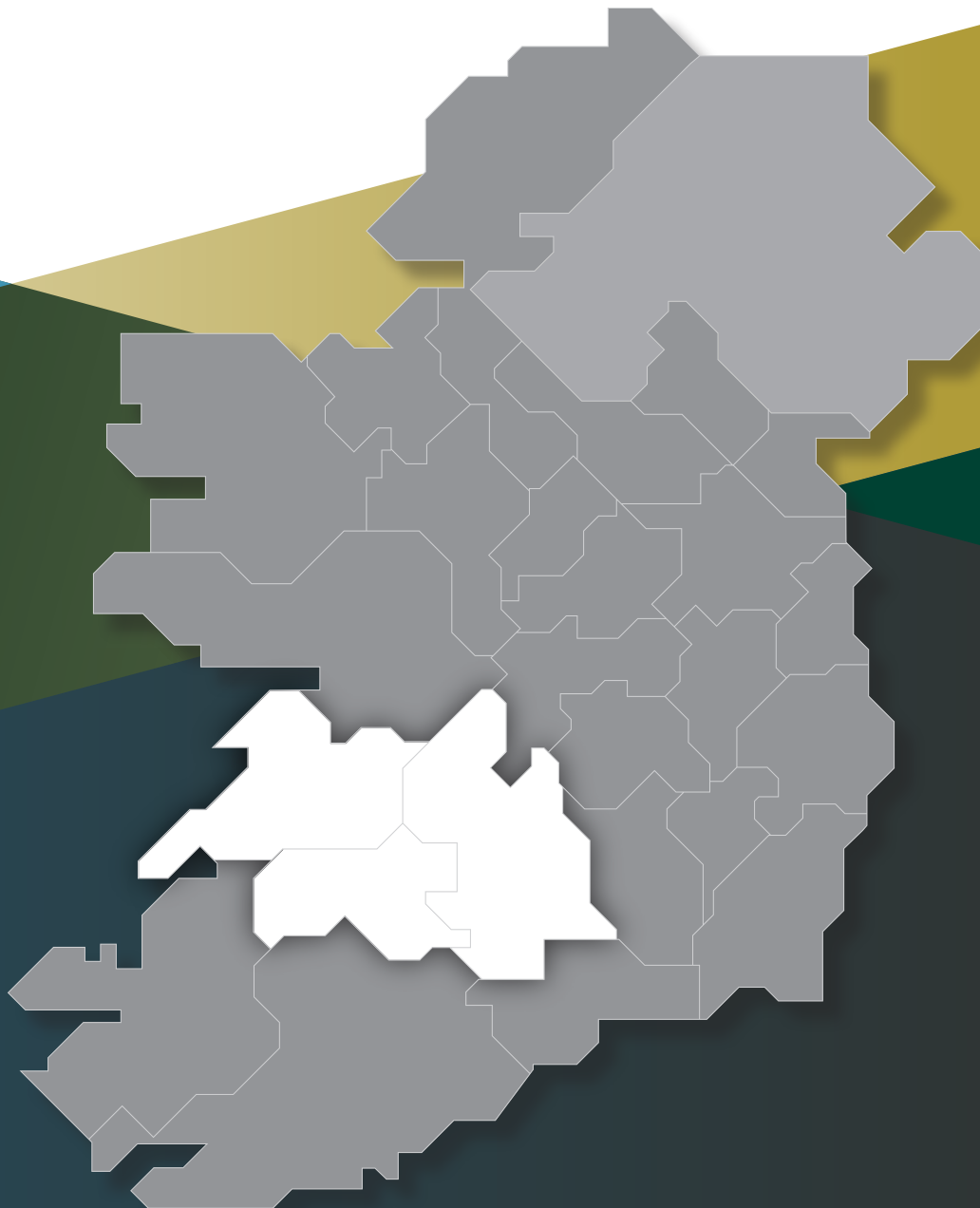




Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

MID-WEST



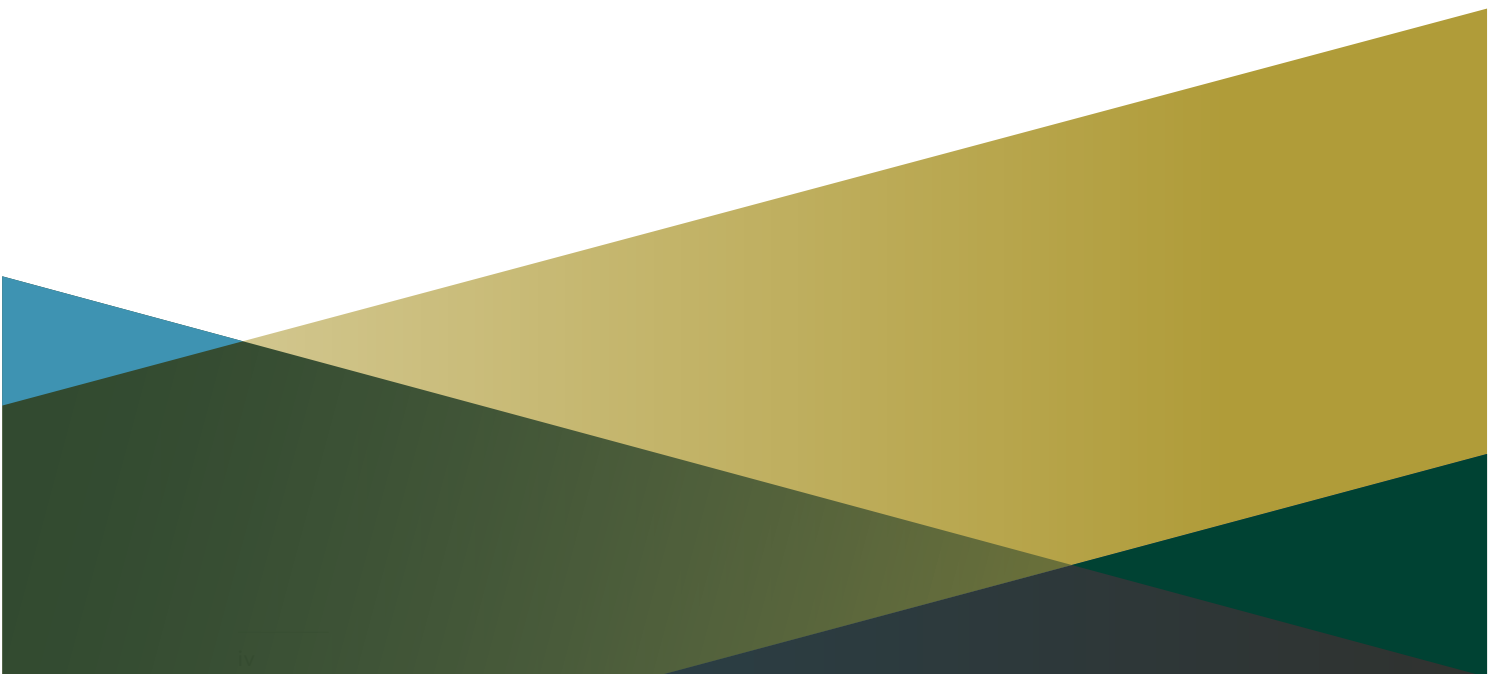
An initiative of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

MID-WEST

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Minister's Foreword

Realising the enterprise and jobs potential in all of the regions and thereby reducing disparities between regions continues to be a priority of this Government. We remain committed to achieving an overall jobs uplift of between 10 and 15 percent in each region by 2020 and to bring and/or maintain unemployment levels in each region to within at least one percentage point of the State average.

In the Mid-West Region, the 2015-2017 Regional Action Plan for Jobs (RAPJ) set out 159 actions to support job creation and accelerated economic recovery. At the end of that period, 136 actions were completed or substantially progressed, and more than 18,800 jobs have been created in the region. With an unemployment rate currently at 7.2 percent much has been achieved, yet more needs to be done to reduce the gap relative to the State average.

This *Regional Enterprise Plan* (REP) for the Mid-West aims to build on the strong progress achieved under the RAPJ initiative towards our 2020 ambition. Under the refreshed approach, I have placed a renewed emphasis on collaboration and delivery on measurable actions. I have also stressed additionality and asked the Regional Committees to bring forward and elevate ideas that, through collaborative working, complement and add value to the core work of the enterprise agencies and other bodies. The Plan is therefore deliberately selective and 'bottom-up' in terms of its strategic objectives and not intended to be a comprehensive regional enterprise strategy in its own right.

I have been very pleased to note that in preparing this REP, the Mid-West Regional Implementation Committee (along with the other eight Regional Committees nationally) has engaged in a regionally co-ordinated manner on important considerations to do with strengthening productivity, driving job creation, and supporting enterprise resilience in their region. These include: diversifying the regional economy, building on place-specific strengths, regional brand development, business clustering and ecosystem strengthening initiatives to support new business creation and investment.

I look forward to seeing a further strengthening of the collaborative mindset that has grown in the Mid-West and in each region, bringing together Local Authorities, the enterprise agencies, higher and further education institutions, Local Enterprise Offices, the business community, and others, to work towards a better future for their region.

As we look towards 2020, it is clear that the context for enterprise development in Ireland has changed. Unemployment levels in all regions are now at more stable levels, but we have some new challenges; the forthcoming departure of the UK from the European Union will have far reaching impacts as yet not fully known; while our competitiveness is challenged by a tightening labour market and unrealised productivity potential, especially in our Irish-owned SMEs.

My Department's *Enterprise 2025 Renewed*, has oriented our enterprise policy towards building resilience in our enterprise base so that our businesses and our economy more generally can withstand new challenges and realise sustained growth and employment creation for the longer-term. Together with the Department of the Taoiseach, we are defining a whole of Government *Future Jobs Ireland* agenda that will give effect to that policy focus, with key actions to drive productivity growth and innovation, build enterprise resilience, increase participation in the labour force, and enable businesses to transition to a low carbon economy context. In addition, through *Project Ireland 2040* we will make sustained investments in place-making so that Ireland remains an attractive place to live, work and invest over the longer term.

Every region has a part to play in realising sustained enterprise and economic performance; and no region should lag behind their potential. This refreshed Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, one of nine regional plans, sees the RAPJs evolve to a more strategic, focused approach, in line with and complementing these policy developments at the national level. Through the established mechanism of the Regional Steering Committee, these Plans will be maintained as "live" agendas so that new ideas and collaborative initiative can be propagated and national policy initiatives can be effectively translated into regional impact; for example, in areas such as climate action and the digital economy.

Under my Department's €60 million competitive Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) the Mid-West has already secured more than €9.5 million across five projects that will enhance the region's potential for enterprise growth and job creation. Guided by this new Regional Enterprise Plan, the region is well positioned to compete for further competitive calls, including the REDF, on a rolling basis, as part of the further roll-out of *Project Ireland 2040*.

I want to commend the work of the Implementation Committee under the chairmanship of Barry O'Sullivan, Global Manufacturing Lead, Johnson & Johnson Vision for their work on the roll out of the first RAPJ for the Mid-West. I welcome the new focus and energy embodied in this refreshed Regional Enterprise Plan for the region and recognise the extensive collective reflection and effort that has gone in to its production.

My Department will continue to work closely with you as you implement the agenda set out and seek to realise the potential that you have recognised. I look forward to engaging with you over the coming months and supporting you in your endeavours.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Humphreys TD".

Heather Humphreys TD

*Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation
February 2019*

Chair's Introduction

We are living in uncertain times, with global moves toward protectionism, growing trade tensions, tit-for-tat tariff sanctions and Brexit impacting on both confidence and investment. Declining perceptions of well-being and trust highlight the need for economic and social policies to provide citizens with a greater sense of security and confidence to allay growing fears of technology and globalisation.

As we enter a new decade in 2020 we think about what opportunities will exist for the next generation to 2030 and beyond. What legacy can ensure that our policy frameworks on technology, climate, spatial, education and fiscal matters, provide a social contract that allows us to work toward greater equalisation, redistribution and inclusion.

The Irish economy has made a strong recovery from the global economic downturn; enjoying the highest GDP growth rate in the EU of 5.6 percent in 2018; and predictions of 4 percent growth in 2019, double EU and euro area forecasts. Despite these great achievements, divisions persist across our economy and society.

In Ireland 16.2 percent of people live in households with very low work intensity (Eurostat 2017¹); second only to Serbia (20.1) and significantly higher than the EU average of 9.5 percent. The Eurostat data also points to a strong correlation between low work intensity households and (lower) education attainment.

Of those in work, the growth of technology, automation and artificial intelligence is predicted to disproportionately impact on low-skilled workers. Similarly, those working in traditional industries are facing challenges as we move toward a low carbon economy. And with global population growth being driven by large urban concentrations, fears of a growing urban-rural divides are being fuelled.

The Mid-West region is not immune to these global and national challenges. This plan aims to instil an agility and resilience into our systems and society that help us adjust to inevitable future shocks; build on our unique strengths; convert emerging opportunities to economic reality; and deliver a regional growth model built on partnership and inspired by inclusion.

The Mid-West is Ireland's fastest growing investment location. Our citizens enjoy the highest average disposable income per capita outside the greater Dublin region; but the GVA per person is 72 percent of national averages. We are home to Ireland's University of the Year; and two-thirds of the labour force has a third level education. But we also have the highest concentration of unemployment blackspots in the country; despite youth unemployment rates and the level of young adults 'Not in Education Employment or Training' are half State averages. Limerick City is the Irish "poster-child" for urban growth and resurgence, now the linchpin driving the economic growth of the city-region. Yet we are a rural economy with low population densities. FDI Intelligence rate Limerick as a *European City of the Future*, yet

¹ Eurostat, 2017 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?tab=graph&plugin=1&pcode=sdg_01_40&language=en&toolbox=data
The indicator is defined as the share of people aged 0-59 living in households with very low work intensity. These are households where on average the adults (aged 18-59, excluding students) work 20% or less of their total work potential during the past year. The indicator is part of the multidimensional poverty index.

the region has high employment dependence on traditional sectors, particularly manufacturing and agriculture.

