

Local Enterprise Office Donegal




Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office


Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

Local Enterprise Development Plan 2015 - 2017

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1. Forward

This Enterprise Plan has been prepared by the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Donegal County Council, in the context of the requirements and request of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton T.D, his Department and the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland in Shannon. It has also been prepared in the context of the preparation of the Local Economic Development Plan and the Local Community Development Plan for County Donegal – both of which will encompass 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 sets out the strategic objectives for the LEO Donegal for the three year period 2015 -2017 and sets out clear actions, activities and outputs for 2015. These are all set within the context of the vision statement of the LEO 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 agencies of the state to keep in mind the critical role that these businesses play at local level in providing employment and in sustaining local communities. The Local Enterprise Office Donegal acknowledges that while it has been designated as the primary agency for helping 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 national and local, 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 three year period of the plan seek to increase the number of local businesses seeking to enter export markets, increase their management capability and strengthen their sustainability.

Seamus Neely
Chief Executive

Michael Tunney
Head of Enterprise

2. Introduction

This Local Enterprise Development plan for the Local Enterprise Office Donegal (LEO Donegal) sets out the vision, strategic objective and actions proposed by LEO Donegal for the three year period and in particular details the actions and activities to be delivered on in 2015. It is anticipated that that these will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis during the period of the plan.

The 14th of April 2014 saw the establishment of the Local Enterprise Offices with the LEO Donegal being officially opened by Minister Richard Bruton, T.D. on May 1st 2014. This restructuring took up considerable time and resources not only within the Local Enterprise Office but also within the wider Local Authority for much of 2014, especially in the set-up of appropriate financial management and reporting systems. The period 2015-2017 will see the focussed and strong delivery by the Local Enterprise Office Donegal on its adopted actions, programmes and activities.

The strong enterprise focus and well-tested delivery mechanisms of the previous Donegal County Enterprise Board have been carried forward to the Local Enterprise Office which operates within Donegal County Council under a Service Level Agreement between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authority. Through the synergies which this model can facilitate the Local Enterprise Office hopes to have an increasingly important role in enterprise promotion and development in the county both in policy formulation and support delivery.

3. Plan Context

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 restructured local enterprise support system provides a nationwide cohesive method of delivering this principle, within a cost-effective framework and the Local Enterprise Office Donegal will work to ensure that for Donegal entrepreneurs the county provides them with the most supportive environment and services possible to maximise their potential.

This Local Enterprise Development Plan has been prepared within the context of the preparation of the Local Community Development Plan and the Local Enterprise Plan for Donegal by Donegal County Council under the Local Community Development Committee structure of the Council. In particular the plan seeks to integrate with the high-level strategic objectives of the Local Economic Plan and sets out how the LEO will contribute to the delivery under a number of these objectives. These high-level strategic goals are:

- Develop Donegal as a Connected Place.
- Harness Donegal’s Natural and Human Capital.
- Value and develop our Culture and Creative Resource.
- Promote Sustainable and Inclusive Communities.
- Develop Donegal as a lead region for Learning, Research and Innovation.
- Develop the ‘DONEGAL’ Brand.
- Promote Entrepreneurship, Enterprise, and Investment.

The plan also takes account of the Government’s National Policy on Entrepreneurship published in 2014, the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs 2015 and the Report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas and the range of actions identified for the Local Enterprise Office network nationally and locally within these.

