

Impact Report Local Enterprise Office Carlow 2014 - 2021



Oifig
Fiontair
Áitiúil

Local
Enterprise
Office

Making It Happen

Measuring the impact
of eight years of Local
Enterprise Office Carlow
2014 - 2021



Plan

Start

Grow

LocalEnterprise.ie/Carlow



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland





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Who are We

Small businesses are the heart of the Irish economy. Tasked with enterprise development and job creation, the Local Enterprise Office Network is the most important resource for small businesses in Ireland. Located in Carlow County Council, the Local Enterprise Office Carlow is the first stop shop for those looking to plan, start or grow their business.

In April 2014 the existing 35 County Enterprise Boards were dissolved and 31 Local Enterprise Offices were established within the Local Authority structure.

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) now The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) re-structured the delivery of supports for micro-enterprise to enhance the national enterprise support model for small and micro businesses. This adjustment resulted in a coordinated and cohesive approach to the development of micro-enterprise in Ireland and has the potential to contribute significantly to future economic growth and job creation across the regions. The LEO model ensures that micro-enterprise and small business service delivery continues with significant **local input, within a national micro-enterprise policy framework.**

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office



ENTERPRISE
IRELAND



COMHAIRLE CONTAE
CHEATHARLACH
CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

On a daily basis, **LEO Carlow** provides the right supports at the right time to new and existing small businesses, including:

- financial assistance and access to microfinance loans
- training and development
- mentoring and advice
- signposting to relevant bodies and agencies
- networking opportunities

Enterprise Ireland

A Framework Service Level Agreement (SLA) sets the context for the operation of the LEOs by the Local Authorities, on behalf of Enterprise Ireland (EI). Under this SLA, EI plays a significant oversight role in the activities of the LEOs and, through its Centre of Excellence (CoE), ensures the appropriate matching and linking of national policy and programmes with local policies and programmes.

Carlow County Council

The City and County Management Association (CCMA) is a representative body for the Chief Executives of City and County Local Authorities throughout Ireland and has a key role in ensuring the successful implementation of the LEO initiative. The LEO under the remit of Carlow County Council includes the Economic Development Unit & Special Project Development Unit which are designed to work side by side in order to strengthen the enterprise eco-system in County Carlow.

{The funding for the LEOs comes from the Irish Exchequer and the EU Structural and Investment Funds.}





Welcome from Kathleen Holohan

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Carlow is the 'first stop shop' for anyone thinking about starting or growing a business in Carlow. While the enterprise environment has been radically altered since the establishment of the LEOs in 2014, LEO Carlow continues its commitment to a single mission: to provide new and existing small businesses with the expert advice, tailored training and financial supports they need to help them thrive.

This report looks back at the impact LEO Carlow has had in the enterprise ecosystem from 2014 to 2021. One of the fundamental principles behind the design and operation of the LEOs is that they are uniquely placed to be both key stakeholders in the national enterprise strategy to create jobs in Ireland and at the same time remain closely connected to the local enterprise ecosystem. LEO Carlow engages with its diverse range of businesses every day to deliver valuable supports and actively stays connected so that it can innovate to meet the ever-changing needs of its clients.

LEO Carlow works closely with the other LEOs in the region - Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford & Tipperary in partnership with the Ireland South East Development Office. Examples of Regional Projects have included the Regional Agri-Food Project, South East Remote Working Study, Start Up & Scale Up Programmes and Green for Micro Scheme.

LEO Carlow as part of its wider in Economic Development & Special Project Development has ensured that Carlow County Council has actively responded to funding opportunities for County Carlow in the form of National and International Funding.

Covid-19 has undoubtedly forced the world to adjust, adapt, and pivot. The LEO reworked how it delivered key services almost

overnight and shifted training programmes and mentoring supports online. New training events, like online Lunch & Learn sessions and Covid-specific training courses, were created to support businesses through the pandemic.

During 2022 we will launch the inCarlow Economic Development & Business Support Strategy for 2022-2027 which will present a future framework for the development of economic opportunities for the County. We have the vision and drive to continue to deliver for our business community through a variety of key projects and supports working in partnership with our key stakeholders at local, national and international level.

