The new phase 7 programme of Go2Tender will go live in H2 2016, with particular emphasis on micro-enterprise supports.

FOSTERING INNOVATION

Action 35: Enterprise Ireland, through the Technology Transfer Offices, will promote outreach activities to industry

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Nationally and via Enterprise Ireland's Regional Office, 1-1 engagements, press advertising, events and social media channels are used to promote and increase awareness of national supports available for innovation. Enterprise Ireland takes a lead nationally with the Enterprise Europe Network, Knowledge Transfer Ireland and Horizon 2020, all of which are very active in promoting innovation. In addition, the Enterprise Ireland team promotes the agency's innovation offering to regional enterprise players and companies on a continuous basis. Enterprise Ireland, through its agreements with UL and LIT, have set targets for company involvement in Technology Transfer, licencing, patents and R&D projects completed with their client base in the region and beyond.

UL and LIT were successful in their bid to secure funding under Phase 3 of the Enterprise Ireland funded National Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative. The funding will support the technology transfer offices within the two institutions and will be used to facilitate research linkages with industry at regional and national level. Under this five year programme, which commences in January 2017, LIT and UL will work closely with Enterprise Ireland to market the resources of the two institutions. This will include facilitating company linkages with UL's recently announced Bernal Institute, It will also facilitate linkages with Enterprise Ireland supported Technology Centres at UL (Dairy Processing Technology Centre, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre, Irish Composites Research Centre) and UL led SFI supported Centres (Lero – National Software Research Centre and Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre SSPC).

Action 37: The Technology Gateway Network will continue to carry out industry outreach. Within this, the Shannon ABC Technology Gateway, based jointly in Limerick and Tralee Institutes of Technology, will hold an industry open day in 2015 to showcase its applied research capability and promote greater industry engagement in collaborative research

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Shannon ABC Technology Gateway held an Open Innovation conference in Thomond Park on June 2, 2016. It brought together leaders in Industry and the world class R&D scientists operating in Ireland. The event focused on Biotechnology and Life Sciences, with presentations on industry collaborations with academia, and how this has driven innovation. The conference, which was well attended, also showcased leading examples of industry/industry collaboration and open innovation

platforms.

It is planned to run further open days at Shannon ABC labs in Limerick Institute of Technology at Moylish and at IT Tralee labs later in 2016/early 2017.

Action 39: Engage with 2nd level students through events and social media to develop awareness of opportunities in IT, Engineering, Manufacturing, and Aviation etc. in the region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

University of Limerick and LIT work together on Limerick4Engineering, an industry-led organisation, which this year hosted a very substantial showcase event that attracted thousands of second-level students. The primary goal of Limerick for Engineering is to increase the quality and quantity of engineering talent (apprentice, technicians and engineers) available in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary. A Limerick4Engineering Showcase, held in April 2016, brought various careers in Engineering to secondary school students and seeks to influence their ultimate choice. Secondary students, parents and teachers were invited to come along to meet local companies and colleges to find out about careers and courses. Key partners included Johnson and Johnson, Vision Care (Ireland), Takumi Precision Engineering, and Lufthansa Technik.

The University of Limerick

All outreach events at UL are focussed specifically on schools and public engagement. Throughout the year University faculty and staff undertake a large number of school visits, attend higher education exhibitions and fairs. This year's UL Open Day event attracted over 12,000 secondary school pupils, their parents and teachers to the Campus.

- The Science and Engineering Graduate Career Information Evenings for secondary school pupils, parents and teachers. 12 information evenings per year with 80-90 attendees per session.
- Tutorials (Helpdesk) for Leaving Cert Higher Level Maths. 2-hour weekly sessions covering Leaving Certificate Higher Level maths syllabus.
- Special Maths Entrance Exam. A 2nd chance maths entrance examination for Leaving Certificate students who do not achieve the requisite grade in Mathematics in the Leaving Certificate.
- Science & Engineering Summer Camps. A two-day programme of highly interactive science and engineering activities designed for students in Junior Certificate, Transition Year or Fifth year. The programme involves the exploration of electronics, forensic science, rocket launching, physics, energy, chemistry, biology, ecology, technology, engineering, design, etc. Approx 120 students attend annually.

- Cyber Camp is a three day non-residential programme of interactive computer science & technology based activities designed for students currently in Junior Certificate, Transition Year or Fifth year. The programme involves Computer Music, Arduinos, Scratch programming, GreenFoot programming, Robotics and Entry Electronics. Approx 90 students attend annually.
- As part of Science Week the Limerick Festival of Science is coordinated by the Faculty of Science and Engineering in UL in association with Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology. The aim is to promote an awareness and interest in science, engineering, technology and mathematics with everyone in the region. Science Week is designed to spark curiosity, inspire imagination and to unleash the potential that can help shape the future. The festival aims to challenge stereotypes so young people can see the diversity of people that work in STEM. UL ran over 40 events involving over 3000 students during the Festival.
- Throughout the year, faculty at the University of Limerick run events to celebrate space, maths and engineering..
- UL Science and Engineering Transition Year Programmes run for a week in the autumn and Spring semesters and involves some 20 Transition Year students undertaking interactive activities in the science and engineering laboratories.
- A number of departments within the Faculty give guidance and use of laboratory facilities for secondary school students with their projects for the Young Scientist Exhibition. The Faculty has an interactive exhibition at the event annually.
- Undergraduate students of science and engineering volunteer each week during the academic year to assist socio disadvantaged secondary school pupils with their science and mathematics subjects through the President's Volunteer Programme.
- The Department of Life Sciences annually welcome some 500 Leaving Certificate Biology students from all over Munster into their state-of-the-art laboratories during January. They provide the students with the opportunity to conduct laboratory practical experiments set on the Leaving Certificate Biology curriculum.

Limerick Institute of Technology

LIT leads an extensive engagement programme for secondary school students in the STEM areas for the Mid West and beyond. A key aspect of this programme is its industry focus and involvement in Limerick4Engineering

- LIT hosts Engineering Week and Technology Day for secondary school students, both of which are promoted on the institute's social media platforms and which develop awareness of opportunities in manufacturing and industry.
- Specific initiatives aimed at students in the science sphere include the annual Scifest and CanSat events, which are focussed specifically on secondary school engagement, and which LIT promotes on a range of social media and online platforms.

- In the field of IT, LIT makes extensive use of social media in promoting outreach programmes including Limerick4IT's industry-led direct reach into schools.
- In tandem with these initiatives, LIT provides an extensive schools liaison programme throughout the academic year in the Mid West. The schools liaison programme is supported with an ongoing social media campaign across a number of platforms tailored for engagement with secondary school students. LIT has launched a specialist website for secondary schools, which attracts very significant traffic from students, and which promotes STEM programmes and industry connections.
- In conjunction with ITLG, LIT also co-organised the Young Innovators event in Shannon on 6 April where over 650 secondary school students from schools from across Ireland but primarily from the Mid West participated. Innovation and Technology were the core focus.
- The Institute also attends a large number of higher education fairs and exhibitions for secondary students in Dublin, Cork and Galway, as well as in the Mid West. In partnership with UL and Mary Immaculate College, LIT holds Open Days for secondary students which attract several thousand attendees from a large number of schools. A central part of the LIT Open day experience is the interactive promotion of practical projects in the STEM areas.

Action 40: InterTradeIreland will promote the Fusion Programme to SMEs in the region and will set a target of at least five Fusion approvals in 2015/16

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Product development and innovation is at the heart of growth but often needs costly technology support. InterTradeIreland's Fusion Programme can provide that support by helping to fund a high calibre science, engineering or technology graduate and partnering a business with a third level institution with specific expertise.

Three FUSION projects have commenced in the region between H1 2015 and June 2016.

Action 41: InterTrade Ireland will provide access to its Challenge programme to SMEs in the region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Aimed at MDs and CEOs of ambitious SMEs, the InterTrade Ireland Challenge Programme allows business owners to transform their company's prospects in just nine months by learning and applying the most effective methods of generating, marketing and launching new products and services.