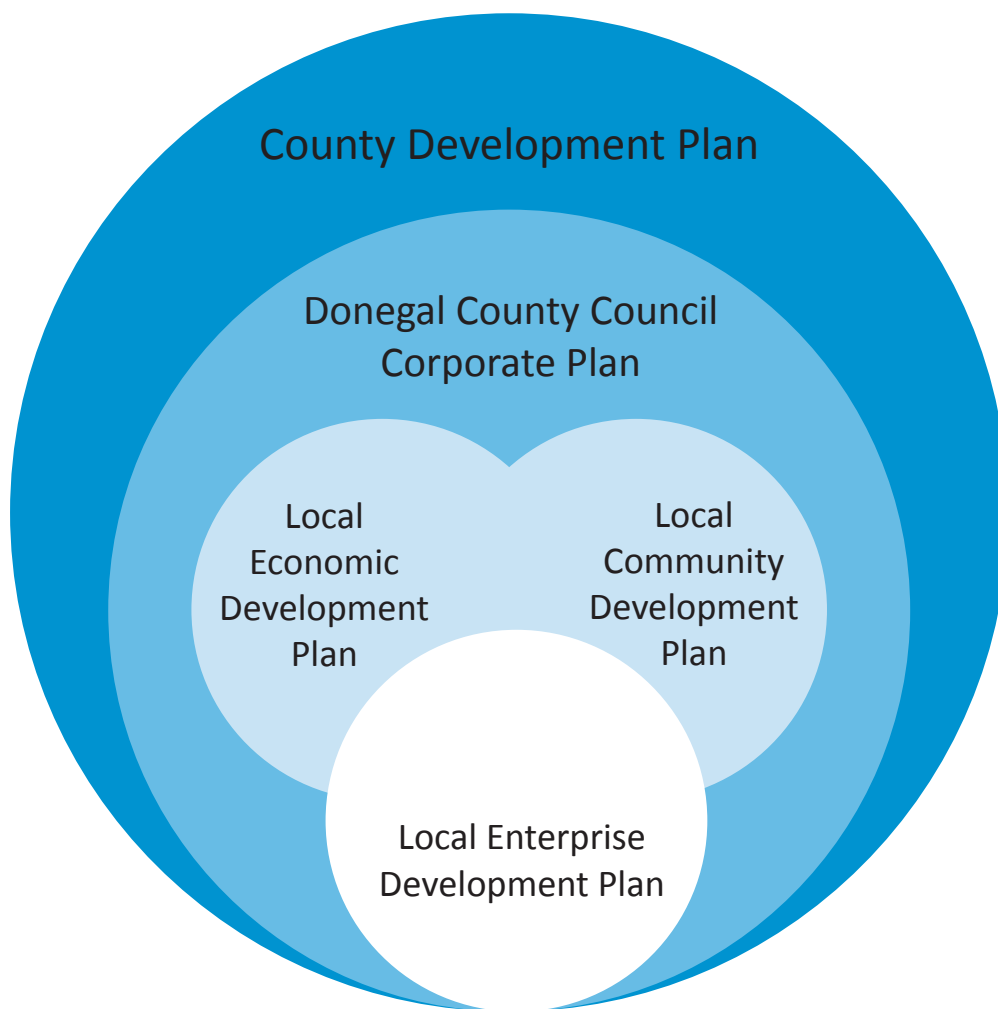


Fig: Local Planning Context

4. County Profile

In 2011 Donegal had a population of 161,137 and had grown by 13,873 persons (9.4%) over the inter-censal period 2006 - 2011. This represented an average growth rate of 1.9% per annum compared to 1.6% per annum in the State. During this same period, 2006 to 2011, Donegal also experienced positive net migration of 10.6 per 1,000 population – the comparable figure for the State during this period being 5.4/1,000.

The county also has a relatively young population with 42% of the population (66,887 persons) of the County being under 30 years of age. An examination of the spatial distribution of this cohort within the county's population indicates that above average rates of over 41% are located predominantly in the east of the county with below average rates in the west and south of the county.

Donegal had a labour force of 72,146 persons in 2011 of which 21,188 fell within the *“Professional Workers, Management and Technical”* categories. The available labour force supply was 18,869 and the labour force participation rate for the county was 58.1%, with a high participation rate of 67.6% among the younger age cohorts of 16-35 years.

The existing economic base of the county is diverse with the traditional economic activities of farming and fishing continuing to play key roles. Significant Foreign Direct Investment over the past thirty years and in particular over the past fifteen years has added significantly to the economic base of the county with major international companies such as ZEUS Industrial Products Inc., United Health Group, Pramerica Systems Ireland Ltd. and SITA Information Networking Computing Ireland Ltd. all adding to the previously existing FDI presence in the county. The focus of the FDI strategy of IDA Ireland is Letterkenny and many of these investments are located in Letterkenny with employees travelling from other parts of the county but still contributing to the maintenance of local communities and local economies.

Indigenous businesses tend to be predominantly micro businesses(less than 10 employees) with over 95% being in this category. However within the indigenous category there are significant businesses including P Mulrine and Sons, JB Interactive Mobile Marketing Ltd. (Sendmode.com), Gartan Technologies Ltd., Moll Industries Ireland Ltd., Inishowen Engineering Manufacturing Ltd., Ashley Martin Shop and Bar Fittings Ltd., and Gallagher's Bakery to name but a few - all of which contribute to economic development and employment creation throughout the county.

The focus of the Local Enterprise Office will be on driving the development of the small and micro business sector within the county and the on-going development of a cohort of micro businesses with the capabilities and ambition to identify opportunities outside of the county and in particular in export markets.

