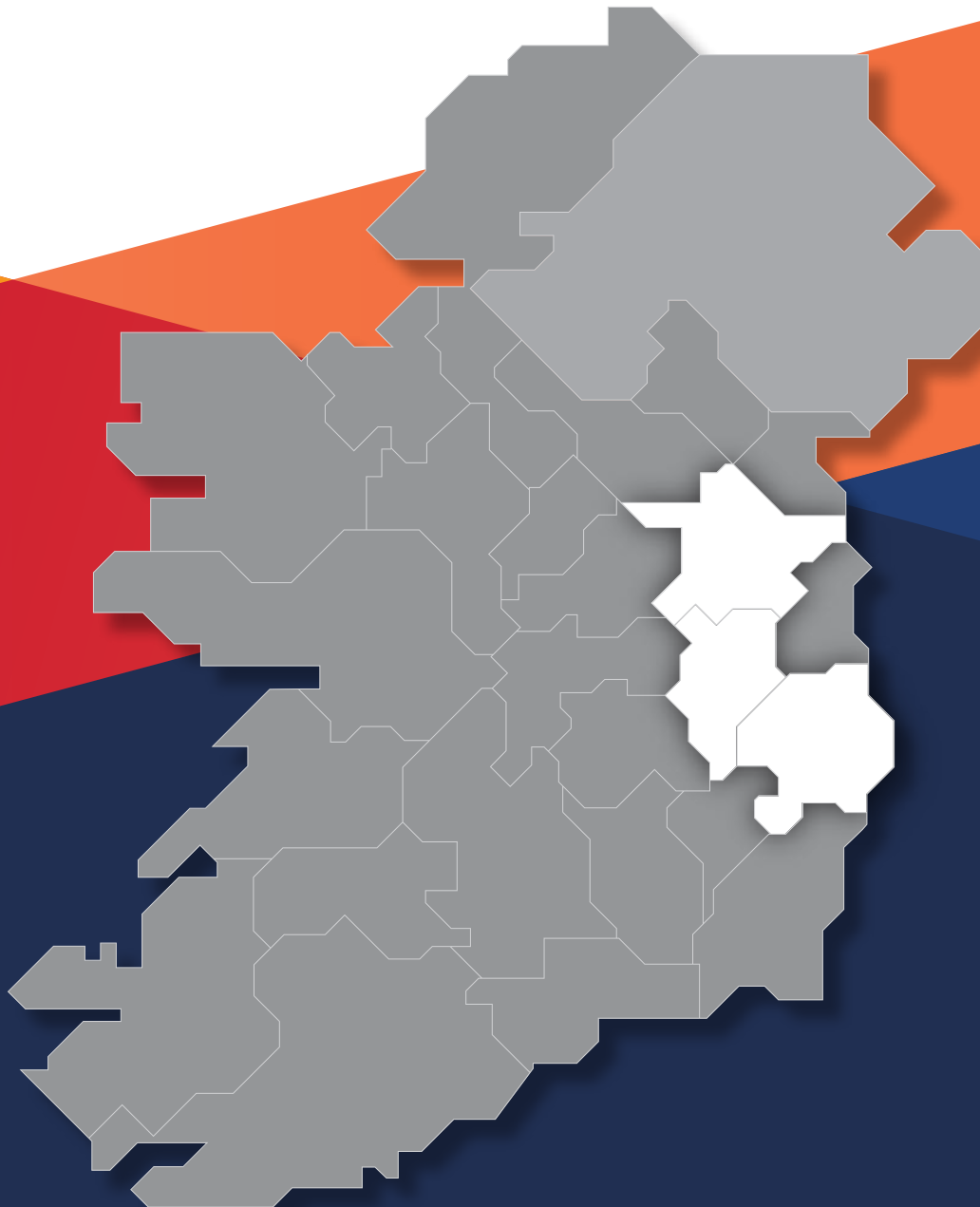




Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

MID-EAST

Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Report



An initiative of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Contents

Minister's Foreword	1
Message from the Chairperson	2
1. Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Report	3
Overall high-level outcomes for the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020	4
2020 Highlights	6
Strategic Objective 1	
Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the screen content creation sector.	7
Strategic Objective 2	
Develop a network of innovative co-working spaces.	11
Strategic Objective 3	
Build an ecosystem framework to support the agri-food sector in the Boyne Valley.	17
Strategic Objective 4	
Ensure the availability of Skills and Talent to realise the Region's future economic potential and address upskilling requirements.	19
2. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Local Enterprise Office activities and outcomes in the Mid-East Region during 2020	23
3. Achieving a Just Transition in Ireland's Regions	27
Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the Mid-East supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2020	28
Appendix 2: Statistical snapshot – Mid-East	29
Appendix 3: Just Transition Fund Projects (Department of Environment, Climate and Communications)	30

Minister's Foreword

I welcome this publication of the final Progress Report on implementation of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. I am pleased to see that the Mid-East Steering Committee working with regional stakeholders has advanced all of the actions set out in the Regional Enterprise Plan.

Our Programme for Government has balanced regional growth at its core and seeks to pursue a coherent policy approach to the enterprise needs of every part of Ireland. This is seen in the strategies of the enterprise agencies; the valuable work of the local enterprise offices at county level; as well as through competitive funding and other strategic investments to reinforce regional enterprise ecosystems, including the regional enterprise development fund; regional technology clustering; investment in RD&I infrastructures; and the IDA Ireland regional property programme.

There is added value to be created however if we all work together locally to understand challenges; recognise new opportunities; and make the most of our complementary skills and resources. The Regional Enterprise Plans initiative, first launched in early 2019, takes a 'bottom-up' approach and brings together regional stakeholders to focus on addressing both vulnerabilities and opportunities critical to enterprise growth and job creation in each of regions, including the Mid-East.

I want to thank all the members of the Mid-East Steering Committee for your achievements during 2020 and since the commencement of the Regional Enterprise Plan. I want to commend in particular the leadership provided by Eamonn Sinnott, Vice President Technology and Manufacturing Group, General Manager, Intel Ireland and chair of the Regional Steering Committee. Thanks also to Conor Sweeney, Programme Manager of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan for all of your work in support of the Plan's implementation.

It is timely now, as we work to assist businesses all over the country to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, to consider also what will help grow and sustain businesses over the longer term as they negotiate the transformative effects of digitalisation, and address both opportunities and challenges in a low carbon economy.

The creation of a new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the Mid-East has already commenced and will play a very important role in recognising and realising the potential that exists in this region. I very much look forward to further engagement with the Mid-East Regional Steering Committee over the coming months as the new Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 takes shape.



Damien English

Damien English TD,
Minister of State for Business,
Employment and Retail

Message from the Chairperson

As Chair of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Committee, I am pleased to present the final progress report for the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020.

