



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

Local Enterprise Office Donegal

Local Enterprise Development Plan 2017-2020



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

Table of Contents

01	FOREWORD	04	07	NATIONAL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS	42
02	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	06	08	LEO COMMUNICATION PLAN	46
03	PLAN CONTEXT	08	09	CUSTOMER CARE	48
3.1	POLICY CONTEXT.	09	10	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING	49
3.2	COUNTY PROFILE.	11	11	KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROTOCOLS	50
3.3	SWOT ANALYSIS.	12	APPENDIX 1. PERFORMANCE METRICS.	51	
3.4	OPPORTUNITIES.	14	APPENDIX 2. LEO SUITE OF SERVICES.	55	
3.5	BREXIT.	18	APPENDIX 3. MENTORING.	57	
3.6	ENTERPRISE CULTURE AND PROMOTION.	20			
3.7	LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS SUPPORTS.	22			
04	REVIEW OF 2016	24			
05	VISION, MISSION & STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	28			
5.1	VISION AND MISSION.	29			
5.2	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.	30			
5.2	KEY UPGRADE GOALS.	33			
06	2017 OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS FOR 2017	36			



Foreword

SECTION
01

01. Foreword

This four year Local Enterprise Development Plan has been prepared by the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Donegal, Donegal County Council, in the context of the requirements and request of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell-O'Connor T.D, and her Department. It has also been prepared in the context of the adopted Local Community and Economic Development Plan for County Donegal – which encompasses the broader countywide economic, social and cultural issues, opportunities and development actions which will affect the community and business environment within which the LEO will operate and within which its client base i.e. small and micro local businesses, will operate.

The plan is set in the policy framework of the Government's national strategies and Action Plan for Jobs, the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and the emerging County Development Plan for Donegal. It is also prepared within the context of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership model between Donegal County Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council.

The Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the LEO Donegal for the four year period 2017 -2020 and sets out clear actions, activities and outputs for 2017. These are all set within the context of the vision statement and mission of the Local Enterprise Office which it believes to be challenging yet achievable.

The Plan also outlines some of the challenges and opportunities which the LEO believes currently face the business community within the county and thus the county as a whole. As more than 95% of the businesses in the county are micro businesses it is incumbent on all the enterprise development agencies to keep in mind the critical role that these businesses play at local level in providing employment and in sustaining local communities.

With the decision of the UK government to leave the EU the full impact and challenges arising from this decision are likely to be known and active during the lifetime of this plan. As of December 2016, 76% of the grant aided clients [183 firms] of the Donegal LEO were exporting and 93% of these were exporting exclusively to the UK. Thus the risk and potential adverse consequences for our local firms in Donegal are significant and require immediate actions to support them reduce this dependency in the short term and increase their resilience.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal acknowledges that while it is the designated primary agency for promoting and supporting entrepreneurship and the small and micro business sector at local level that it cannot fulfil this role without the co-operation and support of the other enterprise agencies, both local and national, and with the integrated support of the other sections within Donegal County Council.

The Local Enterprise Office will work with these organisations to maximise the potential of the small and micro business sector in the county and will over the four year period of the plan seek to increase the number of local businesses seeking to increase their management capability and strengthen their sustainability and enter export markets.

Seamus Neely

Chief Executive.

Michael Tunney

Head of Enterprise.



Executive Summary

SECTION
02

02. Executive Summary

This four year local enterprise development plan for the Local Enterprise Office Donegal (LEO Donegal) sets out the vision, strategic and operational objectives and actions proposed by the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal County Council for the four year period and in particular details the actions and activities to be delivered on in 2017. It is anticipated that that these will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis during the period of the plan.

The Plan takes cognisance of the Brexit decision and the challenges which it raises for Donegal and its business community and many of the actions proposed for 2017 and beyond have a focus on assisting businesses and the county address these challenges and possible opportunities.

The plan also recognises some of the local challenges such as the relatively low level of new businesses eligible for grant aid and the need for increased start-up activity in these sectors i.e. added-value manufacturing and services with the potential to export. In this context it proposes that the LEO will take the lead in having a discussion with local stakeholders on alternative models for enterprise promotion and support.

The key areas for enterprise opportunity are identified in the Plan and the LEO will work with the other enterprise agencies in seeking to drive enterprise creation in these sectors as well as supporting new and existing business that can create employment throughout the county. In this regard the Plan puts significant emphasis on the need for higher levels of efficiency, innovation, internationalisation and exporting but also recognises that for most small and micro enterprises there is a significant development curve to be achieved before some of these capabilities and objectives can be achieved.

The Plan sets out the LEO's vision and mission and the strategic and operational objectives which it hopes to achieve

during the life of the plan. It also identifies Key Upgrade Goals – goals that require either a new approach or collective engagement. These goals and the operational objectives for 2017 have clearly defined timescales, outcomes and outputs and will be the core areas of delivery of the LEO on an annual basis.

The Service Level Agreement between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authority sets out clearly the key role envisioned by Government for the Local Enterprise Office as part of the Local Authority and aligned with policies and actions of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland. The Service Level Agreement also identifies the potential role which the LEO can play in the broader economic development of the county and the integration of enterprise development within the broader local authority system. Through the synergies which this model can facilitate the Local Enterprise Office Donegal will have an increasingly important role in the direction and delivery of economic development, as well as enterprise promotion, support and development in the county.


Fiontair Áitiúil
Enterprise Office



Plan Context

SECTION
03

03. Plan Context

3.1 Policy Context

“Enterprise 2025”- Ireland’s National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025, sets out the long term ambition for enterprise growth and job creation for Ireland for the next decade. In this strategy the role and importance of businesses is highlighted: *“A competitive enterprise base drives productivity growth, innovation and investment and creates jobs, delivering higher standards of living for all. Through exchequer returns, enterprises contribute to the provision of essential public services including infrastructures, healthcare and education. Enterprises also contribute to enhanced quality of life and the attractiveness of our towns and cities by providing quality retail outlets, restaurants, professional and personal services and by engaging in collaborative regionally based initiatives. In addition, innovative enterprises can contribute to realising national policy priorities in areas such as smart infrastructures, healthy ageing, food security and a sustainable environment to deliver better outcomes for our citizens”*

The EU 2020 Entrepreneurship Action Plan states that *“The principle of “think small first” must become the touchstone of European and national policies. We must work on ensuring that being an entrepreneur is an attractive prospect for Europeans”*. The Local Enterprise Office within Donegal County Council can be the local method of delivering on this principle, within a cost-effective framework and in creating a competitive and outward looking enterprise base within the county.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work to develop and enhance a cohort of businesses in Donegal so that they are more competitive, more sustainable and more innovative and capable of addressing existing, new and emerging market opportunities both national and international. It will also seek to ensure that for Donegal entrepreneurs the county provides them with the most supportive environment

and services to maximise their potential and that new and youthful entrepreneurs are encouraged and supported.

This Local Enterprise Development Plan has been prepared within the context of the Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) prepared under the Local Community Development and Local Economic Development Committees structure of Donegal County Council. In particular the Local Enterprise Development Plan seeks to integrate with the high-level strategic objectives of the LECP and sets out how the LEO will contribute to the delivery under a number of LECP goals and objectives – particularly those with a clear enterprise focus.

“The principle of “think small first” must become the touchstone of European and national policies. We must work on ensuring that being an entrepreneur is an attractive prospect for Europeans”

These high-level strategic goals are:

- » To develop Donegal as a Connected Place.
- » To harness Donegal’s Natural and Human Capital.
- » To value and develop our Culture and Creative Resource.
- » To promote Sustainable and Inclusive Communities.
- » To develop Donegal as a lead region for Learning, Research and Innovation.
- » To develop the ‘DONEGAL’ Brand.
- » To promote Entrepreneurship, Enterprise, and Investment.

The preparation of a new County Development Plan for Donegal in 2017 - 2018 will give added impetus to the further development of the county’s economy and will set ambitious growth targets and outcomes for the county.

As previously stated the Local Enterprise Development Plan for Donegal has been prepared taking account of national and European strategies and priorities and in particular the Regional Action Plan for the North East/North West in which Local Enterprise Offices in the region have been identified as key delivery agents for a range of actions. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work with stakeholders in the county and the region and with the Border Local Enterprise Offices to deliver on the strategic objectives and actions as outlined in the **Regional Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017**.

