



# Strategic Plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board 2007 - 2013



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## **Executive Summary**

In October 2006, Wicklow County Enterprise Board decided to engage in a strategic planning process with a view to developing a strategic plan for the period 2007 -2013. The intention was that this plan would give the Enterprise Board a clear focus and direction and would provide a platform on which annual operational plans would be based.

Paula Fitzsimons, an independent strategy and management consultant, was appointed to facilitate the strategic planning process on behalf of Wicklow County Enterprise Board. A consultative and inclusive approach was taken to the development of this plan, fully involving staff, clients, other stakeholders and interested parties in the process.

The strategic plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board is focused on strengthening client businesses and supporting them to realize their growth. It has been designed to be client focused and responsive, and has been developed to take account of the international, national and county circumstances that will prevail in the coming years.

Section 1 of the report (pages 10 to 18) establishes the international, national and local backdrop against which the strategic plan has been developed and will be implemented, while the strategic plan is detailed in Section 2 (pages 19 to 37).

### **Section 1: Establishing the Context**

This section examines in broad outline the international, national and county circumstances that create the backdrop against which the strategic plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board will be set. The policy framework within which the County Enterprise Boards in general operate is also briefly set out, together with the particular circumstances and current scope of Wicklow County Enterprise Board.

The ESRI *Medium Term Review*<sup>1</sup> suggests that the economy has the potential to continue growing at between 4 and 5 per cent a year to 2015. While this is a significantly slower rate of growth in potential output than was experienced in the late 1990s, it is still substantially greater than for the EU as a whole.

There is general agreement that the indigenous enterprise sector must assume greater importance in sustaining and driving growth going forward and the growing importance that small businesses will make to the Irish economy in the future has been emphasised.

The key challenges for small businesses in Ireland, however, include low productivity and poor competitiveness, which are closely tied to poor management skills, low uptake of ICT and lack of focus on innovation.

Issues around the cost of doing businesses in Ireland, the burden of regulation, a tight labour supply which particularly affects small businesses in their efforts to attract and retain key employees, infrastructural deficiencies and the relatively small size of the home market add to the other challenges that face small businesses operating in Ireland.

More positively, the continued strong growth of the Irish economy and increased consumer spending has provided very many opportunities for the creation of new enterprises and these opportunities have been availed of by a growing cadre of young Irish entrepreneurs.

Positive aspects of the demographic profile of Ireland have also been driving the growth in entrepreneurial activity, namely population growth, inward migration, and a young population.

At a national level, it is clear that Ireland is to the fore in Europe in terms of the relative number within its population that are at an advanced stage of setting up a new business or have recently done so. Ireland's strong ranking within Europe has been maintained for

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<sup>1</sup> ESRI Medium Term Review 2005 -2012, No 10, Fitzgerald John et al, December 2005

several years now. The positive culture and supporting social norms surrounding entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are ranked among the highest in the world<sup>2</sup>.

With a variety of landscapes, maritime, rural and mountainous, within a relatively short distance to the city, County Wicklow is divided geographically by the mountain range running northeast to southwest. The county is associated in many people's minds with a high quality of life. This is reinforced through positive associations with its *Garden of Ireland* image. However it is also acknowledged that in the past, County Wicklow has not sufficiently promoted itself and has allowed negative publicity about the county to detract from its many fine features.

The proximity of Wicklow to Dublin has driven the development in the north and east of the county. This has resulted in the population within the county increasing both through organic natural growth and from the addition of newcomers into the county, with increasing numbers of well educated young people living within the county bounds.

The population of County Wicklow according to the 2006 census was 126,330. The total population grew by over 10% since the last census in 2002. These demographic features may be expected to contribute to a higher rate of early stage entrepreneurial activity than would be the case in a county not experiencing population growth of this nature<sup>3</sup>.

The natural resources of the county are of particular importance to the tourism, forestry and agri-tourism sectors. There is a long tradition of enterprise in both the north and south of the county. The availability of enterprise centres, the accessibility of the County Enterprise Board and other enterprise support organisations together with a firm commitment by the local authority and state agencies to drive forward the development

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<sup>2</sup> Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) the Irish Report 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005, Paula Fitzsimons and Colm O'Gorman.

<sup>3</sup> **Growing population leads to increased demand for products and services**, *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Executive Report*, Reynolds et al, 1999; **Increases the base for new business opportunities**, *An eclectic theory of entrepreneurship: policies, institutions and culture.*, EIM research report, Verheul et al, 2001; **Regions with higher population growth rates have higher prevalence rates for nascent entrepreneurship**, *The Entrepreneur Next Door: Characteristics of Individuals starting Companies in America*, Reynolds et al, 2002.

of enterprise in the county are all positive features working towards the creation of a vibrant county.

There are other features, however, which are less positive and are inhibiting the development of the county. Despite the recent improvements to the N11, the transport infrastructure remains poor in many parts of the county. Under development in other public utilities such as water, effluent and waste disposal also pose difficulties for enterprise development within the county. High profile delays and difficulties with the planning process have tended to give the county a negative and anti development reputation.

The lack of pervasive broadband access negatively affects many businesses throughout the county. In particular, internationally traded service based enterprises, which have a very low impact on the environment and would appear to be particularly suitable for development within the County Wicklow, are less developed than they might be within the county, due to the lack of broadband access countywide.

Historically there was no third level college within the county, which is a disadvantage in the context of Ireland's knowledge based economy aspirations, although the north of the county has reasonable proximity to IADT in Dún Laoghaire, UCD Belfield and the Smurfit Business School in Blackrock. In this connection, a very welcome development occurred in the autumn of 2006 with the establishment by the Institute of Technology Carlow of an outreach centre, located at the Clermont Campus in Rathnew.

Wicklow County Enterprise Board was established by Government in 1993. One of 35 Boards established at this time, its primary objective is the promotion of entrepreneurship and the provision of assistance towards the development and growth of enterprises at local level. The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has directed that the Enterprise Boards will increasingly focus on the *quality* of projects and on their potential

to grow and to contribute to increased economic activity at local, regional and national level.<sup>4</sup>

It is against this backdrop that Wicklow County Enterprise Board will focus its resources over the period of the strategic plan 2007 -2013, thereby making its contribution to the achievement of one of the high level objectives of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, namely supporting enterprise, innovation and productivity.<sup>5</sup>

## **Section 2: Strategic Plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board 2007 -2013**

The mission of Wicklow County Enterprise Board is to foster a strong entrepreneurial culture in County Wicklow and to actively support the development of indigenous businesses, in particular those with the potential to grow.

This mission is translated into five strategic objectives, namely

### *Excellent service*

- To provide an excellent level of service to all who come into contact with the Enterprise Board

### *Fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship*

- To encourage the strengthening of a pervasive entrepreneurial climate that will inspire the creation of new enterprises and provide a supportive environment for business in County Wicklow.

### *Supporting new enterprises*

- To appropriately support entrepreneurs to create dynamic new enterprises within the county, particularly those which have the capability to grow and develop.

