



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

LOCAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021 - 2024



Fingal

Making it Happen



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Executive Summary

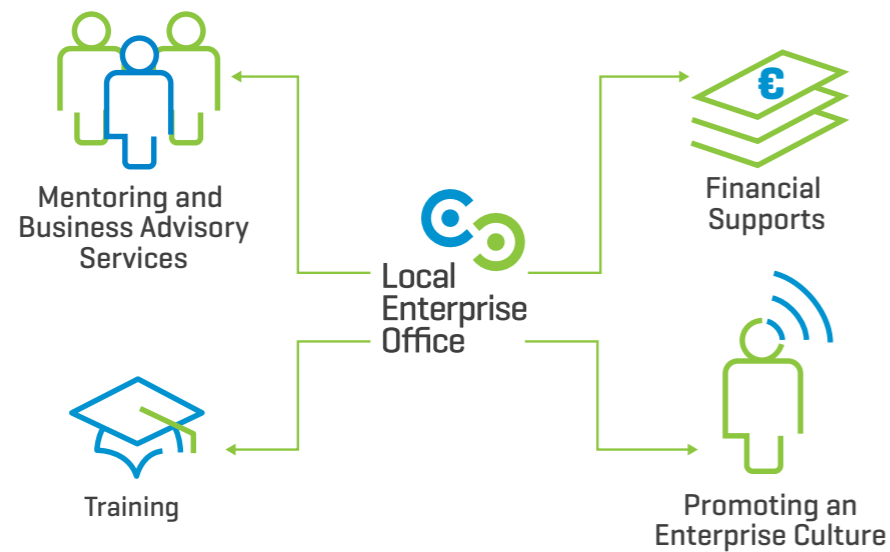
Local Enterprise Office Fingal (LEO Fingal) is one of 31 Local Enterprise Offices nationwide. The network of Local Enterprise Offices was established through the integration of the previous County & City Enterprise Boards into the Local Authorities.

LEO Fingal is the 'First-stop-shop' for enterprise supports in the County and operates from purpose-built offices located on the first floor of County Hall in Swords.

Funding for the Local Enterprise Office is provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and operates under a Service Level Agreement between Fingal County Council and Enterprise Ireland. Other funding includes income generated via programme fees, partnership programmes, EU funded activities and repayable grants on an ongoing basis.

The services provided by the Local Enterprise Office are broadly categorised into four areas:

- [a] Business Information and Advisory Services;
- [b] Enterprise Support Services;
- [c] Entrepreneurship Support Services;
- [d] Local Enterprise Development Services.



LEO Fingal has consistently performed at a high level to ensure that all key targets are achieved or exceeded. During the period of the previous plan, in each of the four years 2017 through 2020, a consistently high volume of businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs availed of the services of the LEO. 2020 was an exceptional year in this regard and saw an unprecedented demand for services, arising from an avalanche of challenges to businesses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. LEO Fingal has responded extremely effectively to the impact of the pandemic, ensuring that businesses had a lifeline to essential services and funding to enable their survival. Substantial additional funding was secured to enable the LEO to provide these essential services. The pandemic continues during 2021 with severe consequences to businesses, with many having to curtail their operations or unable to trade.

In addition to this, it is likely that the full impact of BREXIT has yet to be realised and the Local Enterprise Office will need to address strategic difficulties for businesses that are impacted negatively by Brexit.

In the four-year period 2017 to 2020, the following are some key outputs for LEO Fingal:

- Approved 149 businesses for Measure One Grant assistance, totalling €3,102,033
- Approved 38 first-time exporter grants ("TAME" grants)
- 545 Management Development training programmes provided to 5,577 participants
- 60 Start Your Own Business Programmes completed by 818 participants
- One to one mentoring service provided to 3,405 clients
- 26 high potential clients funded by LEO Fingal and successfully transferred into the EI portfolio
- 37 small businesses undertook the LEAN programme
- 89 loan applications processed, assessed and submitted to Microfinance Ireland
- 477 Business Continuity Vouchers approved during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

The objectives and actions set out are based on the stated aims and also on the anticipated outcomes and impacts which can be achieved by LEO Fingal working in a targeted way at local level with local businesses. Local LEO services must be based on the needs of local businesses.

LEO Fingal has clearly defined service areas within the outlined actions so that our local businesses can tap into the suite of services most beneficial to them. This should allow for the setting of entry level criteria and entry level assessments so that businesses get the most appropriate service and maximum benefit from LEO intervention by way of executive time, external expertise and financial and non-financial supports. It will also enable the measurement of the outcomes of the services provided.

This approach will result in the delivery of more targeted and measurable services/actions to businesses and in more meaningful outcomes and outputs for both the businesses and for the public investment being made. This approach will also require the movement away from upward only numerical KPIs for LEOs and to a greater focus on qualitative outcomes.



The key focus of LEO Fingal is to maximise opportunities for job creation and retention, attained through:

- creating and raising local enterprise awareness and developing an enterprise culture and community-based enterprise activity;
- providing a single/first point of contact service to the business community - providing business advice, direction and signposting, business counselling and mentoring;
- providing support to private sector and community initiatives to secure the establishment and/or expansion of commercially viable micro-enterprise projects;
- providing comprehensive pre-and post-start-up supports to new and expanding micro-enterprises;
- influencing the allocation of resources for micro-enterprise from EU, private and public funding sources;
- promoting the general economic development of their areas.

The following are the strategic priorities of LEO Fingal as set out in this Local Enterprise Development Plan over the period 2021-2024:

1. Entrepreneurship
2. Competitiveness and Digitalisation
3. Green/Sustainability
4. Innovation
5. Exporting/Internationalisation
6. Networking and Clustering
7. Capacity and Capability Development

The Local Enterprise Development Plan provides a comprehensive framework for building upon the many successes to date. We aim to ensure that all aspiring and established entrepreneurs in our community receive a support structure that is practical, contemporary, multi-faceted and comprehensive, to enable our local small businesses to thrive.



SECTION 1 – CONTEXT



1.1 Overview / 4-year outlook for enterprise development in the LEO Area

Fingal is an area of 450 sq.km, located in North County Dublin, bordered by Dublin City, South County Dublin, Meath and Kildare. The population of Fingal has been growing steadily for many years and at the last census in 2016 the population was recorded as 296,214. Assuming a continuance of the previous five-year growth rate of 8.1%, the current population would now exceed 320,000.

The Fingal region is characterised by a unique mix of both urban and rural hinterlands. The two largest urban townlands are Blanchardstown and Swords. At the same time, the rural base of Fingal provides rich farmlands and has contributed to the region’s strong food production industry, as well as a striking coastline and strong heritage venues offering an exciting tourism experience.