In particular the Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work to:

- » Drive an increase in the number and survival rate of start-ups through driving participation in Start Your Own Business courses and a suite of training programmes such as Accelerate, Hi Start, Export Awareness, Lean, and Mentoring.
- » Develop a pipeline of young entrepreneurs at local level.
- » Maximise collaboration with Community Enterprise Centres to assist start-ups and existing businesses to grow and develop.
- » Contribute to the delivery of national schemes that can help enterprises grow such as Microfinance Ireland and Trading Online Vouchers.
- » Assist more companies in Donegal to export and internationalise i.e. achieve scale and grow internationally.
- » Support and facilitate networks for start-ups and local businesses in the county.
- » Increase employment in its baseline portfolio through increased start-ups and the scaling of existing clients. Local Enterprise Development Plans will be developed, setting out clear targets and objectives to support start-ups and enterprises in the county.
- » Increase awareness of national public and private sector supports to provide access to finance to start ups and existing businesses and organise regional workshops, and roadshows to achieve this objective.
- » Undertake a review of incubation space and property solutions within the county and integrate with a similar regional review.

This plan also takes account of **“Enterprise 2025” – Ireland’s National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025**, as well as the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs 2017, Governments innovation strategy – **“Innovation 2020: Excellence Talent Impact”** and the Action Plan for Rural Development **“Realising our Rural Potential”**.

3.2 County Profile.

Below is a summary of the socio-economic profile of Donegal and highlights some of the challenges and unique factors affecting economic and enterprise development in the county.

Population

**158,755
Persons**

Donegal was one of the few counties that experienced population decline during the last inter-census period. In 2016, Donegal was home to 158,755 persons - down from the 2011 figure of 161,137, a loss of 1.5%. However population and employment projections prepared as part of on-going forecasting indicates growth in both population and employment in the period to 2030.

Youthful Population.

**43% Under
30 years old**

Donegal has a relatively young population, 43% of the population of the County are under 30 years of age which equates to 66,887 people.

People are living longer.

**21,471
persons over
65 years old**

There were 21,471 persons aged 65 years and over or 13.3% of the population in County Donegal in 2011, an increase of 17% over the period 2006-2011. The 2011 Census highlighted that 12.5% of the population of the Border Regional Authority Area were 65 years and over. Recent research recently carried out by AIRO indicates that in 2031, 21.5% of the population of the Border Regional Authority Area will be over 65 years of age, bringing with it major demographic and service related challenges.

Settlement Pattern.

**33.8 persons
per sq.km**

Donegal is the fourth largest and the fifth most rurally dispersed county in Ireland with 33.8 persons per sq.km compared to the State average of 67 persons per sq. km. The county has a weak urban structure, with just 9 settlements falling into the aggregate urban category of 1,500 or more inhabitants while 15.8% of households do not have access to a motor car, making it difficult to access economic, social and cultural services in towns.

3.3 SWOT Analysis.

The following table sets out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats taken into account when preparing the Enterprise Development Plan for Donegal.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis Donegal

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Rich natural resource assets – environment, landscape, language and culture.	Limited progress on strategic infrastructure.
Strong enterprise culture.	Broadband availability.
Strong tourism sector.	Limited appropriate enterprise spaces for emerging sectors.
Potential within the creative sector.	Gaps in tourism sector.
Emerging Food Sector and Food Culture.	Under supply of bed capacity.
Emerging medical/health and medical/health related sectors.	Diminished capacity in community organisations.
Wild Atlantic Way.	Lack of marine infrastructure.
Diverse existing economic base.	Relative distances to larger markets.
Strong Diaspora resource.	Over dependence on traditional industry sectors.
Donegal –Derry/Strabane City Region.	Over dependence on local and regional markets by indigenous firms.
Good stakeholder engagement and collaboration.	Over dependence on GB market as the export market of choice by indigenous firms.
Strong indigenous sectors e.g. farming, fishing, engineering	Limited ability of national enterprise support agencies to adapt to county needs.
Good inter-agency collaboration.	Dispersed creative and food sectors.
Third Level Institute within the county.	Structural unemployment and “welfare culture”.
ETB within the county.	
Critical mass in Donegal/Derry /Strabane City Region.	
North West Strategic Growth Partnership	

Opportunities:

- Marine Technologies and resources.
- Medical sector – research, medical devices, digital health etc.
- Renewable energy in particular tidal and marine.
- Integrated enterprise ecosystem.
- New funding models through collaboration.
- Harnessing of Diaspora for investment and market opportunities.
- Creation of local service and creative hubs.
- Leveraging of the “Donegal” brand.
- Greater collaboration on education and training.
- Access to a range of INTERREG and EU funds.
- Co-location of businesses north and south of the border.
- Use of technology to overcome locational and operational challenges

Threats:

- Exit of Britain from the EU.
- Establishment of border customs, border tariffs, etc.
- Reduction in funding at central level.
- Impact of taxes and charges on SME sustainability.
- Loss of momentum in the development of emerging sectors.
- Emigration and consequent loss of educated and motivated young people.
- Loss of potential EU funding for cross border projects arising from Brexit.
- Lack of investment in key strategic infrastructure i.e. A5, Broadband etc.
- Dependency of Agri-Food sector on NI market.

3.4 Opportunities.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will continue to deliver its services in a targeted way to new and existing businesses across the sectors and with a particular focus on supporting those businesses which have a desire to develop, grow and export. However in the context of the SWOT analysis the Donegal LEO believes that there are significant opportunities for development and investment which can assist in the creation of confidence, create employment opportunities, facilitate and encourage entrepreneurship, and result in the creation of new and more sustainable small and micro enterprises in the following areas.

FOOD/BEVERAGE



There is significant potential for the development both of artisan food products at local level targeted at both regional, national and export markets and the development of significant added value food producers based on the quality food produce available from within the county. The Local Enterprise Office has been active in both the development and delivery of a comprehensive food strategy for the county in recent years [The Food Coast – Donegal’s Good Food Initiative] that seeks to “make Donegal famous for food” and an exemplary location for supporting food businesses. The achievement of this objective can only be done through a strategic alliance involving the private and public sectors. Such an approach will facilitate the streamlined and integrated delivery of the initiative and its actions.

SEAFOOD



The development potential of added value fish and shellfish products from Donegal is still to be realised. However, Brexit may have very significant negative consequences for the fishing sector in Ireland affecting catch size and quotas. There are also significant export opportunities for the development of fish and shellfish products to international markets. The LEO will work with BIM and other agencies to maximise these opportunities for Donegal and its businesses.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



The development of the creative industry sector continues to provide new opportunities [as highlighted by the Western Development Commission] for both new enterprises and employment opportunities. In 2015 the Donegal LEO launched the “Strategic Action Plan for Creative Entrepreneurship for Donegal”. This strategy focusses on addressing the key inhibitors to the economic and enterprise development of the sector and its individual “creative entrepreneurs”. Significant work has already happened in the delivery of the Strategy actions and many are still on-going. While the focus of the LEO will be on supporting creative entrepreneurs and businesses, it recognises the need for a positive and supportive arts and creative environment within the county from which its creative entrepreneurs will come. It is hoped that through the Creative Ireland programme that this creative environment can be supported

ICT/MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES



There continues to be market opportunities for product and service development in these sectors and there is the emergence of an ICT cluster in the Letterkenny area.

These sectors also provide opportunities for employment throughout the county as with the requisite infrastructure they are not location dependent. There is need for the implementation of a comprehensive and meaningful broadband plan for the county that will provide appropriate access to broadband throughout the county and it is hoped that the Digital Action Plan for the county will address this issue. In particular this infrastructure will be a prerequisite for the maximisation of enterprise opportunities within designated development centres within the county.

SPIN-OUTS



While Donegal through IDA Ireland, has been very successful in attracting foreign direct investment, it has not been as effective in encouraging and facilitating the establishment of indigenous spin-out businesses, either from larger multinationals, larger indigenous firms or from third level institutions. To maximise the potential of this sector spin-outs from some of the FDI investments and larger local firms in the county must be encouraged and facilitated. The LEO will work with the relevant agencies and in particular Enterprise Ireland to identify and delivery dedicated programmes to achieve such start-ups.

