



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN  
TO 2024

# SOUTH-WEST



An initiative of the Department  
of Enterprise, Trade and Employment



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# Minister's Foreword



*Damien English*

**Damien English TD,**  
Minister of State for Business,  
Employment and Retail

**There is a huge appetite to facilitate regional enterprise development and grow job opportunities right across the country. I am delighted to see this outlook reflected strongly in the publication of this Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the South-West.**

I would like to acknowledge the work of the regional stakeholders – the Enterprise Agencies, LEOs, Local Authorities, Regional Skills, Higher and Further Education, the Regional Assembly, Private Sector, and many other participants – for their determination and intense engagement for the betterment of the South-West.

Together they considered important questions to enhance enterprise development for their region, about enterprise resilience; place attractiveness; competitiveness; and the twin business transformation imperatives – low carbon and digital in developing their Plan.

Looking to the future, through the framework of our Economic Recovery Plan, and the recent review of the National Development Plan 2021-2030, the Government is committed to achieving a balanced, sustainable, and inclusive recovery for our people and our regions. The imperative to realise the enterprise and jobs potential in all our regions and reducing disparities between them remains a core priority.

My Department has an important role to play in the promotion and funding of regional development, through the work of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, and the Local Enterprise Office Network, by assisting businesses directly, and through ecosystem strengthening measures. These include initiatives such as the IDA regional property programme, the EI Regional Enterprise Development Fund and investments in innovation and start-up infrastructures. Critically, in overseeing the development of Regional Enterprise Plans, we recognise that there is added benefit if stakeholders work together regionally to understand their unique enterprise opportunities and challenges; and collaborate on solutions.



This new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the South-West is future-focused and centred around a number of priorities including:

- Strengthen the enterprise eco-system across the region,
- Maximise the potential of digital enterprise and innovation hubs in the region,
- Support cluster organisations in the South-West,
- Make the region synonymous with excellence in sustainable Food Production & Agri-Tech,
- Embrace the opportunities of Climate Action, and
- Ensure a strong pipeline of talent in the region.

With continued regional collaboration, knowledge sharing and a solutions mindset, the actions within this Plan can make a real and lasting difference for the South-West, and to the collective national economic recovery.

I would like to especially thank the Chairperson of the South-West Regional Steering Committee Patricia Quane, for her leadership on the preparation of this new Plan, and Jonathan Hoare, South-West Programme Manager for his critical coordination role in delivering the final outcome. I am very appreciative of the time and energy given by all the members of the Steering Committee, and for your ongoing commitment to the Regional Enterprise Plan.

To assist the Regional Enterprise Plans, my Department, through Enterprise Ireland, has made available over €126m in funding since 2018 to assist locally-led regional enterprise development projects. Of this, over €19.3m has been approved for the South-West Region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund and the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme.

New funding of up to €180m will be made available for the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative enterprise projects that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the regions.

This funding will complement the aims and objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plans and through their new Plan, the South-West Region is well positioned to compete for future funding calls to help improve the capability and competitiveness of their regional enterprise development offering and to encourage entrepreneurial activity among their local vibrant business community.

I am very much looking forward to further engagement with Patricia and the members of the South-West Steering Committee as implementation progresses towards 2024.



# Message from the Chair



**Patricia Quane,**  
Chair, South-West Regional  
Enterprise Plan

**I am pleased to present the South-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 as Chair of the South-West Steering Committee. This plan sets out our ambitious vision for the region for the next three years. In short, we want the South-West to be the most innovative and enterprise focused region in the country.**

Our Plan will go beyond the traditional approach of counterbalancing the growth of Dublin and will instead foster all that is great about the region from an enterprise perspective in its own right.

With a city of scale in Cork as well as a multitude of entrepreneurs and economic assets across Kerry and Cork County, we have the most diverse and dynamic region in Ireland. The South-West is home to two universities, a number of world class research centres and significant clusters of economic activity including Pharmaceuticals, ICT, Energy, Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence, Agri-food, Tourism, and Business services. We have two airports in the region and an extremely significant asset in Cork Harbour in its own right.

Our Plan deliberately places strong emphasis on the economic opportunities and potential of climate action and digitalisation. We see these two areas as being at the heart of our region's economic growth, competitiveness and future sustainability. We are particularly mindful of both national and EU policy in this regard. The core themes of Resilience and Recovery, Transition (Climate/ Digital), Enterprise Innovation, and Regional Competitiveness run through every Strategic Objective.

The new Plan has not been developed in isolation and we have built on the work and learnings of the SWREP to 2020. We have built on its achievements and have also recognised that not everything can be encompassed in one enterprise plan.

Our plan is deliberately selective and does not, and is not intended to, capture the full picture of economic and innovative activity in the region. We have sought to be strategic, choosing areas where the region has strengths, potential and promise. The actions that we have set out are new and will bring value to the region and to the work of stakeholders and partners.

I want to thank all of the regional stakeholders who have contributed to the development of this plan and will be central to its implementation in the years ahead. The breadth of engagement and experience is clear to see. I want to thank the Local Authorities in the region in particular – Kerry County Council, Cork County Council and Cork City Council. They provide great leadership and support for the Plan, and I pay tribute to them.

We now move to implementation, and I look forward to working with all regional stakeholders to put into practice and reality the actions in this Plan.



# South-West Regional Profile

**The South-West is one of the most significant regions in Ireland from the perspective of economic growth, innovation and future potential. With the largest economy outside of Dublin, the South-West region is also the largest rural economy in the country with annually increasing economic activity in industrial, research and innovation, and business development activities. The South-West Regions is diverse with the Country's second largest City, important regional towns; vibrant Island and Gaeltacht communities; significant national, international and global leading companies; a tourism industry of both national and international significance; and a landscape of outstanding beauty and rich in culture and heritage.**

Comprising of the Local Authorities areas of Cork City Council (210, 853 population) Cork County Council (332,105 population) and Kerry County Council (147,707), the South-West Strategic Planning Area covers an area of 12,100 sq.km and recorded a population of over 690,000 people in 2016, 44% of the total Southern Region's population. The population of the region under the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) is targeted to grow by up to 343,500 by 2031.

As a key economic driver of the region, Cork City is targeted to grow by 50-60% to 2040 under the NPF and Regional Spatial RSES. With a targeted population growth of up to 125,000 by 2040, Cork City will be one of Ireland's fastest growing cities over the next twenty years. The South-West is further complemented by a network of Key Towns including Tralee, Killarney, Mallow and Clonakilty. They will play a significant role in strengthening the urban structure of the Region based on their strategic location and influence, record of performance and delivery, employment and service functions, potential for employment led growth, subregional interdependencies and scope for collaboration.

The region also includes some of the most remote parts of the country with low population density and economic activity. These factors all contribute to making the South-West one of the most dynamic and diverse regions in the country with unique strengths and challenges.

The South-West is accessed by the strategic Tier 1 Port of Cork, Airports (Cork National Airport and Kerry Regional Airport), road and rail networks.

A consequential development for the region has been the merger of the Cork Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology Tralee to form the Munster Technological University (MTU) representing a clear demonstration of the potential and promise of regional collaboration. University College Cork has been driving economic growth nationally, and in the South-West region, through its significant research and development capabilities. The development of industry partnerships together with disruptive innovations from within the Universities ensure that MTU & UCC play a crucial role in knowledge creation and discovery, and technology and knowledge transfer to industry and society.



The South-West region has a wealth of natural resources, which contribute to the social and economic fabrics of the region. Maritime and the marine is a growth sector and selling point for the region, reaching into a range of areas including enterprise and entrepreneurship, tourism, technology, and sustainability, among others. Cork Harbour and the Shannon Estuary provide the Region with natural marine resources of significant potential to capitalise on in significant scale. The vibrant coastal communities of the region offer a rich tapestry of marine based assets underpinning the potential of the marine economy in the South-West.

In the South-West, industry sectors with significant concentrations of employment exist in financial services, agritech, agri-food, pharma, medtech, ICT, engineering, tourism/hospitality, and manufacturing, whilst sectors such as, cyber security, renewable energy, maritime and the marine are expanding.

The ambition of the South-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, is to go beyond balanced regional development and position the South-West as a leading national and international centre for enterprise. The enterprise ecosystem in the South-West is bolstered by a number of centres of excellence, digital enterprise & innovation Hubs, research centres, start-up programmes as well as the Higher Education Institutions, Local Authorities and the evolution of clusters which continues to be supported as an economic development and enterprise capability development tool to support regional growth, and to forge greater linkages and collaborations amongst the plethora of indigenous and foreign owned enterprises across the region, and beyond.

The enterprise ecosystem of the South-West is expertly assisted by a number of agencies – Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Local Enterprise Offices. Through a number of different funding avenues, these agencies support local enterprises through vouchers, mentoring, funding, courses, infrastructure development and capital project development. These agencies' regional offerings will be detailed in other sections of this publication.