5. Challenges

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal has identified the following as being the principle challenges facing the business community in Donegal:

A - Lack of Business Confidence

As a result of the economic crisis experienced within Ireland since 2008, there has been a very significant erosion of business and consumer confidence at national, regional and local level. While there have been some indications of an improvement in the economic environment in late 2014, this lack of confidence continues to be experienced across all sectors, including the public, private, and community sectors, as well as within private households. As a result, there has been a declining domestic market for products and services, reducing opportunities for existing and new businesses. This lack of confidence has also resulted in a declining appetite for risk taking and investment by existing business and potential new entrepreneurs. This decline has had a serious knock on effect on the entrepreneurial spirit and drive of both existing businesses and potential new business start-ups. While the forces affecting business confidence are outside of the control of Donegal County Council and the LEO, the sustained positive promotion of entrepreneurship and the development of a strong local business base in the county will over time assist in restoring this confidence within the county.

B - Access to Capital

Despite the introduction of government initiatives, such as the Partial Loan Guarantee Scheme, the establishment of Micro Finance Ireland, the establishment of the Strategic Banking Corporation and the restructuring of the tax relief scheme, there is still evidence of market failure in the availability of loan finance and investment capital on acceptable terms to the small business sector. This problem is considerably more acute in areas outside the main centres of population where seed and venture capital providers are most active. The LEO will seek to actively promote the availability of all the forms of business finance and start-up finance available to businesses and promoters.

C - Lack of Employment Opportunities

As a consequence of the economic crisis over the past 6 years, and with the reduced demand for products and services, many of the county's small and micro enterprises reduced their workforce or ceased operation. A further trend had been the change in the nature of employment patterns, with many small businesses choosing to retain staff, but on a part time basis. This significant reduction in employment opportunities, allied to the lack of business confidence has resulted in the County having the highest rate of unemployment in the country with unemployment in the county being experienced equally in both urban and rural areas. Unemployment is thus the outcome from a lack of employment opportunities. Through the active promotion of entrepreneurship and targeted supports to new and existing businesses, small businesses will be supported to set-up and /or develop and grow thus creating more employment opportunities throughout the county. The LEO will work with other agencies and funding sources to ensure that the maximum return on investment by way of employment creation is achieved over the period of the plan.

D - Emigration

There has been a significant growth in emigration out of the regions over the last 6 years, which has resulted in a loss of a substantial cohort of young, highly educated and dynamic people, who would otherwise have been expected to add significantly to enterprise development, wealth and job creation. Donegal thus needs coherent policies and programmes to create an attractive, supportive and conducive business environment, through which at least some of our highly qualified graduates and skilled emigrants can be attracted back to Donegal.

Thus the main priorities of any plan, local, regional and national must focus on:

- Investments that restore consumer and business confidence;
- Encouraging and facilitating entrepreneurship and new business start-up;
- Assisting in the creation of new employment opportunities, primarily through the small and micro enterprise sector, so as to promote balanced local economic development.

6. Opportunities

The Local Enterprise Office in 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 problems and issues listed above, the LEO Donegal believes that there are significant opportunities for 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. In this context, it is worth noting that the Local Enterprise Offices have entered into a strategic alliance with Board Bia to maximise opportunities in this sector. This alliance will facilitate a streamlined service to the food and beverage sector.

Seafood - The development potential of added value fish and shellfish products from Donegal is still to be realised. However, its full potential can only be achieved after the significant licensing obstacles currently experienced by the shellfish sector are addressed and overcome with dynamism and with a sharp business focus. 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, and in particular will work with the other development agencies to develop an integrated innovation centre in Killybegs with a strong focus on added value food products and marine resources.

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 2014 the LEO Donegal initiated the preparation of a strategic action plan for creative entrepreneurship in Donegal and this strategic plan with agreed key actions will be launched in early 2015 with the key focus being on “action delivery” during the term of this Enterprise Plan. 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. The key player in supporting this environment will continue to be Donegal County Council.

ICT/Mobile Technologies – there continues to be market opportunities for product and service development in these sectors. They 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 digital plan for the county that will provide appropriate access to broadband throughout the county. In particular it is a prerequisite for the maximisation of enterprise opportunities within designated development centres within the county.

Spin-Outs – while Donegal through IDA Ireland, has been 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 or from third level institutions. To maximise the potential of this sector spin-outs from some of the FDI investments 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 – 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 Failte Ireland and local capital tourism projects have in most recent years been funded through the LEADER programme, the role of the LEO in this sector is limited. However the LEO will work with other sections within Donegal County Council and with Failte Ireland, where and when appropriate, to increase the capability of tourism business owners and to ensure that opportunities are maximised.

Exporting – with the current limited demand for products and services within the domestic economy at local level, more and more small and micro businesses must be assisted to identify and develop possible export markets. A key focus of the LEO will be to work closely with Enterprise Ireland to deliver supports and programmes to Donegal small businesses that have ambition and capability to export.