TOURISM



With the development of the Wild Atlantic Way there has been a significant increase in the visitor numbers and spend in Donegal. However the county has significant capacity to develop this sector further and the sector is a key economic driver for the county. The development of integrated tourism activities at local level which have a potential to scale through the targeting of visitors and users from overseas still offers significant opportunities to the county. Donegal County Council has identified tourism as one of its priority sectors for development in the county and is actively engaged in both key product development projects and in the tourism marketing of the county. Such projects will build on the county's natural resources, its landscapes, rugged coast and rich cultural heritage. As the responsibility for tourism business development lies primarily with Fáilte Ireland and local capital tourism projects have in most recent years been funded through the LEADER programme, and as the LEO is restricted by DJEI policies as to its level and form of direct intervention in the sector, the LEO will work with other sections within Donegal County Council and with Fáilte Ireland, where and when appropriate, to increase the capability of tourism business owners and to ensure that opportunities are maximised.

MEDICAL DEVICES AND DIGITAL HEALTH



There is an emerging sector in Donegal and the north west in the area of medical devices, digital health and related services. The accelerated development of this sector through further FDI and new indigenous business would have a major impact on the county and region and give a new direction for enterprise, R&D, skills, education and economic sustainability. A key focus of the LEO will be on developing, in conjunction with key stakeholders such as existing businesses, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and our Diaspora a possible model for the future development of the sector in the county.

COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL ENTERPRISES



Not for profit businesses which provide local services and infrastructure not provided by either the private commercial sector or the public sector will continue to play a vital role within local communities. Social enterprises have the potential to be significant employers as well as innovative deliverers of local services and product producers. Local Enterprise Office Donegal believes that there is a need for the

further development of these social enterprise in the county but that this should only happen following an evaluation of each project based 1)of their commercial sustainability; in particular that they have the potential to create reserves that can be used to ensure on-going operational costs and necessary investment and 2) on their management capability and skills and where required these deficiencies should be addressed. The provision of co-working/shared-space with good access to broadband within existing community enterprise centres and facilities may be a model worth examining.

3.5 BREXIT.

As identified by the Local Enterprise Office in 2016 in its Enterprise Development Plan, Brexit was and is a significant threat to the future economic and enterprise development of County Donegal. With the decision by the UK to leave the EU in 2016 the full outcome of the decision is only now beginning to unfold.

Currently no one knows what the actual final agreements will be but it is becoming more and more likely that border counties will be at the frontline of any of the negative outcomes such as arrangements to control the movement of people, products and services. The implementation of any of these trade barriers will make it more costly and more difficult for businesses in the border counties to do business. This will be even more difficult for Donegal as it has but a short land border with the rest of the Republic of Ireland of some 8km in the south of the county and the direct route to national points of access in Dublin is through NI.



The report published by Donegal County Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council – “Initial Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities for the Derry City & Strabane District Council and Donegal Council areas- The North West City Region” is the first significant piece of published work on the issue and sets out some suggested strategic and practical actions. The report highlights that in relation to trade that there are some major structural challenges that are inherent in our economy, in particular the fact that not enough SMEs are exporting and of those that currently do, too many are dependent on the UK market

The likely impacts of Brexit on business in Donegal are;

- » Increased sterling fluctuations – this is not a new issue for businesses in Ireland but is likely to play a more significant role in future business development especially for businesses serving the UK markets.
- » Increased costs – the introduction of any additional administrative arrangements to comply with customs controls, whether physical or digital, will add to the costs of doing business into the UK.
- » Uncertainty around staff employment contracts for cross border workers employed in Donegal businesses.
- » Increased difficulty in getting qualified staff or staff with the necessary skills, if it becomes more difficult to recruit from the UK into the EU.
- » Possible reduction in the capability of the region to respond to industry needs if collaboration at third level education becomes more difficult or prohibited.
- » Possible tendency to favour employing cross border workers as cost of living in NI is lower and consequently wage expectations may be lower.
- » Possible loss of opportunities for EU programmes in support of small and micro businesses and in R&D sector if NI excluded from EU programmes

To seek to alleviate these possible outcomes and to address the current and likely short-term uncertainty the Local Enterprise Office working as an integral part of Donegal County Council will;

- » Work with the enterprise support agencies and local authorities on both sides of the border in the Northwest to represent the best interests of Donegal, its people and business community in all discussions on the potential impacts of Brexit on the county and to seek to minimise these if and where possible.
- » Seek to keep itself informed and current on all developments arising from the Brexit decision and negotiation process.
- » Seek to advise local businesses of any confirmed decisions and outcomes that will affect their businesses.
- » Organise appropriate information sessions and training sessions when necessary.
- » Focus more of its resources in assisting more Donegal businesses to internationalise through market diversification.
- » Working with other enterprise support and training organisations, to focus resources on addressing the capability and skills deficiencies of small and micro businesses to internationalise. In particular to draw from its engagement in EU programmes which focus on best practice in the areas of internationalisation and innovation.
- » Seek to assist local businesses to identify growth opportunities in alternative export markets through workshops, market visits, participation in EEN international events etc.
- » Lobby through the LEO Network, Regional Action Plan for Jobs, and DJEI for additional financial resources to be ring-fenced for small and micro businesses to assist them in overcoming the additional costs of new market entry once they have identified and developed a new export market.
- » Through EEN, international programmes and the Donegal Diaspora to develop a support network/ support infrastructure which will be able to provide cross-border/ new-market relationship support for small and micro businesses enabling them obtain better market representation and appropriate market partners.

3.6 Enterprise Culture and Promotion in Donegal.

Over the past twenty years the Local Enterprise Office has worked proactively to continue to foster and promote entrepreneurship in Donegal. It has done this in and through close working relationships with the other enterprise promotion and development agencies and organisations, in conjunction with the education sector in the county at all levels and with the co-operation of the local business community.

Over the past twenty years the Local Enterprise Office has worked proactively to continue to foster and promote entrepreneurship in Donegal. It has done this in and through close working relationships with the other enterprise promotion and development agencies and organisations, in conjunction with the education sector in the county at all levels and with the co-operation of the local business community.

Since the earliest years of the County Development Board now followed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), the agencies and organisations in the county have recognised that the LEO (and its predecessor the CEB) as the “First Point of Contact” for business advice and direction and operated as a referral point to other agencies and supports where and when appropriate. The LEO now has the role of co-coordinating the enterprise and economic actions in the County’s Local Economic and Community Development Plan. It is anticipated that the previous working relationships and close co-operation will continue during the current National Development Plan and funding programmes.

The LEO is active in promoting enterprise in Donegal through:

» The annual delivery of the Student Enterprise Programme within the second levels schools in the county. In 2016 the County had a national winner at Junior level. This programme while meeting some enterprise promotion objectives does not seem to have long-term measurable outcomes and outputs such as entrepreneurs who have engaged in the programme subsequently setting up in

business, or increased levels of business start-ups at local level, and possibly needs structural changes at national level in the overall model.

- » The annual organisation of Donegal Enterprise Week. This model was developed by Donegal and has been delivered on an annual basis over the past twelve years. This model of condensed enterprise activity over a week long series of events has become a highlight of the LEO calendar in Donegal and indeed has now become an adopted model at national level in recent years. Again the LEO in Donegal delivers Enterprise Week in partnership with the other enterprise support agencies and organisation in the county and with the direct involvement of local businesses.
- » The on-going promotion of local business success stories and business role models within the county with the objective of maintaining business awareness and confidence within the county and to encourage others pursue a career in business. Events such as “Doing Business in Donegal” and the end of year “Business Showcase” events are all designed to contribute to this objective.
- » The LEO delivers a number of Start Your Own Business Programmes – 2 day kick-starter programmes and follow-on 4 day full programmes with the objective of increasing the number of new business start-ups in the county. The LEO seeks to differentiate its programmes from the short introductory courses provided by the Local Development Companies under SICAP and from those delivered by the ETB and from EI through New Frontiers.

The on-going challenge is that the majority of participants on all these programmes, including those of the LEO are in local services including tourism, and often are ineligible for grant aid from the LEO, Enterprise Ireland and most funding programmes. A new approach at local and national level needs to be examined which takes account of the lack of business proposals coming forward outside the local services sector and the lack of eligible investment proposals under the current national policies and funding schemes. An example might be that the LEO should be able to offer funding similar to that offered under the New Frontiers Phase II programme to potential grant- eligible projects.