The Economic infrastructure in Fingal is well developed, with the region being serviced by the M50 and M1 motorways. Fingal is also home to the single biggest economic entity in the state. Dublin Airport’s contribution to the national and local economy is substantial in terms of the volume of business generated, numbers in employment, range of related/support industries and infrastructural importance.

The industrial base in Fingal is significant and plays a vital role in National wealth creation. Some of the key sectors in the county include Transport and logistics, Information Technology, Food production, Biotechnology, Pharmaceuticals and the Green Economy.

Technological University Dublin [Blanchardstown] is a leading third level education provider and Dublin City University, which lies just outside of the Fingal area, is another important educational institution servicing the population of Fingal.

Tourism is also an important sector in the Fingal area and before COVID-19 struck in March 2020 the region attracted significant domestic and international tourism traffic each year. Dublin Airport is the largest gateway for passenger traffic in Ireland, with almost 33 million travellers into and from Ireland in 2019.

The Fingal region has built up a reputation as being one that is “business-friendly”, dynamic, young and entrepreneurial. The Local Authority has been to the forefront of embracing this ethos and this is reflected in the levels of entrepreneurial activity underway in the area.

In March 2021 Fingal was one of eight local authorities from either side of the border that came together to launch the “Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor”. The initiative was established in response to challenges facing the region identified by a joint report from Dublin City University and Ulster University.



COVID-19 has proven to be disruptive to businesses throughout Ireland and many of Fingal’s businesses have been deeply impacted. In addition, the full impact of the recent departure of the UK from the EU is yet to be felt. It is anticipated that both COVID-19 and Brexit will remain significant factors affecting businesses and will consequently require ongoing and appropriate responses from enterprise development state agencies.

Supported by Enterprise Ireland and within the policy and funding responsibility of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, LEO Fingal operates within the context of national and regional enterprise policies and plans.

The content, aims and objectives of the Fingal Local Enterprise Development Plan are all set within Government policies as set out in key Government and international strategic documents such as Project Ireland 2040, Future Jobs Ireland, Enterprise 2025 Renewed and the most recent OECD report on Ireland.

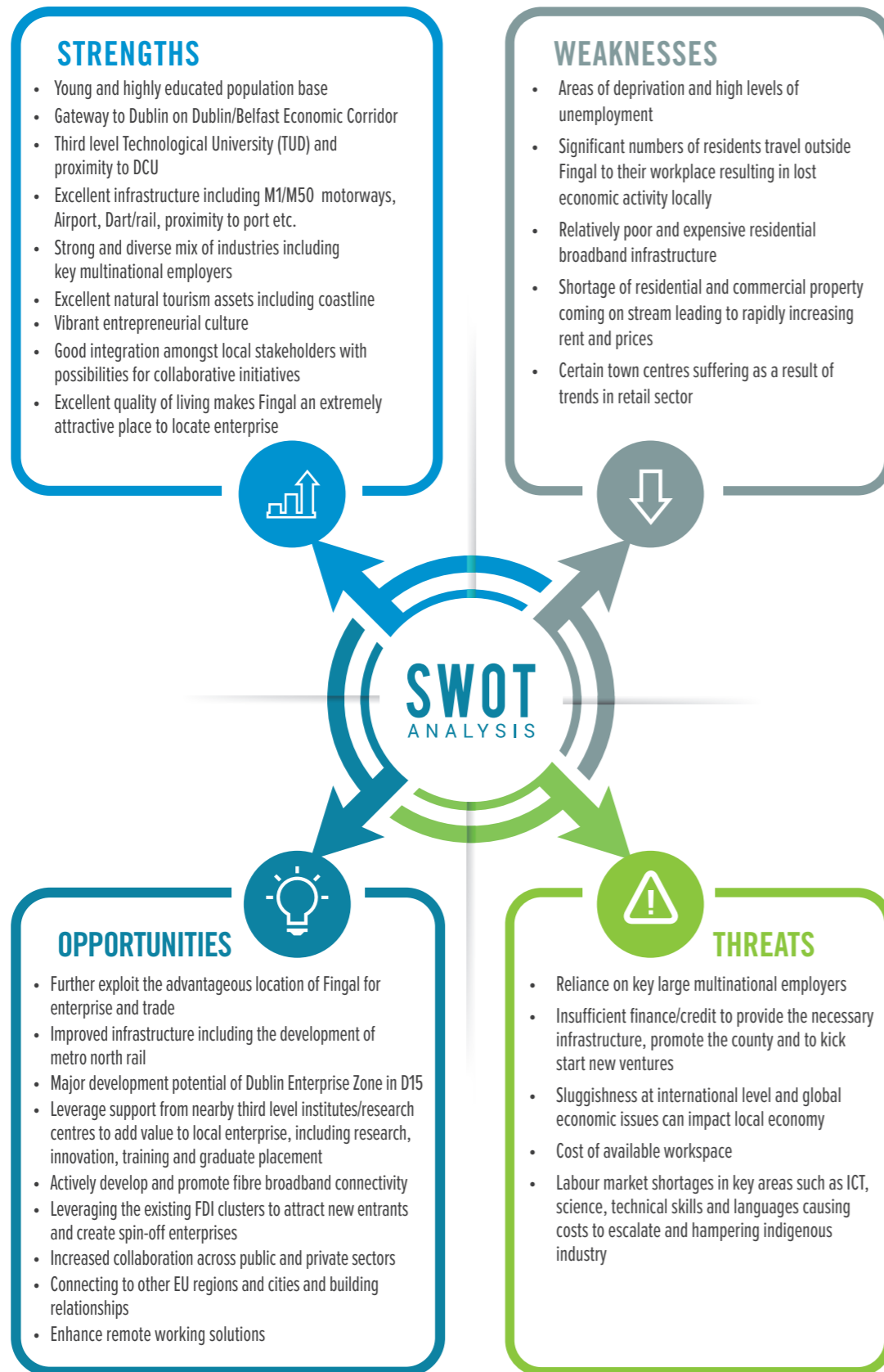
The next iteration of the Fingal Local Economic and Community Plan [LECP] 2021-2026 is currently being developed by the Fingal Local Community Development Committee [LCDC] alongside the Fingal County Council Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee [SPC]. The LCDC and SPC will work in tandem with other publicly funded agencies and civil society stakeholders, to achieve improved outcomes for the citizens, businesses and communities of the county. It is considered important that there is clear alignment of the LECP with the LEO Fingal strategy.

The Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan plays a key role in the delivery of the aims and objectives of government policies, and more specifically in the implementation of the National Planning Framework and its constituent Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies [RSEs] at NUTS 2 [Regional Assembly] level. The Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan sets out regional strategic objectives and actions aligned with these national strategic documents with the actions to be carried out by regional stakeholders – the Local Enterprise Offices being critical stakeholders in the Dublin region.