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. Local Enterprise Office Donegal believes that investment in these enterprises should be evaluated on the basis of their sustainability; in particular that they have the potential and the management capability to create reserves that can be used to ensure on-going operational costs and necessary investment. Where appropriate, and within resource restrictions, the LEO will work with other sections of Donegal County Council and Local Development organisations to implement such an approach.

7. Vision and Objectives

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

“Through working with local businesses and the enterprise support organisations 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 accessing external markets and employment creation.”

The objectives that will underpin delivery of the Donegal Local Enterprise Development Plan 2015 - 2017 are as follows:

- To create employment opportunities throughout the county by assisting in the establishment of new businesses and the development and sustainability of existing businesses.
- To increase the culture and level of entrepreneurship in Donegal and in particular through maximising the number of new start-up businesses and reducing the gap between female and male entrepreneurship.
- To support small businesses by increasing their competitiveness, innovativeness, export-orientation, management capabilities and sustainability.
- 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.
- 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.
- To develop the role of the Local Enterprise Office Donegal so that it provides a focus for collaborative economic 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.
- To increase the level of entrepreneurship within and arising from the education sector.
- 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.

8. Proposed Actions and Initiatives

A - 2014 Summary

Since its establishment in April 2014 the Donegal Local Enterprise Office has continued to provide a range of supports to local businesses in the county in line with the Service Level Agreement.

During 2014 there was a net increase of 45 jobs created in the LEO portfolio of grant-aided Businesses. This figure consisted of full-time gains of 184 and full time loses of 138 with a further net loss of 1 job in part-time employment.

LEO	No of Clients	Full Time	Other Time	Full Time Last Year	Other Time Last Year	Full Time Gains	Full Time Losses	Other Time Gains	Other Time Losses		Full Time	Other Time	Net Jobs
Donegal	159	748	475	702	476	184	-138	177	-178		46	-1	45.5

The LEO portfolio of 159 clients represents a significant reduction in LEO clients, which was the outcome of the removal from the portfolio in 2014 of businesses which had progressed to be Enterprise Ireland clients and Toursim and Services projects no longer deemed as “portfolio clients”.

The Local Enterprise Office Donegal will seek to increase it’s portfolio of clients both through grant aid and its other enterprise supports during the period of the plan.

A summary of the overarching goal and actions carried out in 2014 are outlined in Table 1 below.

Overarching Goal for 2014	To promote enterprise and entrepreneurship in Donegal through providing a range of supports to foster entrepreneurship and to support the development of new and existing, micro and small businesses and business managers in County Donegal.
<p>Summary of 2014 activities</p> <p>During 2014 the Donegal LEO provided a range of programmes and supports in Donegal to achieve its overall goal. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of business advice, counselling and referral, both on a one-to-one basis and on a group basis at monthly information sessions. • The delivery of a range of business training and management development programmes to 984 participants which included Start Your Own Business Programmes, Small Business Accounts, Computerised Accounts, Accelerate, SMACHT, Accelerate Marketing, the Food Academy and Writing a Business Plan. • The Donegal LEO continued to organise enterprise promotion events and programmes such as Enterprising Donegal Business Week and Doing Business in Donegal events, with over 400 attendees. • Continued to deliver the Profitnet peer learning network with three groups operating during the year bringing the number of participants since the programme began in 2008 to over 250. • Delivered the IBYE programme in Donegal and co-ordinated the regional finals in the North West and had one finalist who got through to the last three in the national final in Dublin. • Delivered on the Online trading Voucher scheme in Donegal achieving the target of 28 vouchers. • Assisted in 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 15 projects which had the potential to create 35 new jobs in year 1 and over 190 new jobs in the following three years. • Continued to deliver the student enterprise competition to secondary schools in Donegal with 10 secondary schools participating in the programme. • Continued to deliver the Donegal Food Strategy through resourcing a range of food and food business development programmes and workshops, some in conjunction with other agencies such as BIM. • Continued to promote the availability of the Micro Finance Ireland loan facility to potential clients in Donegal and carried out evaluations on submitted applications. • Working with Enterprise Ireland and the Chambers of Commerce in Cork and Dublin developed an application under the COSME programme for the delivery of the Enterprise Europe Network on a national basis. • Contributed to the on-going development of the County Economic Plan and County Community Development plan under the new LCDC structure. • Participated in the Letterkenny Gateway Initiative. • Completed the delivery of the Tradelinks cross-border programme and participated in discussions on possible future programmes. • Participated as a partner in three European programmes – Knowledge Cities, e-CREATE and IMAGINA. 	