I am confident that LEO Carlow will continue to support ambitious entrepreneurs in our communities in County Carlow to plan, start and grow their businesses in 2022 and beyond.

Kathleen Holohan,
Chief Executive Officer, Carlow County Council



Output Highlights 2014 - 2021

€1.4M

Priming Grants to
55 SMEs with
less than 10 staff

€1.6M

Business Expansion Grants
to **80** SMEs with less than
10 staff in manufacturing
& international services

44 successful
town & village
applications valued
at **€3.2M**

616

training &
networking
events

FUNDING



Enterprise Ireland
- Business Support Budget
€ 9,341,342.78



Carlow County Council
€ 2,944,441.00

Special Project Development
€ 8,034,848.84

TOTAL: €20,320,632.62

10,000+

students engaged in
Student Enterprise
Programme

1,672

mentoring
specialist
sessions

€1.1M direct

EU funding for creative
industry, food & drink sector
development, tourism
& capacity development
training

€394K

feasibility studies
to **42** projects

12,300

training &
development
participants

€852K

investment
in festivals
& events

€737K

investment in
tourism promotion
& development

325

trading online
vouchers
approved



First Stop Shop

The Local Enterprise Office is the first stop for Carlow’s aspiring entrepreneurs. The physical or virtual door is always open. Every day, the LEO helps business owners find out more about the supports available to help plan, start, or grow a business.

Danny Barron, CIELS

“If you approach the Local Enterprise Office for assistance, they’re very open, very helpful. They will meet you and let you know what services are available. They’re very positive and constructive in their interactions with the local business community.”



One to one meetings are the start of our relationships with local businesses. Our dedicated and experienced staff members are available to meet local entrepreneurs and those interested in starting a business to provide confidential business advice and direction.

Since 2014 our business advisors have held over **4,000** individual meetings with Carlow businesspeople.



At the heart of Ireland’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, the LEO team help their clients navigate the organisations that can help their business grow, including:

- Local authorities
- Enterprise Ireland
- Education and Training Boards
- Microfinance Ireland
- Fáilte Ireland
- Enterprise Europe Network
- Revenue Commissioners
- InterTrade Ireland
- Bord Bia
- Skillnet Ireland
- Credit Review Office
- National Association of Community Enterprise Centres
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
- Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

Séamus Doran,
Assistant Head
of Economic
Development
& Enterprise



“There are over 80 different government supports available to help small businesses. The sheer amount of them can be overwhelming to businesspeople at times and they can struggle to identify the most suitable ones for their businesses. The First Stop Shop support offered by Carlow County Council’s Local Enterprise Office works in partnership with entrepreneurs to identify the supports which will put them on the pathway to sustainable growth. The Local Enterprise Office’s engagements are positive and constructive in our interactions with the local business community.”

Lily Homes, PB Machine Tech

“The LEO has always been supportive in delivering speedy responses to business needs.”



Financial Assistance

Local Enterprise Office Carlow provides a range of grant assistance to eligible businesses. These are designed to help fund start-up costs, expansion plans and jobs growth.

Feasibility grants are designed to assist with researching market demand for a product or service and examining its sustainability.



Ciaran Bolger, RT Smart Data

“Our Local Enterprise Office was instrumental to our success by listening to our idea and supporting us quickly. They provided us with a grant which helped in the rapid development of our solution. There are lots of supports available to small businesses, so make sure to see what is available to you.”

The **Business Expansion grant** is designed to assist the business in its growth phase after the initial 18 month start-up period.



**Brendan Kavanagh,
Brendan Kavanagh Furniture**

“Without doubt my business is in a much better place because of the supports offered by the LEO. There is no way my business would be in as strong a place without them. I am very appreciative of all the help I received along the journey and am looking forward to many years ahead working together.”

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

**Tomasz & Magda Pydych,
Little Crew**

The support of the Local Enterprise Office through a priming grant allowed this family to move their start-up business from their home to a dedicated unit in a business park outside Bagenalstown. “We are really happy to have support from the Local Enterprise Office in Carlow. They do help us a lot. We get so many mentoring sessions from different people and different fields of business, for example, marketing, strategy, and finance.”