In seeking to address these divergences and cognisant of international trends, this plan seeks to build technical resilience into our traditional employment sectors, while supporting emerging opportunities; prepare us for future growth in an economy delivering lower carbon outputs; develop the skills and talent of our existing and future workforce; while developing our natural assets and expanding our infrastructural capacity to facilitate an increase in the economic output of the region, delivering opportunities for all citizens



Barry O'Sullivan

Global Manufacturing Lead
Johnson & Johnson Vision

*Chair
Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan*

1 Policy Context

The Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) is one of nine such Plans that have emerged from a process to refresh and refocus the Regional Action Plan for Jobs (RAPJ) initiative which originally focused on the 2015-2017/8 period. The purpose of the refresh and refocus was to further build on the positive regional collaboration fostered by the RAPJs over the period to 2020, taking account of the changed and improved economic circumstances nationally, the emergence of new challenges to enterprise development and competitiveness both domestically and internationally in origin, including Brexit, and the persistence of uneven economic progress across the regions in Ireland - as of Q3 2018 there were three regions with rates of unemployment more than one percent above the State average of 6 percent, including the Mid-West region (at 7.2 percent²).

The REPs provide perspective and ideas from the 'ground-up'. They are informed by an understanding of unique local strengths and assets and have the potential to enable more effective translation of national policy into regional and local impact³. They focus on leveraging the added value from regional and local actors working collaboratively, and in so doing, they aim to complement and build on the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, the LEOs and the wider range of State Bodies directly involved in supporting enterprise development in the regions (see Chapter 3 on Enterprise Agency and LEO activities and Appendix 5). As a result, the Plans are focused on a suite of selected priority objectives requiring a collaborative regional effort and are not meant to be comprehensive economic development

strategies on their own. The Regional Steering Committees will oversee these Plans as 'live' agendas. Through them new ideas and collaborative initiatives can be propagated and national policy initiatives which can be effectively translated into regional impact; for example, in areas such as climate action and the digital economy.

The REPs are an integral part of the broader policy system aimed at driving economic growth and sustaining better standards of living throughout Ireland. As a 'bottom-up' initiative, the Plans complement national level policies and programmes emanating from the 'top-down' (see Figure 1) and in particular, there is strong alignment with Ireland's national enterprise policy, *Enterprise 2025 Renewed*.

Enterprise 2025 Renewed aims to embed resilience in our enterprises, contributing to strong economic performance over the longer term, through a number of key policy priorities. These include:

- An increased emphasis on developing our Irish owned enterprises – enhancing productivity and delivering quality jobs – and helping companies to navigate Brexit;
- exploiting the potential offered by collaboration and clustering within our distinctive foreign and Irish owned enterprise mix;
- placing a spotlight on innovation (including disruptive technologies) and talent development, so that more enterprises are developing new products, services and solutions, and are more competitive internationally;

2 Midlands 7.1% | Mid-West 7.2% | South-East 8.6%

3 Appendix 3 contains a brief regional profile and statistical snapshot of the Mid-West

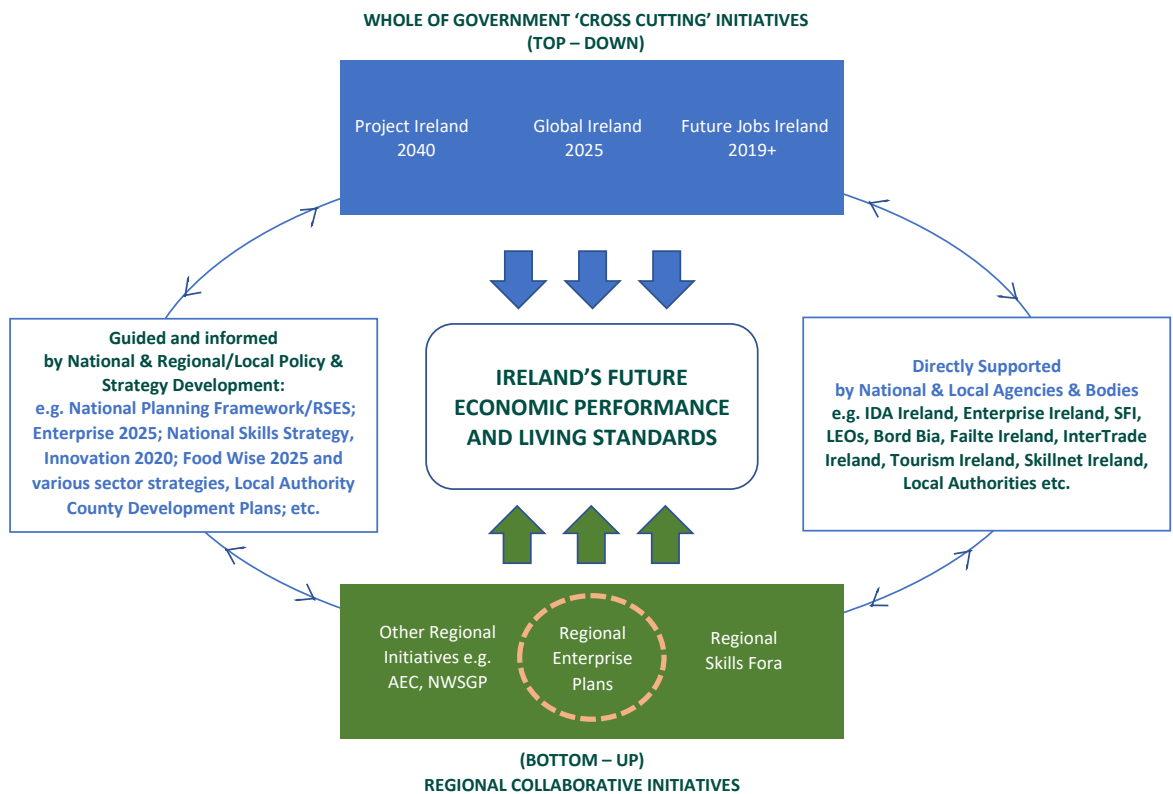
- realising the full potential of our regions
 - developing places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work; and
- raising Ireland's visibility internationally, protecting Ireland's reputation, and providing opportunities for our enterprises supported by the Global Footprint 2025 initiative.

At the national level, the recently launched *Future Jobs Ireland 2019* initiative will, as part of a multiannual framework, give effect to national enterprise policy objectives and leverages a 'whole of Government' approach so that all policy levers at the national level, relevant to job creation and labour force participation, talent development, enterprise growth, innovation and competitiveness, and transition to a low carbon economy, are engaged on an agenda that will prepare for Ireland's future enterprise and economic needs. The coming together of public and private sector stakeholders

to set regional strategic objectives for enterprise development under these refreshed Regional Enterprise Plans will have an important role to play in the realisation of *Enterprise 2025 Renewed* and the ongoing *Future Jobs* agenda.

The REPs also have a strong role to play in the context of *Project Ireland 2040*, and more specifically in the implementation of the National Planning Framework and its constituent Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) at NUTS 2 (Regional Assembly) level. The refresh of the Regional Action Plans has informed and will continue to inform the implementation of these future planning strategies for Ireland (see Appendix 6 on *Project Ireland 2040* for further details). The RSESs will be key to addressing longer term strategic planning and infrastructural requirements that will be needed to unlock the potential in all regions recognised in the REPs.

Figure 1



2 Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Enable a digital and innovation economy and make the Mid-West Ireland's leading smart city-region



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Achieve a step-change in progress toward a low carbon economy in the Mid-West



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Continue to develop workforce skills and talent and enhance the attractiveness of living and working in the Mid-West



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Develop the regions capacity to deliver economic growth



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:

Build a coordinated regional messaging brand for consistent communication

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

Enable a digital and innovation economy and make the Mid-West Ireland's leading smart city-region

CONTEXT

The pace of technological change has never been as fast; and will never be as slow. Digital technologies present new enterprise productivity growth opportunities but may also challenge employment in some sectors. It is the ambition of this plan to deliver on emerging opportunities while building resilience into the region's enterprise base and its people to mitigate against emerging and unforeseen risks. To deliver on this vision, the region will work toward the development of a holistic eco-system that drives inclusion while delivering new innovations.

This plan identifies a number of emerging sectoral opportunities which are unique and build on the strengths of the Mid-West region. Some sectors are enabled by the application of emerging digital technologies while others will be completely transformed by it.

A Digital Economy requires a connected infrastructure that traverses the urban and rural population, equipping citizens and enterprises with the capabilities to regenerate and accelerate the Mid-West's transition to becoming Ireland's leading smart city-region. Adopting such a culture will allow the region to implement and develop novel technologies, build a sustainable knowledge base and engage citizens in digital transformation, minimising the risk of digital inequalities and augmenting social inclusion.

This plan builds on the digital strategies adopted by the three local authorities across the region and aims to address key challenges that the region will face in the future, including urbanisation and urban dependent economic growth, population growth, ageing population, scarce resources, traffic, pollution, increased demand for employment and changes in education delivery models.

Without a collaborative and focused approach to enhanced digital infrastructure and capability, the divide between urban and rural communities, and those with differing levels of educational attainment, will continue to grow.

The plan seeks to prepare the region for changes in where people work (for example the rise in remote working) and what people work at (potential displacement and changes in work practices emerging from the growth in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Machine Learning to name but a few).

VISION TO 2020

The Mid-West positioned as Ireland's leading smart city-region implementing and developing novel technologies, building a sustainable knowledge base and engage citizens in digital transformation, minimising the risk of digital inequalities and augmenting social inclusion.

KEY ACTIONS TO 2020

SECTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

Action 1:

Develop an Autonomous Mobility Testbed

Ireland has the opportunity to be at the forefront of a global mobility revolution. It has an established industrial base in the technology & automotive sectors, including global market-leading firms with ambitious investment plans, a plethora of expert SMEs and depth of research expertise. There is support across public and private stakeholders including the Local Authorities and industry.

The Mid-West region extending along the Atlantic Corridor connected between Galway and Limerick along the M18, encompassing the entire county of Clare, is home to a plethora of global market leaders including Jaguar Land Rover, General Motors, DELL, Analog Devices, Emdalo Technologies, Arralis, Valeo, Cisco among others, as well as Ireland's software research centre LERO.

Weather conditions in Ireland, as well as the rural road network, are unique assets which other international test sites cannot replicate. This plan seeks to create an R&D testbed through a public-private partnership model. The Hub would deliver a test-bed facility and associated programmes to support Autonomous, Connected & Electric Vehicle and Shared Mobility Services, augmenting Ireland's research and development toward development and deployment of new technologies and delivering a new growth market for Ireland located in the Mid-West.

This action is closely aligned and complementary to the Lighthouse City, +CityXchange program under the strategic objective of working toward a Low Carbon Economy and both actions will work in tandem.

Timeframe for delivery: Q2 2020

How will delivery be measured?

Development of test-bed site has commenced

Responsibility: CAV Ireland, Vehicles of the Future, Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Shannon Group, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Programme Manager, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, industry partners.

Action 2:

Position the Mid-West as a national centre for advanced manufacturing

Manufacturing is the single largest employer in the Mid-West. The Mid-West is home to 1,705 manufacturing companies; supporting 28,850 direct jobs⁴. Robotic technologies and connected devices are transforming manufacturing productivity processes and efficiencies. One-fifth of those working in manufacturing in the Mid-West are working at 'low technology' intensity, while 36 percent operate at 'high technology' intensity⁵.

Ireland's SFI research centre for Smart Manufacturing, CONFIRM, is located in the region in Limerick's Digital District. CONFIRM will deliver enhanced competencies in AI, Data Analytics and Predictive

4 CSO Census 2016

5 <https://www.regionalskills.ie/Regions/midwest/Profile%20of%20the%20Mid-West%20Region.pdf>

Maintenance among others. With 42 industry partners from inception the centre will make a positive impact on the preparedness of companies in developing new technologies and methodologies.

While this investment is welcome, there remains a significant gap in Ireland's investment into later-stage TRL innovations in Smart Manufacturing. Such an investment is needed if Ireland is to continue to remain competitive internationally for mobile investment, while also closing the SME productivity gap. The co-locational advantages the Mid-West offers are unique and result in a higher return on investment as location of choice for a National Advanced Manufacturing Centre for Ireland.

Timeframe for delivery: Q3 2020

How will delivery be measured?

- Additional 100 employees in larger and smaller companies in the manufacturing sector will have engaged with the EXPLORE programme;
- Enterprise R&D capabilities and innovation capacity increases delivered by CONFIRM.

Responsibility: IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Industry partners, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, CONFIRM, Regional Skills, Enterprise Plan Manager, Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council.

Action 3:

Appoint a Regional Film Manager to develop and exploit industry opportunities

While still a recent arrival to the region, the strength of the Film industry in the region is set to continue, with TROY studios extending their footprint – creating the largest facility in Ireland. The first production directly employed 320 people during its nine-month duration contributing €53m to the local economy.

Additional economic and job creation potential opportunities exist in the region. To explore and realise this growth Innovate Limerick received funding under Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (2018) to appoint a Regional Film Manager. This person will be tasked with ensuring the economic impact of TROY is felt across the region and that opportunities are grasped as they arise.

To support the continued growth of the industry, a focus will be placed on building the indigenous talent pipeline. Recent changes to Section 481 'Film & TV Tax Credit' supports this ambition, by placing greater emphasis on training programs for persons located within the region where filming is taking place. The Mid-West region will continue to foster and grow successful collaborations to deliver this regional talent pipeline.