When we launched this plan in February 2019, we set out to deliver on four core objectives for Meath, Kildare and Wicklow in addition to promoting a culture of enterprise development that would continue the process of sustaining and revitalising our communities.

We could not envisage the incredible changes that our lives, our communities and our economies would have experienced throughout 2020. The rapid acceleration of remote working has brought into sharp focus the demand for a connected network of hubs across the country as employers, employees and businesses experience the benefits of a more flexible approach to work.

The key focus of our plan over the last two years has been roll out of this network. The success of our plan can be witnessed first-hand through the funding and development of a number of co-working and sector specific hubs across the region. In Wicklow, the Clermont Content Creation Enterprise Hub will enhance its position as a leader in screen content creation and production. In Kildare, MERITS in Naas will provide state of the art digital and technology facilities. In Meath, the Boyne Valley Food Hub will provide the infrastructure for food business to start and scale. These hubs will all be underpinned and supported by a skilled workforce that can meet the ever-changing demands of our region and our economy.

I want to acknowledge the active collaboration from all local stakeholders in our region in achieving these impressive results.

First of all, sincere thanks to all the members of the Mid-East REP Steering Committee for giving of their time and invaluable expertise over the last two years. In particular the enterprise champions Siún ní Raghallaigh, John Cunningham, and Kate Brosnan whose world class insights and contributions were always offered freely.

The Project Delivery Team comprising the local authority Heads of Enterprise and the CEO's, working hand in hand with the state agencies, and the specially appointed Project Manager Conor Sweeney ensured the unwavering focus on delivery. Without the commitment of these individuals, the progress achieved would simply not have happened.



Eamonn Sinnott,
Vice President, General Manager Intel Ireland,
Chair Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan 2020

1. Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 – Final Progress Update

MID-EAST STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the screen content creation sector.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop a network of innovative co-working spaces.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

Build an ecosystem framework to support the agri-food sector in the Boyne Valley.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Ensure the availability of Skills and Talent to realise the Region's future economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

Overall high-level outcomes for the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020

This is the final Progress Report of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 which closes out this iteration of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. For the Steering Committee to present a final assessment on the level of implementation achieved during the 2019-2020 period, actions have been classified into four categories.

Complete: The Committee has deemed that these actions have been fully completed within the scope and lifetime of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020.

Action commenced but requires further work: The Committee has deemed that while these actions were not completed in full, work had commenced, and significant progress was made during the lifetime of the Plan and will continue, as many projects are of a delivery period which exceed the plan duration. The Committee will consider if these actions could be included as part of future strategic objectives in the new Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan through to 2024.

Action not commenced: The Committee has deemed that these actions were not initiated, or insufficient progress was made within the scope and lifetime of the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020. These actions will be reconsidered as part of future strategic objectives in the next Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan.

Table 1: Progress on Actions during 2020 and Final Status

Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan	
Total Actions	15
Complete	5
Action commenced but requires further work	10
Action not commenced	0

Each of the previous Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017/8 set out two core outcomes for achievement in each region by the end of 2020 and these continued to be monitored under the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020:

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

Table 2: Utilising data from the CSO Labour Force Survey (LFS), the rate of growth and unemployment rates achieved for the Mid-East region during the period Q1 2015 up to Q4 2020 are as follows:

Region	Numbers Employed			Actual Increase in Employment	Unemployment Rate	
	Q1 2015	Q4 2020	Growth Rate Q1 2015 - Q4 2020	Q1 2015 - Q4 2020	Q1 2015	Q4 2020
Mid-East	294,900	339,300	15.1%	44,400	9.6%	5.1%
State	2,014,400	2,306,200	14.5%	291,800	10.5%	5.7%

Source: CSO Labour Force Survey, Q4 2020

Since the launch of Regional Action Plan for Jobs in 2015, 44,400 more people are in employment between Q1 2015 and to Q4 2020. This is an increase of 15.1 percent which exceeds the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 target while the unemployment rate also fell from 9.6 percent to 5.1 percent over the same period, in the region, again well inside the 2020 target.

The figures in Table 2 exclude people who were receiving the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) at the end of 2020. As of the 31st December 2020, a total of 37,979 people were in receipt of the PUP (see Table 3 for a county and regional breakdown).

Table 3: Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at the end of 2020

County	Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (Number)
Kildare	14,197
Meath	13,772
Wicklow	10,010
Mid-East	37,979

Source: CSO, Labour Market Live Register
<https://data.cso.ie/table/LRW03>

2020 Highlights



Construction works concluding on the €5m MERITS hub with the centre scheduled to open in Q3 2021.



Athy Food Drink and Skills Innovation Hub was awarded €311,000 for design team appointment from the RRDF programme. The Part 8 planning application has been submitted and an application for capital funding has also been submitted to the RRDF programme.



The Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus in Rathnew secured over €1.4m in funding under the REDF Call 3. Planning permission has been approved and construction tender has been published. It will be operational in Q3 2022.



Wicklow County Council have appointed a consultant to commence a five year Screen Sector Development Strategy. The strategy will be published in Q2 2021 following extensive consultations with the industry.



The Boyne Valley Food Hub was awarded €1.58m funding under REDF and planning permission has been approved. Construction is due to commence in Q2 2021.



Construction was completed on the Dunshaughlin Enterprise Hub and when it opens in 2021, it will support up to 40 entrepreneurs.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

Develop the Mid-East as a hub for the screen content creation sector



Action 1:

Develop and operate a Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council/LEO Wicklow, Enterprise Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work with completion expected in Q3 2022.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

Following a successful funding application to Enterprise Ireland, €1.43m was awarded to Clermont Content Creation Enterprise Hub in January 2020 to develop the hub. With the support of Wicklow County Council and other stakeholders, the project delivery team appointed a design team and secured Part 8 planning permission in February 2020. The schedule of site works has been delayed by COVID-19, however, preliminary site works have now been completed. The detailed design and the publication of the tender documents for the construction contract has also been completed.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

Following the completion of the tender process, a construction contractor will be appointed in Q2 2021 and the timeline for completion of the hub is Q3 2022. The recruitment of a manager for the hub will also take place in 2021.

Action 2:

Activate Content Creation and Feeder Industry Networking Events.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council, Local Enterprise Office (LEO), IT Carlow, Screen Skills Ireland, Screen Ireland, Kildare/Wicklow Education and Training Boards (ETB), industry partners

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to Q4 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work with completion.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

The funding applications to further develop networks events have been so far unsuccessful. Clermont Enterprise Hub submitted a funding application to Screen Skills Ireland under the Screen Stakeholders Funding Scheme in October but were unsuccessful.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

Building on the *South-Eastern Creative Corridor* programme, further networking opportunities to facilitate business partnerships and collaboration will assist in the consolidation of this existing cluster. Development of a programme of *Expert Voices* seminars and stand-alone networking events will be undertaken in 2021 and will allow participants to network during the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and these events will ensure continued engagement within the industry.