Table 1: Actions Delivered in 2014

B - Key Roles

To continue to fulfil its the role in local enterprise promotion and development and its expanded role in local economic development, in line with the services outlined in the Service Level Agreement, the Local Enterprise Office Donegal:

- Will be the “first point of contact” for any person or business wishing to set-up or develop their business in Donegal.
- Will be the catalyst for the promotion of entrepreneurship and enterprise within Donegal.
- Will be the principal provider of a range of relevant business services to new and existing businesses in Donegal.
- Will seek to articulate the needs of local businesses in Donegal and when necessary be an advocate on their behalf.
- Will actively contribute to and engage in the promotion of economic development within Donegal.
- Will seek to access the maximum amount of available resources from all sources to fulfil its role and achieve its objectives.
- Will operate as a dynamic unit within Donegal County Council working closely with all sections to encourage and facilitate small business development and economic prosperity within county Donegal.

C - Local Enterprise Office Business Services

The LEO Donegal 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 LEO will 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.

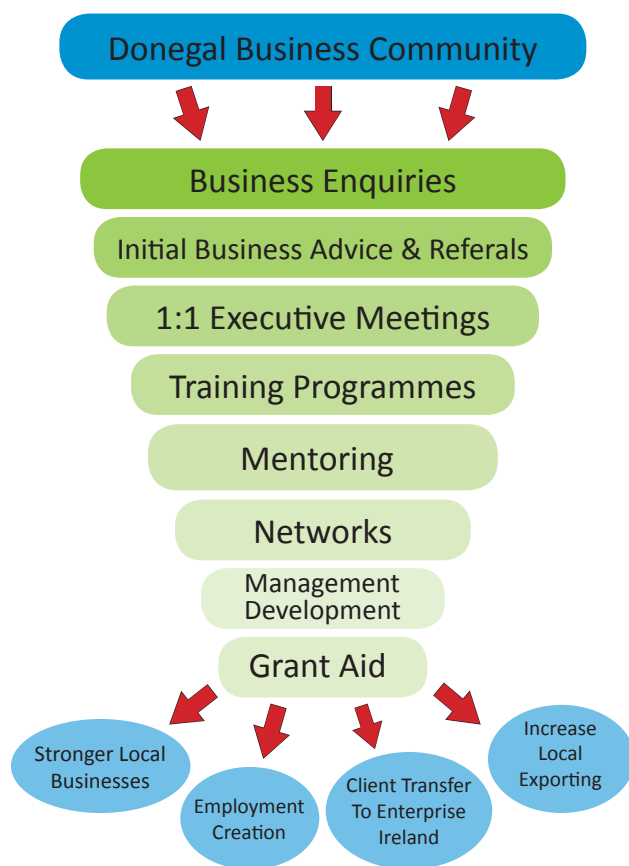
All enquiries will be responded to appropriately within the resource limitations of the LEO and clear referral processes with other relevant agencies and organisations will be developed.

The LEO 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.

The core objectives of the LEO Donegal for the period of the plan 2015 - 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. Annual actions, targets and outputs will be included in the plan as required by the CCU and DJEI. (see Table 3)

The LEO will have clearly defined service areas so that the various businesses can tap into the suite of services (Appendix 1) 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 LEO 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 LEO Donegal will take the lead in defining 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.

The LEO 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. The LEO as an integral part of Donegal County Council will in particular seek to ensure that the LEADER programme is delivered in accordance with its operating rules, regulations and funding criteria and does not duplicate and/or compete with mainstream Government programmes and funding to businesses.

The strategic actions set out by the Local Enterprise Office for the period 2015 – 2017 are outlined in Table 2 below:

Strategic Actions for 2015 -2017	Other LEO/3rd parties involved
1.1 To promote entrepreneurship and enterprise in Donegal.	Donegal County Council(DCC), Education Training Board(ETB), Local Development Companies, Enterprise Ireland (EI), Letterkenny Institute of Technology LYIT, Udaras na Gaeltachta.
1.2 To promote and develop the LEO as the First Point of Contact for business information and advice in County Donegal.	All enterprise agencies within the county.
1.3 To provide a suite of targeted and tailored services and supports appropriate to the needs of local small and micro businesses in Donegal.	All enterprise agencies.
1.4 To re-focus the supports and services of the LEO on supporting micro and small businesses that have developmental ambitions.	Enterprise Ireland.
1.5 To deliver on the strategic action plan for the creative industries (creative entrepreneurship) sector.	DCC EI, Udaras na Gaeltachta, LYIT, Fáilte Ireland, Private businesses.
1.6 To continue to deliver the Food Coast Initiative, in particular in 2015 the roll-out of the Food Coast brand.	EI, BIM, Failte Ireland, LYIT, Udaras na Gaeltachta and private businesses.
1.7 To identify and develop a number of cross border and European projects and project partners for delivery during 2015 to 2020.	Border LEOs, NI Councils and Local Enterprise Agencies and potential EU partners.
1.8 To develop a strong core staff to continue to deliver on the identified strategic objectives and actions over the period.	Donegal County Council, Enterprise Ireland, DJEI.

