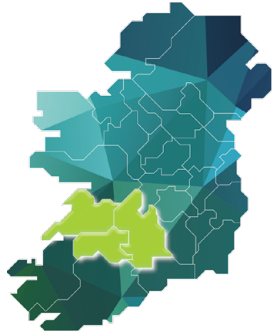


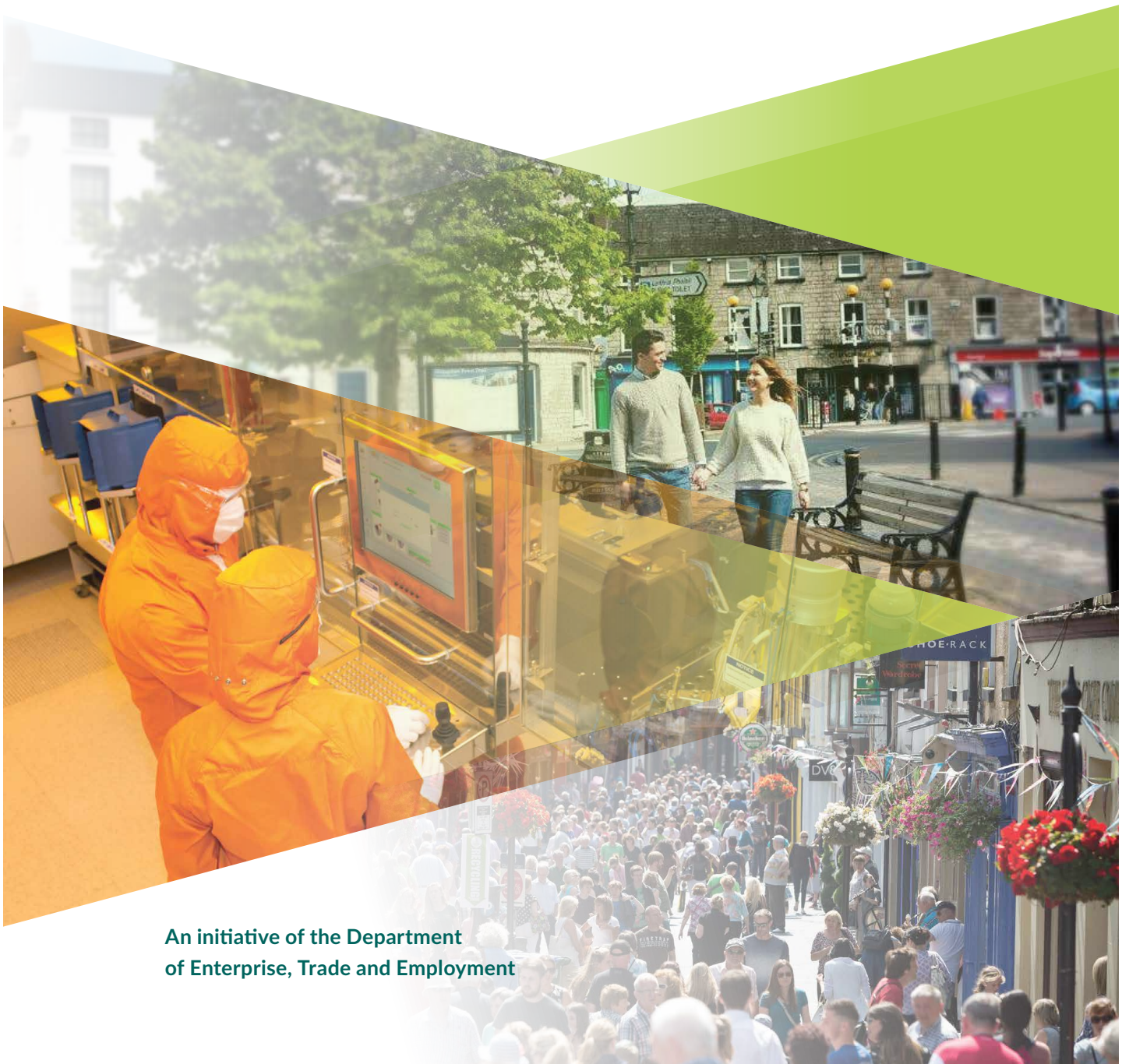


Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN TO 2024

MID-WEST



An initiative of the Department
of Enterprise, Trade and Employment



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Minister's Foreword



Damien English

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

There is a huge appetite to facilitate regional enterprise development and grow job opportunities right across the country. I am delighted to see this outlook reflected strongly in the publication of this Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the Mid-West.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the regional stakeholders – the Enterprise Agencies, LEOs, Local Authorities, Regional Skills, Higher & Further Education, the Regional Assembly, Private Sector, and many other participants – for their determination and intense engagement for the betterment of the Mid-West.

Together they considered important questions to enhance enterprise development for their region, about enterprise resilience; place attractiveness; competitiveness; and the twin business transformation imperatives - low carbon and digital in developing their Plan.

Looking to the future, through the framework of our Economic Recovery Plan, and the recent review of the National Development Plan 2021-2030, the Government is committed to achieving a balanced, sustainable, and inclusive recovery for our people and our regions. The imperative to realise the enterprise and jobs potential in all our regions and reducing disparities between them remains a core priority.

My Department has an important role to play in the promotion and funding of regional development, through the work of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, and the Local Enterprise Office Network, by assisting businesses directly, and through ecosystem strengthening measures. These include initiatives such as the IDA regional property programme, the EI Regional Enterprise Development Fund and investments in innovation and start-up infrastructures. Critically, in overseeing the development of Regional Enterprise Plans, we recognise that there is added benefit if stakeholders work together regionally to understand their unique enterprise opportunities and challenges; and collaborate on solutions.



This new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the Mid-West is future-focused and centred around a number of priorities including:

- to enable innovation across the region,
- to contribute to the region's ambition to lead on sustainability and low carbon,
- to create a balanced region, where both urban and rural communities can work together,
- growing new and existing small business, and
- assisting enterprise growth in more rural areas and areas of high unemployment.

With continued regional collaboration, knowledge sharing and a solutions mindset, the actions within this Plan can make a real and lasting difference for the Mid-West, and to the collective national economic recovery.

I would like to especially thank the Chairperson of the Mid-West Regional Steering Committee Professor Eamonn Murphy, Managing Director of the Irish Centre for Business Excellence, for his leadership on the preparation of this new Plan, and Dr. Paraic Rattigan, Mid-West Programme Manager for his critical coordination role in delivering the final outcome. I am very appreciative of the time and energy given by all the members of the Steering Committee, and for your ongoing commitment to the Regional Enterprise Plan.

To assist the Regional Enterprise Plans, my Department, through Enterprise Ireland, has made available over €126m in funding since 2018 to assist locally-led regional enterprise development projects. Of this, over €16m has been approved for the Mid-West Region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund and the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme.

New funding of up to €180m will be made available for the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative enterprise projects that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the regions.

This funding will complement the aims and objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plans and through their new Plan, the Mid-West Region is well positioned to compete for future funding calls to help improve the capability and competitiveness of their regional enterprise development offering and to encourage entrepreneurial activity among their local vibrant business community.

I am very much looking forward to further engagement with Eamonn and the members of the Mid-West Steering Committee as implementation progresses towards 2024.



Message from the Chair



Prof. Eamonn Murphy,
Managing Director,
Irish Centre for Business Excellence
Chair, Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan

As we commence the delivery of this new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, I ask myself: is there a need for another entity like the Regional Enterprise Plan given the number of other strategies and plans that already exist? On reflection, I believe there are three unique and compelling reasons for regional stakeholders to support this new plan, 1) Alignment between regional stakeholders, 2) Building on strengths and targeting weaknesses, and 3) Enabling informed debate about the long-term development of our region.

1. Alignment

A magnetised piece of steel is a perfect metaphor for the contribution of the Regional Enterprise Plan to the region. Prior to becoming a magnet the north and south poles, while never in opposition, are not in perfect alignment. Post magnetisation all the individual elements are in perfect alignment and the previously passive piece of steel becomes a powerful attractor. Our vision is for the Mid-West Region to become a powerful attractor, not just for economic development but also to remain as a very attractive place to live, with the ability to draw and retain the highly skilled graduates needed to enable our vision to become a reality. Some might argue that magnets are old technology. I would argue that the Electro-Magnetic field is the unobtrusive basis for all modern connectivity including Internet, Mobile Phones, Television etc., and as such is a perfect metaphor for our contribution; unobtrusive and aligned connectivity.

2. Building on strengths and targeting weaknesses

The successes of the previous Plan reflect our strategy of building on strengths and targeting weaknesses. The projects we promote in this plan are expected to provide Environmental, Societal and Economic dividends.



The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) funded National Bioeconomy Campus in Lisheen, is a circular economy project based in a disused mine in a rural setting. Future Mobility Campus Ireland in Shannon having started investigating autonomous on-road mobility is now planning to diversify by including drone distribution technology, in conjunction with Shannon Airport. The new, REDF funded, Digital Collaboration Centre, located in Innovate Limerick's Engine, is an excellent physical and dynamic space whereby multinationals and indigenous sectors can interact in a safe and trusting environment to their mutual benefit, allowing our indigenous enterprises to remain competitive in an ever more digitalised world. In this plan, we intend to support these and other ongoing regional projects alongside a range of new initiatives that will contribute to the economic, environmental and societal agendas.

3. Long-Term

A long-term challenge for the Mid-West Region is the existence of many economically disadvantaged areas. The recent Trinity National Deprivation Index emphasises the scale of economic deprivation in Limerick City noting that *'In Ireland, the difference in life expectancy between the most deprived area (Limerick City) and the least deprived area (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) was 7.5 years for men'*. All analyses of social deprivation conclude that it is a most complex societal problem; a complicated interaction of low income, poor educational opportunities, inadequate housing and reduced access to adequate health care supports. Many of the issues and challenges associated with Social Deprivation are outside the primary remit of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan. Nevertheless, we have identified a number of worthy projects across the region that aim to address economic imbalance as part of our Plan to 2024.

A long-term opportunity for the region comes from our presence at the heart of the Golden Vale, probably the most productive farmland in Europe, with a long-standing agricultural output that is the envy of many. Looking to the future the economic and environmental dividend to be derived from Bio-Gas generation has the potential to enable our region to contribute significantly to the Irish economy while simultaneously significantly reducing our carbon emissions.

Renewable energy presents the Mid-West with a number of wonderful opportunities for future economic prosperity. Growing international interest suggests that the waters off the Clare/Kerry coastline can be the most reliable locations in Europe for large-scale generation of wind energy. The energy potential of the Mid-West will far exceed our national requirements. Our goal must be to exploit fully the economic opportunity presented to us by ensuring that as many high value jobs, as possible, are created within our respective communities. The Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan has established the Atlantic Green Digital Basin (AGDB) as an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate our efforts to promote the region internationally and to support initiatives that generate economic activity from our onshore and offshore renewable energy opportunity.

In summary, we are confident for the future of our region. We are proud of the alignment of the various agencies in the Mid-West and particularly the co-operation among our three local authorities. The Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 is positively supported by all the key stakeholders in the region. We are indebted to our excellent programme manager Dr. Paraic Rattigan and we are buoyed by the successes of our projects to date. We are determined that the projects outlined in our Plan to 2024 will deliver on their respective economic, environmental and societal agendas.



Mid-West Regional Profile

Consultation with Mid-West stakeholders has identified a number of capacity building measures that, although outside the scope of this plan, are crucial to the planned growth and long-term success of the region.

The provision of adequate housing, safe recreational spaces, improved public health services, sufficient primary and post-primary school places, etc. all remain priorities for a growing region such as the Mid-West. In addition, civil infrastructure such as water and wastewater services and high-speed broadband requires immediate and ongoing investment by the relevant public bodies to develop fit for purpose residential and commercial sites throughout the region.

In this chapter, we will look at some of the opportunities for the region to build capacity in the coming years, with a focus on an educated workforce, connectivity, placemaking and green energy.

Growing the Region's Higher Education and R&D Capacity

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West is the first cross-regional technological university (TU) in the State following the merger of Limerick (LIT) and Athlone (AIT) Institutes of Technology. The new University, which was formally opened on October 1st, 2021, comprises a student population of more than 14,000 and a staff complement of approximately 1,200 people across six campuses, five of which are in the Mid-West Region in Limerick (2), Clonmel, Ennis and Thurles. The new University will increase higher education access, grow regional development and create new opportunities for students, staff, business and enterprise, and local communities.

TUS: Midlands Mid-West will provide higher educational programmes across all levels of the National Framework of Qualifications, from apprenticeships to doctoral-level qualifications. The new TU will play a central role in the strategic development of the Mid-West Region and ensure a global outlook and a civic-oriented value system.

Alongside the establishment of the new University, significant major new physical developments (of the order of €150m) are planned across all of its campuses in the region as part of The Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

University of Limerick and City Campus

The University of Limerick (UL), as it approaches its 50th anniversary in 2022, continues to significantly enhance the region as a preferred location in which to visit, work, study and live. UL has rapidly grown from a regional university into a national – and indeed international – university located in the Mid-West. UL is host to a number of Research Centres and units including national externally funded research centres such as Lero, SSPC, Confirm, DPTC, PMTC, MACSI and Epi-Stem, as well as housing two research institutes, the Bernal Institute and the Health Research Institute.

UL, as part of its strategy to 2024, aims to bring its student population to more than 20,000, with staff number increasing to 1,930. Many of the new students will be based at the new UL City Campus. Final plans for the City Campus are underway. However, an existing space is already being repurposed to contain an innovation lab, the UL FabLab, the +CityxChange project, and a community engagement lab. In addition, an opportunity is being pursued for the development of a South Clare Economic Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) at UL on a large-scale strategic site zoned as a University Zone to act as a catalyst for economic and social development, regionally and nationally.

Other Education and Training Providers

The Mid-West continues to be comprehensively served by a variety of additional education and training providers. Mary Immaculate College has a growing student population of over 5,000 students across its campuses in Limerick and Thurles. Both Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and Tipperary Education and Training Board continue to deliver a broad range of education programmes including second level education, post-leaving certificate programmes, further education, second chance learning, adult and community education and training services throughout the region.



International Connectivity

Shannon International Airport

Shannon International Airport, part of Shannon Group plc, is a national asset located in the region, supporting the sustainability of enterprise and tourism along the Atlantic and Southern coasts of Ireland. The direct, international connectivity provided by Shannon International Airport has been a critical factor in the decision of many multinationals to base operations in the Mid-West and adjacent regions, with the Shannon Campus area being home to the largest concentration of multinationals outside Dublin. This multinational base in turn supports a thriving base of indigenous enterprises across the sub-supply network. Furthermore, the Shannon region has the largest cluster of aviation and aerospace industry in the country encompassing more than 80 companies. The significant investment of over €131m by Shannon Group across its Shannon Campus in recent years incorporating the airport, along with the available land space, make it an ideal location for the further development of the aviation sector and its supply chain.

Daily connectivity to the UK, mainland Europe, direct flights to North America and a US preclearance facility at the airport have played an integral role in facilitating the expansion of Irish companies overseas while supporting the international relationships of foreign based firms. 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.

Attracting overseas visitors to Ireland and encouraging increased dwell time has significant benefits for tourism employment in the country. Moreover, Shannon International Airport's positioning as the most accessible gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way is a key enabler for tourism in Ireland. It is estimated that visitors through Shannon International Airport support 10,900 tourism industry jobs.

During 2013 – 2017 the number of passengers using Ireland's airports 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. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Shannon International Airport, like airports worldwide, suffered a devastating drop in passenger numbers.

As air travel resumes, Shannon Group has worked with its airline partners to secure the return of air services. A number of previous routes have returned to the skies, with Ryanair in particular announcing a number of new European routes to/from Shannon. However, there remains concern that some key business routes to the UK and US could be slow to return. Stakeholders from across the Mid-West and adjoining regions are united in highlighting the importance of Shannon International Airport to the regional economy as it recovers and grows. In the short-term it is imperative that all possible means are deployed to ensure key routes are recovered as quickly, and as comprehensively as possible, to complement the work of Shannon Group to sustain international connectivity and attract new business to the region.

Shannon Foynes Port Company

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) is Ireland's second largest port operation, handling trade with a turnover value of €8.5bn per annum, with associated economic impacts of €1.9bn per annum supporting over 3,900 jobs. Shannon Foynes Port Company is an EU Core Network Port (TEN-T) located on two Core TEN-T Corridors and a Tier 1 Port in the National Ports Policy, highlighting the Shannon Estuary as a commercial watercourse of international significance. SFPC's statutory harbour extends to 500km² and there are 1,200 hectares of available adjoining land designated for maritime related development over six Strategic Development Locations.



SFPC is pursuing an unprecedented investment programme to transform the Shannon Estuary into a major economic hub, by adding substantial new capacity at its general cargo terminals of Limerick and Foynes. This €850m investment program is guided by SFPC's 30-year masterplan Vision 2041 and includes projects such as new deep-water jetties and associated infrastructure together with new hinterland connections such as the Limerick to Foynes Road Scheme and the reinstatement of the Limerick to Foynes rail line. Separately, planning permission has been granted to re-develop the Bannatyne Mill on the Dock Road in Limerick City as part of plans to re-develop 75 acres of property along a 2.1km stretch of the River Shannon.

In Q4, 2020 the port launched its 'Offshore Wind Potential Study', which identifies the potential, through capitalising on our unique offshore wind resource and deep-water port, to turn the State into an exporter of up to 75GW of energy annually and generate unprecedented job creation in the process. The opportunity combines the emergence of floating offshore wind technology as the biggest growth area for renewables globally, the Irish west coast having among the best wind resources in the world and the unrivalled deep waters of the Shannon Estuary to enable the manufacturing and industrial ecosystem necessary to support the global scale floating offshore wind farms. The Offshore Wind Potential Study found that, by using conservative assumptions, that €12bn in supply chain investment could be made in the Shannon Estuary by 2050 and that this investment would lead to "huge" job growth.