<p>Action 3:</p>
<p>Develop the talent pool through skills, training, and education.</p>
<p>Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:</p>
<p>Wicklow County Council, LEO, IT Carlow, Screen Skills Ireland, Screen Ireland, Kildare/Wicklow ETB, industry partners</p>
<p>Timeframe for delivery:</p>
<p>Revised to Q4 2021</p>
<p>Final Status:</p>
<p>Action commenced but requires further work with an expected completion date of Q4 2021.</p>
<p>Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:</p>
<p>The Regional Skills Forum Manager and the Wicklow Film Commissioner have been engaging with industry to identify skills requirements. Screen Skills Ireland have also completed a screen needs skills survey in October 2020 and the findings will be used to develop courses, initiatives and funding opportunities that support the industry.</p> <p>Due to COVID-19 this action has been delayed as the appointment for the consultants for the <i>County Wicklow Screen Development Strategy</i> was delayed.</p>
<p>Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:</p>
<p>As part of the development of the <i>County Wicklow Screen Sector Development Strategy</i>, Saffrey Champness have commenced a skills-needs analysis directly with the industry in Wicklow. The feedback received will provide the stakeholders with the relevant information to address any skills or educational gaps identified and to work together on the development of training courses.</p>

Action 4:

Encourage and assist in the growth and scaling up of the existing content creation industry in the Mid-East.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Wicklow County Council, industry partners, Fáilte Ireland

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to Q4 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

In order to ensure that it has a strategy in place that will outline the actions required to support the growth of the screen content creation sector locally, Wicklow County Council tendered for the development of a Screen Sector Development Strategy for the next five years. Following the completion of the tender process, Saffrey Champness commenced work on the strategy in October 2020.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

The development of the strategy will focus on a number of key areas and actions that will support the growth of the industry in the Mid-East such as:

- Consultations with key stakeholders on their requirements from the Clermont Content Creation Enterprise Hub and how it will support the industry directly.
- The development of a strategy for attracting foreign direct investment.
- Roundtables with the indigenous screens sector to discuss the challenges facing the indigenous industry and the types of interventions that could be implemented to support its growth.
- Conduct research that will identify international best practice in promoting screen tourism.
- Set out actions to support the development and growth of local screen content creators to strengthen and develop local talent including the development and monetisation of local intellectual property.

The strategy will be published in Q2 2020 (the consultants who are drafting it were only appointed in October 2020).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

Develop a network of innovative co-working spaces



Action 1:

Develop and operate the Mid-East Regional Innovation Think Space (MERITS) in Naas County Kildare.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Kildare County Council, Enterprise Ireland, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow LEOs, Maynooth University, Kildare County Chamber, KWETB, Skillnet Ireland, industry representatives

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to Q3 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

The project is supported with funding from Kildare County Council and was successful in receiving €1.9m under REDF from Enterprise Ireland. The technology hub in Naas will offer a dynamic workspace with state-of-the-art digital and technology facilities for over 100 people. The project commenced construction in November 2019. The COVID-19 lockdown meant that the site was closed for six weeks during 2020 and is now closed again in early 2021.

The building will be completed and fitted out during Q2 2021 and will commence its operational phase during Q3 2021. The project is being delivered under a Company Limited by Guarantee (County Kildare Community Network CLG) and all the key stakeholders are represented on the board of the company. The board meets regularly and is kept fully abreast of progress on the building.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

The building is now weather proofed with all windows and doors fitted. External cladding to the building has been installed and internal partitions have been installed. Assuming construction activity can recommence in early 2021, the main contractor will be finished on site by May. There is an additional one month needed for furniture fitout as well as ICT and audio-visual fit-out. Provided the timelines are not affected further, the building should be ready to be occupied by early June 2021.

Action 2:

Develop 10 flexible working spaces to facilitate remote workers and drive entrepreneurship in the region based on the MERITS model.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee (with other stakeholders)

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

The Mid-East project delivery team identified a number of hubs in the region at both operational and development phase and have been working on creating a network of hubs across the three counties since 2019. The network includes:

Kildare:

1. Maynooth Works: Maynooth Works business innovation centre (BIC) supports a vibrant community where entrepreneurs develop their ideas and maximise their company's potential. As companies journey through the different stages of development, Maynooth Works BIC provides a range of business supports and a mix of flexible facilities including bright modern offices, hot desk space, wet labs and meeting rooms.
2. MERITS: The project is supported with funding from Kildare County Council and was successful in receiving €1.9m under REDF from Enterprise Ireland. The technology hub in Naas will offer a dynamic workspace with state of the art digital and technology facilities for over 100 people. The project commenced construction in November 2019. The COVID-19 lockdown meant that the site was closed for six weeks during 2020 and is now closed again in early 2021. The building will be completed and fitted out during Q2 2021 and will commence its operational phase during Q3 2021. The project is being delivered under a Company Limited by Guarantee (County Kildare Community Network CLG) and all the key stakeholders are represented on the board of the company. The board meets regularly and is kept fully abreast of progress on the building.
3. Athy Food, Drink and Skills Innovation Hub: Kildare County Council is converting the historic Model School in Athy into a centre for educational and entrepreneurial excellence for the food sector. In addition to offering fresh approaches to food and culinary skills training, this hub will provide a space for food producers in Kildare and the wider region to access high-class facilities to enable them to develop innovative food concepts and to commence small scale production. There will also be office and co-working space provided. The hub has received funding of €500,000 from Coca Cola and the project team received Category 2 RRDF funding of €311,000 for design works in February 2020. A design team was subsequently appointed. The team have also applied for RRDF capital funding in December 2020. The project team has submitted an application for Part 8 planning permission. Subject to funding and planning, the project will commence construction in Q3 2021.

4. **Equine Tech Innovation Hub:** Located on the grounds of the Irish National Stud in Kildare Town, the 14 desk co-working space will act as a sectoral stimulus to develop an equine innovation hub of enterprise, innovation, applied research, commercialisation and learning. An application for funding to Kildare LEADER for €80,000 was successful and construction will commence once the current restrictions are lifted and will be operational within five months.
5. **AgTech Innovation Centre:** In partnership with Enterprise Ireland and NovaUCD, a new innovation hub is located at UCD Lyons Farm in Celbridge. This hub is dedicated to AgTech and the wider bioeconomy. This innovation centre helps AgTech companies launch and scale, as well as bringing together the AgTech community (academics, investors, start-ups, corporates, farmers) to create an international focal point for AgTech innovation. The new building will include incubation offices, co-working spaces, labs, meeting rooms and ancillary services provided. The Lyons Farm is open to entrepreneurs looking to test new innovations in real farm conditions. The hub has received funding totaling €4m. A new building will commence construction in 2021 and open in 2022. The director of the Centre had been recently appointed, and the launch of a nationwide challenge programme, as well as an accelerator programme are planned during 2021.
6. **Allenwood Green Enterprise Hub:** Allenwood Community Development were recently awarded €810,394 in Just Transition funding to develop a Green Enterprise Park on eight acres of land allocated by Bord na Móna. The site will have the potential to host up to 16 new or relocating green enterprises in the manufacturing or services areas. The project will also include the refurbishment of existing training facilities and the creation of a regional remote working hub.

