




Donegal 2030:

# WRITING OUR OWN ENTERPRISE FUTURE

Donegal Strategic Enterprise  
Development Plan







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# 01. INTRODUCTION

**An Enterprise Development Strategy and Plan must put forward a clear pathway of how the investment of time and a clear focus can help people in a geography establish, expand, or improve their business. The very nature of Enterprise Development is to facilitate companies create value, help people earn a living or a way out of poverty and lead to a long-term economic growth for themselves, their families, and their communities.**

This Enterprise Development Plan therefore focuses on the changing nature of the interactions between universities, industry, government agencies and other public organizations and brings forth a multi-actor orchestration model for Donegal with new forms of interfaces, organizational forms and collaborative formats and spaces and well as a change in the fundamental role of each actor within the county.

Donegal, although one of the most spacious and beautiful counties in Ireland has long experienced a burden of geography. For many reasons, it could be perceived to be isolated. This is demonstrated in the analysis of this report which shows a static local economy – one that is active but not generating the relevant value and wealth and one that missed at least one generational opportunity of growth.

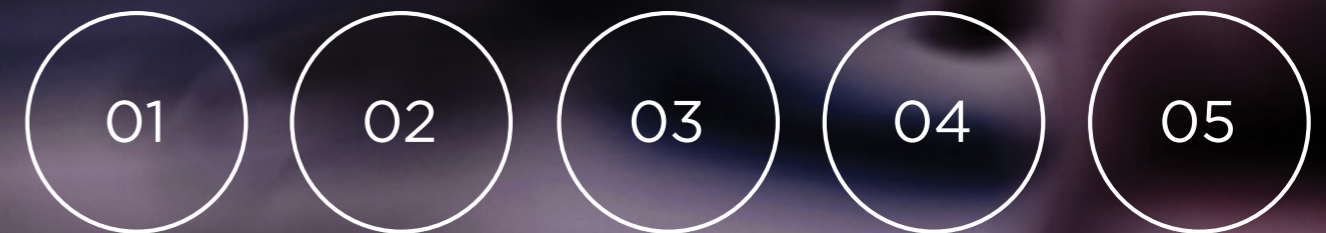
**The entire plan is predicated on 4 pillars of development which work with government agencies, various industries and push academia to attain sustained enterprise growth and value, expand business activity within the SME sectors, generate more and better employment opportunities and attract in new talents and skills, enhance the competitiveness of the sector in order to increase exports, accentuate the development of human resources in tandem with the selected sectors, increase foreign direct investment inflows and improve the governance of the local economy.**

However, the pathway to achieving this is difficult and complex. Significant changes in academia, government agency engagement and industry itself is required.

Fundamentally this plan can only work, if the inner limits of thinking in Donegal and those who support it are transformed to embrace the change needed and do not prevent it from doing so.

This Enterprise Development Strategy and Plan document outlines the Donegal County commitment to transform Donegal and the Metropolitan area into a nexus for commerce as well as a nationally recognised centre for innovation in distinct areas. The entire document is centred on the need for a collaborative effort involving the entire business community and an investment commitment from both the public and private sector.

This Strategy will require significant leadership and civic commitment but the rewards of pursuing this challenge are significant. Over the next decade, the Strategy is proposing investments into programmes and research and development that will create:



**01**  
A national leadership position for Donegal in key identified sectors where it can enable Ireland to take an international leadership position.

**02**  
New technical, business, and technology job opportunities for Donegal residents.

**03**  
Business opportunities especially in the key priority investment areas.

**04**  
Partnership opportunities for local businesses to expand their operations locally and internationally.

**05**  
Distinct and competitive local business clusters in all of Donegal's business communities.

All of this requires a governance structure that enables relevant levels of consultation and orchestration between all the actors engaged in the county. The strategy and associated plan see a

new type of network emergent in Donegal that shows the changes in the relationships between universities, governments, public agencies and businesses.