Placemaking

County Development Plans

The development of new County Development Plans for each county in the region is underway. The plans will set out the blueprint for the growth of each county for the period 2022-2028, from an economic, social, physical and environmental perspective. The plans will be a framework for how each county will deliver for its communities in terms of economic, environmental, energy and strategic urban/rural planning. Each plan has already been through a period of public consultation, with adoption of the plans expected in mid-2022.

Ennis 2040

The "vision" for the project is to strengthen Ennis' role as a key regional economic driver and major tourist destination in the Mid-West through expansion and diversification of its economy. Its purpose is to guide the long-term development of Ennis and highlight opportunities that will deliver competitive advantages. The newly established Ennis 2040 Designated Activity Company (DAC) will identify employment opportunities, environmental improvements and other plans developed in conjunction with the Ennis 2040 strategy, as launched in Q4, 2021. Councillors have already given the green light to lend €10m to the Ennis 2040 DAC, with up to nine sites already identified for the company as 'potential development opportunities'.

Limerick 2030 Economic & Spatial Plan

The Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan, first published in 2013, has been recently updated taking into account progress and learnings over the last nine years and sets out an updated strategy and a suite of opportunities to take us to 2030 and beyond. Limerick 2030 DAC and Innovate Limerick DAC have been set up to enable the Council to deliver some of the economic and spatial opportunities set out in the plan.

Innovate Limerick helps drive innovation and acts as the delivery mechanism for the projects outlined in the Limerick 2030 plan, the Limerick regeneration implementation plans and others. Innovate Limerick's aims to develop Limerick's business ecosystem and position Limerick City and County as one of the most attractive locations to start and grow a business.

Limerick 2030 DAC continues to play a leading role in ensuring the revitalisation of the city, county and region with a number of nationally significant development projects underway. Projects such as the €275m Opera Site project and the estimated €300m Cleaves Riverside Quarter project will reflect Limerick's status as a leading destination for inward investment, providing high-quality mixed-use schemes of residential, commercial, educational and cultural accommodation and developing the public realm for locals and visitors to enjoy.



Shannon Town Centre Masterplan

Clare County Council is preparing a draft Shannon Town Centre Masterplan comprising of a 30 hectares area in the centre of Shannon Town that will set out a clear and shared vision for its development over the next 15 years. The purpose of the draft Plan is to define the focus and locations for economic, spatial, social, cultural, community and commercial development in the town centre. It is intended that the draft Plan will unlock the development potential and guide and stimulate the development of all lands within Shannon Town Centre to maximise the opportunity for the town centre to unlock its potential as a social, cultural, economic, retail and recreational destination of choice.

Major Infrastructure Projects

The following major transportation projects are identified as key enablers for economic growth in the region, many of which are listed in the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP).

M20 Cork to Limerick scheme

Cork and Limerick are the centres of the second and third largest clusters of population and economic activity in the country. Poor connectivity limits economic links between the two cities, inhibiting the growth of the regional economy. The potential 50 percent growth in population in both Cork and Limerick is outlined in the National Planning Framework (NPF). The project to improve connectivity between Cork and Limerick is currently at Phase 2 Option Selection, where alternatives are being considered.

N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction Project

The N24 is a strategic corridor from Limerick to Waterford, traversing through County Tipperary passing Tipperary Town, Cahir, Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel, and their rural hinterland. The existing road has restricted capacity, creates significant traffic delays, is economically inefficient and detracts from the development and growth of the region. The project is currently at Phase 2 Option Selection, where feasible upgrade options are being considered to address the current issues.

N69 Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme

The new N69 road connection to Shannon-Foynes Port will provide better connection to the Port of Foynes, relieve the significant traffic congestion on the national road network, and facilitate economic growth across existing and new sectors, including the significant opportunity for offshore wind projects to be delivered from the port.

The project has completed Oral hearing at An Bord Pleanála in February 2021, with a final decision expected in early 2022.

Other road projects

Other road projects continue to be progressed by stakeholders in the region to support growth, efficiency and safety. Projects including the Coonagh to Knockalisheen road and subsequent stages of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road, N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Improvement Scheme, Shannon Crossing/Killaloe Bypass, Thurles Relief Road and others have been identified as key enablers to economic growth within the region.

Rail & Transport Networks

As part of the NDP, government funding will be provided over the next ten years to support the development of a new Limerick commuter rail network including new stations on each of the historical rail lines, the detail of which is to be set out in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy. The NDP also includes a review of the strategic potential of the Waterford to Limerick Junction line which is expected to examine the identification of Limerick Junction as a national and regional rail transport hub, upgrade works at Colbert Station, and the Foynes rail link to improve access to Shannon Foynes Port. In addition, significant investment in Bus Connects, Cycling and walking infrastructure is anticipated to make our towns and cities more sustainable.

Atlantic Green Digital Basin – A Twin Transition to a New Economy

The Mid-West Region is approaching a significant opportunity for transformation through the delivery of large renewable energy projects and the economic development potential that this presents. The region is fortunate to possess strategic advantages when it comes to renewable energy with world-leading wind conditions, existing grid infrastructure at Moneypoint and Tarbert, ideal port conditions, land for development, and an existing workforce and innovation ecosystem. An aligned approach and coordinated effort is now required in order to maximise the regional economic and environmental benefits that can be gained from the major renewable energy potential of the region. Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and Tipperary County Council, through their Economic Development Directorates, have agreed to work together along with the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, to build an outline strategy and progress initiatives in support of the region's Green Digital objectives. Collectively this group will promote the renewable energy opportunity, identify direct and indirect job opportunities, and engage with regional, national and international stakeholders to facilitate the twin green-digital transition for the region.



Overview of Strategic Objectives and Actions



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Enable innovation to make the Mid-West a leading digital region

- Action 1.1** Strengthen the position of the Mid-West as a national centre for advanced manufacturing.
- Action 1.2** Development and expansion of advanced mobility technology capabilities at Future Mobility Campus Ireland.
- Action 1.3** Create a sustainable Regional Film Industry in the Mid-West.
- Action 1.4** Collaborations to solve healthcare problems and challenges using digital solutions.
- Action 1.5** Establish the region as a national leader in the sports-tech and eSports sectors.
- Action 1.6** Progress regional data centre projects with an emphasis on innovation and sustainability.
- Action 1.7** Innovation in education – inclusive, immersive, enterprise focused education programs.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Make the Mid-West Ireland's leading sustainability / low carbon region

- Action 2.1** The Atlantic Green Digital Basin – decarbonising industry by developing the Shannon Estuary as a renewable energy hub.
- Action 2.2** Build regional research, education and training capacity for emerging renewable energy opportunities.
- Action 2.3** Grow circular bioeconomy capacity, leveraging the National Bioeconomy Campus.
- Action 2.4** Develop a centre of excellence for sustainable energy.
- Action 2.5** Deliver initiatives and projects to promote sustainability in the built environment.
- Action 2.6** Upskilling of small businesses for the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Enable Enterprise growth in regional towns and rural areas

- Action 3.1** Create an efficient and sustainable regional network of enterprise centres and remote working eHubs.
- Action 3.2** Undertake a skills mapping exercise to identify employment trends and needs across the region.
- Action 3.3** Support the regional agri-food sector through the development of food hubs.
- Action 3.4** Increase through digitalisation the visibility of the region's tourism offerings.
- Action 3.5** Build on the region's equine heritage to develop equine tourism and enterprise products.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Initiatives to support SME, Start-ups and Microbusiness

- Action 4.1** Develop existing and new industry clusters in strategic sectors.
- Action 4.2** Increase the numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Action 4.3** Expand the EXPLORE Engineering Alliance.
- Action 4.4** Deliver management and financial training and upskilling initiatives.
- Action 4.5** Build an ecosystem for start-ups and entrepreneurs.
- Action 4.6** Deliver R&D, competitiveness and internationalisation initiatives to support export sales growth in SMEs.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Develop Social Enterprises and Job Creation Initiatives for areas of high unemployment

- Action 5.1** Develop, support and scale social enterprise.
- Action 5.2** A connected jobs strategy for Limerick's unemployment blackspots.
- Action 5.3** Community Based Organisations – creating employment pathways for the economically marginalised and socially excluded.
- Action 5.4** Establish a multi-functional Creative and Innovative Industries Centre of scale at LEDP.
- Action 5.5** Establish a world class Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change Centre in Kilrush.
- Action 5.6** Task force-lead regeneration of regional towns – Pilot Scheme at Tipperary Town.

1

The Regional Enterprise Plans Initiative

Introduction

In early 2019, nine Regional Steering Committees established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), finalised and commenced implementation of the first *Regional Enterprise Plans*. This 'bottom-up' collaborative mechanism, involves the enterprise agencies, local enterprise offices, local authorities, regional assemblies, higher and further education bodies, private sector and others, within each region, chaired by a senior figure from industry. The Committees were formed initially in 2015 to drive the Regional Action Plans for Jobs until 2018.

The Regional Enterprise Plans each contain agreed 'Strategic Objectives' for enterprise development, accompanied by a time-bound set of actions that deliver to the objectives. Progress Reports on implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 are available on the Department's website.

Policy Context

Delivering balanced regional growth through a coherent policy approach to the enterprise needs of every part of Ireland is a stated objective within the Programme for Government (PfG) and more recently emphasised in the *Economic Recovery Plan 2021*.

DETE contributes to this agenda in a number of ways, including through: the enterprise agencies; the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs); and direct investments in strengthening the enterprise ecosystem (incl. Regional Enterprise Development Fund, IDA property programme etc.), guided by our national enterprise policy. This work takes place in the context of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which provides the vision and holistic future planning framework for Ireland's spatial development across society and economy over the longer-term, and its translation through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and the aligned Local Authority County and City Development Plans.

The NPF and the three RSES provide a statutory long-term framework for the spatial, economic and social development of all regions in Ireland, offering an ambitious and sustainable proposition to delivering balanced regional development in Ireland. Smart Specialisation (S3) represents one of the key economic principles adopted in each of these high-level statutory frameworks, with a key enabling condition for funding interventions under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) also being the development of and alignment with the Member State's S3. By placing Smart Specialisation as one of the thematic areas of the Regional Enterprise Plans, we can ensure that regional enterprise priorities identified and supported in these plans are aligned with the long-term vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES.



Other pertinent national policies include the *National Skills Strategy 2025*, *Innovation 2020* (with a new innovation strategy forthcoming); and *Making Remote Work* amongst others. Also, as part of the Shared Island initiative, there will be added impetus to delivering balanced regional growth by leveraging the potential to grow the all-island economy, while driving growth and job creation North and South.

Ensuring that all regions can realise their enterprise development potential and that regional disparities are reduced therefore requires that the Department works closely with relevant partners across Government to strengthen the enabling conditions for investment and business growth.

The Regional Enterprise Plans recognise that enterprise policy coherence and collaboration at the national level needs to be mirrored from the 'bottom up', to enable:

- a place-based perspective on needs, capabilities and opportunities to inform national enterprise and other policies;
- economies of scale through joined up actions and investment;
- effective targeting of national initiatives to areas of opportunity and greatest need; and
- development and delivery of a programme of collaborative actions that can drive better outcomes in terms of regional job creation

Although the Plans themselves are focused and timebound, the Steering Committee mechanism also maintains a live agenda at regional level, responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges, for example: Brexit, COVID-19 pandemic impacts, remote working opportunity for regions, climate action/just transition, and regional shocks requiring joined up responses.

Developing new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024

The outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) concluded at the end of 2020. Final Progress Reports from the nine Steering Committees show that the model has impact and that actions delivered are complementary and add value to the mainstream interventions of the enterprise agencies and other bodies working to enable enterprise development at a regional level.

The new Plans to 2024 build on the first iteration of the REPs and each Steering Committee had a clear mandate to deliver a new Plan to 2024 that would:

- complement and translate national enterprise policy in a regional context;
- facilitate collaboration regionally to address prioritised ecosystem gaps and opportunities, and help achieve Agency and LEO investment and jobs targets in each region; and
- use collective insight and resources in each region, and available regional funding, to progress initiatives to enable enterprise growth and job creation in each region.

The Department highlighted a number of national policy challenges that each of the Regional Committees were asked to consider as part of the preparation of the new Plans: enabling recovery and building enterprise resilience in the context of COVID-19 and other external shocks; the twin transition imperative for enterprises to digitalise and contribute to a carbon neutral economy; improving competitiveness through effective placemaking, including enabling flexible work patterns; and capitalising on existing and emerging sectoral strengths and capabilities through smart specialisation.

The development of Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 has for the first time been done in parallel with the creation of Ireland's forthcoming new Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3). The stakeholder consultation events undertaken as part of the development of these Regional Enterprise Plans has acted as an entrepreneurial discovery process which has contributed valuable insights to the S3 for Ireland.

The final appendix summarises the various stages that has led to the publication of the Regional Enterprise Plans. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the development of the nine new Plans to 2024 was undertaken in a virtual environment. The Regional Enterprise Plans and Initiatives Unit, within DETE, will oversee the implementation of the new Plans at the national level, while roll-out of the process in each region will be driven on the ground by the existing Regional Steering Committees, assisted by Programme Managers appointed by the Local Authorities in each region.

Finally, to help drive delivery of the new REPs to 2024, drive best practice across regions, and encourage cross-regional collaboration on areas of common interest and opportunity, the Department has established a National Oversight Group (NOG) for the REPs, chaired jointly by Minister Robert Troy and Minister Damien English. This grouping includes the Chairpersons and the Programme Managers of the Regional Steering Committees, national level representatives of the enterprise agencies and other relevant bodies, as well as relevant Government Departments. The Group will meet over the lifetime of the new Regional Enterprise Plans.





Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

Strategic Objective 1:

Enable innovation to make the Mid-West a leading digital region

Context and Vision to 2024

Globally, technological change continues at an extraordinary pace, with the COVID-19 pandemic having accelerated the digital evolution as well as identifying new and innovative ways of doing business across all sectors. Digital technologies present enterprise growth opportunities, through efficiency, mobility and new market opportunities, but this rapid change may also challenge some sectors. It is the ambition of this plan to continue to deliver on emerging opportunities while building resilience into the region's enterprise base and its people to mitigate against emerging and unforeseen risks.

This plan identifies a number of emerging sectoral opportunities which are unique to the region and builds on our strengths. The Mid-West has a strong technology base, crossing multiple sectors and supported by extensive research facilities. The region has the capabilities, capacity, infrastructure and ambition to be a leader in emerging technologies such as future mobility, SportsTech, gaming, digital fabrication, augmented / virtual reality and eHealth. Regional strengths in sectors such as advanced manufacturing will continue to be developed, with exciting new collaborations to be launched during the life of the plan. Meanwhile, the regional film sector has shown significant growth in recent years, with innovative projects and initiatives offering a real opportunity for a diverse range of employment options to grow in the region.

The third round of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) has seen Mid-West success with partners including PBC Biomed Ltd, Mincon Group PLC, Modular Automation, Analog Devices and the University of Limerick sharing in €12.8m of the €95m announced nationally. This funding will support cutting-edge research in MedTech, offshore energy and advanced manufacturing. Continued collaboration within the region such as this can lead to the innovative and disruptive ideas required to attract national and international funding and create high-quality employment opportunities.

This objective, which builds on the digital strategies adopted by the local authorities and others across the region, is underpinned by our strong education and training providers. Through this objective regional stakeholders are aiming to address key challenges that the region will face in the future, including the future of work, population growth, scarce resources, traffic and transportation, pollution, increased demand for employment and changes in education delivery models.

This objective aims to position the Mid-West as Ireland's leading digital region implementing and developing novel technologies, building a sustainable knowledge base and engaging citizens and the regional business community in digital transformation, minimising the risk of digital inequalities and augmenting social inclusion.



Actions to 2024

Action 1.1: Strengthen the position of the Mid-West as a national centre for advanced manufacturing.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
IDA Enterprise Ireland Confirm Centre IDEAM Cluster	EXPLORE Engineering Alliance Regional Skills Forum University of Limerick TUS: Midlands Mid-West Industry Partners	Q4, 2023

Rationale:

Manufacturing is the single largest employer in the Mid-West. The Mid-West is home to over 1,700 manufacturing companies, supporting close to 30,000 direct jobs. The manufacturing eco-system in the Mid-West is comprehensive, with world-leading education and research programs and infrastructure to support a diverse industry base of both SMEs and major MNCs.

To sustain and enhance the competitiveness of the Irish manufacturing sector, IDA Ireland is leading on the delivery of the National Advanced Manufacturing Centre (AMC), which it intends to deliver and operationalise by Q1 2022. The AMC is a strategic national priority and aligns with Government's Industry 4.0 (2020-2025) strategy. The AMC will become a national showcase and international exemplar for advanced manufacturing across Ireland's discrete manufacturing base. It shall support manufacturing companies to create value from the deployment of digital technologies and the digitisation of their manufacturing operations, by collaboratively researching and solving defined industry problems at latter stage technology readiness. The AMC will contribute to supporting the retention and creation of jobs in the Irish manufacturing sector and will support the enhancement of Ireland's value proposition for manufacturing investments.

Robotic technologies and connected devices are transforming manufacturing productivity processes and efficiencies. Ireland's SFI research centre for Smart Manufacturing, CONFIRM, is being led from the region, with its new headquarters at UL's Digital District recently completed. The centre provides an array of advanced technology infrastructure and expertise for early-stage R&D activities to support the national manufacturing landscape. In addition, the EI/IDA Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre (PMTc), located at University of Limerick, provides research expertise across the pharmaceutical manufacturing chain, continuous and powder processing, and advanced rapid microanalytical techniques.