# Overview of Strategic Objectives and Actions



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Enhance the enterprise eco-system across the region through innovation, entrepreneurship and digitalisation

- Action 1.1** Develop programmes to support undergraduate and graduate entrepreneurship for the South-West.
- Action 1.2** Support the growing animation and visual effects sector in the region.
- Action 1.3** Increase the number of start-ups in technology with a focus on Cyber Security, AI and other emerging technologies through accelerator programmes.
- Action 1.4** Establish a South-West 'Thought Leaders' Forum to identify enterprise opportunities in emerging technology including sustainable finance, cyber security, AI and fintech.
- Action 1.5** Explore the opportunities for the region through research and innovation in travel/tourism technology & Aquaculture technology.
- Action 1.6** Develop a Southern Smart Region through partnership with regional stakeholders to implement recommendations of a Smart Region Maturity Framework.
- Action 1.7** Explore new niche market opportunities for regional enterprises and new start-ups in the Silver Economy.
- Action 1.8** Develop shared workspace to support graduate and student start-ups in the region.
- Action 1.9** Support the further development of the Scale Cork programme to support those who are in the indigenous MedTech, Agri-Tech, Digital and Connected Health and Life Sciences. This Action would include those who are part of the Supply Chain of these sectors.
- Action 1.10** Strengthen the Enterprise Ecosystem of the South-West Region through the regeneration of city, town and village centres creating an environment that is attractive for investment in enterprise, residential and community development.
- Action 1.11** Support Kerry Economic Development Growth Engine (Kerry EDGE).
- Action 1.12** Support the development of the film/creative industries.
- Action 1.13** Explore the feasibility of developing an eHealth & Community Wellbeing Innovation District in the South-West Region 'Project An Oilean'.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Maximise the potential of digital enterprise and innovation hubs to support digitalisation, business growth, climate action and smart working

- Action 2.1** Strengthen the networks of digital hubs in the region and increase knowledge sharing among hubs.
- Action 2.2** Develop the research and evidence base of the benefit of hubs for job creation, climate action and digitalisation.
- Action 2.3** Mainstream the role of sustainability, climate action and digitalisation in hubs.
- Action 2.4** Foster and develop links between hubs in the South-West with international peers to support learning and knowledge exchange, collaboration, and investment.
- Action 2.5** Investment in shared programmes across hubs for clients and training for Hub Managers/staff.
- Action 2.6** Support the hub ecosystem within the region.
- Action 2.7** Establish a new urban Centre of Excellence in the Northside of Cork City to support enterprise and job creation in the area whilst creating a positive impact both economically and socially.
- Action 2.8** Pilot the establishment of an inclusive co-working space which creates opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate equally in the new world of co-working/remote working.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Support Cluster Organisations in driving the development & growth of enterprises

- Action 3.1** Support the development and management of best-in-class cluster organisations in the South-West through the provision of cluster training and expertise.
- Action 3.2** Establish a South-West cluster forum to bring together cluster managers across the region to support cross-cluster collaboration as well as supporting stakeholders from academia and government.
- Action 3.3** Develop a new cluster organisation for Technology Innovation in Life Science, Medical/Health Sciences and Advanced Technologies (TILMHS Cluster).
- Action 3.4** Support the development and management of STEM South-West Cluster as an industry led cluster for the South-West Region.
- Action 3.5** Progress the Establishment of a National Space Industry Cluster.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Bolster the South-West as a leader in sustainable Food Production & Agri-Tech through education, technology, and innovation

- Action 4.1** Establish a Regional Innovation Incubator to develop technology solutions that will improve farm productivity enabling the production of more high-quality food while reducing the environmental impact.
- Action 4.2** Accelerate the adoption of Digitalisation in the AgriTech domain to include solutions for AgriTech companies and farmers.
- Action 4.3** Research and development of digitalisation and tech-based solutions.
- Action 4.4** Skills development and training.
- Action 4.5** Set up Virtual Testing Facility in addition to testbed partners.
- Action 4.6** Support the development of food enterprises in the Region.
- Action 4.7** Further develop both full-time and part-time education, training and executive education flexible pathways for food, agri-food and seafood industry personnel from artisan food producers to multinational companies in the SW region. This includes both technical and food management initiatives at accredited and non-accredited levels.
- Action 4.8** Work with stakeholders to develop food tourism opportunities through the implementation of the Destination Experience Development Plans (DEDPs).



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Embrace the opportunities of Climate Action in the Marine, Circular Bioeconomy, Tourism and Energy Sectors

- Action 5.1** To increase the number of start-ups and SMEs with sustainable marine, circular bioeconomy and energy solutions through relevant accelerator programmes.
- Action 5.2** Strengthen the links between the digital/ICT technology sector and the marine, agriculture, energy, forestry, Tourism and industrial sectors to encourage collaboration between start-ups, SMEs and industry.
- Action 5.3** Build greater collaboration in the energy sector and climate action sectors between enterprises in Cork and Kerry.
- Action 5.4** Support the work of the CARO/enterprise opportunities initiative. Consideration could be given to linking with decarbonization zones in Local Authority areas.
- Action 5.5** Collaborate with the Mid-West Region to support economic development potential of the Shannon Estuary and surrounding region.
- Action 5.6** Collaborate with the Mid-West Region to build regional research, education and training capacity for emerging renewable energy opportunities in the Shannon Estuary and surrounding region.
- Action 5.7** Develop funding applications for Innovation Programmes and infrastructure facilities for Climate Action, Blue Economy, Circular Bioeconomy, Energy, Sustainable Port Activities, and Just Transition.
- Action 5.8** Provide training and education supports to develop the necessary human capital, skills and competences required for the transition to a zero carbon and circular economy across a broad base of enterprise and industry within the South-West Region.
- Action 5.9** Engage with stakeholders to scope out enterprise opportunities for coastal communities in the South-West arising from the post Brexit and Climate Transition.
- Action 5.10** Support the development of sustainable and green enterprise within the tourism economy.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6: Ensure a strong pipeline of talent in the region, focusing on sustainable high-quality jobs

- Action 6.1** Develop Innovation and Design Thinking Training and Development Programmes to prepare SMEs to supply the South-West FDI companies.
- Action 6.2** Introduce supports for the services industry to achieve resource efficiency through targeted training initiatives.
- Action 6.3** Provide training and education supports in the synthesis and continuous processing of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) to meet the demand for highly skilled postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers in the pharmaceutical industry in the South-West Region.
- Action 6.4** Establish an agreed and coordinated approach to life-long learning, skills and talent development and retention across regional stakeholders.

## 1

# The Regional Enterprise Plans Initiative

## Introduction

In early 2019, nine Regional Steering Committees established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), finalised and commenced implementation of the first *Regional Enterprise Plans*. This 'bottom-up' collaborative mechanism, involves the enterprise agencies, local enterprise offices, regional assemblies, local authorities, higher and further education bodies, private sector and others, within each region, chaired by a senior figure from industry. The Committees were formed initially in 2015 to drive the Regional Action Plans for Jobs until 2018.

The Regional Enterprise Plans each contain agreed 'Strategic Objectives' for enterprise development, accompanied by a time-bound set of actions that deliver to the objectives. Progress Reports on implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 are available on the Department's website.

## Policy Context

Delivering balanced regional growth through a coherent policy approach to the enterprise needs of every part of Ireland is a stated objective within the Programme for Government (PfG) and more recently emphasised in the *Economic Recovery Plan 2021*.

DETE contributes to this agenda in a number of ways, including through: the enterprise agencies; the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs); and direct investments in strengthening the enterprise ecosystem (incl. Regional Enterprise Development Fund, IDA Ireland property programme etc.), guided by our national enterprise policy. This work takes place in the context of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which provides the vision and holistic future planning framework for Ireland's spatial development across society and economy over the longer-term, and its translation through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and the aligned Local Authority County and City Development Plans.

The NPF and the three RSES provide a statutory long-term framework for the spatial, economic and social development of all regions in Ireland, offering an ambitious and sustainable proposition to delivering balanced regional development in Ireland. Smart Specialisation (S3) represents one of the key economic principles adopted in each of these high-level statutory frameworks, with a key enabling condition for funding interventions under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) also being the development of and alignment with the Member State's S3. By placing Smart Specialisation as one of the thematic areas of the Regional Enterprise Plans, we can ensure that regional enterprise priorities identified and supported in these plans are aligned with the long-term vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES.



Other pertinent national policies include the *National Skills Strategy 2025*, *Innovation 2020* (with a new innovation strategy forthcoming); and Making Remote Work amongst others. Also, as part of the Shared Island initiative, there will be added impetus to delivering balanced regional growth by leveraging the potential to grow the all-island economy, while driving growth and job creation North and South.

Ensuring that all regions can realise their enterprise development potential and that regional disparities are reduced therefore requires that the Department works closely with relevant partners across Government to strengthen the enabling conditions for investment and business growth.

The Regional Enterprise Plans recognise that enterprise policy coherence and collaboration at the national level needs to be mirrored from the 'bottom up', to enable:

- a place-based perspective on needs, capabilities and opportunities to inform national enterprise and other policies;
- economies of scale through joined up actions and investment;
- effective targeting of national initiatives to areas of opportunity and greatest need; and
- development and delivery of a programme of collaborative actions that can drive better outcomes in terms of regional job creation.

Although the Plans themselves are focused and timebound, the Steering Committee mechanism also maintains a live agenda at regional level, responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges, for example: Brexit, COVID-19 pandemic impacts, remote working opportunity for regions, climate action/just transition, and regional shocks requiring joined up responses.

## Developing new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024

The outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) concluded at the end of 2020. Final Progress Reports from the nine Steering Committees show that the model has impact and that actions delivered are complementary and add value to the mainstream interventions of the enterprise agencies and other bodies working to enable enterprise development at a regional level.

The new Plans to 2024 build on the first iteration of the REPs and each Steering Committee had a clear mandate to deliver a new Plan to 2024 that would:

- complement and translate national enterprise policy in a regional context;
- facilitate collaboration regionally to address prioritised ecosystem gaps and opportunities, and help achieve Agency and LEO investment and jobs targets in each region; and
- use collective insight and resources in each region, and available regional funding, to progress initiatives to enable enterprise growth and job creation in each region.