Meath:

1. **Kells Tech Hub:** This facility was funded under REDF and is supported by Meath Enterprise and Meath County Council. The Kells Technology Hub offers high quality, modern, fully serviced and affordable accommodation to start-ups and SME's such as offices, co-working spaces, hot desks and meeting rooms to help them to start, scale and go global. There is also a mini conference and expo centre and several flexible training spaces to support entrepreneurship education and the delivery of world class enterprise training and innovation programmes that can help Irish start-ups and SME's to scale and go global.
2. **Boyne Valley Food Hub:** This is the flagship project of the Boyne Valley Food Innovation District. The hub will provide infrastructure for food businesses to start, grow and scale. The hub secured €1.58m from REDF funding in December 2018. It will deliver nine food grade units available for start-up and scaling food businesses, a timeshare community kitchen, a food specific co-working and knowledge lab to create higher levels of connectivity, collaboration and innovation in the food and drink sector. Planning permission was approved in November 2019. The tender process was due to commence in Q1 2020 however this was delayed due to COVID-19 and instead commenced in Q1 2021. It is expected that a building contractor will be appointed in Q3 2021 with construction completed by end of 2021.
3. **Food R&D Lab and Digital Media Hub:** Meath Enterprise is currently developing a new food R&D Lab in the Meath Enterprise Centre (MEC) that will consist of a new product development kitchen, a sensory testing lab and a food innovation training and events hub. Meath Enterprise is also currently developing a digital media hub in the MEC that will consist of a state-of-the art digital media and video production studio with broadcast quality equipment for rental, training, events and promotions. Both these projects are being funded under the Community Enterprise Initiative (CEI) and match funded by Meath Enterprise and Meath County Council. All building works (phase 1) are complete and phase 2 (equipment purchase and fitout) of the new Meath Enterprise Digital Media Hub/Lab were completed in Q4 2020. It is expected that Phase 2 (equipment purchase and fitout) of the new Meath Enterprise Food R&D Lab will be completed during Q1 2021.
4. **Dunshaughlin Enterprise Hub:** The hub, located in the county council building in Dunshaughlin, will consist of a flexible co-working area capable of supporting up to 40 entrepreneurs, meeting /office rooms for hire and an event space that will be used to deliver business training and networking events. Construction on the hub commenced in October 2019 and was completed by Q3 2020. Phase 2 (equipment purchase and fitout) has been delayed as a result of COVID-19 and should now be completed in Q2 2021, subject to restrictions being lifted.

5. Meath Digital Innovation and Smart Agri Hub: This hub is a new build project (28,000 sq ft) that will be developed by Meath Enterprise at the Meath Enterprise Centre in Navan. The basic ground works (site clearance) and services development for this project have already been funded under Call 2 of REDF and the feasibility study, which is being developed by Momentum Consulting, is being funded under Call 3 REDF. Once the feasibility work is complete (updated to take account of current climate / COVID-19 etc), Meath Enterprise will explore options for funding the new build which will be match funded by Meath County Council. Meath Enterprise are currently preparing a full planning application for this project that will be submitted to Meath County Council before the end of Q1 2021. It is expected that Meath Enterprise will make an application for funding under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and other potential sources during Q2 and Q3 2021.
6. Meath Enterprise (and local partners) have secured a premises in Slane village which will be used to develop a new remote Working / Co-working Hub. The Slane Enterprise Hub will require development funding of approximately €250k. If funding is secured in Q3 2021 for this project, the hub can be fully operational by Q1 2022.
7. Meath Enterprise Centre: The MEC is an 85,000 sq ft enterprise centre in Navan that is home to over 30 different organisations providing almost 250 direct jobs to the community. Through ongoing development, the MEC will be creating additional new and improved office and co-working facilities and services to support startups, SMEs and remote workers from across the region. Meath Enterprise secured funding of almost €290k under the Enterprise Centre (COVID-19) grant scheme in Q4 2020. This funding will be used to upgrade existing equipment and facilities in the enterprise centres in Navan and Kells and to create new co-working spaces that can support remote working post-pandemic. It is expected this work will commence as soon as restriction allow. Meath Enterprise CEO (Gary O'Meara) continues to chair the National Association of Community Enterprise Centre (NACEC) in Ireland. NACEC (with support from Enterprise Ireland and DETE under Call 3 of REDF) appointed a new national hub network manager in January 2021. NACEC has already started work on the development of a quality standards system and a framework for Ireland's enterprise hub sector and will continue to support the Mid-East region's ambitious hub network and development plans during the next Regional Enterprise Plan.

Wicklow:

1. Clermont Content Creation Enterprise Hub: The Content Creation Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus in Rathnew will support the positioning of Ireland's east coast region as a leader in content creation and production by facilitating content creation entrepreneurs to identify and exploit new businesses models for the creation and commercialisation of content. The Hub will extend to approximately 10,000 square feet of creative pods, co-working spaces and private offices. The Hub will offer a collaborative social space, conference centre, podcast studio and a screening facility. The project team submitted an application for funding to REDF in September 2019. The project was awarded €1.43m in January 2020. The part VIII planning request (local authority own development) was presented for decision at the February 2020 meeting of Wicklow County Council and approved for planning. Site clearance works took place in Q3 2020. The construction tender was published in January 2021 and following the completion of the procurement process, it is expected that a contractor will be appointed to commence construction in Q2 2021.
2. Digital Hub @ Arklow Courthouse: The hub is located on the first floor of the redeveloped Arklow Courthouse and comprises hot desks, office space and a meeting room. Funding for the hub was awarded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and following the completion of the tender process, a contractor carried out construction works during 2020. The enterprise hub is providing quality office space for up to six businesses and accommodation for up to 12 individuals in the co-working area which features a hot-desking space and is supported by Arklow Business Enterprise Centre (ABEC) and Wicklow County Council.

3. Digital Hub @ Baltinglass Courthouse: The Courthouse Renovation Project is at the heart of the economic regeneration of Baltinglass. The digihub will be housed in the old library and will offer space for 20 people across individual offices and co-working space. The hub received initial funding under the Town and Village Scheme and has recently received additional funding under RRDF. The project went to tender in Q1 2020 and architects, De Blacam and Meagher have been awarded the tender for development of Baltinglass courthouse. Investigative works have been carried out and following the appointment of a construction contractor, works will commence in 2021.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

A number of the hubs are currently operational however it is expected that by the end of 2021, most of these hubs will be fully completed and operational and a formal network will be then established to ensure greater collaboration across the region subject to construction activity being permitted under COVID-19 guidelines.