The recent addition of the industry driven IDEAM Cluster adds further support to SMEs in the region and beyond, with a particular emphasis on supporting small firms in their digital transformation journey. Already the cluster has shown a significant uptake of its services, with considerable cluster membership already established. Elsewhere, the EXPLORE engineering alliance continues to ensure that a diverse and highly skilled workforce is available to current and future employers through a suite of education and public engagement initiatives.

Action Outcome:

- IDA Advanced Manufacturing Centre completed, launched and operational by Q1, 2022.
- SFI CONFIRM centre renewed for second term, with continued enterprise-led research and innovation projects ongoing.
- 70+ SMEs from the Mid-West and nationally supported on digital transformation journey by IDEAM cluster.



Action 1.2: Development and expansion of advanced mobility technology capabilities at Future Mobility Campus Ireland.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Future Mobility Campus Ireland	CAV Ireland Vehicles of the Future Clare County Council Limerick City and County Council Shannon Group Mid-West Enterprise Plan Programme Manager IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Skyports Avtrain other industry partners	Q4, 2022

Rationale:

Future Mobility Campus Ireland (FMCI) is a not-for-profit organisation that was founded with the purpose of creating and delivering future mobility testbed facilities for stimulating research, development and innovation in the area of Autonomous Connected Electric Shared Vehicles (ACES), including Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV) in Ireland. The testbed is located in Shannon and received REDF funding to support Phase 1 development in 2019.

The vehicle testbed zone is expected to be operational by early 2022 and will be equipped with multiple sensors located throughout the site, along with high accuracy location systems, a data management and control centre, an autonomous parking area, multiple smart and connected junctions and fully sensor equipped test vehicles. Once operational the testbed will enable collaborative R&D projects with industry partners to be delivered, providing an ideal base for emerging enterprises and established firms to test new technology. Recent jobs announcements from the likes of Bosch and Renovo have shown the considerable impact that FMCI and the growing mobility ecosystem is already having on attracting inward investment to the region.

In parallel with their on-road activities FMCI and associated partners are working collectively to bring advanced air mobility to Ireland through the necessary expert advice and physical infrastructure for researching and testing innovations for UAV operations and applications. In May 2021, a partnership between FMCI, Skyports, Avtrain and Shannon Group has been established to work towards launching an operational vertiport at Shannon's FMCI campus in 2022. This partnership will encourage R&D activities and investment in Ireland's Advanced Aerial Mobility (AAM) industry. This will lead to the establishment of Ireland's first drone air taxi service and routine beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) drone operations. These operations will validate state-of-the-art technologies of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and showcase the benefits in Ireland and beyond.

Action Outcome:

- Fully operational testbed for advanced vehicle technologies by Q1, 2022.
- Launching an operational vertiport at Shannon's FMCI campus in 2022.
- Pipeline of collaborative R&D projects with industry partners.



Action 1.3: Create a sustainable Regional Film Industry in the Mid-West.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Regional Film Manager	Innovate Limerick (Film in Limerick) TROY studios Limerick School Art and Design Screen Skills Ireland Screen Guilds Limerick Clare Education Training Board Tipperary Education Training Board Local Enterprise Offices Limerick City and County Council Tipperary County Council Clare County Council	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

Recent years have seen the regional film sector go from strength to strength, with a number of significant productions undertaken across the region, supported by the continued growth of Troy studios and the emergence of successful start-ups such as Odyssey studios and plans for Lisbunny Enterprise Park in Nenagh. The region's Film Manager, Paul C. Ryan, continues to work with stakeholders to realise the economic and job creation potential opportunities that exist in the region. Initiatives like the recent Engine Short Film Scheme and the Engine Docs Scheme – development and production schemes for emerging talent in the Mid-West, aim to support up-and-coming filmmakers and offer the opportunity for emerging local crew to gain real-world experience and receive industry guidance on funded productions.

Crew Base – With the significant success of the industry in the Mid-West, the demand for set-ready 'below-the-line' crew has also increased. Having a sizeable, trained crew base in the region is one of the biggest factors in attracting inward productions to film here. A dedicated crew hub, providing intensive training delivered by industry as well as work placements on set will build the crew base, create new jobs in films and attract further productions and economic impact to the region.

Infrastructure – The success of Troy Studios and blockbuster series such as AppleTV+ 'Foundation' has proven that the Mid-West can attract and house world-class productions. To continue to develop the industry in the region we need to respond to the demand for further build and studio spaces as well as attracting supporting facilities and infrastructure.

Animation – The Irish animation industry has seen huge growth in recent years with half of all production spend each year on animation projects. In the Mid-West and Munster however, the sector is underdeveloped. The opportunity exists to develop the sector in the region, attracting inwards productions and companies and delivering jobs and economic impact. We are working with stakeholders in the region and province to develop industry-training initiatives and to incentivise companies and productions to set up here.

Investment – An important tool in attracting productions to a region is the availability of a regional fund (such as The WRAP fund in the West), which provides investment of up to 5 percent of a production budget to bring inward productions to film locally creating significant economic impact and jobs.

Entrepreneurship – Key to developing film and TV IP in the region is the establishment of a Film Accelerator, which will work with international industry partners to deliver bespoke industry labs with a focus on creating market-ready IP and developing new companies. Partnering with leading film and training labs, the Film Accelerator will fast track talent and support new projects to raise finance and go into production.



Action Outcome:

- An additional 500 people employed across the film and TV sector in the region by 2024.
- **Crew Base** – 440 people trained and placed on film and TV productions.
- **Infrastructure** – Two build / studio spaces and two supporting facilities supported in the region attracting further production activity and economic impact.
- **Animation** – Feasibility report delivered to develop the animation industry in the region.
- **Investment** – A feasibility report delivered on creating a regional fund for film and TV in the region. The creation of a fund that would attract 5 further productions to the Mid-West each year, 500 extra jobs and an extra €7.5m in region spend.
- **Entrepreneurship** – A world class Film Accelerator based in the region, developing IP, leading to new production, job creative and economic impact.

Action 1.4: Collaborations to solve healthcare problems and challenges using digital solutions.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Engine Collaboration Centre	Innovate Limerick University of Limerick Hospitals Group Mid-West Community Healthcare and University of Limerick	Q4, 2023

Rationale:

Healthcare staff in the Mid-West can share their challenges and develop ideas collaboratively to solve these healthcare challenges in the hospital and community settings. Healthcare staff will have the opportunity to visit an Innovation Centre and work with design thinking experts and industry partners to scope out the challenges and find innovative solutions using digital capabilities. The Centre will provide a safe space that designs and creates prototypes that can be evaluated and tested in the healthcare environment. Healthcare staff will brainstorm with colleagues and technology experts and test their ideas leading to real use cases. These can then lead to the development of applications and solutions that will help transform business processes in the hospital and community settings to deliver better outcomes for patients and staff.

The Healthcare Innovation Centre will be based in Innovate Limerick's Engine Collaboration Centre and will allow healthcare and digital partners create new solutions in a collaborative way. The Innovation Centre can also become an independent entity that works closely with the UL Hospitals Group and Mid-West Community Healthcare to provide greater insights on people's health and behaviour that improve the patient experience in the Mid-West of Ireland. As a trusted advisor, the Centre would collaborate closely with University of Limerick Hospitals Group (ULHG) and Mid-West Community Healthcare to develop a data model and provide a team to gather data from healthcare, pharma and ICT providers to gain a better insight into behaviour and challenges. This data would then be mined and analysed to drive greater outcomes with digital solutions.

Action Outcome:

The creation of a Healthcare Innovation Centre based in Innovate Limerick's Engine to:

- Identify and develop innovative projects.
- Develop solutions to challenges brought to the centre.
- Develop prototypes/pilot projects.



Action 1.5: Establish the region as a national leader in the sports-tech and eSports sectors.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
SportsTech Ireland	Limerick City and County Council IDA Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Innovate Limerick Enterprise Ireland TUS: Midlands Mid-West University of Limerick Dogpatch Labs Associated industry partners	Q2, 2023

Rationale:

There are now more than 80 SportsTech companies in Ireland, many of whom are exporting globally. Between 2020 and 2026, the global sports tech market is expected to grow at an impressive compound annual growth rate of about 21 percent to top €35bn, with investment in the sector in Europe exceeding €500m in 2019. The rising adoption of emerging technologies, such as the internet of things (IoT) and data analytics, along with social media integration, across various sports, is expected to drive the market over the forecast period. Recent funding trends in Ireland mirror global trends in venture capital money flowing into sports tech. The sports tech sector has also seen significant growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided a heightened awareness and desire to live a healthy lifestyle.

In 2017 SportsTech Ireland, a privately held not-for-profit, serving the national SportsTech scene was established in the Mid-West Region. The initiative builds connections between commercial bodies, start-ups, entrepreneurs, research facilities and venture capitalists, and seeks to develop sports technology research and business growth throughout Ireland. SportsTech Ireland is led by a dedicated group of industry leaders and has an advisory panel of national and international experts guiding future plans.

SportsTech Ireland's purpose is to represent, connect and grow the sports innovation industry in Ireland. Its role is to serve as a central platform to bring together all the stakeholders within the industry to share ideas and knowledge of how technology is changing the world and business of sport, and to help build a SportsTech value proposition for Ireland which:

- Markets Ireland as a destination for SportsTech foreign direct investment.
- Assists entrepreneurs and indigenous industry to launch and scale.
- Devises and promotes industry talent development initiatives.
- Builds a SportsTech cluster through industry-leading research, community network activities and an innovation hub.

An ambitious new phase for SportsTech Ireland is planned, to include the appointment of a full-time cluster manager, publication of industry research, the opening of a new SportsTech incubator/ accelerator space, and the provision of an accelerator program.

The coming years will also see other significant opportunities for SportsTech firms to align with major events / projects in the region. A €30m digital interactive world rugby experience is on track to open its doors in Limerick City in 2022. Meanwhile preparation is underway to host the Ryder Cup at Adare Manor in 2027, during which the eyes of the sporting world will be on the Mid-West Region.

Action Outcome:

- Appoint SportsTech Community and Cluster Manager – Q1, 2022.
- Launch of new accelerator space in Limerick City – Q1, 2022.
- Rebrand and new website for SportsTech Ireland – Q1, 2022.
- SportsTech Innovators Event – Q2, 2022.
- Ireland's Sports Technology Industry Publication – Q1, 2022.
- Launch of SportsTech Ireland Accelerator Program – Q2, 2022.
- Expansion in cluster membership and activities – Q4, 2024.



Action 1.6: Progress regional data centre projects with an emphasis on innovation and sustainability.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Clare County Council Limerick City and County Council Shannon Foynes Port Company	Tipperary County Council IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan	Q4, 2023

Rationale:

Data centres are vital in a digitalised world, but their relentless consumption of valuable energy resources must be considered in a strategic manner. The rapid digitalisation of the economy is driving exponential growth in the volume of data created, transmitted, used and stored. However, data storage, typically through datacentres requires large quantities of energy. Ireland currently has 70 of these in operation, primarily in the Dublin region, consuming up to 900MW (11 percent of supply). Eirgrid's analysis shows that anticipated growth could lead to datacentres accounting for 27 percent of all electricity demand in Ireland by 2029.

The Mid-West Region has the renewable energy resource, grid infrastructure, and land availability, along with dark fibre connectivity to support data centre projects, serving the needs of data driven enterprises while providing valuable additional national capacity to an industry which is now reaching saturation on the east coast due to limitations of the national energy grid and land availability. Crucially, as part of a twin transition, the region plans to use digital industry to add value to our future energy resource prior to export, providing the maximum benefit to the nation and safeguarding our economic and energy futures.

Shannon Foynes Port Company have received planning permission to create an innovative floating, water-cooled data centre at Limerick Docks in partnership with Nautilus Data Technology. The project, a pilot project for energy efficiency, could create 24 permanent jobs as well as employing 100 people during the construction phase, and will be part of overall redevelopment of facilities at Ted Russell Dock in Limerick. A planning application has been lodged to develop a data centre campus in Ennis, comprising of a vertical farm and six data halls designed on a flexible and modular basis, covering 145 acres or 1.3 million sqft.

Action Outcome:

- Commence construction of first data centre by Q3 2022.
- New data centre technologies employed and showcased.
- Develop regional strategy for co-location of data centres and high-energy industries close to renewable energy resources.



Action 1.7: Innovation in education – inclusive, immersive, enterprise focused education programs

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Regional Skills Forum University of Limerick TUS: Midlands Mid-West	Limerick Clare Education Training Board Tipperary Education Training Board Innovate Limerick Industry Partners	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The Mid-West has a proud record of innovation in education, with progressive initiatives such as the University of Limerick's cooperative education (internship) programme, which is one of the largest of such programmes in the European Union. A number of new undertakings will continue this reputation for innovation in the education sector.

UL @ Work, funded by the Human Capital Initiative (HCI), is a new range of over 19 digital led programmes from the University of Limerick (UL) and co-designed with industry, which enables upskilling and reskilling through combining education and work in areas like; Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics, ICT, industry 4.0, robotics, digital leadership, law and technology and future studies.

Immersive Software Engineering is a new computer science degree where students learn by doing to get an integrated Bachelors/ Masters qualification (level 9) in four years. Students will spend half their time learning on campus in a research-driven paradigm, and the other half of their time in paid residencies, solving problems in cutting-edge companies. UL has already announced partnerships for integrated undergraduate and Masters degrees with over a dozen leading tech companies, including Analog Devices, Stripe, DELL, Zalando, Intercom, Shopify, and Manna Aero.

Coding Careers for Women is a joint initiative between Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum. This pilot initiative offers women a pathway into a career in the tech industry. It combines a 52-week online Diploma in Software Development with a 3-month work-placement, in partnership with the local tech industry. Students have access to live tutor support 24/7, a personal mentor, a learner community and career services to help you gain employment in the sector.

The Digital Collaboration Centre (DCC) is a REDF funded project offering a platform to facilitate further engagement between industry and education providers in the design of new programmes utilising immersive technologies such as AR and VR.

Action Outcome:

- Successful uptake and delivery of innovative new programs.
- Increased delivery of inclusion and diversity focused skills and training initiatives.
- New apprenticeships in emerging sectors such as Immersive Technology.



Strategic Objective 2:

Make the Mid-West Ireland's leading sustainability / low carbon region

Context and Vision to 2024

Climate change represents the single biggest threat to humanity, and can only be addressed by ambition matched by commitment across all aspects of society. The Mid-West can be an international leader in support of reduced CO₂ emissions and can lead in providing a sustainable future for generations that follow.

The Mid-West has always played a crucial role in Ireland's energy network, with transformative projects like Ardnacrusha and Moneypoint providing electricity for the nation and driving Ireland's economic growth throughout the 20th century. Recent years have seen energy generation switch away from reliance on fossil fuels with the Government now committing to delivering 80 percent of Ireland's electricity from renewable sources by 2030. Already, the Mid-West is playing its part, with a large number of wind, solar and hydro energy projects built or in development across the region. Projects such as the bulk storage hydro scheme at Silvermines can provide valuable diversity and redundancy to Ireland's energy system. In particular, the emergence of offshore floating wind as a cost-effective, highly efficient energy source has firmly placed Ireland's Atlantic coastline at the forefront of the global renewable energy opportunity. Regional strengths such as existing grid infrastructure, deep-water port conditions, land for development, and an existing skilled workforce combine to form a compelling case for both public and private investment.

In addition to the generation of green energy, other industry sectors will be required to transition to more resource efficient solutions. The Mid-West can play a leading role in Ireland's 'Just-Transition', where the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind. The region is home to Ireland's National BioEconomy Campus located at Lisheen, Thurles. The campus is a critical piece of infrastructure which will enable diversification of business activities in the agri-food and Marine sectors in the rural economy, attracting and retaining workers and businesses in the region which in turn will drive innovation and investment. The Dairy Processing Technology Centre at University of Limerick and Shannon Applied Biotechnology Centre at TUS: Midlands Mid-West are also supporting agri-food evolution in the region.

Significant projects are also being developed to target energy efficiency in the built environment, while efforts by education and training providers as well as the Local Enterprise Offices are aiming to develop a culture of sustainability across the wider business community. The region's local authorities are also investigating and developing plans for Decarbonising Zones, in accordance with the Government's Climate Action Plan 2021. These zones will be used to develop low carbon town projects for future funding calls and to progress demonstrator projects harnessing a range of new technologies and initiatives.

The Mid-West will play our part in the international climate action movement by developing a low-carbon region, with the scaling of renewable energy production, improved energy efficiency across all sectors, and circular economy as the building blocks to support this vision.



Actions to 2024

Action 2.1: The Atlantic Green Digital Basin – decarbonising industry by developing the Shannon Estuary as a renewable energy hub.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Shannon Foynes Port Company Limerick City and County Council Clare County Council Tipperary County Council	Collaborators from other Atlantic coast regions Public Sector Agencies Industry partners	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The emergence of offshore floating wind as a cost-effective and highly efficient renewable energy source has firmly placed Ireland's Atlantic coastline at the forefront of the global energy revolution. Recent studies identify the Shannon Estuary as the ideal location from which to deliver on a world leading energy resource of up to 70GW in coming decades to complement the region's existing and planned onshore wind and solar energy projects. The Mid-West/Shannon Estuary Region has strategic advantages when it comes to delivering this resource, with existing grid infrastructure at Moneypoint and Tarbert (in North Kerry), ideal deep-water port conditions within the Shannon Estuary, land for development, and an existing skilled workforce and innovation ecosystem.