Strategic Actions for 2015 -2017	Other LEO/3rd parties involved
1.9 To integrate the LEO into Donegal County Council in such a way that there is an enhanced and improved services to the small and micro businesses community in Donegal.	DCC and public service centres.
1.10 To identify and develop a minimum of two European projects which will add value to the LEO in its development of the food and creative industries sectors and their respective action plans.	Potential EU partners.
1.11 To contribute positively to the development of economic and local development strategies and to the delivery of services, projects and programmes within these plans, appropriate to the role and functions of the LEO Donegal.	DCC and other agencies in Donegal
1.12 As a joint partner with Enterprise Ireland and as the “lead Local Enterprise Office” to manage the national delivery of the Enterprise Europe Network programme	Enterprise Ireland, Chambers of Commerce in Dublin and Cork and LEO network.
1.13 To contribute to the establishment of Killybegs as a centre for marine technology and food.	DCC, BIM, EI, local businesses and cross Border/EU partners.

Table 2 Strategic Actions 2015 - 2017

Working to achieve these actions the proposed Activities and Outputs for the Local Enterprise Office in Donegal for 20215 are outlined in Tables 3 and 4 below and are in line with the areas of responsibility outlined in the Service Level Agreement between Donegal County Council and Enterprise Ireland.

Proposed Activities for 2015 under the Local Enterprise Development Plan***Business Information and Advice:***

- Continue to actively promote the business information, advice and referral service of the LEO and integrate this into the Local Authority decentralised offices.
- Engage in training and familiarity meetings with relevant agencies to ensure that all information is current and relevant.
- Promote and deliver the Enterprise Europe Network project and services to clients in Donegal.

Enterprise Support:

- Provide access to a range of appropriate funding mechanism for small and micro businesses in Donegal including Local Enterprise Office grant aid, Donegal County Enterprise Fund and MFI micro credit, EI and Udaras na Gaeltachta main grant schemes etc.
- Provide a suite of training, management development programmes and workshops appropriate to the needs of new and existing businesses in Donegal during the year to include Accelerate, Digital Marketing, Lean for Micros, and the Food Academy (on a regional basis).
- Support and facilitate on an on-going basis business networks such as the Donegal Women in Business Network, Donegal Designer Makers, Creative Entrepreneurs and Profitnet groups.
- Continue to deliver the Donegal Food Strategy and its various strands, in particular the roll out of the Food Coast brand in 2015.
- Develop and deliver in conjunction with the other stakeholders an integrated strategic action plan for creative entrepreneurship in the County and oversee its delivery during the initial period 2015 to 2020.
- Provide mentoring support in line with the Mentoring process outlined in Appendix 2.
- Deliver the national Online Trading Voucher scheme in Donegal throughout 2015.

Entrepreneurship Promotion:

- Engage in the promotion of entrepreneurship through actively engaging with second level schools, the Donegal ETB and interested teachers in both the implementation of the Student Enterprise Competition and reviewing the range and appropriateness of various programmes in this space within the county.
- Promote entrepreneurship throughout the county through positive events such as Enterprise Week, Enterprise Awards, Doing Business in Donegal etc.
- Deliver Ireland Best Young Entrepreneur programme in Donegal in 2015 in line with the national programme.
- Deliver a dedicated programme targeted at existing female entrepreneurs in the county.
- Develop and deliver suitable projects/programmes for competitive calls from the Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland, which will add value to the range of supports that the LEO Donegal can offer its clients.

Proposed Activities for 2015 under the Local Enterprise Development Plan***Economic Development:***

- Actively participate and contribute to the Local Community Development and Economic Development Committees and processes to develop county community and enterprise strategies.
- Work with strategic and identified partners, in particular Donegal County Council, to develop appropriate European and cross-border projects to enable the fulfilment of the Local Enterprise Office's strategic objectives, access funding for their implementation and manage their delivery.
- Work with Donegal County Council and Enterprise Ireland and Udaras na Gaeltachta in developing and/or managing enterprise infrastructure in the county and in particular devising a strategy to maximise the resources and space of the network of Community Enterprise centres within the county.
- Pilot new initiatives of Government through the LEO as and when requested.