Summary of Grants Approved 2014 - 2021

TYPE OF GRANT	NUMBER OF GRANTS APPROVED	APPROVED AMOUNT €
Business Expansion	80	€1,630,698.08
Priming	55	€1,464,511.46
Feasibility / Innovation	42	€396,845.62
TOTAL	177	€3,492,055.16

The Evaluation and Approvals Committee is the volunteer committee that meets to review and approve grant funding. The committee is made up by several members including: a Chair [Director of Service delegated by the Chief Executive of Carlow County Council]; an Enterprise Ireland representative; and individuals with specific areas of business expertise. The LEO recognises the significant commitment the committee makes to supporting the work of the office and Carlow’s entrepreneurs.

Progression Pathway to Enterprise Ireland

Local Enterprise Office Carlow works with small companies looking to export or trade internationally, helping them to grow to a point where they can avail of Enterprise Ireland supports.

Financial Assistance

The Local Enterprise Office supports businesses as they investigate expanding to new markets to grow the business.

The Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters' grant part-funds the costs of investigating and researching export markets such as exhibiting at trade fairs, preparing marketing material, and developing websites specifically targeting overseas markets.

Local Enterprise Office Carlow invested

€35,429 in

24 businesses

from 2017 - 2021 to
research and develop
their overseas markets.



Joanne Browne, Jo Browne

"The TAME grant has been really, really helpful in building the Jo Browne business."



Microfinance Ireland

Microfinance Ireland (MFI) is a not-for-profit lender established to deliver the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund. It provides loans of between €2,000 and €25,000 to commercially viable businesses that employ fewer than 10 people, with an annual turnover of less than €2 million.

Local Enterprise Offices assist client companies with their MFI loan applications, which attract a discount on standard loan rates.



**Microfinance
Ireland**

Small Business Loans

Training & Development

Over 12,300 participants have attended training programmes offered by Local Enterprise Office Carlow between 2014 - 2021. The LEO offers a diverse range of training programmes aimed at micro / small business and entrepreneurs looking to acquire new skills or develop existing ones. The aim is to enable and equip participants to start or grow their own businesses.

Every year the Local Enterprise Office invests over **€100,000** in a suite of **Start Up & Development Programmes** which are provided to the business community in a low to no cost way.

In 2021 Carlow County Council's Local Enterprise Office published an extensive training needs analysis. This research-based needs analysis was developed to guide the delivery of training and business development programmes to the business community in County Carlow and was the result of a consultation with over 200 Carlow businesses.

Start Your Own Business Participant, November 2019

"It's really given me a great perspective on what I need to do to make my business idea succeed. I feel I can go ahead with confidence now. Thank you Local Enterprise Office!"

The LEO's core programme for those starting to consider establishing a business is the **Start Your Own Business Programme**. The office runs several programmes throughout the year. Over 650 participants have enjoyed the benefits of this programme in Carlow since 2014, leading to the establishment of many innovative local businesses.

The Management Development Programme

is the Local Enterprise Office's flagship support programme for the owner / managers of established Carlow businesses who want to approach the growth of their businesses with a new strategic focus. Every year dozens of Carlow business owner / managers take part in this transformative programme.





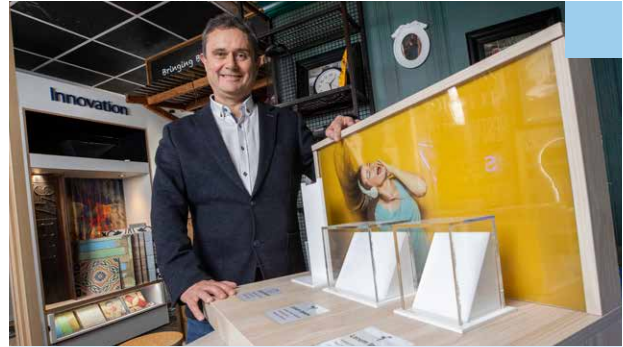
Training & Development

The Food Academy is a training programme aimed at supporting and nurturing start-up food businesses. The Local Enterprise Offices have joined forces with Bord Bia and SuperValu on this initiative to provide a consistent level of food marketing knowledge to new and early-stage food business owners. At the final workshop, participants get the opportunity to present their product to a panel from SuperValu and if successful, can participate in a trial based in local shops, which in the right circumstances, could progress over time to a national listing with SuperValu.