Action 3:

Provision of a support structure for the development of the talent pool for technology start-up and expansion businesses in the Mid-East.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Kildare County Council (Maynooth University)

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to Q2 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

The building has been designed for a total of 42 desks in a co-working space. In addition to these desks, the building can cater for over 50 additional people in first floor offices ranging from two to eight persons in size. To facilitate collaboration and interaction, the building design incorporates breakout areas, meeting rooms, a boardroom and two conference suites. MERITS will run appropriate accelerator and incubator programmes for start-up companies and entrepreneurs.

Kildare LEO will be a tenant within the building, and this will foster a close relationship between the LEO and the tenant companies. Having this source of support at close quarters will make it easier for the start-ups to access funding and soft supports.

An advisory group of recognised business leaders is being finalised and will be an additional source of support for companies within our ecosystem.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

Closer to the official opening, the exact content of the incubator and accelerator programmes that we will be providing in association with Maynooth University and Kildare LEO will be finalised. These programmes will include guest-speakers who have already successfully navigated the start-up, scale-up and exit journey.

Action 4:

Branding and promotion – establish the MERITS initiative as the premier technology location in Ireland and continue to provide assistance to technology workers.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Kildare County Council, Enterprise Ireland, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow LEOs; Maynooth University; Kildare County Chamber; Kildare/Wicklow ETB; Skillnet Ireland and other industry representatives

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to Q2 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work.

Expected Completion Date:

Q2 2021

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion

The soft promotion and branding of the facility continues, without incurring many costs. Branding and website development work is underway but has been slowed down in light of the delayed completion of the building. Most promotion is being done online, through social media, and through the regional LEO, Enterprise Ireland and Chamber networks.

To increase brand awareness, two significant webinars have been organised. The first was run in October and was entitled *The Role of Digital Technology in Climate Action* – it was part of the AI Gore Global series of climate reality events that took place over a 24-hour period. Over 220 registered to attend this inaugural event and we had participants from around the world.

The second event took place on the December 9th 2020 and was entitled *The Workspace of the Future* with five high profile speakers from Ireland, the UK and the US. The theme is chosen to underscore the role of hubs in the future configuration of the workplace.

A third, co-hosted by the Innovation Value Institute at Maynooth University took place on Thursday, February 18th 2021 and showcased local SMEs that have embraced the digital transformation. The CEO of Enterprise Ireland Digital, Willem Jonker, gave the keynote address.

We have secured the support of several tech giants including Amazon Web Services, Hubspot, ZoHo and Stripe to provide supports to companies locating at MERITS.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

A significant promotion event is planned for the official opening of the building in July or September 2021 (COVID-19 restrictions will determine optimum timing of this. Ahead of that, the website will unveil the full suite of supports that we will be providing for tech companies that base themselves at MERITS.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

Build an ecosystem framework to support the agri-food sector in the Boyne Valley



Action 1:

Hub development – deliver nine units available for start-up and scaling food businesses.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Meath Enterprise and Meath County Council

Timeframe for delivery:

Revised to Q4 2021

Final Status:

Action commenced but requires further work.

Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:

This is the flagship project of the Boyne Valley Food Innovation District. The hub will provide infrastructure for food businesses to start, grow and scale. The hub secured €1.58m from REDF funding in December 2018. It will deliver nine food grade units available for start-up and scaling food businesses, a timeshare community kitchen, a food specific co-working and knowledge lab to create higher levels of connectivity, collaboration and innovation in the food and drink sector. Planning permission was approved in December 2019.

Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:

The tender process was due to commence in Q1 2020 however this was delayed as a result of COVID-19 and instead commenced in Q1 2021. It is expected that a building contractor will be appointed in Q3 2021 with construction completed by end of 2021.

Action 2:
Development and delivery of 'knowledge centre' training activities.
Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:
Meath Enterprise and Meath County Council
Timeframe for delivery:
Revised to Q1 2021
Final Status:
Action commenced but requires further work.
Progress achieved to date and reason for delayed completion:
The recruitment of the business development manager has been delayed as a result of COVID-19.
Outline of remaining work to be completed on this action:
A new manager will be recruited to be in place by Q2 2021 to support the project team through the construction phase of the Boyne Valley Food Hub. They will be charged with championing the development of the food innovation centre and creating and nurturing a collaborative, innovation fuelled environment which encourages collaboration and synergies among tenant businesses and food businesses in the Mid-East and North-East. The food innovation specialist will be recruited once the new Meath Enterprise Food R&D Lab is up and running in Q2 2021 and will assist companies to realise a pipeline of new product development. This includes helping companies access the appropriate skills, service providers and processing technologies available in the companies and stakeholder organisations. A full schedule of knowledge centre training activities will be developed and delivered once the Boyne Valley Food Hub project is completed and is fully operational from Q4 2021 onwards.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

Ensure the availability of Skills and Talent to realise the Region’s future economic potential and address upskilling requirements



Action 1:

As part of the *Skills for Growth* initiative the Regional Skills Forum (RSF) 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.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF and partners including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, ETB, and the Department of Social Protection

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2019

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Throughout 2020 the RSF continued to assist local enterprises though audit tools and link companies with relevant education and training providers.

The format for Enterprise Ireland’s *Spotlight on Skills* workshops was revised and moved online during 2020 to enable delivery throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Workshops will continue in each of the regions throughout 2021.

Final Outcome:

The RSF continue to assist local and regional enterprises identify their skills needs through the *Skills for Growth* initiative and continue to collaborate with *Skills for Growth* partners. Revised, on-line *Spotlight on Skills* workshops will continue to roll out in each region during 2021. The Mid-East workshop is scheduled for April 2021.

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.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

Education and Training Board (ETB), RSF

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2019

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

Explore continued to run during 2020 in the Mid-East in partnership with both Louth/Meath ETB and Kildare/Wicklow ETB with companies in the manufacturing sector. Also, in the Mid-East, Explore is currently being piloted in the equine sector.

Final outcome achieved:

Explore was successfully delivered in partnership with Louth/Meath ETB and Kildare/Wicklow ETB during 2020 in the manufacturing and equine sectors.

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.

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF, Higher Education Institutes (HEI)

Timeframe for delivery:

Q2 2019

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

The Regional Skills Forum manager for the Mid-East in collaboration with local enterprise, supported education and training providers in preparing applications under Springboard+ in order to increase provision of programmes for upskilling and reskilling within the region.