A key challenge for LEO Fingal is how it will address a series of key issues among its client base, in respect of: Entrepreneurship and start-ups; Productivity and Competitiveness; Digitalisation; Green/Sustainability; International trade; Innovation; Clustering and Networks; Infrastructure; and leadership & management skills in SMEs.



SWOT Analysis



Other Local Authority Supports

LEO Fingal works closely and collaboratively with other Departments within Fingal County Council to provide a seamless suite of support services. In particular, the provision of workspace through the Fingal Community Enterprise Centres [CECs] is an important additional support service. Other services and opportunities provided by Fingal County Council for local businesses include sectoral initiatives such as tourism support programmes, procurement information, and retail/town improvement schemes. Fingal County Council played an important role in the rollout of emergency initiatives to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 including the administration of more than €30.1M in Restart Grant Scheme in 2020 as well as the more recent Small Business Assistance Scheme for COVID [SBASC].

1.2 Review of 2017-2020

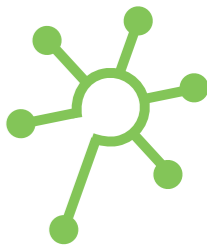
Throughout the duration of the previous Local Enterprise Development Plan [2017 through 2020] LEO Fingal delivered a diverse and intensive series of support services in keeping with the objectives set out, focusing on the outputs and ensuring all targets were met or exceeded where possible.

When COVID-19 struck in early 2020, all of the activities provided by LEO Fingal were substantially affected. All training and support services were changed to be delivered online, a suite of new programmes was quickly put into place and additional resources were secured to ensure that the impact of COVID on businesses was appropriately addressed. Fingal County Council provided additional temporary staffing to ensure that the Local Enterprise Office was equipped to deal with the surge in demand for services.

Over the period 2017 to 2020, the performance of LEO Fingal was consistently strong in terms of not just the quantitative metrics but also the actual impact of the supports on clients that were served, enabling many businesses to start-up and grow. In 2020 the focus changed to prioritise business survival owing to COVID-19.

The following illustrates the cumulative totals of outputs in some of the key measures:

Cumulative LEO Fingal Outturn Metrics -2017 to 2020	Total
Net Jobs Increase	314
No. of Clients Approved M1 Funding	149
Value of Approved M1 Funding €	€3,102,033
No. of Clients Approved Funding:	
- Feasibility/Innovation Grant Approved	41
- Business Priming Grant Approved	44
- Business Expansion Grant Approved	57
- Exporter [TAME] Grant Approvals	38
Total No. of all Training/Development Programmes	545
Total no. of participants on all Training Programmes	11,919
No. of SYOB Programmes	60
No. of participants attending SYOB Programmes	818
No. of Individual Mentoring Assignments	3,405
No. of Client Transfers to E I HPSU	26
No. of Students participating in Student Enterprise Programme.	10,594
No. of TOVs approved	914
Value of TOVs approved €	€2,131,370
LEAN -No. of companies	37
MFI - No of applications	89



SECTION 2 - VISION/MISSION AND OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES



LEO Vision

“To develop and sustain a positive enterprise ecosystem at local level throughout the country that will in particular drive new added-value start-ups, the further growth of small and micro enterprises and enhance local economies.”

Mission Statement:

We aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster sustainable business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high-quality supports for your Business ideas. Entrepreneurs and Businesses are supported to:

- Increase exports
- Build resilience
- Increase productivity
- Prepare for the Low carbon economy
- Embrace the Digital economy
- Innovate
- Be managed by ambitious & capable individuals
- Fuel regional growth



Business Information & Advisory Services:

- **First Stop Enterprise & Business Support Solution**

Provision of first stop shop activities in respect of Business Support, Enterprise Development and Promotion, including Signposting.

LEO Fingal runs an effective business information service and a business advice clinic which is easily accessible and free of charge to any business or individuals seeking advice, guidance and information on business supports available from state agencies and other bodies. The service is in strong demand, with on average 851 availing of business clinics in each year between 2017 and 2020. This service will continue to be provided to meet demand for the period 2021-2024.



- **Make It Easier to do Business**

Provide supports, guidance and solutions that make it easier for entrepreneurs, owners and managers to identify opportunities and implement actions to start-up, grow and survive within a competitive business environment.

A wide range of support services will continue to be offered to established micro-enterprises and aspiring entrepreneurs, regardless of the stage of their development. Connecting clients into both the national, regional and local/Fingal supports ecosystem is a critical service for all clients.

Enterprise Support Services:

• **Maximise Business Potential**

Deliver support services that equip entrepreneurs, owners and managers with the knowledge to plan, grow and sustain productivity, innovation and competitiveness, as well as encourage greater technology uptake.



Through a series of initiatives including the LEAN programme, management development training, and working with EI on rolling out innovation programmes including AGILE and the Innovation Partnership, LEO Fingal will maximise the capability of small businesses to become more competitive and productive.

• **Collaborate with Enterprise Ireland**

Enhance communication with Enterprise Ireland to facilitate potential progression of companies from LEO to EI, facilitating access to relevant EI financial, business and innovation/research facilities, and two-way transfer of clients to ensure appropriate services and maximum impact.

LEO Fingal is continually actively identifying and targeting clients that may be candidates for direct EI investment or other EI-funded programmes that they may not be aware of. In the period 2017 through 2020, 26 clients were transferred from the LEO Fingal portfolio into EI as they had reached a stage in their development where they required more substantial investment to fund their continued growth and international expansion.



Entrepreneurship Support Services:

• **Promote a Best Practice Enterprise Culture**

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

Through the delivery of a suite of enterprise information programmes LEO Fingal promotes an enterprise culture in Fingal. As the youngest County in Ireland [*census 2016], Fingal is well placed to excel in programmes such as the "Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur" and "Student Enterprise Programme". LEO Fingal has one of the country's highest participation rates in each of these initiatives, demonstrating that the Local Enterprise Office is successfully stimulating young aspiring entrepreneurs.