- » The Donegal LEO has over the years assisted in both the set-up and on-going facilitation and development of both sector specific and model-specific networks. Examples would include the Donegal Designer Makers, the Donegal Women in Business Network, PROFITNET peer learning networks and the piloting of creative sector networks. The LEO will continue to support and develop these and other business networks such as a Donegal Engineering network in the county subject to resource availability.
- » The LEO will continue to seek to identify new and innovative ways to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship in the county and will during the life of the plan carry out an on-going review with its enterprise partners as to how the county might achieve higher levels of business start-ups, higher numbers of businesses with growth ambition and develop sector specific capabilities.

3.7 Local Authority Business Supports.

Currently Donegal County Council takes a pro-active role in supporting the development of businesses within the county. As well as a key role in providing the necessary infrastructure that enables business and economic activity to happen in the county, Donegal County Council has a number of specific areas of engagement with and support to the businesses in the county:

How The Donegal County Council supports and engages with businesses in the county:

- » Donegal County Council actively engages in the development of tourism products in particular signature attractions along the Wild Atlantic Way and in the marketing of the County as a destination. It commits significant staff and financial resources to this sector on an annual basis.
- » Through its Finance Section it works with local businesses to find solutions to challenges which they have in relation to rates and service charges.
- » Donegal County Council has made available a strategic investment fund of some €750,000 per annum aimed at assisting local projects that add to the economic, social and cultural development of local communities throughout the county.
- » It manages the funds and structures under which the LEADER Local Action Group now operates and which will provide significant funding to rural enterprises, community projects and environmental projects over the next seven years.
- » It owns and manages a range of land and building assets that have the potential to contribute significantly to the economic development of the county and specifically can provide suitable lands for enterprise development.
- » Through the planning process – both the preparation and delivery of the County Development Plan and through the planning control process, the Council plays a very significant role in setting policies around land use planning that affects locational decisions and in delivering a timely service that facilitates business start-ups and expansions.
- » Through its Research and Policy Unit it carries out statistical and market analysis and policy reviews on issues and challenges affecting the county which assist in the planning and implementation of strategic initiatives, assists in enterprise development plans and enables investment decisions.



Review of 2016

SECTION
04

04. Review of 2016



The core LEO staff and funding for 2016 and anticipated for 2017 is set out in Table 2 below. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in funding in 2017 reflecting additional resources secured by the Department at national level for the LEO network.

With the additional national programmes and schemes since the establishment of the LEOs such as IBYE and TOVs, and the deeper integration of the LEOs into Local Authorities, often as its Economic Development Unit, there has been a significant increase in the workload and anticipated outputs from the LEOs with no provision for additional staff which will continue to be the limiting factor for the LEO in Donegal in achieving the objectives and actions set out in this plan.



Table 2: Donegal LEO Staff and Funding.

Total No. of Core LEO Staff:		5	
Funding:			
M1 Budget Allocated 2017	€301,198	M2 Budget Allocated 2017	€248,014
M1 Spend (Year End 2016)	€216,525	M2 Spend (Year End 2016)	€419,622
Refundable Aid Cash Balance at 31st December, 2016			€151,503

4.1 Summary of 2016.

During 2016 the Local Enterprise Office Donegal provided a range of programmes and supports in Donegal to achieve its overall goal. These included:

- » Provision of business advice, business counselling and referral, both on a one-to-one basis and on a group basis at monthly information sessions with over 300 individual and businesses availing of this service.
- » Assisted in the creation of a net increase of employment of 170.5 jobs in the core client portfolio of 183 businesses and had 10 jobs associated with transfers to Enterprise Ireland and Udaras na Gaeltachta.
- » The delivery of 75 business training and management development programmes and workshops to 1,362 [655M/707F] participants which included Start Your Own Business Programmes, Small Business Accounts, Creative Business Development Programmes, HR Management Development Programme and Strategic Marketing and Branding Programme.
- » The Donegal LEO continued to organise networking and enterprise promotion events [22] such as the Creative Network, The Food Coast Network, Enterprising Donegal Business Week and Doing Business in Donegal events with over 560 attendees in 2016.
- » Received 65 applications for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition 2016 and delivered the IBYE programme in Donegal with one of the County winners winning through at regional level to the national final in Dublin in March 2017
- » Delivered on the Trading Online Voucher scheme in Donegal and approved 24 vouchers with a value of over €36,000 in 2016.
- » Contributed to the on-going operation of the Donegal Women in Business Network and funded the on-going operation of the Donegal Designer Makers network.
- » Provided grant aid to 25 projects which had the potential to create 62 new jobs.
- » Continued to deliver the Student Enterprise Programme to secondary schools in Donegal with 14 secondary schools (an increase in 4 schools from the previous year) and 513 students participating in the programme and had a national winner in the Junior Category.
- » Continued to deliver the Donegal Food Strategy through resourcing a range of food and food business

development programmes, events and workshops, some in conjunction with food businesses and some with other agencies such as BIM, Enterprise Ireland and Failte Ireland. The Food Coast also attended Feile na Tuaithe in Mayo, Blas na hEireann awards in Dingle, the Hooked Festival in Killybegs and the "A Taste of Donegal" food festival in Donegal Town. During 2016 the LEO carried out a three year review of the Donegal Food Strategy and made significant changes to the focus and methodology proposed as well as reviewing the range of proposed actions. A critical issue is the need for a dedicated executive to be put in place to maintain the momentum of this initiative.

- » Continued to promote the availability of the Micro Finance Ireland loan facility to potential clients in Donegal and carried out evaluations on 10 submitted applications during the year.
- » Contributed to the delivery of the New Frontiers programme in the North West.
- » Working with Enterprise Ireland and the Chambers of Commerce in Cork and Dublin managed the roll-out of the Enterprise Europe Network project to the LEO Network. This project is funded under the COSME programme with the LEO in Donegal being one of the four lead partners at national level. During 2016 the LEO Donegal also delivered a range of events and supports under the Enterprise Europe Network project as a local delivery agent.
- » Contributed to the on-going delivery of the County Community and Economic Plan under the new LCDC structure and through the Head of Enterprise who is an active participant on the LCDC.
- » Continued to deliver on the actions within the Strategic Action Plan for Creative Entrepreneurship for Donegal which had been launched in May 2015. This consisted in continuing the organisation of network meetings around the county, the piloting of a "Creative Sector Investment Programme" which resulted in six investments, a joint business development programme with the Design and Craft Council of Ireland, the organisation of showcase events as part of Enterprise Week 2016 and Errigal Arts Festival as well as developing an online portal www.creativecoastdonegal.ie.
- » Initiated the delivery of the EU INTERREG funded NICHE project aimed at increasing innovation in the food value chain. This consisted of the identification, collation and publication of more than 20 best practice cases, the organisation of the launch conference in Donegal and attendance at the inaugural project meetings. During 2017 20 innovation audits will be carried out and subsequent Food Innovation Programme developed.
- » Engaged in the development of a major application under the INTERREG programme along with InterTradeIreland, Scottish Enterprise, Highland and Islands, the border Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Northern Ireland which was successful and which will begin delivery in June 2017. The Head of Enterprise in Donegal, representing the six Border LEOs [LAs] is on the Project Management Committee which will oversee the management and delivery of the programme.
- » Actively participated in the Regional Action Plan for jobs and co-ordinated Donegal County Council inputs and updates to the Secretariat.





Vision, Mission & Objectives

SECTION
05

05. Vision, Mission & Objectives.

5.1. Vision and Mission

The vision adopted by the Donegal County Council's Local Enterprise Office in its role as the primary support agency for small and micro businesses in Donegal is:

“Through working with local businesses, key stakeholders and the enterprise support organisations in the northwest to make Donegal an attractive and competitive location for setting up and doing business, thus creating a strong and sustainable county economy with a strong focus on employment creation and on accessing external international markets.”

The mission of Donegal LEO to achieve this vision is

“To provide high quality supports and services that will promote entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses and drive the local economy”.



5.2 Strategic Objectives.

The strategic objectives that will underpin the delivery of the Donegal Local Enterprise Plan 2017 - 2020 are as follows:

First Stop Enterprise & Business Support Solution

Acting as “the first point of contact” at local level, to be the recognised business information, advice and referral service within the county for anyone wishing or proposing to establish or expand a new or existing business, so that all business enquiries receive appropriate and timely information and direction.

Make It Easier to do Business

Provide supports, guidance and solutions that make it easier for entrepreneurs, owners and managers to identify opportunities and implement actions to start-up, grow and survive within a competitive business environment in Donegal. In particular to integrate the services of the LEO with key sections within Donegal County Council.