Unison Business Development Series is a programme of short, tailored, half day business programmes delivered by the Local Enterprise Office throughout the year. Topics cover a broad range of subjects relevant to local businesses from technology to marketing to finance. The training needs analysis published by the Local Enterprise Office showed a demand from local businesses for bite-sized programmes which could serve as a lead-in to more comprehensive supports. The popular Unison series was developed in response to this demand.

The Profit Academy is a financial development programme which supports the owners and key staff of Carlow businesses to appreciate the financial factors which impact their growth and profitability. The Profit Academy, which is unique to County Carlow, gives companies the opportunity to develop their in-house capacity and build an understanding of their financial health which will help them to grow and develop.

YEAR	TRAINING PARTICIPANTS	TRAINING PROGRAMMES
2014	1754	66
2015	1318	55
2016	842	57
2017	1622	75
2018	1620	71
2019	1409	115
2020	2238	120
2021	1589	57



Mark Dowling, CGL Retail Solutions

“We received fantastic support from LEO, with support for staff training, Lean principles, business development, marketing and various online tutorials. While it is nice to be grant-aided, we find one of their best resources is the training courses they facilitate. Every small business should take advantage of this offering.”



Amplify is a unique programme developed by Local Enterprise Office Carlow. It gives participants the knowledge and understanding to develop recurring online subscription incomes.

Nicola Brown, Fine Art Textiles

“Support for developing my practice has been fantastic, particularly from my LEO. Recently, I was selected to participate in Amplify, an innovative programme to help Carlow-based businesses join the thriving Global membership and subscription economy.”



Mentoring

Local Enterprise Office Carlow’s Mentor Programme is designed to match the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business practitioners with small business owner / managers who need practical and strategic one to one advice and guidance. The mentor contributes independent, informed observation and advice.

Almost **1,700** Carlow entrepreneurs were supported by the Local Enterprise Office to avail of mentoring supports from 2014-2021




Paul McNally, McNally Dental Clinic

“The Local Enterprise Office in Carlow County Council have been brilliant as they have really helped us with mentoring.”

Fergal Doyle, Arboretum

“All through the life of Arboretum, what was once known as Carlow County Enterprise Board, now Carlow LEO, has supported us through excellent training, advice and events.”



YEAR	MENTORING PARTICIPANTS
2014	98
2015	114
2016	147
2017	217
2018	251
2019	316
2020	256
2021	273

Brexit Ready

As hubs of expert advice, information and practical supports, dedicated Local Enterprise Office Carlow staff have been helping businesses to manage a Brexit response and take simple steps to prepare for Brexit. LEO supports, including one to one Brexit mentoring, proved crucial to small Carlow businesses as Great Britain exited the Single Market and Customs Union.



Enterprise Awards & Promotion

Local Enterprise Office Carlow promotes a culture of entrepreneurship through a number of local, regional and national initiatives.

Local Enterprise Week

This high-profile annual initiative showcases the full range of enterprise supports LEOs can offer existing and aspiring entrepreneurs. A week-long programme of mentoring, advice and networking shines a spotlight on the services and supports available to SMEs and start-ups, as well as providing a selection of events and workshops, tailored to inspire and inform. Local Enterprise Week offers a wealth of opportunity to learn, share, inform and contribute to the thriving start-up and micro enterprise community in Carlow.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Carlow's David Walsh, founder of HaloCare and former CEO of Netwatch, was the first ever recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award, in the National Enterprise Awards. He received this prestigious accolade in 2021.



David Walsh, founder of HaloCare and former CEO of Netwatch

National Enterprise Awards

31 companies are shortlisted by the LEOs for the National Enterprise Awards every year. The series of country-wide competitions culminates in the national final which takes place in Dublin's Mansion House. 12 winning companies across a range of categories share a €40,000 prize fund to further support their business to grow and scale.



Pat Amond, Carlow Toolmaking Services represented Carlow in the 2019 National Enterprise Awards

"We were exposed to people who didn't even know that CTS existed. It reassures our customers that we are an award-winning and reputable company. This has opened doors for us throughout the country to several very targeted customers."