Challenge remains open to all eligible companies in the region as promoted through the engagement with the LEOs. In the Mid West, five companies participated from 2015 to June 2016.

Action 45: Recognising the significant activity and potential for agri-innovation, create linkages for farming sector to relevant offerings from development agencies

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Teagasc is making referrals from its Options Programme to the relevant agencies and the Opt-in training portal is currently being piloted in North Tipperary and Limerick.

Opt-in provides rural dwellers with a database of courses and events all over Ireland aimed at helping them find the means and skills necessary to increase their income generating options.

Action 46:

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

IDA's RD&I Program is an ongoing offering available to both new and existing client companies.

IDA targets and engages with its existing clients in the Mid West at both corporate and local executive level following analysis of the company's R&D strategy. IDA highlights where capability in a location matches the skills needs of the client and therefore seeks out potential opportunity within the company's R&D strategy.

ATTRACTING AND EMBEDDING FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

Action 47: IDA will target at least 66 investments for the Mid West over the period 2015 – 2019; an uplift of 30%-40% in projects compared to the strategy for 2010-2014

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Mid West is home to 123 IDA client companies. IDA Ireland continues to target an increase of investment into the Mid West by 30% to 40% from 2015-2019 including R&D investments.

IDA is marketing the Mid West as a location for a range of different investment opportunities. Potential opportunities are assessed and corresponding locations within the Mid West are put forward along with an invitation to a site visit. IDA also proactively engage with its Global Teams Overseas on the development and the provision of up to date, relevant, quality marketing material for the Region.

IDA also continues to work with all stakeholders to enhance the proposition of the Mid West, thus better positioning it to secure additional investment into the future.

Action: 48: IDA will continue to collaborate with existing clients under its Transformation program, encouraging them to invest in new activities, innovation and to win new mandates

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

IDA Ireland works with client companies in the Mid West to review operations and to support investments that will ultimately make their operations more sustainable. Transformation investments are aimed at Existing IDA clients, to ensure the sustainability for the operation and to further embed the companies in the region.

IDA Client companies of all scale are met by IDA on a regular basis and many of these clients have recently availed of incentives such as Lean Start, Training and RD&I. IDA engages regularly with senior executives in the Irish operations as well as in Corporate headquarters. Discussions are focussed around the client's strategic direction with a view to identifying transformation opportunities.

Action 50: IDA is in the process of acquiring Raheen Business Park (57 hectares) from Shannon Group Commercial Properties. IDA will develop a site plan for Raheen and a masterplan for the recently acquired NTP in conjunction with key stakeholders including Limerick City and County Council.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Work is ongoing. Specific initiatives to date include:

- IDA Ireland is currently seeking to upgrade waste water capacity in conjunction with Irish Water to facilitate existing and potential FDI clients in both NTP and Raheen Parks
- Flood risk assessment undertaken to alleviate issues from adjacent Mulkear and Shannon river confluence. Proposed mitigation works are out to tender.
- Design for new advanced Office Building is underway.
- Upgrade works on all signage, public lighting, landscaping, footpaths and roadways in both Parks is underway.
- Traffic alleviation study on the National Technology Park is underway.

Action 52: Limerick City and County Council will support the delivery of enterprise and office solutions that will come on stream from Limerick 2030

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Planning and design work is currently underway for three major commercial projects in the city aimed at increasing the availability of enterprise and office solutions.

Action 53: Shannon Group Commercial Properties will market the new and refurbished property options that they are putting in place over the next 2-3 years.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

A new property website has been developed and new real estate partners appointed to promote properties in the region and adverts placed in national and regional newspapers. In addition, Shannon Commercial Properties is working with IDA to attract more FDI itineraries to Shannon.

Planning permission for new Grade A offices and advanced manufacturing units will be submitted later in 2016.

Action 57: Tipperary County Council will identify and prepare an appropriate marketing programme in relation to property solutions suited to prospective clients.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

A 26 acre site at Roscrea has been transferred to Tipperary County Council from Shannon Commercial Properties.

Cathaoirleach Seamus Hanafin launched the Roscrea Business & Technology Park at the Racket Hall Hotel Roscrea on 22 June 2016. The launch of the Roscrea Business and Innovation Park and development of the associated suite of marketing materials is one of a series of initiatives supported by Tipperary County Council to drive economic activity in Roscrea.

<http://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/Roscrea%20Brochure%20Final.pdf>

In addition, Thurles investment properties are being identified and discussions with landowners are underway.

Action 58: IDA will appoint a new Marketing Executive for the region.

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

Niall O'Callaghan has been appointed as IDA Manager of the Mid West region.

Action 59: IDA Executives based overseas will visit relevant companies in the region to enhance their knowledge of the region to market it to potential inward investors

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

In January, IDA Ireland ran 'Familiarisation Visits' for overseas teams in certain sectors of the region. On occasion when they are back in Ireland for specific events, IDA Ireland overseas teams endeavour to meet clients in the region. In addition, IDA Ireland value propositions for the Mid West region are updated on a weekly basis with any new information.

Action 61: Develop a Regional Connect Ireland Plan that is integrated with the local authorities' enterprise development and job-creation activities and formalise the name of a nominated officer from each county in the region for the roll-out of the Plan

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Connect Ireland have been working individually with the counties in the Mid West region to create a diaspora-focused business message. In particular, Connect Ireland have worked on a series of videos promoting a business message aimed at the diaspora. The next step for this project will be to bring together local liaison officers to convert this county focus into an overall regional message. This is scheduled to take place in H2 2016.

Action 62: Announce and run the 'Connectivation' competition, inviting third Level students to share their ideas for the future development of the Succeed in Ireland initiative

Status: Delayed

Progress Update:

This competition has been postponed due to contractual issues; a further update will be provided in H2 2016.

BUILDING SECTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

Action 63: Enterprise Ireland will target manufacturing companies in the Mid West region to scale, innovate and develop international markets.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Supporting Manufacturing and Internationally Traded Service companies to grow is a key focus of Enterprise Ireland. This is achieved by working with client companies on a 1-1 basis to deliver on their business plans. This includes both financial support to support business growth plans of individual companies in the Mid West region, as well as access to a range of programmes such as Management & Leadership development, Trade Missions, Selling Opportunity events, Mentoring, providing Market Intelligence, and more.

In addition to this Enterprise Ireland has been active in the development of the market for risk money, enterprise space, and innovation infrastructure. Some of the funding is provided to schemes nationally that deliver locally while some funding is provided locally. Enterprise Ireland works with clients in the region to develop annual growth action plans focussed on export opportunities/NPD and jobs growth.

Action 64: LIT will roll out a level 7 programme (with conversion to level 8) in Precision Engineering which was recently developed in conjunction with the Precision Turned Parts Manufacturing Association

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

This Level 7 degree in Precision Engineering has been designed with industry to respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of the Precision Engineering sector. The programme focuses on the key factors required in the design, manufacturing, and assessment of high value components in the materials processing sector.

A Level 8 programme is in development.

Action 67: Shannon Group Commercial Properties will commence an upgrade program of existing offices and manufacturing units in Shannon to ensure that these units are suited to prospective FDI and other clients.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Planning permission for new Grade A Office and Advanced Manufacturing Units will be submitted later in 2016.

Shannon Commercial Properties has completed the development of 67,000 ft² manufacturing unit for GE Sensing and upgraded a 50,000 ft² office and warehouse unit for Magellan Aviation.

Action 70: In the context of the Ibec Manufacturing survey host a series of regional seminars in association with AIB including one in the West/Mid West

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Ibec and AIB have commenced the promotion of the manufacturing sector at an All Ireland conference taking place in Dublin in June 2016. Following this major event some key topics will form the basis of regional seminars later in 2016.