Table 3 Proposed Activities 2015

Table 4: Detailed Activities within each area of activity	When are these actions expected to be delivered?				Output/Outcome
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Business Information and Advice Activities					
1. Promotion of the Information and advice services of the LEO	X	X	X	X	Enhanced awareness of LEO services
2. Monthly advice sessions	X	X	X	X	100 attendees during 2015
3. Meetings with other agencies re-supports and programmes		X		X	Improved inter-agency referrals
4. Organisation of workshops on public procurement	X		X		50 attendees
5.Refer appropriate businesses to MFI, CEF and EI for loan finance and grant aid	X	X	X	X	10 MFI approvals, 6 EI referrals and 6 CEF referrals.
6.Promotion of the EEN services within the county		X	X	X	40 businesses availing of EEN services.
7. Organisation of two IPR workshops per annum	X			X	20 businesses accessing specialist advice.
Enterprise Support Activities					
1.Provide grant to eligible and appropriate businesses	X	X	X	X	Target of 25 projects approved grant aid.
2.Deliver a range of training and management development programmes including SYOB, Accelerate, Lean for Micros, Digital Marketing, Food Academy and Small Business Accounts	X	X	X	X	Target of 300 participants on training and management training programmes. Enhanced business and management skills.
3. Provide mentoring to small and micro businesses.	X	X	X	X	30 businesses approved mentoring.
4. Facilitate the Profitnet business network programme.	X	X	X	X	Minimum of 15 businesses engaged.
5. Deliver on the Online Trading Voucher scheme for Donegal	X	X	X	X	Minimum of 30 businesses approved OTVs
6. Delivery of the Food Coast programme and roll out of Food Coast brand	X	X	X	X	Minimum of 40 food businesses participating on the programme. Enhanced skills and increased profile.

Table 4: Detailed Activities within each area of activity	When are these actions expected to be delivered?				Output/Outcome
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Entrepreneurship Promotion					
1. Deliver the Student Enterprise Competition	X			X	Minimum of 3 schools and 300 students participating.
2. Commence a review of initiatives to support student entrepreneurship	X		X	X	More integrated plan for student enterprise promotion
3. Deliver female entrepreneurship programme in autumn			X	X	Min. 10 participants with enhanced business skills.
4. Deliver the IBYE programme in Donegal		X	X	X	Minimum of 15 participants and 10 start-ups and expansions.
5. Support the Donegal Women in Business Network	X	X	X	X	Network of 100+ female entrepreneurs maintained.
6. Deliver on actions within the Donegal Food Strategy	X	X	X	X	Food sector promoted within the county.
7. Prepare and deliver a strategic action plan for the creative industries sector 2015-2020	X	X	X	X	Creative entrepreneurship promoted within the county. 10 creative entrepreneurs with enhanced business skills.
8. Carry out assessments on MFI applications made through the LEO	X	X	X	X	10 applications forwarded to MFI
9. Implement Enterprise Week and other positive enterprise events	X	X		X	Positive promotion of enterprise within the county.
10. Advertise and promote Donegal Business Awards 2015	X	X		X	12 county finalists and profile of local enterprises raised.
Economic Development					
1. Contribute to the LCDC and LEDC processes	X	X	X	X	Integrated plan for enterprise and economic development prepared.
2. Engage with potential partners in NI on possible cross-border programmes	X	X	X	X	Two Possible cross border programmes identified and developed
3. Prepare outline ideas for European programmes and engage with potential partners	X	X	X	X	Two possible EU projects developed and submitted
4. Engage with DCC and EI regarding enterprise infrastructure in the county	X	X	X	X	Enhanced business environment within the county.

Table 4: Detailed Activities within each area of activity	When are these actions expected to be delivered?				Output/Outcome
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Other Activities					
1. Contribute to LEO network, sub-committees of the LEO network and working groups	X	X	X	X	LEO network strengthened and best practice shared.
2. Manage and co-ordinate the national delivery of the Enterprise Europe Network project within the LEO network.	X	X	X	X	Roll out of the EEN project on a national basis and enhanced service offering available from all LEOs
3. Deliver on outstanding EU project, e-CREATE.	X	X			Completion of the project and finalised funds drawdown.

Table 4: Detailed Activities for 2015

Table 5 outlines the key metrics - outputs anticipated from the actions and activities which will be undertaken by the Donegal LEO in 2015.

Table 5: Key Metrics 2015 – Outputs	
Job Commitments Linked to LEO Approvals / Funded	80
Number of Client Investments / Projects Funded	25
New Start-ups (grant aided and from programmes)	20
Expansion of existing businesses (through grant aid and programmes)	25
New ideas investigated (FS)	5
New Jobs (confirmed by survey)	120
Number of Participants on training/management development programmes	300
Number of persons receiving business information and advice	160
Number of persons engaging in enterprise support services	320
Number of recipients of mentoring (outside programmes)	30
Number of MFI applications through the LEO	10
Production of strategic action plan for creative industry sector	1
Number of participants at workshops/information sessions	300
Student entrepreneurship(schools/students)	10/200
Numbers in IBYE	15
Number of businesses approved Online Trading Vouchers	30
Number of businesses engaging in Food Coast Initiative	50
Number of businesses engaged in networks.	175
Engagement in two EU and two Cross-border programmes	4

Table 5 – Key Metrics 2015

Tables 6 and 7 outline the proposed initiatives that will be engaged on with other enterprise partners and Table 7 outlines the main events which the LEO Donegal will organise during the year.