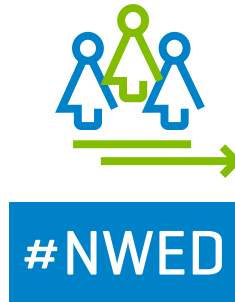
Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE)

This €2 million investment competition was established in 2014 to encourage and support a culture of entrepreneurship among young people in Ireland, to promote entrepreneurship as a career choice, and to encourage the establishment and development of new innovative businesses by Ireland's young entrepreneurs.

Enterprise Awards & Promotion

National Women's Enterprise Day

This Local Enterprise Office initiative is an annual event designed to celebrate women in business. Events in the programme are free of charge and include workshops, panel discussions, facilitated networking to connect more entrepreneurs with each other and advice and insights from some of Ireland's most successful female entrepreneurs.



Local Enterprise Village

31 small businesses are supported by their Local Enterprise Office each year to exhibit their products and services at the Local Enterprise Village at the National Ploughing Championships.

Local Enterprise Office Carlow hosted the Local Enterprise Village in 2019 at the site of the National Ploughing Championships in Fenagh when a **record 297,000 visitors** attended "the ploughing" over its **3 days**.



Showcase Ireland

Showcase Ireland is a trade show for the crafts and design sector held annually in the RDS in Dublin. It is an event which attracts over 2,700 trade buyers over its 4 days. Showcase is one of the biggest trade shows of the year with buyers attending from around the world.

A select number of companies from each LEO are supported with a stand in the Enterprise Zone of Showcase Ireland in January every year. Local Enterprise Office Carlow has always been extremely active in supporting our clients to exhibit at Showcase and to prepare for the opportunity to present their products in front of some of the industry's most influential buyers. Carlow clients who have exhibited in the Enterprise Zone include Ballyshane Irish Wood Design, Jo Browne Natural Solid Perfumes and Sidereus Watches.



Networking

Local Enterprise Office networks are key to provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs to come together and support each other as they grow and develop their businesses.

Taste inCarlow is an innovative marketing and networking platform representing many of the outstanding food and drink producers and providers based in Carlow. The group aims to raise awareness of the quality of food and drink associated with Carlow and to provide an opportunity for businesses working in that sector to explore options for collaboration.



POWERHOUSE Women in Business Network is a Local Enterprise Office Carlow initiative for women running their own business. Being an entrepreneur can be challenging and the group provides opportunities to share experiences, learn from other women and expand the business network.



The Enterprise Europe Network helps business grow through tailored support, new business and technology partnerships, commercial opportunities, licensing deals, and partner searches for EU funded R&D. Services are tailored to SMEs but are also available to all other businesses, universities and research centres.



Networking

FORM Designmade in Carlow is a group of designer makers and craftspeople living and working Carlow.

Collectively FORM's aims are to:

- Raise the profile of designer makers and craftspeople producing high quality work in Co. Carlow
- Promote Carlow as a destination for high quality design and craft
- Provide a forum for the exchange of views, common objectives, collective activities, constructive criticism and feedback amongst highly skilled designer makers and craftspeople



FORM was established by Carlow County Council's Local Enterprise Office and continues to be funded by the LEO. FORM's activities have included a Christmas pop-up shop in Fairgreen Shopping Centre.

Mary Bourke, DeBurca Design

"The opportunity to showcase members' work is a great boost for the craftspeople involved."



The Business Picnic is an annual event which takes place in Carlow in the summer and is one of Ireland's most innovative networking events. The event is hosted by Carlow County Council's Local Enterprise Office and attracts businesses from across the country.

The Business Picnic is a free event designed to encourage professional connections in an informal setting. Open to businesses all over Ireland, the Picnic aims to encourage future business development, not just in Carlow, but nationally.



Trade Mission to Netherlands

Carlow County Council's Local Enterprise Office organised a networking and trade mission to the Netherlands for Carlow businesses in 2019 as part of our wide programme of supports to encourage the diversification of marketplaces as a response to Brexit. 7 representatives of Carlow businesses travelled on the trade mission and they held 28 pre-arranged meetings with prospective Dutch costumers over a 3 day period.