### *Developing existing enterprises*

- To address the needs of existing enterprises to increase their competitiveness, innovation and management capability, and

### *Supporting growth*

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<sup>4</sup> Speech by Micheál Martin, TD, Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment at the launch of the County and City Enterprise Boards' National Brand, 15 April 2005  
<http://www.entemp.ie/press/2005/20050415b.htm>

<sup>5</sup> *Transforming Ireland*, National Development Plan 2007-2013, Executive Summary, page 24.

- To support those owner managers, who wish to grow their businesses, to achieve the full potential of their enterprises.

A range of initiatives are described in the body of this strategic plan which have been developed to meet each of these objectives. To encourage the widespread development of enterprise activities, the implementation of the initiatives will be implemented throughout the county. The Enterprise Board intends to be innovative and to try new initiatives to achieve the objectives set out above on behalf of its stakeholders. Not all of these initiatives will be equally successful. Hence, the importance of feedback mechanisms which allow informed judgements to be made in this regard.

All interventions will be weighed against the potential outcomes. Accordingly, **greatest resources will be targeted at areas with the highest potential outcomes.** For example where a business, regardless of its stage of development, is identified as having a potential for growth, it will be prioritised for support.

Targets have been set to measure the progress towards the achievement of the stated objectives. These targets reflect the underlining theme of this plan with its focus on supporting development and growth. They are considered ambitious targets and will be reviewed at the end of 2008 and amended, if considered necessary.

The strategic plan has been designed to be actioned and accordingly five areas have been identified as being critical to its successful implementation:

- **The necessary structure and resources** needed to achieve all of the above, including staff and partnership relationships, have been analysed and will be put in place over the course of 2007, so as to be fully operational by January 2008. This plan has been costed and is deliverable within limits, within the budget currently available to the Enterprise Board. If more resources were to be made available to the Board, an increased level of activity would be possible. Its successful implementation, however, is based on an assumption that there will be



no diminution of financial resources available to the Enterprise Board on an annual basis.

- **Evaluation and feedback mechanisms**, designed to ensure that the strategy continues to fulfil the stated mission in a manner that is client focused and sensitive to client needs, will be established, together with reporting procedures to ensure that the Board is kept informed of the roll-out of the strategy and progress towards targets.
- **An appropriate client report management system:** The Performance Monitoring System (PMS) is the required means by which reports on the activities of the Enterprise Board are transmitted to the Department. This system does not provide, however, a management information system for the executives of the Enterprise Board that is appropriate to the needs of its clients. Accordingly, the executives within the Enterprise Board have begun to develop a parallel system. While this entails a large degree of duplication it is considered necessary. It is intended to further develop this system into a suitable CRM system that fully captures client information from first contact and allows the Enterprise Board to tailor its assistance appropriately to the needs of its individual clients.
- **An organisation dedicated to continuous Improvement:** Wicklow County Enterprise Board intends to be an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement through learning and development. The Enterprise Board and its executives will be open to learning from any source - local, national, European and international - that it believes can assist the organisation's ability to achieve its strategic goals in an effective and efficient manner.
- **Profile enhancement:** The consultations suggested that the profile of the Enterprise Board had been improved but that it could be further improved. In order to enhance the profile of Wicklow County Enterprise Board in a consistent and thematic manner, a three year marketing plan will be developed which will identify the different target audiences and the most appropriate means to communicate with each of these. A variety of means will be used to raise the profile of the Enterprise Board and its supports and services.

- **Providing a supportive environment within the county:** Wicklow County Enterprise Board is fully committed to playing a full role in creating a supportive environment for enterprise creation and development within the county. The Enterprise Board recognises, however, that a broad number of other stakeholders have a pivotal role to play in ensuring that the necessary transport, communication and physical infrastructure and planning environment exists, which is conducive to enterprise development. The Enterprise Board through its representation on the County Development Board and its Economic Sub-Group, and through all other means at its disposal, will continue to highlight the needs of enterprise development within the county so that a more supportive environment can be provided.

### **Section 3: Conclusion**

At the heart of this strategic plan is a developmental approach to the achievement of the objectives. Such an approach has implications for the manner in which the interventions of the Enterprise Board are viewed whereby activities are not considered in isolation but rather as contributing to the achievement of the mission and objectives of the Enterprise Board and that of its client companies.

This approach will in turn assist the Enterprise Board in playing an active role with regard to the strengthening and growth of existing businesses in the county and in encouraging a greater level of *quality* start-ups that have the aspiration and the capability to further grow and develop.

The Enterprise Board is confident that the implementation of the strategic plan in the coming years will benefit the entrepreneurs and small owner managers in the county through greater sustainability, growth and enhanced profitability of their businesses, while the wider county and local communities will prosper through having dynamic business in their midst.

## **Introduction**

In October 2006, Wicklow County Enterprise Board decided to engage in a strategic planning process with a view to developing a strategic plan for the period 2007 -2013. The intention was that this plan would give the Enterprise Board a clear focus and direction and would provide a platform on which annual operational plans would be based.

Paula Fitzsimons, an independent strategy and management consultant, was appointed to facilitate the strategic planning process on behalf of Wicklow County Enterprise Board. A consultative and inclusive approach was taken to the development of this plan, fully involving staff, clients, other stakeholders and interested parties in the process.

The strategic plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board is designed to be client focused and responsive, and has been developed to take account of the following:

- The international, national and county circumstances that will create the backdrop in the coming years against which the strategic plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board will be set
- The policy framework within which the County Enterprise Boards in general operate
- The particular circumstances and current scope of Wicklow County Enterprise Board, and
- A desire to ensure that the activities of the Enterprise Board contribute to the prosperity of County Wicklow and local communities within it, by fostering a spirit of enterprise in the county and by appropriately supporting the creation and development of micro enterprises, particularly those with an aspiration for growth.

Section 1 of the report (pages 10 to 18) establishes the international, national and local backdrop against which the strategic plan has been developed and will be implemented, while the strategic plan is detailed in Section 2 (pages 19 to 37).

## **Section 1: Establishing the Context**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This section examines in broad outline the international, national and county circumstances that will create the backdrop in the coming years against which the strategic plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board will be set. The policy framework within which the County Enterprise Boards in general operate is also briefly set out, together with the particular circumstances and current scope of Wicklow County Enterprise Board.

### **1.2 Economic Backdrop**

The ESRI *Medium Term Review*<sup>6</sup> comments that before looking to the future it is important to acknowledge the huge economic achievements since 1995 and the fact that the new Irish economy is reasonably robust in the face of economic shocks.

The analysis in this *Review* suggests that the economy has the potential to continue growing at between 4 and 5 per cent a year to 2015. While this is a significantly slower rate of growth in potential output than was experienced in the late 1990s, it is still substantially greater than for the EU as a whole.