Table 6: Proposed innovative initiatives in conjunction with other LEOs/organisations to be implemented in 2015

1. Engage with other agencies in the county on county wide events such as Enterprise Week, Doing Business in Donegal and Donegal Business Awards.
2. Deliver in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland, the Chambers of Commerce in Dublin and Cork and the LEO network the Enterprise Europe Network project.
3. Engage with border LEOs and LEAs to identify future opportunities for cross-border enterprise programmes.
4. Engage with other agencies in the county to co-ordinate enterprise supports within the county so as to maximise available resources and outcomes.
5. Preparation and submission of integrated applications for additional funding under competitive calls thought Enterprise Ireland and others.

Table 7: Proposed LEO events for 2015

Proposed date or quarter in 2014	Name of event	Type of event e.g. knowledge event, start-up information, etc.	Expected number of participants
Q1	Enterprising Donegal Business Week	Enterprise Promotion	200
Q1	Student Enterprise Competition	Student entrepreneurship	200
Q2	Launch of Creative Entrepreneurship Strategy	Enterprise Promotion	100
Q2	Launch of LEO Local Enterprise Development Plan	Enterprise Promotion	100
Q3	IBYE Presentation	Youth Entrepreneurship	50
Q4	Doing Business in Donegal - Donegal Business Network	Networking	70

Table 8 outlines the potential risks that may adversely affect the LEO Donegal in the delivery of its proposed actions and activities during 2015.

Table 8: Risks to LEO Performance	
Risks that can adversely affect the achievement of the objectives outlined above.	Actions to mitigate this risk
1.Lack of necessary staff compliment to implement the proposed actions and activities.	1. Engage with DCC re staffing levels
2. Lack of necessary financial resources/budget to fund actions.	2. Engage with COE in EI to maximise available budget
3.Lack of projects applying for grant aid.	3. Ongoing promotion of the services of the LEO
4. Managing expectations of stakeholders and clients.	4. Engage in meaningful discussions on work programmes and available resources with DJEI/ EI/ Donegal Co.Co.
5. Unanticipated national initiatives without additional resources to deliver same.	5. Maintain communications with Centre of Excellence in EI and Department.

Table 8 Key Risks to LEO Performance.

9. Resources

The LEO Donegal anticipates that for 2015 it will have access to the same level of financial resources for its grant-aid and non-grant activities and supports i.e. €220,000 and €225,00 respectively. Donegal County Council has committed a further €50,000 to the LEO from its own resources for 2015 and this will be used to pilot the delivery of the LEAN programme in Donegal.

Additional staff resources have been secured by the LEO for 2015 in particular two graduates (1 EI and 1 LA), an additional staff member dedicated to the Enterprise Europe Network Projects and a further executive from the County Enterprise Fund dedicated to the delivery of the Food Initiative.

These resources should enable the LEO to deliver on its 2015 actions and activities.

APPENDIX 1

LEO Suite of Services.

This appendix sets out in more detail some of the specific business supports which are included in the Service Level Agreement and the actions needed to ensure their delivery in Donegal.

1 - Start-Ups

Support Service	Action
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)(6 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. Possible EU project.
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
1:1 consultation	Tool required to capture needs and issues.
SYOB / Small Business Accounts/ Business Planning.	Schedule on annual basis
Mentoring	Implement proposed approach.
Management Development Progs.	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
Start Your Own Business	Identify business and training needs, 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.	
Profitnet / Profitnet Plus	

4 - Sector Specific Supports

Support Service	Action
Food Coast Initiative	Continue delivery and momentum
Youth Entrepreneurship	Develop pilot as follow on from national IBYE.
Female Entrepreneurship	Develop and deliver programme.
Creative Industries	Develop strategy and action plan and implement in conjunction with partners.

APPENDIX 2

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 the LEO Donegal:

- 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 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.

The Local Enterprise Office will not generally provide mentoring to persons wishing to examine patentability, copyright etc. As an alternative, the Donegal Local Enterprise Office will organise a minimum of two Ideas Days in each year (possibly in March and September) to cover areas such as patents, copyright, licensing etc.



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil

Local Enterprise Office



Ireland's EU Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014 - 2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government
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**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council