County Carlow Chamber is the representative body for businesses in the county. Carlow County Council's Local Enterprise Office supports the chamber to deliver a range of networking activities throughout the year.




County Carlow Chamber
Advancing business together

Trading Online Vouchers

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOV) is designed to get small firms trading online, opening up markets at home and abroad. The initiative involves training, advice, and financial assistance. Designed under the National Digital Strategy to assist small businesses to increase their online trade, the scheme is funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, and delivered by Local Enterprise Offices. A total of 325 vouchers were approved to Carlow businesses between 2014 - 2021 to the value of €698,627. Of this amount 161 vouchers collectively worth €366,615 were approved in 2020 to Carlow businesses who wanted to develop new customer bases in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

325 vouchers
approved to Carlow business
between 2014 - 2021 to
the total value worth
€698,627




Catriona Cullen, Cullen Nurseries

“The Trading Online Voucher was instrumental in us being able to expand our business, open up to new markets and reach new customers who wouldn’t have known us otherwise.”

YEAR	TRADING ONLINE VOUCHERS APPROVED	TOTAL VALUE
2014	18	€ 38,077.00
2015	29	€ 54,853.00
2016	22	€ 38,057.50
2017	12	€ 23,583.00
2018	5	€ 7,600.00
2019	7	€ 13,821.70
2020	161	€ 366,615.81
2021	71	€ 156,019.16

Green & Lean

Local Enterprise Office Carlow provides a suite of Lean for Micro and Green for Micro programmes to businesses in Carlow to help them become financially, operationally and environmentally sustainable.

Lean and Green Projects are about looking at new or innovative ways to do things within your business. But also looking at your business in a new or innovative way. This can help with the future of a business to reduce costs, remain competitive, be more sustainable and, ultimately, provide a better product or service to customers.



David Butler, Butler's Organic Eggs

"The Local Enterprise Office has transformed how we think about running our business. As we grow, we look forward to their continued support."



Jim Murphy, Murphy's Butchers

"We spoke to the Lean mentors on our programme, who helped us break down a lot of things like costings and other areas of the business, which can be overlooked. Sometimes you get so caught up in providing the service, that you forget you have to make money, and keep the business open! If you don't do these simple, background tasks, then you can lose money and therefore, your business. It really helped us a lot."

Optimization+

Minimising food waste is one of the easiest financial savings a food business can make. Food producers, pubs, cafés and restaurants can all adopt simple techniques which will have an immediate impact on their profitability and sustainability.

Local Enterprise Office Carlow developed the **Optimization+ Programme** to help Carlow businesses reduce waste and save money. Food and drinks producers and providers were supported to measure the cost of food waste to their business using the Touchstone tool and then minimise this cost through the use of simple lean and green techniques.



**Colin Duggan,
Woodford
Dolmen Hotel**

"That has really helped us to reopen, as it made us think very methodically about how we reopen."

Student Enterprise Programme

Helping to seed the idea of entrepreneurship in secondary schools, the **Student Enterprise Programme** encourages young people to research, establish and run their own businesses, with the help of student enterprise coordinators from the Local Enterprise Office.

Secondary schools in Carlow have always embraced the opportunity to allow their students experience entrepreneurship through the Student Enterprise Programme. Each year up to 11 Carlow schools enter the competition with up to 160 mini-companies being formed to compete within their school and against the rest of the county.



Economic Development & Special Project Development



Economic Development & Special Projects

The Local Enterprise Office works on a cross functional basis to develop competitive funding and economic development projects which are delivered in-house by the economic development team of the Local Enterprise Office and across the wider corporate body of Carlow County Council.

Since the establishment of the LEO offices and as part of this cross functional work €8.4 million of resources have been awarded to Carlow County Council as follows:

EU Funding	€ 1,120,547.00
URDF Pre-Development / Phase 1	€ 760,000.00
Redz	€ 250,000.00
Rural Regeneration & Development Fund	€ 876,820.00
Town & Village - Masterplan Funding	€ 100,000.00
Town & Village - Streetscape Scheme	€ 261,760.00
Town & Village Connected Hubs	€ 103,000.00
Enterprise Ireland - Regional Enterprise Centre Development	€ 139,178.00
Faillte Ireland - Destination Towns	€ 500,000.00

The delivery of these projects and actions are delivered on a cross functional basis across the Local Authority.