### **1.3 Role of Indigenous Enterprise**

While foreign direct investment (FDI) has been a major growth engine of the Irish economy in recent times and will continue to be an important driver in the future, there is general agreement that the indigenous enterprise sector must assume greater importance in sustaining and driving growth going forward.<sup>7</sup> Government policy also places considerable emphasis on the need for knowledge based industry based on a strong R&D foundation.

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<sup>6</sup> ESRI Medium Term Review 2005 -2012, No 10, Fitzgerald John et al, December 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *Ahead of the Curve – Ireland's Place in the Global Economy*. Enterprise Strategy Group Report, July 2004. See also Speech by Micheál Martin, TD, Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment at the launch of the County and City Enterprise Boards' National Brand, 15 April 2005 <http://www.entemp.ie/press/2005/20050415b.htm>

The key role played by small businesses in the economy is emphasised in the recent Report of the Small Business Forum. The Report is very clear also in terms of the growing importance that small businesses will make to the Irish economy going forward:

*“In the years ahead, as Ireland moves towards a knowledge-based economy, the importance of the small business sector will increase, and the vitality and dynamism of the sector must be supported, in order to ensure continued economic growth and high living standards throughout the country.”*

#### **1.4 Challenges Facing Small Businesses**

The Irish economy has changed dramatically since 1990, and provides an arena for enterprise that is strongly supportive, while posing a different set of challenges for growing businesses than were previously faced.

The report of the Small Business Forum underlined the key challenges for small businesses in Ireland. These challenges included low productivity and poor competitiveness, which are closely tied to poor management skills, low uptake of ICT and lack of focus on innovation.

Issues around the cost of doing businesses in Ireland, the burden of regulation, a tight labour supply which particularly affects small businesses in their efforts to attract and retain key employees, infrastructural deficiencies and the relatively small size of the home market add to the other challenges outlined above that face small businesses operating in Ireland.

More positively, the continued strong growth of the Irish economy and increased consumer spending has provided very many opportunities for the creation of new enterprises and these opportunities have been availed of by a growing cadre of young Irish entrepreneurs.

Positive aspects of the demographic profile of Ireland have also been driving the growth in entrepreneurial activity, namely population growth, inward migration, and a young population.

At a national level, it is clear that Ireland is to the fore in Europe in terms of the relative number within its population that are at an advanced stage of setting up a new business or have recently done so. Ireland's strong ranking within Europe has been maintained for several years now. It should be pointed out, however, that Europe is not particularly entrepreneurial and that Ireland is some way behind the most entrepreneurial of the OECD countries, such as the US, Australia and New Zealand in terms of the proportion of its population that are engaged in actively planning and setting up new businesses. The positive culture and supporting social norms surrounding entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, however, are ranked among the highest in the world<sup>8</sup>.

## 1.5 County Wicklow



<sup>8</sup> Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) the Irish Report 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005, Paula Fitzsimons and Colm O’Gorman.

With a variety of landscapes, maritime, rural and mountainous, within a relatively short distance to the city, County Wicklow is associated in many people's minds with a high quality of life. This is reinforced through positive associations with its *Garden of Ireland* image. However it is also acknowledged that in the past, County Wicklow has not sufficiently promoted itself and has allowed negative publicity about the county to detract from its many fine features.

County Wicklow forms a part of the Greater Dublin Area. Under the Strategic Policy Guidelines, 1999, the development centres in County Wicklow are:

- ***Metropolitan Area***; Bray & Greystones

- ***Hinterland***: Wicklow & Arklow

There are five electoral areas for County Wicklow: Bray, Greystones, Wicklow, Arklow and Baltinglass. There are four Town Councils, in Bray, Greystones, Arklow and Wicklow.

County Wicklow is divided geographically by the mountain range running northeast to southwest through the County.

The proximity of Wicklow to Dublin has driven the development in the north and east of the county, as the roads have improved and the commuter belt becomes further extended in all directions. This has resulted in the population within the county increasing both through organic natural growth and from the addition of newcomers into the county, with increasing numbers of well educated young people living within the county bounds.

The population of County Wicklow according to the 2006 census was 126,330. The total population grew by over 10% since the last census in 2002. The gender division is almost 50/50 across the total population; however rural areas particularly in West Wicklow tend to have more men than women. The increase in population in Co. Wicklow is attributable to two factors; natural increase and net inwards migration.

The main population centres in West Wicklow are Blessington and Baltinglass and in East Wicklow are Greystones/Delgany, Wicklow/Rathnew, Arklow and Bray. The largest town is Bray with a population of almost 27,000.

The areas in County Wicklow that exhibited the highest growth in population between 2002 and 2006 are Arklow (17%), Baltinglass (22%), Blessington (27%), Kilcoole (68%), Aughrim (22%) and Greystones /Delgany (15%). The population of Co. Wicklow is continued to grow over the period of this plan.

These demographic features may be expected to contribute to a higher rate of early stage entrepreneurial activity than would be the case in a county not experiencing population growth of this nature<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, among those living in the commuter belt and currently traveling into the Dublin city and surrounding counties to work are those who might welcome the opportunity to reduce their traveling time each day by either starting and running their own businesses in the county or by choosing to work for a new employer in the county who could make full use of their skills and experience. In this way there may be potential key employees available in the county were knowledge based entrepreneurs to become more active in the county.

The natural resources of the county are of particular importance to the tourism, forestry and agri-tourism sectors. There is a long tradition of enterprise in both the north and south of the county. The availability of enterprise centres, the accessibility of the County Enterprise Board and other enterprise support organisations together with a firm commitment by the local authority and state agencies to drive forward the development

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<sup>9</sup> **Growing population leads to increased demand for products and services**, *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Executive Report*, Reynolds et al, 1999; **Increases the base for new business opportunities**, *An eclectic theory of entrepreneurship: policies , institutions and culture.*, EIM research report, Verheul et al, 2001; **Regions with higher population growth rates have higher prevalence rates for nascent entrepreneurship**, *The Entrepreneur Next Door: Characteristics of Individuals starting Companies in America*, Reynolds et al, 2002.



of enterprise in the county are all positive features working towards the creation of a vibrant county.

There are some features of the county, however, that are less supportive. Despite the recent improvements to the N11, the transport infrastructure remains poor in many parts of the county. Under\_development in other public utilities such as water, effluent and waste disposal also pose difficulties for enterprise development within the county. High profile delays and difficulties with the planning process have tended to give the county a negative and anti development reputation.

The lack of pervasive broadband access negatively affects many businesses throughout the county. In particular, internationally traded service based enterprises, which have a very low impact on the environment and would appear to be particularly suitable for development within the County Wicklow, are less developed than they might be within the county, due to the lack of broadband access countywide.

Historically there was no third level college within the county, which is a disadvantage in the context of Ireland's knowledge based economy aspirations, although the north of the county has reasonable proximity to IADT in Dún Laoghaire, UCD Belfield and the Smurfit Business School in Blackrock. In this connection, a very welcome development occurred in the autumn of 2006 with the establishment by the Institute of Technology Carlow of an outreach centre, located at the Clermont Campus in Rathnew.