5.2.2 ENTERPRISE SUPPORT SERVICES:

Maximise Business Potential.

Seek to create employment opportunities throughout the county by assisting in the establishment of new businesses and by enhancing the development and sustainability of existing businesses.

Deliver a quality suite of support services that equip entrepreneurs, owners and managers with the knowledge to plan, grow and sustain their businesses in particular through innovation and internationalisation and enhanced efficiency and competitiveness.

Support the development of small and micro businesses in Donegal by assisting in enhancing their competitiveness, innovativeness, export-orientation, management capabilities and sustainability.

To increase the pool of indigenous business at local level, in particular the number of growth-oriented and export-oriented businesses and where appropriate assist in the development and transfer of high potential clients to Enterprise Ireland.

Collaborate with Enterprise Ireland.

Enhance communication with Enterprise Ireland at regional and national level to facilitate potential progression of companies from LEO Donegal to EI, facilitating access to relevant EI support programmes for LEO clients, including financial, business and innovation/research facilities.

To establish and implement robust processes for the two-way transfer of clients to and from Enterprise Ireland so as to ensure the delivery of appropriate client services and maximum impact.

Maximise Key Sectors

Support business creation and development in key sectors and areas of identified opportunity for Donegal: food/seafood, creative sector, engineering, medical devices/e-health, ICT/mobile technologies and spin-outs. This will entail the development and implementation of sector specific initiatives which will include facilitated networks, new support models, new enterprise infrastructure and facilities.

5.2.3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT SERVICES:

Promote a Best Practice Enterprise Culture

Act as the catalyst and advocate for the establishment of a best practice enterprise culture among start-ups, micro and small businesses; also promoting enterprise and self-employment as a viable career option among the wider population.

Working with the ETB and LYIT to seek to increase the level of entrepreneurship within and arising from the education sector in the region, especially from the third level.

Work with key local stakeholder organisations to promote the enterprise opportunities arising from vocational education and skills as well as form academic and professional qualifications.

5.2.4 LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES:

Environment for Start-Ups.

Leverage the full range of potential enterprise support/economic development promotion mechanisms across the Local Authority economic development remit, including enterprise space, Rates framework, rural economic development zones (REDZ), etc to start-ups and small businesses in county.

Enterprise Coordination.

Through the Local Enterprise Office provide focus and direction for collective enterprise and economic actions at local level by coordinating the activities and actions of all enterprise and economic stakeholders and agencies at local and regional levels, and in particular to achieve enhanced outcomes through “added-value collective projects”.



5.3 Key Upgrade Goals

In addition to pursuing the achievement of the identified strategic objectives under the four key areas of operation of the LEO under the Service Level Agreement as outlined above, the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal has identified a number of Key Upgrade Goals [KUGs] which it hopes to achieve during the life of the plan i.e. 2017 -2020. These are:

KUG 1

Seek to provide current information and advice to businesses in Donegal on the business and trade implications arising out of the negotiated arrangements arising from Brexit. This will be done in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Office of the Chief Executive of Donegal County Council and where appropriate on a cross-border basis with the appropriate NI agency/partner.

KUG2

To shift the balance of Measure 2 activity and actions toward the client portfolio and i.e. those businesses in receipt of grant aid from the LEO and to those businesses that have engaged extensively with the LEO over the previous three years with the goal of achieving higher returns by way of increased efficiency, competitiveness, innovation, exports and job creation.

KUG3

With the goal of assisting higher levels of start-ups in the county to work with stakeholders in the county such as LYIT, the ETB, Enterprise Ireland and other enterprise support agencies to identify new models/approaches to promoting entrepreneurship and new start-ups and in turn shifting the focus of grant aid toward eligible new start-ups.

KUG4

Through EU projects such as the Enterprise Europe Network, Co-Innovate, NICHE and EIS to identify and apply

best practice in promoting and supporting higher levels of innovation and internationalisation with the aim of achieving higher numbers of micro and small businesses in Donegal engaging in innovation and exporting. This will also involve the development of an appropriate support programme and funding mechanism.

KUG5

Through the Enterprise and Skills sub-committee of the Local Economic Development Committee [LEDC] and the LEDC itself to develop an integrated enterprise ecosystem in the county that positively promotes entrepreneurship and enables higher levels of start-ups.

KUG6

Working with key local stakeholders such as LYIT and international partners to develop a dedicated resource to promote and facilitate new business start-ups and development in the medical devices/e-health sector.

KUG7

Engage with all community-owned enterprise centres throughout the county with the goal of ensuring that they can play a positive role in supporting and accommodating local enterprises and in ensuring that their clients get access to the full range of enterprise support services.

A summary of the Key Upgrade Goals are set out in Table 3 on the next page.

Table 3: Summary of Key Upgrade Goals 2017-2020

Key Upgrade Goals 2017 - 2020			
Strategic Areas	Key Upgrade Goal	Intended Outcome	Indicative timescale and key milestones
Business Information & Advisory Services	KUG1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Informed and aware SME sector. » Increased readiness of SME to address challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » To commence Q1 2017. » Ongoing information gathering with first information sheet, Q4 2017
Enterprise Support Services	KUG2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Higher level of job creation. » Higher levels of innovation and exporting. » Higher levels of transfer of LEO clients to EI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Assessment of LEO Portfolio Q1 2017. » Promotion of LEO services to portfolio. » One-to-one meetings with LEO executives.
	KUG3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improved levels of new start-ups in the county. » Higher levels of start-ups. » Higher numbers of eligible projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Initial meeting with key players (ETB, LYIT etc) by June 2017. » Initial scoping completed by end Q4 » New model prepared by end Q2 2018
	KUG4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improved innovation capabilities, internationalisation and efficiency in LEO clients. » Businesses better placed with regard to Brexit challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Initial surveys completed end 2017. » Best practices identified June 2017. » New policies and models in place Jan, 2018.
Entrepreneurship Support Services	KUG5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Enhanced enterprise ecosystem to support entrepreneurs and enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Initial meeting of Ent.& Skills committee Q1 2017. » Ongoing information sharing and project/Program development until 2020.
Local Enterprise (Development Services)	KUG6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Dedicated range of resources to support the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Draft business plan Q2 2017. » Seek funding Q2-Q4 2017. » 2018: implementation.
	KUG7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Comprehensive network of community enterprise centres capable of supporting local businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Start engagement Q3 2017. Ongoing Process. » First meetings and scoping by end 2017



2017 Operational Objectives and Actions for 2017

SECTION
06

06. 2017 Operational Objectives and Actions for 2017

The Local Enterprise Office will provide on a pro-active basis and based on business needs, a suite of relevant business services to all micro and small businesses within Donegal. The Local Enterprise Office will also seek to continuously improve on both the manner and the content of its supports and interventions through participation in training, peer learning opportunities and in EU programmes and knowledge exchange.

All enquiries received by the Local Enterprise Office will be responded to appropriately within the resource limitations of the LEO and clear referral processes with other relevant agencies and organisations will be implemented and as agreed in the relevant protocol.

The proposed operational objectives and actions of the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal County Council for 2017 are based upon impacts and the outputs which can be achieved by working in a targeted way with Donegal businesses. The services offered will be based upon the needs of businesses so that the businesses will feel the impact of its interventions - this is particularly so in relation to actions and preparations around addressing the challenges arising from Brexit.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will have clearly defined service areas so that the various businesses can tap into the suite of services which are most beneficial to them. This will allow for the setting of entry level criteria for the services to

ensure that the businesses and their management team can best benefit from the investment of Local Enterprise Office staff time, external expertise and direct financial and non-financial supports. This approach will result in the delivery of more targeted services to fewer businesses through a “funnelling” of clients and the services provided to them but will result in more meaningful results and outputs both for the businesses and for the public investment being made. In this context the Local Enterprise Office Donegal will take the lead in working with the other enterprise support agencies to define the route for start-ups, the areas of support in relation to start-ups and will seek to address market gaps - either at county, regional or national level.

“All enquiries received by the Local Enterprise Office will be responded to appropriately within the resource limitations of the LEO and clear referral processes with other relevant agencies and organisations will be implemented and as agreed in the relevant protocol.”