Local Economic Development Services:

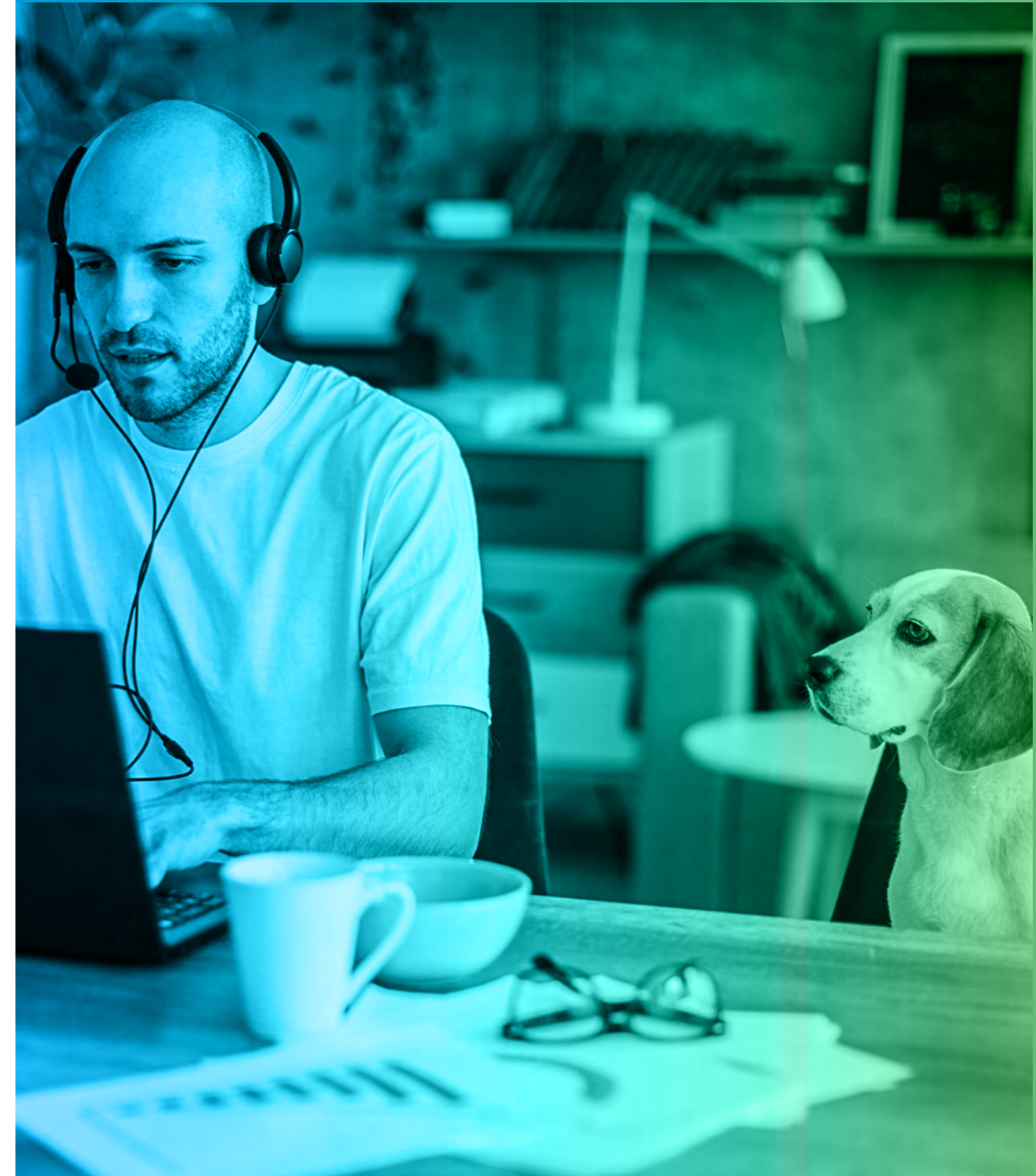
• **Environment for Start-Ups**

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

Operating within the Economic Development Department within Fingal County Council, LEO Fingal works closely with the other arms of FCC in rolling out programmes of relevance to its constituency in areas such as tourism, events and libraries. There are three Community Enterprise Centres in Fingal (BASE, Drinan and BEAT) co-ordinated within FCC. LEO Fingal works closely with each of these to ensure that clients have the physical premises to operate from and that the tenants in these centres are provided with appropriate support services.



SECTION 3 - STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



3.1 Strategic Priorities for LEO Fingal 2021-2024

Entrepreneurship

- The standard “start your own business” programme provided by LEO Fingal serves as an essential measure to enable those considering setting up a new business. It is also important to focus on increasing the number and quality of “high potential start-ups” (HPSUs). As many businesses undertaking these programmes do not have the opportunity to achieve HPSU status there is clearly a need to have different levels of start your own business programmes. At Dublin regional level the additional offering of a Hi-Start programme is an excellent mechanism to cultivate HPSU-type clients and it is envisaged that this initiative will continue in the period 2021-2024.
- In terms of inclusion, all LEO Fingal programmes are open to all and the LEO strives to provide participants with essential skills required to succeed in a highly competitive landscape. LEO Fingal will continuously support third parties in the delivery of programmes tailored for specific client needs such as disability Referral programmes in place for people who require support for social enterprises including the local development company in Fingal (“Empower”) as well as LEADER.
- LEO Fingal actively engages with Enterprise Ireland and works closely with Technological University Dublin in the provision of the New Frontiers programme and ensures that clients are signposted towards the most relevant training and funding that meets their needs.
- LEO Fingal operates a client first policy, whereby clients’ needs are carefully considered in partnership with Enterprise Ireland to ensure they are receiving the right suite of supports and can access the necessary levels of funding.
- Fingal is a well-connected County in terms of broadband and the council has a mechanism to monitor and improve broadband where possible and necessary. It is envisaged that the rollout of the national broadband plan will address any shortcomings in the medium term.
- The Local Enterprise Office works closely with local chambers and other business associations to understand the needs of the business community.
- There is consistent engagement with a wide pool of trainers to keep up to date with current opportunities to enhance the management skills of business owner/managers.
- Staff and mentors are kept up to date with trends, strategies and new initiatives to ensure they can signpost clients to the most appropriate supports and advise them on accessing supports for their businesses.
- The Student Enterprise Programme in Fingal is the biggest in the country and encourages future school leavers to consider an entrepreneurial path.
- The IBYE (Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur) programme is designed to encourage younger entrepreneurs and as well as the competitive element, the programme features a very important training and networking element which has real impact.
- Fingal Enterprising Women Network has continued to go from strength to strength throughout 2017-2020. The programme is extremely popular, with many hundreds of female entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs participating. This initiative will continue to be provided in 2021-24, in order to encourage and enable female entrepreneurship.



Competitiveness and Digitalisation

LEO Micro and Small business clients demonstrated great agility when faced with the challenge to survive and sustain their businesses when COVID-19 struck. Many businesses embraced the opportunity to add digital capability such as on-line trading and virtual meetings to sustain and in many cases expand their business operations during the pandemic.

LEO Fingal has approved 914 Trading Online Vouchers in the period 2017 through 2020, valued at €2,131,370. Of these 755 were approved in 2020, indicative of the impact that the pandemic has had on the manner in which Irish businesses have continued to trade, i.e. via online solutions.