## **1.6 The Policy Framework**

Wicklow County Enterprise Board was established by Government in 1993. One of 35 Boards established at this time, its primary objective is the promotion of entrepreneurship and the provision of assistance towards the development and growth of enterprises at local level.

The following strategic goals are focused on the core principle of the Enterprise Boards: *Driving Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Small Business in Ireland*<sup>10</sup>.

- To stimulate and promote local enterprise culture and entrepreneurship
- To assist new business start ups, particularly through provision of financial assistance
- To assist the expansion and growth of existing small business through a range of measures including the provision of financial assistance
- To promote and facilitate greater levels of product and process innovation within small businesses particularly through the promotion of innovation management and the use of R&D.
- To encourage and facilitate higher levels of exporting businesses, greater innovation and the use of R&D in small businesses
- To grow a significant number of companies for entry to the EI portfolio
- To develop the management capability of promoters of small business
- To develop strong business networks
- To contribute to the achievement of balanced regional development and a balanced regional economy.

The financial assistance provided by the County Enterprise Boards is intended primarily for the support of enterprises in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors. Assistance of a non financial nature may be directed more widely, however, to enterprises outside these *eligible sectors* that would benefit from the support.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has recognised that CEBs play an extremely important role in developing the small business sector and that while the individual projects approved by the Enterprise Boards may be small, their collective impact can be very significant indeed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Driving Entrepreneurship & Innovation: The Role of the County & City Enterprise Boards, 2006

<sup>11</sup> Speech by Micheál Martin, TD, Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment at the launch of the County and City Enterprise Boards' National Brand, 15 April 2005

<http://www.entemp.ie/press/2005/20050415b.htm>

In accordance with the directions of the Minister, the Enterprise Boards will increasingly focus on the *quality* of projects and on their potential to grow and to contribute to increased economic activity at local, regional and national level.<sup>12</sup> This focus on strengthening client businesses and supporting them to realize their growth potential is reflected throughout this strategic plan.

Since their inception the County Enterprise Boards have been managed and coordinated by a section within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This role is being transferred to a Central Support Unit (CSU), which is to be established within Enterprise Ireland in the current year.<sup>13</sup> Policy formulation, however, will remain the responsibility of the Department. For example, the level of assistance that can be provided by the Enterprise Boards is set down by the Department, together with the criteria that must apply with regard to its approval. The Enterprise Boards operate within degrees of freedom within these policy guidelines.

## **1.7 Wicklow County Enterprise Board**

It is against this backdrop that Wicklow County Enterprise Board will focus its resources to achieve the following objectives over the period of the Strategic plan 2007 -2013:

- To provide an excellent level of service to all who come into contact with the Enterprise Board
- To encourage the strengthening of a pervasive entrepreneurial climate that will inspire the creation of new enterprises and provide a supportive environment for business in County Wicklow.
- To appropriately support entrepreneurs to create dynamic new enterprises within the county, particularly those which have the capability to grow and develop.
- To address the needs of existing enterprises to increase their competitiveness, innovation and management capability, and

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<sup>12</sup> Speech by Micheál Martin, TD, Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment at the launch of the County and City Enterprise Boards' National Brand, 15 April 2005  
<http://www.entemp.ie/press/2005/20050415b.htm>

<sup>13</sup> In accordance with a recommendation of the Fitzpatrick Report, echoed by the Enterprise Strategy Group and accepted by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

- To support those owner managers, who wish to grow their businesses, to achieve the full potential of their enterprises.

In this way Wicklow County Enterprise Board will make its contribution to the achievement of one of the high level objectives of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, namely supporting enterprise, innovation and productivity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Transforming Ireland*, National Development Plan 2007-2013, Executive Summary, page 24.

## **Section 2: Strategic Plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board 2007 -2013**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section sets out the strategic plan for Wicklow County Enterprise Board for the period 2007 to 2013 against the context described in Section 1. At the heart of this strategic plan is the Enterprise Board's desire to place client service as the focus of its operations and to achieve a dynamic enterprise culture in which new and established enterprises can thrive and grow throughout County Wicklow.

The mission is clearly stated which will guide the organisation over this period. This is translated into five strategic objectives. A range of initiatives are described which have been developed to meet each of these objectives and targets have been set to measure the progress towards the achievement of the stated objectives. Evaluation and feedback mechanisms are outlined which are designed to ensure that the strategy continues to fulfil the stated mission in a manner which is client focused and sensitive to client needs. Finally, the resources and systems needed to achieve all of the above, including staff and partnership relationships, are set out.

### **2.2 Mission**

The Mission of Wicklow County Enterprise Board is to foster a strong entrepreneurial culture in County Wicklow and to actively support the development of indigenous businesses, in particular those with the potential to grow.

### **2.3 Objectives**

#### *Excellent service*

- To provide an excellent level of service to all who come into contact with the Enterprise Board

#### *Fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship*

- To encourage the strengthening of a pervasive entrepreneurial climate that will inspire the creation of new enterprises and provide a supportive environment for business in County Wicklow.

### *Supporting new enterprises*

- To appropriately support entrepreneurs to create dynamic new enterprises within the county, particularly those which have the capability to grow and develop.

### *Developing existing enterprises*

- To address the needs of existing enterprises to increase their competitiveness, innovation and management capability, and

### *Supporting growth*

- To support those owner managers, who wish to grow their businesses, to achieve the full potential of their enterprises.

## **2.4 Initiatives to Achieve the Objectives**

The Enterprise Board intends to be innovative and to try new initiatives to achieve the objectives set out above on behalf of its stakeholders. The initiatives described below are intended to assist in the achievement of these objectives.

All interventions will be weighed against the potential outcomes. Accordingly, **greatest resources will be targeted at areas with the highest potential outcomes.** For example where a business, regardless of its stage of development, is identified as having a potential for growth, it will be prioritised for support.

In formulating the initiatives designed to achieve the strategic goals set out above, the Enterprise Board assessed each in terms of its implementation feasibility, its acceptability to stakeholders and its suitability to achieve the stated objectives.

In each instance, the initiative, when run over the course of a year, will be reviewed against the objective set for it and its continuance or suspension will be decided upon in the light of its progress towards the achievement of that objective and on the feedback from clients with regard to their perception of its value. Not all of these initiatives will be equally successful. Hence, the importance of feedback mechanisms which allow informed judgements to be made in this regard.

To encourage the development of enterprise activities throughout the county, the implementation of the initiatives set out below will not be confined to one or two areas of the county, but will be implemented throughout the county.