How will delivery be measured?

An additional 1,000 people employed by the film sector in the region by 2020.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020

Responsibility: Innovate Limerick, TROY studios, Limerick School Art & Design, Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Tipperary Education Training Board.

Action 4:

Expand the Emerald Aero Group cluster

Emerald Aerospace Group (EAG) is a cluster of indigenous manufacturing companies. Members are indigenous SMEs, with expertise in sectors such as precision engineering, metal treatments, plastic injection moulding & thermoforming, 3 D Printing, composites and fabrication. Members are located through Ireland with a concentration in and around the Mid-West.

EAG aims to capture the growth that the aerospace industry is experiencing globally, with revenues in civil aircraft manufacture forecast to accumulate to \$1.3 trillion by 2030 as demand for aircraft reaches 56,000. Pressure on existing sub-suppliers to meet growth levels is intensifying. Emerald Aero Group (EAG) is focused on realising, for Ireland, the opportunities that exist and increasing the country's market share in the global sub-supply chain of Aircraft manufacturing.

EAG's ambition is to increase member aero-structure export revenues by €20m over the next 3 years. This increase in revenue will result in the creation of an additional 200 direct jobs.

The cluster was successful in securing €250,000 from Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (2017).

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020

How will delivery be measured?

€20m additional contract secured.

Responsibility: EAG Group, Enterprise Ireland funded this project and will be actively involved in, monitoring the delivery of a set of Metrics & KPI's with EAG on a half yearly basis for the next 3 to 5 years.

Action 5:

Develop a SportsTech Cluster

The international SportsTech market value is estimated at \$39.6bn with projections to almost triple to \$113bn by 2021. The European SportsTech industry gained significant traction in 2017, with now more than 1,000 sports technology companies across Europe and € 135million in investment, more than tripling from 2013⁶.

A study commissioned by Limerick City and County Council, Innovate Limerick and the University of Limerick (2015) sought to establish a formal 'House of Sport' cluster to redress economic development imbalances in Ireland by growing employment, enhancing competitiveness across smart specialisations, enhancing innovation, accelerating entrepreneurship and positively impacting on the growth rate of average wages. The ambition was to support the creation of an additional 500 jobs.

In 2017 SportsTech Ireland, a privately held not-for-profit, was established. While the entity serves the entire island, it is head quartered in the region. The initiative seeks to develop sports technology research and business growth in Ireland and builds on efforts to create a National Sports Cluster in Limerick and its hinterland, which could create up to 500 jobs.

6 See: <https://www.siliconrepublic.com/start-ups/sports-tech-ireland-hub-limerick>
<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/innovation/ireland-making-waves-in-the-sports-technology-space-1.3449309>

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020

How will delivery be measured?

- Network Development: Global, national and local collaborative SportsTech network development that benefits start-ups, scaleups, established organisations and partners through the sharing of ideas, learning, expertise and sectoral knowledge.
- Industry Engagement: Attracting established brands and SportsTech organisations to the region that can be active partners, customers and acquisition routes for start-ups and scale-ups.
- Knowledge Development: Educational and commercialisation services: Provision of mentorship, training and development programmes, to help stimulate start-ups by providing a systematic approach to commercialisation and provide within the region a supply of talent that is in turn attractive to FDI companies and Irish SportsTech companies.

Responsibility: SportsTech Ireland, IDA Ireland, Limerick City & County Council.

DIGITALLY-ENABLED SERVICE TRANSFORMATIONS

Action 6:

Develop a suite of regional 'Smart E-Hubs'

The way in which people work is changing. Seventy-five percent of all workers will be millennials by 2025, and the number of people working remotely will rival the number of people working in a traditional office environment. With advances in technology, changing employment trends, the arrival of millennials into the workplace, shortages in talent and a greater focus on work-life balance, there is a significant rise in the number of people seeking flexible remote working. While e-working still encompasses employees working remotely from their office, e-working can now extend to capture new & emerging employment trends including digital nomads and e-lancers.

There is a plethora of studies which identify the benefits to both employer and employee of e-working⁷ and a number of initiatives in Ireland seeking to capitalise on this growth market including Grow Remote, Abodoo and EmployMum to name a few.

This action seeks to create and roll-out a co-ordinated regional strategy to create a regional co-working Smart e-Hub network bringing talent and space together building on the regions value proposition as a location of choice to live and work. Led by the local authorities in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, working in partnership with community groups (IFA, ICA, Community Enterprise Centres, LEADER etc) and education & training boards, the region can create a collective suite of networked Smart E-hubs. The project will deliver new opportunities and is future proofing employment opportunities for the towns and villages across the Mid-West region in the growing number of remote workers. It will complement work already undertaken by local authority's (eg. www.digiclare.ie) and existing hubs.

This project is part of a wider ambition to grow a digitally smart city-region, and feasibility will explore the opportunity for these e-hubs to serve local communities in the delivery of a suite of e-Smart services, including in the first instance e-Learning and e-Health.

The hubs will be located in rural towns and villages and will play an integral role in revitalising towns and villages and supporting growth across the region's rurally based population, complementing and

7 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrealoubier/2017/07/20/benefits-of-telecommuting-for-the-future-of-work/#2d55519916c6>
<https://remote.co/6-interesting-benefits-of-remote-work/>
<https://www.myhrtoolkit.com/2017/02/benefits-remote-working/>
<https://www.techrepublic.com/blog/10-things/10-good-reasons-why-working-remotely-makes-sense/>

aligning with the Town & Village Renewal action contained under the Strategic Objective of increasing regional capacity. As e-learning becomes more embedded in these e-hubs, the potential to deliver on this action to pilot an enterprise-led development initiative targeted at unemployment blackspots can potentially also be delivered.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020

How will delivery be measured?

Six new e-hubs in place & regional roadmap on collective value proposition in place

Responsibility: Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager, Enterprise Ireland, Local Development Companies, LEO network, Industry partners, HSE, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Tipperary Education Training Board.

Action 7:

Create a digital collaboration centre to increase Multinational/ SME linkages

The Digital Collaboration Centre will house industry collaborative projects in an agile manner responsive to business needs through proof-of-principle applications via a community of co-located experts. It will present new business models opportunities in an emerging growth market. It will facilitate collaborative linkages across the business community (MNC, SME, StartUp) with research and education in disruptive technology applications to services and business processes.

Innovate Limerick received €2.2m funding from Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (2018) to develop this centre located in the heart of Limerick's Georgian Innovation Quarter, serving the wider Mid-West region. As funders of the project Enterprise Ireland will be actively involved in monitoring its implementation, seeking participation on the Advisory Board, agreeing and monitoring the delivery of a set of Metrics & KPI's with the promoters on a half yearly basis for the next 3 to 5 years, including:

- Commence the redevelopment of a currently derelict building, creating this new Digital Collaboration Centre
- Appoint a Digital Collaboration Centre Manager to drive & deliver collaborative project pipeline

The Digital Collaboration Centre is an anchor project within the Georgian Innovation District. Its location and collaboration activities are aligned with actions aimed at the Mid-West becoming Ireland's lead location for the Autonomous Mobility Sector and the outcomes complementary.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2019; Q4 2020

How will delivery be measured?

Construction commenced and manager in place; 3 collaborative projects undertaken with SME and MNC partnerships involved.

Responsibility: Innovate Limerick, Enterprise Ireland, Limerick City & County Council, Industry partners; Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager.

Action 8:

Run a pilot Public Sector Automation & Digital Transformation Centre of Excellence

There is an expectation by Irish enterprises that more government services be delivered online, increasing transactional efficiencies and saving time. Transformative solutions such as the Irish Online Passport Renewal Service, the technology solutions of which were delivered by an SME in the Mid-West, demonstrate Ireland's ability to innovate and disrupt legacy processes. Building on the successful delivery of HAP from the Mid-West region, this initiative seeks to secure funding to identify other government services that are ready for digital transformation. If funded, the initiative seeks to run a pilot to develop and test the Return on Investment delivery model of an Automation and Digital Transformation Centre of Excellence in the Mid-West region, building on the outcomes captured in the NOAC's 2016 report on the Delivery of Shared Services and delivering on the ambitions as identified in the 2012 McLoughlin report.

Timeframe for delivery: Q2 2020

How will delivery be measured?

Pilot successfully funded, and results obtained to build ROI model.

Responsibility: Limerick City & County Council and associated partner stakeholders as appropriate.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

Achieve a step-change in progress toward a low carbon economy in the Mid-West

CONTEXT

The Mid-West region is home to Ireland's National BioEconomy Campus located at Lisheen, Thurles. The campus is a critical piece of infrastructure which will develop BioRefining technologies based on renewable biological resources which are essential for a carbon-neutral future. Making better use of the Mid-West's bio-based resources presents real opportunities. It means that the region's farmers, fishers and foresters will – in the future – not only be partners with food companies, but also potentially with chemical, textile and construction industries.

The campus was successful in securing €4.6m from the Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Fund (2017) to develop an Innovation & Pilot facility. The facility will catalyse the regeneration and re-industrialisation of the region around Lisheen by facilitating the efficient and cost-effective scale up and valorisation of new processes & technologies relevant to the Bioeconomy. It will enable diversification of business activities in the Agri-food and marine sectors in the rural economy which will attract and retain workers and businesses in the region, which in turn will drive innovation and investment. It will do so by acting as a 'centre of gravity' for industry, entrepreneurs, academics, and ancillary service providers to interact, innovate and create new technologies, processes, products, companies and jobs.

Energy generation is also fundamentally changing. The Mid-West is a net contributor to electrical power generation supplying Ireland with electricity primarily from Moneypoint and Ardnacrusha. There are also a number of wind energy developments across the region. ESB International have an off-shore Wave Energy test site off the Coast of Clare, whilst tidal action renewable energy investigations have taken place in the Shannon Estuary. The region has the highest wind speeds in the country and access to the existing grid is readily available.

The Shannon estuary is recognised as a significant economic driver in the region with strong economic and development policies focused on growing its potential. Universities in the region have signed a memorandum of understanding with a group of leading firms in Silicon Valley with the aim of creating a 'world-class cluster' of sustainable and renewable energy companies between Galway and Limerick, known as the 'Shannon Energy Valley'.

Shannon Foynes Port Company also works closely with national bodies and organisations to promote and market the Shannon Estuary as 'Europe's Ocean Energy Hub', particularly in terms of providing a land base to access and service generating platforms, including deep water. The Ocean Energy Hub is not only promoted on the facilities provided by the Shannon Estuary but also on the positive attributes of the wider region, including; access to the largest wave energy resource in Europe; access to the best wind energy regime in Europe; its close proximity to Shannon International Airport; the benefits derived from Limerick's gateway designation and its advanced third level institutions; access to electricity grid and gas supplies; and supports and incentives for new enterprise.

ICT plays a critical role in delivering a low carbon smart city-region economy. The ambition of the region to create a smart city-region as outlined in their Plan's Strategic Objective toward Enabling a Digital Economy is intertwined with this strategic objective in working toward a low carbon economy.

VISION TO 2020

Mid-West region being a positive net renewable energy source for Ireland.

KEY ACTIONS TO 2020

Action 1:

Develop and grow the National BioEconomy Piloting & Innovation Facility

Commence the development of the National BioEconomy Piloting and Innovation facilities which was granted €4.6m under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund in December 2017. Continue the alignment with the new €22.2 million BEACON BioEconomy SFI Research Centre, UCD. The pilot and innovation facilities at the National BioEconomy Campus in Lisheen will work on bio-based projects in the TRL (Technology Readiness Level) of 3 to 7 which will take products to pre-commercialisation stage. The research work at Lisheen will strengthen existing sustainable agri-food production systems, but also adding value and environmental benefits by producing innovative new bio-based products.

Timeframe for delivery: Commence Q1 2019

How will delivery be measured?

- Construction commences on the National facility at Lisheen, Thurles.
- An increase in the commercialisation research outputs in the BioEconomy sector transforming early stage research to commercial testing.
- Increase number of enterprises engaged and benefitting from the facility.

Responsibility: Irish BioEconomy Foundation, Vedanta, Tipperary County Council, Irish BioEconomy Foundation, BEACON, DPTC, Shannon ABC, Teagasc, Tipperary County Council, Glanbia, CMP, Marine Institute, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland.

Action 2:

Create a Marine and Renewable Energy Research Centre at Docklands Economic Park

In 2018 the Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) published its strategy to develop a 'Docklands Economic Park' to future-proof enterprise activity within Limerick docklands. With a focus on marine and renewable energy research and production, the Economic Park at Limerick Docklands will support the development of high technology businesses as set out in the Limerick City Development Plan and will capitalise on its unique marine setting adjoining a working port and Limerick city centre. Limerick Docklands offers a big space in which to do business, in the right place, with substantial quays built to accommodate shipping and which can also accommodate the testing and deployment of large industrial components to the Estuary and beyond - all this, in the heart of Limerick City close to research facilities and third level institutions. It provides a natural testing and demonstration site with associated supporting infrastructure to help accelerate the industry's ambitions for commercialisation of technologies as well as attracting investment in the sector.

Timeframe for delivery: Q3 2020

How will delivery be measured

Commencement of the development of Marine & Renewable Energy Research Centre at the new 'Docklands Economic Park'

Responsibility: Shannon Foynes Port Company, University of Limerick, Limerick City & County Council and other commercial and research partners as appropriate.

Action 3:

Initiate an energy demonstrator project: Positive City Exchange (+CityXchange)

The +CityXchange (positive city exchange) is a Horizon 2020 Smart City 32 partner project which includes Limerick City and County Council.