Major projects are already being investigated for locations adjacent to the Estuary, including Green Atlantic at Moneypoint (a 1.4GW+ project by ESB), Western Star (a 1.1GW+ project by Simply Blue and Shell) and Clarus (a 1GW project by DP Energy and Iberdrola). A number of other projects, offering multiples of this capacity, are known to be in the early stages of pre-planning. Stakeholders from across the region are supporting efforts to deliver on the ambition to transform the Shannon estuary into a renewable energy hub.

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), the region's local authorities, education and training providers, and others, are committed to working together to attract major offshore floating wind projects to the region. SFPC's Offshore Wind Potential Study found that, by using conservative assumptions, that €12bn in supply chain investment alone could be made in the Shannon Estuary by 2050, leading to "huge" job growth.

As part of the regional Atlantic Green Digital Basin strategy, we aim to develop a strategy that couples the generation of renewable energy, attracting supply chain jobs, and overall industrial growth by bringing the users of renewable energy, such as high-tech firms, advanced manufacturing and data centres, physically close to the energy source. This approach will minimise pressure on the national grid and in turn ensure maximum value-add from our sovereign natural resources for the national economy. For companies and institutions invested in digitalisation, our region has unique advantages including green energy, educated workforce and development lands, from which to build a long-term sustainable future.

Action Outcome:

- Supply Chain Study to promote opportunities to region's SMEs and MNCs – Q3, 2022.
- Atlantic Green Digital Basin – Industrial development strategy for Estuary and Mid-West Regions – looking at direct and indirect job opportunities and economic value – Q4, 2022.
- Engaging in national policy consultations to address challenges including Energy Route to Market and Export Opportunity strategies, development of a new Offshore Consenting and Planning Regime, forward planning for electricity grid, and the scheduling of Commercial Auctions for Offshore Floating Wind.



Action 2.2: Build regional research, education and training capacity for emerging renewable energy opportunities.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Shannon Foynes Port Company Limerick City and County Council Clare County Council Tipperary County Council	Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Limerick and Clare ETB Griffith College Future Mobility Campus Ireland and others	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The Mid-West Region has over 25,000 third level students across a number of locations, with significant academic expertise and infrastructure present. As the climate emergency worsens, it is imperative that academic stakeholders in the region support and prepare for a greener future, by providing thought leadership and enabling the development of the leaders of tomorrow.

The establishment of the Mid-West Renewable Energy Cluster is an initiative jointly undertaken by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, Shannon Foynes Port Company and a comprehensive list of research, education and training providers in the region to build capacity to support renewable energy projects. The cluster will contain two subgroups, each made up of representatives from across the region: (1) the Mid-West Renewable Energy Education and Training Working Group (ETWG), (2) the Mid-West Renewable Energy Research Working Group (RWG).

The ETWG will be tasked with driving and supporting a growing talent pipeline in skill areas of emerging talent need. The establishment of the group can provide assurance to potential investors in the region that the education and training sector in the region is responsive to their skills requirements and as a basis for engaging investors to understand their skills requirements.

The RWG will be tasked with identifying and delivering on research opportunities aligned with renewable energy generation projects and the more general decarbonisation goals of society. This group can help respond to industry technical challenges and support the development of national and international collaboration to assist the pursuit of common climate goals and grand challenges.

Action Outcome:

ETWG outcomes:

- forecast and report the future education and training required for floating offshore wind energy and hydrogen production activities in the Mid-West.
- act as contact points for prospective employers.
- develop new programs, perform outreach and public engagement to deliver pipeline of human resources to support new projects.

RWG goals:

- supporting industry in the development of new and innovative solutions to renewable energy challenges.
- providing long-term perspective / guidance for the future of the national energy system.
- attracting national and international funding for research activities aligned with renewable energy generation projects and the more general decarbonisation goals of society.



Action 2.3: Grow circular bioeconomy capacity, leveraging the National Bioeconomy Campus.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Irish Bioeconomy Foundation	Tipperary County Council Centenary Co Op BiOrbic Amber Shannon ABC Teagasc MTL DPTC Glanbia CMP Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland InterTradelreland Industry Partners and members and partners of IBF	Pilot Scale Facility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 – Q1 2022 • Phase 2 – Q4 2022. Expansion of National and European Bioeconomy Network – by Q4, 2024.

Rationale:

The Irish Bioeconomy Foundation (IBF) has established a significant National and European Network in the Circular Bioeconomy through ongoing projects funded by Enterprise Ireland, InterTradelreland and the EU BioBased Industries Joint Undertaking (BBIJU) Horizon 2020 projects. IBF will continue to deliver and expand these projects and its network, which will be accelerated with the commencement of the development of the National Bioeconomy Piloting and Innovation facilities, which was granted €4.6m under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund in December 2017 and subsequently extended to March 2023.

According to the latest 2020 report from the European Commission's Knowledge Centre for Bioeconomy on Future transitions for the Bioeconomy towards Sustainable Development and a Climate-Neutral Economy – 'A circular, sustainable bioeconomy can be a core instrument for the Green Deal, making the EU more sustainable and competitive.

The National Bioeconomy Pilot Scale facility will be a lynchpin that provides an integrated pathway between vitally important, but currently disparate elements in a burgeoning Irish bioeconomy ecosystem. It will thus 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 and 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, in turn driving 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.

Action Outcome:

- Complete construction on the National facility at Lisheen, Thurles.
- 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.
- Delivery of National and European Bioeconomy Projects.
- Expansion of Bioeconomy Network on a National and International level.



Action 2.4: Develop a centre of excellence for sustainable energy.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Tipperary County Council	Tipperary Energy Agency North Tipperary Development Company TUS: Midlands Mid-West Community Power and Siga Limited	Q4,2024

Rationale:

This project will develop a Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy which will be the anchor and catalyst for the redevelopment of the Martyr's Road Regeneration Quarter in Nenagh. The Centre of Excellence will host a range of public agencies working collaboratively to deliver innovation solutions from training and development, to new cutting-edge research on technologies, to incubating low-carbon social enterprises.

The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy will be an exemplar in energy positive and carbon neutral design. It will be the national destination of learning and education for sustainable energy technologies, hosting over 130 social and sustainable energy professionals and researchers, in a state of the art 'demonstrator' building, and will be a pilot centre for innovation in active and smart grid technology.

The centre will be Ireland's very first Net Zero Embodied Carbon Building which will produce more energy than it uses. Designed to LEED Platinum standard, it will provide a collaborative working environment in a sustainably designed building and will act as a demonstrator for how buildings can contribute to the energy transition. The project will also deliver public infrastructure, civic spaces and public realm enhancement and will consolidate the linkages to the town centre and unlock the potential for the overall area.

Action Outcome:

- Completion of Ireland's very first Net Zero Embodied Carbon Building which will produce more energy than it uses.
- Creation of 130 jobs for social and sustainable energy professionals and researchers.
- Pilot / Demonstration projects underway in sustainable energy technologies.



Action 2.5: Deliver initiatives and projects to promote sustainability in the built environment.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
TUS: Midlands Mid-West, Limerick City and County Council, Tipperary County Council, Limerick City and County Council, Limerick and Clare ETB	DASBE Consortium, +CityXChange Consortium, Public Sector Partners, Private Sector Partners	Q4,2024

Rationale:

The region will continue to lead the way in efforts to promote sustainability in the built environment, whether through new build construction or through retrofit of existing buildings. Examples of the significant projects which will be delivered during the lifetime of the plan are given below, with others in development.

DASBE Project: The Digital Academy for Sustainable Built Environment (DASBE) project is funded under the HEA Human Capital Initiative (HCI) with TUS: Midlands Mid-West as its leading partner. The project will address changes in the construction sector as a result of new policies, regulations, green construction, circular economy and digital skills. The project provides rapid design, development and deployment of education and training programmes to construction workers and professionals using a wide variety of on-line, blended and face to face approaches. It will focus on provision of programmes which are flexible and responsive to the needs of the building sector.

+CityXChange: Limerick City and County Council is part of a pan-European project looking into new ways of helping to reduce energy consumption while maintaining the characteristic Georgian heritage of Limerick city centre. The project will develop solutions for existing Georgian buildings to help generate more energy than they consume and allow for the excess energy to be returned to the grid. Several buildings forming a Positive Energy Block, will be the first to become part of a new renewable energy management structure which will allow for the two-way flow of energy.

NZEB Centre of Excellence: Limerick Clare ETB have received funding to deliver a retrofitting centre of excellence located at LEDP. The centre will provide the very highest standards of skills training and qualifications to enable improved energy efficiency practices to be implemented on building retrofits and new builds.

Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy: The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Energy in Nenagh will be Ireland's very first New Zero Embodied Carbon Building. Designed to LEED Platinum standard, it will provide a collaborative working environment in a sustainably designed building and will act as a demonstrator for how buildings can contribute to the energy transition.

Action Outcome:

- Develop a collaborative ecosystem of education and training courses working alongside innovative employers and practitioners to deliver best-in-class real world examples of sustainable construction / energy efficient built environment.



Action 2.6: Upskilling of small businesses for the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Local Enterprise Offices	Enterprise Ireland Education and Training Boards	Q4,2024

Rationale:

With climate change, changing regulations, rising resource costs and changing customer expectations, adopting a more eco-friendly approach is crucial for businesses of all sizes.

There are a number of initiatives planned to help small businesses to embrace and benefit from low carbon, resource efficient practices. Developing a 'greener' policy can offer many benefits to small business, including: increased cost savings, improved resource efficiency, reduced environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, opportunities for higher and additional value on products and services, increased access to customers, improved corporate image and increased resilience to climate change impacts.

The Local Enterprise Offices have recently launched their 'Green for Micro' programme – an initiative to help prepare small businesses for the low carbon, more resource efficient economy of the future.

The Mid-West Regional Skills Forum has created and piloted the DigiEco programme, which has now been adopted nationally in partnership with Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) and Limerick Clare ETB. This training starts small enterprises on a green digital pathway, helping them to implement new work processes that contribute towards greener and cleaner working environments.

The Regional Enterprise Plan stakeholders will endeavour to grow these green digital programs and support the development of additional programs to ensure a transition to low carbon business practices across all levels of enterprise in the region.

Action Outcome:

- Increase the number of LEO companies in the region participating in Green for Micro scheme.
- Continue to develop and grow the DigiEco scheme through the Regional Skills Forum in collaboration with regional agencies.



Strategic Objective 3:

Enable Enterprise growth in regional towns and rural areas

Context and Vision to 2024

The Mid-West Region is a predominantly rural region, with large parts of the counties of Clare, Tipperary and Limerick having below average population density. The CSO, in its Urban and Rural Life in Ireland, 2019 report indicated that 60 percent of Clare residents, 58 percent of Tipperary residents and 47 percent of Limerick residents lived in rural areas compared with a national average of 37 percent. Many of the region's rural areas and smaller regional towns have been adversely affected in recent decades as the trend of urbanisation has taken hold. This trend has resulted in an ageing population and higher risk of poverty in rural areas, which is magnified by the centralisation of most services, facilities, and job opportunities. The advent of the remote working culture (accelerated by the pandemic), along with the emergence of new enterprise opportunities and ecommerce has provided a welcome lifeline to Ireland's rural communities.

The Government's new 'Our Rural Future' strategy provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over the next five years. Aligned with this strategy is the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), which is a commitment of €1bn by Government to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027 to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in our regional towns and villages. This Plan's objective is complementary to the activities of the region's local authorities – who are each actively developing a number of projects in rural areas with support from the RRDF and other funding mechanisms.

A strategic objective of this Plan, aligned with national policy, is to have more people working in rural parts of the Mid-West, with access to more employment opportunities, and a resulting uplift to regional towns in particular. This ambition of regional employment can be delivered by creating an environment that supports entrepreneurship and enterprise growth in rural areas, by improved connectivity of regional towns, and by providing better support systems and facilities for small enterprise and remote workers.

This objective aims to create a balanced region, where both urban and rural communities can work together to complement each other, and grow opportunities for employment and enterprise development for all citizens throughout the region. We aim to identify synergies and strengths and create solutions for businesses of all sizes to allow them to locate teams throughout the Mid-West, enabling a higher quality of life through reduced commute times, lower cost of living and house prices, and vibrant regional communities.



Actions to 2024

Action 3.1: Create an efficient and sustainable regional network of enterprise centres and remote working eHubs.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Clare County Council Innovate Limerick Tipperary County Council Limerick City and County Council	LEO network Enterprise Ireland Local Development Companies University of Limerick TUS: Midlands Mid-West Western Development Commission Limerick Clare Education Training Board Tipperary Education Training Board	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

This action seeks to continue the delivery of co-working Smart e-Hub spaces, bringing talent and facilities together and building on the region's value proposition as a location of choice to live and work. This initiative will deliver new opportunities, future proofing the Mid-West Region by growing the number of remote workers and attracting relocation to the region. This action aligns with the national strategy for rural development: 'Our Rural Future', with significant investment allocated for remote working hubs and enterprise. It will complement work already undertaken by local authorities and existing hubs.

Since 2018, nine digital hubs have been opened in Clare, as part of the DigiClare initiative. These are located at Ennis, Kilrush, Miltown Malbay, Feakle, Ennistymon, Cross, Kilkee, Corofin and Sixmilebridge. Plans are advancing for the creation of digital hubs in Newmarket-on-Fergus and Flagmount. A prospectus detailing all information regarding these locations and facilities was launched in August 2021. A marketing campaign for DigiClare that will be international, national and local will also be launched shortly.

In Limerick, the ENGINE Hubs network now consists of locations at Limerick city centre, Newcastle West, Croom, Kilfinane, and Abbeyfeale. In addition, plans are underway to repurpose existing buildings in Askeaton, Bruff, Kilmallock, Kantoher, Rathkeale and Bruree to provide an enterprise mix that includes co-working and meeting spaces and small business units.

An additional new enterprise centre/park in Newcastle West is also being considered, to facilitate retaining indigenous entrepreneurs in the engineering, food and technology sectors in their local community thus creating local jobs and strengthening the economic base in the town.

The new Tipperary town innovation centre will be launched in Q1, 2022, and will have services linked to the wider ENGINE network. Elsewhere Tipperary is served by the Questum Acceleration Centre in Clonmel, Thurles Community Enterprise Centre, Stable Lane Digital Hub in Carrick-on-Suir, and the Green Enterprise Centre in Cloughjordan. There are also plans to develop a new Digital Hub in Nenagh to provide flexible working space, with the facilities required for start-ups and SMEs, remote workers, indigenous companies, and companies looking for a second landing site. Further expansions are also planned at Questum, Clonmel, Thurles Enterprise Centre and in Carrick-on-Suir.

Going forward, smaller hubs will continue to be located in a number of strategic regional towns and will play an integral role in revitalising towns and villages and supporting growth across the region's rurally based population. For larger towns, enterprise centres with a full suite of services can support balanced regional development by attracting multi-national corporations to locate in regional centres, particularly as "landing space" / "second site" locations in Ireland.

Action Outcome:

- International marketing campaign for DigiClare – Q1, 2022.
- Launch of Tipperary Innovation Engine – Q1, 2022.
- Expansion of DigiClare range of eHubs – Q4, 2022.
- Expansion of ENGINE network of e-Hubs and open e-Hubs at 4 new locations – Q4, 2023.
- Improved collaboration across new and existing centres to drive greater synergies through the adoption of shared services such as booking systems, training, etc. to enable efficiency and long-term sustainability.



Action 3.2: Undertake a skills mapping exercise to identify employment trends and needs across the region.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Clare County Council	Limerick City and County Council Tipperary County Council Mid-West Enterprise Plan Manager Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Industry partners	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The Mid-West Region has many advantages for those seeking an alternative to city living, with affordability of living, proximity to family and friends, and outdoor amenities high amongst them. However, there is often a disconnect between having the right jobs available, in the right locations, at the right time. With the increasing mobility and greater connectivity afforded by the internet, companies have found that for hiring decisions, location no longer is the decisive factor in attracting great talent. Instead, availability of talent increasingly dictates choice of location.

Locating and gathering information about an area's talent remains a major challenge. The State's data needs have evolved beyond conventional census data, making it increasingly difficult to deliver the granular, comprehensive and timely information needed to attract investors. A skills mapping exercise can show the relative scarcity or abundance of various skills within the region.

For example, a skills mapping exercise can: help companies target the right workforce and take full advantage of an individual's academic and professional background, allow universities to predict and refine their talent acquisition strategies by offering predictive insights into incoming talent and gaps. It can also provide local authorities a headcount showing the areas where talent resides, and to identify talent that needs to be tapped, and show the diversity of talent, and provide a degree of knowledge about talent in the state/county that will attract businesses to relocate to their regions.

In Q2 of 2021 Clare County Council launched a new initiative in partnership with technology company, Abodoo, aimed at mapping the talent and skills of those living and working in the county. The findings of this exercise, and lessons learned will inform other counties in the region who may consider similar studies.

Action Outcome:

- Skills mapping exercise undertaken by Clare County Council – Q1, 2022.
- Other counties to consider skills mapping based on success of trial in Clare, with aggregation of results to provide regional insight into skill gaps versus talent needs of industry.



Action 3.3: Support the regional agri-food sector through the development of food hubs.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Innovate Limerick	Local Enterprise Offices Limerick Clare ETB Tipperary ETB Local Authorities Industry Partners	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The Agri-food sector makes a large contribution to the economy of the Mid-West Region. A major new decade-long and pioneering strategy for Ireland's food and drinks sector, *"Food Vision 2030 – A World Leader in Sustainable Food Systems"* was launched in 2021. This ambitious and innovative roadmap for the agri-food sector aims to increase agri-food exports from €14bn to €21bn by 2030 – further enhancing Ireland's position as global leader in safe, sustainable agri-food exports.