Action 72: Fáilte Ireland will identify opportunities to present the region's cultural and sporting heritage to visitors, in line with key strategic areas such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Business Tourism, and Events. Clare County Council will work with Fáilte Ireland to develop marketing material for the 'Culturally Curious' market segment.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Ongoing activities to market the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) internationally and domestically include:

- Implementing a programme to increase international consumer awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way brand proposition
- The continuous targeting of international and domestic media
- The management of the 'always on' social media community and outreach partnerships to grow awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way
- The development of new digital content along with new promotional and point of sale materials for WAW businesses to encourage consumer engagement
- Familiarisation trips and learning journeys for trade professionals are arranged on an ongoing basis. These are arranged by tourist boards to encourage tour operators, journalists, and trade professionals to feature a destination or experience in the programmes for sale to potential visitors. They are an essential part of the distribution process of holiday offers.
- Implementing a domestic media campaign to encourage domestic consumers to visit the Wild Atlantic Way catchment

- Focus in on events and festivals e.g. Fleadh Ceoil, Wild Atlantic Way projects, Food and Cultural events in the Mid West

Action 73: Tipperary County Council will work with the new Tipperary County Tourism Board to commence the preparation of an all-county tourism strategy

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

Tipperary Strategic Tourism Marketing, Experience and Destination Plan 2016 - 2021 is complete. The overall objective of the Plan is to galvanise and enable growth for Tipperary as a unique tourism destination within the island of Ireland experience. In meeting that objective the Plan's aims are:

- Develop and promote the tourism experiences in order to improve Tipperary's performance within the national framework;
- Encourage industry sustainability and growth through the improvement and development of product offering
- Build the capacity of tourism providers and to extend visitor length of stay;
- Identify and build synergies between different tourism product offerings in order to deliver a top quality visitor experience
- The plan was adopted by the Council in May 2016 and is available to the public.

[HTTP://WWW.TIPPERARYCOCO.IE/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PUBLICATIONS/TIPPERARY%20TOURISM%20DEVELOPMENT%20STRATEGY%202016%20-%202021.PDF](http://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/publications/tipperary%20tourism%20development%20strategy%202016%20-%202021.pdf)

Action 75: Progress the development of Shannon Blueway (Multi Activity Trail) in Clare, Tipperary, Galway and Offaly

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Planning permission has been received and works have commenced. Completion is expected end 2016. This initiative will offer significant opportunities to grow outdoor adventure tourism in the Mid West region.

Action 77: Fáilte Ireland will provide a suite of Business Supports to build capability in the tourism sector in the areas of Visitor Experience, Digital and Sales

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Fáilte Ireland seeks to offer on an ongoing basis a suite of supports to assist businesses as they face the challenges of operating within the tourism business.

Fáilte Ireland's 2016 suite of training workshops provide interactive learning opportunities where participants explore, develop, and apply ideas to advance their business and personal success. The trainers, all of whom work directly within the tourism industry, bring with them a real in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing industry businesses.

The workshops are highly interactive, with engaging and interactive discussions, and provide inspiration for direct application of the learnings to each participant's own tourism business. Workshop sessions are enhanced with national and international best practice case studies and current industry examples. All workshops include workbooks, actions plans and sample templates, each of specifically tailored for immediate implementation and results. Key target areas include enhancing digital capability, finance, sales with a domestic and international overview.

Action 83: Through FoodWise 2025, achieve an 85% increase in exports over the next decade

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Exports of categories which are typical of the Mid West (Prepared Consumer Foods, Dairy, Seafood and Beverages) saw good growth in 2015 and, while there is uncertainty about how "Brexit" might unfold, there is no reason to revisit the target at this point.

Prepared Consumer Foods increased by 7%, Dairy exports were up 4% in a difficult environment as were Seafood exports and Beverages, which increased by a very healthy 10%.

Action 84: Create regional links between food suppliers & tourism providers to develop an integrated approach to rural & agri-business development

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Fáilte Ireland continues to offer key service delivery supports in the form of unique customer service programme specifically tailored made for the tourism industry to enhance service excellence and the

creation of a natural authentic Irish experience.

Key programmes include:

- **Customer Service – Going the Extra Mile** Fáilte Ireland research shows that three quarters of holiday makers cited the friendliness of the Irish people as a very important factor when choosing Ireland as a holiday destination. The key to business success is the ability to offer a tailored service which exceeds the customers’ expectations.
- **Increasing Food and Beverage Sales Service** plays a vital role in the customer experience and especially in an Irish context where it has proven to be one of our differentiating strengths. Customers spend more in response to excellent customer/table service and salesmanship. Therefore, Fáilte Ireland has developed this workshop for businesses serving food and beverages with an aim to enhance both the business and the customer experience through the provision of service and the creation of experiences that are both memorable and represent value for money.
- **Developing and Implementing Standards of Performance To Achieve Service Excellence** In order to consistently deliver service excellence, performance must be continually managed and assessed. Adopting a structured approach to managing standards in the business and maintaining them has many benefits to both the business and customer. Fáilte Ireland has developed this workshop for tourism businesses to assist them put in place effective and measurable standards of performance. These standards will enhance both the business and customer experience through the provision of consistent service excellence.
- **Coaching for Performance in the Workplace.** Research shows that coaching of staff within the tourism industry can improve standards, enhance motivation and teamwork and increase productivity. Fáilte Ireland has designed this workshop to develop the coaching skills of managers / supervisors to assist businesses in managing the development of personal and interpersonal skills which, in turn can increase the performance of employees.

Action 85: Develop a range of new tourism, food and beverage offerings to develop an integrated approach between tourism providers, rural, marine & agri-businesses

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In 2016, Failte Ireland developed a unique resource in the form of “Ireland’s food story” – a free resource packed full of engaging content and inspirational advice to help Irish food tourism outlets create their own unique food story. More information is available for download at www.failteireland.ie. Of the 16 Food Ambassadors featured on the website , helping to tell Ireland’s Food Story, 3 are from County Clare:

- Siobhán Ní Ghairbhith, one of Ireland’s most respected and beloved cheesemakers, producing St. Tola Goats Cheese since 1999
- Deborah Evers, food producer and a driving force in development of the Burren Food Trail
- Ross Quinn, Chef and co-owner, Vasco restaurant, on the Wild Atlantic Way at Fanore

Additionally, a new tourism conference was developed by Fáilte Ireland featuring expert international and domestic speakers, food showcases as well as panel discussions, networking opportunities and the unveiling of new findings on Irish food tourism. The event was aimed at tourism and food businesses who want to be a part of Ireland's food story and who are looking to further develop saleable and unique food tourism experiences, particularly for international visitors.

Action 87: Target an increase in the number of participants on the Food Academy Programme and progress a number of companies in the region to the next level, Food Academy Advance

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In **Limerick LEO**, 4 full days of workshops were held in H1 2016, with a further 2 x 3 hours of mentoring per participant. The aim of the programme was to provide participants with all of the tools and knowledge necessary to launch and build a successful food business in Ireland and start looking at the export market.

In **Clare LEO**, the programme consists of 4 workshops and 3 one to one mentor visits. 9 Clare food businesses who made pitches to Musgrave Group representatives in 2015, as participants of the Food Academy Start Programme, have secured shelf space for their products in SuperValu stores. The next phase of the programme is scheduled for H1 2017.

In **Tipperary LEO**, the next course starts in H2 2016. The programme consists of intensive training, workshops and mentoring given by experienced food marketing consultants. As part of the programme, there is an opportunity for producers to pitch their products to local SuperValu representatives, obtain their feedback and secure a three month trial in a local SuperValu store. The intensive workshops will provide companies with business support and knowledge including consumer insight, technical advice, resource planning, commercial advice and marketing development.

Action 88: Teagasc will continue to support and increase the level of farm diversification in the Mid West through their Options programme and their pilot Opt-In web portal

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Referrals are being made from Teagasc Options Programme to the relevant agencies and the Opt-In training portal is currently being piloted in North Tipperary and Limerick.