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work with the other enterprise support agencies and organisations in a collaborative way in order to provide an integrated and comprehensive range of services to ensure that there is no duplication or conflict and work to achieve a better return from all the available enterprise resources and actions. In particular the Local Enterprise Office, as an integral part of Donegal County Council, will seek to ensure that the LEADER and FLAG funding is delivered in such a manner as to avoid duplication of effort, grant shopping, displacement and competition with mainstream Government programmes and funding to businesses.

In addition to the Key Upgrade Goals the following Operational Objectives (OO) will underpin delivery of the Donegal Local Enterprise Action Plan initiatives during 2017 :

1

Acting as “the first point of contact” at local level, to provide a locally and nationally recognised business information and advice service within the county for anyone wishing or proposing to establish or expand a new or existing business.

2

To create employment opportunities throughout the county by assisting in the establishment of new businesses and the supporting the development and sustainability of existing businesses.

3

To support small businesses to increase their competitiveness, innovativeness, export-orientation, management capabilities and sustainability.

4

To provide a “quality suite of services to business” at local level and in particular to those businesses with employment creation and growth potential. This will include support to appropriate businesses within the services sector.

5

To increase the enterprise culture and level of entrepreneurship in Donegal.

6

To increase the level of entrepreneurship within and arising from the education sector.

7

To develop the role of the Donegal Local Enterprise Office so that it provides a focus for collective economic and enterprise action at local level by coordinating the activities and actions of all economic stakeholders and agencies at local level and through working with and through the Local Authority in facilitating local economic development within County Donegal .

The following table sets out the operational objectives, key upgrade goals and activities as well as their timescale, outputs and outcomes as proposed by the Local Enterprise Office Donegal for 2017.

Table 4: 2017 Activities

1. Business Information & Advisory Service				
Strategic Objective	2017 Action	Target / Output	Outcome	Timescale
KUG 1	Collection of information and preparation and circulation of information sheet	First Information pack Q4 2017	Increased readiness of SMES to overcome BREXIT challenges	Commence Q1 and on-going.
Operational Objective (OO)	Promotion of the Info& Advice services of the LEO	Local PR	Enhance awareness of LEO services.	Q1 –Q4.
	Monthly advice clinics	Enhanced knowledge of LEO services	100 attendees	Monthly
	Referrals to other appropriate agencies	12 MFI, 6 EI, 10 LAG LEADER and 4 CEF referrals.	30 referrals	On-going
	Promotion of EEN services	Enhanced exporting and innovation within participating businesses.	30 businesses availing of EEN services	On-going

2. Enterprise Support Services				
Strategic Objective	2017 Action	Target / Output	Outcome	Timescale
KUG 2	Review of portfolio. Targeted promotion of LEO services	35 businesses in receipt of targeted supports.	Higher levels of job innovation, efficiency, job creation etc.	Q2 onwards
KUG 3	Meeting June. Scoping completed by end 2017	Higher levels of start-ups. Higher levels of grant eligible projects	Improved ecosystem for entrepreneurship in the county.	June 2017 onward
KUG 4	Initiate survey of best practices and programmes in 2017.	40 businesses targeted in 2017/2018	Improved innovation, internationalisation and efficiency capabilities	Initial survey completed end of 2017
00 2,3 & 4	Provide grant aid to eligible projects	30 projects considered	25 projects approved	On-going
	Deliver suite of training and management development workshops and programmes	Target of 450 participants	Enhanced business capabilities	On-going
	Provide Technical Asst. to eligible micro exporters.	Target of a minimum of 25	Enhance export capability.	On-going
	Provide mentoring to small and micro businesses	35 businesses receiving mentoring	Enhanced management capabilities	On-going
	Facilitate a number of networks such as Profitnet, the Creative Coast, Donegal Engineers, etc	60 businesses engaged.	Enhanced business knowledge, enhance business networking and enhanced business skills.	On-going
	Delivery of sector specific initiatives such as the Food Coast and Creative Coast	140 businesses engaging	Enhanced business skills, collaboration and knowledge sharing within the sectors and an increase in new-start-ups and developing businesses within the sectors.	On-going

3. Entrepreneurship Support Promotion.

Strategic Objective	2017 Action	Target / Output	Outcome	Timescale
KUG 5	Initial meeting Q 1	More start-ups per annum	Enhanced enterprise ecosystem	Mid-2017 onward
00 5 & 6	Deliver on programmes such as Student Enterprise, IBYE	Minimum 8 schools, 300 students, 50 IBYE applicants and 15 finalists on an annual basis	Enhanced levels of entrepreneurship and start-ups in Donegal	On-going
	Deliver Enterprise Week on an annual basis	300 participants on an annual basis	Enhanced business learning and networking	Q1 annually
	Promote and deliver Donegal Enterprise Awards on an annual basis	20 applicants per annum	Increase in role models at local level and increased business confidence.	Q1 annually

4. Local Enterprise Development Services

Strategic Objective	2017 Action	Target / Output	Outcome	Timescale
KUG 6	Prepare business plan. Seek funding.	New start-ups in medical devices and e-health and related sectors	Support framework for medical device and e-health sector put in place	Q2 2017 onward
KUG 7	Meet with enterprise centres. Carry out scoping review of resource.	At least 6 enterprise centres engaged.	Comprehensive network of capable community enterprise centres	Commence Q3 2017
00 7	Contribute to LEDC and LCDC processes	Attend monthly and quarterly meetings	Integrated delivery of support services	On-going
	Delivery of Donegal Diaspora Project	Quarterly newsletter. 4 Diaspora events p.a.	Active engagement with Donegal Diaspora	On-going
	Delivery of EU funded programmes	As per each project plan	Improved levels of innovation, internationalisation and capabilities.	On-going until 2011.



National Local Enterprise Projects & Programmes

SECTION
07

07. National Local Enterprise Projects & Programmes.

Below is a summary of the actions and programmes at national level in which the Local Enterprise Office Donegal actively engages in on an annual basis and will continue to do so in 2017 and during the period of this plan. Should additional national initiatives be developed during the period of the plan and subject to any decision taken to end national participation in these programmes or events, the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal will seek to deliver on these in a committed and professional manner.

STUDENT ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME



The Student Enterprise Programme (SEPs) is the biggest enterprise competition for students in Ireland. It helps students to grasp real life skills associated with running an enterprise, including working as part of a team, managing production and finances, organising a sales and marketing campaign and liaising directly with customers, judges and the media. Each year over 17,000 students all over Ireland get to find out what it's like to run their own business by taking part in the Student Enterprise Programme. Local Enterprise Office Donegal will continue to promote and deliver the programme in Donegal.

NATIONAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS



The Local Enterprise Office Donegal has been organising the Donegal Business Awards for over 20 years and has over the years had a number of national finalists and a national winner. Enterprise Awards Competition is designed to recognise and reward the commitment, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit of small businesses at local and national level. The competition for the awards involves two stages: a local competition, at County level, with the winner then representing the County at a National Final.

SHOWCASE.



Showcase at the RDS is the first major trade event of each year, organised by the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland and promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland. The dedicated Enterprise Zone on the balcony area, co-ordinated by the Local Enterprise Offices, has become known as the home for emerging designers and craftspeople in recent years. A wide range of creative sectors is represented within the Enterprise Zone, such as ceramics, knitwear, jewellery, interiors, skincare and giftware. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will continue to support suitable craft businesses to participate at Showcase and in their preparation for attendance at same.

FOOD ACADEMY.



The Food Academy is an initiative designed collaboratively with Bord Bia, Musgraves and the Local Enterprise Office Network. Its aim is to give 'Small Producers a Big Chance'. The Food Academy works with and nurtures small businesses through their journey from start up to getting their products on SuperValu shelves. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work with Local Enterprise Offices in the North West to continue to deliver this programme at local level provided that a cohort of suitable local food producers can be sustained.

NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS.



The National Ploughing Championships are held in September each year. As part of its National Programme the Local Enterprise Offices host a Local Enterprise Village to provide an opportunity for clients to take full advantage of this unique consumer event. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the quality and high standard of goods and services supported by the LEO Network. Subject to national decisions on Network participation, Donegal will seek to have suitable businesses avail of this opportunity on an annual basis and will continue to contribute to the delivery of the event during the week through staff attendance.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE WEEK.