Having the opportunity to explore and adopt these changes, many business owners have been awakened to the fact they need to introduce further digitalisation in order to better serve their customers and become more efficient and productive.

LEO Fingal will continue to support our SMEs to face challenges in boosting productivity, rapidly adopting digitalisation and actively pursuing innovation to increase competitiveness. The LEO will continue to work closely with Enterprise Ireland to maximise client take up on relevant Enterprise Ireland products and services to drive competitiveness, accelerate the adoption and implementation of sustainable business practices and develop local sectoral networks and clusters to drive productivity, knowledge sharing and competitiveness at local and regional level.

Key actions reflect wider LEO National strategy and include:

- Increase LEO staff one-to-one client engagement to identify on-going client needs.
- Continue to promote and develop the LEAN for Micro programme to LEO clients to drive efficiency and improve productivity.
- Develop new, measurable productivity management development programmes for our LEO clients.
- Drive productivity improvements through capital and skills funding.
- Deliver the LEO non-financial supports to firms up to 20 employees.
- Work with EI HPSU Section to drive scale within identified LEO enterprises.
- Develop and deliver sectoral initiatives/networking programmes at local level to maximise local sectoral strengths and ambitions.
- Promote the new Green for Micro programme to enable small and micro businesses future-proof their businesses from an environmental perspective.

Green/Sustainability

LEO Fingal is embracing new green and sustainability initiatives geared at helping local businesses to decarbonise and become more sustainable. Making businesses more sustainable is not just the right thing to do from an environmental point of view, it also makes good business sense. The Triple Bottom line will become a consideration for many businesses considering not just profit but their impact on people and the planet also.



Recent survey results show that 33% of respondents plan to switch to businesses which are doing more about sustainability, while 49% also said they intend to become better informed about the impact their purchasing has on the planet [source: AIB Sustainability Index, December 2020].

With climate change, changing regulations, rising resource costs and changing customer expectations, adopting an eco-friendly approach is the best way forward for business.

The Green for Micro Programme was launched in March 2021 and through this programme LEO Fingal will help many micro-businesses to begin the journey to greater sustainability and will lead to further initiatives and investments over the 2021-2024 period.

Innovation

Innovation in product, service, management and selling are increasingly important in the connected environment that Irish businesses operate in. There is a challenge in raising the awareness of the need to be innovative as a starting point and to get companies to take the steps to be innovative which often requires reflection, change and financial/ time risk which is not always embraced. LEO Fingal is committed to raising the level of innovation of companies in the region:

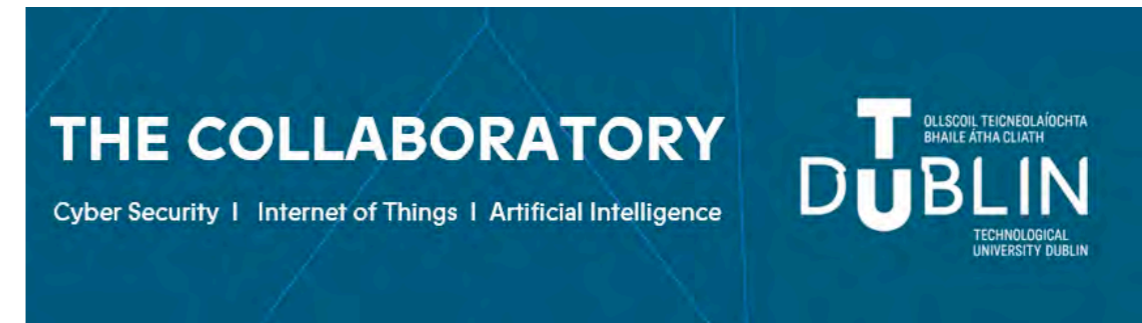
- LEO Fingal has run three AGILE and Innovation seminars with EI, one in each of the previous three years. All of these were well attended and have resulted in Fingal businesses benefiting from the AGILE and Innovation programmes from EI. It is intended that at least one of these promotional seminars will be hosted by LEO Fingal each year 2021 – 2024;



- LEO Fingal will promote feasibility study funding for early stage companies and “Agile” innovation funding for more established companies. In addition the EI Innovation Partnership programme has now been made available to LEO companies. LEO Fingal will actively promote all of these mechanisms to help fund and encourage innovation;



- The Breakthrough Innovation Program (a funded programme run by the four Dublin-based LEOs in conjunction with Dublin Business Innovation Centre) will be widely publicised and participation will be encouraged with other programs to follow where appropriate;



Exporting/Internationalisation

One of the key aims of LEO Fingal is to enable and assist Fingal businesses to internationalise and sell their products and services overseas. LEO Fingal will work closely with Enterprise Ireland to maximise client take up on relevant Enterprise Ireland export products and services, whilst directly assisting microenterprises in their early stage research endeavours.

Small businesses continue to express interest in the TAME grant, these businesses are looking to export or expand into new markets. Any business approved for a TAME will be travelling overseas to develop new market opportunities. LEO Fingal will seek to assist these businesses with links to EI research and overseas offices, as appropriate.

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly enhanced consumer confidence in E-commerce and the capacity of business owners to take their business online and continue to meet consumer demand, where possible. During 2020, some 755 Fingal businesses were approved for Trading Online Vouchers to pivot develop their business online. Some of these businesses are now in a prime position to attract new customers and continue to grow their business internationally. LEO Fingal will endeavour to identify those businesses with international capabilities, to enable them to export their products or services.

In the period 2021-2024, support will be provided to capitalise on the growth of e-commerce and assist entrepreneurs to exploit such opportunities. LEO Fingal will achieve this via the following strategic actions:

- Development of tailored Management Development Programmes
- Monitoring of portfolio Clients to establish those with greater potential
- Provision of online workshops with high potential clients and EI Advisors
- Promotion of TAME to encourage greater participation at international trade events
- Creation of a Micro Exporters network to support best practice and knowledge exchange
- Staff development to assist with identifying LEO clients with greater export potential



Networks and Clustering

LEO Fingal will continue to maximise access for Fingal businesses to networking opportunities, both directly through initiatives such as the Fingal Enterprising Women Network, and in cooperation with other organisations including Chambers and business associations.

- The Fingal Enterprising Women Network is run by LEO Fingal. It provides networking and learning opportunities for women in business and enterprise in the region. The Network meets up regularly and provides a platform to female entrepreneurs (and aspiring entrepreneurs), to network, build useful local business contacts and keep up to speed with key issues affecting business. In the period 2017 to 2020, thousands of established and aspiring female entrepreneurs networked together at the many events. The network also encourages informal online networking among members.