The Department highlighted a number of national policy challenges that each of the Regional Committees were asked to consider as part of the preparation of the new Plans: enabling recovery and building enterprise resilience in the context of COVID-19 and other external shocks; the twin transition imperative for enterprises to digitalise and contribute to a carbon neutral economy; improving competitiveness through effective placemaking, including enabling flexible work patterns; and capitalising on existing and emerging sectoral strengths and capabilities through smart specialisation.

The development of Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 has for the first time been done in parallel with the creation of Ireland's forthcoming new Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3). The stakeholder consultation events undertaken as part of the development of these Regional Enterprise Plans has acted as an entrepreneurial discovery process which has contributed valuable insights to the S3 for Ireland.

The final appendix summarises the various stages that has led to the publication of the Regional Enterprise Plans. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the development of the nine new Plans to 2024 was undertaken in a virtual environment. The Regional Enterprise Plans and Initiatives Unit, within DETE, will oversee the implementation of the new Plans at the national level, while roll-out of the process in each region will be driven on the ground by the existing Regional Steering Committees, assisted by Programme Managers appointed by the Local Authorities in each region.

Finally, to help drive delivery of the new REPs to 2024, drive best practice across regions, and encourage cross-regional collaboration on areas of common interest and opportunity, the Department has established a National Oversight Group (NOG) for the REPs, chaired jointly by Minister Robert Troy and Minister Damien English. This grouping includes the Chairpersons and the Programme Managers of the Regional Steering Committees, national level representatives of the enterprise agencies and other relevant bodies, as well as relevant Government Departments. The Group will meet over the lifetime of the new Regional Enterprise Plans.



## 2

# South-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

## Strategic Objective 1:

**Enhance the enterprise eco-system across the region through innovation, entrepreneurship and digitalisation**

### Context and Vision

In order to compete for talent and investment, the South-West needs to ensure that its enterprise environment provides world class supports, opportunities, networks and facilities. The region has the scale to compete internationally and should be enabled to do so through ambitious investments and collaborative projects.

This concept of place-making has emerged as a critically important enabling factor in building a supportive business ecosystem. Quality of place and a strong sense of place contributes to the attractiveness factors for entrepreneurship, for business investment, for foreign direct investment (FDI), for talent and for tourism. The introduction of the Project Ireland 2040 funds in support of Urban and Rural regeneration and development has been a key enabler of projects that enhance the quality and livability of both urban and rural areas.

This Strategic Objective is linked and aligned with the national policy themes of **Resilience and Recovery, Enterprise Transition, Placemaking for Regional Competitiveness** and **Smart Specialisation/Enterprise Innovation**.

It is important to consider the ecosystem from the perspective of the business and within the local context, to identify location specific issues that may give rise to barriers to business investment, growth and competitiveness.

Building on the strengths of the South-West is a key tenet of the new SWREP. The region has a thriving start-up scene and some of the most cutting-edge technology research and innovation are being developed here.

As part of this Strategic Objective, the region will work to embrace the advantages of smart initiatives, in particular through the work of the Southern Regional Assembly. A smart region initiative is a solution to the social, economic and environmental problems caused by climate change, global trends in population growth, urbanisation and the challenges of sustainably supplying urban areas with basic resources like water, food, energy and public transport. Future trends in areas such as an aging population, environmental scanning, health and communications, delivery of rural services will provide opportunities which should be core to a Smart Region Strategy.

The South-West recognised both nationally and internationally as one of the leading regions for innovation and entrepreneurship. The region will also embrace the benefits of digitalisation with a renewed focus on smart initiatives and technology.



## Strategic Objective 1: Actions to 2024

### Action 1.1: Develop programmes to support undergraduate and graduate entrepreneurship for the South-West.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU UCC	LEOs Enterprise Ireland Local Authorities	Q4 2022
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>As a region with two Universities and 35,000 students at third and Higher Education level, this undergraduate and graduate population represents an untapped source of entrepreneurship and innovation for the region with the potential to create multiple start-ups annually. In addition, the South-West Region is host to world leading research groups with over €150m spent on research in the region annually. Activation measures to encourage start-ups in this cohort will lead to the creation of high-quality start-ups as evidenced by the Student Inc and Ignite Programmes in particular.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <p>Develop programmes to foster Student and graduate led start-ups with potential to scale, to become LEO Clients and Enterprise Ireland High Potential Start-Ups (HPSU) where relevant.</p>		

### Action 1.2: Support the growing animation and visual effects sector in the region.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
LEOs	MTU Enterprise Ireland LEOs Animation/visual effects industry	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>With increasing numbers employed in the animation and visual effects industry, Munster is not seeing the levels of success being experienced elsewhere in Ireland despite having significant third level programmes active in the region. Following initial regional stakeholder collaborations across Munster there is a growing appetite amongst training providers and a range of disparate enterprises to work together to significantly grow both in size and range of businesses. Opportunities exist to enhance the use of animation across other sectors such as Gaming, Computer Generated Imagery (CGI), Web animation, corporate media promotions, Product information and eLearning.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce and implement a strategic plan for animation sector in Munster.</li> <li>• Develop an appropriate communication/promotional platform to engage with the various interest groups operating in this field.</li> <li>• Support regional development of animation clusters and integration with digital hubs that are evolving.</li> <li>• Engage with relevant Skills/Education organisations in supporting gaps identified.</li> </ul>		





### Action 1.3: Increase the number of start-ups in technology with a focus on Cyber Security, AI and other emerging technologies through accelerator programmes.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
RDI Hub/Fexco	Cluster organisations Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland Údarás na Gaeltachta MTU UCC NDRC partners	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

In line with national strategy the region will drive increased enterprise collaboration, building on regional strengths, through cluster and network development, working in partnership with stakeholders across the regional enterprise ecosystem, including the Local Authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Regional Assemblies, and higher and further education providers.

#### Action Outcome:

- Build on the success of the establishment of the 'John McCarthy AI Summer School' which in 2021 had 350 Registrations and over 100 attended each day. Continuing to exploit AI solutions to meet with Socio-economic challenges. The RDI Hub will continue to maximise on the outcomes both as a solution but also as new business opportunities.
- Driving programmes to accelerate the scaling and internationalisation of earlier start-ups – continuing the growth trajectory for these companies within the SW ecosystem.
- Facilitating the engagement of Research at an early stage to build a stronger start-up project pipeline across the region.
- Significantly increasing the jobs and the export value of these businesses in the region, through product positioning, enhancing the digital capability and innovation.
- Maximise the impact of collaborative regional funding initiatives, helping start-ups to work through the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme and Regional Technology Cluster Funds, and including any future regional enterprise development funding.

### Action 1.4: Establish a South-West 'Thought Leaders' Forum to identify enterprise opportunities in emerging technology including sustainable finance, cyber security, AI and fintech.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
South-West Programme Manager	Cluster organisations Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland MTU UCC Local Authorities Cork Chamber Southern Regional Assembly	Q4 2024



**Rationale:**

A forum for industry leaders and professionals to discuss projects, policies, technology and any topic affecting business. Creating a platform for progressive and innovative solutions to challenges in the region across multi-disciplines, organisations, industries and communities – co-opetition as a means to further capitalise on regional strengths and future proofing of the region.

**Action Outcome:**

- Further strengthen the regional participation of SW Thought Leaders Forum actively engaging new leaders in areas of expertise to maximise the collective opportunities.
- Build on the Founders’ Circle which is a private space for tech founders to meet, have rich conversations in small groups, to share experience and gain valuable insight from other founders. The Founders’ Circle is powered by RDI Hub in Co. Kerry, Ireland in association with Scale Ireland.

**Action 1.5: Explore the opportunities for the region through research and innovation in travel/ tourism technology & Aquaculture technology.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
RDI Hub/Fexco	Enterprise Ireland Fáilte Ireland Local Authorities	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

In line with the actions outlined by the Tourism Recovery Taskforce and both regional Tourism Industry group the South-West will building on our traditional strength in Tourism, targeting target digital delivery for tourism/travel related enterprises using new technologies AI, IoT, VR, AR, Blockchain etc.

Additionally, the South-West recognise that the global aquaculture industry is the fastest growing food sector in the world today worth \$300B. 53% of all seafood consumed today is farmed and that trend is set continue its upward trajectory. However, there are still many challenges and problems within the industry that require innovative solutions to enable its exponential growth.

Recognising the opportunity to grow and accelerate the value of the Irish Aquaculture lies in innovation and technology needed to produce more seafood efficiently and sustainably.

**Action Outcome:**

- Programmes and events on Tourism-tech and Aqua-tech Ideation/ Validation/ Testing/ Skills, leveraging technology solutions, the universities, and partnerships, national and International.
- An Internationally recognised ecosystem attracting tech talent to the Tourism and Aquaculture industry, married with the provision of sector specific insights, networks, support, and investment will realise the growth of targeted opportunities with Ireland to the forefront in delivery.
- Expertise developed in the region to combine the traditional strength in tourism with new and innovative technology in travel and tourism.
- Developing sustainable aquaculture with technology, the aquaculture industry needs a multi-pronged approach among academia, the tech industry and government to bring innovation to the space.



### Action 1.6: Develop a Southern Smart Region through partnership with regional stakeholders to implement recommendations of a Smart Region Maturity Framework.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Southern Regional Assembly	Local Authorities MTU UCC	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region recognises the strategic role played by all areas, urban and rural, in achieving targets under Project Ireland 2040. The strategy builds on Cities and Metropolitan Areas as engines of growth and in parallel seeks to reposition our strong network of towns, villages and diverse rural areas in an economically resilient and smart way. Key to achieving a competitive, innovative and productive regional economy is for all locations, urban and rural, to collaborate on Smart Region Initiatives. Under Regional Policy Objective 134, the RSES seeks to build on Smart City initiatives and extend such initiatives to towns, villages and rural areas. Digital infrastructure and smart technologies are critical enablers for economic resilience and social revitalisation. This is particularly critical for the labour force, businesses, and delivery of services in the post COVID-19 context.