For the next five years, Limerick City along with partner and follower cities will develop together through citizen engagement a series of demonstration projects on how to become smart positive energy cities. Together, with all of their citizens, they will develop solutions that will help generate more energy than they consume, and exchange experiences with cities across Europe to learn faster, together.

By winning the grant, Limerick will become the first Irish 'Lighthouse Smart City'- Lighthouse cities are ones that develop and test integrated innovative solutions at district scale and act as exemplars for their region and other cities and regions across Europe.

Limerick is the only Irish city to ever receive this prestigious award and €6.5m of the overall funding will go directly to Limerick and its partners.

Limerick will be developing a new "community grid" and the use of smart meters, innovation in new energy sources (including hydrokinetic energy) and storage, digital tools and citizen participation to create what is called a 'Positive Energy District' in Limerick city centre, starting with the Gardens International building and ENGINE training and workspace, provided by Innovate Limerick. A Positive Energy District is one that contributes more energy than it consumes. Limerick's demonstration project will be centred in the Georgian Innovation district in the city centre.

This action is aligned with the Mid-West becoming Ireland's lead location for the Autonomous Mobility Sector and the creation of the Digital Collaboration Centre; the outcomes of each action are complementary. The project also enhances social inclusion measures, crucial in the delivery of a smart-city region.

Timeframe for delivery: 5-year demonstrator project

How will delivery be measured?

Commence infrastructure installation Q1 2019

Responsibility: The project will be led by Limerick City and County Council and Trondheim Kommune (Norway) and hosted by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The Irish partners include the Limerick Clare Energy Agency, Innovate Limerick, University of Limerick, IES R&D, Smart MPower, ESB Innovation and ESB Networks, Space Engagers, GKinetic Energy Ltd, Future Analytics Consulting

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

Continue to develop workforce skills and talent and enhance the attractiveness of living and working in the Mid-West

CONTEXT

The Mid-West region is home to 20,000 students across three 3rd level institutions at University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate College. The region is also rich in its offering of Further Education and Training through Limerick Clare Education Training Board and Tipperary Education Training Board.

If enterprise in the region is to continue to flourish and grow the pipeline of talent emerging from these institutions and the region must continue to grow. However, a graduate pipeline is only one of a number of sources of talent. There is an ever-increasing need for persons in employment to engage in upskilling, re-skilling and life-long learning to ensure the region's talent is equipped with the skills to respond to changing employment patterns and demands, by developing skills resilience.

And, while unemployment levels have fallen significantly across the region in recent years (unemployment rate has fallen from 19.5 percent in Q1 2012 to 7.2 percent Q3 2018⁸), the economic up-turn has not been felt equally. Eight of the country's top ten unemployment black-spots are within the Limerick metropolitan area, and 23 of the country's 79 unemployment black-spots are across the region. A progressive inclusive region offers equal opportunities for all citizens, and as this plan seeks to increase the number of persons active in the labour market. A specific focus will be placed on equal access to education and training.

There is also a newly developed sub-classification of the economically inactive population (retired, student or home duties primarily) categorised as the 'Potential Additional Labour Force' (PALF). In Q2 2017 the National Skills Council estimates that this PALF accounted for 111,200 persons across the country, equating to 8 percent of the inactive cohort. Of the 26,000 classified as on home duties, the majority were female, had higher secondary/ FET or third level qualifications and had previous work experience.

Census 2016 identified 31,519 persons living in the Mid-West who categorise their occupation as 'Looking after home/ family'. Over 90 percent of these were women. The participation rate of females in the region is 52.8, while the state average is 55.2. As the war on talent intensifies more innovative ways in which to re-engage homemakers and increase female participation rates in the labour market are needed.

Finally, there is a need to future proof the region's long-term talent pipeline. There are a number of regional collaborative education-industry initiatives already underway which focus on increasing the quality and quantity of the talent pipeline for the region. These include Limerick for Engineering, Limerick for IT, a dedicated Hospitality Education & Training Centre as well as the Regional Skills Forum. This plan seeks to build on these successes.

Funded by the Department of Education and Skills, the Mid-West Regional Skills forum is part of a network of 9 Regional Skills Fora has been created as part of the Government's National Skills

8 CSO Labour Force Survey Q3 2018

Strategy 2025. The Fora provides an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The Fora have been established to align with wider Government policy and initiatives on regional economic development. The innovative structure of the Fora sees the work plan within each region being driven by key stakeholders in the region including employers, enterprises and education and training providers. The work of the Fora through facilitation and engagement will contribute to better outcomes for learners and support enterprise development. The Fora provide a single contact point in each region to help employers connect with the range of services and supports available across the education and training system, more robust labour market information and analysis of employer needs to inform programme, development greater collaboration and utilisation of resources across the education and training system and enhancement of progression routes for learners and a structure for employers to become more involved in promoting employment roles and opportunities for career progression in their sectors.

VISION TO 2020

Enterprise productivity is driven by an agile, skilled and talented workforce with the necessary skills to deliver on future opportunities and overcome challenges, where education is an exemplar pathway in delivering equal opportunity for all citizens.

KEY ACTIONS TO 2020

Action 1:

As part of the Skills for Growth initiative the Regional Skills Forum will assist local enterprises identify their skills' needs through a variety of audit tools to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity. Once skill needs have been identified, Regional Skills Fora will link companies with the education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need.

Timeframe for delivery: Q2 2020

How will delivery be measured:

Number of enterprises audited.

Responsibility: RSF, and partners including EI, IDA Ireland, ETB, HEIs, Local Authorities, LEOS, Regional Enterprise Plan for Jobs Programme Manager, and DEASP

Action 2:

Double the number of participants on the EXPLORE programme over the 2018 figure. The EXPLORE programme is designed to address the need for enhanced digital skills among older workers in manufacturing sectors within the region.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2019

How will delivery be measured:

Number of participants

Responsibility: ETB, Regional Skills Forum.

Action 3:

Support education and training providers in preparing applications under Springboard+ 2019 in collaboration with local enterprise in order to increase provision of programmes for upskilling and reskilling within the region.

Timeframe for delivery: Q2 2019

How will delivery be measured:
Number of successful applications.

Responsibility: RSF, HEIs.

Action 4:

Support all actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.

Timeframe for delivery: Ongoing

How will delivery be measured:
Customer feedback

Responsibility: RSF

Action 5:

Communicate to employers the services available through Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs.

Timeframe for delivery: Ongoing

How will delivery be measured:
Increased number of engagements

Responsibility: RSF and other stakeholders.

Action 6:

Promote existing skills initiatives to Life-Long Learners and those in employment

The number of persons engaged in life-long learning in the region exceeds that of the State as a whole (8 percent versus 6.7 percent), however numbers engaged in life-long learning in Ireland remain half OECD averages.

Unless the upskilling of those in employment increases the region cannot be prepared for future work needs. There are a number of unique attributes in the region which will continue to enhance the levels of life-long learning in the region. Collaborative initiatives such as Limerick for Engineering and Limerick for IT are delivering agile flexible solutions in response to industry needs. Government schemes including Springboard+ and Explore target those in employment requiring up-skilling or re-skilling to enable them perform new job roles. This work must continue. Additionally, Limerick is a designated UNESCO Learning City.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (ongoing over the lifetime of the Plan)

How will delivery be measured?

Regional uptake of 'Skills to Advance' program is above national averages.

Responsibility: Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Tipperary Education Training Board, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Mary Immaculate College, Mid-West Regional Skills Forum, Limerick for Engineering, Limerick for IT, Skillnets, Chambers of Commerce, IBEC, LEO network, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager.

Action 7:

Increase Apprenticeships and Traineeships

A key objective of the action plan is to work toward achieving Department of Education and Skills ambition to double the number of programmes on offer across industry sectors, achieving in excess of 10,000 apprentice registrations per annum in Ireland.

To increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships a number of initiatives will continue to grow including holding an annual 'Apprenticeship and Traineeship' showcase and 'Limerick for Engineering' showcase.

Utilising existing industry clusters in the Mid-West, new programmes such as the Level 7 Manufacturing & Data Integration apprenticeship are being designed to capture emerging skill needs. Work with these clusters, including Limerick for Engineering, Limerick for IT and employer organisations including IBEC will continue, with the ambition of delivering new non craft apprenticeship programmes including Laboratory Technician, Software Development, Financial Services and Cyber Security between 2019-2020 in the Mid-West region.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (ongoing rollout and programme delivery over the lifetime of the Plan)

How will delivery be measured?

Number of programmes on offer is doubles and apprenticeship registrations exceed 10,000.

Responsibility: University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Tipperary Education Training Board, Limerick for Engineering, Limerick for IT, Skillnets, Chambers of Commerce, IBEC, LEO network, Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Regional Enterprise Plan Programme Manager, with Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Manager.

Action 8:

Pilot an Enterprise-led employment initiative targeted at Unemployment Blackspots

There are a number of areas of disadvantage across the region where low levels of educational attainment coupled with high rates of long-term unemployment have created pockets of employment exclusion. Increased labour market inclusion, access and participation are a key objective of this plan. To achieve these, this action will pilot an initiative in partnership with relevant state and regional agencies, but specifically the Education and Training Boards, working toward employer-led pathways

for persons from areas of social and economic disadvantage. Working in collaboration with enterprise, this action seeks to provide specific skills-training to meet employer-identified skills needs, targeted at selected candidates within communities, with the ambition of moving persons into the workplace.

This initiative will initially pilot two locations; Tipperary Town (delivered cross-regionally in partnership with South-East Enterprise Plan) and Limerick City (delivered in partnership with Limerick Regeneration and Innovate Limerick).

This action will complement the action on Town & Village Renewal as identified under the strategic objective of Increasing Capacity and improves levels of social inclusion, critical for the success of a smart city-region.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (ongoing over the lifetime of the Plan)

How will delivery be measured?

50 persons placed in employment through this action by 2020.

Responsibility: Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Tipperary Education Training Board, Limerick Regeneration Agency, Innovate Limerick, Department of Employment and Social Protection, regional employers, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manger, South-East Enterprise Plan Manager.

Action 9:

Work with companies to develop 'Returnships', aimed at increasing the female participation rate

The participation rate of women in the Mid-West region is lower than national averages. Across the three LEOs in the Mid-West, while women avail of 58 percent of the training courses, mentorship and events that take place, 73 percent of grant supports are taken-up by men⁹. The occupation of 31,519 people in the Mid-West as at Census 2016 was 'Looking after Home/ Family'. Of these, 93 percent are female.

If participation rates of women are to increase, then more flexible working options must be offered by enterprises. Similarly, the transition to returning to work for women who have taken time out of the labour market to look after home and family, must be managed better.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020(ongoing over the lifetime of the Plan)

How will delivery be measured?

Additional 10 companies offering 'Returnships' by 2020. Increase in female participation rates in Census 2020.

Responsibility: Mid-West Enterprise Plan Programme Manager, with industry and regional stakeholders

Action 10:

Undertake a campaign to attract national and international talent into the region

Attracting and retaining globally mobile talent is crucial for the sustained growth of the region and ensuring it is a globally diverse location. Building on the implementation of a cohesive brand a

9 Data collected from Clare, Tipperary and Limerick LEO and represent figures Jan –Oct 2018

targeted campaign to attract national and international talent will be delivered. Additional activities such as roadshows will take place to communicate the opportunities – job & quality of life – that exist and are offered in the region. This will include the Work permit system. There are 152 different nationalities living in the Mid-West region; non-Irish nationalities represent 11 percent (national average is 11.6 percent) of the total population. If the region is to continue to become an attractive international location of choice for mobile talent, cultural diversity and inclusion must continue to increase.

This action will work in tandem with the strategic objective of regional messaging.

Timeframe for delivery: Commence Q1 2019

How will delivery be measured?

Mid-West event takes place in Dublin and one in London. Branding strategy adopted by multiple agencies and promotional campaign in place.

Responsibility: Chambers of Commerce, Recruitment agencies, Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, Enterprise Ireland Mid-West, IDA Ireland Mid-West, Industry partners, HEIs, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager.

Action 11:

Expand the Mid-West STEM Alliance

The Mid-West STEM Alliance is an industry led initiative in collaboration with education and training providers that partners regional post primary schools with local enterprise. Greater engagement and awareness of STEM roles in industry together with student placement opportunities and events will assist in increasing numbers participating in STEM related higher education courses. Actions to include holding an annual 'Apprenticeship and Traineeship' showcase and 'Limerick for Engineering' showcase and growing the numbers involved in STEM Shannon.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (ongoing over the lifetime of the Plan)

How will delivery be measured?

Increase in numbers registering for STEM courses, Apprenticeships, as well as number of employers participating in alliance.

Responsibility: Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Regional Skills Forum Manager, Mary Immaculate College, Regional Enterprise Plan Programme Manager, Limerick for Engineering, Limerick for IT, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Tipperary Education Training Board, industry partners, Skillnets, LERO outreach, Chambers of Commerce.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

Develop the region's capacity to deliver economic growth

CONTEXT

All regions require critical infrastructure capacity and capabilities to deliver economic growth. Without sufficient capacity, regions become constrained by infrastructural deficiencies and cannot reach their economic potential.

Ireland is an island economy on the periphery of Europe. The State's population is the same as the greater San Francisco-Oakland area and smaller than European cities such as Munich or Barcelona; half the size of cities such as Qingdao in China and Chennai in India; while Tokyo, the largest city in the world has a population seven times greater than the whole of Ireland, living in a geographic area that is less than one-fifth the size of this island.

A strong functioning capital city is crucial in maintaining Ireland's position as a globally competitive location. Holding 40 percent of the population of the country, Dublin is challenged by dynamic growth in the context infrastructural deficiencies. The shortage of space is most acutely felt in the current lack of suitable housing options for employees. The value proposition for the island of Ireland will be weakened if solutions are not delivered.