**Women in Business:
"Our Time to Shine"**
Friday 5th March, 12:00 - 13:30
Featuring Renowned TV Presenter
and Businesswoman
Gráinne Seoige



**Confidence, Courage
and Making It
Happen**
Tuesday 20th April, 11:00 - 12:30
Featuring Best-selling Author
Cathy Kelly

- The food sector is hugely important to the Fingal local economy. LEO Fingal is delivering a wide range of financial and non-financial supports to agri-food companies in the county. The Agri-Food Strategy for Fingal (2019-2021) builds upon this work and sets out a common framework that will foster innovation and collaboration across the sectors, increasing value-added, leading to further jobs creation in the agri-food sector and maximizing the potential of the agri-food base in the county. Fingal County Council developed the strategy with the input of a steering group of local sectoral experts.
- LEO Fingal provides a series of initiatives to support the Craft and Design sectors, working closely with the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland. These include enterprise promotion activities (including Showcase trade show, and export trade missions), management development programmes, E-commerce programmes, and the Design Awards competition which debuted in 2020, a collaborative initiative between the LEO Network, DCCI and Enterprise Ireland. LEO Fingal will continue to target these initiatives to clients and maximise the benefits to craft and design sectors.
- Other sectoral initiatives will be supported where possible such as manufacturing, engineering, ICT. The retail sector has suffered hugely during the COVID-19 pandemic, in response LEO Fingal provided appropriate supports to this sector and will continue to support retail trade in 2021-24.

3.2 Capacity and Capability Development

Innovation Projects

LEO Fingal will continue to work with the Dublin Business Innovation Centre and the other three Dublin-based LEOs on the Breakthrough Innovation Programme. This programme brings clients through a disciplined framework to discover and analyse where the innovation potential lies in their enterprise and how to capitalise on those opportunities to strive for growth.



Management Development Capability

The COVID 19 Pandemic greatly challenged the founders and promoters of our Micro and Small client businesses and highlighted deficits in their general management capability. Key challenges include: Financial Management (Cash-flow and Management Accounting), IT Management, Digitalisation (to support home working / off-site management and e-Commerce capability), HR and Sales and Marketing (including Digital Marketing).



LEO Fingal is committed to meeting the management development needs of modern businesses and recognises the need to review and continually improve management and leadership development programmes to meet this need. LEO Fingal will build the confidence and drive the ambition of local firms to scale and compete internationally, build and strengthen the leadership skills and capabilities of small and micro enterprise owner/managers. The programmes offered by LEO Fingal in 2021-2024 will help businesses to establish specific expertise in key areas of management development including finance, digitalisation, marketing, strategic growth, internationalisation and human resources.

LEO Fingal has a strong panel of trainers and has consistent engagement with them to understand the opportunities and deliver the programmes to increase the level of skills and management development of the local business community. The LEO will also partner with Enterprise Ireland and introduce client companies that may benefit from appropriate EI programmes.



In the period 2021-2024 a broad programme of supports will be provided to develop our entrepreneurs and future business leaders. LEO Fingal will undertake to take the following strategic actions:

- Deliver client-focused, needs-based, management development programmes targeted at LEO portfolio clients, to include new measurable programmes.
- Maximise the LEO mentoring programme to increase ambition and capabilities.
- Increase LEO staff one-to-one client engagement to identify export ready clients.
- Facilitate local business networks with a particular focus on peer learning and enhancing capabilities.
- Strengthen relationships and networking opportunities with other organisations including local Chambers and larger companies in the region that can link in to the benefit of SMEs.
- On a Regional or National basis deliver annual International Leadership programmes to identified LEO portfolio clients.
- Deliver accredited modules of client-focused management development programmes.

3.3 National LEO Programmes

Below is a summary of the key National programmes and actions to be progressed by LEO Fingal from 2021 through 2024. It is anticipated that additional National initiatives will be rolled out in due course, to address the ever-changing needs of clients and entrepreneurs.

• Student Enterprise Programme

The Student Enterprise Programme is the biggest enterprise competition for students in Ireland. It helps students to grasp real life skills associated with running an enterprise, including working as part of a team, managing production and finances, organising a sales and marketing campaign and liaising directly with customers, judges and the media. Each year some 27,000 students all over Ireland get to find out what it's like to run their own business by taking part in the Student Enterprise Programme. In Fingal, between 2,000 and 2,700 students participated in the programme each year from 2017 to 2020, from an average of 25 secondary schools. It is anticipated that this level of participation will be maintained, ensuring that Fingal youth have a positive learning business learning experience with exposure to real-life start-ups.



• National Enterprise Awards

Enterprise Awards Competition is designed to recognise and reward the commitment, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit of small businesses at local and national level. The competition for the awards involves two stages: a local competition, at County level, with the winner then representing the County at a National Final. The competition is open to businesses that have received financial or soft supports from the LEO. Fingal finalists have scooped National awards numerous times over the years, with two National overall winners. The 2020 Fingal finalist scooped the "Export" award at the national level. LEO Fingal will continue to run the Fingal Enterprise Award competition each year, from which a strong finalist will be selected to represent Fingal at the National Enterprise Awards.



• Showcase

Showcase at the RDS is the first major trade event of each year, organised by the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland and promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland. The dedicated Enterprise Zone on the balcony area, co-ordinated by the Local Enterprise Offices, has become known as the home for emerging designers and craftspeople in recent years. A wide range of creative sectors is represented within the Enterprise Zone, such as ceramics, knitwear, jewellery, interiors, skincare and giftware. A number of Fingal clients will participate in this initiative each year. Owing to COVID-19, the trade show was held online in January 2021. It is hoped that the event can proceed in the RDS in January 2022 and each year thereafter, so that Fingal craft and artisan producers have an opportunity to market themselves on a global stage.



• **Food Sectoral Initiatives**

Three National initiatives are currently offered through the 31 Local Enterprise Offices and will continue to be provided to encourage and enable food production start-ups:

- **Digital School of Food:** an online learning resource to assist individuals to learn about how to set up a successful food enterprise
- **Food Starter:** A “Start Your Own Business” programme aimed at food sector
- **Food Academy:** The Food Academy is an initiative designed collaboratively with Bord Bia, Musgraves/ SuperValu and the Network of Local Enterprise Offices. It aims to “Give Small Producers a Big Chance”. The Food Academy works with and nurtures small businesses through their journey from start up to getting their products on SuperValu shelves



• **National Ploughing Championships**

The National Ploughing Championships is held in September each year. As part of its National Programme the Local Enterprise Offices host a Local Enterprise Village to provide an opportunity for clients to take full advantage of this unique consumer event.



This is an opportunity to showcase the quality and high standard of goods and services supported by the LEO. Post-COVID19 it is hoped that LEO Fingal will continue to support suitable clients at this promotional event.