Easy-to-access food grade facilities will be an enabler to the establishment and growth potential of artisan food producers who struggle with the capital requirements of setting up a suitable production facility of their own that meets the rigorous health and safety standards required. The food hub concept provides time-share or affordable rental access to value added production facilities and the opportunity to start and expand specialty food and catering businesses without the prohibitive cost.

Projects already operational or in development in the Mid-West Region include: The North Tipperary Food Centre in Newport, a food hub at the Milk Market in Limerick City, Tradaree Food Hub in Newmarket on Fergus, Ballyhoura Food Centre in Hospital, and the Bruree Food Unit, a 5,000 sqft enterprise centre dedicated to food manufacturing and research and development. A Feasibility Study has also been completed for a Food Centre of Excellence at Rockwell College in Tipperary.

Elsewhere, LCETBs Hospitality Education and Training Centre provide skills training with QQI accredited programmes in Culinary and Front of House Hospitality Skills, providing the necessary skills and knowledge including essential food safety skills, complimentary studies, HACCP training.

These projects and others identified in the coming years will act as incubators for emerging producers of high-quality food from the Mid-West.

Action Outcome:

- Establish a regional stakeholder forum to highlight and develop the food sector.
- Develop food hub facilities to support new food enterprises.
- Deliver skills and training in response to the needs of food entrepreneurs and industry.
- Seek funding to appoint a regional food officer to drive and coordinate the development of food hubs, farmers' markets and training opportunities.



Action 3.4: Increase through digitalisation the visibility of the region's tourism offerings.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Fáilte Ireland	Industry Partners Local Authorities Public Sector Partners	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

Ireland's Mid-West Region benefits annually from an influx of foreign and domestic visitors with this market proving particularly important for the region's tourism and hospitality sectors. Prior to the pandemic, the region benefited from approximately 1.4 million overseas visitors each year, and over 900,000 domestic tourists, which when combined contributed over €600m annually to the regional economy.

In recent years significant efforts have been made to enhance the visitor experience to the region, with initiatives such as: 'Wild Atlantic Way', 'Destination Lough Derg', 'Shannon Estuary Way', 'Munster Vales', 'Cruise Shannon Estuary', 'Burren Food Trail', 'Butler Trail', 'Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City', 'Suir Blueway', and 'Limerick Greenway' all adding to the already strong portfolio of reasons to visit and stay in the region.

In 2020, Fáilte Ireland commissioned a detailed national audit of 1350+ attractions and activity providers and uncovered significant market failures. The digital presence and eCommerce capabilities of market participants lag behind international competitors and indeed our own domestic accommodation sector. This has affected businesses' ability to respond to COVID-19 and likely affected them in terms of lost sales as consumers cannot easily discover their products, cannot book them and cannot pay for the experience online.

In response, Fáilte Ireland has launched a new 'Digital that Delivers' programme to support the digital transformation of the Irish visitor experiences sector, enabling them to respond better and address the needs and expectations of today's visitors — both domestic and international. This programme provides practical, technical and financial support to enable them to generate operational efficiency and value-add benefits from technology. The benefits will include: securing direct bookings through their own websites, distributing products via third party channels, targeting the consumer at key stages on their path to purchase, enhancing their own websites and digital marketing content and evaluating and optimising their digital channel performance.

Action Outcome:

- Support the uptake of 'Digital that Delivers' program.
- Demonstrable digital transformation of the visitor experiences sector in the region.
- Review post- COVID tourism industry metrics and identify recovery measures as needed.



Action 3.5: Build on the region's equine heritage to develop equine tourism and enterprise products.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Tipperary County Council	Coolmore Stud Horse Racing Ireland and Fáilte Ireland	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The Mid-West has an international reputation for equine excellence and this action aims to establish this as a consideration for visitors to the region from abroad and for those staycationing. There are 2 major equine concepts: Tipperary Equine World Experience, and Tipperary Racecourse Development.

Tipperary Equine World Experience: A new Tipperary horse park, home to the largest collection of native horse breeds in the country. It will promote and celebrate every aspect of equine culture in a publicly accessible way (with fun and learning at the heart of the experience). Fethard is home to both the Coolmore stud and the new interactive attraction Fethard Horse Country Experience in the centre of the town. The aim is to elongate visitors' stay, increase expenditure locally and heighten the experience, creating something unique in Ireland. Suggested content that visitors will enjoy include: A thoroughbred centre – a training centre for future champions, an equine vet base where best practice animal care is openly demonstrated to visitors, an international Museum of the Horse and the Breeding Dynasty of Thoroughbreds, and working horse farm tours (include tours of nearby horse farms).

Tipperary Racecourse Development: Horse Racing Ireland have forecast that by 2022, Tipperary Racecourse will be the location for the second all-weather track in the country. This multi-million euro investment will have a considerable impact on the local and county economy. Tipperary town task force are planning to build on that investment by creating a tourism product at Limerick Junction that would be open 52 weeks of the year and include water sports, food-centre, access to behind the scenes of the horse industry including access to horses for disabilities, and a greenway linking the racecourse to Tipperary Town.

Action Outcome:

- Progress the Tipperary Equine World Experience project as a publicly accessible equine experience.
- All-weather racetrack at Tipperary Town to act as driver of redevelopment at Tipperary Racecourse – Q4,2022.
- Progress the Tipperary Racecourse Development as a modern and commercially progressive sporting tourism attraction in Tipperary town.



Strategic Objective 4:

Initiatives to support SME, Start-ups and Microbusiness

Context and Vision to 2024

SMEs and microbusiness firms (firms employing less than 250 people), dominate the Irish economic landscape. In overall terms, they account for 99.8 percent of the total number of business enterprises in the private business economy; they employ over one million people, accounting for 68.4 percent of total employment in the private business economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented attack on previously healthy small and medium sized businesses, with those in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and retail being hit particularly hard. The willingness of small businesses in these and other sectors to accept lockdown measures, with their significant business impacts, was an act of solidarity to protect the wellbeing of everyone. We must reciprocate that solidarity to the SMEs and their owners by acknowledging their importance to the economic and social fabric of the region.

The SME sector played a very important role in pulling the economy out of the labour market crisis in 2012, and with proper support and recognition, it will play a very important role in pulling the economy out of the COVID-19 crisis. Between 2012 and 2017, firms employing less than 250 employees, delivered employment growth of 21.6 percent, accounting for 188,795 extra employees.

It is vital that a strong indigenous enterprise sector is developed and nurtured so that it can play an increasingly important role in firstly rebuilding the Irish economy post COVID-19, and secondly in helping to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the Irish economic model. Going forward, the importance of Ireland's Experience Economy, encompassing sectors such as hospitality, retail, travel, food, drink, tourism, entertainment, technology, events and organisations in the arts, cultural, sporting and heritage sectors, will need improved recognition and support to build broad national resilience to future shocks.

This objective aims to deliver initiatives to support all forms of SMEs, start-ups and microbusiness in order to develop and nurture a strong indigenous enterprise sector thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Irish economic model.



Actions to 2024

Action 4.1: Develop existing and new industry clusters in strategic sectors.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan	Enterprise Ireland EAG Group IDEAM Cluster LINC Engineering Cluster SportsTech Ireland Cluster Shannon ABC Cluster Irish Aviation Services Centre Social Impact Ireland LEO Network	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The Mid-West Region will continue to support industry-led groups to maximise the benefits of collaborative opportunities. Collaborating with other companies provides the opportunity to access customers, research facilities, technical knowledge and markets that would be outside the capability or scope of most small businesses working alone.

The benefits to companies from involving themselves in industry-led clustering activities include: increased productivity and company income, increased market share, increased innovation and knowledge transfer and enhanced capability.

The Mid-West Region hosts/co-hosts a growing number of successful industry clusters, such as:

- Emerald Aero (a national cluster supporting aviation supply chain industries),
- IDEAM (the national industry cluster for smart manufacturing and digital engineering),
- SportsTech Ireland (a national cluster for Sports Innovation and Technology),
- LINC Engineering Network (a regional network of Engineering firms in East/West Limerick and North Cork),
- Irish Aviation Services Centre (a cluster focused on growing aviation and aerospace firms),
- Social Impact Ireland (a cluster supporting a diverse range of social enterprises),
- Irish BioEconomy Foundation (a national BioEconomy association and innovation cluster)

As part of the Government's new 'Our Rural Future' policy for rural development a new Clustering Policy and Framework will be established to strengthen the links between SMEs, multinational corporations and the third-level sector in the regions. Through cluster development a more robust, sustainable and innovative ecosystem of SMEs can be built to support regional capacity growth.

This action will provide positive impacts across all five of the strategic objectives. Cluster development will lead to the promotion of innovation, digital advancement, skills development, etc. Some of the clusters will specifically target sustainable practices, while others are focused on social impact. Most of the clusters in the region are national clusters, catering for partners across Ireland.

Action Outcome:

- Engage with and inform National Clustering policy, with emphasis on regional context – Q2, 2022.
- 25 percent (minimum) growth target for membership numbers at existing clusters – Q4, 2024.
- Development of new clusters to support strategic sectors – Q4, 2024.
- Deliver knowledge sharing forum between clusters, to identify best practice, collaboration opportunities, funding opportunities and share common challenges – Q4, 2022.



Action 4.2: Increase the numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Limerick Clare Education Training Board Tipperary Education Training Board Regional Skillnets	SOLAS University of Limerick TUS: Midlands Mid-West Mary Immaculate College LEO network Industry Partners Local Authorities Public Sector Agencies EXPLORE Alliance IDEAM Cluster	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

Apprenticeship is a statutory based programme of structured education and training, which formally combines learning in the workplace with learning in an education or training centre. The positive impact of learning which is closely linked to the workplace is well recognised, providing benefits for learners, employers and society as a whole. Completion of an apprenticeship prepares the participant for a specific occupation and leads to a qualification recognised under the National Framework of Qualifications at any level from Level 5 upwards to Level 10. For the employer engagement with an apprenticeship programme provides access to high quality and motivated employees who retain access to ongoing learning and development throughout the period of their programme.

With the release of the new 'Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2021 – 2025', the Government aims to significantly increase the footprint of apprenticeship within the education landscape, ensuring that apprenticeships are open and accessible and are seen as a viable and exciting path to skills and a qualification. The route to expansion of apprenticeship lies in attracting and retaining employers who recognise the value that an apprentice can bring to their organisation. An ambitious national target of 10,000 new apprentice registrations per annum by 2025 underlines the Government's commitment to reforming the position of apprenticeship in the wider education and training sector.

To increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships in the Mid-West Region a number of initiatives will continue to grow including the annual 'Apprenticeship and Traineeship' showcase and the 'Explore Engineering' showcase.

Utilising existing industry clusters in the Mid-West, new programmes such as the new Level 8 Honours Degree Cyber Security Practitioner Apprenticeship (developed by UL in collaboration with Limerick for IT industry network and the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum) are being designed to capture emerging skill needs. Work with these clusters, including Explore Engineering, IDEAM and employer organisations including IBEC will continue, with the ambition of delivering new apprenticeship programmes in the region.

The Traineeship model provides employers and ETBs with the agility to respond to emerging skill needs in partnership with employers. New Traineeships in Logistics, Construction, Manufacturing, and others are currently in design in partnership with Limerick Clare ETB, Regional Skills Forum and industry to create new talent pipelines for employers.

Action Outcome:

- Continue to develop new apprenticeship programs, and grow existing programs.
- Increase the number of new apprenticeships per annum in the region by 2025.
- Identify apprenticeships and traineeships opportunities through the annual 'Apprenticeship and Traineeship' showcase and the 'Explore Engineering' showcase.
- Engage local employers to consider their inclusion in the apprenticeship programme.



Action 4.3: Expand the EXPLORE Engineering Alliance.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board TUS: Midlands Mid-West University of Limerick	Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Industry Partners	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

There are 23,200 people employed in the Mid-West engineering sector across 1,353 active companies, with the vast majority of these firms having 50 or less employees. Explore Engineering, formerly known as Limerick for Engineering, is an industry led initiative that has support of the education and training providers in the region, enabling a vital alliance between the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, TUS: Midlands Mid-West and University of Limerick. These institutions collectively produce talented graduates and apprentices that continue to fill the skills gap that exists within the STEM sector in the Mid-West Region. Explore Engineering works with education and training providers to ensure that there are pathways for everyone to enter the engineering sector.

The recently rebranded entity now covers the entire Mid-West Region of Ireland. The primary goal of Explore Engineering is to increase the quality and quantity of engineering talent (apprentices, technicians and engineers) available in the region. Explore Engineering has a particular focus on encouraging female students to enter the predominantly male-occupied engineering sector.

For the past 6 years, Explore Engineering has hosted an annual showcase event, where industry comes together to showcase their leading-edge technology and provide a unique experience for students, teachers, parents and others to gain an insight into the various worlds of engineering.

Action Outcome:

- Drive outreach and inclusion initiatives that align with the EXPLORE motto that "Engineering is for Everyone".
- Relaunch the Engineering Showcase, bringing together regional educational institutions, multinational companies, SMEs and students.
- The development of new flexible learning programmes reflecting new skill needs to assist industry upskill employees to take on new job tasks.



Action 4.4: Deliver management and financial training and upskilling Initiatives.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Public Sector Education and Training Providers'	University of Limerick Regional Skills Forum Enterprise Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Limerick and Clare ETB Tipperary ETB	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

Small businesses are more dependent than larger firms are on their internal financial resources and consistent cash flow, both to invest and to cover their recurrent costs such as the compensation of their employees. These challenges make SMEs more vulnerable to economic downturns and drops in revenues than larger firms. This vulnerability is even more pronounced for micro firms that can only rely on bank financing or a limited number of alternative sources of finance. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted this economic risk with emergency state intervention required to sustain small and micro- businesses during a number of lockdowns.

It is critical that we support the filling of gaps in the skillsets of our small and micro-business owners. Many have limited formal training in financial management, accounting, project and corporate finance and the management skills required to grow and sustain a business in a resilient fashion. The plan aims to implement and promote measures that ensure small business build up financial reserves over time to survive future shocks and reduce reliance on emergency state supports.

The delivery of micro-credential type courses, utilising short and focused modular courses can provide greater flexibility to those wishing to gain important skills without affecting productivity for their companies. Modules are stand-alone so that participants can gain skills and put them into practice immediately in the workplace. Some modules are also accredited in such a way as to provide building blocks to a full qualification should the student so wish. These courses align with Enterprise Ireland strategy to maximise company survival through targeted financial and advisory measures, and drive efficiency and productivity through existing and new financial and advisory supports.

Action Outcome:

- Establish an SME culture of long-term planning, financial resilience and continuous development.
- Deliver innovative micro-credential and short training courses to support small business owners to build management knowledge in a flexible manner.
- Support SME companies through existing and new financial and advisory supports (incl. Lean, Competitiveness and Innovation funding).
- Host SME Upskilling events in collaboration with stakeholders and business representative associations so as to increase awareness on the range of Government funded talent development supports.



Action 4.5: Build an ecosystem for start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Local Enterprise Offices Enterprise Ireland	Innovate Limerick TUS: Midlands Mid-West University of Limerick Mary Immaculate College	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

Entrepreneurship is a uniquely powerful mechanism for economic and social development, generating incomes and jobs while enabling and enriching individuals and communities. The 2020 GEM report on Entrepreneurship in Ireland indicated that over 3,000 people started a new business every month in Ireland in 2019 – the highest ever rate of early-stage entrepreneurial activity. Across the OECD Ireland ranks 10th in terms of early-stage entrepreneurs and 4th in Europe. Despite this, the level of informal investors in Ireland has remained low for many years.

The Nexus Innovation Centre at University of Limerick, the Hartnett Enterprise Centre at TUS: Midlands Mid-West (which hosts the Enterprise Ireland New Frontiers programme), as well as the LEOs and Enterprise Ireland each facilitate the transition from education, research and employment to start-up success by assisting clients in a number of complimentary areas: research commercialisation, early-stage enterprise start-up and internationalisation. In addition, Start-up Grind Limerick is part of the largest global independent start-up community, actively educating, inspiring, and connecting more than 2,000,000 entrepreneurs in over 600 chapters.

As part of its Liveable Limerick City Initiative, Limerick City and County Council propose to develop an acceleration centre for scaling enterprise, as part of an innovation campus at ENGINE within the City Centre to attract innovative companies and start-ups, accelerators and other related entities. This campus, including the REDF funded Digital Collaboration Centre and a Film skills academy will create a dense cluster of innovators and entrepreneurs collaborating.

Of particular interest in the Mid-West is the development of entrepreneurial skills for young people. Initiatives such as Empower Summer Camps, which are facilitated by TUS: Midlands Mid-West and Mary Immaculate College are designed to help young people from the Mid-West develop and grow their innovative, entrepreneurial, and creative skills. This crucial need will also be addressed by enCentre, a proposed pilot co-working space in a school environment to nurture start-ups, promoting entrepreneurial spirit and providing facilities for sharing of ideas, skills and resources.

Action Outcome:

- Deliver Accelerator Centre as part of innovation Campus at Engine.
- Develop a mechanism to promote venture capital investment in regional High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs).
- Further develop Enterprise Ireland's Female Entrepreneurship Strategy.
- New initiatives and infrastructure to promote entrepreneurship in schools.



Action 4.6: Deliver R&D, competitiveness and internationalisation initiatives to support export sales growth in SMEs.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Enterprise Ireland	Local Enterprise Offices SME companies	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

Mid-West enterprises, regardless of size, must respond to post-pandemic impacts, climate transition, and adapt to the changes driven by industry 4.0 and digitalisation. Simultaneously, those companies who export will continue to require post-pandemic support while also adjusting to the new EU-UK Trade arrangements.