#### *2.4.1 Excellent Service*

*Objective: To provide an excellent level of service to all who come into contact with the Enterprise Board*

- All who come into contact with the Enterprise Board will be treated in a friendly and efficient manner. The current customer charter forms part of the annual business plan and an annual customer service review is conducted, the findings of which are included in the Annual Report.
- The emphasis will be on what the Board can do for its clients. . For example, the emphasis in advertising and marketing will focus less on the provision of finance, which is only available to a very small number of enterprises within eligible sectors, and more on the provision of information, which can be made available to all; “Thinking of starting a new business - contact your local Enterprise Board”.
- In all circumstances, where a person is being referred to another agency or organisation, the person will be directed to the correct organisation and, where possible, will be given a contact name as well as a telephone number. In this way, signposting will be both accurate and helpful. Similarly, other organisations with whom the Enterprise Board has dealings will be encouraged to adopt this approach so that a more seamless service is made available.
- The executives of the Enterprise Board will constantly seek to improve the quality of the information given to those thinking of starting or further developing a business in the county.
- The re-location of the offices of Wicklow County Enterprise Board to the new Clermont Education & Enterprise Centre in Rathnew will assist in the development of Clermont as a centre of excellence for enterprise and education, where local entrepreneurs will have a one stop shop for information and support on starting and growing their businesses, a means of further developing their research and development capability, thereby strengthening the innovative nature

of their businesses. The move will also have the added benefit of ensuring easier disability access to the offices of the Enterprise Board.

- Clients will be asked to assist in a review of the existing website ([www.wicklowceb.com](http://www.wicklowceb.com)) against the criteria of client friendliness and usefulness. Ease of navigation around the site will be checked and amendments will be made as necessary. The website will be improved to allow on-line payments.
- Certain documentation must be submitted to the Enterprise Board by those who are seeking its assistance, particularly those seeking financial support as the Enterprise Board is dispensing public monies. Every effort will be taken, however, to minimize these requirements, to make the application process as easy as possible and to fully inform clients as to what is required and the manner in which the information should be presented. To this end, simple guides will continue to be made available to those applying to the Enterprise Board for financial assistance.
- The Enterprise Board executives will be mindful of the need to ensure that real and quantifiable benefits flow to entrepreneurs and their companies as a result of their interaction with the Enterprise Board.
- A partnership approach will be taken with key external suppliers of services such as trainers and business mentors, to ensure that the ethos and customer service approach of the Enterprise Board is fully reflected in all outsourced services.

#### *Target*

To achieve a 90% “High” Satisfaction rating across all services

#### *2.4.2 Fostering a Spirit of Entrepreneurship*

*Objective: To encourage the strengthening of a pervasive entrepreneurial climate that will inspire the creation of new enterprises and provide a supportive environment for business in County Wicklow.*



- Enterprise events/ inspirational seminars will be organized in locations around the county to include a motivational speaker who will focus on life choices and the role of entrepreneurship as a possible life enhancing option<sup>15</sup>.
- Localized presentations using DVDs based on inspiring real life success stories of County Wicklow enterprises supported by Wicklow County Enterprise Board will be run in a variety of locations, taking in smaller venues throughout the county. These DVDs will also be available on the website.
- A major drive is underway in the 2006/2007 academic year to increase the number of schools in the County that are participating in the Student Enterprise Award. The relative success of this drive will be assessed before the summer of 2007 and appropriate adjustments will be made to the approach for future years. As part of this evaluation process, the students involved will be asked to complete a short questionnaire to assess (i) their degree of active learning from their participation , (ii) any changes in their attitude to entrepreneurship that have occurred as a result of their participation and (iii) any changes that they would suggest to the manner in which the students are prepared and supported for the competition and the way in which the Student Enterprise Awards competition is organised in the county.
- A “Celebrating Enterprise” event will be held to showcase high achievers in entrepreneurship every two years.
- Bi-annual newsletters will be circulated countywide, promoting the services of Wicklow County Enterprise Board and showcasing successful clients.

### *Target*

The ultimate measure of the success of initiatives taken to foster a pervasive entrepreneurial climate and the provision of a supportive environment for businesses in County Wicklow will manifest in the number of those inspired to plan, start and grow innovative and competitive new businesses in the county. At present there is no

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<sup>15</sup> For example Wicklow Enterprise Information Day was organised for 16 February 2007, as a one stop shop for information and free advice, at which a range of public and private services, agencies and organisations were represented and two guest speakers addressed themes related to starting and growing a business (*Do you have a start-up mindset?*” and *“Growing a business –facing the challenges”*)

mechanism available to track these in their entirety. Accordingly, operational targets will be placed against each of the initiatives outlined above for example:

- At least two enterprise events will be organized in locations around the county on an annual basis
- Four localized presentations will be run in a variety of locations, taking in smaller venues throughout the county.
- At least 90% of second level schools in the county will have an engagement with enterprise education supported by the Enterprise Board.
- A “Celebrating Enterprise” event will be held every two years.
- Two newsletters will be circulated countywide each year.

#### 2.4.3 *Supporting New Enterprises*

Objective: *Appropriately support entrepreneurs to create dynamic new enterprises within the county, particularly those which have the capability and the desire to grow and develop*

- Start Your Own Business (SYOB) courses, which have proven to be highly popular and successful, will continue to be run several times each year. Research recently conducted on behalf of the Enterprise Board has indicated that the current format of the courses is working very well<sup>16</sup>. The name of these courses will change, however, to *How to Start a Business* to underline the fact that these are not just for sole traders/self employed.
- In future, there will be continuity of contact with those who attend *How to Start a Business* (formally known as SYOB) courses and a check will be made after three to six months to ascertain if further assistance is appropriate to assist in bringing the proposed new enterprise into operation.
- As the role of the entrepreneur in a start up enterprise is often a lonely one, consideration will be given to initiating a start-up support network for those who have completed a *How to Start a Business* course and are in the early stages of starting a new business. This would be similar to the support offered to those

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<sup>16</sup> *The Impact of Completing a Start Your Own Business Course*, An analysis of the participants of start your own business courses offered by Wicklow County Enterprise Board from 2003 to 2005, prepared by Marie Parkes, September 2006.

existing businesses that have completed the management development programme and continue to meet for a breakfast meeting on a regular basis to address issues of common interest in a facilitated forum.

- The *advice clinics* have proven to be highly popular and effective, and it is intended to continue providing these.
- The great majority of new enterprises start small and remain small. In many instances this reflects a lifestyle choice made by the entrepreneur. In other circumstances the entrepreneur may wish to grow the business, but the original concept and strategic positioning of the new venture becomes a limiting factor as it does not easily lend itself to be scaled. To minimise instances of this kind, it is intended that those attending *How to Start a Business* courses and/or are being advised by the executives of the Enterprise Board or by mentors acting on its behalf, will be encouraged to be more innovative in their original concept, in order to introduce greater developmental potential from the outset.
- Those contemplating and setting up new businesses will be encouraged to incorporate appropriate ICT systems and supports into their business from the outset.
- As part of the “Celebrating Enterprise” event, a celebration will be held to mark the achievement of those who have set up a new business in the County in the previous two years.
- A range of business skills training courses aimed at providing basic business operational skills, suitable to those setting up and in the early stages of running a new business, will continue to be delivered throughout the year.
- The Board will consider suitable financial intervention in circumstances in which a new business, in manufacturing or in internationally traded services, is identified as having the potential to grow and requires funding to enable it to start.
- The executives of the Board, and their core suppliers, will actively seek to identify start ups with growth and/or export potential and will work in partnership with Enterprise Ireland as appropriate to assist these new businesses to grow and

develop. When they meet the criteria of a HPSU, these client companies will be transferred to Enterprise Ireland.<sup>17</sup>

- Meetings will be held more frequently with financial intermediaries, advisors and those who can act as sources of quality referrals to the Enterprise Board.
- The potential of the Seed Capital Scheme as a means of providing early stage finance to qualifying projects has not been fully exploited. The executives of the Enterprise Board will encourage accountants and other advisors in the private sector in the county to fully familiarize themselves with this scheme so as to be in a position to provide appropriate advice to their clients with regard to its availability.