To achieve this outcome, the SRA in collaboration with the Interreg Europe Cohes3ion Project are implementing a Smart Region Maturity Framework to nurture greater collaboration in smart initiatives which support enterprise growth.

#### Action Outcome:

Provide an effective conduit for implementing recommendations under the Smart Region Maturity Framework including:

- Align stakeholders around a co-created vision and charter for a Southern Smart Region.
- Complete stakeholder mapping and a smart project interactive mapping tool.
- Agree a governance structure and Southern Smart Region Action Plan.
- Identify and support funding to Local Authorities and stakeholders for cross-thematic smart initiatives in cities, towns and rural areas through Project Ireland 2040 and EU Funds.
- To explore the opportunities of the Smart Region as a living pilot testbed as noted in RPO 133.

### Action 1.7: Explore new niche market opportunities for regional enterprises and new start-ups in the Silver Economy.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	Local Authorities Enterprise Ireland LEOs	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

The European Commission has given significant recognition to the size, value and potential of the Silver Economy, representing the purchasing power of older adults. The Silver Economy in Europe is valued at €3.7 trillion and projected to increase to €5.7 trillion by 2025. In Ireland, it is estimated to be worth c. €13bn. The European Silver Economy represents the third largest economy globally after those of the USA and China. It is for this reason that it is being targeted as a new focussed area of opportunity for Irish entrepreneurs.

#### Action Outcome:

The outcome of the action is to highlight the potential of the silver economy to Irish enterprises and entrepreneurs, through familiarisation and training for enterprises and new start-ups.



**Action 1.8: Develop shared workspace to support graduate and student start-ups in the region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
UCC	Enterprise Ireland LEOs	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

There are 40,000 3<sup>rd</sup> level students in the South-West Region. Various programmes to date have demonstrated the valuable contribution that student and graduate led start-ups can make to economic, social and environmental development. A vibrant, shared workspace for graduate and student founders that has sufficient critical mass is essential to provide enhanced opportunities for start-up founders to network, connect and learn from each other, to facilitate experienced entrepreneurs, business owners and investors to meet, mentor and advise, to showcase young entrepreneurial talent and to inspire future waves of student and graduate entrepreneurs.

**Action Outcome:**

A workspace with capacity for 40 student and graduate led start-ups and associated supports will provide a pipeline of robust start-up companies led by experienced founder teams that create local jobs, generate sales, and raise investment, and which will progress to public and private shared workspaces and own office accommodation across the region.

**Action 1.9: Support the further development of the Scale Cork programme to support those who are in the indigenous MedTech, Agri-Tech, Digital and Connected Health and Life Sciences. This Action would include those who are part of the Supply Chain of these sectors.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Cork County Council Rubicon MTU	Local Authorities LEO's Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Scale Cork is a successful pilot program aimed at the above sectors which form a major part of the employment and innovation system of the South-West. These companies have the potential to Scale but need Capacity building to allow them to increase sales, both home (Including the FDIs) and in export markets.

Many companies have grown organically in the Irish market and may have looked to export markets for expansion opportunities. Many of these target companies are larger than 10 persons and may not have used any of the supports of Enterprise Ireland or LEO. Scale Cork's pilot provides both market access to partners in the USA and UK, as well as further opportunities in the FDI sector.

Before companies can avail of these new opportunities, which brings new employment and revenue opportunities to them, they need to be made ready to increase their sales abroad, and with the FDI sector. Scale Cork is a programme which aims to fill this need through the utilisation of Benchmarking, Advanced Mentoring and Market Access Professionals. The programme utilises the existing frameworks of its partners, bringing them together in a package which is suitable for companies in the region who want to scale. The Programme has been designed such that it can target other sectors and be replicated regionally and at national level. The utilisation of existing relationships developed at home and abroad, by Local Government partners, Technology Universities and the skills-base of the Incubation Centre's makes it easy to expand beyond the pilot stage.

**Action Outcome:**

Develop and deliver further scaling capability and services in the region for established companies in the indigenous MedTech, Agri-Tech, Digital and Connected Health and Life Sciences sectors.



**Action 1.10: Strengthen the Enterprise Ecosystem of the South-West Region through the regeneration of city, town and village centres creating an environment that is attractive for investment in enterprise, residential and community development.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Local Authorities	State Agencies Central Government Departments Third Level Institutions Industry Business Representative Groups Local Communities	Ongoing

**Rationale:**

Project Ireland 2040 has identified fundamental objectives based on the importance of urban and rural settlements. The policy both nationally and at a regional level is a ‘town centre first’ policy which focuses on the viability, resilience and vitality of towns and villages both for residential population and as centres for retail and services, information, learning, innovation and research & development, administration, healthcare, as well as offering choice and opportunity, employment, connectivity, and community in support of large rural hinterlands. Central to this is the creation of place making, a multi-faceted approach to strengthening the sense of place through enhancing urban attractiveness, liveability, and accessibility, delivered through high quality public realm.

Some of the decline that has been experienced in our towns, most noticeable in physical dereliction and vacancy, must be arrested by promoting the consolidation of new development within the town where existing services and infrastructure can be utilised. Housing for All also strongly supports the greater re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings as a policy objective, with more infill and brownfield sites activated to regenerate the heart of our towns and bring people and activity back.

Irish towns are facing significant challenges and opportunities that require a coordinated and comprehensive response. The Town Centre First policy will facilitate that response by towns of all sizes across the country so that their centres can function as the sustainable and vibrant heart of the communities they serve, in ways that are adaptable and appropriate to 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs and that foster economic and enterprise investment.

**Action Outcome:**

Continue to deliver and implement significant capital investment programmes to support city, town and village centre regeneration to create attractive investment locations that attract and support enterprises in the region.



**Action 1.11: Support Kerry Economic Development Growth Engine (Kerry EDGE).**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Kerry County Council	State Agencies Central Government Departments Third Level Institutions Industry Business Representative Groups Local Communities	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**  
 The County Kerry COVID-19 Economic Recovery plan's strategic pillars outline themes which will support the economic recovery of the County post COVID-19. Kerry EDGE aims to provide a step-change to collaborative economic development in order to create jobs, grow the economy, attract investments, drive innovation and significantly support businesses and entrepreneurs across high growth sectors and markets in the region, in particular, STEM and emerging high growth areas. The rapid advance of technology across all industries has caused a disruption in the global economy and has been even further expedited by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This disruption has created risks and opportunities for all, in particular rural regions like Kerry.

**Action Outcome:**  
 Develop a long-term investment strategy that plays to Kerry's unique strengths, making the region a more prosperous and successful place.

**Action 1.12: Support the development of the film/creative industries.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Local Authorities	Industry Partners Third Level Institutions collaborative partners	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**  
 According to the Government commissioned Olsberg SPI Report, "worldwide screen content production is one of the fastest growing industries in the world". The Government launched an Audio-visual Action Plan in June 2018 to capitalise on this. The industry-wide, long-term plan aims for Ireland to become a global hub for the production of Film, TV drama and animation. "Global Ireland 2025 seeks to double the size of Ireland's film production sector." The screen industry's contribution to the Irish economy has more than doubled in the past decade, from €164m in 2010 to €357m in 2019, according to figures from development agency Screen Ireland. The Irish film, television and animation sector has a gross value added of €692m. The animation sector has been a notable success, almost quadrupling in size over the same period. This is a growth industry. In recognition of this, Screen Ireland was handed a €9m increase in funding last year, lifting its capital budget 52% to €26.2 million for 2021. The Irish Government is committed to developing regional film making, evidenced by the Section 481 tax incentive – which is worth 32% of budget, rising to 37% for projects shooting in the regions.

**Action Outcome:**  
 Identification of film/creative industry needs, opportunities and development of infrastructure.



### Action 1.13: Explore the feasibility of developing an eHealth & Community Wellbeing Innovation District in the South-West Region 'Project An Oilean'.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Kerry Innovation Centre	MTU Local Authorities Industry healthcare partners	Q3 2022

#### Rationale:

COVID-19 and recent cyber-attacks have placed a spotlight on healthcare. There is an unprecedented increase in awareness and value on community and front-line health care services. Once taken for granted and considered low innovation and entrepreneurial domains services such as health testing (e.g. COVID-test, blood tests), physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise prescription and rehabilitation, personal training, GP and community nursing and pharmacy services (prescriptions & vaccinations), medical supply and patient records and security all came under intense focus when inaccessible and or dysfunctional. This has driven huge levels of opportunity, innovation (product and service) and digital transformation of the health care system – with SMEs and start-ups emerging to provide new technologies, products, solutions, and services to public and private health care providers and direct to consumer. The founding consortium of 'An Oilean' is a multidisciplinary public private partnership, with a founding and proposing consortium involving Education, Health Care Providers, Industry, Enterprise Development, and local government agencies.

#### Action Outcome:

The proposed development "An Oilean" has the potential to establish and scale a pioneering regional health care innovation ecosystem via the deployment of the Innovation District model of best practice in urban regeneration. This feasibility stage will explore and potentially validate An Oilean's potential to integrate activities in community health care service and technology innovation, enterprise and talent development, community engagement and placemaking that is multi-generational in community relevance and appeal.



## Strategic Objective 2:

### Maximise the potential of digital enterprise and innovation hubs to support digitalisation, business growth, climate action and smart working

#### Context and Vision

The COVID-19 pandemic has fast tracked the move to remote working and the role of digital enterprise hubs. There is an opportunity to embrace the positive elements of smart/flexible working to revitalise towns and villages as well as to reimagine the model of city-based work.