In response to the above challenges and opportunities, and aligned to the Government's National Economic Recovery Plan and forthcoming SME Growth Plan, Enterprise Ireland has developed the following strategic priorities to support SMEs:

- Strengthen Irish enterprise to respond to market shocks and disruption in response to COVID-19, Brexit and other challenges.
- Drive transformational change and the pace of innovation transitioning to new business models, digitalisation and the low carbon economy.
- Scale and Grow the export and start-up base, across regions and sectors and grow companies of all sizes.

Under the Government's Global Ireland 2025 initiative, Enterprise Ireland's overseas presence has expanded significantly to 40 locations in recent years representing a global ambition to grow in international markets, both emerging and established. This action will support this ambition by delivering R&D, competitiveness and internationalisation initiatives to support Export Sales growth for the region's SMEs.

Action Outcome:

- Promote innovation across key export sectors to international buyers through the 'Irish Advantage' campaign, digital trade platform, in-market communications, virtual trade missions, events and partnerships.
- Maximise research and innovation collaboration nationally and regionally, including through Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, Technology Centres, Technology Gateways and Regional Technology Clusters.
- Build client sales and marketing capabilities with a focus on virtual/ remote selling and marketing, to international buyers and partners.
- Engage with a wider cohort of potential new exporters through delivery of tailored capability supports and a targeted 'Ready to Export' communications campaign.



Strategic Objective 5:

Develop Social Enterprises and Job Creation Initiatives for areas of high unemployment

Context and Vision to 2024

The Mid-West Region has made substantial economic progress in recent years to the point where it has become the fastest growing region for job creation outside of Dublin. However, not all have felt this progress, and the Mid-West continues to have the highest number of unemployment blackspots in the country, with ongoing issues of social disadvantage contributing to an imbalance in standards of education, quality of life and employment opportunity.

The 2016 Census highlighting 23 electoral areas within the region of having unemployment levels of greater than 27 percent. Although there are blackspots in each county, Limerick City is particularly affected, containing a total of 17 areas of high unemployment and 8 of the top 10 blackspots nationally. A 2019 report on deprivation across the country shows that the difference in life expectancy between the most deprived area (Limerick City) and the least deprived area (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown) was 6.4 years for women and 7.5 years for men.

Over the life of this plan, the Mid-West's committed stakeholders will continue to strive to improve education and employment opportunities for all. Central to delivering on this objective will be three complimentary themes:

- to continue to support the emergence and growth of social enterprise.
- to develop and support pilot programmes aimed at improving the opportunities for those seeking work from disadvantaged areas.
- to deliver targeted initiatives and projects which can make a measurable difference to reduce the high number of unemployment blackspots in the region.

This objective will look to continue to support the impact-driven work of Social Impact Ireland and other social enterprise initiatives across the region and nationally.

This objective will also look to support the establishment and scaling of recognised pathways to employment programmes focusing on the needs of the individual.

This objective will also endeavour to deliver a number of enterprise development related capital projects in areas of high unemployment within the region.



Actions to 2024

Action 5.1: Develop, support and scale social enterprise.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Social Impact Ireland	University of Limerick Ludgate Hub SECAD NEWKD CLDC Innovate Communities	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The publication of the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland, 2019-2022 heralded in a new era for social enterprise in Ireland. This policy reflects the awareness of the Irish Government of the ability and effort of those in the social enterprise sector to combat the social challenges faced by communities across the country.

The Mid-West is a national leader in the development and delivery of social enterprise supports, with local enterprise incubator BNest receiving over €600,000 in REDF funding in 2018. Since then, BNest has grown into Social Impact Ireland (SII), an organisation that works in many ways to support social enterprises, supporting both the enterprise and the individual, allowing them to achieve the impact they desire, wherever they may be on their journey. SII offers a variety of programmes and workshops – ranging from Incubator Programmes, One-to-one Business Advice Clinics, Information Evenings on various topics and much more.

A 2019 report by SII identified a number of enablers that are necessary to support social enterprise. Amongst the identified actions are the need for direct supports to address critical gaps in their current capabilities which limit their ability to engage at a professional business level. These include; articulating impact, preparation and readiness for funding, training and upskilling, online retail capability skills, access to premises, stronger business relationships within the commercial sector. SII will continue to support its social enterprise members with these and other business challenges through its Social Impact Scaling Strategy (2022- 2025).

SII are partnering with Social Enterprise Mark CIC, an international accreditation body to pioneer the Social Enterprise Mark in Ireland. The Social Enterprise Mark is an international accreditation which defines what it means to be a genuine social enterprise. It provides assurance that a company is living up to its claims as a business committed to creating positive social/ environmental change.

SII are preparing to pilot a '360 Impact Project' working regionally with participating hubs to meet challenges including: diversity of participation, the 'Reach Dilemma', building a community of businesses, long-term sustainability of hubs, and increasing community purpose dimension. SII will address challenges through a five-point solution consisting of (1) a virtual workshop support programme, (2) access to advance consultancy support, (3) a dedicated "Peer Support" community, (4) a proactive Cluster development approach, and (5) government and management engagement. SII also aim to work towards a 3rd Level educational offering that encompasses the various support programmes outlined above.

Action Outcome:

- Grow the number of SII supported enterprises.
- New initiatives to support Social Enterprise, through SII and others.
- Launch of Social Enterprise Mark – to provide assurance that a company is living up to its claims as a business committed to creating positive social/environmental change.
- Diverse, inclusive, cohesive, impact driven business communities through regional working hubs.
- Growth in community clusters, social enterprise expertise and social economy.



Action 5.2: A connected jobs strategy for Limerick's unemployment blackspots.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Limerick City and County Council	Local communities Community based Organisations Industry Partners Public Sector bodies Innovate Limerick Limerick Clare ETB Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan Mid-West Regional Skills Forum	Q4, 2024

Rationale:

The 2016 Census highlighted 23 electoral areas within the Mid-West Region of having unemployment levels of greater than 27%. Limerick City is particularly affected, containing a total of 17 areas of high unemployment and 8 of the top 10 blackspots nationally. This action seeks to establish dedicated supports to build on existing initiatives and ensure a connected approach is being taken to reduce unemployment. The connected approach includes each of the following 4 key components, all working together in parallel:

- 1. Community Support:** The first step in any solution to long-term unemployment must be to engage with the local community. Only with the buy-in and support of locals will any process be a success – a person centered approach and person-to-person contact is key to this success. Each community faces different challenges, and only the local community have the knowledge and existing relationships required to deliver real success. Some communities have already established strong community groups, with an employment focus, that want to see success and will support, others do not and will need additional attention.
- 2. Preparing for employment:** A 'Pathways to Employment' program will support people who are seeking work to prepare for employment with a particular focus on regeneration areas. This program has already gained significant traction on the north-side of the city and is now being rolled out on the south-side. The process focuses on the development of soft skills, as well as developing an understanding of different roles, the importance of time-keeping, chains of command, rates of pay and benefits, etc. Pathways to Employment will target industries where opportunities exist, identifying employment opportunities and providing training to give participants the skills to take up employment. Industry-led traineeships and/or apprenticeship type models will also be utilised.
- 3. Pairing the right Candidate with the right job:** Some key sectors such as construction and hospitality are now identifying a shortage of staff. This presents an opportunity for those in unemployment either short-term or long-term to join the workforce. This also presents an opportunity for employers in the region to make a positive impact to their community while addressing their staff shortages. We will aim to develop linkages whereby local employers can better connect with long-term unemployed or unemployed youth from some of the region's unemployment blackspots to understand the challenges faced, develop suitable job opportunities, and work together with employees and local supports to ensure the best chance of success.
- 4. Support and Mentoring:** Each individual is supported by liaison officers and/or voluntary mentors to ensure a best chance of long-term success. Mentor supports will be initiated from the pre-employment stage onwards. Mentors can be either work colleagues, or even a friend or family member. Mentors will check in regularly (weekly at first) with candidates in an informal manner to give advice and support and promote career development and continuation in employment. This mentor support structure is considered vital in the context of bringing our most difficult to reach participants to the employment baseline.
- 5. Physical Infrastructure:** This action will also seek to identify niche enterprise opportunities that may be suitable for development in Limerick's regeneration areas. We will examine the physical infrastructure required to support the existing strengths and preferred jobs for the area(s), and bring forward suitable plans for future funding submissions.



Action Outcome:

- Fund and Appoint Project Coordinator(s).
- Engage Community Leaders to develop deep knowledge of location-specific issues.
- Identify willing candidates through community outreach.
- Develop a robust process focusing on the current blockers for the long-term unemployed.
- Identify local (and regional) employment opportunities, then build and maintain a long-term relationship between the employer(s) and the community.
- Ensure the training required is available, with regular reviews to ensure needs of employers are met.
- Developing a robust, appropriately funded, community based mentor programme to ensure candidates are supported, particularly in pre-employment and early stages of employment.
- Examine feasibility of physical infrastructure initiatives to support local enterprise.

Action 5.3: Community Based Organisations creating employment pathways for the economically marginalised and socially excluded.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Limerick City Build Moyross Youth Academy	Limerick City and County Council Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board Public Sector partners Local Industry partners Local Communities Other community based Organisations	Q4, 2023

Rationale:

Community Based Organisations have been established to create employment pathways for economically marginalised and socially excluded people in Limerick City. The Limerick City Build (LCB) model delivers training, provides support to long-term unemployed and ex-offenders to engage in full time skills training, and creates an economic appetite among its trainees. LCB offers tailored training based on employment needs and cutting-edge construction industry skills, informed from the private sector and Limerick City Council. LCB's curriculum ensures that upon completion each participant is in high demand, and have the most current and relevant skills. LCB also features an Enterprise incubation hub, training and mentoring services for aspiring entrepreneurs specific to the construction industry, with a range of resources provided that most starts ups find challenging to acquire in the initial weeks of business. This is then supported with Health & safety guidance, weekly demos and sharing of expertise in order to create a hive of creativity, ideas and cross pollenate ideas and solutions to challenges. LCB has recently moved to a new location in Grove Island. In the coming years LCB will require ongoing funding to maintain its current levels of services. LCB also has ambitions to grow in size and services offered to meet the growing demand for its services.

Moyross Youth Academy (MYA) premises are home to the Moyross Garda Youth Diversion Project (MGYDP) and Moyross Probation Project (MPP). The recent addition of 5,000 sq. feet of workshop space has established an onsite employment and training facility with support from Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). This facility will ensure that young people are in the best position to avail of the opportunities that are coming on stream as part of the Economic Pillar of regeneration for the area, along with providing a clear, structured and supported pathway to employment for the participants.

MYA are strategically placed to deliver on the potential that now exists within the Limerick 2030 plan and the economic benefits that will accrue from this. Collaboration remains key to the success of the initiative and the stated commitment of all key partners already exists. The ability to create a 'sightline' of real employment opportunities for individuals within the programme combined with the opportunity for continuous personal progression must become the central focus. The delivery of talent into these roles will require continuous investment in the development of hard and soft skills. The combined strength of all partners within the programme will realise a strong employment and training dividend for the Moyross community extending over time across the regeneration areas of Limerick. This has evolved recently with the inclusion of the West End Youth Centre on the southside of the city. This has now moved from 'proof of concept' to a scalable and replicable programme across the regeneration areas.



Action Outcome:

- Community Based Organisations supported to continue delivery of services to economically marginalised and socially excluded.
- Expansion of Community Based Organisations to meet growing demand for services.
- Examine feasibility of scaling of current Community Based models such as LCB and MYA to existing community-based organisations in other locations.
- Secure investment for expansion of LCB's Incubation Hub.

Action 5.4: Establish a multi-functional Creative and Innovative Industries Centre of scale at LEDP.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership (LEDP)	Innovate Limerick/Film in Limerick Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board Apollo Lighting Odyssey Studio's others	Q4, 2023

Rationale:

LEDP was established in 1999 as a not-for-profit, independently funded charity in response to the closure of the Moulinex-Krups factory and the substantial income and job losses that resulted, particularly affecting communities in a regeneration area on the Southside of Limerick City. Its purpose was to support social and economic inclusion in disadvantaged communities. The LEDP building is a total of 169,000 sq. ft. in size with multiple tenants in sectors commercial, charity, training and upskilling, and education. All revenue is put back into the community in various initiatives. There is a vacant unit totalling 33,000 sq. ft. which has been identified for this project specifically.

As part of LEDP's recently launched Strategic Plan 2021-2026 a new multi-functional Creative and Innovative Industries Centre at the Innovation Hub is planned. This facility will compromise Ireland's first virtual production studio and appropriate space to facilitate and encourage indigenous SME sub suppliers to the Film Industry to grow (prop making, lighting, set construction etc.), in a regeneration area. The project will enhance the vision for the Mid-West Region to be recognised as the most equipped region in Europe for complete film production facilities.

Action Outcome:

Targeted benefits (pre-feasibility study outcomes):

- The creation of 200 direct and indirect jobs over 5 years.
- Recruitment of employees from the local regeneration area (target 20 percent).
- Annual 52-week production occupancy by year 5 of the studio.
- Growth in number of indigenous companies servicing industry (milling, stage construction, workshop, etc.).
- Creation of Film and Creative industry SME cluster, and 'Limerick for Film' initiative to ensure that there are pathways for everyone to enter the film industry.



Action 5.5: Establish a world class Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change Centre in Kilrush.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Clare Maritime Economic Zone DAC led by Clare County Council	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Enterprise Ireland industry-partners others	Q3, 2022

Rationale:

Two of the three County Clare blackspots identified by the 2017 Census were in the West Clare towns of Kilrush and Kilkee. Clare Maritime Economic Zone in Kilrush (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. This will enable significant enterprise growth not only in Kilrush but also in the wider West Clare area.

It delivers on the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan, which provides a framework for development along the Shannon Estuary and seeks to realise the objectives specifically relating to the maritime industry, renewable energy, tourism and research.

The Vision for the facility is to create a vibrant, publicly accessible, world-class educational, training and cultural/tourism centre specialising in Marine, Renewable, Science and Climate Change. The project will restore a derelict building at the heart of the maritime infrastructure located at Kilrush Marina, refocusing the site and the wider area, on the opportunities provided by its location on the Shannon Estuary. This will provide economic, rural development and social benefit to West Clare in a manner that respects the historical maritime connection which Kilrush and West Clare has to the Estuary and the wider Atlantic Ocean.

The training facility 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 and to Ireland.

The facility proposed is to be designed, built and equipped to enable it to satisfy the requirements to achieve accreditation by international training bodies. These include OPITO (Oil and Gas), IMO STCW (Maritime) and GWO (Global Wind Organisation) while also being suitable for training numerous other emergency and rescue scenarios.

The facility will be the only facility in Ireland, solely dedicated to the STCW, OPITO and GWO standards. Its remit will be to cater for the safety training of multiple sectors to ensure safe transit home for all workers. Its focus will be to train and upskill workers locally, nationally and internationally. This will make it highly desirable as a "one stop shop" for training on the international stage.

Action Outcome:

- Site preparations commence.
- Clare MEZ open and operational with delegates attending for courses.



Action 5.6: Task force-lead regeneration of regional towns – Pilot Scheme at Tipperary Town.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Tipperary Town Task Force	Tipperary County Council Local Enterprise Office Enterprise Ireland Department of Housing, Local Government	Q4,2024

Rationale:

The objective of the Tipperary Town Task Force initiative is to address social exclusion and other socio-economic issues in Tipperary Town including high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, high commercial vacancy, and to develop the overall liveability and aesthetic appeal of the town. Following extensive stakeholder engagement, a town Strategy and Action Plan is being developed with stakeholder consultations held in Q4, 2021.

The Tipperary East Urban electoral district has an unemployment rate of 34 percent – and is the 16th worst unemployment black spot in the country. This initiative enables locals 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 the town. The Task Force aims to deliver a comprehensive Social Inclusion Programme for the town that will address a range of issues that are inhibiting social inclusion, job creation and entrepreneurship among other factors.

A dedicated revitalisation manager has recently been appointed to lead the implementation of the action plan, while development of Tipperary Innovation ENGINE, a new Digital Hub and Innovation Centre funded to the tune of €500,000 by REDF, is currently underway. The new facility will be closely linked to Innovation ENGINE Limerick and will serve as a multiservice centre for enterprise within the catchment of Tipperary town.

The Task Force will develop a detailed Enterprise Plan for the town including development briefs for key vacant properties in the town centre, identification of opportunities for enterprise development, job creation and training.

The learnings from this task force-led regeneration approach will help to provide an indication as to what might work well for similar types of towns 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.

Action Outcome:

- Tipperary Innovation ENGINE launched in Q1 2022.
- Significant reduction in town centre vacancy.
- Development of Enterprise Plan for Tipperary Town including development briefs for vacant landmark properties.
- Increase in number living in the town centre.
- Delivery of Social Inclusion Programme.
- Progression of a new Business Park to stimulate light industry and manufacturing.
- Number of unsightly properties painted and renovated.
- Strategic development of the tourism and leisure sectors.



3

Implementation

The consultation process to develop the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2024 was enhanced by an understanding amongst stakeholders of the importance of ownership, collaboration, and the definition and delivery of specific measurable actions that could add value to the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant bodies involved in supporting enterprise development. These priorities are reflected in the implementation structure for the Mid-West REP to 2024.

Implementation of the REP will be overseen by a Regional Enterprise Steering Committee. The Steering Committee for the Mid-West Region will continue to be chaired by Prof. Eamonn Murphy, and this is welcomed by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The functions of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Oversee and drive delivery of the REP.
- Nominate and secure Public and Private Sector leads, where appropriate, to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives.
- 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 opportunities.
- 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, URDF, RRDF Project Ireland 2040 etc.).
- Oversee, contribute to and sign off on Progress Reports to the Department.