The Local Enterprise Office Donegal piloted the first Business Week some twelve years ago and received a National European Enterprise Awards in 2007. During Business Week a series of events, workshops, guest speakers and seminars aimed at stimulating business growth and new business creation is made available to everyone, regardless of whether they are at start-up, early stage or wishing to develop their business further.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal does this in conjunction with other enterprise stakeholders in Donegal including Enterprise Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta, WestBic, LYIT/CoLab, Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce and other organisations and private businesses. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will continue to organise Donegal Business Week as part of the national Local Enterprise Week.

ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK.

Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is a national programme



involving Enterprise Ireland, the network of Local Enterprise Offices and the Chambers of Commerce in Cork and Dublin. EEN is an initiative of the European Commission Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry and is co-funded under the EIP and CIP programmes. The Network is made up of over 600 contact points in over 60 countries and offers a range of supports to help ambitious SMEs to innovate and grow internationally. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal is the lead and managing partner for the 31 Local Enterprise Offices nationally and delivers the programme in Donegal.

IBYE.

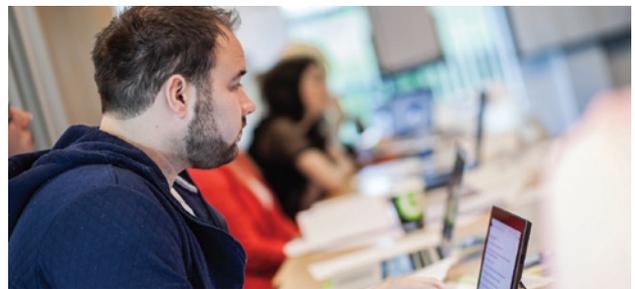


Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur is a national initiative to promote and encourage young people between the ages of

18 and 35 to start-up and grow their own business. Over the initial three years the number of applications has increased and the standard of the projects has improved. Donegal has also found that the programme also produces a pipeline of potential portfolio projects. Donegal Local Enterprise Office will continue to deliver the project in Donegal on an annual basis.

TRADING ONLINE VOUCHERS (TOVS).

TOVs are provided by the Department of Communications and



Natural Resources and are available to any small business wishing to increase its on-line presence and sales. The Local Enterprise Office in Donegal has actively promoted the TOVs and will continue to do so and to process applications and approvals so as to achieve its allocated targets.

BREXIT SEMINARS.



During 2017 additional funding has been provided to deliver Brexit seminars. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will deliver these during 2017 and in subsequent years if the resources are made available.



Local Enterprise Office Donegal Communications Plan.

SECTION

08

08. Local Enterprise Office Donegal Communications Plan.

As an integral part of the national Local Enterprise Office network the Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work closely with the LEO network, Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in implementing all national and local awareness and publicity plans during the life of this plan. It will also work to ensure that national initiatives such as Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur are both promoted and delivered to the highest standards within Donegal.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will appoint a local PR company on annual basis to work with in the delivery of its communication strategy for the period of the plan. This strategy will seek to inform both the general public and in particular, the business community within the County of the range of supports available from and the activities and programmes organised by the Local Enterprise Office. The Local Enterprise Office will also draw on the resources of Donegal County Council and its Public Relations Officer in actively promoting the Local Enterprise Office and its services. The Local Enterprise Office in Donegal will take into account within its Communication Plan the National Communication Strategy for Local Enterprise Offices and will update and amend its plan and activities as necessary in line with national policies and approaches.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will make use of the following media channels and marketing tools in rolling out its communication plan in 2017 and for the period 2017-2020:

- » [Press releases.](#)
- » [Radio interviews and advertising.](#)
- » [Website promotion.](#)
- » [Twitter.](#)
- » [Facebook.](#)
- » [Email marketing,](#)
- » [Case studies, in both soft and hard copy.](#)



09. Customer Care.



The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will operate under the Customer Charter developed for the Local Enterprise Office network and will seek to provide its services to the highest standards and professionalism. Any adverse findings either identified in the national customer care survey carried out by the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland or expressed directly to the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal will be addressed in a pro-active and on-going basis.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All information, both personal and business, provided by you, will be dealt with in total confidence and in a manner that respects your dignity

EQUALITY

In our dealings with customers we will ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation are upheld. The LEO does not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, family status, race, religious belief, sexual orientation and membership of the traveller community.

Source: LEO Customer Charter

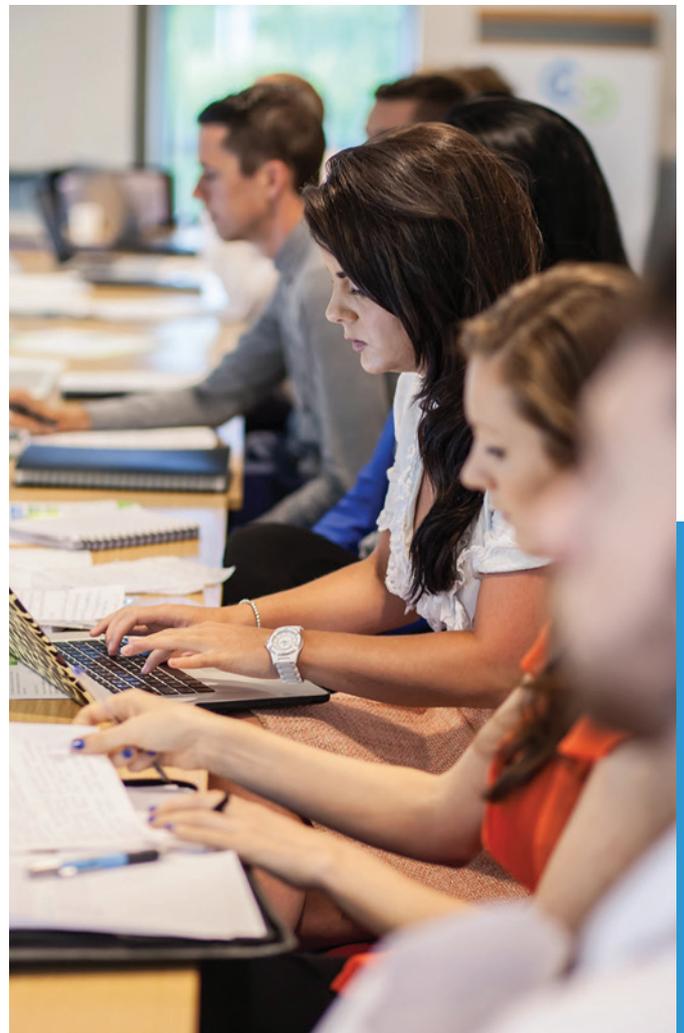
10. Financial Management Planning.

The core budget of the Local Enterprise Office is provided by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It is managed and overseen by Enterprise Ireland and is drawdown by the Local Enterprise Office on a quarterly basis. Donegal County Council also provides additional funding for the Local Enterprise Office towards its core Measure 2 activities.

The Local Enterprise Office uses the Local Authority AGRASSO system to manage the budget on a day to day basis and to report on its use both to Enterprise Ireland and internally within the Local Authority. It is also governed by the LEO Financial Procedures Manual as developed by the CCU in Enterprise Ireland.

The Local Enterprise Office will seek to manage the budget provided in a prudent, efficient and effective manner. It will seek to achieve this by the timely and even drawdown of quarterly funds, the provision of financial reports in an accurate and timely fashion and will seek value for money at all times.

It is the policy of the Local Enterprise Office to adhere to the procurement requirements of Donegal County Council and in this regard it is its practice to seek tenders/quotes in relation to all external activity and programme delivery costs.



11. Key Stakeholders and Protocols.

Within the context of promoting and driving enterprise in Donegal and in addition to the cohort of indigenous business in the county, there are a range of key stakeholders that the Local Enterprise Office will work with and communicate with. These include:

- » [Donegal County Council \(DCC\).](#)
- » [Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation \(DJEI\).](#)
- » [Enterprise Ireland \(EI\).](#)
- » [IDA \(Ireland\).](#)
- » [Border and West Regional Assembly \(BWRA\).](#)
- » [Udaras na Gaeltachta.](#)
- » [Donegal Education & Training Board.](#)
- » [Failte Ireland.](#)
- » [Bord Iascaigh Mhara \(BIM\).](#)
- » [Department of Social Protection.](#)
- » [Micro Finance Ireland \(MFI\).](#)
- » [Donegal County Enterprise Fund.](#)
- » [LEADER Local Action Group.](#)
- » [Local Development Companies.](#)
- » [InterTradeIreland \(ITI\).](#)
- » [Invest Northern Ireland \(INI\).](#)
- » [Enterprise Northern Ireland \(ENI\).](#)
- » [Special European Union Public Body \(SEUPB\).](#)

Protocols/Memorandums of Understanding have been agreed with a number of these organisations and in particular with :

- » [Department of Social Protection](#)
- » [Credit Review Board](#)
- » [Fáilte Ireland](#)
- » [Microfinance Ireland](#)
- » [Skillnets](#)
- » [ETBI](#)
- » [Revenue](#)
- » [NACEC](#)
- » [Udaras na Gaeltachta](#)
- » [Local Action Groups administering the LEADER programme.](#)

These protocols govern dissemination of information, information signposting and inter-agency referrals. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal has formal and informal engagement with the above Agencies/Organisations and works closely with them to assist in job creation and information sharing. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will seek to continue to implement these protocols on an on-going basis and review locally as required.