• **Local Enterprise Week**

LEO Fingal has hosted a packed schedule of events during the LEO “Local Enterprise Week” each year, in the first week of March. The event was run online in March 2021. It is envisaged that the initiative will feature a blended approach of online and in-person events in future years.

Typically the programme focuses on providing supports for individuals at all stages of business development, from those with business idea to individuals starting up a new business or growing an existing enterprise.



• **National Women’s Enterprise Day**

In October of each year 2017 to 2019 the four LEOs in the Dublin region organised and promoted a major networking event as part of “National Women’s Enterprise Day”. In October 2020, owing to COVID-19, the event was held online as a single National event. Post-COVID, LEO Fingal will continue to support the regional initiative which will rotate annually between each of the 4 x Dublin LEOs for the period 2021-2024.



• **Trading on line Vouchers**

In recognition of the increasing importance for local small businesses to exploit online sales opportunities, Fingal will continue to roll out the Trading Online Voucher scheme, actively promoting the programme to eligible small businesses with a view to maximising online sales among local suppliers. In the period 2017 through 2020, 914 TOVs were approved by LEO Fingal. Of these, the vast majority were approved in 2020 (i.e. from an average of 55 per annum between 2017-2019, to 755 in 2020 alone). This phenomenal growth was a direct consequence of COVID-19, whereby the scheme saw huge demand as small businesses focused on online selling. As well as continuing to provide the TOV scheme to Fingal businesses during the period 2021-2024, LEO Fingal will focus on identifying previous TOV recipients that have strong potential to accelerate their digital marketing strategy.



• **Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE)**

LEO Fingal will ensure that previous finalists and winners are given every support necessary to maximise their prospects of success. Existing programmes and supports will also be promoted to IBYE applicants that did not emerge as finalists.



• **Micro-Finance**

Microfinance Ireland provides small loan facilities to businesses that have difficulty raising finance from other sources. LEO Fingal works very closely with MFI and has a dedicated resource to ensure that start-up and existing businesses have access to this source of funding, regardless of the business sector. In 2020 the numbers of applications for MFI loans processed by LEO Fingal increased significantly (from an average of 14 in each year 2017-2019, to 48 in 2020. It is envisaged that the volume of applications will return to “normal” levels post COVID-19).



• **LEAN for Micro**

In conjunction with EI, LEO Fingal will continue to roll out the LEAN programme to enable small businesses with real growth potential to streamline their business processes and give them an opportunity to enhance competitiveness. It is anticipated that the numbers of participants will grow year on year in the period 2021-2024.



SECTION 4 – ASSOCIATED ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



4.1 Protocols

The following protocols govern dissemination of information, information signposting and inter-organisation referrals. Local Enterprise Office Fingal will continue to implement these protocols on an on-going basis and review locally as required. The aims of the Protocols are:

- To establish a structured link between the Local Enterprise Offices and Protocol Partners to support the provision of information and guidance measures for enterprise development;
- To provide for an efficient customer service in response to LEO clients' queries;
- To provide for informing and updating staff from both organisations of respective programmes and services;
- To provide for cooperation on awareness and promotion activities;
- To provide for exchanges between the parties on the uptake and operation of the measures and levels of demand for information/guidance by clients of the LEOs;
- To provide for periodic review of the operation of the protocol;
- To Provide for collaboration and efficiencies in the provision of training programmes where appropriate.

Department of Social Protection:

Agreed between the Department of Social Protection and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). This protocol aims to maximise the recruitment of appropriately skilled persons from the Live Register by enterprise agency client companies.

Credit Review Office

Agreed between the Credit Review Office and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). The Credit Review Office provides a simple, effective review process for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, including sole traders and farm enterprises, who have had requests for credit refused or existing credit facilities reduced or withdrawn.

Fáilte Ireland

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority, whose role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. Fáilte Ireland also works with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy.

Microfinance Ireland

Agreed between Microfinance Ireland and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). Microfinance Ireland, as a not-for-profit lender, has been established to deliver the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund. All business sectors are eligible to apply. Companies may be Sole Traders, Partnerships and Limited Companies with fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover of less than €2 million. Loans may be used to fund the start-up of a business, the purchase of stock, equipment, machinery, and business vehicles and are also available to established enterprises.

Skillnets

Agreed between Skillnets and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). Skillnets actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to address their current and future skills needs on the basis that training and up-skilling are key elements in keeping Irish companies competitive. Skillnets funds groups of companies in the same region/sector, and with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and Education & Training Boards Ireland. The ETBs are statutory authorities which have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes. Further education and apprenticeship training is also provided through 16 training centres nationally. ETBs are active in local communities through the direct provision of training and education programmes delivered in training centres, colleges and other training and educational settings.

Revenue

Agreed between The Revenue Commissioners and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). The role of the Revenue Commissioners is "to serve the community by fairly and efficiently collecting taxes and duties and implementing customs controls". Specifically, in relation to business, Revenue provides information and support under three headings:

- A comprehensive range of information and guidance on taxation issues, customs and Revenue requirements relating to starting and running a business, including the Revenue Online Service
- Tax Simplification Initiatives for Smaller Businesses
- Supporting Job Creation and other Enterprise Supports.

National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC)

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and The National Association of Community Enterprise Centres. The National Association of Community Enterprise Centres is a strong representative body of 120 community enterprise centres in the Republic of Ireland. Its primary role is to support and develop the interests of community enterprise centres on a national basis.

Leader

Agreed between The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The aim of the protocol between Local Enterprise Offices and Local Action Groups is to ensure that the available enterprise supports are complementary, are configured to meet local needs and ultimately, maximise the impact of both development bodies in their local areas.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta. The rationale for the development of this proposal was to ensure that all client enterprises of Údarás na Gaeltachta and LEOs have equal access to services and funded programmes and benefit from enhanced collaboration and information sharing between the organisations. Údarás na Gaeltachta manages its client base in the Gaeltacht and use its core funding (exchequer and own resources) to service existing commitments & Údarás led schemes (grant-based supports for employment and capital projects). LEOs in the eight Local Authority areas comprising of Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas continue to operate in the county and city areas outside of the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta continue to deliver enterprise support in the Gaeltacht.