Action 89: Enterprise Ireland will target food companies in the Mid West to scale and innovate in line with national policy

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Food Division works with clients in the region to develop, scale, and grow their businesses on an on-going basis.

Supporting food companies in the Mid West Region to grow is a key focus of Enterprise Ireland. This is achieved through supporting food entrepreneurs to participate on the New Frontiers Programme and through a dedicated Food Accelerator programme called FoodWorks: a partnership between Teagasc, Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland, and also through the core activities of working with client companies on a 1 – 1 basis to deliver on their business plans.

In 2016 Enterprise Ireland also designed and developed an Innovation Voucher Scheme for Artisan Food Sole Traders and Partnerships. The scheme was launched on 7th March and was open for applications for 6 weeks with a closing date of 21st April. Through this scheme, Artisan businesses were able to apply for a €5,000 voucher enabling them to avail of leading edge academic expertise in the third level Knowledge Providers to improve business innovation capability.

Action 90: Promote the uptake of Food Innovation Vouchers

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Food Innovation Voucher scheme was run initially as a pilot to specifically target the sector and grow the number of vouchers used. The companies are now encouraged to use the standard Innovation Voucher scheme, which is promoted by regional and sectoral teams, plus the 3rd level and LEO networks on an on-going basis.

Action 91: Bord Bia will work with retailers to increase shelf space for local produce

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Food Academy is a joint initiative between SuperValu, Bord Bia, and the Local Enterprise Office Network and since its inception in 2014 to June 2016, it has supported more than 600 small producers from start-up to getting their products onto supermarket shelves. They, in turn, support 900 jobs nationwide. Retail sales of companies supported by the Food Academy programme are expected to top €25m in 2016

In 2015, two companies from the Mid West graduated from the Food Academy Advance programme, out of 24 participants, giving them exposure to the entire SuperValu chain

Action 92: Bord Bia will work with LEOs to assist food and drink companies in the Mid West to be included in the Tesco Taste Buds programme

Status: **Delayed**

Progress Update:

A change in role for the original project manager in Tesco has pushed this project into the second half of 2016. This action will be reported in the next progress report.

Action 95: Limerick Institute of Technology will roll out an industry specific biopharma programme, developed in conjunction with Regeneron and Ethicon

Status: **Complete**

Progress Update:

Ireland is currently experiencing rapid growth in the Biopharmaceutical sector, with a number of large Biopharmaceutical companies locating to the Mid West region. The production of Biopharmaceuticals requires personnel with specialist training in the manufacture of Biopharmaceuticals (Bioprocessing). Responding to this emerging sector, LIT in collaboration with The National Institute of Bioprocessing, Research and Training (NIBRT) have delivered this action , aimed at providing key skills that are essential for employment in this sector.

Funding for this programme has been provided through Springboard. The programme is a Certificate in Science in Biopharmaceuticals (40 ETCs) and has been developed in conjunction with Ethicon Bio-Surgical. The course was delivered to 14 students in LIT with specialist bioprocessing training in NIBRT, with students graduating in 2015.

Action 96: Limerick Institute of Technology will roll out a new programme (B.Sc. in Medical Technology) which will be delivered by LIT in conjunction with Barrington's Hospital

Status: **Complete**

Progress Update

The Department of Applied Science at LIT has launched a new and exciting degree in Medical Technology for September 2015. The first cohort of 16 students started in September 2015.

The Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology is an interdisciplinary programme that will provide

graduates with diverse employment opportunities in Healthcare and Hospital settings as well as the fast growing Bio Medical Industry sectors. The programme also contains training for a parallel award as an accredited Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) further enhancing career opportunities, and allowing employment in Ambulance and Pre-Hospital settings.

Action 97: Explore the potential for convergences and clustering of research centres within the Mid West Region and across the Mid West, West and South West regions

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In this period the Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC), Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre (PMTC) and Dairy Processing Technology Centre (DPTC) based at the University of Limerick collaborated on a Marie Curie CoFund application in the area of Engineering solutions for the process industries. 'Intrepid' was submitted in September with results due in early 2017.

SSPC and PMTC are also collaborating on a proposal to encourage greater funding by the EU in the Pharma Manufacturing space in the later part of H2020 and into FP9.

During the period SSPC and PMTC met with European MEP Sean Kelly and are planning a high level seminar in Brussels on Feb 28th next with members of the EU commission, together with Irish and European industrial and academic partners.

Action 98:

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

IASC has already convened a cluster leadership group and has published a directory of regional cluster members. In discussion with IDA/EI regarding marketing of the cluster.

IASC's work in growing the aerospace cluster at Shannon, is contributing to developing Ireland's aerospace capabilities and helping to ensure that the country remains a global centre for the aviation industry.

Action 99: Develop a marketing package summarising Irish aerospace manufacturing capabilities

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

IASC has produced a directory of regional cluster members and their capabilities including manufacturing capabilities.

The IASC Aerospace & Aviation Cluster Directory is now available on the IASC website: <http://www.iasc.ie/wp-content/uploads/01964-IASC-Shannon-Cluster-Directory.pdf>

Action 100: Develop a marketing package to promote Ireland/Shannon for global aerospace/aviation firms

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

IASC has produced marketing collaterals for the Shannon cluster and is working with IDA to market Ireland/Shannon to global aerospace/aviation firms.

A PDF can be downloaded from the IASC website:

<http://www.iasc.ie/wp-content/uploads/01794-SAA-Brochure-web.pdf>

Action 101: Develop a business plan for the establishment of an Aerospace and Aviation Institute to be located at Shannon Airport

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Work on this action is progressing. The University of Limerick have begun negotiations with a commercial entity in Shannon, with a view to establishing an institute in Shannon.

Two industry networks are also being established, one in the area of manufacturing/aviation and a second in aviation/aerospace services. UL is in negotiation with both groups with a view to developing the Mid West as a centre of excellence in Aerospace and Aviation.

Action 102: Clare County Council will consider means by which it can support the development of aviation related activities through financial incentives and other supports

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Work on this action is ongoing. Clare County Council are in the process of drafting a new Clare County Development Plan for 2017 -2023. An issues paper was published in 2015, seeking input on a range of issues, including creating opportunities for enterprise & economic development. This

includes consultation on harnessing the potential growth of Shannon Airport, how the new Development Plan might further maximize the strengths of Shannon and Shannon Airport, and what type of innovative aviation related industries could be located within Shannon Airport grounds and surrounding areas.

Draft objectives for Clare County Council include working in coordination with Shannon Group Plc. and all relevant stakeholders to support the development of an International Aviation Services Centre at Shannon; and supporting the redevelopment and renewal of enterprise and industrial units in the Shannon area, in particular works to enhance the energy efficiency of the buildings and the physical appearance of the existing business park/industrial zones in the town.

Action 105: Pursue the creation of a start-up and enterprise ecosystem for sports-related start-ups, leveraging the educational, training and vocational opportunities in the region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Innovate Limerick are in discussions with Sport Ireland regarding plans for the development of a Sports Cluster in the region. There are also on-going discussions with Sporting Limerick regarding the branding of such a cluster under the Sporting Limerick banner. A dedicated resource of two staff members will be working in Sporting Limerick on the cluster project, commencing in January 2017. W2 Consulting have prepared a report on the formulation of the cluster for Innovate Limerick. Discussions are ongoing with the three third level institutions in the region regarding their role in the education, training and vocational opportunities aspects of the cluster.

Discussions with stakeholders are ongoing and a further progress update will be included in H2 2016.

Action 107: Use 'Year of Design' to promote strength of LIT School of Art and Design (LSAD) and UL Degrees in architecture and product design

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In 2016, the University of Limerick established the School of Design which encompasses Architecture and Product Design. This development enhanced the collaborative nature of these disciplines and strengthens the regions reputation in design. Following this, Adam de Eytro, Head of School of Design at UL was involved in the development of the government's Design Skills for Enterprise Policy Framework which came about from the National Design Policy developed during the Year of Irish Design 2015.