By 2040 there will be an extra 1 million people living in Ireland in an additional 550,000 households in (Ireland 2040). 50 percent of this population growth is to be accommodated in the five cities; and at least 40 percent of new housing stock is to be delivered within existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and or brownfield sites.

Regional capacities to grow have traditionally been supported by infrastructures such as road and rail connections. While there remains a need for these hard infrastructures, new needs are emerging, specifically in digital connectivity. Ninety per cent of the world's data has been generated in the past 18 months. One autonomous vehicle will generate 300 terabytes of data per year. If the Irish economy is to grow and successfully convert emerging growth sectors into real job opportunities, it must have the capacity to store these exponential levels of data. If the Mid-West region is to complement the value proposition of the island as a whole, then data capacity must increase.

The Mid-West region has several unique infrastructural assets which play a crucial role in supporting its enterprise base; specifically, the Shannon Estuary with its deep-water port facilities, and Shannon International Airport providing daily UK, European and North American connectivity. It is vital that these assets continue to grow supporting the economic well-being of the regional economy into the future.

The region is economically driven by the urban centre of Limerick City. Limerick 2030, a €1bn investment program is recognised as an exemplar in delivering a new direct model of enterprise infrastructure. However, the towns and villages across the region must continue to play a supporting role in driving economic opportunities. Indeed 54 percent of the population in the Mid-West region live in 'Aggregate Rural Areas'¹⁰, higher than the national average of 37 percent. The region will work

10 The term Aggregate Rural Area refers to the population outside Aggregate Town areas and includes the population of towns with a population of less than 1,500 persons

toward negating an urban rural divide, working to reverse the decline felt in some towns and villages across the region that are experiencing population reductions, high unemployment rates, patterns of emigration, declining agriculture sectors and main streets that falling into vacancy and dereliction. If the region is to continue to grow economically, its towns and villages must have equal opportunities to thrive, while access to education and pathways to gainful employment must have greater equality.

VISION TO 2020

An innovative 'Tier 2' Limerick City region of a scale which can exert critical-mass leverage at an international level, maximising the economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities in a manner for all those who live, work and visit the region and for the benefit of the country.

KEY ACTIONS TO 2020

Action 1:

Pilot a Town & Village Renewal project

This targeted pilot initiative will focus on one town in each of the three local authority counties within the region: Ennistymon, Co. Clare, Tipperary Town, Co. Tipperary and Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. The ambition of the initiative is to increase the number of persons living in an area, decrease unemployment rates and increase the aesthetic appeal of the main street.

This Pilot scheme will enable towns to come up with solutions to the challenges they face and to encourage more people to live and enjoy a high quality of life in towns and villages. The reasons why more people do not live in town centres are many and complex. The availability of schools, public transport, recreational areas, public realm, a good retail mix, social networks, and the minimisation of anti-social behaviour all need to be part of the offering to encourage people to want to live in town centres. This pilot initiative will allow three Local Authorities to develop and test different innovative models which are considered appropriate for rural towns. The learnings from this approach will help to provide an indication as to what might work well for similar types of town across the region.

The intention is to look at all the elements that go into making towns and villages more attractive for residential occupancy, including infrastructure and services, and arrive at blueprints for each town to attract more people to live in their centres.

The action will also assess the opportunities to jointly applying for funding for the benefit of the 3 settlements e.g. Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Town & Village Renewal, REDZ, or EU funds such as URBACT.

This action is inter-connected with the delivery of a Regional Suite of Smart e-hubs, and the action on Enterprise-led Employment Initiatives for Unemployment Blackspots; the outcomes of all three actions are correlated and will have tacit spill over impacts on each other.

The action will also be linked to initiatives currently being undertaken by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Timeframe for delivery: 3 years, with bi-annual review via a town forum.

How will delivery be measured?

- Significant reduction in vacancy
- Increase in number living in the town centre
- Number of commercial properties converted to residential use
- Number of unsightly properties painted and renovated
- Prepare development briefs for key town centre properties and sites
- Create itinerates for FAM and investment visits
- Consistent and regular feed of good news stories to general public

Responsibility: The three Local Authorities of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary will lead the project in partnership with LEO offices, local town and community fora, business associations, Local Development Companies, Department of Rural and Community Development.

Action 2:

Support the development of data centres in the Mid West, including new forms of data centre technology development

The Mid-West region has both the power capacity and grid infrastructure, coupled with dark fiber connectivity to successfully deliver a cluster of data centres, serving the enterprise needs of companies both regionally and nationally.

A proposal is in place to develop a one million square foot facility in Ennis. Shannon Foynes Port Company have submitted a planning application to create the first floating data centre in Europe located at Limerick Docks in partnership with Nautilus Data Technology with the potential to create 124 jobs in phase one. Nautilus Data Technology employs water cooling technology in its data centres, meaning they operate more efficiently and less expensively than traditional land-based facilities.

Timeframe for delivery: 2019-2020

How will delivery be measured?

Commence construction of first data centre by Q3 2019.
New data centre technologies employed and showcased.

Responsibility: Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, Shannon Foynes Port Company, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland.

Action 3:

Deliver new enterprise capacity and opportunities arising from Shannon Foynes Port Company operations

Shannon Foynes Port company (SFPC) is Ireland's second largest port operation contributing €1.9bn (1 percent of Ireland's entire GDP) to the national and regional economy. Foynes Port has been identified as a 'core' European TEN-T port (Trans European Transport Network). In 2017 cargo volumes (11.3m tonnes) surpassed peak levels of the boom of the last decade and have now grown by 18 percent in the three years since 2014. Tonnage at general cargo terminals has increased by just over 53 percent since 2011 and tonnage throughput will continue to trend upward in the coming years, in line with the mid to high scenario projected in Vision 2041.

This performance is enabling the company to continue its record investment programme, as outlined in its Masterplan Vision 2041. With the €12m Phase 1 completed over the two-year period ending 2016, a planning application is in progress for a further €22m investment covering Phases II to IV. These phases will comprise a significant extension to berthing facilities at Foynes, including the development of the recently acquired 38 hectares of land for port activity. Funding for this record expansion is in place and has been co-funded by the EU Ten-t program. This investment will facilitate growth for the energy, agriculture and potentially biomass sectors among others. The Limerick Docklands Framework Strategy explores a number of emerging market opportunities to deliver new capacity for the region. These include commercial office options at the former Banatyne Mill site; as well as exploring the potential for distribution centre/ logistic hub activities at Corcanree, decarbonising Ireland's supply chain capacity, supported by new road infrastructures.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020(ongoing over the lifetime of the Plan)

How will delivery be measured?

Banatyne Mill occupied by Q4 2020 with the potential to house upward of 400 jobs; construction of jetty joining and in-fill activity at Foynes Port commenced by Q4 2019

Responsibility: Shannon Foynes Port Company, Limerick City & County Council.

Action 4:

Develop a Marine Enterprise Zone

Clare Maritime Economic Zone DAC (Clare MEZ) is an initiative by Clare County Council to provide specialist infrastructure, accommodation and development space for a range of different maritime-related niche businesses. It delivers on the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan which provides a framework for development along the Shannon Estuary and includes the recommendation for the Cahercon site to be zoned for maritime industry-related development.

The project received €1.8m funding from the Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Fund in 2018 to create a specialist commercial training facility, field research labs & field testing base for marine renewable devices. As funders of the project Enterprise Ireland will be actively involved in agreeing and monitoring the delivery of a set of Metrics & KPIs with the promoters on a half yearly basis for the next 3 to 5 years.

The facility is based on the periphery of a rural community in County Clare and this development will deliver new job creation opportunities for the local community and act as an economic stimulus with wider regional positive impacts offering new opportunities on a significant natural asset unique to the region.

Timeframe for delivery: Site preparation commence Q3 2019. Operational Q3 2020.

How will delivery be measured?

Cahercon Marine Enterprise Zone open

Responsibility: Clare Maritime Economic Zone DAC led by Clare County Council, Enterprise Ireland, Maritime College of Ireland Commercial Services, Flagship Maritime Consultant, Limerick Clare Education Training Board, Limerick Institute of Technology, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, United Hospitality Institute.

Action 5:

Explore opportunities for greater utilisation of capacity at Shannon Airport

Shannon International Airport is one of Ireland's three national airports, a national asset located in the region which supports the sustainability of enterprise along the Atlantic and Southern coasts of Ireland. The direct, international connectivity provided by Shannon Airport has been a critical factor in the decision of many multinationals to base operations in the Mid-West and adjacent regions. This multinational base supports a thriving base of indigenous enterprises across the sub-supply network.

This connectivity has resulted in Shannon's catchment area being home to the largest concentration of multinationals outside Dublin. Shannon airport also has the largest cluster of aviation and aerospace industry in the country encompassing more than 50 companies, directly employing more than 2,600 staff.

Shannon Airport is a national asset with existing capacity to accommodate 4.5 million passengers per year. Passenger numbers at the airport were 1.75m in 2017, equating to 4.6 percent of Ireland's total passenger numbers. During 2013 – 2017 the number of passengers using Ireland's airport increased by almost 30 percent; however, over that period the dominance of Dublin Airport also increased, with its percentage of overall passenger journeys increasing from 81.3 percent to 85.3 percent.

The airfield infrastructure at Shannon International Airport along with the available land space make it an ideal location for the further development of the IASC cluster incorporating a range of MRO and Cargo facilities. Building on the success to date, IASC provides an opportunity for the Mid-West region to become a truly global player in the aerospace industry provided there is cross-agency cooperation to promote Shannon as the home of MRO in Ireland. The National Aviation Policy sets out that it will seek to "encourage the development of the International Aviation Services Centre (IASC) at Shannon.

Daily connectivity to mainland Europe and direct flights to North America have played an integral role in facilitating the expansion of Irish companies overseas while supporting the international relationships of foreign based firms. While the London Heathrow route will continue to be hugely important in the future; in a post Brexit world, as the UK exits the European Union, the West of Ireland will be without connectivity into an EU hub. The economic viability of the greater Western and Southern regions is underpinned by these air connections and these must be maintained to support future sustained job and enterprise growth.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (and ongoing)

How will delivery be measured?

Increased passenger numbers utilising Shannon International Airport. Continued daily European & North American connectivity.

Responsibility: Shannon Group, Chambers of Commerce, IBEC, Industry partners, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Limerick City & County Council, Clare County Council & Tipperary County Council

Action 6:

Conduct a feasibility study for a regional Housing Agency

There is a housing shortage nationally, although most acutely felt in the greater Dublin region. An advantage of the Mid-West region is that it has not reached crisis point. However, it is prudent to plan for increasing demand. To ensure adequate supply of suitable housing, the feasibility of creating a regional approved housing agency will be explored by the local authorities. The region has a track record in successfully developing and delivering innovative models and this feasibility will examine if a model similar to Limerick 2030 would be appropriate. A special purpose vehicle of Limerick City and County Council, Limerick 2030 is developing strategic sites in Limerick City and County for enterprise, investment and residential development. It is recognised as a successful innovative intervention mechanism for local authorities where market failures exist.

Timeframe for delivery: Feasibility commences Q1 2019, recommendations and implementation Q3 2019.

How will delivery be measured

Recommendations in place and implemented.

Responsibility: Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council.

Action 7:

Make use of lands for the expansion of Enterprise, Education and R&D capacity

The region has ambitious plans for growth, for its citizens and enterprises. To ensure enterprise growth which unlocks the potential for the economic growth of citizens, an adequate residual of zoned land must be made available for Education, R&D and Enterprise expansion purposes. The creation of new, and enhancement of existing, facilities which deepen the innovative capability of the region, increasing productivity and available enterprise space, is an on-going priority for the region.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (and ongoing)

How will delivery be measured?

Adequate supply of zoned lands for future enterprise, education and R&D activity available in the region.

An additional 150,000 sq. ft. of new engineering and manufacturing space for the region by year end 2020 (Shannon Commercial Properties); an additional 500,000 sq. ft. of commercial and enterprise space in Limerick's urban core (Limerick 2030).

Responsibility: Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, Shannon Commercial Properties, Limerick 2030, IDA Ireland.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

5

Build a coordinated regional message for consistent communication

CONTEXT

The Mid-West region encompasses the counties and three local authority areas of Clare, Limerick and Tipperary. Spatially its geography is aligned with the National Planning Framework, Ireland 2040 as well as the Mid-West Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). It is a sub-region of the Southern Region and is a designated NUTS3 region by the European Commission. Each local authority within the region has invested in the promotion of their county through their online portals. The region has a rich and unique tourism offering, located in all three of Ireland's Regional Experience brands: Wild Atlantic Way; Ireland's Ancient East; and Hidden Heartlands. There is a plethora of additional brands, particularly focused on the tourism market across in the region¹¹.

The region competes internationally for mobile talent and investment. There is no entity charged with the cohesive messaging of the economic value proposition being adopted by multiple stakeholders for the Mid-West targeted at attracting national and international companies and talent to locate here. The assets of each county within the region are complementary to each other; the urban capital of Limerick provides a critical mass value proposition for Clare and Tipperary; while the assets of people, land and natural resources as well as the tourism proposition of being located along the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East augment the value proposition of the region's capital city.

A clear quality of life and value proposition would augment and complement the work of other agencies and strategies in existence.

This strategic objective complements all of the other strategic objectives identified in this plan.

VISION TO 2020

A clear and defined messaging brand and value proposition developed for the Mid-West region to attract national and international talent and investment, and which complements and enhances the existing activities of each individual local authority, the Atlantic Economic Corridor Taskforce, and Government agencies.