Carlow Tourism

Carlow Tourism is the marketing and tourism development company for County Carlow whose remit is to increase the number of domestic and overseas holidaymakers to the county and maximise economic benefits vis-à-vis job creation and revenue for the entire county of Carlow. The company aims to provide a cohesive approach to tourism marketing and development planning in co-operation and collaboration with all relevant agencies with a remit for tourism development within County Carlow.

Carlow Tourism was established in 2001 as a partnership between Carlow County Council, agencies and the tourism industry within the county. It was established on the basis that funding for operational costs would be provided by the County Council in the Annual Estimates and paid by way of a grant-in-aid at the commencement of each year, to assist with cash flow and project management. Revenue is also generated by the company from a variety of sources including an annual membership fee, grants from other statutory bodies and agencies and other sources including fundraising, to fulfil the objectives for which the company was established.



As part of its work, Carlow County Council provide part funding for the operation of Carlow Tourism under a Memorandum of Understanding and annual operational plan and also works with the company on a variety of marketing and product development projects under the Town & Village Scheme, EU Funding and other aspects of its work.

carlow
tourism

The objectives of Carlow Tourism are:

- To carry on the expeditious promotion, development and administration of the tourism product in the whole of the county (Urban and Rural) of Carlow in collaboration with all relevant agencies and bodies with a remit for tourism development in County Carlow;
- To facilitate the creation of additional employment derived and supported by the continued and additional revenue generated from the marketing of Carlow as a tourism destination;
- To harmonise the workings of all tourism interests, groups, individuals and activities who promote Carlow as a quality tourism destination;
- To develop a marketing strategy which aims to generate an awareness of County Carlow as a tourist destination, both in the marketplace and among the people of Carlow;
- To focus on market segments which offer the most potential while also maximising the length of stay and expenditure by tourists and visitors in the Carlow area;
- To identify, develop and promote products which will increase tourist traffic in co-operation with all relevant bodies.



EU Funding & Development

Carlow County Council as part of its Special Project Development brief develops direct EU funding opportunities in relevant areas of development for the County. This work enhances and compliments the resources available locally and nationally via the development of international partnerships which are designed to enhance the County Carlow Eco-System.

Catalyst was a cross-border Ireland Wales pilot project that used the theme of sustainability to drive and inspire innovation within Welsh and Irish businesses from the food and drink and life science sectors, two of the three priority areas of the Ireland Wales programme.

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David was the lead partner and was joined by Carlow County Council, WRAP Cymru, Tipperary County Council and the Institute of Technology Carlow.

The Catalyst project was part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Ireland-Wales Programme. The Ireland-Wales programme plays a vital role in helping to foster partnerships and business links through cross-border projects between the coastal counties of East and South-East Ireland and West Wales.

Carlow County Council is an EU partner in RU:RBAN which is a Good Practice Transfer Network funded under Urbact.

RU:RBAN's Good Practice is the Management model of Urban gardens in Rome to be transferred to newcomer cities that are geographically, historically and socio-culturally distant from each other, to ensure sharing of experiences to enhance the capacities of local governance. Transfer efforts will be ensured on the 3 well known and successful components the good practice is divided into: 1. Capacity building, 2. Inspiring and training people to manage urban gardens (Gardenisers), 3. Governance & Regulations. The RU:RBAN project lead partner is in Italy with partners from Split in Croatia, Algeciras in Spain, Alexandroupolis in Greece and Carlow. The project will conclude in 2023. *For further information visit: www.urbact.eu/rurban-second-wave*

63 Enterprises Supported
10 Direct Additional Jobs
14 Cross Border Research Projects
22 New Products Developed



EU Funding & Development

Carlow County Council is lead partner in a Creative Europe Project called Craft Hub. The project is coordinated by the LEO Offices in partners with Arts, Community & Finance.



Craft Hub is a European project co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme focused on Craft in the context of cultural heritage and its continuing relevance in contemporary practice.