The Chairperson will convene at least two meetings of the Steering Committee per year and will present a progress update on the implementation of the Plan. The Chairperson will also lead the Committee in the preparation of both a mid-term and a final progress report, to be submitted to the Department. These reports will be the subject of a meeting between the Chairperson and/or the Steering Committee and the Minister during one of the biannual meetings.

The Mid-West Regional Steering Committee will oversee the formation of five working groups to drive delivery of each of the strategic objectives and their list of actions in the REP. Working Groups will convene as frequently as is required and will report on progress to the Chairperson and the Regional Steering Committee.

The Department will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of the REPs at national level. A National Oversight Group (NOG), which all Chairpersons attend, will oversee implementation of the new REPs. This group will be chaired by Ministers of State Robert Troy and Damien English and will provide a fora for the Chairs to share good practice and identify potential areas for inter-regional cooperation.





4

Mid-West Enterprise Agencies and Local Enterprise Office

The Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 are based on a collaborative approach to regional enterprise development. The Strategic Objectives and actions identified are set alongside and complement the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). Each Agency have corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as activities that support specific regional enterprise development potential. This Chapter provides an overview of those Agency activities and that of the LEOs in the Mid-West Region to 2024.



4.1 Enterprise Ireland: Focus to 2024

Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Enterprise Ireland work in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and achieve international growth. In this way, Enterprise Ireland support sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment.

Balanced regional development is central to Enterprise Ireland's remit. Enterprise Ireland manage a number of regional development funds on behalf of Government and work in collaboration with key stakeholders in all regions to deliver regional enterprise infrastructure, strengthen the enterprise base and deliver regional growth.

Strengthening regional enterprise development is a key focus in the new Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2022-2024, reflecting the varying needs and opportunities of enterprise across the different regions.



Recent developments in the Mid-West Region

Enterprise Ireland's team of Development Advisors and capability specialists work with over 372 companies employing more than 19,714 people in the Mid-West Region.

Between 2018-2020, Enterprise Ireland invested €36m in client companies in the Mid-West Region supporting employment creation, innovation, competitiveness and expansion including investment in HPSUs.

Strong regional clustering is important to enhancing regional enterprise success. Under the Regional Technology Cluster Fund (RTCF), Enterprise Ireland approved funding to the IDEAM Cluster in Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) Mid-West, which is an amalgamation of the Limerick for Engineering and Limerick for IT groups. The region's first cluster, Emerald Aviation Cluster, continues to be supported under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF). Investment into regional infrastructure that supports innovation and entrepreneurship is central to Enterprise Ireland's regional development strategy. The region benefits from important well-established supports provided by Enterprise Ireland, such as funding for the three Local Enterprise Offices in Limerick, Clare and Tipperary and the New Frontiers Programme at TUS Mid-West.

An important element of strengthening Ireland's economic prospects, is growing Ireland's base of exporters and encourage more SMEs to become first-time exporters. Enterprise Ireland has increased resources in this area and has recently increased the headcount to three, with an additional dedicated Development Advisor appointed to the Mid-West Region to support first-time and growing exporters in the region.

Enterprise Ireland continues to dedicate significant investment in supporting the regional development initiatives and investments across the Mid-West Region. Ambitious enterprise development projects have been supported by the REDF which will be significant catalysts and economic drivers for the region, they include the Digital Collaboration Centre at the Engine; BNest Social Enterprise initiative in UL; The Irish Bio-Economy Foundation in Lisheen; Clare Maritime Enterprise Zone in Kilrush; the Future Mobility Campus Ireland in Shannon and the Emerald Aero Cluster.

Enterprise centres are another critical enterprise development support to which Enterprise Ireland has committed significant funding over several years, supporting the development of 22 projects in the region. In 2020 Enterprise Ireland approved over €630k funding for 7 Enterprise Centres in the region to help them make strategic and capital investments addressing the challenges of COVID-19.

Enterprise Ireland objectives for the Mid-West Region to 2024

Enterprise Ireland's development objectives for the Mid-West to 2024 focus on the dual priorities of delivering an effective and supportive enterprise ecosystem and driving entrepreneurship activity across the region.

To support these objectives, our strategic priorities to 2024 include:

- The successful completion and delivery of projects in the Mid-West funded under the regional development funds. Enterprise Ireland's sectoral and capability specialists working with clients across the region to support their growth plans and assisting companies on transformation initiatives such as climate change, digitisation, competitiveness, and sustainability. Collaboration with local stakeholders to identify gaps in the Mid-West's enterprise ecosystem and to plan and help fund essential regional enterprise-enabling infrastructure.
- Work with partners such as the LEOs, HEIs and regional accelerators to deliver initiatives that support entrepreneurship and foster an exciting new generation of innovative and ambitious start-ups in the Mid-West.
- Broadening and strengthening the Mid-West's exporting base by identifying and supporting first-time exporters, growing knowledge and capability and supporting SMEs to scale-up their exporting opportunities.
- Drive strong and effective regional clustering and collaboration in the Mid-West with existing and emerging clusters.
- Continue to strengthen linkages between the Mid-West's third level research institutes and industry through the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, the Commercialisation Fund, Innovation Partnerships, and Innovation Vouchers.
- Work with the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and our clients to ensure availability and development of appropriate skills and talent to support company growth.



- In collaboration with the IDA promote the Mid-West as a world class destination for Advanced Manufacturing Solutions linked to the new Centre for Advanced Manufacturing being developed in Limerick.
- Work as active members of the Shannon Estuary Task Force to maximise the enterprise and economic potential of the estuary in partnership with local stakeholders from the public and private sector.

Enterprise Ireland is a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the Mid-West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the region.



4.2 IDA Ireland: Focus to 2024

IDA Ireland's mission is to partner with multi-national companies (MNCs) 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, including under the Regional Enterprise Plans and in relation to the provision of property solutions to the indigenous base, where appropriate.

IDA's strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth* 2021-2024 was developed in the context of the Government's National Economic Recovery Plan and positions IDA to respond to the emerging trends that are accelerating as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. It identifies the opportunities for sustainable growth among IDA's established base of clients through a focus on transformative investments to increase the productivity of Irish operations and their workforce through RD&I, digitisation, training, and actions on sustainability. Crucially it also maintains a focus on attracting the next generation of leading MNCs to locate in Ireland, further driving sustainable growth and maximising the impact of FDI in Ireland to 2024 and beyond. The Strategy has five pillars:

- 1 Growth pillar** – win investment to support job creation and economic activity
- 2 Transformation pillar** – partner with clients for future growth in Ireland
- 3 Regions pillar** – win investment to advance regional development
- 4 Sustainability pillar** – embrace an inclusive and green recovery; and
- 5 Impact pillar** – maximise FDI's positive impact on local businesses and communities

Regional development is at the centre of IDA's strategy. Although FDI cannot be the sole contributor in addressing the challenges facing Ireland's regions – from Brexit to COVID-19, digital transformation to the climate transition – it can have a significant impact in propelling economic recovery and realising more balanced growth. IDA is targeting half of all investments (400) from 2021-2024 to regional locations and is maintaining the same high level of investment as targeted in IDA's previous strategy for each region of the country.

Under the regions pillar of *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth*, IDA will:

- Win investment to propel recovery and support development in each region;
- Partner with existing regional clients to transform through innovation and upskilling;
- Develop clusters to support transformation, spill overs and linkages;
- Collaborate with clients and stakeholders to facilitate remote working opportunities; and
- Continue to roll-out IDA's regional property programme, including delivery of 19 Advanced Building Solutions (ABS) to regional locations over the course of the strategy.



The global competition for FDI is intense as countries compete for investment to support economic recovery. It is in this context – of greater competition for potentially fewer projects – that IDA wins investment for Ireland and engages with MNCs on the benefits of choosing regional locations for their investment projects. Key to IDA's success in the past and essential to success in the future is strategic collaboration with national and local stakeholders to ensure that each region has the necessary conditions in place to foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. The delivery of necessary infrastructure and property solutions, the availability of a skilled and future ready workforce, and an emphasis on quality of life and placemaking in each region are pre-requisites to winning continued investment from MNCs.

Regional Economic Impact of FDI

IDA client companies directly employed almost 145,000 people outside of Dublin in 2020. Combined with indirect employment of 116,000, an estimated 260,000 jobs in the regions were supported by FDI in 2020. Clients in regional locations had an annual spend of €7.9bn on payroll, €2.7bn on Irish services and €2.2bn on Irish materials in 2019. They contributed a further €1.3bn on in-house R&D. These linkages support diverse, innovative, and vital local economies.

Over the period 2021-2024 IDA Ireland will:

- Win 800 total investments to support job creation of 50,000 and economic activity
- Partner with clients for future growth through 170 RD&I and 130 Training investments
- Win 400 investments to advance Regional Development
- Embrace a green recovery with 60 sustainability investments
- Target a 20 percent increase in client expenditure in Ireland to maximise the impact of FDI

Read more about IDA's 2001-2024 Strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth* at www.idaireland.com.

IDA Ireland objectives for the Mid-West Region to 2024

There are 143 (2020) IDA client companies in the Mid-West Region (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary), employing 25,270 (2021) people. FDI performance in the region has been strong over the past five years with employment among IDA clients increasing by 29 percent. The Mid-West Region has an impressive base of existing FDI companies across key industry sectors, with recent investments of scale in Technology, Life Sciences, and International Financial Services.

Under its Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth strategy IDA is targeting 76 investments for the Mid-West in the period 2021 to 2024. IDA will support the existing base of IDA clients and build on the strengths and competencies of the region with a focus on high value manufacturing, services, and RD&I opportunities across a number of established regional clusters. Emerging technology trends have and will continue to create new opportunities across the region in areas such as mobility, green economy, sports technology, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and smart manufacturing.

The Mid-West has developed a strong professional services and technology ecosystem including companies such as Becton Dickinson, Dell Technologies, Extreme Networks, Fiserv, IQEQ, Northern Trust, Waystone and WP Engine amongst others. Additionally, the continued development of the connected and autonomous mobility sector is exciting with great references like General Motors, Jaguar Land Rover, and recent investments from Bosch, Exida and Renovo, as well as the Future Mobility Campus Ireland located in Shannon, Co. Limerick.

IDA will deliver an Advanced Building Solution in Limerick over 2021-2024, in addition to the soon to be completed Advanced Manufacturing Centre. The Mid-West is now recognised as an established location of choice for advanced manufacturing operations across both life sciences and semiconductor and this value proposition is further enhanced by the Advanced Manufacturing Centre in the National Technology Park. Further upgrade works, and investment are planned for IDA Parks in the region.



IDA client companies in the Mid-West include Microchip, Zimmer Biomet, Beckman Counter, JLP, Abbot, Boston Scientific, Fiserv, Regeneron, Northern Trust, Edwards Life Sciences, Stryker, Johnson and Johnson Visioncare, DMS Governance, and Analog.

New operations, expansions and R&D activity since 2020 have included: Axiom SL, Meira GTx, Bath Fitter, Regeneron, Exida, Transact Campus, Indigo Telecom Group, IQEQ, Renovo, Fiserv, OLED Material Manufacturing PPG, Abbott Vascular, Bosch and Legato Technologies.

FDI in the Mid-West Region is estimated to generate €2.28bn for the region and Ireland through Payroll (€1,502m), Purchasing of Irish Materials and Services (€538m) and in-house R&D spend (€250m)

– (Source: DETE ABSEI 2019).

The thriving, dynamic and innovative enterprise base in the region is supported by third level institutes of scale, the University of Limerick, and the newly established Technological University of the Shannon, and by SFI Research Centres. Other education providers include Shannon College of Hotel Management, and The Education Training Boards in Clare, Tipperary, and Limerick.

Shannon Airport, which facilitates international, transatlantic connectivity and is an important infrastructure asset for FDI access across the western part of the country.

IDA Ireland is a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the Mid-West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the Mid-West Region.



Local Enterprise Office

4.3 Local Enterprise Office (LEOs): Focus to 2024

The Local Enterprise Offices aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high quality supports for your Business ideas. The Local Enterprise Office is the *First Stop Shop* for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland.

Entrepreneurs and Businesses are supported to:

- Increase exports
- Build resilience
- Increase productivity
- Prepare for the Low carbon economy
- Embrace the Digital economy
- Innovate
- Be managed by ambitious and capable individuals
- Fuel regional growth

Recent developments in the Mid-West Region

Regions	Client Numbers 2021	Total Jobs 2021	Net Job Change 2021
Mid-West	796	4,500	413

The LEOs of Limerick, Tipperary and Clare deliver a range of programmes and initiatives to support entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the Mid-West Region. Some recent developments led by the LEOs include:

- A Tech Disrupt Project to identify and foster emerging Industry 4.0 projects and develop an eco-system around future technologies in Clare and Limerick.
- Development of a robust engineering cluster titled 'LINC' to foster collaboration and support of Micro/SME engineering companies in the region.
- Development of a network of e-Hubs across the Mid-West Region led by Innovate Limerick.
- Development of local food strategies to build and develop local food producers, particularly those in more rural locations.
- Promotion of female entrepreneurship through various networks and programmes.
- Developing the Life Sciences eco-system in Tipperary in collaboration with Technological University of The Shannon (TUS): Midlands Mid-West.
- Supporting emerging start-ups in energy management and sustainability as part of a new development 'Centre of Excellence in Sustainability Nenagh'.

Local Enterprise Office objectives for the Mid-West Region to 2024

The principal areas of focus for the Local Enterprise Offices over the coming three years in the region include the following:

Entrepreneurship

- Proactive engagement with technology networks to encourage an ecosystem of tech-related entrepreneurship.
- Enhance the skill set of our entrepreneurs through targeted programmes such as leadership skills, financial skills and selling skills.

Competitiveness and Digitalisation

- Identify enterprises with the potential to grow and commence a structured programme to:
 - i. Identify potential gaps in the management skills set.
 - ii. Assess the cost benefits of participation in “LEAN for Micro”.
 - iii. Develop a structured leadership programme for entrepreneurs.
- Develop the online capabilities through strategic workshops.
- Pilot a “Search Engine Optimisation” audit of key Trading Online Voucher recipients to identify opportunities to enhance their online promotional activities.
- Raise awareness of the threat of poor cyber security and steps to mitigate through workshops and mentor engagement.
- Ongoing engagement with key enablers located in the Mid-West/West innovating in new technologies.

Green/Sustainability

- Webinars to raise awareness of the increasing importance of enterprises adopting appropriate sustainable business practices.
- Encourage micro enterprises to participate in the first “Green for Micro” pilot scheme.
- Educate those enterprises who sub-supply to large multinationals of the need to be responsive to the ever-increasing sustainability targets being placed on large organisations.
- Promote the new pilot programme “DigoEco” facilitated by the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and specifically targets Micro/SME indigenous businesses.

Innovation

- Introduce a pilot diagnostic tool to assist in early-stage identification of enterprises developing innovative concepts.
- Follow up this pilot scheme with 1:1 mentor engagement to identify enterprises that may benefit from Research and Development funding options.
- Introduce a series of informative webinars to raise awareness of the innovation supports available via the 3rd level institutions in the region.
- Facilitate creative design workshops which is designed to de-mystify the innovative process and have enterprises think about innovation in a different manner and through a different “lens”.
- Introduce a series of webinars/network opportunities focused on specific sectors where innovation is encouraged.

Exporting/Internationalisation

- Focused approach on developing export capability by utilising dedicated export mentors to work with those enterprises with a desire to grow their presence in export markets.
- Work closely with Enterprise Ireland overseas offices to assist with appropriate business introductions where required.
- Use the Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters grant to facilitate attendance of local enterprises at international trade shows either virtually or physically.

Networks and Clustering

- Explore the potential to develop tech-focused networks.
- Continued support of the ‘LINC’ engineering cluster and active engagement in the “Explore Engineering” and ‘Limerick for IT’ clusters.
- Specific focus on development of female entrepreneurship.
- Continued proactive participation in the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum.



5

Complementary Strategies and Initiatives



5.1 Fáilte Ireland: Mid-West Region Focus to 2024

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the long-term sustainable growth in the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of tourism to Ireland. In addition to helping to develop destinations, Fáilte Ireland also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business supports and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fáilte Ireland's mission over the next three years is to support the survival and drive the recovery of the sector in order to maximise the sustainable economic, environmental, cultural and social contribution of tourism to Ireland. It is also Fáilte Ireland's objective to spread the benefits of tourism more evenly around the country.

The Mid-West Region is served by three of Fáilte Ireland's regional tourism brands, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ireland's Ancient East. Clare and Limerick are part of Wild Atlantic Way and Limerick City has recently been designated a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City. Co. Tipperary spans Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ireland's Ancient East. Fáilte Ireland is currently preparing a suite of four Regional Tourism Strategies (one for each of the four Regional Tourism Brands), which will be published in early 2022.

Through these regional brand development initiatives, Fáilte Ireland has worked closely with a wide range of industry and stakeholder partners towards the sustainable development of tourism in the Mid-West.

Since March 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, Fáilte Ireland has delivered significant business supports, by way of direct grant-aid, mentoring and training. Destination Recovery Task Forces were established to provide targeted supports to tourism businesses.



At the same time, Fáilte Ireland has remained focused on the medium-to-long term sustainable recovery and development of tourism in the region. For example, launch of Destination Experience Development Plans including for Limerick City – the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy; the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Destination Experience Development Plan; the Cliff Coast DEDP covering North Kerry and Co. Clare; and ongoing work to develop on the 'Castles and Conquests' Visitor Experience Development Plan for Tipperary.

Fáilte Ireland has also provided funding to Waterways Ireland for the Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon River focused on sustainable tourism in the Shannon Corridor.

Fáilte Ireland's objectives for the Mid-West Region to 2024

The overall tourism objective for the Mid-West Region is to continually increase visitor numbers by raising awareness of the region as a visitor destination through sustained domestic marketing and sales promotion; and by substantiating the tourism experience brand propositions for each area with exciting saleable visitor experiences that appeal to our target audiences. Fáilte Ireland will also work with Tourism Ireland to ensure awareness of all that's new in the Mid-West Region such that it informs their international marketing activity as well.