## 02. CURRENT CONTEXT

The overall analysis of the economy in Donegal is one that is relatively static. Economic activity continues within enterprises across the sectors within the county and there have been noted achievements since 2016 which have been observed by many including:

- 01 The commencement of early-stage cluster formation across distinct and viable sector lines
- 02 The growth in Tourism due to the Wild Atlantic Way
- 03 The Local Enterprise Office noted interactions in micro and mini enterprise development
- 04 The formation and alignment of the Metropolitan Area concept with Donegal, Derry and Strabane
- 05 The evolution of LYIT towards Technical University status which can only be a progressive step
- 06 The attraction of some centre of excellence capability to Ulster University (Magee Campus)
- 07 The development of Green and Blue economic messaging and engagement in the county
- 08 The expansion of FDI projects in conjunction with the IDA
- 09 The support of indigenous businesses by state agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Údarás Na Gaeltachta

However, these have yet to yield significant dividends. It is important to recognise that these do take time to demonstrate economic growth but

for the moment, despite this activity, the Donegal economy is relatively static and there must be an intervention to change this.

The characteristics of the county are not that different to other parts of the country that have demonstrated economic development and growth. Clearly there is a geographical dimension to Donegal, which has seen it historically isolated, but this dimension now has positive aspects in respect of a larger metropolitan area, access to natural resources and landscapes and sitting on the border of the European Union.

There remains a fundamental question over the availability and scale of skills into the county - the current available workforce will not be sufficient to enable the economy to grow from its current base and in particular, capacity around professional and scientific categories will need to be attracted into the county to support the growth of distinct sectors alongside ICT skillsets. This is particularly so in those areas where there can be a pull through in value added employment such as engineering, manufacturing, utilities, and scientific and research fields where the multiplier impact on the economy is greater. Given the current profile of Donegal the county does not currently possess the quantum of skills internally to grow the enterprise base.





### 03. VISION & MISSION

This Enterprise Development plan is about placing Donegal in the top 5 counties in Ireland in the next decade and nationally as a recognised centre of innovation for specific sectors with a vibrant and innovative SME and micro business sector.



#### Vision

The Vision is for Donegal to become a gateway for enterprise and a nationally recognised centre for innovation in a core number of selected sectoral areas utilising the natural assets of the county and integrating/maximizing its role on the border of the European Union.



#### Mission

The Mission is to create a vibrant enterprise ecosystem that catalyzes the development of jobs, investment, entrepreneurship, and innovation within Donegal and facilitates a transformation, which is nationally recognised as the top 5 economic hubs in Ireland outside Dublin in distinct sectors.



## 04. CHANGING THE CHARACTER OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN DONEGAL

The plan proposes several changes in the characteristics of Donegal over the next decade:



### Economic Resiliency

This will be achieved by the diversification of the economy over 6 focus areas and enriching those sectors by completing the Innovation System in Donegal by itself as outlined in this strategy.



### Transformative

Companies will be formed in Donegal and come to Donegal to transform their business in Europe based on the levels of knowledge, design and skills capability.



### Capacity Building

Enhanced focus on providing and developing expertise.



### Outward Looking

Export markets will be essential, as will a focus on managerial and commercial skills.



### High Visibility

Donegal will be marketed as a place to do business.



### Innovative

Donegal will demonstrate a national leadership position in the innovation aspect of selected sectors.



### Evidence-Based

Donegal enterprise development will deal with facts and will provide the correct information to benchmarking companies forging relationships with them and proving economic returns.



### Collaborative Leadership

The leadership of the county in industry, academia and Government need to work with companies to make them successful in Donegal.

## 05. THE FOUR PILLARS OF DEVELOPMENT

The Enterprise Development Plan is predicated on four pillars of development:



01

Attract Investment to Transform Donegal Enterprise Development

### Objective

To identify and unlock investment opportunities that will accelerate Donegal's transformation over the next decade.

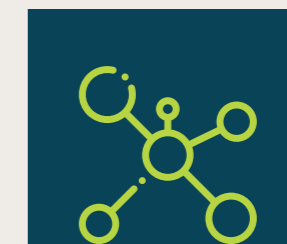


02

Grow Donegal's Innovation Economy

### Objective

To transform Donegal into a nationally recognised centre for innovation over the next decade covering foreign investors, social innovation, start up companies with a focus on knowledge intensive companies in the identified sectors.