Continuing from the Year of Irish Design, a series of talks, workshops and information evenings are regularly hosted at the Fab Lab, number 7 Rutland Street Limerick and the Architecture studios at

the University of Limerick. These activities bring the world of design, architecture and technology to a wider audience and involve local, national and international collaborators.

The Schools of Design, University of Limerick provide support to the Irish economy by educating architects, engineers and technology graduates in disciplines that they will find both challenging and interesting while giving experience of tackling real-world problems.

The prestigious James Dyson award for Ireland was won by UL Product Design and Technology student Cathal Redmond for his invention 'Express Dive'. Express Dive allows divers to breathe underwater for up to two minutes. Once the air supply begins to run out, the user simply resurfaces and holds a button to refill the one-litre tank. University of Limerick Product Design and Technology students have been successful in the Dyson Awards for the past 5 years running.

A part of DesignFest Clonmel a Digital Design Careers Fair at LIT which took place on the 20th November 2015. DesignFest Clonmel was a festival celebrating media, art and digital design which also included interactive CoderDojo workshops and special guest speakers. The festival began as collaboration between LIT, Tipperary County Council, LEO and Clonmel Chamber of Commerce as part of Irish Design 2015 and the event will also be held in November 2016.

The ITERATIONS design journal was established by University of Limerick in collaboration with LIT and third level institutions from around the country using seed funding from Irish Design 2015 of €9000. The Journal publishes peer reviewed research papers, reflections on design practice, case studies, invited editorials, etc. and the editorial board to encompass members of UL and Limerick School of Art and Design.

Action 110: Complete bid for EU Capital of Culture 2020 to attract visitors to the region and generate economic benefit

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Limerick City & County Council submitted its Bid Book for final adjudication, followed by Site Visits by adjudicators in June/July 2016.

Unfortunately Limerick's bid was not successful on the occasion. However, the significant work undertaken by the Limerick 2020 Bid Team, building on the success of Limerick as National City of Culture 2014, is delivering an impact in terms of making Limerick and the Mid West region a better place to live and work.

Action 112: Initiate a research facility in marine renewable energy and marine robotics at Limerick Dock

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

A collaborative bid for funding for a Marine Campus Incubation Centre was made to Enterprise Ireland. This bid involved UL, LIT, Limerick City & County Council and Shannon Foynes Port Company. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful however a continued focus on funding solutions is ongoing.

Action 113: Promote and assist the delivery of cost savings through energy efficiency programmes and training for businesses and public sector organisations in the region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The SEAI supports for business and the public sector have been developed and are available on free on SEAI website. SEAI is also exploring the potential for further engagement with new models for delivery of the programme for business through the Local Authorities.

Action 115: IDA will collaborate with Shannon Foynes Port Company and other stakeholders to maximise the benefits that will accrue arising from the recently announced €50million investment programme by SFPC which is aimed at transforming the Shannon Estuary into a major national and international trading hub with particular emphasis of exploring opportunities in the area of clean tech and renewable energies

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

A key element of the development of the Shannon Estuary involves the N69 Roadway, servicing the Port, which is currently being advanced through design stage. A further update will be provided in H2 2016.

Action 117: Develop a Green Energy Hub on the Lisheen Site near Thurles, Co. Tipperary

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Tipperary County Council led a successful application, bringing together stakeholders from universities, industry and government, to be designated a model demonstrator region for the bio-economy in December 2015. It is one of six such regions receiving support from the European

Commission to show the way towards sustainable chemical production in Europe by taking advantage of domestically available feedstock such as biomass or waste.

Two projects are currently being developed for the site which, through its designation as a European 'Green Energy' hub, means it is first in line for consideration when a new investor comes to Ireland aiming to create new energy sources.. Task Force meetings are underway.

Action 118: Implement the Shannon Estuary Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for strategically zoned sites on the Shannon Estuary.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Shannon Estuary Region is an attractive investment location for companies in the pharmaceutical, manufacturing and ICT sectors due to the global connectivity offered by Shannon Airport, the quality of lifestyle, and the abundance of world-class third level education facilities and graduates. The presence of large-scale marine-based facilities, 1,220 hectares of zoned land, and the existing sheltered deep water resource presents considerable new investment potential along the Shannon Estuary. The Shannon Estuary is also a key pillar in the potential attractiveness of the Mid West to new forms of foreign direct investment.

A new marketing drive promoting deep water marine investment opportunities along the Shannon Estuary is being undertaken by stakeholders engaged in the development and management of Ireland's largest and deepest estuary.

The region's local authorities, namely Clare County Council, Kerry County Council and Limerick City & County Council, joined with IDA Ireland, Shannon Commercial Properties and Shannon Foynes Port Company in producing a prospective marketing brochure package that details 'Deep Water Marine Investment Opportunities' at 6 strategic development locations deemed appropriate for marine-related investment. The package, which will be launched in H2 2016, will be distributed to potential investors around.

The promotion of investment and development opportunities is the result of the *Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary*, a land and marine-based plan launched in late 2013 by a multi-agency steering group comprising member organisations from throughout the wider region. The promotion by the regions' local authorities and key agencies of one of Ireland's most important assets has the potential to deliver significant marine-related investment in the coming years.

The existing facilities on the estuary are serviced by the largest vessels entering Irish waters while all commercial marine activities on the Shannon Estuary are managed and controlled by Shannon Foynes Port Company.

Marketing and promotional collateral to actively promote the Shannon Estuary as an investment location was completed. A one stop shop website for all SIFP information www.shannonestuarysifp.ie was established.

Action 119: Clare County Council will consider means by which it can support the development of marine related activities in the Shannon Estuary

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

It is recommended that this action be merged with action 118.

Action 120: Ensure that the electricity transmission grid in the Mid West is strengthened to enable maximum investment by industries that rely on large energy consumption.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Eirgrid is continuing their work to ensure the electricity grid is equipped to deliver increased investment and economic development in the region. This entails the uprating of the existing electricity grid where required and ongoing identification of where further investment is required in the grid in the Mid West.

Action 121: Innovate Limerick will co-host the International Cluster Conference to share best practices in cluster development, to promote knowledge exchanges and identify future opportunities for clusters as drivers of competitiveness

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

In October 2015, the conference was held outside Switzerland for the first time, at the Strand Hotel in Limerick. Key international speakers from a range of disciplines, such as Dr. Christian Ketels of Harvard Business School, explored the conference theme of Clusters as Driver of Competitiveness.

The aim of the conference was to share best practices, promote knowledge exchanges, and identify future opportunities for clusters as drivers of competitiveness.

SKILLS ENHANCEMENT AND LABOUR MARKET ACTIVATION

Action 123: Develop the Mid West Regional Skills Forum to foster better engagement between education providers, employers and other regional stakeholders, on an ongoing basis, to collaborate in building the skills of the region

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

The Mid West Regional Skills Forum Manager was appointed in May 2016. Objectives for 2016 were agreed and established and the work programme and implementation has commenced. The Mid West Regional Skills Forum is a partnership between the regional education and training providers; local authorities; local enterprise offices; and relevant public and private sector organisations to match skills supply and demand; support employers; and facilitate job creation. The forum is currently chaired by Dr Ann Ledwith, University of Limerick and the manager is Dr Órlaith Borthwick.

Objectives for 2016:

- In collaboration with industry develop a framework to support, coordinate, promote, align and sustain the Limerick skills initiatives. Consider the possibility of extending these successful networks across the Mid West region and across other sectors.
- In collaboration with employers, education providers, and other regional stakeholders develop a system to coordinate and support where necessary regional efforts to inform career choices at a young age in line with employment opportunities in the Mid West region.
- Building on the Employment Demand and Skill Set Report in collaboration with 1) regional employers (from MNCs to micro SMEs) and 2) education and skill providers.