### *Target*

- It is proposed that forty new businesses will be started in 2008 and each year thereafter, with the active support of the Enterprise Board.
- Of the forty new businesses supported each year, at least ten will receive financial support from the Enterprise Board.
- At least fifteen new businesses which have been supported by the Enterprise Board each year, through financial or non financial means, will have the intention to become an employer within two years.
- Ideally, at least fifteen of the new business supported will have a woman entrepreneur among its owner managers.

These targets are considered ambitious targets and will be reviewed at the end of 2008 and amended if considered appropriate.

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<sup>17</sup> A 'high potential start up' is defined as a company which is:

- Based on technological innovation;
- Likely to achieve significant growth in 3 years (sales of €1.0m per annum and employment of 10 or more);
- Export oriented;
- Ideally, led by an experienced team, with a mixture of technical and commercial competencies.

This definition includes early stage, product led R&D companies, with equivalent sales and employment potential, following successful completion of a defined pre-commercialisation phase.

#### 2.4.4 *Developing Existing Enterprises*

Objective: *To address the needs of existing enterprises to increase their competitiveness, innovation and management capability*

- The focus will be on capability building among existing owner managers, on enhancing productivity and innovation, and on the development of export potential. To support the achievement of this objective, the full range of appropriate supports will be available to qualifying businesses.
- The fostering of ongoing relationships with existing clients will be prioritised. It is envisaged that at least 100 meetings with businesses to assess their needs and to enquire if the Enterprise Board can further support their development efforts will be carried out in 2008 and each year thereafter. In the first instance, executives from the Enterprise Board will contact those businesses that previously received financial support to ascertain their suitability for support to further enhance their development. These meetings will also be used to identify businesses with a clear aspiration for growth.
- Mentor support will continue to be offered as appropriate to owner managers of existing enterprises who encounter specific developmental challenges.
- Small Innovation Grants, as well as the proposed innovation vouchers, will be provided to qualifying businesses which are engaging in activities designed to improve productivity and increase competitiveness.<sup>18</sup>
- A direct result of the Management Development Programme was the formation of the Owner Manager Network, in response to the requests of owner managers for some form of on-going support and peer networking. This initiative will continue.
- The Women in Business initiative will continue through the facilitation of an on-going Network of Entrepreneurial Women. The results of a recent consultation with members of this network will be used to further improve the developmental impact of the network.

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<sup>18</sup> It is intended that the voucher scheme will be launched early in 2007

- Businesses will be encouraged to make better use of ICT. For example, as a means of improving productivity, client companies will be encouraged to avail themselves of assistance to carry out ICT audits, when these become available.<sup>19</sup>
- The Enterprise Board will continue to organise informative seminars of interest to people in businesses to help them stay up to date on a range of topics. At least two seminars of this nature will be organised on an annual basis.<sup>20</sup> The opportunity presented by the audience at the event will also increasingly be used to target information about the services of the Enterprise Board to people who might be considering setting up their own business.
- The executives of the Enterprise Board will partner with other agencies and organisations as appropriate to strengthen the development potential of their clients.

### *Target*

It is envisaged that at least 60 existing businesses will be supported each year from 2008 through to 2013 that wish to strengthen their management capabilities, enhance their innovation and increase their competitiveness. Of these at least seven should be considered suitable for financial support by the Enterprise Board.

Progress will be tracked on an annual basis for each of these companies in terms of an increase in turnover and output per employee. Baseline figures will be established in the first year that these companies are supported by the Enterprise Board and progress tracked against these.

These targets reflect the underlining theme of this plan with its focus on supporting development and growth. They are considered ambitious targets and will be reviewed at the end of 2008 and amended, if considered necessary.

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<sup>19</sup> It is anticipated that assistance to carry out ICT audits will be introduced in April 2007

<sup>20</sup> Recent topics covered range from corporate responsibility to the protection of intellectual property. These seminars are attracting on average over 60 people to each event. The audience is made up not only of owner managers but of key employees among others.

#### 2.4.5 Supporting Growth

Objective: *To support those owner managers, who wish to grow their businesses, to achieve the full potential of their enterprises*

- The executives of the Enterprise Board, and their core suppliers, will actively seek to identify existing businesses with growth and/or export potential and will work in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and other agencies as appropriate to assist these businesses to grow and develop. When they meet the criteria of a HPSU, these client companies will be transferred to Enterprise Ireland.<sup>21</sup>
- The executives of the Enterprise Board will work closely with the Regional Director and other executives of Enterprise Ireland, as appropriate, to gain access to a range of expertise, advice and support which may be available to suitable clients of the Enterprise Board with potential.
- The Enterprise Board intends to take an increasingly developmental approach to supporting the existing base of client enterprises in the county, particularly those that have the desire and potential to grow.
- The Enterprise Board recognises that different supports are needed at different life cycle stages in businesses. Future training provision will take into account and specifically target different stages. For example, different developmental challenges face a business that has grown to employing five or more people than one that has remained smaller. Businesses that are entering a growth phase may require short intensive management development training combined with one to one on-going mentoring/coaching. Suitable supports of this nature will be provided by the Enterprise Board as appropriate.

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<sup>21</sup> A *high potential start-up* (HPSU) is defined as a company that is:

- Based on technological innovation
- Likely to achieve significant growth in 3 years (sales of €1.0m per annum and employment of 10 or more)
- Export oriented
- Ideally, led by an experienced team, with a mixture of technical and commercial competencies

This definition includes early stage, product led R&D companies, with equivalent sales and employment potential, following successful completion of a defined pre-commercialisation phase.