Priority areas of focus for Fáilte Ireland over the coming three years in the region include:

- Continuing to raise awareness of the region as an appealing visitor destination and encourage them to explore the region by promoting the range of things there are for visitors to see and do.
- Providing a range of business supports focused on meeting the particular needs of tourism businesses in the region in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic over the next three years.
- Implementation of the Destination Experience Development Plans for each different destination and the themes have been designed to enhance each area's strongest tourism assets and improve both the destinations' appeal to domestic and overseas markets and the experiences on the ground; and by extension, help to increase visitor dwell time and spend in the region.
- Helping tourism providers to secure new business by introducing them to new markets and buyers and helping them to secure incremental sales. In particular, helping them to develop and enhance their saleable experiences to ensure they are picked up by domestic and international tour operators.
- Liaising with Local Authorities and other State Agencies such as Coillte, Waterways Ireland, the OPW and Bord na Móna in optimising the benefit of state assets and attractions for tourism, in particular through the development of Greenways, Blueways, and walking trails, which can be leveraged by tourism enterprises to create new jobs.
- Ensuring that the potential of existing strategic tourism infrastructure, assets and facilities is fully explored and that they are fully leveraged by tourism businesses to create new enterprises and jobs. The key tourism assets for this region are as follows: King John's Castle, the Limerick Milk Market, Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, Lough Gur Heritage Centre and Lakeshore Park, the newly-launched Limerick Greenway, Co. Limerick – the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, the culture, wellness and traditional music experiences of the Burren and Co. Clare, Loop Head Lighthouse and Scattery Island on the Cliff Coast and as well as the Rock of Cashel, Ormonde Castle and the Butler Trail in Co. Tipperary. Limerick's new designation as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City will be extremely important for developing Limerick as a compelling visitor destination and base for exploring Wild Atlantic Way which will benefit the Mid-West Region and economy as a whole.
- Completion of the development of a master plan for the Beara Breifne Way- Ireland's longest inland way-marked route, spans Tipperary, Galway, Roscommon, Leitrim and Cavan, which will see a number of towns along the route identified as walking hubs to drive visitors into nearby areas and maximise the tourism benefits increased tourist numbers will bring.
- Establishing and assisting a range of commercially-focused tourism business networks throughout the region and helping them to cross-promote and cross-sell one another.
- Aiding the digital transformation of the tourism industry in the region through a 'Digital that Delivers' initiative, aimed at providing improved online book-ability for tourism businesses, enhancing their connected distribution and improving their digital skills.



- Develop and execute a sustained strategy for Tourism Skills and Careers to both attract and retain staff within the tourism industry – the absence of staff represents an existential crisis as businesses capacity to trade is being restricted.

As a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the Mid-West, Fáilte Ireland looks forward continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on its ambition for the Mid-West Region.



5.2 Regional Skills Forum: Focus to 2024

The *National Skills Strategy to 2025*, provides a framework for skills development that drives Ireland's growth both economically and societally. One of the key elements of the Strategy was the development of a National Skills Council (NSC) and 9 Regional Skills Fora (RSF). The Fora structure fosters engagement and collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies, the education (Further and Higher) and training system, and enterprise.

The RSF seek to bring people together at local and regional level, to identify, interrogate and validate skills needs, and to ensure that employers and enterprise are linked with the appropriate resources across the education and training system. The RSF provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The RSF work to ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the region's economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

The Regional Skills Forum leads a number of key activities in each region:

- acting at local and regional level, to drive forward the National Skills Strategy;
- assisting local enterprises identify skills needs to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity;
- linking (once skills needs have been identified) companies with regional education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need; and

- assisting with actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.

Over the period of this Regional Enterprise Plan and beyond, the areas of technology, climate and business transformation though digitalisation will drive new skill needs across business sectors in the Mid-West.

Through a process of partnership, the Mid-West RSF will continue to play an integral role in the development of regional industry networks across Manufacturing, ICT, Logistics, Hospitality and Retail sectors. These employer-led networks are enabling an agile response to address training needs and skill gaps through new programme design and development.

The world of learning is changing with increased demand for blended, online, and modular courses that offer micro credentials to facilitate employees to upskill and achieve certification at their own pace. The Mid-West RSF will continue to promote the value of work-based learning through apprenticeship and traineeship programmes as a solution to skill needs as these models are now increasingly recognised by industry as a key talent development enabler.

Advising and assisting businesses especially small and micro enterprises to upskill in areas such as digitalisation and sustainability through innovative Government funded programmes such as Explore and DigiEco will remain a priority.

Communicating the range of Government funding supports to enable businesses upskill their employees at both further and higher education level together with supporting regional training initiatives will contribute towards the overall competitiveness of the Mid-West for business investment and growth.

Upskilling and training traverses all five Strategic Objectives outlined in this Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024. The value proposition as a region is one of collaboration and working together across agencies and stakeholders will ensure that we give ourselves every opportunity to address the challenges and achieve the objectives identified.

Our collective efforts in the delivery of this Regional Enterprise Plan in the years ahead will contribute towards a vibrant inclusive region to live work and learn.





5.3 The Regional Assembly

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) covers nine counties containing 10 Local Authorities namely – Carlow, Clare, Cork City, Cork County, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

One of the principal functions of the Assembly is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which sets out the strategic regional development framework for the region. The primary aim of the RSES is to implement [Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework](#) (NPF), at the regional tier of Government and to support NPF policy for achieving balanced regional development.

The region's priorities for investment are identified in the RSES and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) and set a 12-year strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development for the region in line with vision and objectives for national change in the NPF and the *National Development Plan* (NDP).

The Regional Assembly's RSES also aims to develop a sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient regional economy. Key to delivering this vision is ensuring the region develops a strong and diverse economic base and with immediate challenges such as COVID-19, Brexit, Just Transition and potential vulnerabilities for Ireland's enterprise base.

Alignment of the economic principles of the RSES and Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) is critical to underpin the achievement of national strategic outcomes at the regional and local level and give regional support for the implementation of actions identified through the REP. This is also of key relevance for EU cohesion funding in Ireland for the period 2021-2027 and the development of priorities under the ERDF 2021-2027 Programme. The Regional Assembly has an enhanced role in the management of this programme which will have a focus on smart cities and a smart region, lower carbon emissions, climate resilience and urban regeneration, themes that support priorities and actions under the REP.

The Southern Regional Assembly RSES can be found here: [SRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy](#).



5.4 Local Authorities – Local Economic and Community Plans

Local Authorities are the key agents of government responsible for local and community development at local level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 strengthened the role of Local Authorities towards economic, social and community development.

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has statutory responsibility for the LECPs overall and additional responsibility for the Local Community Development Committees who are charged with the development and the delivery of the Community elements of the LECP. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) have statutory responsibility for the Economic elements of the LECP. The local authorities are responsible for the development and implementation of the economic elements of the LECP through the relevant Strategic Policy Committee.

The purpose of the community elements of the LECP is to promote local and community development and to ensure the coordination of relevant public funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where they are most needed and maximises benefits for communities. The focus of the community elements of the LECP should be on the social and economic issues that have relevance and can be addressed at a community level.

The development of the economic elements of the LECP is part of the wider role of economic development in local government. Revised guidelines on the development of LECPs to assist with the development of local area plans were published in November 2021.

As the framework for the economic and community development of the local authority area, the LECP is also the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Membership of the Regional Steering Committee

Chair Regional Enterprise Plan:	
Prof. Eamonn Murphy, Managing Director, Irish Centre for Business Excellence	
Programme Manager:	
Dr. Paraic Rattigan	
Membership of the Committee:	
Limerick City and County Council	STATS PERFORM
Clare County Council	Takumi Precision Engineering
Tipperary County Council	Analog Devices
Limerick Local Enterprise Office	Johnson and Johnson Visioncare
Clare Local Enterprise Office	Emerald Aero Cluster
Tipperary Local Enterprise Office	IDEAM Cluster
Innovate Limerick	LINC Engineering Network
IDA Ireland	Irish Bioeconomy Foundation
Southern Regional Assembly	Social Impact Ireland
University of Limerick	SportsTech Ireland
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West	EXPLORE Engineering Alliance
Mary Immaculate College	Future Mobility Campus Ireland
Regional Skills Forum: Mid-West Region	Film in Limerick
Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board	Irish Hotels Federation
Tipperary Education and Training Board	Irish Centre for Business Excellence
Fáilte Ireland	Limerick City Build
InterTrade Ireland	Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership
Ibec	Tipperary Town Task Force
Teagasc	Ballyhoura development
Shannon Group Plc	North Tipperary Development Company
Shannon Foynes Port Company	Limerick Chamber of Commerce
Northern Trust	Shannon Chamber of Commerce
Jaguar Land Rover	Ennis Chamber of Commerce
Abbey Machinery	County Tipperary Chamber of Commerce
Transact Campus	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Grassland Agro	



Appendix 2: Mid-West Regional Statistical Snapshot

Constituent counties	Clare, Limerick, Tipperary			
Mid-West Population	473,269 ¹			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment	232,100 ²			
ILO Participation Rate	62.8% ³			
ILO Unemployment Rate	7% ⁴			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)	126,500 ⁵			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)	105,600 ⁶			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q1 2015 ⁷ – Q3 2021	Q1 2015	Q3 2021		
	195,900	232,100		
Actual Increase in Employment between from Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	36,200			
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	18.4%			
Persons on Live Register in the Mid-West at 01/12/2021	16,163 ⁸			
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 07/12/2021 in the Mid-West	4,092 ⁹			
Unemployment blackspots ¹⁰	23 ¹¹			
Irish-owned Companies – Total Employment in the Mid-West, 2015-2020 ¹²		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	14,844	19,744	+4,900
Foreign-owned Companies – Total Employment in the Mid-West, 2015-2020 ¹³		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	19,628	25,127	+5,499

1. 2016 CSO Census

2. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Mid-West Region)

3. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Mid-West Region)

4. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Mid-West Region)

5. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Mid-West Region)

6. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Mid-West Region)

7. Launch of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs

8. CSO Live Register

9. <https://www.gov.ie>

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

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

12. Annual Employment Survey 2020

13. Annual Employment Survey 2020



Appendix 3: Other State Agencies and Bodies Supporting Enterprise Development

Shannon Estuary Task Force

The Programme for Government, Our Shared Future, commits to establishing a Shannon Estuary Taskforce to consider the regional economic development potential of the Shannon Estuary. It is envisaged that the work of the Taskforce will be undertaken in 2022. During 2021, officials from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment convened inter-departmental meetings with relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and Local Government to explore areas of economic potential across transport and logistics, manufacturing, tourism and renewable energy in the Shannon Estuary. This preliminary engagement will serve as preparatory analysis which can feed into the considerations of the Taskforce.

Atlantic Economic Corridor

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is a consortium of geographical, sectoral and thematic interests, with a singular goal to transform the Atlantic Economy encompassing the 9 western seaboard counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway, Clare, Limerick and Kerry. The consortium is driven by business representatives and communities and supported by national and local government and State agencies. The region represented by the AEC has a total population of 1.7 million people and is home to a number of higher education institutions and a wide range of successful businesses, including ambitious start-ups, established multinationals, and indigenous Irish firms prospering in global markets. The AEC seeks to bring together and better harness State and private sector resources to strengthen the region's economic contribution, and to create and attractive place to seize opportunities both in life and work.

The Irish Government has recognised the importance and potential of the AEC in Project Ireland 2040, the over-arching national policy that provides a framework for long term planning and investing in Ireland's future. The development of the AEC is also central to both the Northern and Western Region and the Southern Region Economic and Spatial Strategies and features prominently in both the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan. Each of the 10 Local Authorities within the AEC has appointed an AEC Officer to support and progress the work of the AEC initiative.

The Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative aims to lay a strong foundation for the region's economic growth through a broad programme of innovation-led initiatives, with a particular focus on building on the region's natural resources. The AEC partnership aims to grow our entrepreneurial and innovation culture, encourage infrastructural investment, attract foreign direct investment and support indigenous companies with global ambitions. The initiative seeks to consolidate and align the State capital investment programme with the potential investment of the private sector to strengthen the region's economic contribution and make the Atlantic region a better place in which to live and work.

InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland has been helping small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready for over two decades. Based in Newry, their services include supports for sales growth and innovation, plus funding and business insights for SMEs across the island who are looking to grow their business.

Through their dedicated Brexit-advisory service they also help companies to manage the new trading relationship between Britain and the EU, via a range of supports and services. They have also introduced specific COVID-19 supports focused around funding and recovery. As a cross-border bodies, InterTradelreland is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department for the Economy (DFE) in Northern Ireland.

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.



Appendix 4: Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021–2025

Introduction

Our Rural Future-Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 is the most ambitious and transformational policy for rural development in Ireland for decades.

The vision of the policy is for a thriving rural Ireland which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, which is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment.

The policy contains more than 150 commitments for delivery across the whole-of-Government for both short-term recovery and longer-term development. It has a five-year timeframe, with updates on delivery provided by a series of Progress Reports. Annual work programmes allow for the review and revision of priorities contained in the measures for delivery.

Policy Objectives

The policy aims to bring about improved opportunities and a better quality of life for people who live and work in rural areas, through balanced regional development, benefitting individuals, families, communities and businesses.

We want to see more people living and working in rural Ireland, rural towns as vibrant hubs for commercial and social activity, reduced regional income disparities, improved access to public services such as transport links, rural Ireland benefitting from the transition to a more sustainable future and rural communities – especially young people – having an active role in shaping their future.

Funding streams

The level of activity across Government in recent months highlights delivery of the Policy's ambition. The Government's commitment to rural Ireland is also evidenced in the unprecedented capital investment of €850m provided under the revised National Development Plan for rural development projects to 2025, across a range of areas such as remote working facilities, rural regeneration projects and outdoor amenities. This includes huge levels of support for important projects under the Department of Rural and Community Development's (DRCD) Rural Development Investment Programme.

DRCD supports include:

- Revitalisation of rural town centres through the €1bn Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Investment of €220m through the LEADER Programme.
- Provision of funding for other programmes such as the Small-Scale Rural Projects (CLÁR), Town and Village Renewal, Local Improvement Scheme for non-public roads, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and Connected Hubs Fund.



Appendix 5: Regional Enterprise Development Funding

Regional Enterprise Development Fund and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) supports the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can enable and sustain enterprise and employment growth in the regions. Under the RETS and the three calls of the REDF to date, the Mid-West has secured over €16m in funding for 10 enterprise projects.

Projects approved for Mid-West Region

Projects approved award	County	Project description
Emerald	Limerick/Clare	Aerospace Manufacturing Cluster
Irish Bioeconomy Foundation CLG	Lisheen	Innovation
BNest	Limerick, Clare, Tipperary, Cork, Kerry	Project to provide a full set of collaborative supports and capability building for social entrepreneurs.
Clare MEZ (Maritime Economic Zone) DAC	Clare	Provision of specialist infrastructure and accommodation on the Shannon Estuary for maritime related training and field research support.
Innovate Limerick/Hospital Food Units DAC	Limerick, Clare, Tipperary	Digital Collaboration Centre to position the Mid-West Region as a hub of applied disruptive technology innovation.
Future Mobility Campus Ireland CLG	Clare	The project aims to deliver a CAV test facility located in real-world settings, providing technology companies and researchers the ability to test and enhance their innovations
Tipperary Innovation Engine (Company Limited by Guarantee)	Tipperary	The Tipperary Innovation Engine project linking with Engine Innovation Limerick to provide flexible co-working and individual office spaces.
Emerald Aerospace Group	Limerick	This project is an expansion of an original project approval under Call One of the REDF which has been very successful in
Future Mobility Campus CLG	Clare	To develop a CAV test facility located in real-world settings, providing technology companies and researchers the ability to test and enhance their innovations.
BNest Social Initiative	Limerick	Project to develop business capability of social entrepreneurs.
Total Mid-West REDF and RETS Funding		€16,044,534



Appendix 6: Methodology

The process to develop these Regional Enterprise Plans involved the following steps:

January 2021	A round of initial consultations with key stakeholders was undertaken by the Department including the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees, Agency representatives, Programme Managers, and other key organisations represented on the Regional Steering Committees. The bilateral discussions focused on what worked/didn't work well over the period of the outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans.
February-March 2021	In February 2021 the Tánaiste wrote to the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees formally setting out the Department's intention to develop new Plans to 2024.
February-May 2021	The Tánaiste and Ministers of State formally launched the commencement of the process to develop Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 with meetings of the nine Regional Steering Committees in virtual sessions around the country. Each Committee established a Project Delivery Team for the process, led by the Steering Committee chairperson.
March-May 2021	Each of the Project Delivery Teams met to review the outgoing Regional Plans and considered future thematic areas of focus and agreed an approach for a formal stakeholder consultation with the wider Steering Committee members and other relevant stakeholders.
May-August 2021	An online facilitated Stakeholder Consultation event was held in eight of the nine regions; with a series of bilateral stakeholder engagements and focus group discussions undertaken in the South-East Region. Participants considered topics including: enterprise resilience, smart specialisation, placemaking, transition-climate, digitalisation.
July-October 2021	The Project Delivery Teams re-grouped to consider the consultation outcomes and further develop emerging themes into Strategic Objectives and to identify suitable actions for delivery in the period to 2024.
November-December 2021	The Draft Final Regional Enterprise Plans were signed off by the Project Delivery Teams and Steering Committees.
February 2022	Memo for Government considered by Cabinet and noted the Department's intention to publish the nine Regional Enterprise Plans.



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