See more at: <http://www.regionalskills.ie/Regions/midwest/Our-Services/Regional-Skills-Forum/Our-Objectives-/#sthash.Qj3wcLeF.dpuf>

Action 124: Roll out of new National Apprenticeship Model including expansion into new sectors such as aviation.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Apprenticeship Council continues to work closely with the consortia of education and industry to develop apprenticeship proposals into sustainable national apprenticeships. In recent months we have seen the first of the new apprenticeships with the new Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship launching and the Industrial Engineer Apprenticeship getting underway. Further new apprenticeships are due to launch in the coming months in various sectors including medical devices, polymer processing and financial services.

The Industrial Electrical Engineering Apprenticeship was launched on 21st November 2016 in the Limerick Institute of Technology. The 2-year programme has had an initial intake of 12 registered apprentices. The programme is at Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications and leads to a Bachelor of Engineering in Industrial Electrical Engineering. It is a 5 stage 'block-release' programme, three of which comprise of 21 weeks on the job with two further periods of 15 weeks spent in formal training in the Limerick Institute of Technology.

The Insurance Practitioner Apprenticeship, developed jointly by the Insurance Institute of Ireland and Institute of Technology Sligo, was launched on 16th September. It is a three year programme at level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications and leads to an honours degree in Insurance Practice. A total of 67 apprentices have started the programme.

13 further apprenticeships are expected to be implemented, subject to further development and validation, in 2017.

Action 125: Consider potential to roll out 'Mid West for IT initiative', to address ICT skills shortages/opportunities within the region, building on the 'Limerick for IT' skills initiative pioneered by a collaborative industry/academia working group, that has been very successful in delivering jobs for the region and building incremental skill sets pipelines

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Limerick for IT is an employer-led partnership between the University of Limerick (UL), Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), Limerick City and County Council and IDA Ireland, with more than twenty employers across the region ranging from global multinationals such as Johnson and Johnson, General Motors and Dell to innovative indigenous SMEs such as Action Point Technology and Redfair. Activities of Limerick for IT are ongoing, there has been an upsurge of interest in the network following the creation of an additional 1,000 IT jobs in the region and plans to continue this growth.

Dr Ann Ledwith (UL) current chair of the Mid West Skills forum and Dr Orlaith Borthwick (Skills Forum Manager) recently coordinated a breakfast meeting for IT companies in the region. This was attended by 57 people from 22 Mid West IT firms as well as the other Limerick for IT partners, LIT, Limerick City and County Council, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. A new Limerick for IT steering committee has been formed and has agreed to work with Limerick for Engineering to promote STEM to second level students, including participation at the annual Limerick for Engineering Showcase event that attracted almost 2,000 second level students and their parents in May of this year.

Janice O'Connell, LIT (supported by UL) recently coordinate an event in city centre (Bank of Ireland Workbench) where UL and LIT students showcased ICT Technology (Virtual Reality, Leap motions Sensor, 3D ME, Robots etc.) to children. This is part of ongoing Limerick for IT promotional events.

Action 126: Mid West CEO Forum to explore with other interests how the successful 'Limerick for Engineering' skills initiative can be extended to incorporate all engineering firms across the Mid West region and how it can be extended across other sectors such as tourism; food and hospitality; chemical engineering; and biopharma

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Mid West Regional Skills Forum Manager is currently engaging with Limerick for Engineering skills and talent group to examine how the model can be extended to other sectors and is also examining key employment trends to assess and prioritise skills needs.

Action 127: Promote the newly launched Graduate Placement Programme through Enterprise Ireland's Shannon regional office to support the placement of graduates with SME companies

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Graduate Placement Programme is currently being recruited for, and is being promoted to clients in the region through Enterprise Ireland Development Advisers, social media, and national press.

Action 129: The Local Enterprise Offices will collaborate with Skillnets to ensure a streamlined approach to training offerings in the region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Local Enterprise Offices and Skillnets are collaborating within the Mid West to ensure that training programmes are 'cross promoted' by both agencies.

Action 130: Explore areas of collaboration and mentoring through the existing networks and the development of communications of current training supports available in manufacturing

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Ibec have delivered a number of programs to date in OHS and Management Training.

Irish Medtech Association Lean mentoring programme

The Irish Medtech Association MÓRTM Benchmark model is an Operational Excellence industry standard for companies to improve strategic deployment, organisational culture and employee behaviour, designed by the Irish Medtech Association member companies. This diagnostic tool assesses where companies are on their lean journey and how to progress. The tool is applicable to both SMEs and large companies and over 190 people have completed the cost effective training to date. Irish Medtech Association now offer a suite of services in lean manufacturing which use the MÓRTM Model framework, including a level 9 lean leadership programme, a highly successful lean mentoring programme, and an e learning tool is in development. Irish Medtech Association's Lean Mentoring Programme was showcased at the European Shingo Conference in Cork in October.

Four new Lean Mentoring Partnerships have been announced in 2016:

- Abbott Diagnostics Longford and KPW Print
- Boston Scientific Cork, and Tecomet
- DePuy and Gilead Lifesciences
- Waters Technologies and Automatic Plastics

Irish Medtech Association and Enterprise Ireland Mentoring Programme

Phase two of the mentoring programme began in Q4 2015. This programme was developed to help nurture entrepreneurship by pairing high potential start-ups selected by Enterprise Ireland with experienced Irish Medtech members who could offer expertise in strategic areas. One key lesson from the successful first year was the importance of regional proximity and this was reflected when the companies were matched. Additionally, rather than pairs, to reflect the demanding timetables of senior professionals we trialled a networking model with multiple mentors offered to the start-ups.

OHS/EHS for Medtech and Engineering Companies

Irish Medtech Association, Engineering Enterprises and Plastics Ireland have come together to develop a joint OHS/EHS forum. Effective procedures can promote business efficiency, tackle lost working days and have positive impacts on the wider environment. EHS and OHS standards broadly impact the operation of every company and any legislative changes can have far-reaching effects. This makes it essential to keep up to date with new trends and changes. Ibec recognise that key synergies exist in the Medtech, Engineering and Plastics industries so the aim of the Medtech and Engineering EHS OHS Forum is to leverage this overlap to develop best practice models and new ideas while providing a platform for members to share insights and knowledge in this area.

Three meetings of the EHS OHS Forum have taken place during 2016. The first meeting in mid-February was hosted by Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Manufacturing and covered two broad themes of accident identification and resource management. Siemens Healthcare provided an

overview of their advanced Zero-Harm/Close-Call safety system which records accidents and near-miss situations. A site tour was included allowing delegates to witness this initiative in practice. In early-July the group met for the second time in the First Polymer Training Centre, Athlone. The final meeting took place on 2nd December and revisited the theme of workplace accident investigations and claims at the request of forum members. Member engagement with the forums EHS query facility has also dramatically increased in the second half of the year and will continue to be encouraged, with over 270 contacts engaged.

Action 131: Ibec to hold extensive training programmes covering a range of sectors through Skillnets and Springboard

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update: Complete

Ibec is the promoter for nine Skillnets including, ICT Ireland Skillnet, Irish Software Skillnet, BioPharmaChem Ireland Skillnet, First Polymer Skillnet, Retail Ireland Skillnet, Food and Drink Industry Ireland Skillnet, Finuas Financial Services and Irish Medtech Association Skillnet, as well as the newly formed IoMT Skillnet

Irish Medtech Association and First Polymer Training Skillnets:

Irish Medtech Association Skillnet has continued its success over previous year in delivering high-quality, cost-effective training to its members and developing bespoke programmes for the medical technology sector, upskilling and reskilling existing employees, training new entrants and providing jobseekers with useful and marketable skills. By the end of 2016 the network expects to exceed its targets and achieve 1,374 employed trainees and over 5,867 training days. Total expenditure (2008 - 2015) is over €4.2 million, with 40% contribution from member companies and the remaining 60% funded by the State. Targets of over 6,000 trainees and 30,000 training days have been achieved. The Irish Medtech Association Skillnet has been approved for 2017 budget of over €1Million budget for the development and delivery of training to its members. Given the strong linkages between the medtech and plastics industry, the Irish Medtech Association Skillnet works closely with the First Polymer Training Skillnet. They operate a training network for the plastics industry in Ireland, as part of Plastics Ireland, The FPT centre is based in Athlone

Irish Medtech Association Springboard:

The Irish Medtech Association was approved in 2016/2017 for the 5th round of HEA Springboard funding to convert unemployed engineers to the Medtech sector. Two hundred and thirty trainees have completed the programme to date since 2012 with 80% completing internships or converting to employment. On 14th Nov 2016, 30 engineers starting training in NUI Galway and will be available for placement in March 2017.