- The challenge for a growing business is often to make the transition from being operationally focused to being able to manage the business as it grows. The WCEB Management Development Programme has proven extremely successful in facilitating this type of capacity building in businesses at this stage of development and will continue to be provided.
- Group mentoring clinics will be piloted specifically aimed at addressing the common needs of growing businesses.
- A panel of Growth Management Guides consisting of experienced executives and entrepreneurs will be formed who are prepared to act as strategic guides for those companies who are actively trying to grow their businesses.<sup>22</sup>
- Issue specific business clinics will be offered to businesses, which will enable the best use of professional business consultants in order to provide relevant information and “health checks” to growing businesses.
- Given that fewer women are owner managers of larger businesses an intensive management development type programme will be initiated which will target a small group of woman owned businesses with ambitions to grow.
- Where a business with growth potential requires funding to enable that growth to take place, the Board will consider suitable financial intervention to companies in the manufacturing and internationally traded sectors.
- As appropriate, businesses with export aspirations will be supported to participate in Enterprise Ireland’s first flight programmes, to research potential new markets and to participate in trade missions.

### *Target*

- Working closely with Enterprise Ireland, the Enterprise Board will support twelve small companies each year towards achieving their ambitious growth aspirations.

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<sup>22</sup> It is considered that this service would be appropriate to those businesses that are partnerships or limited companies, which have been through the initial set up and establishment phase - so would probably be at least 3 years old. The Growth management Guide would not involve themselves in the operations of the business, their function would be to attend monthly meetings and to help keep the company focused and on track to achieve their growth aspirations.



- The Enterprise Board will seek to have at least two clients transferred to Enterprise Ireland each year.
- To further encourage micro businesses in the county to develop new markets, twelve small businesses will be identified and supported to develop exports each year. At least half of these will be first time exporters. For those companies that are already exporting, the objective will be to support the companies' efforts to further expand their sales in export markets.

These targets reflect the underlining theme of this plan with its focus on supporting development and growth. They are considered ambitious targets and will be reviewed at the end of 2008 and amended, if considered necessary.

## **2.5 Implementation**

### *2.5.1 Provision of the Necessary Structure and Resources*

The Enterprise Board has a dedicated staff fully committed to delivering this ambitious strategy, which is designed to support the efforts of entrepreneurs and micro businesses in County Wicklow and to create an environment in the county which is conducive to enterprise development and growth.

It is intended to redistribute responsibilities under certain specific objective areas, in particular "Starting" and "Growing" to the relevant executives. This shift in roles will begin in the second half of 2007 and will be fully in place by January 2008. The Chief Executive will continue to have responsibility to the Board for the successful implementation of all aspects of this strategy. In carrying out this responsibility the CEO provides leadership, support and guidance to the executives, develops the necessary external relationships with a wide range of stakeholders that is necessary for the effective implementation of the strategy, develops and implements annual business plans as well as a marketing plan aimed at raising the profile of the Board in a manner that is complementary to the objectives set out in this strategic plan. The CEO will also be responsible for working, where appropriate in partnership with EI, in support of particular clients, especially those that have the potential to become EI clients.

- The Assistant Chief Executive will have primary responsibility for the Enterprise Board's support for businesses that are more than two years in existence with particular focus on enhancing their management capability, improving their competitiveness and strengthening their innovative capacity. She / He will encourage owner managers to embrace a growth agenda and those businesses that have an aspiration for growth will be supported to achieve their full potential. Businesses that wish to increase their sales through exports will be supported to do so. He / She will continue to undertake other areas of activity as defined in the *Job Description and the Performance Management Role Profile*, or that may arise from time to time.
  
- The Business Advisor will primarily concentrate on (i) developing a culture of entrepreneurship in the county, raising awareness of entrepreneurship as a possible career option not only for those still in education but also for those already in employment or thinking of returning to the labour force and (ii) on supporting those wishing to establish new businesses in the county, particularly those with an aspiration for growth. She / He will continue to undertake other areas of activity as defined in the *Job Description and the Performance Management Role Profile*, or that may arise from time to time.
  
- The Administrator will continue to meet the accountancy requirements and financial reporting needs of the Enterprise Board. She/ He will also provide support to the Chief Executive in meeting the Board's governance responsibilities, in meeting the reporting requirements of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and in responding to queries from the Department. She / He will continue to undertake other areas of activity as defined in the *Job Description and the Performance Management Role Profile* or that may arise from time to time.
  
- The Information Officer will be the first point of contact for those contacting the Enterprise Board in person, by telephone or by email and will through her manner of response deliver excellent customer service, responsive to the needs of those

that contact the Enterprise Board. She / He will continue to provide support to the Chief Executive and will also provide support as required to the other executives. She / He will continue to undertake other areas of activity as defined in the *Job Description and the Performance Management Role Profile* or that may arise from time to time.

Teamwork is a core principle of the executives of the Enterprise Board and colleagues work to support each other as the need arises. Accordingly, while the restructuring reflects certain divisions of responsibility for the efficient implementation of the plan, the executives are committed to working in a flexible manner as required.

The executives in carrying out their responsibilities will do so in a manner that reflects well on the Enterprise Board, that delivers an excellent service to its clients and that puts clients' needs and aspirations at the centre of their focus.

It is intended to continue to outsource the provision of training, while maintaining the highest standards in its delivery. Enhanced evaluation systems, which are being introduced as part of this strategic plan, will facilitate the analysis of the learning taking place on the longer courses, the degree of transfer of the skills/knowledge into the business and its impact on the business against stated objectives at the outset.

Over the next year, it is intended to undertake a review of mentoring and of the appropriateness of the mentor panel relative to the needs of new and growing businesses in the County. Based on the outcome of this review, any changes considered necessary will be made to further deliver an excellent mentoring service to clients who can best benefit from this type of support.

This plan has been costed and is deliverable within limits, within the budget currently available to the Enterprise Board. The range and extent of activities and services provided and the degree of financial interventions made are limited by the resources, including financial. If more resources were made available to the Board, an increased level of

activity would be possible. Its successful implementation, however, is based on an assumption that there will be no diminution of financial resources available to the Enterprise Board on an annual basis.

### *2.5.2 Evaluation/Feedback mechanisms*

It is intended to report to the Board on achievement towards targets in July (mid year review) and again in January (annual review) each year of the operation of the new strategy.

As targets of this nature have not been set for the operations of the Enterprise Board previously, it is difficult to assess their appropriateness at this point. Ideally, they are achievable, but stretch goals, that will motivate and direct the focus of the executives. Accordingly, the targets set out in the plan will be reviewed after the first year to assess their suitability.

It is intended that improved evaluation mechanisms will be introduced to monitor the impact of all the Enterprise Board's interventions and to assess their benefit to all clients and their businesses.

In circumstances in which initiatives proposed in this plan are not proving effective they will be discontinued.

### *2.5.3 An Appropriate Client Report Management System*

The Performance Monitoring System (PMS) is the required means by which reports on the activities of the Enterprise Board are transmitted to the Department. This system does not provide, however, a management information system for the executives of the Enterprise Board that is appropriate to the needs of its clients. Accordingly, the executives within the Enterprise Board have begun to develop a parallel system. While this entails a large degree of duplication it is considered necessary. It is intended to further develop this system into a suitable CRM system that fully captures client

information from first contact and allows the Enterprise Board to tailor its assistance appropriately to the needs of its individual clients.