Final outcome achieved:

Springboard+ 2020 provided for 12,940 places across the country, including applications for the Mid-East region. Springboard+ 2019 provided 9,151 places nationally.

Action 4:
Support all actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to education and training providers are required.
Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:
RSF
Timeframe for delivery:
Q4 2020
Final Status:
Complete
Outline of work undertaken during 2020:
Screen Guilds Ireland, through their stakeholders scheme, funded the development of a competency framework for all crew departments in the sector which, when finalised, will be of great benefit to the sector, bringing some good structure and opening up progression opportunities, as well as opportunities for new programmes linked to the competency framework, including traineeships and apprenticeships.
Final outcome achieved:
Continued facilitation and collaboration between industry and the education and training providers to analyse the requirements of the industry and assist the stakeholders in future-proofing the industry.

Action 5:

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

Lead Actor(s)/Working Group Members:

RSF and other stakeholders.

Timeframe for delivery:

Q4 2020

Final Status:

Complete

Outline of work undertaken during 2020:

During 2020 the RSF manager continued to communicate the services available through Regional Skills Forum to assist with resolution of emerging skills needs in 2020.

Final outcome achieved:

The Regional Skills website featured information relating to the services provided by the Fora as well as government supports related to COVID-19 as well as information on free or partly funded online courses.

The RSF manager collaborated with forum members throughout the year to further communicate services available to employers such as the Meath Apprenticeship Expo in February 2020 and the Meath Chambers Careers Skills and Training virtual event throughout October 2020.

Other modes of communication include website updates, events attended by the Regional Skills Forum manager, ongoing communications with employers through the Explore initiative, *Skills for Growth* skills audits and sectoral sub groups in the screen sector and advanced manufacturing sector as well as education and training provider sub-groups, working groups and the Midlands Regional Just Transition Team.

2. Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Local Enterprise Office activities and outcomes in the Mid-East Region during 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-East region complement and reinforce the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and 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.

During 2020, the Agencies and LEOs worked in partnership with regional stakeholders to strengthen regional enterprise ecosystems as well as maintaining their focus on attracting foreign investment, providing guidance and financial supports to the installed base of companies in the region, and fostering new enterprise start-ups.

Enterprise Ireland

Powering the Regions is Enterprise Ireland's response to recent Government Regional Initiatives including the Future Jobs Ireland framework, the Regional Assemblies, the Regional Enterprise Plans and Project Ireland 2040. It provides an overarching national plan underpinned by nine regional specific plans, to grow and sustain jobs, and to expand the reach of the Enterprise Ireland client base in every county and region in Ireland.

The plan proposed six new national initiatives which aim to futureproof the regions through enhanced productivity and resilience, drive new entrepreneurship, develop urban centres of growth, support the expansion of scaling companies into the regions and attract foreign direct investment in the food sector.

Enterprise Ireland identified the following initiatives in particular for the Mid-East region to scale and expand reach of indigenous enterprise in the region and continues to work closely with regional stakeholders through the Regional Steering Committee and Regional Enterprise Plan to progress:

Building on Regional Strengths

- Support the development of **10 smart working hubs** – including MERITS (Naas) and Kells Tech – to retain talent in the region.
- Build on the **screen-industry** success of Wicklow and the Mid-East. Develop the sector's existing companies and build start-ups.
- Develop a state-of-the-art **food innovation centre** in the Boyne Valley Food District for the Navan-Meath Region.
- Building the region's global innovation hubs such as Kerry Group, Naas and Devenish Nutrition, Co. Meath, to develop **global innovation capability** in the region.
- Drive the Mid-East/Midlands as a **centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing** leveraging Irish Manufacturing Research, manufacturing companies and the region's 3rd level institutes.

Implementing Enterprise Irelands National Initiative at Regional Level

- Foster engagement between Maynooth University, SMEs and innovative start-ups.
- Leverage Maynooth University, the LEOs and key stakeholders in the Mid-East to develop a robust pipeline of start-ups.
- Support 1,300 co-working spaces in the Mid-East #Worksmartchallenge.
- Promote the Mid-East as a strategic location for food foreign direct investment (Food FDI).
- Exploit opportunities for company expansions along the M2, M3, M4 and M7 corridors.

In 2020, 20,902 people were employed in Enterprise Ireland supported companies in the Mid-East, down 2.1% from 2019.

IDA Ireland

IDA Ireland's mission 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 Ireland works with key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors to deliver on this mandate. IDA Ireland partners closely with Enterprise Ireland across the Regions on multiple initiatives under the Regional Enterprise Plans and in relation to the provision of property solutions to the indigenous base, where appropriate.

On January 6th, 2021, IDA Ireland launched summary results for FDI for the country for 2020, and also launched a new Strategy, "Driving Recovery & Sustainable Growth 2021-2024".

Employment growth of 3.6 percent in IDA Ireland supported companies was achieved in 2020. Total employment in IDA Ireland client companies in Ireland now stands at 257,394, accounting directly for 12.4 percent of COVID-19 adjusted national employment.

The IDA Ireland Mid-East Region includes the counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The region is home to 66 IDA Ireland supported companies recording employment of 13,435 and has been successful in mobilising inward foreign direct investment (FDI) with employment levels in IDA Ireland client companies maintaining an upward trajectory since 2009.

There is a significant ecosystem of well-established ICT, Pharmaceutical, International Financial Services and Engineering companies including Intel, MGS, HPE, Facebook, P&G, Pfizer, Takeda, MSD, Elavon, Nypro, Coca Cola and IFS State Street in the Region. Many of these companies have maintained a long-standing presence in the region, such as, Intel, Tegral, Crown Packaging, Generali, Pfizer, Servier, Welch Allyn, Sigma Aldrich, P&G and in addition more recent arrivals include Facebook, KDP, MSD Dunboyne (Shire), Endress and Hauser and INIT.

In IDA's strategy *Winning; FDI 2015-2019*, the Mid-East Region achieved a 40% uplift in investment within the region. The region has had a number of significant announcements including PCI Pharma Services (Stamullen), INIT (Maynooth), MSD Dunboyne (Shire), Facebook (Clonee), Keurig Doctor Pepper (Newbridge) and Endress and Hauser (Kill).

In December 2020, MSD announced plans to create 240 jobs as it builds a new research facility next to its biologic medicines operation. The region has also won significant investment in both the Food sector and the Film sector which supports the promotion of the region for FDI. IDA Ireland will continue to focus on investment opportunities arising in global business services, high tech manufacturing and research, development and innovation.

Throughout its previous strategy, *Winning; FDI 2015-2019*, IDA Ireland has leveraged Wicklow's success in film production investment from companies such as Ardmore Studios and Ashford Studios to market the county and region as a location for further investment in this sector. During 2020, Greystones Media Campus submitted a planning application to develop a €150 million film and media campus on the IDA Ireland's Greystones strategic site in Co. Wicklow. This proposed investment reinforces the county's, and indeed the region's, value proposition as a location Film Content investment supported by a strong track record.