**This Strategic Objective is linked and aligned with the national policy themes of Resilience and Recovery and Enterprise Transition.**

Under the previous SWREP, significant progress was achieved in relation to strengthening the networks of hubs in the region. The networks in both Cork and Kerry have made significant progress in bringing hubs together and encouraging greater cooperation. Both networks are managed voluntarily and are not in receipt of funding to support their goals.

The new SWREP will focus its attention on placing these hubs at the heart of the region's enterprise ecosystem to support digitalisation, business growth, climate action and smart working. The new SWREP will focus on the quality of programmes and services that are being delivered and have the potential to be developed.

It will be vital in the coming years for hubs in the South-West to stay linked into the national Connected Hubs network to capitalise on the profile and reach of the new network.

The Government has invested significantly in remote working hubs and enterprise spaces over the last number of years, including through the Department of Rural and Community Development, Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta. Stakeholders and Government must remain vigilant regarding the financial sustainability and viability of hubs into the future, and the South-West must ensure that the services being provided can be agile and adaptable to the needs and demands of the region.

Transition to a more climate neutral and digital society are core themes of the Regional Enterprise Plans and in the South-West, efforts will be made to encourage the use hubs as conduits for community engagement in climate action and digital programmes.

The location of hubs in the future in the region should also be based around the needs of the region overall in terms of the services that each individual hub can provide and also mindful of developments under the National Broadband Plan such as Broadband Connection Points.

A network of impactful hubs across the region that are viable in the long term and that are at the heart of the regional enterprise ecosystem to support companies, smart working, climate action, digitalisation and communities.





## Strategic Objective 2: Actions to 2024

### Action 2.1: Strengthen the networks of digital hubs in the region and increase knowledge sharing among hubs.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	Kerry Hub Network Cork Hub Network Local Authorities Enterprise Ireland National Hubs Network CEAI DRCD	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

There is a vibrant community of digital and innovation Hubs across Cork & Kerry that provide space and support to freelancers, entrepreneurs, start-ups, SMEs, multinationals, flexible workers, and digital nomads across the public and private sectors. Through the already established Cork and Kerry Hub Networks (Chaired by MTU) there is an opportunity to further strengthen these regional networks and connect with the National Hub Network and the Community Enterprise Association Ireland [CEAI] to identify opportunities for collaboration and business support, funding, and knowledge and best practice exchange in the areas of digitalisation, business growth, climate action and smart working. This action will deliver benefits to member hubs, hub clients, employers, and by extension, local communities.

#### Action Outcome:

- Opportunities for hubs across the region to network, collaborate, innovate, and share best practice in the areas of digitalisation, business growth, climate action and smart working.
- Identify funding and supports that will enable these activities.

### Action 2.2: Develop the research and evidence base of the benefit of hubs for job creation, climate action and digitalisation.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
CEAI	Local Authorities Enterprise Ireland WDC CEAI DRCD CSO MTU	Q2 2023



**Rationale:**

The National Hub Network is considered a National Asset by Government. The ambition for the Network is underpinned by the rollout of the QHubs Guidance Standard – a world-first, supporting the National Hub Network through external verification of hub growth plans and performance measurements for centre and hub locations. Key performance measurements will include tenant numbers, job creation, innovation performance, good governance, collaborative relationships and a number of other solid management principles including sustainability and digitisation. This data will be gathered using a scorecard approach. It will complement planned research work to be undertaken with a research partner in collaboration with the Western Development Commission as set out under the 2021 MoU.

**Action Outcome:**

Concrete data and evidence gathered to demonstrate the economic, climate and digital impact of hubs to the region. This action will require funding to support its implementation.

**Action 2.3: Mainstream the role of sustainability, climate action and digitalisation in hubs.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
CEAI	Local Authorities Enterprise Ireland WDC CEAI CARO MTU	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

CEAI secured funding under the 2021 RETS Programme to develop a Sustainability Blueprint Plan for centre and hub locations, with a focus on how to transition centre and hub locations from high cost, unsustainable locations and preparing them and their tenant base for the low carbon and environmentally sustainable economy of the future. This will be rolled out regionally, commencing with the South-West. Implementation of the Plan will be supported by the Erasmus Plus [Sustainable Futures for Enterprise Centres](#) project with outputs including a replicable model of learning that enables enterprise centre managers, tenant businesses and learners to adopt sustainable and responsible business practices. CEAI has also established a Sustainability Taskforce, chaired by the IERC at the Tyndall Institute to explore funded research opportunities.

**Action Outcome:**

Greater awareness and level of activity of hubs in their communities in relation to sustainability, climate action and digitalisation initiatives.



### Action 2.4: Foster and develop links between hubs in the South-West with international peers to support learning and knowledge exchange, collaboration, and investment.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	Kerry Hub Network Cork Hub Network Local Authorities WDC CEAI IDA Ireland Cork Chamber SRA	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

There is potential for hubs to develop closer relationships with international counterparts and develop linkages based on areas of specialisation, target sectors, client demographics, among other areas. Located in a region that affords works life balance, without compromising on connectivity, the South-West has the potential to become an ideal location for start-ups and companies looking for a second site location and this opportunity will be supported by international networks and partnerships. The established network of remote working and innovation hubs provides a channel for connecting with an international community.

#### Action Outcome:

- Networks, partnerships (formal/informal) and links established between hubs in the South-West and outside of Ireland to support trade, investment, and learning.
- Position the South-West as an ideal choice to start and grow a business.

### Action 2.5: Investment in shared programmes across hubs for clients and training for Hub Managers/staff.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
CEAI	Enterprise Ireland WDC Local Authorities IDA Ireland National Hub Network MTU CEAI Skillnet	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

There is a recognised demand for training, mentoring, learning, development and general upskilling programmes and services for staff across the National Hub Network. In 2021, CEAI secured a training programme with the support of Skillnet Ireland to address an immediate need for management upskilling in advance of the QHubs Guidance Standard rollout between 2022 – 2024. This programme is a precursor to the research, development and rollout of a suite of programmes which will support a learning and development journey for managers and staff. The suite of programmes will target the entirety of the National Hub Network and will be led by CEAI under the 2021 MoU with the Western Development Commission.



**Action Outcome:**

- The suite of shared programmes will underpin the QHubs Guidance Standard which is committed to achieving, sustaining and improving the capability of the centre or hub location to deliver services – consistently and to the highest standard – to the satisfaction of clients, tenants, stakeholders and the wider community.

**Action 2.6: Support the hub ecosystem within the region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Hub Network	Enterprise Ireland WDC Local Authorities National Hubs Network CEAI	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

There is an established hub network in the South-West Region which forms strong economic infrastructure to support remote/blended working, entrepreneurs and SMEs in the region. The provision of new hubs will be identified using evidence-based data to support new infrastructure. The hub network requires supportive interventions in the delivery of entrepreneur development programmes, research and development activities and provision of remote/blended working infrastructure. The hub infrastructure requires management support to operate the hubs and deliver work programmes.

**Action Outcome:**

- Enhanced hub infrastructure embedded in the local enterprise environment and communities in the region.
- Provision of remote/blended working infrastructure to support national enterprise strategy.

**Action 2.7: Establish a new urban Centre of Excellence in the Northside of Cork City to support enterprise and job creation in the area whilst creating a positive impact both economically and socially.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Recreate Shandon CLG Cork City Council	UCC MTU Enterprise Ireland Southern Regional Assembly	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Cork’s North Side has become home to many large companies such as Apple, Heineken, Teamwork, Blizzard Entertainment, The Irish Examiner and the Revenue Commissioners. The continued rejuvenation of Cork’s North Side as an attractive location in which to recreate, work and live remains a key imperative. Building on the success of Northside for Business in Blackpool, the historic Shandon Butter Exchange on the Northside of Cork’s city centre, has been identified as a suitable location for a new centre of excellence to support emerging sectors of importance within a less served region of Cork City. The vision is the Exchange as a key enabler for start-ups, scaling companies and entrepreneurship focused on delivering capability building programmes to support Irish enterprises in emerging technologies and opportunities.

**Action Outcome:**

The establishment of a new centre of excellence in Cork’s historic Shandon area supporting Irish start-ups and scaling enterprises in emerging sectors.



## Action 2.8: Pilot the establishment of an inclusive co-working space which creates opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate equally in the new world of co-working/remote working.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
The Crann Centre	AIB The Open Doors Initiative The Rubicon Centre at MTU Ballincollig Business Association Cork City Council	Q2 2022

### Rationale:

The Impact Hub at the Crann Centre is a bright, modern fully inclusive facility specifically designed to create equal access for people with disabilities to coworking and remote working. The Impact Hub will be an important resource for business owners and their employees in the South-West Region who wish to locate in an inclusive collaborative environment.

The Impact Hub is located In Ovens, just outside Ballincollig. Members will have access to key business supports from The Rubicon Centre at Munster Technological University (MTU), Local Enterprise Offices, Local Authorities, and the Open Doors Initiative.

### Action Outcome:

- Formally open The Impact Hub at the Crann Centre offering a unique environment for users to work and develop enterprise opportunities in conjunction with project partners.
- Broaden the network of partners collaborating with the Impact Hub.
- Share learnings from the establishment of the Impact Hub with view to offering similar facilities which ensure equal access for people with disabilities to collaborative coworking spaces elsewhere across the region.



## Strategic Objective 3:

### Support Cluster Organisations in driving the development & growth of enterprises

#### Context and Vision

Industry clusters have been recognised and utilised across Europe as an economic development tool for many years. Enterprises are more likely to progress and succeed if they are part of a supportive ecosystem such as a localised economic cluster – that can serve to catalyse beneficial relationships, linkages and spillovers between enterprises with other actors in their supply chains and the wider innovation ecosystem and with international peers.