The project activities involve investigating and documenting craft skills and processes; their differing application in creative practice across Europe; and questions of cultural specificity & individual motivations of practitioners. This will be addressed through a comprehensive and exciting program to allow the creation of new craft work / experimental investigations into process and material supported by 42 transnational maker residencies, 305 days of outreach work, 1 festival, 7 exhibitions and 2 conferences.



Partners include, APOSTOLINA TSALTAMPAKI KAI SIA EE [Greece], Materahub [Italy], Craft Scotland [UK], Designkolen Kolding [Denmark], Glasmalerei Peters Studios [Germany], Oslo Metropolitan University [Norway], Universidade NOVA de Lisboa [Portugal] & University of Wales Trinity Saint David [UK].

For further information visit: www.crafthub.eu

Program supported by:

42 transnational
maker residencies,

305 days of
outreach work,

1 festival, **7** exhibitions

and **2** conferences



Development of the Food Sector

Taste in Carlow

'The Taste of Carlow County 2020-2025' strategy focuses on the development of production, processing, promotion and consumption of locally sourced food in County Carlow while also exploring cross boundary opportunities for collaborations.



The project brand and promotion activities were developed in 2021 and in 2022 a Food & Drink Animator will be appointed to further progress a suite of activities under the project.



The project has five core development pillars which form the basis of future development work for the County.

These include:

- The development of a communications and marketing strategy for Carlow Food and Drink
- The creation of a stakeholder forum, steering group and subgroups to oversee and assist with Carlow Food and Drink activity
- Support and develop tourism and agri-tourism
- Develop and provide appropriate business development and training supports
- Develop regional partnerships to benefit food and drink businesses



Closing Remarks

On behalf of Carlow County Council we wish to acknowledge the support and guidance received from the LEO Unit – the LEO Centre of Excellence – in Enterprise Ireland as we transitioned from County Enterprise Board to Local Enterprise Office and worked to establish and position the Local Enterprise Office both as part of a national network of offices and an on the ground local hub of expertise and enterprise supports.

The environment for small business owners has dramatically changed since the establishment of the Local Enterprise Office in 2014. At that time, Ireland’s economy was in recovery mode. Since then, Ireland’s business owners have faced several challenges – a difficulty with attracting and retaining talent as the economy began to flourish again; then the task of learning, planning, and adapting for the uncertainty and change that came with Brexit; and most recently the global Covid-19 pandemic. As the external circumstances changed, so too have County Carlow businesses.

Our team has witnessed immense levels of adaptation, innovation, resilience in our client companies. We have and will be right there with these businesses, their back-room support team, as they plan, start, and grow businesses in County Carlow.

Over the next five period, LEO Carlow will continue to provide first class support to the enterprise ecosystem in Carlow and will deliver on a vision for Carlow’s economy to: recover and grow sustainably to achieve a vibrant county, with revitalised towns and villages, which creates economic opportunities to enable people and business to thrive. Underpinning the delivery of the vision, three ‘pillars of focus’ are proposed which address economic development across the whole county. Given the immediate impacts and challenges from Covid-19, the first pillar is ‘Recovery’. Then, as the economy emerges from



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Head of Economic
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& Enterprise

“Over the next five period, LEO Carlow will continue to provide first class support to the enterprise ecosystem in Carlow.”

the pandemic, ‘Growth and Innovation’ will drive the future direction of the economy in key areas of business growth and priority sector development. Finally, ‘Revitalised Places, Sustainable Economy’ aims to address town and village vitality and shift the Carlow economy towards achieving environmental targets.

Finally, we would like to recognise and thank the staff of LEO Carlow for their work over the last number of years supported by the wider teams across Carlow County who has helped us to deliver for County Carlow. We have an amazing team who have gone above and beyond to meet the increasing demand for services, particularly in the last year as we responded to the challenges of Covid-19. We would like to thank our partners and stakeholders who have worked with us and we

look forward to a continued collaboration over the coming years and finally our Approvals & Evaluation committee for supporting us in our work in providing direct financial assistance.

We look forward to continually adapting right alongside new and existing LEO clients to deliver the right LEO supports at the right time to County Carlow businesses as we collectively navigate our way out of the pandemic, and to vigorously promote the economic development of the County.







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