Irish Medtech Association and Plastics Ireland Apprenticeships:

Irish Medtech Association and Plastics Ireland have developed three new employer led

apprenticeship programmes:

- Manufacturing Technician Apprenticeship at level 6:
- Manufacturing Engineer Apprenticeship at level 7 and
- Polymer Processing Technologist Level 7.

These programmes have been specifically designed to give apprentices the advanced knowledge, competences and skills necessary to move into technical and engineering roles in the Medtech and Plastics Industry. The programmes were developed in collaboration with Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (coordinating provider), Athlone Institute Technology (coordinating provider) and Institute of Technology Sligo, and will be rolled out nationally in early 2017.

Action 135: Schools, colleges and companies to collaborate on regional competition for entrepreneurs, such as 'BizWorld' or 'BizFactor'

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In November 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills officially launched the partnership between BizWorld Ireland and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

The partnership will see BizWorld training MIC students in the delivery of its programme for primary schools which is aimed at teaching children about enterprise, money management, problem solving, and critical thinking in fun and creative ways.

The National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, published last year, acknowledges the significant role education plays in fostering a culture of entrepreneurship. This partnership between MIC and Bizworld complements that theme and will provide the next generation of primary school teachers with the tools necessary to engage and excite young students about entrepreneurship.

Action 136: Influence career choices at young age through presenting to young students, parents, career guidance teachers, and the wider educational community to inform second level students of opportunities and careers within companies in the Mid West Region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The primary goal of Limerick for Engineering is to increase the quality and quantity of engineering talent (apprentice, technicians and engineers) available in Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary.

A Limerick for Engineering Showcase, held in April 2016, brought various careers in Engineering to secondary school students and seeks to influence their ultimate choice. Secondary students, parents

and teachers were invited to come along and meet local companies and colleges to find out about careers and courses. Key partners included Johnson and Johnson, Vision Care (Ireland), Takumi Precision Engineering, and Lufthansa Technik.

See action 39 for a full list of events showcasing opportunities and careers to second level students and their parents in the Mid West region.

Action 137: Roll out online MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) to support students and parents in the transition from second level to third level.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

There are a number of factors cited that make it difficult for students to adjust to third level life including: financial pressures; the wrong choice of programme or module; difficulties with making friends or being homesick; and difficulties with adjusting to new ways of learning.

This free on line course has been designed to address the needs of students making this transition from 2nd to

3rd level education. The course was developed by a project development team, led by Sligo IT with key partners including Mary Immaculate College, UL and LIT. It is available to second level students in Ireland from transition year to leaving certificate and aims to:

- Prepare students for their journey into higher education.
- Enable students to learn and collaborate online with their peers.
- Provide students with an understanding of the type of learning required at third level.
- Enhances the transition to higher education through improved access and greater student retention.
- Provide Principals, Guidance Counsellors and Teachers with a range of online resources and support materials they can activate in the classroom or integrate into existing career guidance subjects or transition year programmes.

The course is being piloted in schools at present.

Action 139: Promote the discipline of computing and ICT to students and teachers through a series of initiatives including competitions, training and summer camps

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Lero - The Irish Software at University of Limerick has promoted computing and ICT to more than 3,000 people (including students, teachers, wider community) at approximately 30 events, including events such as the Limerick for Engineering Showcase outlined in action 136, since launch

Action 140: To provide a toolkit, 'First Leanings Tool', to Transition Year coordinators to support students in identifying strengths, interests, and preferences and using this information to find a fit with their choice of higher level courses.

Disseminate 'Threshold Concepts' project which supports second-level students with preparing for study in third level, following 2014/15 pilot.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

First Leanings supports students in building a picture of their individual strengths, interests and motivations and in linking this to their career preferences through a number of workshops. The toolkit brings with it a specific emphasis on the worlds of higher education and work and it is hoped that this will actively support students in transitioning successfully from second level to higher level.

Copies of the toolkit are available in PDF format on the UL website here:
www.ul.ie/careers/firstleanings.

The toolkit was developed by the UL's Cooperative Education & Careers Division and supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The First Leanings Toolkit was launched at the Institute of Guidance Counsellors national conference in February. Copies of the guide have been circulated to over 750 second level schools nationally.

The Threshold Concepts Successful Transitions Programme has been rolled out to participant schools in Limerick and Clare who now use the materials developed as part of their Transition-Year programme for mathematics. In addition Threshold Concepts workshops have been offered to academic staff in UL and LIT by project staff. A conference paper on the project was presented at the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Conference (SoTL 2015) in University College Cork. The originator of the Threshold Concepts theory, Professor Ray Land, is coming to speak in Ireland in June.

Action 141: Disseminate the 'Aiming Higher' publication to all second level schools within the Region. The purpose of the guide is to provide students and parents with valuable advice on making decisions on education programmes and career choices

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

Over 15,000 copies of Aiming Higher have been disseminated to schools, parents, guidance

counsellors, youth organisations and higher education institutions. Such is the demand for the publication an on-line ordering system has been developed.

The guide, which was authored by Patrice Twomey, Director of the Cooperative Education and Careers Division at the University of Limerick and funded by the Higher Education Authority, is aimed at parents (and guardians) of prospective third level students, to give them a practical understanding of the higher education system in Ireland and to help them to support their daughter or son in making informed decisions around third level courses and career choices. It is the first guide of its kind that is specifically targeted at parents and extensive consultation with parents drove much of its content.

Action 142: IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will continue to collaborate with the Dept. of Social Protection and SOLAS in promoting the recruitment of people from the Live Register amongst client companies

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

IDA Ireland continues to work with Solas and the Dept. of Social Protection which has already included a test run with over 100 people from the live register, in October. The project is still ongoing and further updates will be provided.

BUILDING BUSINESS NETWORKS

Action 147: EI and IDA will work together to develop and implement an information/networking event across the region for EI and IDA clients.

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

In May 2016, over 200 people attended Thomond Park where 14 IDA Client Companies held 10 minute networking sessions with over 120 EI Client Companies for the annual Mid West Trade Mission.

Action 150: Continue to operate Ibec sector specific regional networks including Pharma, Medtech and explore ICT

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

New Ibec Medtech /ICT/Software/Pharma Network (Internet of Medical Things):

The newly established Ibec IoMT (Internet of Medical Things) group (comprising Irish Medtech, ICT Ireland, Irish Software Association and Biopharmaceutical Ireland) met on four occasions during 2016 (Dublin, Galway, Athlone and Dublin) It is the vision of the group that Ireland will be the location of choice for the adoption and commercialisation of connected health solutions that deliver better patient outcomes, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health and care services, and deliver economic growth. The group explored a number of objectives to support the development of the Irish connected health ecosystem, among these infrastructure, research and commercialisation opportunities, the need to build constructive collaboration and knowledge and expertise. Plans for 2017 will see the establishment of a national IoMT Strategy and Value Proposition for Ireland; this activity will be undertaken in collaboration with government agencies. The work plan for the group during for 2017 will also focus on skills development; the Irish Medtech Association's National Skills Report for the Medical Technology Sector 2020 will inform key connected health future skills requirements. The group has also applied funded to set up a new Skillnets to develop IoMT skills network.