Clustering initiatives are variously described but are generally focused on creating linkages between organisations and stimulating collective action with the aim of enhancing the enterprise environment for mutual benefit of members.

They can provide a vehicle for learning, collaboration, and sharing of best practice in a particular industry or sector, in addition to the development of best practice that can be shared at a broader level. They can also act as a collective voice that can represent the strengths, needs, and interests of a particular sector or industry.

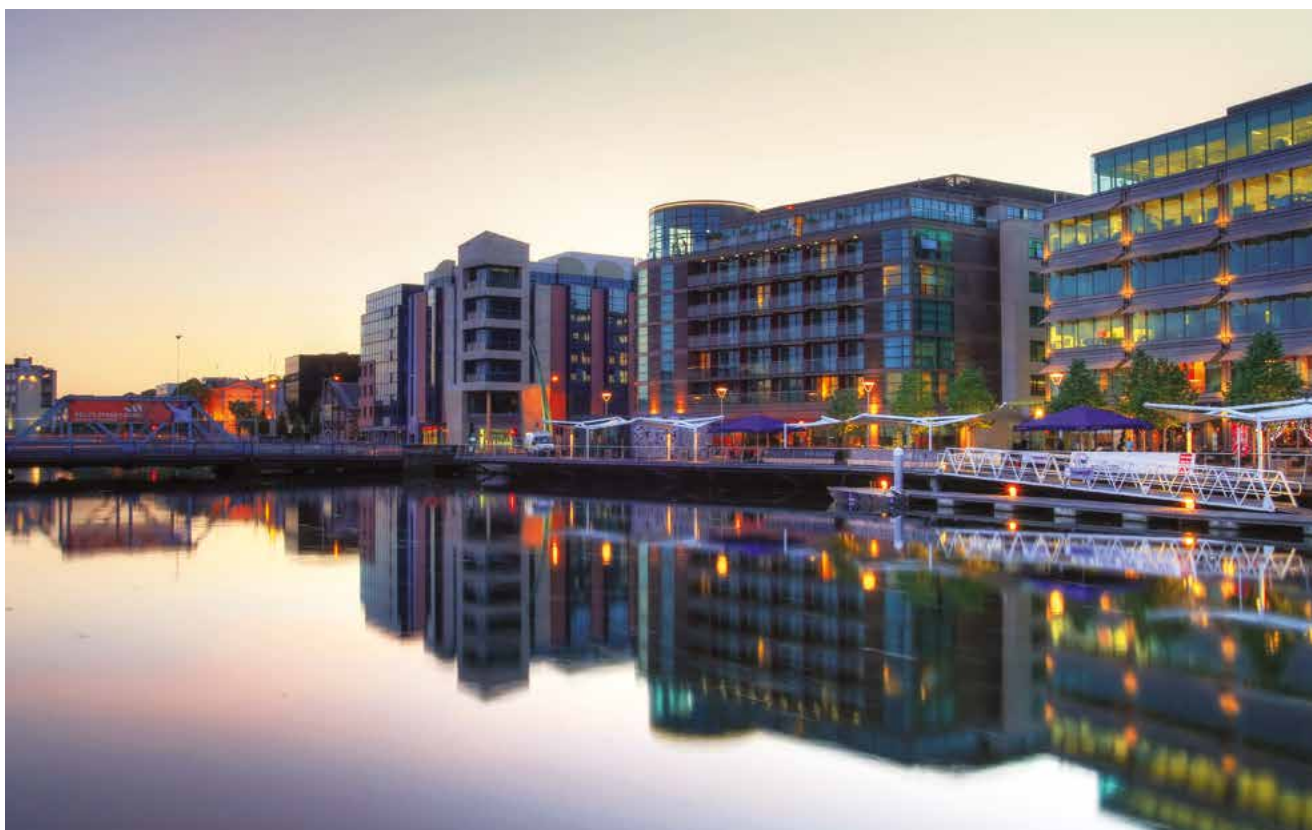
This Strategic Objective is linked and aligned with the national policy theme of **Resilience and Recovery**.

It is important that emerging clusters can be nurtured and given the support and guidance to ensure their success and long-term viability. Cluster organisations amplify the scale and reach of indigenous firms while also enabling crucial linkages and ties with foreign multinational corporations. Greater collaboration and cooperation between cluster organisations, academia and the public sector will benefit the region by highlighting gaps in the regional innovation/enterprise system that need to be addressed.

Clusters/cluster organisations will be very important to the national economic recovery – particularly in regions. This Strategic Objective will be pursued by stakeholders cognisant of the development of a National Clustering Policy & Framework and will work with the Department of Enterprise Trade & Employment to ensure that the strengths and learnings in the South-West can inform and support the policy development. Cluster organisations can also play a significant role in the region to address progress in relation to climate action and digitalisation.

A number of nationally significant clusters/cluster organisations are based in the South-West. These include Kerry Sci Tech, Cyber Ireland, it@Cork, Energy Cork, AgriTech Ireland, Circular BioEconomy South-West, and STEM SW.

The South-West Region to home clusters of national significance in terms of scale and impact. The South-West will also provide a supportive environment for clusters to emerge, grow and have a sustainable future.



## Strategic Objective 3: Actions to 2024

**Action 3.1: Support the development and management of best-in-class cluster organisations in the South-West through the provision of cluster training and expertise.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU UCC	Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland	Q4 2024

### Rationale:

Clusters are a central feature in the European Commissions' competitiveness and Smart Specialisation strategies ([DG Research, 2019](#)). Their pivotal role in RIS3, leading the green and digital transitions, in building resilience and boosting recovery is widely recognised ([European Expert Group on Clusters, 2019](#)). This has become abundantly clear with their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. To be effective and resilient our industry clusters in the South-West need support, training, and access to strategic planning for sustainability to ensure they provide transformative supports for their members.

### Action Outcome:

Clustering is in its infancy in Ireland and support is urgently needed for cluster organisation development, management, and sustainability. To achieve this, targeted national/regional funding will be sought to develop a clustering centre of excellence to provide training and support to emerging and established clusters in the region to enhance their management, collaboration, internationalisation, research and innovation activities.

**Action 3.2: Establish a South-West cluster forum to bring together cluster managers across the region to support cross-cluster collaboration as well as supporting stakeholders from academia and government.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU Cluster Organisations	UCC Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland Local Authorities DETE Cork Chamber	Q1 2022

### Rationale:

The [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#) notes that cross-cluster collaboration can be extremely powerful and open opportunities for new trade, research and innovation, which can lead to new jobs, growth and regional competitiveness.

At present the South-West's regional 'clusters' operate independently of one another and are not connected or linked strategically to take advantage of synergies and cross-cluster collaboration opportunities. A South-West cluster forum will allow for a formalised strategic connection between our region's clusters, opening channels of communication and the ability to take shared opportunities locally and internationally. The forum would act as a conduit to feed into regional and national policy in the Smart Specialisation (RIS3) and clustering space.

### Action Outcome:

Cluster forum established with regular meetings held, including key stakeholders from academia and government. Enhanced cooperation between the region's existing clusters and map their areas of work.



**Action 3.3: Develop a new cluster organisation for Technology Innovation in Life Science, Medical/Health Sciences and Advanced Technologies (TILMHS Cluster).**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
UCC	MTU Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland Cork County & City Councils	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

The South-West Region has major strengths in Life Science, Medical/Health Sciences and Advanced Technologies, at manufacture and innovation stages. Synergies created by cross fertilisation of these sectors and the various actors have the potential to develop and grow Irish enterprises to deliver major disruptive technologies and major job creation. Currently, cross fertilisation between the sectors is limited and a catalyst is required to realise the synergistic potential.

This cluster will bring together multiple relevant actors, including the UCC-led CorkBioHub and Health Innovation Hub Ireland (developing technology) and iEd Hub (developing human capital), as well as regional clinical stakeholders and large & small enterprise, progressing a Health Innovation Corridor in the region.

**Action Outcome:**

- A virtual TILMHS hub focused on engaging and connecting Life Science/Med/Health Tech-relevant regional enterprise, innovation stakeholders, clinical assets and sources of capital funding.
- Seed capital funding (public/private) secured for progressing the Innovation Corridor.

**Action 3.4: Support the development and management of STEM South-West Cluster as an industry led cluster for the South-West Region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU Local Authorities	Industry leaders/UCC/Kerry SciTech	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

STEM South-West Cluster is an emerging industry led cluster representing life science, engineering and technology companies, third level institutions and government agencies in Cork and Kerry. STEM South-West is committed to promoting and advancing world class STEM talent and capabilities to deliver innovation and economic growth in the South-West Region.

The purpose of the cluster is to promote and facilitate collaboration on STEM initiatives in the SW region, to enhance the talent pipeline, establish a dedicated STEM network, increase opportunities for collaborative research and innovation, and ultimately drive the visibility and economic development of the indigenous and FDI STEM sectors in the SW. This cluster was originally developed in 2019 following a series of meetings and workshops with STEM industry stakeholders drawn from across Cork and Kerry.

Consistently at these events, the need within the region to establish a STEM cluster was identified as the best means to address a number of different but interrelated needs which all centre on the development of the Region's STEM capacity, capability, brand and investment readiness. While these needs/challenges are varied, the creation of the STEM-SW Cluster offers an opportunity for the STEM partners in the Region to collaborate in resolving them over the coming years whilst also creating a sustainable and effective organisation to represent and promote STEM and the SW region nationally and internationally.

**Action Outcome:**

Provide secure, long term supports to enable the cluster to focus on the STEM objectives and goals set out in the STEM South-West strategy.