4.2 Other Initiatives

- During 2020 LEO Fingal collaborated with the other three LEOs in the Dublin region and Dublin Business Innovation Centre (DBIC), to provide the "Breakthrough Innovation Programme" to small businesses that are seeking to adopt strong innovative practices and processes in their business. This programme, funded by the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, will continue to be provided to suitable businesses employing 3 to 50 staff in the period 2021-2024.
- In 2019 LEO Fingal developed a new initiative called "Sport to Start-Up", in collaboration with Sporting Ireland. The pilot Sport to Start-Up programme was run on a Dublin regional basis in early 2020, offered to full-time sportspeople. A second intake saw professional sportspeople from across Ireland participating in the intensive programme to help them build entrepreneurship skills and see how they can transfer their existing skillset into a potential new business.
- Dublin Food Chain is a collaborative initiative of the four Local Enterprise Offices in the Dublin region, supported by Bord Bia. It offers a network of food producers, wholesalers, foodservice operators and food retailers, and is part of an ongoing effort to harness the power of the 'collective'.
- Targeting businesses that would benefit from state of the art technical training and product development facilities, LEO Fingal will work with the Learning and Innovation Centre (LINC) at Technological University Dublin (Blanchardstown) to help build innovation clusters among SMEs. The "Collaboratory" will house state of the art technical training and product development facilities alongside applied research and consultancy centres in these sector-specific disciplines. It will aggregate market intelligence, knowledge and new discoveries and deliver a centre of excellence for Irish SMEs to ensure that companies are secure and competitive. The centre will also support a community platform in each of the three areas containing our industry partners, collaborators and external stakeholders, such that reciprocal knowledge transfer occurs.



SECTION 5 – RISKS



Identified Risks:	
Risks that can adversely affect the achievement of the objectives outlined	Actions to mitigate this risk
Not enough finance to meet demand	Request more funds; Partner with other organizations; Examine other funded programmes (particularly EU projects); Reduce range and frequency of services.
Quality reduction of Mentoring/Training due to budget constraints	Spreading limited funding to meet capacity of Fingal.
Skills shortage/ Experienced staff leave	Engage in staff training in Final County Council and COE/EI where available; Secure interns; Contract out some work; Utilise the Tus scheme.
Training costs increase	Continue to work closely with trainers to be innovative about how training can be delivered cost effectively; Examine online training delivery.
Protracted impacts on ability to deliver services caused by COVID-19 pandemic	Seek and develop new innovative programmes and utilise latest technologies to continue to provide essential services to businesses.




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SECTION 6 – DELIVERING THE STRATEGY



Funding

LEO Fingal is funded annually by Government through Enterprise Ireland from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). LEO Fingal will continue to work with Enterprise Ireland and DETE on its annual funding and resourcing requirements to drive our strategy. LEO Fingal commits to maximising its budget allocation ensuring value for money in fulfilling its objectives and strategic priorities.

Training

LEO Fingal commits to the 2021-2024 Learning and Development plan for LEO staff and managers to ensure we have the necessary business development skillset to support our clients evolving needs to survive and thrive in the ever-changing business environment. A collaborative approach between Enterprise Ireland and the LEO's is taken to design programmes to support us in achieving the strategic priorities across Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Digitalisation, Green/Sustainability, Exporting/Internationalisation and Innovation. A best practice approach is adopted to deliver programmes such as the Professional Business Advisor programme, Green for Micro, Finance, Social Media and other business pillar programmes accordingly.

Communications

The LEO Fingal communications strategy will be fully aligned with the national 'Making It Happen' marketing and communications strategy for the Local Enterprise Offices, as set out by the LEO Communications Committee and LEO Communications Team in Enterprise Ireland.

This strategy will focus on four key pillars:

- Promoting LEO-led programmes, supports and initiatives and those open to LEO clients from local authorities, Enterprise Ireland, protocol partners and other stakeholders
- Showcasing LEO and client announcements, regular profiling through case studies and thought leadership
- Rolling-out brand communications campaigns locally, to include 'Pre-Start,' 'Start' and 'Grow' themed campaigns
- Increasing the LEO's digital footprint online and enhancing social media presence and reach.

The Local Enterprise Office Fingal Communications Strategy will continue to support National Initiatives such as those focused on Exporting, Innovation, Green, Digitalisation and "Look for Local".

Customer Service Charter

LEO Fingal is committed to providing the highest levels of customer service as embodied in our Customer Service Charter and in line with the principles of quality customer service as adopted by all Government Departments and Public Service Bodies. The Customer Service Charter is published on the LEO Fingal website and displayed in the reception area of the public office.

LEO Fingal ensures that customer service is at the heart of all services provided. LEO Fingal endeavours to deal with all client queries promptly and efficiently. All course participants are surveyed (via survey monkey), so that customer satisfaction ratings can be monitored. Training needs analyses are conducted regularly and feedback from all programmes is assessed with a view to amending the delivery of future programmes.





APPENDIX ONE – Performance Metrics

Jobs:	Output 2020	Target 2021
LEO Client Portfolio*	258	272
Total Portfolio Employment (All Jobs, both FT & PT)	984	1185
Gross Jobs Created (All Jobs both FT & PT)	127	150
Net Jobs Increase (All Jobs created minus all Job Losses)	-60	100

Progression Pathway:	Output 2020	Target 2021
Number of Clients transferred to E.I.	5	4

Measure 1	Output 2020	Target 2021
Number of Clients Approved Funding:		
Feasibility: Number:	15	10
Priming: Number:	5	12
Business Expansion: Number:	23	15
TAME: Number	3	10
No. of projected potential new jobs associated with Approvals (Priming & Business Expansion)	47	10

Trading Online Vouchers:	Output 2020	Target 2021
No. of Trading Online Vouchers approved	755	250

Agile R & D	Output 2020	Target 2021
No. of Companies approved Agile R & D	1	1

EI Grant Support Measure administered through the LEO (e.g. Grad Start, IP Start, etc.)	Output 2020	Target 2021
No. of Companies supported	-	2

Measure 2	Output 2020	Target 2021
Training/Development Programmes (All Training and Networking events)		
Total No. of All Programmes (Training/Networking/Events/Seminars)	208	100
Total No. of all Participants participating in above Programmes	5577	2000
No. of SYOB Programmes	18	12
No. of Participants attending SYOB Programmes	329	180
No. of Management Development Programmes	81	100
No. of Business Coaches assigned to Clients	-	31



Mentoring:		
Total Number of individual mentoring – (participants availing of one to one mentoring – one to one engagement by a Mentor with one client)	1211	1000
Total Number of group mentoring participants – (are all group mentoring engagements or clinics where a mentor engages with a group of clients)	0	0
Total Number of Mentoring Participants (both one to one and group)	1211	1000

Schools Entrepreneurship:	Output 2020	Target 2021
Number of Schools Participating (Secondary schools only engaged in school enterprise programmes)	29	20
Number of Students Participating	2954	2000

Competitiveness	Output 2020	Target 2021
No. of Companies who have undertaken a Lean for Micro Assessment by a Lean Expert *	10	10
No. of Companies who will undertake Green Start Programme	0	10

Export Enterprise Development Programme	Output 2020	Target 2021
No. of clients undertaking Export Enterprise Development Programmes in Enterprise Ireland	-	10

MFI:	Output 2020	Target 2021
Number of Applications submitted	48	15

NOTES




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