11 Discover Lough Derg <http://www.discoverloughderg.ie/>
 Munster Vales <https://munstervales.com/>
 Ballyhoura Country <http://visitballyhoura.com/>
 Visit East Clare <https://www.visiteastclare.ie/>
 The Burren <http://www.burren.ie/>
 Visit West Limerick <https://www.visitwestlimerick.com/>

KEY ACTIONS TO 2020

Action 1:

Establish a regional messaging cross-stakeholder forum

There are a plethora of brands in existence across the region, yet a dearth of clear value propositions with consistent messaging being utilised across multiple stakeholders. A regional messaging forum will be formed to assess the regions needs and conduct a SWOT analysis.

The messaging of the region must reflect the ambition and vision of the Mid-West, which may extend beyond the geographic boundaries and expand into neighbouring cities and regions to reflect the advantageous geographic and visionary positioning of the region. This will be determined by the forum. Alignment with ongoing work of the Atlantic Economic Corridor Taskforce will also need to be achieved.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2020 (and ongoing)

How will delivery be measured?

Forum starts meeting in Q1 2019

Agreed roadmap and SWOT analysis complete

Responsibility: Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, Chambers of Commerce, Shannon Group, public and private stakeholders including HEI's and industry partners, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager.

Action 2:

Deliver a 'real-time' information source for Second Site Location property data

Data collation of commercial, office and industrial property solutions identifying shortages, opportunities and matching with industry needs as appropriate providing relevant information in timely fashion on regional property solutions and potential second site locations. This work will also contribute to the AEC Taskforce initiative on auditing available property solutions along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

Timeframe for delivery: Q4 2019

How will delivery be measured?

Real-time data available

Responsibility: Directors Planning Clare County Council, Limerick City & County Council, Tipperary County Council, AEC officer in Clare County Council, ACE officer in Limerick City & County Council, Enterprise Ireland Mid-West, IDA Ireland Mid-West, Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager.

3 Enterprise Agency and LEO activities in the Mid-West to 2020

In order to achieve the 2020 employment targets and maintain strong regional enterprise and job creation performance, the Strategic Objectives and collaborative actions identified for the Mid-West are set alongside and complement the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies, the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).

The Enterprise Agencies each have corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as frameworks for bespoke regional activities that support regional enterprise development potential and leverage regional assets and opportunities.

This section provides an overview of these activities in the Mid-West to 2020, including their ongoing support for the installed base of companies in the region as well as the range of supports and initiatives that they are undertaking to foster and attract new enterprise development and investment for the region.

The contributions and remit of other relevant agencies and bodies in the Mid-West are outlined in Appendix 5.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland supports companies in urban and rural areas to start, innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and into the future. At the centre of the agency's strategy, *Build Scale, Expand Reach 2017 - 2020*, are strategic targets focused on:

- Assisting clients to create 60,000 new jobs by 2020 while sustaining the existing record level of jobs;
- Growing the annual exports of client companies by €5bn to €26bn per annum;
- Increasing the level of spend made by client companies in the Irish economy by €4bn to €27bn per annum by 2020; and
- Inspiring more Irish owned companies to have global ambition.

The 5,000 manufacturing and internationally traded services companies that Enterprise Ireland works with are a critical source of existing employment and job creation in every county in Ireland.

Reflecting the strength of the Irish economy and of global markets in 2018, Enterprise Ireland client companies reported strong employment performance. Enterprise Ireland's 2018 employment survey reported:

- the highest employment in the 20 year history of the agency with 215,207 people employed in Enterprise Ireland supported companies;
- the successful number of net jobs created which saw 9,119 new jobs created after losses are taken into account, with over 60 percent of these outside Dublin;
- the lowest number of job losses since 1998; and
- employment growth across all regions.

Enterprise Ireland is working with client companies through a network of market and sector advisers from ten offices located throughout the country. This network enables the agency to connect and collaborate at a local level with enterprise development partners to assist in driving the multiagency response required to promote regional development. Enterprise Ireland engages with established client companies through teams of sectoral focused development advisors using a company led diagnostic approach which is used to establish clients' business needs. Based on this, the agency can tailor a support package to the company's growth potential based on their ambition, capability and need. A support package focuses, where relevant, on six business pillars (Innovation, Finance, Operations, Sales and Marketing, People and Organisational Development). Enterprise Ireland actively works with established clients throughout the country on a one-on-one basis to deliver this client engagement model.

The EI Corporate Strategy "Build Scale Expand Reach 2017 - 2020" places the regions at the core of economic growth in Ireland. The strategy sets ambitious targets to sustain 200,000 existing jobs and to create 60,000 new jobs nationally by 2020.

Enterprise Ireland's Regional Plan 2019 builds on this Strategy. It is a plan which identifies "National Initiatives" that are impactful and will develop regions of scale. The plan entails a vision that is ambitious and proposes a number of new initiatives which will have significant impact on economic development in the regions. The plan is founded on four core objectives:

- To maximise growth of Enterprise Ireland Clients in the regions
 - To strengthen Regional Infrastructure to maximise future growth of Irish Enterprise in the regions
 - To support Entrepreneurship in the regions
 - Work in collaboration to deliver Regional Growth
- Enterprise Ireland's overall vision for the region is: "All regions growing optimally, based on their innate and unique strengths and capabilities, sustaining and creating regional jobs and thereby, maximizing the contribution made by each region to economic growth & national prosperity".

Enterprise Ireland in the Mid-West

- In 2018, 16,833 people were employed across 420 Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the Mid-West.
- Enterprise Ireland supports all sectors with success in food, construction, manufacturing, electronics to name a few.
- Enterprise Ireland has co-funded, with local enterprise development groups, 157 Community Enterprise Centres across the country including 14 in the Mid-West.
- The Technology Centre Programme is a joint initiative between Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland allowing Irish companies and multinationals to work together in these centres. Technology Centres are collaborative entities established and led by industry. These centres are resourced by highly qualified researchers associated with research institutions who are empowered to undertake market focused strategic R&D for the benefit of industry. There are three Technology Centres located in the region
- Enterprise Ireland, in partnership with the Institutes of Technology, has established a nationwide network of 15 Technology Gateways which deliver technology solutions for Irish industry close to their market needs and are open to all sizes of companies. The Mid-West Gateway is Shannon ABC LIT
- Enterprise Ireland has funded the establishment of a national network of business innovation centres and specialist bio-incubation facilities across the Higher Education Sector. The Mid-West region is home to two campus incubators.
- EI supports and collaborates with HEIs in the region including UL, LIT through Innovation supports such as the Commercialisation Fund, Innovation Partnerships and Innovation Vouchers.

Local Enterprise Offices

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in every county are the 'first-stop-shop' for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own businesses. In the first instance, the LEOs provide a 'signposting' service in relation to all relevant State supports. The LEOs can also offer advice and guidance in areas such as Local Authority rates, Public Procurement and other regulations affecting business.

The LEOs can offer grant aid to microenterprises in manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors which have the potential to develop into strong export entities, in addition to 'soft' supports in the form of training, a mentor to work with the business proposer, or targeted programmes such as Lean for Micro (to help boost business productivity and competitiveness).

The Mid-West region is served by its Local Enterprise Offices in Limerick, Clare and Tipperary, which are co-located with the Local Authorities. In 2017, the LEOs operating the Mid-West region supported an additional 438 jobs from 2016 (total of 4,841 jobs) and the establishment of 26 new companies, bringing the total number of companies supported by the LEOs in the Mid-West region to 820.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland is the State's inward investment promotion agency. The mission of the agency is to partner with multi-national companies to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland.

IDA's current strategy, *Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019*, sets out ambitious targets to support the delivery of its mission to win and develop Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland. These include:

- Win 900 new investments for Ireland
- Support clients in creating 80,000 new jobs
- Grow market share and help maximise the impact of FDI investments

- Focus on greater balanced regional development

Regional development is a key pillar of IDA's strategy. For the first time, ambitious investment targets have been set for each region. IDA is targeting a minimum 30% to 40% increase in the number of investments for each region outside Dublin. These investments are a combination of new name investments, expansions from existing overseas companies in Ireland and R&D investments. To deliver on these ambitious targets IDA Ireland has;

- Worked with public bodies and the private sector on the Regional Enterprise Plans
- Worked with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence in each region
- Increased Global Business Services and High-Tech Manufacturing investments
- Aligned IDA business sectors with regional strengths to develop sectoral ecosystems
- Work more closely with EI and its client companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the region through the Global Sourcing Program
- Delivered property solutions in designated regional locations
- Increased IDA Ireland's regional footprint to adequately support the regional strategy

2019 represents the final year of IDA's current Strategy "Winning 2015-2019". In implementing the strategy, IDA Ireland has shown a clear determination to showcase the many benefits that are to be found for companies locating in regions. Significant gains have been made in deepening and growing FDI outside Ireland's main cities. To date, 407 regional investments have been won and 27,000 net jobs have been added on the ground in regional locations. A total of 58% of all IDA client supported jobs are now located in the regions with every region of the country experiencing employment gains in 2018. In addition to direct employment and skills transfer, IDA Ireland's client companies have a hugely positive effect on the local economy with over eight jobs being created for every 10 jobs in an FDI company. A total of

50% of the €5.7bn in annual capital expenditure by IDA client companies occurs outside of Dublin. These investments have been won despite the demographical challenges that exist and international trends of greater urbanisation.

IDA Ireland is committed to playing its part in the economic development of Irelands regions. However, winning investments is a challenge and will require a continued collaborative effort by all national and regional stakeholders.

Regional locations must continuously demonstrate the capability to deliver on a number of exacting criteria which generally inform the location decisions of multinationals.

An assessment of investments delivered for regions since 2015, would confirm the strategic importance of key criteria in actually influencing the investment decision;

- Critical mass in population
- The ability to attract and develop appropriate skills
- The presence of Third Level Institutes
- The existence of clusters of companies in specific industry sector
- Regional Infrastructure
- Regional Place Making Strategies
- Availability of high spec standard Manufacturing & Commercial Office Properties

To support the delivery of IDA's current strategy and the attraction of investments into different parts of the country, a €150m property investment plan was announced in 2015. IDA Ireland's approach of developing strategic sites and developing advanced buildings has proven to be hugely successful. In 2019, IDA Ireland will continue its building programme with the design and construction underway of advance buildings in Sligo, Dundalk, Athlone, Waterford, Galway, Monaghan and Limerick.

Over the course of 2019, IDA Ireland will be developing the agency's new five-year strategy. This strategy will take account of the changing

nature of work and the impact of technology on specific sectors. Profound changes are occurring in the world of work and this is already reflected in the jobs being created by the IDA Ireland client base. We can see an increasing complexity in the roles being created, technology skills becoming ubiquitous across roles, increasing demand for business professionals and a fall in the number of low-skilled jobs including back office support and basic manufacturing. This transition is likely to impact the nature and type of roles across the regions of Ireland.

Building on the success achieved to date, IDA will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders and parties in the regions to realise the economic potential and ambition of Irelands regions under the Regional Enterprise Plan.

IDA in the Mid-West Region

The Mid-West consists of three counties – Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary. There are a total of 128 IDA companies located across the region, employing 17,787 people.

The Mid West has an impressive base of existing FDI companies across key industry sectors from Life Sciences to Financial Services. Key recent investments of scale have been in Technology, Med Tech, Pharma and Financial Services, and also new emerging sectors such as Sports Technology. The Region has seen considerable growth in technology particularly in software development. Companies such First Data, Jaguar Land Rover, STATS, Becton Dickinson, WP Engine and Dell EMC are all engaging in high end Research & Development activities.

There is a thriving, dynamic and innovative enterprise base in the region. Significantly many of the existing FDI companies have increased their mandates and as a result employment headcount in the Mid-West region since 2015 – from J&J, to Regeneron, to Northern Trust. The presence of the 3rd level institutes of scale - the University of Limerick and Limerick Institute of Technology has been key to nurturing and producing the talented graduates required to help attract further investment in existing FDI companies in the region and winning new projects.

The Mid-West region has a strong proposition as a second site location, given the ease of access into the region with its strong motorway networks, Shannon International Airport and also the availability of Grade A offices. Fast landing swing spaces are also on offer to give potential new clients the flexible 'plug and play' option while waiting for fit-out of offices.

To strengthen the Mid-West's proposition to clients, IDA is currently constructing an office building on the National Technology Park, Limerick and this will be complete by Q1 2019.

IDA Ireland is planning to establish an Advanced Manufacturing Centre within the National Technology Park in Limerick (planning permission for this facility was submitted in December 2018). This initiative is in response to the identified needs of our discrete manufacturing industry base, and will serve the entire Irish-based manufacturing sector. Critically, the centre will be of scale and an exemplar internationally while ensuring coordination with and also complimenting existing resources. The Advanced Manufacturing Centre will provide a collaborative environment focussed on the acceleration of core platform technologies to 'digitize' Ireland's discrete manufacturing base and supply chain partners.

IDA's focus over the coming two years and beyond is to build on the strengths and competencies of the region with a particular focus on high value manufacturing, services and research and development opportunities across a number of established existing strongholds in Life Sciences, Technology, Global Business services, Financial Services, Engineering and Aviation. Emerging technology trends has and will continue to create new opportunities across the region in areas such as sports technology, marine technology, data analytics, artificial intelligence and smart manufacturing. IDA will continue to work closely with Enterprise Ireland and its indigenous base of companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the region.

Enhanced collaboration will be needed to align the efforts of all stakeholders and service providers to ensure that the Mid-West region continues to meet the needs of FDI companies. The delivery of necessary infrastructure and property solutions, fostering the continued development and growth of a skilled workforce and the continued development of the place-making of the region are pre-requisites to winning continued FDI investment. The region is very well positioned to continue to attract new FDI investment and grow employment in existing companies and IDA Ireland will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders and parties in the region to achieve this objective under the Regional Enterprise Plan.