**Action 3.5: Progress the Establishment of a National Space Industry Cluster.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	LEOs Enterprise Ireland Technological University of South-East ESA BIC Ireland IDA Ireland Industry Partner	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

The international space sector is currently undergoing a rapid transformation due to an increasing demand for space-based services alongside the emergence of "Space 4.0", driven by SMEs from non-space and space sectors. The National Space Strategy for Enterprise (2019-2025) sets targets for Ireland to "double the space related revenue and employment in space-active Irish companies" and MTU is specifically tasked in the strategy to work with Government agencies to help achieve this.

**Action Outcome:**

A Space Industry Cluster which enables SMEs to become aware of and subsequently increase their business opportunities in the global space sector. SMEs from all disciplines will be eligible with no prior experience in the space sector required..



## Strategic Objective 4:

### Bolster the South-West as a leader in sustainable Food Production & Agri-Tech through education, technology, and innovation

#### Context and Vision

The recent launch of Ireland's agri-food and marine sector the Food Vision 2030 Strategy, and its vision for Ireland to become a world leader in Sustainable Food Systems over the next decade, highlights the magnitude and importance of this sector. The plan was developed to ensure the sector's continued contribution to the national economy, especially to rural and coastal communities such as those in the South-West and has an ambition to grow national agri-food exports from €14bn to €21bn by 2030 – further enhancing Ireland's position as global leader in safe, sustainable agri-food exports.

The South-West region recognises and embraces the challenges and importance of research and innovation in supporting balanced regional growth. Its geographical, climatic and economic foundations have historically underpinned the development of existing and nascent leaders in the AgriTech and Food sectors.

Greater advancements in the use of technology and data on farms, fishing boats, forests and across food and drink companies necessitate increased access to knowledge transfer and innovation hubs, the South-West is perfectly positioned to develop and augment existing centres of excellence and services to collaborate and bolster growth, particularly with the vibrant indigenous ag-tech community whose innovations and technological advances hold the key to driving greater sustainability, innovation, efficiency and prosperity for the sector.

The South-West offers an unmatched region for AgriTech and food excellence to become synonymous with by virtue of its existing infrastructure and reputation as a world leading, accessible, pastoral, natural environment for cultivating innovation and growth. This advantage can be further enhanced and bolstered through a strategic and focused approach including increased collaboration among all stakeholders (public, private and academic institutions) to create, design, demonstrate, test and learn about new ideas in real world settings. In addition, the South-West regions reputation as synonymous with excellence in AgriTech and food will be enhanced by concentration upon Pan-European Innovation Partnerships and national collaborative research, technology and cluster programmes with a view to developing collaborative practices and sector specific knowledge sharing.

**This Strategic Objective is linked and aligned with the national policy themes of Enterprise Transition, and Smart Specialisation/ Enterprise Innovation.**

To drive forward the AgriTech and food sectors and enhance company capability in the South-West Region by providing expert specialised training, a virtual testing facility, collaboration and learning spaces, testbed opportunities, business centre, state-of-the-art tech-based solutions under the four central pillars of sustainability, digitalisation, skills development and economic growth.



## Strategic Objective 4: Actions to 2024

**Action 4.1: Establish a Regional Innovation Incubator to develop technology solutions that will improve farm productivity enabling the production of more high-quality food while reducing the environmental impact.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
AgriTech cluster	MTU AgriTech Centre Excellence (ACE), IMaR & other research centres CBCSW Business development hubs Agri service providers / associations Industry Partners Regional research farm centres	Q4 2024

### Rationale:

The AgriTech Incubator is envisioned to be a location where AgriTech researchers, start-ups, SMEs, large companies and farmers can come together to develop products, services and processes for farms of the future. Today's farming challenges are real and have competing demands, with increasing food demands driving increased farming output and climate change actions seeking less emissions. Farming practice needs to become significantly more productive so that sufficient food is provided for the world's growing population while excessive global warming is prevented. Easy access to innovative settings and testing facilities is important to develop and validate complex interconnected technologies that will enable more efficient farming practice and accelerate AgriTech business growth. The MTU Kerry campus and the South-West Region is well positioned to meet these needs and offers the ideal mix of skills, academic base and access to companies coupled with diverse farm types in the location to deliver high-impact innovations.

The use of digital immersive technologies has the potential to add-value to a wide variety of Agri processes. The adoption of these technologies needs to be organised through a collaborative approach. A collaboration between MTU, ACE and regional research farms will allow experts in digital immersive training (ACE and MTU) to research and develop the extended reality technology within a testbed scenario to ensure best, tried and tested results and services are brought to the AgriTech sector and its companies.

### Action Outcome:

- A physical facility in place on the MTU Kerry campus with facilities and equipment to incubate new AgriTech business ideas and drive AgriTech innovations.
- Structured programs scheduled and fully subscribed to solve real farming challenges by forming multi-disciplined teams supported by industry and validated by farmers.
- Develop partnerships with other VR facilities to develop a seamless pathway for the Agri community and AgriTech companies to access the latest equipment and technology solutions.
- Provide opportunities to explore and experience virtual and digital technology solutions at an early stage, to help save time and cost and improve business capabilities in the long term.



**Action 4.2: Accelerate the adoption of Digitalisation in the AgriTech domain to include solutions for AgriTech companies and farmers.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
AgriTech cluster and Agri service provider	MTU ACE Education providers Research centres Business development hubs Agri service providers / associations and Industry Partners	Q4 2023

**Rationale:**

The use of digital technologies has the potential to transform business and farming practice. The adoption of digital solutions in agriculture is low when compared to other sectors. The low availability of cost-effective and easy-to-use solutions are the primary causes of low digitalisation levels across the primary agricultural producers (farmers) and their suppliers.

**Action Outcome:**

- Expansion of the National Centre for Agricultural Engineering in the MTU Kerry campus as a centre of excellence that develops and promotes best practice across the sector through both academic and service solution offerings that will enhance the supply chain from agricultural manufacturing, engineering and systems providers to individual farm management.
- Accelerate uptake of digital solutions in AgriTech companies and by farmers to optimise productivity and enable growth via integrated and regular collaboration with stakeholders.

**Action 4.3: Research and development of digitalisation and tech-based solutions.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
AgriTech cluster and IMaR research centre.	MTU ACE Education providers Research centres CBCSW	Q3 2024

**Rationale:**

The adoption of digital solutions by the agriculture sector is necessary to enhance competitiveness and enable economic growth. To accelerate the update of digital solutions requires cost-effective, easy-to-use solutions. This requirement poses a research and development question that needs to be solved by identifying the agriculture sector digitalisation needs and to develop pathways to bridge the gaps to more efficient food production.

**Action Outcome:**

- Participate in and develop strong alliances with established DIHs in the European Smart Agri Hub network. Disseminate best practice digital solutions and smart technology practices identified through research projects to develop Ireland as a global leader in this space.
- Sourcing research funding to support project activities.
- Communication of research findings for wider dissemination and commercialisation opportunities.
- Case Studies and lessons learned.



**Action 4.4: Skills development and training.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	ACE Nimbus National Maritime Centre of Ireland Education and Skills Training providers	June 2023

**Rationale:**

Immersive learning, including virtual and augmented reality (VR & AR), is the future of training and education. These methods allow a person to train four times faster than standard classroom learning, the person is four times more focussed than the eLearning peers, and most convincingly: 275% more confident to apply skills learned after training. For the AgriTech sector, this would mean bringing state-of-the-art training methods directly to companies to revolutionise their in-house and dealer training from induction through to the essential health and safety education of their staff.

**Action Outcome:**

- Establish a connected network of VR facilities across the region equipped with the latest immersive technology and resource skillsets to help inform, educate, guide, and assist companies with developing and implementing successful digital training solutions for their internal employee and dealer/customer audiences. The aim is to begin this in the South-West Region.
- Support people development and the management of training and skills within companies via an e-Learning training platform.
- Digitalisation content integrated into apprenticeship, undergraduate and post-graduate programmes to develop the skills base.
- Digitalisation training for AgriTech companies.

**Action 4.5: Set up Virtual Testing Facility in addition to testbed partners.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	ACE Regional research farm centres	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

The use of digital immersive technologies has the potential to add-value to a wide variety of Agri processes. The adoption of these technologies needs to be organised through a collaborative approach. A collaboration between MTU, ACE and regional research farms will allow experts in digital immersive training (ACE and MTU) to research and develop the extended reality technology within a testbed scenario to ensure best, tried and tested results and services are brought to the AgriTech sector and its companies.

**Action Outcome:**

Partnerships with other VR facilities to develop a seamless pathway for the Agri community and AgriTech companies to access the latest equipment and technology solutions.

Provide opportunities to explore and experience virtual and digital technology solutions at an early stage, to help save time and cost and improve business capabilities in the long term.



**Action 4.6: Support the development of food enterprises in the region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Local Authorities LEOs Local Development Companies	MTU UCC Teagasc BIM Collaborative Partners Food Hubs	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**  
 Food production has traditionally been the most important contributor to rural economies, and it remains important as a significant source of income and both direct and indirect employment. Food production will continue to be an important component of the economy. The food production sector will continue to innovate and adapt to the challenges posed by modernisation, restructuring, market development and the increasing importance of environmental issues. There has been a number of food hubs established within the region which support facilities specific to food production standards.

**Action Outcome:**  
 Increase in number of start-ups and employment in the food sector. Provide support for development of new innovative products. Examination of future food trends and access to new market opportunities. Enhanced research and development opportunities to support the food and beverage industry.