IDA Ireland will continue to market the Mid-East region drawing on existing assets including property solutions and placemaking. As well as IDA Ireland-owned sites and properties, IDA continues to market private property solutions including the network of Hub spaces within the Mid-East region including Kells Tech Hub and MERITS (Naas). Solutions such as these offer a flexible and varied range of property solutions which facilitate not only smaller investments but larger investments whilst clients are waiting for a longer-term solution. These hubs will also facilitate remote working which has become a focus of many FDI clients during COVID-19 restrictions.

IDA Ireland continues to work with Education providers Maynooth University and IT Carlow. Along with the Regional Skills Forum members, IDA Ireland continues to contribute to the region's skills agenda to support growing FDI.

LEOs

In 2020 the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) continued to be the 'first stop shop' providing entrepreneurs and business owners with advice, guidance, financial assistance and other supports but as with other state bodies, their focus shifted from assisting with start-up or growth, to triage and rescue, with 31 offices spread throughout the country the LEOs were truly operating at the coalface of the COVID-19 response to the Small and Micro Enterprise sector and provided a 'signposting' service for all the relevant COVID-19 supports available through all state bodies.

The LEOs supported 35,236 jobs across 7,529 client companies in 2020 of which there was an additional 82 companies outside of the Dublin region. In 2020 there was a fall of 1,494 net jobs during the year the State. It is worth noting however, that micro enterprises were adding jobs with a gross job gains across all regions. The challenge ahead will be to restore businesses to growth once the impact of the pandemic subsides. The LEOs provided significant training and mentoring to small businesses in 2020 to help them navigate the particularly difficult trading environment created by Covid-19 and Brexit. Last year, the Local Enterprise Offices trained over 77,000 entrepreneurs and business representatives, up from 37,000 the year previous. 16,231 completed business mentoring assignments up from 10,756 in 2019.

In response to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the LEOs quickly moved to introduce new schemes and adapt existing supports to meet the needs of enterprises across all regions and business sectors.

The Business Continuity Voucher, which was introduced in March 2020, offered businesses with up to 50 employees, across all sectors, a voucher of up to €2,500 in third party consultancy costs. This was used by companies and sole traders to develop short-term and long-term strategies to respond to the COVID-19 Lockdown restrictions and prepare their businesses for the eventual reopening of the economy.

This scheme helped businesses make informed decisions about what immediate measures and remedial actions should be taken, to enable them to protect staff and sales. This scheme closed for new applications in May 2020 and within that period the LEOs processed 14,871 applications and approved 12,077 of these to a value of €25.8m.

In response to COVID-19 restrictions the **Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVs)** was adjusted to provide a more attractive offering to businesses who were forced to close. The scheme moved from a 50% co-funding basis to a 90% funding model and businesses who had successfully implemented a previous voucher were now allowed to apply for a second voucher, further amendments were introduced in June allowing sectors that were normally excluded from this scheme to apply.

In previous years this scheme would have seen an average of around 1,200 applications, in 2020 the LEOs processed 17,315 applications for TOVs and approved 12,984 of these, this unprecedented demand for this scheme saw funding rise from its initial €2.3m to its eventual figure of an estimated cost of €30m.

This scheme has greatly contributed to enabling many regional Micro enterprises to quickly develop and implement digital solutions that have allowed them to continue trading throughout the pandemic and explore the export potential of their business by opening them up to a global audience. It is hoped that this will encourage more regional entrepreneurs to exploit gaps in the marketplace by developing online capacity as a core of their businesses.

Throughout 2020 and in spite of the pandemic and lockdowns, the LEOs continued to offer grant aid to entrepreneurs who spotted opportunities in the current climate to start or grow their businesses through their feasibility, priming and expansion grant programmes.

The Micro Enterprise Assistance Fund, introduced in September 2020, targeted a small cohort of micro enterprises that could not avail of existing government supports by virtue of their sector, size or by way of operating from a non-rateable premise, many of which were small local traders who provided unique services within their communities.

This Grant Fund was available to eligible businesses that had suffered a 30% reduction in turn-over due to COVID-19, provided that they committed to remaining open and to hiring and sustaining employment. Successful applicants were awarded a grant of between €500 - €1,000 of vouched expenditure on adaptation and reconfiguration costs, as well as COVID-19 consumables such as PPE and sanitisation equipment. From its launch in September until the scheme was closed to new applicants in December the scheme saw 428 applications and 196 approvals to the value of €185,079.

To assist in their remit of developing regional employment, the LEOs also offer 'soft' supports by way of their free of charge **Mentoring programme**, where clients work with an experienced mentor to identify solutions to areas of exposure within their business. With advice and guidance from their mentor, clients develop strategies that are more robust, address issues and maximise potential opportunities including those around COVID-19 challenges.

The LEOs have also pivoted their extensive suite of **Training programmes**, workshops and networking meetups to an online platform covering areas such as

- cash management in a crisis,
- leading your business through COVID-19
- advice for employers impacted by the crisis.

There have been 10,255 participants in the Mentoring Programme and 49,623 participants in the COVID training programmes. In addition to this, the LEOs launched the **LEO Client Training Initiative** which is a new 'Lunch & Learn' live training webinar series that is open and accessible to all LEO client companies and prospective clients across the country, with no registration or sign-up required. This new series is intended to complement the online training and webinar programmes that LEOs already have in place for clients. This is an interactive chat with a different expert every week under a 'Lunch & Learn' model and is available on the national LEO Facebook Page and through the LEO YouTube channel.

Unfortunately, many of the successful projects under the LEO Competitive fund in 2019 had to be put on hold as a result of the pandemic. These were collaborative projects between two or more LEOs; and LEOs working with other local groups like Chambers, Community Enterprise Centres, Education or training bodies, Local Authorities or colleges and are aligned with the strategic objectives in the Regional Enterprise Plans and the ambitions in Future Jobs Ireland. It is very much hoped that as our economy reopens through 2021 that these projects will recommence.

The LEOs supported 38,535 jobs across 7,400 client companies in 2019 of which there was an additional 148 companies outside of the Dublin region. 3,149 net jobs were created during the year and 78% of these were produced outside of the Dublin region with an even distribution across the regions. This is the 6th year of continuous employment growth for the LEOs since their inception in 2014. LEOs saw increases across all supports in 2019 including training, mentoring and funding. The number of those trained in 2019 was up 6.4% last year with 37,306 availing of training through their Local Enterprise Office. There was also an 10.5% increase in mentoring assignments completed, with 10,756 clients benefitting from LEO mentoring.