4 Implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plan

The consultation process to refresh and refocus the original Regional Action Plans was enhanced by an understanding amongst stakeholders of the importance of ownership, collaboration, and the definition and delivery of specific measurable actions in the new Plans that could add value to the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, LEOs and other relevant bodies involved in supporting enterprise development. These priorities are reflected in the implementation structure for the new Regional Enterprise Plans.

The existing Regional Implementation Committee construct will be maintained for each region but will be renamed as a 'Regional Steering Committee'. Each Committee will continue to be chaired by a senior figure from the private sector who has been appointed by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The functions of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Oversee and drive delivery of the REP.
- Agree an annual work programme for the Committee based on the Plan.
- Nominate and secure 'Champions' to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives.
- Agree key milestones and metrics for delivery of each actions.
- Oversee the formation of working groups as necessary to drive implementation of actions.
- Explore and propagate new ideas and opportunities for collaborative projects, and funding.

- Provide a forum for the sharing of updates and information by members on key enterprise development initiatives including those set out by the Agencies and LEOs in this Plan and other pertinent updates (incl. REDF, RSES, *Project Ireland 2040* etc.).
- Oversee, contribute to and sign off (through the Chair) on annual Progress Reports to DBEI.

Full details of the composition of the Steering Committee is contained in Appendix 1.

The Chairperson will convene at least three meetings of the Steering Committee per year and will present a progress update on their Plan to the Minister at an annual meeting of all Chairpersons in the second half of 2019. This meeting will provide a fora for the Chairs to share good practice and identify potential areas for inter-regional co-operation. The Chairperson will also lead the Committee in the preparation of two progress reports to be submitted to the Department at the end of 2019 (mid-term) and end of 2020 (final report).

It is intended that each Steering Committee will oversee the formation of smaller working groups to drive delivery of actions or groups of actions in the REP. Working Groups will convene as frequently as is required and will report on progress to the Chairperson and the Steering Committee on a regular basis. They will also provide input to the annual progress reports in relation to their action(s).

Each region has the resource of a Programme Manager/Secretariat which has been provided through the Local Authorities. The Programme Manager/Secretariat will support the Chairperson and the Steering Committee in the coordination and delivery of the Plan and will be the primary operational point of contact with DBEI.

The Final Progress Reports for the Regional Action Plans for Jobs 2015-2017 provide a closing status in relation to all actions in these original reports and can be found on the Department's website at www.dbei.ie. The original Plans continue to be a useful resource for the REPs going forward as an input to the rolling work agenda for the initiative.

Finally, DBEI will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of all REPs at a national level. The Department will provide ongoing advice, guidance and support to the Chairpersons, Programme Managers/Secretariat and Steering Committees.

Targets for the Mid-West Region to 2020

The Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017 set out two core outcomes for achievement in each region by the end of 2020:

- employment growth of between 10 and 15 percent; and
- an unemployment rate reduced to within one percentage point of the State average.

Utilising new data from the CSO Labour Force Survey (LFS)¹², the rate of growth and unemployment rates achieved for the Mid-West region during the 2015-2017 lifetime of the original Regional Action Plans and up to Q3 2018 are outlined in Table 1.

The Mid-West recorded a strong rate of employment growth over the period of the RAPJ to Q1 2018 and if it continues at this rate the region will exceed the employment growth target by 2020. Despite strong performance on employment creation, more recently, the region has lost some ground in relation to unemployment with latest figures (Q3 2018) showing an increase in the unemployment rate to 7.2, which is more than one percentage point above the State average. This is a significant increase over a nine-month period. As the data is derived from a Survey the unemployment rate should be monitored over the longer term to establish a clearer overall pattern. However, it is also noted that over the period January 2015 – December 2018, Live Register numbers in the region have decreased by 16,658 or 44 percent. For a more detailed statistical analysis of the region's performance, please see Appendix 3.

The focus for the Mid-West over the period to 2020 is to sustain the momentum of employment growth achieved since 2015 and to reduce unemployment levels further to more closely match the national average to at least within one percentage point. The Plan will also place a focus on female labour force participation. The strategic objectives and actions in this Plan, along with the core activities of the various Agencies and Bodies involved in supporting enterprise development over the coming two-year period will support this.

¹² In 2018, the CSO introduced a new quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) to replace the original Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), which incorporated a new survey methodology and applied new NUTS 3 regional administrative boundaries used by Eurostat. The CSO later produced comparable ('back-casted') data at regional level to overcome the resulting break in the time series between old QNHS data and the introduction of the new LFS.

Table 1

	Numbers Employed				Unemployment Rate	
	Q1 2015	Q3 2018	Change Q1 2015 to Q3 2018	Growth Q1 2015 to Q3 2018	Q1 2015	Q3 2018
Mid-West	196,500	215,300	18,800	9.6%	12.0%	7.2%
State	2,014,400	2,273,200	258,800	12.8%	10.5%	6.0%

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, Q3 2018

Appendix 1: Membership of the Regional Steering Committee

Organisations represented on the Mid-West Steering Committee¹³

Chair of the Mid-West Committee:

Barry O'Sullivan
Global Manufacturing Lead, Johnson & Johnson Vision

Membership of the Committee:

J&J Vision (chairman)	Waterways Ireland
Enterprise Champions	Teagasc
Abbey Machinery (Enterprise Champion)	Northern Trust
Takumi Precision Engineering (Enterprise Champion)	General Motors
Limerick City & County Council	Grassland Agro
Clare County Council	STATS
Tipperary County Council	University of Limerick
Limerick Local Enterprise Office	Limerick Institute of Technology
Clare Local Enterprise Office	Mary Immaculate College
Tipperary Local Enterprise Office	Shannon College of Hotel Management
Enterprise Ireland	Shannon Group Plc
IDA Ireland	County Tipperary Chamber of Commerce
Southern Regional Assembly	Shannon Chamber of Commerce
Regional Skills Forum: Mid-West Region	Limerick Chamber of Commerce
Limerick & Clare Education & Training Board	Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation
Tipperary Education & Training Board	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Fáilte Ireland	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
InterTrade Ireland	Department of Rural and Community Development
Ibec	

Secretariat/Programme Management

Órlaith Borthwick

¹³ The existing Implementation Committees will be renamed 'Steering Committees'

Appendix 2: Enablers

The following represents the views of the Mid-West Steering Committee on the key infrastructural enablers for continued economic growth in the region.

Connectivity is a prerequisite infrastructural enabler for regional economic growth. The movement of citizens in an efficient and easy manner is an essential quality of life barometer in which the region currently scored very well: almost two-thirds of our population has a commute time of less than 30 minutes.

Data capacity and digital connectivity are critical in delivering on the ambition of this plan. Transatlantic tier-one dark fiber connectivity is required to enable our envisaged economic growth and support enterprise sustainability to 2020 and beyond.

On-going government investment into the maintenance of existing and creation of new road networks untaps new enterprise growth opportunities, increasing the functioning area of influence. The way in which people will move is fundamentally changing – real time information, an increase in the provision of smarter travel options and increased public rail and bus efficiencies will enhance the livability of the region.

To enhance inter-county and inter-regional road connectivity the following road projects are priorities:

- M20
- N24
- Limerick-Foynes road
- Limerick Northern Distributor Road (LNDR)

Air connectivity has proved vitally important in supporting regional indigenous companies expand overseas, reaching new suppliers, customers and markets while simultaneously connecting overseas investors located in the region to their headquarters, international client base and purchasers. To ensure that this connectivity remains, the current funding model which allows for OpEx and CapEx subvention payments to regional airports but not to state airports needs to be addressed. There is also a need to support capital expenditure at Shannon, so that the airport has adequate financial resources to support new route development initiatives.

Appendix 3: Brief profile and statistical snapshot – Mid-West

Constituent counties	Clare, Limerick and Tipperary	
Regional Population & change (1996-2016)	392,583 (1996) - 473,269 (2016) increase of 80,686	
GVA ¹⁴ per person 2000 and 2015	€22,494 - €38,109 (2015)	
Total in employment	215,300*	
Labour Force Participation rate	60.3%*	
Unemployment rate	7.2%*	
Unemployment blackspots ¹⁵	23 ¹⁶	
Percentage employed in Manufacturing: Services: Public sector	17%: 19%: 25%	
Educated to third level in Mid-West: State	41%: 45% (Census 2016)	
Third Level Students (full-time & part-time)	23,202 ¹⁷	
Number of enterprises (micro: small: medium: large) (2016)	21,303: 1,514: 210: 39	
Number of Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-Ups ¹⁸ (HPSUs) Mid-West: State (2017)	11: 90	
EI supported employment & no. client Companies 2016 - 2017	2016	2017
	Jobs: 16,750	Jobs: 17,885
	Companies: 505	Companies: 504
IDA supported employment & no. client companies (2017)	2016	2017
	Jobs: 20,183	Jobs: 21,117
	Companies: 137	Companies: 135
LEO supported employment & no. client companies (2017)	2016	2017
	Jobs: 4,403	Jobs: 4,841
	Companies: 794	Companies: 820
Number of LEO Priming Grants ¹⁹ Mid-West: State (2017)	26: 294	

14 Gross Value Added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

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

16 Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Clare (3), Limerick City and County (18) & Tipperary (2)

17 University of Limerick (13,472), Limerick Institute of technology (5,932) & Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick (3,798)

18 HPSUs are start-up businesses with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale on international markets and the potential to create 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 years of starting up.

19 A Priming Grant is a business start-up grant, available to micro enterprises within the first 18 months of start-up.

* CSO Labour Force Survey Q3 2018, Mid-West Region

The Mid-West region has a vibrant and diverse enterprise base, with recognised strengths in manufacturing, ICT, Aviation, Pharma/MedTech, Tourism and Renewable Energy. In addition, sectors such as Agri-Food and Agri-Tech, Sports Industry and Design offer further potential to develop the sector. Many of these sectors are underpinned by the presence of world class research centres in the University of Limerick and the Limerick Institute of Technology. These centres have a strong track record of collaborative linkages with industry, supported by Enterprise Ireland research and innovation programmes and the Shannon ABC Technology Gateway, which connects industry to research resources both within the region and across the State.

The region has earned a reputation as an established and proven location for business and is home to significant concentrations of economic activity in the areas of ICT, aviation and advanced manufacturing.

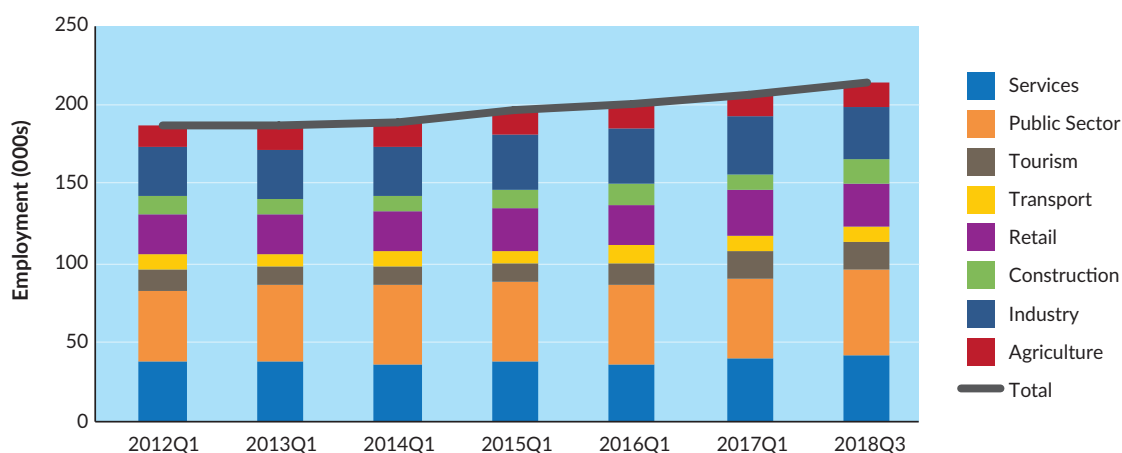
Excellent national and international connectivity is a key strength of the Mid-West region through road, rail, Shannon Airport and the Shannon Foynes Port.

Another key strength of the region lies in its excellent education infrastructures. There is a wide range of third level institutions across the region, including the University of Limerick and Limerick Institute of Technology. Skillnets Training Networks are very active within the region, working with SMEs to build their management and financial capability. In addition, both Limerick & Clare and the Tipperary Education and Training Boards provide extensive further education and training within the region.

Employment trends

In Q3 2018 there are 215,300 people employed in the Mid-West region. Over the period Q1 2015 to Q3 2018, employment overall has grown by nearly 10 percent with 18,800 more employed. The structure of the sectoral employment has changed little over that period, with some adjustments evident. Chart 1. below show the employment figures from Q1 2012 to Q3 of 2018.

Chart 1. Mid-West Region Employment Growth 2012-2018 (CSO)



Services

Employment in the Services sector, including the Public Sector, has increased significantly from 132,100 in 2012 to 150,300 in Q3 of 2018 and the sector currently accounts for nearly 70 percent of all employment in the Mid-West region. This highlights the contribution to employment in the Mid-West. There are currently 150,300 people working in the Services Sector and within the broad Services sector,

the combined areas of Public Administration/Defence, Human Health/Social Work and the Education sector account for 53,600 of those employed in the Mid-West which represents 35 percent of all Services employment and 24 percent of the total employment in the region, which is similar to other regions.

Retail/Wholesale

Retail and Wholesale which forms a significant part of the Services sector is the largest private sector employment sector in the country, with particular significance for regional towns and villages. Employment in the sector in Ireland is regionally dispersed with approximately 70 percent employed outside Dublin. 27,000 people are employed in the sector in the Mid-West region.