#### *2.5.4 An Organisation Dedicated to Continuous Improvement*

Just as it encourages its clients in this regard, Wicklow County Enterprise Board intends itself to become an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement through learning and development. By developing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, the Enterprise Board will learn from the relative success of its various activities. By listening closely to its clients, it will learn how to be more responsive to their needs in a way that adds real value to their activities. The Enterprise Board will also actively seek to learn from its partner organisations within the county, and from the other Enterprise Boards with regard to what initiatives have proven to be successful for them in fostering entrepreneurship and in supporting the development and growth of micro enterprises. It will look to Enterprise Ireland for assistance in developing the sectoral knowledge of its executives and to increase their knowledge of the most appropriate manner by which to increase the export potential of the Enterprise Board's client companies. In short, the Enterprise Board and its executives will be open to learning from any source - local, national, European and international - that it believes can assist the organisation's ability to achieve its strategic goals in an effective and efficient manner.

#### *2.5.5 Profile Enhancement*

The consultations suggested that the profile of the Enterprise Board had been improved but that it could be further improved. The objective of enhancing the profile of Wicklow County Enterprise Board is to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Ensure that the public is aware of WCEB and the services it provides, leading to an increased demand for these services, in particular from entrepreneurs who wish to set up vibrant new business in the county and from established micro businesses that have the desire to develop and grow.
- Ensure that the perception of WCEB by the public is of a professional business organisation and a credit to the public sector.

- Ensure that other agencies and organisations, both public and private sector, are aware of WCEB, understand the services that are provided, perceive WCEB as a professional business organisation, and feel confident to refer their clients and (relevant) members of the public to WCEB.
- Ensure that the local media (press and radio), understand role of WCEB and the services provided and that they use WCEB as a point of contact when doing relevant stories. Positive media coverage supports the work of the Enterprise Board in strengthening the culture of entrepreneurship in the county and brings the work of the Enterprise Board to a wider audience.
- Contribute to building respect and a positive image for Enterprise Boards at both local and national level.

In order to enhance the profile Wicklow County Enterprise Board in a consistent and thematic manner a three year marketing plan will be developed which will identify the different target audiences and the most appropriate means to communicate with each of these.

A variety of means will be used to raise the profile of the Enterprise Board and its supports and services including the following:

- Improved media contact and the development of a relationship with individual editors, producers and journalists
- The use of advertising in a most cost effective way when necessary
- Direct communication with groups of clients as appropriate, increasingly through email, as it is both cost efficient and immediate
- The bi annual newsletter, “Enterprise Update”, will continue to be produced. This publication will reflect the new approach of the Enterprise Board and will focus on the various aspects of fostering entrepreneurship, starting and developing new businesses and the enhancement and growth of existing micro businesses in the county.

#### 2.5.6 *Providing a supportive environment within the county*

Wicklow County Enterprise Board is fully committed to playing a full role in creating a supportive environment for enterprise creation and development within the county. The Enterprise Board recognises, however, that a broad number of other stakeholders have a pivotal role to play in ensuring that the necessary transport, communication and physical infrastructure and planning environment exists, which is conducive to enterprise development. The Enterprise Board through its representation on the County Development Board and its Economic Sub-Group, and through all other means at its disposal, will continue to highlight the needs of enterprise development within the county so that a more supportive environment can be provided.

The executives of the Enterprise Board will continue to work in a spirit of partnership with neighbouring County Enterprise Boards and with other public and private agencies and organisations and that are committed to the development of County Wicklow and the enterprises in its midst.

### **Section 3: Conclusion**

At the heart of this strategic plan is a developmental approach to the achievement of the objectives. Such an approach has implications for the manner in which the interventions of the Enterprise Board are viewed whereby activities are not considered in isolation but rather as contributing to the achievement of the mission and objectives of the Enterprise Board and that of its client companies.

This approach will in turn assist the Enterprise Board in playing an active role with regard to the strengthening and growth of existing businesses in the county and in encouraging a greater level of *quality* start-ups that have the aspiration and the capability to further grow and develop.

The Enterprise Board is confident that the implementation of the strategic plan in the coming years will benefit the entrepreneurs and small owner managers in the county through greater sustainability, growth and enhanced profitability of their businesses, while the wider county and local communities will prosper through having dynamic business in their midst.



## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

***Objective: To provide an excellent level of service to all who come into contact with the Enterprise Board***

**Target**

To achieve a 90% “High” Satisfaction rating across all services

***Objective: To encourage the strengthening of a pervasive entrepreneurial climate that will inspire the creation of new enterprises and provide a supportive environment for business in County Wicklow.***

**Target**

The ultimate measure of the success of initiatives taken to foster a pervasive entrepreneurial climate and the provision of a supportive environment for businesses in County Wicklow will manifest in the number of those inspired to plan, start and grow innovative and competitive new businesses in the county. At present there is no mechanism available to track these in their entirety. Accordingly, operational targets will be placed against each of the initiatives outlined above for example:

- At least two enterprise events will be organized in locations around the county on an annual basis
- Four localized presentations will be run in a variety of locations, taking in smaller venues throughout the county.
- At least 90% of second level schools in the county will have an engagement with enterprise education supported by the Enterprise Board.
- A “Celebrating Excellence” event will be held every two years.
- Two newsletters will be circulated countywide each year.

***Objective: Appropriately support entrepreneurs to create dynamic new enterprises within the county, particularly those which have the capability and the desire to grow and develop***

**Target**

- It is proposed that forty new businesses will be started in 2008 and each year thereafter, with the active support of the Enterprise Board.
- Of the forty new businesses supported each year, at least ten will receive financial support from the Enterprise Board.
- At least fifteen new businesses, supported by the Enterprise Board each year, through financial or non financial means, will have the intention to become an employer within two years.
- Ideally, at least fifteen of the new business supported will have a women entrepreneur among its owner managers.

***Objective: To address the needs of existing enterprises to increase their competitiveness, innovation and management capability***

**Target**

It is envisaged that at least 60 existing businesses will be supported each year from 2008 through to 2013 that wish to strengthen their management capabilities, enhance their innovation and increase their competitiveness. Of these at least seven should be considered suitable for financial support by the Enterprise Board.

Progress will be tracked on an annual basis for each of these companies in terms of an increase in turnover and output per employee. Baseline figures will be established in the first year that these companies are supported by the Enterprise Board and progress tracked against these.

***Objective: To support those owner managers, who wish to grow their businesses, to achieve the full potential of their enterprises***

## **Target**

- Working closely with Enterprise Ireland, the Enterprise Board will support twelve small companies each year towards achieving their ambitious growth aspirations.
- The Enterprise Board will seek to have at least two clients transferred to Enterprise Ireland each year.
- To further encourage micro businesses in the county to develop new markets, twelve small businesses will be identified and supported to develop exports each year. At least half of these will be first time exporters. For those companies that are already exporting, the objective will be support the companies' efforts to further expand their sales in export markets.