Pharma/Medtech Drug Delivery Forum :

A joint Forum between Medtech and Pharma on the topic of Drug Delivery took place on the 06 May in Cork. Over 80 people attended the forum. The event will be hosted again in 2017

Pharma/Plastics Manufacturing Forum :

A joint forum between Medtech and Plastics Ireland took place on the 06 October in Sligo, on the topic of advanced manufacturing; over 50 people attended the forum. The event will be hosted again in 2017

Medtech Brew: Start Up Network with BioInnovate:

The Irish Medtech Association launched a new event for medtech start-ups with BioInnovate in February 2016, with three Brews taking place in 2016. The Medtech Brews covered topics such as starting a business, the commercial model and funding. More than 130 people attended the last Brew which took place in September 2016 in Galway. Wlbec will continue with the Brew series in 2017.

Action 151: Host business briefings, award programmes, member business evenings, and networking events in the Mid West region

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Ibec Mid West continues to host regional briefings and seminars on critical business issues and more are due to be conducted in the coming months. In addition to the HR Manager's Forum, which takes place monthly in Ibec Mid West office, members have regular opportunities to network locally with peers to share information and best practice.

Action 152: Hold a Regional Business Roadshow on a topic of relevance to business. Ibec will also host a Regional Business Summit for Ibec members.

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

This year, the Ibec regional roadshow series explored the theme of innovation-based competitiveness. The aim of the roadshow, which was held in 7 key locations around the country, including Limerick, on the 25th of May, was to help companies discover practical ideas and supports and to generate actual business growth from their innovation efforts.

Action 153: Continue to host HR forums through Ibec's regional offices for Ibec members

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Ibec Mid West HR Forum is an informal network of HR specialists from Ibec member companies in the Mid West region. It plays an important role in ensuring all Ibec members are kept up-to-date with best practice and legislative changes. The purpose of the forum is to discuss human resource related subject areas of interest to HR practitioners in the region. The forum allows for an exchange

of information and the sharing of best practice. Recent forums topics include redundancy legislation, business continuity planning, developing workplace agreements, and The National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) inspections.

HR Forums take place monthly in Ibec Midwest office.

MARKETING THE REGION AS AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

Action 155: Mid West CEO Forum to explore how the Global Limerick Network concept can be applied to the whole Mid West region and in the process to reach out to people from/with connections to the region to attract skilled talent back to the Mid West region.

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

Chambers is to engage with the Global Limerick Network with a view to progressing this action.

Action 156: Limerick City and County Council will implement the regeneration programme set out in the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan to revitalise communities in the regeneration area

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

The Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan envisages one of the largest capital programmes and largest regeneration programme in the State. The Plan, which was launched in September 2013, includes a €253m investment on physical, €30m on social, and €10m on economic programmes. It is focused on the three key pillars (Economic, Physical, and Social) of the programme that will revitalise the communities over the next ten years by raising standards of living, opportunity and health and wellbeing for all residents of the regeneration areas.

The Framework Implementation anticipates an average of €28m per annum invested over the term of this Government and beyond and will also dovetail with the Limerick 2030 Economic Plan designed to revitalise the city and countywide economy.

Physical Regeneration

Physical regeneration is already underway with a number of cross-city developments, involving a range of projects from new housing construction to renewal/retrofitting of housing, social and educational projects as well as road network infrastructure. Design will be a key element to all physical regeneration projects to ensure that it facilitates a greater sense of community.

Social Regeneration

Social Regeneration will involve an average annual investment of €3m. Its overall focus will be on improving the quality of life of residents in the regeneration communities, improving health and well-being of the population, closing gaps in health with the average population, improving the social environment and safety on the estates, stabilising community life and supporting civic engagement in the community.

It will also seek to address needs of the population so that they can access opportunities, and close

gaps in standards of living. This covers improved access to economic and social opportunities linked to preventive interventions in early years, interventions to improve attainment in education from the earliest stages and access to further education, training and work.

It will also seek to influence and improve the coherence of service provision across the statutory and voluntary/community sector, with a view to improving effectiveness in responding to needs of the population and to achieve better value for money invested by the totality of the services.

One of the most dynamic projects of the overall programme will be the development of the National Social Innovation Hub to facilitate the development of social entrepreneurship and stimulate local enterprise development, create employment opportunities and act as a focal point for capacity building and job creation. This will be the first such centre of its kind in Ireland and will be designed to attract the support and patronage of Multi-National Companies (MNC) widely engaged in social innovation and will work closely also with the recently announced Limerick Economic Innovation Hub as well as third level institutes.

Economic Regeneration

The Economic programme will see €1m per annum invested in areas such as training, work experience/work placement and job creation. Niche economic activities will focus on growth sectors such as green technologies as well as developing a knowledge economy' sub-sector in community development and community enterprise.

The economic development strategy for regeneration is focused on the delivery of a number of key objectives. They include ensuring the growth of local capacity through the provision of focused sectoral training and employment opportunities, development of a stronger engagement platform to promote economic activity in the target areas between all stakeholder groups and local resources.

It will also seek to foster a culture of social innovation and social enterprise in the Regeneration areas as well as create a programme of civic and economic interventions to attract, support and grow micro and community enterprise. It will also seek to leverage off existing third level and regional enterprise expertise and attract inward investment into areas of Regeneration through infrastructural improvements and institutional supports.

Various initiatives under the Regeneration programme being advanced

Action 157: Appoint a 'Town Centre Manager' for Limerick City to work collaboratively to design and implement a plan which will reinvigorate towns and cities and drive growth for the retail and hospitality sectors

Status: Complete

Progress Update:

This recommendation has been achieved. Limerick was selected, in 2013, as one of two pilot

locations as part of a national effort by Retail Excellence Ireland (REI) to revive Ireland's towns and cities. Retail Excellence Ireland and its national partners Chambers Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, NAMA, An Garda Síochána, the County & City Managers Association and the Dublin Business Improvement District (BID) awarded the honour to Limerick City out of 36 towns and cities across Ireland who applied for pilot status. The pilot programme saw national and local stakeholders come together to create a "town team" to work together to develop and deliver a "town plan".

The overriding objective of the initiative, which is being progressed by REI; Limerick City and County Council; and Limerick Chamber, is to apply shopping centre management principles to Limerick city which in turn will deliver a more vibrant and engaging civic space for citizens to enjoy.

Limerick City and County Council has designated a senior official within the Economic Development Directorate to take responsibility for the City / Town Centre Manager activities. Their role is to work with the City / Town Team and to co-ordinate activities between the city / town stakeholders and the Council to promote business and retail investment in the City/Town Centre. The overall aims of the collaborative team are:

- Improve occupancy of business/retail units
- Create a vibrant City centre
- Improve residential occupancy

Collaborative projects underway include; the Purple Flag application (decision in January 2017), Ireland's Friendliest Place, Love Your Street Scheme, Tidy Towns, Public Realm Projects, Marketing & Promotion initiatives, support for Events and Festivals, and Cultural Activities.

In addition the broader Economic Development Unit is working with the State development agencies (IDA and Enterprise Ireland) to attract companies/firms into the City and towns. Seven significant jobs announcements for city centre locations took place in 2016.

Action 158: Implement proposals for Ennis under the Urban Centre Grants Scheme operated by the Southern Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020

Status: Ongoing

Progress Update:

In January 2016 Clare County Council was allocated a €3 million capital grant Ennis under the Urban Centre Grants Scheme towards the cost of the new flagship County Library project in Ennis. The proposed new library building and the adjoining Glór facility at The Causeway Link will combine as the Clare Cultural Centre.

The capital grant is in addition to the €1 million in EU funding, also received in January 2016, from the Southern Regional Assembly's Operational Programme 2014-2020. The council will now seek to

fund the balance of €4.5 million of the overall cost of the project from its own resources as part of the council's ongoing commitment to provide improved facilities and infrastructure.

The proposed €8.5 million County Library will locate three separate library services together in one building with a focus on community cohesion, cultural integration and support to the economic and social activity of the town.

A design team has been appointed to progress the design and planning phases of the project, while the council anticipates that contractors will be on site by early 2017. The construction period is expected to take approximately 18 months.