3. Achieving a Just Transition in Ireland's Regions

The Climate Action Plan 2019 sets out the measures by which Ireland can reduce its emissions from sectors outside the EU's Emissions Trading System by 30% (relative to 2005 levels) by 2030. It sets out ambitious environmental targets for Ireland to meet over the next 40 years.

Just Transition is a key part of Climate Action policy. It supports the idea that communities and individuals are safeguarded in the move to face the challenges presented by climate change, in a climate-proofed economy.

Under Action 164 of *Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019* the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committees were asked to include a Just Transition standing item on the agenda of each of the nine regional areas. This is now in place for all the Committees and has encouraged consideration of region-specific impacts that transitioning to a low carbon economy will have in their region, and the possible solutions to mitigate these impacts.

How to manage a transition to a fundamentally new economic future was the focus of work at the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in late 2019 and early 2020. The Council's work, a key deliverable in the Government's Climate Action Plan and Future Jobs Ireland 2019, was detailed in their final report, *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland* published in May 2020.

NESC's report is focused on how to manage the transition associated with climate change and digital automation, and identified recommendations to help Ireland address them and embrace the significant opportunities presented through three broad areas:

- continuous, pre-emptive workforce development;
- building resilient enterprises; and
- delivering high-impact targeted funding to support transition.

In the preparation of their report, NESC consulted with a number of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committees to consider the engagement already taking place in the regions and explore how place-based collaborative solutions could be adopted.

Finally, two calls for proposals under the Just Transition Fund, administered by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, have resulted in Strand 1 grant offers totaling €1.2m for 16 successful applicants, and Strand 2 grant offers totaling €27.8m for 47 projects, a number of which include areas of Co. Kildare in the Mid-East region.*

* A detailed list of projects which received provisional letters of offer appears at Appendix 3.

Appendix 1: Regional Funding approved for the Mid-East supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2020

Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF)

The 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. Just under €100m has been approved across 68 projects nationally.

During 2020 the Mid-East Region secured funding of €4,806,041 for three project*.

Project	Location	Description	Grant amount €
Clermont Enterprise Hub CLG	Wicklow	Enterprise / Creative Hub	1,434,000
UCD Nova DAC	Kildare	AgTech Innovation Hub	3,002,441
National Association of Community Enterprise Centres CLG (NACEC)	Meath	The NACEC Regional Transformation Programme	369,600
Total			€4,806,041

*See the first Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan for details of Calls 1 & 2.

Enterprise Centres Fund

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar TD, announced €486,979 in grants for five enterprise centres in the Mid-East under Enterprise Ireland's Enterprise Centres Fund. Enterprise centres are embedded in communities in every county in the country. They provide space and training for entrepreneurs, allowing them to work remotely, access training and advice, and network with other business leaders.

Approvals (Not for profit centres)

Applicant Name (Correct legal entity name)	County	Nuts III Region	Grant amount €
Allenwood Community Development Association CLG	Kildare	Mid-East	75,359
Arklow Business Enterprise Centre Ltd.	Wicklow	Mid-East	99,820
County Kildare Chamber of Commerce CLG	Kildare	Mid-East	17,416
Kells Community Enterprise Company CLG	Meath	Mid-East	148,720
Meath Enterprise Centre Company CLG	Meath	Mid-East	145,664
Total			€486,979

Appendix 2: Statistical snapshot – Mid-East

Constituent counties	Kildare, Meath and Wicklow	
Regional Population and change (1996-2016)	347,407 (1996): 559,973 (2016) increase of 212,566*	
Total in employment	339,300	
Labour Force participation rate	62.5%*	
% of Male employment (State)	54.3%	
% of Female employment (State)	45.7%	
Live Register at 31/12/20	17,633	
Unemployment rate	5.1%*	
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 31/12/20	37,979	
Unemployment blackspots ¹	3 ²	
Employed in Enterprise Ireland companies	220,613	
Total Employment outside Dublin in Enterprise Ireland companies	65%	
Jobs created in Enterprise Ireland companies ³	16,496	
Job losses in Enterprise Ireland companies ⁴	17,368	
Net Change in Enterprise Ireland companies ⁵	-872	
EI supported employment and number of client companies (2019 – 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 21,258	Jobs: 20,902
	Companies: 515	Companies: 344
IDA supported employment and number of client companies (2019 - 2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 13,435	Jobs: 14,024
	Companies: 68	Companies: 67
New jobs created in 2020 by the IDA ⁶	Over 20,000	
% of IDA investments to regional locations ⁷	52%	
IDA net job created ⁸	8,944	
LEO supported employment & no. client companies (2019-2020)	2019	2020
	Jobs: 268	Jobs: -21
	Companies: 625	Companies: 653

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

2. Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Kildare (1), Meath (1) & Wicklow (1)

3. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

4. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

5. Enterprise Ireland End of Year Statement 2020

6. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

7. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

8. IDA Ireland Results for 2020

* CSO Q4 2020 Labour Force Survey

Appendix 3: Just Transition Fund Projects (Department of Environment, Climate and Communications)

Stream 1

	Project Name	Lead Applicant	Counties impacted
1	Mide	Enterprise Ireland	Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath
2	Training Workshop	Ballycommon Telework and Training Centre CLG	Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath
3	Umeras Peatlands Park: Design Study	Umeras Community Development	Kildare, Laois, Offaly
4	Extension to Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk 4 th Final Phase	Peatland Biodiversity Boardwalk Fourth Final Phase – Lullymore	Kildare, Offaly
5	PolySafe	RR Power Projects	Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offaly Westmeath

Stream 2

	Project Name	Lead Applicant	Counties impacted
1	A Brown to Green Jobs Transition to Eliminate Energy Waste in Midlands Homes	Hub Controls Ltd	All counties
2	Bord na Móna Employee Supports – Training and Upskilling Project	Bord na Móna	All counties
3	Bord na Móna Medicinal Herbs Project	Bord na Móna	All counties
4	Climate Action Training and Mentoring Programme	Eastern and Midlands Climate Action Regional Office	All counties
5	Connecting Communities with Peatlands	Irish Rural Link	All counties
6	Empower Eco	Athlone Institute of Technology	All counties
7	Enablers of a Just Transition for Communities in the Midlands Region	University of Limerick - Centre for Environmental Research	All counties
8	Lough Boora Discovery Park and Midlands Cycling Destination – Sustainable Connections 2020	Offaly County Council	All counties
9	Lough Boora Enhancement: Cycle Way and Feasibility Study – Industrial Art Space	Bord na Móna	All counties
10	Midland Bioenergy Development Project	Irish BioEnergy Association	All counties
11	Midlands Retrofit Growth	KORE Retrofit Ltd	All counties
12	North Kildare Business and Learning Campus: Site Expansion Works	Allenwood Community Development Association CLG	Kildare
13	Superhomes Midlands	Tipperary Energy Agency CLG	All counties

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