Industry/Manufacturing

Employment in the Industry/Manufacturing sector has also increased over the period Q1 2012 to Q3 2018 with 3,100 more employed in the Sector. Manufacturing still retains a proportionately larger share of total regional employment (16 percent) compared to the national figure of 12.5 percent, reflecting the strength of the manufacturing base in the region.

Construction

The construction sector employed 10,300 in Q1 2012 and this fell to a low of 9,300 in Q1 2013. The numbers in this sector have started to grow again and currently the sector employs 15,200 people in the region, accounting for nearly 7 percent of the total employment which is similar to the national trend.

Agriculture

Agricultural Sector employed 15,300 in Q1 2012 to 15,900 in Q3 2018 and accounts for approximately 7 percent of employment in the Mid-West, which is higher than the national average of 5 percent, reflecting the strength of the Agricultural Sector within the Mid-West and the rural character and natural assets of much of the region.

Tourism

CSO figures indicate that the Tourism sector employed 18,600 in Q3 2018. However, these figures can be considered as conservative as they only cover employment in accommodation and food services. The actual figure maybe somewhat higher if other "Services" employment, for example in visitor attractions is included.

Appendix 4: Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF)

The €60 million Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) was launched in May 2017 with the overarching aim of driving enterprise development and job creation in each region throughout Ireland. Administered by Enterprise Ireland, it supports new collaborative and innovative initiatives that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the region/across regions, or nationally.

Over the first and second calls under the REDF, the Mid-West secured funding of over €9.5 million across five projects:

Call	Project	Description
1	Emerald Aerocluster CLG Cluster	Cluster of 14 indigenous manufacturing companies
1	Irish Bioeconomy Foundation CLG	Development of a National Bioeconomy Innovation & Piloting Facility
2	BNest Social Initiative DAC	An initiative to assist enterprises seeking social impact to achieve viability and scale through development programmes, service supports and cluster development
2	Clare MEZ DAC	Project located on the Shannon Estuary to re-purpose an existing site to provide specialist infrastructure and accommodation for maritime and cruise liner related training as well as a test bed for renewable technologies
2	Hospital Foods Units	Development of a Digital Collaboration Centre in Limerick City

The Mid-West Regional Steering Committee will work closely together with other stakeholders to leverage the opportunities that these projects will generate in the coming years. The Steering Committee can also assist in identifying projects that have the potential for funding in the future.

Appendix 5: Other State Agencies supporting enterprise development

Local Authorities

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the strengthening of the role of Local Authorities towards economic, social and community development. Local Authorities therefore have a strong role in promoting economic development and sustaining and creating a positive environment for job creation. There is good rationale for increased local government involvement in economic development because of the economic impact of its functions generally, its links with enterprise, its local knowledge and leadership, the economic initiatives by many Local Authorities, and its local development and enterprise functions.

Operation of micro-enterprise support services through the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and Local Authority Business Support Units are now key elements of the local government role in economic development. Other economic development functions include:

- contribution to Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies,
- a strong direct role for Local Authorities in promoting economic development, more clearly specified in legislation;
- ensuring that all Local Authorities focus their general functions and services proactively towards supporting enterprise and economic development;
- leading and mobilising economic development locally in conjunction with relevant agencies;
- drawing up local economic development plans in conjunction with the overall City/County Development Plan.

The economic development role is supported by a dedicated Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) in each local authority service.

Bord Bia

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

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

BIM is the state agency with responsibility for developing the Irish sea-fishing and aquaculture industries. BIM's mission is to lead the sustainable development of a competitive, market-led, innovative and quality-driven Irish seafood industry, maximising the returns to industry stakeholders and the socio-economic contribution to communities in coastal regions in particular. BIM is focused on expanding the volume, quality and value of output from the Irish seafood industry. It provides a range of advisory, financial, technical and training services to all sectors of the Irish seafood industry. BIM's Strategy 2013-2017 is an action plan that aims to deliver 1,200 jobs and €1 billion seafood sales by building scale and enhancing competitiveness in the Irish seafood sector.

Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority. Their role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. Fáilte Ireland provide a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services.

Fáilte Ireland also work with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy.

Fáilte Ireland promote Ireland as a holiday destination through domestic marketing campaigns and manage a network of nationwide tourist information centres that provide help and advice for visitors to Ireland.

InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland's mission is to support businesses, through innovation and trade initiatives, to take advantage of North/South co-operative opportunities to improve capability and drive competitiveness, jobs and growth. InterTradelreland helps small businesses through a strong mix of funding support, business intelligence and meaningful contacts. It supports companies not only with funding, but also with specialist expertise and introductions.

Regional Skills Fora

Funded by the Department of Education and Skills, the network of 9 Regional Skills Fora has been created as part of the Government's National Skills Strategy 2025. The Fora provides an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The Fora have been established to align with wider Government policy and initiatives on regional economic development. The innovative structure of the Fora sees the work plan within each region being driven by key stakeholders in the region including employers, enterprises and education and training providers. The work of the Fora through facilitation and engagement will contribute to better outcomes for learners and support enterprise development.

The Fora provide a single point of contact in each region to help employers connect with the range of services and supports available across the education and training system; provide more robust labour market information and analysis of employer needs to inform programme development; greater collaboration and utilisation of resources across the education and training system; and enhancement of progression routes for learners. The Fora also provide a structure for employers to become more involved in promoting employment roles and opportunities for career progression in their sectors.

Skillnet Ireland

Skillnet Ireland was established in 1999 and is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills. The primary objective of Skillnet Ireland is to increase participation in enterprise training by companies. Skillnet Ireland fosters an enterprise led approach to workforce development. The process of determining training needs and coordinating the delivery of training, is primarily owned by the enterprise groups engaged with Skillnet Ireland. Skillnet Ireland operates under a joint investment model, part-funded by matching contributions from participating businesses in our learning networks. Encouraging enterprise to lead the process in this way helps ensure that programmes delivered through Skillnet Ireland are highly relevant to the needs of industry. This approach also enables cohesive enterprise networking and the flexibility to respond to ever-changing skills demands through both formal and informal learning. Through 65 plus Skillnet Learning Networks, Skillnet Ireland allocates funding to groups of companies in the same industry sector (or region) and with similar training needs, so they can deliver subsidised training for their teams. Skillnet Ireland also plays a key role in supporting and enabling Skillnet funded groups to reach their full potential.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)

Science Foundation Ireland is the national foundation for investment in scientific and engineering research, operating under the auspices of DBEI. SFI invests in academic researchers and research teams who are most likely to generate new knowledge, leading edge technologies and competitive enterprises in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths. SFI has supported the establishment of 17 National Research Centres, aligned with the research priority areas set out in Ireland's research prioritisation exercise (which is currently being refreshed). SFI plays a key role in developing international relationships in the research and innovation domain. It is instrumental in raising Ireland's profile and visibility as a location of research excellence in international markets, thus strengthening Ireland's attractiveness for overseas investment.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

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

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta was established in 1980 as the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. Údarás supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development.

Waterways Ireland

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

Department of Rural and Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development also has a role to play in contributing directly to the Regional Action Plans through initiatives such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal scheme and the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative. The Department's social inclusion programmes - most notably the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SIACP) - also contribute to supporting disadvantaged urban and rural communities.

Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established under statute in 1998 to help tackle population decline in the West of Ireland. Its remit covers seven counties: Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, and Clare. The WDC works to ensure that economic and social policy and practice meet the development needs of the Western Region effectively. Activities include conducting research on regional and rural issues, promoting specific initiatives including sectoral opportunities, and managing and administering the WDC Investment Fund (WIF). This dedicated fund provides risk capital on a commercial basis to projects and businesses through equity and loans.

Third Level Institutes

- University of Limerick
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick

Appendix 6: Project Ireland 2040

The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan under *Project Ireland 2040* have been developed in conjunction to link spatial planning policy and infrastructure capital investment to support the potential in all regions. The NPF, as part of *Project Ireland 2040*, aims to guide the future development of Ireland to 2040 and to influence the spatial patterns of a projected 1 million increase in our population.

The NPF is a long-term framework that sets out how Ireland can move away from the current 'business as usual' pattern of development. The purpose of the NPF is to enable all parts of Ireland, whether rural or urban, to successfully accommodate growth and change, by facilitating a shift toward Ireland's regions and cities other than Dublin, while also recognising Dublin's ongoing key role.

The NPF also sets out a number of key national objectives which include enhanced regional accessibility, strengthened rural economies and communities, and enhanced amenities and heritage. The Ireland 2040 plan sets out a strategy to enable people to live closer to where they work, moving away from the current unsustainable trends of increased commuting; reverse rural decline and promote environmentally sustainable growth patterns and plan for and implement a better distribution of regional growth, in terms of jobs and prosperity.

The Government is focused on unlocking the potential in each region by a co-ordinated delivery of infrastructure and at the same time, enabling regional enterprise development that will enable better distribution of the future anticipated population growth across the whole country while also tackling congestion and quality of life issues.

Project Ireland 2040 Funding

In 2018 the Government launched Project Ireland 2040 and committed €4 billion in funding under the Rural regeneration and Development Fund, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and the Climate Action Fund. The four funds are a major innovation in Project Ireland 2040 and rather than allocating funding in a 'business as usual' way to Government Departments, money was allocated competitively to the best projects, which leverage investment from other sources thereby ensuring that the impact of this investment goes further.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) over the period 2019 to 2027. Initial funding of €315 million is being allocated to the Fund on a phased basis over the period 2019 to 2022. The Fund will provide investment to support rural renewal for suitable projects in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. It will be administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The new Fund provides an unprecedented opportunity to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland, to make a significant and sustainable impact on rural communities, and to address de-population in small rural towns, villages and rural areas. It will be a key instrument to support the objectives of the National Planning Framework, and in particular to achieve Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – one of the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) is intended to drive regeneration and rejuvenation of strategic and under-utilised areas within Ireland's five cities, key regional drivers and other large towns. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has responsibility for implementing the fund, which has €100m available for expenditure in 2019 and an overall allocation of €550 million allocated to the fund up to the end of 2022. The fund will operate on a competitive, bid-based Exchequer grant basis, with proposals being required to demonstrate that they will be:

- Innovative and transformational urban regeneration projects;
- Public-sector led and with the option of community and/or private sector partners;
- Matched by at least 25 percent direct funding from other public and/or private sources;
- A minimum bid of €2m;
- A catalyst for development that would not otherwise occur; and
- Likely to leverage significant further public and private sector investment.

Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation launched funding under the Government's new Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund. €500 million is available for co-funded projects involving enterprises and research partners over the period to 2027.

Disruptive technology is that which has the potential to significantly alter markets and their functioning and significantly alter the way that businesses operate. While it involves a new product or process, it can also involve the emergence of a new business model. Disruption is about the combination of technology and business model innovation.

Proposals are expected to address the development, deployment and commercialisation of one or more disruptive technologies to deliver new solutions through investment in the development and implementation of new products and services. Ultimately, the projects funded will create the jobs of the future.

Climate Action Fund

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 sets out the creation of a Climate Action Fund to support climate action projects which will leverage investment by public and private bodies. The Fund will have an allocation of at least €500m over the period to 2027.

On 29 May 2018, the Government agreed to establish the Climate Action Fund. This includes the objective of funding initiatives that contribute to the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner. It also offers the potential for innovative interventions which, in the absence of support from the Fund, would not otherwise be developed.

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies

The RSES for the Southern Region will set a 12-year strategic development framework for the region for the period 2019 to 2031. At its core the RSES sets out economic and spatial planning objectives for the region through implementation of the National Planning Framework and government policy at regional level.

Whilst meeting statutory objectives, the Draft RSES is an ambitious Strategy for building the Southern Region as one of Europe's most Creative, Innovative, Greenest and Liveable Regions focuses on Key Enablers to Transform the Region:

- Connecting our Region – enhanced infrastructure from North to South and East Coast to West Coast, connecting to the Atlantic Economic Corridor.
- Delivering ambitious growth targets for our Cities, creating the Greenest and most Liveable Metropolitan Areas for diverse communities, culture and enterprise - developing the Cork Docklands, transforming and regeneration of Limerick-Shannon including the Northern Distributor Road/ Smart Travel Corridor and achieving a balanced 'Concentric City' model north of the river with development of the North Quays in Waterford.
- Creating an inclusive and Learning Region, establishing the new Technological Universities of MTU and TUSE and developing a Smart Region, enhancing public services and community infrastructure.
- Establishing the Southern Region as Ireland's International Gateway at Cork and Shannon Airports and our Sea Ports.
- Making the most of Cork and Waterford Harbours and the Shannon Estuary – our natural maritime assets.
- Harnessing our Environment and Heritage – along the Wild Atlantic Way, into Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, through Ireland's Ancient East, in the Gaeltacht and islands, along the Blueways and Greenways.
- Revitalising Rural Areas through re-purposing our small towns and villages and increased collaboration between networks of settlements.
- Taking the rights steps in sustainable travel, energy and in bio-economy to lead on Climate Action in the state's transition to a Low Carbon Economy.

Atlantic Economic Corridor

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) initiative is a collaborative project between the public and private sectors to maximise the infrastructure, talent and enterprise assets along the western seaboard from Kerry to Donegal, and to combine the economic hubs, clusters and catchments of the region to attract investment, support job creation, improve quality of life and contribute to the Government's regional development objectives.

In this context, the AEC initiative and the Regional Enterprise Plans for the regions along the western seaboard will be mutually re-enforcing in supporting enterprise growth, job creation and investment in the regions concerned.

The AEC initiative involves business representatives, national and local government, State agencies and Third Level Institutions. It is led at Government level by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

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