03

Building Distinct & Competitive Business Clusters

### Objective

To increase the market competitiveness of individual Donegal based businesses and build the distinctiveness of each Donegal's declared focus business communities.



04

Create Jobs and Develop the Workforce

### Objective

To create one job per resident worker through retention, attraction and development of Donegal's workforce over the next decade.



Each pillar has distinct programmes, which will support the development of enterprises in Donegal and the metropolitan area, and all the programmes are interconnected.

The identified business sectors/ clusters, which will be driven by sector-specific bi-annual road maps are:



ICT DIGITAL



PATIENT CENTRE HEALTHCARE



TOURISM +



ENGINEERING/ADVANCE MANUFACTURING



BLUE ECONOMY



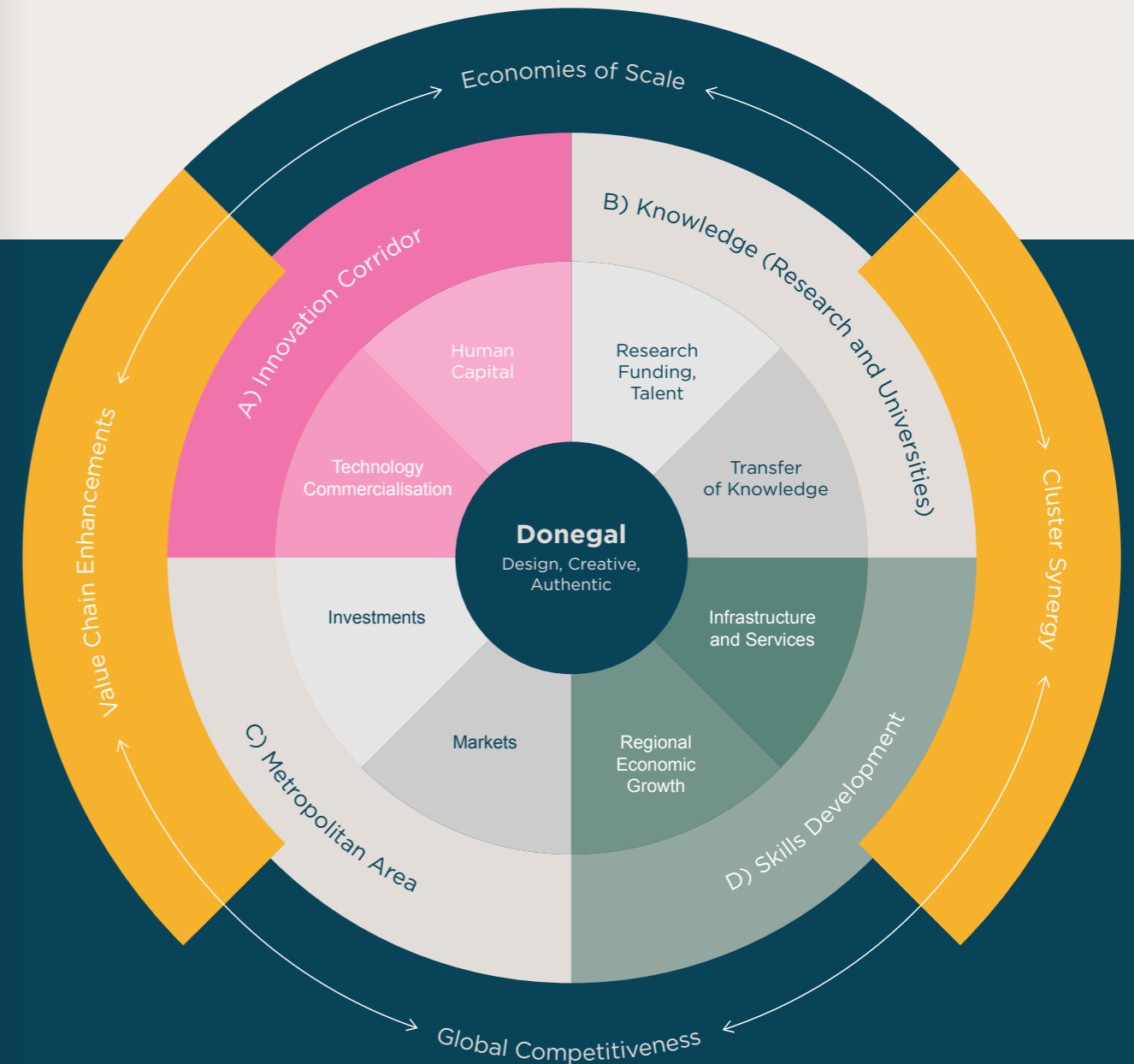
CREATIVE



FOOD COAST

This **model of enterprise development** will see all the actors in the Donegal (and Metropolitan Area) being engaged in a value chain of R&D, Multinational Corporation and SME / Micro business collaboration in the key development sector areas. This is

essential to enable a productive ecosystem to be developed that will combine the best of all these facets of the Donegal ecosystem and ensure that SMEs are included in any significant initiative.



## 06. DELIVERY

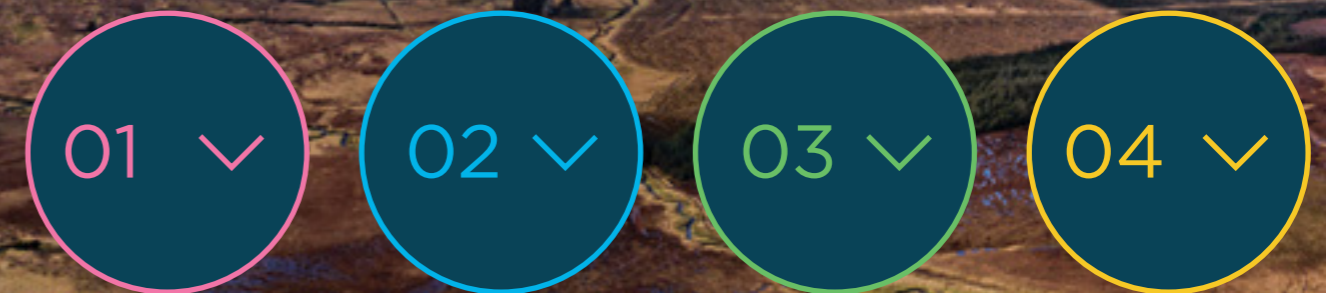
The delivery of the strategy will be overseen by a steering committee comprised of private and public sector representatives and chaired by a private sector chairperson. The steering committee will be supported by the Local Enterprise Office which will provide executive and administrative support.

Each pillar and cluster will have a designated delivery team comprising private and public sector representatives and supported by the active engagement of the relevant public sector agencies.

Each pillar and sector cluster will develop its 2/3 year action plan, each of which will be continuously reviewed, reworked and updated to reflect the dynamic nature of the sectors and the evolving ecosystem in the county.

## 07. OUTPUTS

The Strategy will seek to achieve the following outputs:



Greater push from within academia to attain sustained enterprise growth and value.

An expansion of business activity within the SME sectors.

More and better employment opportunities created.

New talents and skills attracted to enterprise within the county.



Enhanced the competitiveness across the sectors in order to increase exports.

The development of human resources within the selected sectors accentuated and enhanced.

Increase in the foreign direct investment inflows.

Improved the governance of the local economy.

Each of the actions for the pillars has a distinct measurement associated with it. The overarching component of measuring the success of this enterprise development strategy will be done from two perspectives

- business development and economic/ community wealth generation. The strategy sets out clear methods of measurement for each area of activity under the strategy.



# 08. LONG-TERM BENEFITS

This strategy has been developed with the following implications in mind:











**Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil**  
**Local Enterprise Office**

The Strategic Enterprise Plan will be implemented by the Local Enterprise Office Donegal in conjunction with all of our partners.

If you have any questions regarding this Enterprise Plan, please get in touch using the contact details outlined on the right.

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