APPENDIX 1:

Performance Metrics

2016 Outputs and 2017 Targets.

Jobs:	Output 2016	Target 2017	Target 2020
Total Employment in LEO Clients	1,100	1,215	1,450
Gross Jobs Created	364	250	260
Full Time Created	143	130	140
Other Time Created	221	120	120
Net Increase [after Job Losses]	250	145	150
FTE Net Jobs	170.5	115	120
Number of LEO Clients	183	209	260
Measure 1	Output 2016	Target 2017	Target 2020
Number of Applications Received:	26	30	32
Feasibility/Priming/Business Expansion	2/10/14	4/16/10	3/17/12
Grant Applications Approved:			
Feasibility: Number / Value	2/9011	3/15,000	2/10,000
Priming: Number / Value	12/170,349	14/196,000	15/210,000
Business Expansion: Number / Value	11/306,386	8/250,000	10/300,000
No. of potential new jobs associated with Priming	25	30	35
No. of potential new jobs associated with Business Expansion	37	40	50
Costs per job associated with approvals [Average Cost calculated on new jobs over three years]	€7,690	€6,380	€6,000

Measure 2	Output 2016	Target 2017	Target 2020
Training:			
Total No. of Courses	75	45	35
Total No. of Participants	1,362	750	700
No. of Females	655	375	350
No. of Males	707	375	350
No. of Core Programmes/ Mgt. Dev. Programmes [Programmes specifically available to clients that target starting and growing a business e.g. Core Pillars of Management Development – Finance, Mgt. Dev., Sales & Marketing, IT, Operations/ Production, HR]	75	45	35
No. of SYOB Programmes	3	3	4
Network Events/Seminars			
No. of Participants	567	600	800
No. of Events	22	20	20
Mentoring:			
Number of Participants	26	30	40
No. of Mentors	12	20	20
No. of Mentor Visits/Assignments	47	90	120
No. of Clinics	0	0	0

Progression Pathway:	Output 2016	Target 2017	Target 2020
Number of Clients transferred to E.I.	1	4	5
» Pre HPSU (Project resides in HPSU Div. of EI, has been assigned an HPSU DA and/or has received initial HPSU financial support e.g. Feasibility/CSF)	2	2	3
» HPSU (project has received a full HPSU investment €250,000)			
» Established		2	2
FTE Jobs associated with transfer to EI		20	25
Clients received from EI Portfolio	8	6	6
FTE Jobs associated with transfer from EI		30	30
No.of Clients participating in:-			
» New Frontiers	2	2	0
» Competitive Start	1		

Schools Entrepreneurship:	Output 2016	Target 2017	Target 2020
Number of Schools Participating (Secondary only)	7	10	15
» Number of Students Participating	513	550	700

Trading On Line Vouchers:	Output 2016	Target 2017
No. of Trading Online Vouchers approved	24	35
No. of Trading Online Vouchers Paid	17	31
Value of Trading Online Vouchers Paid	€36,199	€55,800

MFI:	Output 2016	Target 2017
Number of MFI Applications Assessed by LEO	10	10
Number of MFI Applications recommended by LEO	9	10

Irish Best Young Entrepreneur:	Output 2016	Target 2017
Number of Applications	65	50

Lean for Micro Project:	Output 2016	Target 2017
No. of Projects Completed	6	5

Measure 1 Projects to Enterprise Ireland for Approval:	Output 2016	Target 2017
Number of Projects	1	1
Value of Projects Approved	€100,000	€60,000
Jobs Associated with Projects	10	10

APPENDIX 2:

LEO Suite of Services

The Local Enterprise Office uses the Local Authority AGRESSO system to manage the budget on a day to day basis and to report on its use both to Enterprise Ireland and internally within the Local Authority. It is also governed by the LEO Financial Procedures Manual as developed by the CCU in Enterprise Ireland.

1. Start-Ups

Support Service	Action within the LEO
Monthly Business Information Briefings	Actively promote on an on-going basis
1:1 consultations	Create awareness of this facility via website.
Pre Start programme[2 days]	Schedule as part of annual training programmes and in advance of SYOB
Start Your Business Programme[SYOB][2/4 days] with mentoring and exit reviews	Exit review to be integral part of SYOB programme.
Review within 3/6 months of finish of SYOB	
Grant Aid	Tool required to access business skills.
3/6 month reviews	Schedule as part of Letter of Offer.
Mentoring	Implement proposed approach.
Management Development Programmes.	Programmes to be developed in response to identified needs.

2. Existing Businesses

Support Service	Action within the LEO
1:1consultation	Tool required to capture needs and issues.
SYOB / Small Business Accounts/ Business Planning.	Schedule on annual basis
Mentoring	Implement proposed approach.
Management Development Programmes.	Develop in response to identified needs.
Grant Aid	Apply to achieve maximum return to county and local economy.
3/6 months reviews with focus on Financial Management.	Tool to enable Owner managers assess their financial performance.
Access to networks and other sources of support.	Ensure familiarity with other sources and supports.

3. Business Skills Enhancement

Support Service	Action within the LEO
Start Your Own Business	Focus more on core M1 portfolio clients. Seek to have M2 clients classified as "Portfolio" clients. Establish annual training programme schedule, carry out evaluations and measure outputs [jobs, sales, exports] and review regularly.
Small Business Accounts	
Business Planning	
Management Development Programmes e.g. Accelerate, LEAN.	
Profitnet	
Business Skills for Non Owner managers	

4. Sector Specific Supports

Support Service	Action
Food Coast Initiative	Continue delivery and momentum
Youth Entrepreneurship	Deliver IBYE and possible pilot with LYIT.
Female Entrepreneurship	Support Donegal Women in Business Network and review on-going need/demand for dedicated programme.
Creative Industries	Deliver strategy and actions in conjunction with the sector and partners.
Engineering	Examine the potential of facilitating a Donegal Engineering initiative.

APPENDIX 3:

Mentoring

The provision of Mentoring as a very focussed and one-to-one approach to business skills improvement will continue to be made available through the Local Enterprise Office. The Donegal Local Enterprise Office will continue to use the national templates and processes as developed by the Local Enterprise Office network in conjunction with the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland.

Mentoring, while continuing to be available to all sectors, will be used **primarily to assist existing added-value businesses, with a particular focus on growth-oriented businesses.** Mentoring will not generally be used for trouble shooting within businesses that are in serious trading difficulty.

The following processes and policies will be used to process requests for mentoring assistance by Donegal LEO:

- » The business must meet with an executive of the Local Enterprise Office in the first instant.
- » Consideration of any request for mentoring will only be considered in the context of the business outlining its overall business strategy and objectives i.e. the business must have a plan.
- » Following this meeting, if deemed appropriate, the business will make a formal application for mentoring using the appropriate form.
- » If participation on a programme of the Board [or another enterprise agency] is decided to be a more appropriate means of support then this will be advised to the client at this stage.
- » The Mentoring Application form must be fully completed by the applicant.
- » Allocated mentoring hours will be capped at 16 hours in a calendar year with the first 8 hours sub-vented at 80% and the second 8 hours at 60%.
- » Payments to mentors will be on foot of submission of detailed mentor reports, as discussed and agreed with the relevant Donegal LEO executive.
- » If mentoring is being provided through another programme of the Donegal Local Enterprise Office such as a management development programme or cross-border programme, then consideration of any further mentoring requests will be deferred until such programme and mentoring is completed.

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil

Local Enterprise Office



Ballyraine
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal
F92 HP64

Phone: 074 9160735

Lo Call: 1890 607000

Email: info@leo.donegalcoco.ie

www.localenterprise.ie