**Action 4.7: Further develop both full-time and part-time education, training and executive education flexible pathways for food, agri-food and seafood industry personnel from artisan food producers to multinational companies in the South-West Region. This includes both technical and food management initiatives at accredited and non-accredited levels.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Food Industry Training Unit (FITU)-UCC	Agri-Food Industry Teagasc South-West Regional Skills Forum Skillnet Ireland Local Authorities	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**  
 There already is a great synergy and partnership between the food, agri-food and seafood industry in the South-West and UCC which allows UCC to build on it and further develop and deliver market-led, research-informed (through collaborations with Teagasc etc) education and training courses that meet the current and future needs of an increasingly dynamic and diverse agri-food sector. This partnership is exemplified by the FITU in UCC which has been dedicated to serving the part-time education and training needs of the sector over the past 29 years. No other region in Ireland has the equivalent of the Food Industry Training Unit which essentially is a food industry education and training 'hub'.

**Action Outcome:**  
 Expanded suite of accredited (from micro-credentials to level 7 and upwards) and non-accredited courses, both designed for in-person and online (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/fitu/foodlineucc/>) delivery to the agri-food sector in the SW. A particular focus will be on training relating to sustainability, and that aimed at areas such as artisan foods and food tourism.



### Action 4.8: Work with stakeholders to develop food tourism opportunities through the implementation of the Destination Experience Development Plans (DEDPs).

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Fáilte Ireland	Local Authorities LEOs	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

The South-West Region of Cork and Kerry account for well over half of the total artisan producers in the state. By developing and promoting further food and drink experiences the Region's reputation as a Food & Drink destination can be solidified internationally.

#### Action Outcome:

Implementation of Food Tourism actions outlined in the Destination Experience Development Plans across the South-West Region with view to enhancing the food & drink experience offering and increasing opportunities for food tourism.



## Strategic Objective 5:

### Embrace the opportunities of Climate Action in the Marine, Circular Bioeconomy, Tourism and Energy Sectors

#### Context and Vision

The South-West region has a wealth of natural resources all around us. Climate action presents enormous opportunities for growth and innovation. By focusing on the Marine, Circular BioEconomy and Energy sectors, the South-West will build on the existing natural strengths and economic activity in the region. Ocean economy industries directly contribute nearly €2bn in value added (approximately 1 per cent of GNI\*) to the Irish economy and provide almost 31,000 jobs.<sup>1</sup>

The South-West region has a wealth of natural resources, which contribute to the social and economic fabrics of the region. Maritime and the marine is a growth sector and selling point for the region, reaching into a range of areas including enterprise and entrepreneurship, tourism, technology, and sustainability, among others.

With an expected 1 million jobs in the European bioeconomy by 2030, now is the time for enterprises, researchers, industry and investors to demonstrate their ingenuity and work with the cluster to build the partnerships needed for scale.

In energy, the South-West can build on its strategic assets including Cork Harbour, the Shannon Estuary and being the home of Ireland's Energy Hub. Ireland's Energy Hub, located around Cork Harbour, comprises the country's most strategically important cluster of energy infrastructure, businesses and research facilities. The Energy Hub supplies over 25% of Ireland's energy demands, is home to 20% of Ireland's electricity generating capacity and the country's only oil refinery. Many of the largest energy companies in Ireland are represented within the Energy Hub or in the wider Cork region. There is also a strong concentration of engineering service providers in support of these industries.

The actions below will strengthen the marine circular bioeconomy, and energy enterprise development ecosystem. The actions will align with other regional plans related to the development of new infrastructures to support marine innovation and marine skills training; assessing the economic potential of existing port infrastructures; and engaging cross regionally in relation to the development of the Shannon Estuary and strategic landbanks as identified in the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan.

This Strategic Objective is linked and aligned with the national policy themes of **Resilience and Recovery** and **Enterprise Transition**.

The South-West to actively embrace the enterprise opportunities presented by climate action and to develop a roadmap to ensure that the region's progress to a low-carbon and digital society is a Just Transition.





## Strategic Objective 5: Actions to 2024

**Action 5.1: To increase the number of start-ups and SMEs with sustainable marine, circular bioeconomy and energy solutions through relevant accelerator programmes.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MaREI Circular Bioeconomy Cluster South-West Energy Cork	Cluster organisations LEOs Enterprise Ireland Local Authorities	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Programmes are required to accelerate solutions to solve complex sustainability challenges, with tailored and relevant materials for the sector.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A greater number of start-up and SMEs working on climate solutions.</li> <li>• Stronger links with Ignite and New Frontiers entrepreneurship programmes.</li> </ul>		

**Action 5.2: Strengthen the links between the digital/ICT technology sector and the marine, agriculture, energy, forestry, tourism and industrial sectors to encourage collaboration between start-ups, SMEs and industry.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
it@Cork Circular Bioeconomy Cluster South-West MaREI Energy Cork	LEOs MTU UCC AgriTech Ireland Cluster Enterprise Ireland	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Stronger collaboration, collective thinking and shared experience between key players in these ecosystems will bring velocity and scale to outcomes, enable cross-pollination of ideas and deliver greater value to the region.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and engagement of the opportunities for ICT/technology companies in the marine, agriculture, energy, forestry and industrial sectors.</li> <li>• Stronger links between ICT / Technology companies with the marine, agriculture, energy, forestry and industrial sectors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Regular meetings between management of clusters operating in these sectors to identify opportunities for collaboration.</li> <li>› Joint learning and sharing event for companies across these sectors.</li> <li>› Event showcasing start-ups and SMEs in these sectors to the ICT / Tech Community &amp; facilitating linkages where appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		



**Action 5.3: Build greater collaboration in the energy sector and climate action sectors between enterprises in Cork and Kerry.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Energy Cork MaREI Circular Bioeconomy Cluster South-West	CARO Local Authorities UCC Cork Chamber Southern Regional Assembly	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

The South-West faces shared energy and climate-related challenges and opportunities. Improved collaboration and networking between companies and stakeholders in the energy and climate action sectors in the region, building on the work to date of the Energy Cork cluster, Circular Bioeconomy Cluster South-West and the extensive local, national and international industry partnerships of the MaREI Centre, should be prioritised to drive enterprise development.

**Action Outcome:**

- A networking and collaboration event in the region.
- Sharing best practice from industry and research clusters.
- Promoting collaboration across the region.

**Action 5.4: Support the work of the CARO/enterprise opportunities initiative. Consideration could be given to linking with decarbonization zones in Local Authority areas.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
South-West Programme Manager	CARO Southern Regional Assembly Local Authorities LEOs Enterprise Ireland	Q4 2022

**Rationale:**

CARO, in cooperation with the CCMA Economic, Enterprise, Community & Culture, established an interagency group to explore, identify and realise potential economic and enterprise opportunities, which in turn generate employment opportunities, from climate action. The key outputs of the Working Group are to explore how and to assist local authorities in both leading on and facilitating new economic and enterprise opportunities from climate action across the range of functions, services and activities delivered.

**Action Outcome:**

An enhanced level of support available from Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices for climate action opportunities for enterprises.



## Action 5.5: Collaborate with the Mid-West Region to support economic development potential of the Shannon Estuary and surrounding region.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Local Authorities	Shannon Foynes Port Company Collaborators from other Atlantic coast regions Public Sector Agencies Industry partners Third Level Institutions	Ongoing through lifetime of plan and beyond

### Rationale:

The emergence of offshore floating wind as a cost-effective and highly efficient renewable energy source has firmly placed Ireland's Atlantic coastline at the forefront of the global energy revolution. Recent studies identify the Shannon estuary as the ideal location from which to deliver on a world leading energy resource of up to 70GW in coming decades to complement the region's existing and planned onshore wind and solar energy projects. The Mid-West/Shannon Estuary Region has strategic advantages when it comes to delivering this resource, with existing grid infrastructure at Moneypoint and Tarbert (in North Kerry), ideal deep-water port conditions within the Shannon estuary, land for development, and an existing skilled workforce and innovation ecosystem.

Major projects are already being investigated for locations adjacent to the estuary, including Green Atlantic at Moneypoint (a 1.4GW+ project by ESB), Western Star (a 1.1GW+ project by Simply Blue) and Clarus (a 1GW project by DP Energy and Iberdrola). A number of other projects, offering multiples of this capacity, are known to be in the early stages of pre-planning. Stakeholders from across the region are supporting efforts to deliver on the ambition to transform the Shannon estuary into a renewable energy hub.

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), the region's local authorities, education and training providers, and others, are committed to working together to attract major offshore floating wind projects to the region. SFPC's Offshore Wind Potential Study found that, by using conservative assumptions, that €12 billion in supply chain investment alone could be made in the Shannon Estuary by 2050, leading to "huge" job growth.

As part of the regional Atlantic Green Digital Basin strategy, the South-West aims to develop a strategy with Mid-West regional partners that couples the generation of renewable energy, attracting supply chain jobs, and overall industrial growth by bringing the users of renewable energy, such as high-tech firms, advanced manufacturing and data centres, physically close to the energy source. This approach will minimise pressure on the national grid and in turn ensure maximum value-add from our sovereign natural resources for the national economy. For companies and institutions invested in digitalisation, our region has unique advantages including green energy, educated workforce and development lands, from which to build a long-term sustainable future.

### Action Outcome:

- Supply Chain Study to promote opportunities to regions SME's and MNCs – Q3, 2022.
- Atlantic Green Digital Basin - Industrial development strategy for estuary, Mid-West regions and North Kerry – looking at direct and Indirect job opportunities and economic value – Q4, 2022.

Advocating for national solutions to relevant challenges including Energy Route to Market & Export Opportunity strategies, development of a new Offshore Consenting and Planning Regime, forward planning for electricity grid, and the scheduling of Commercial Auctions for Offshore Floating Wind – ongoing through life of plan.



**Action 5.6: Collaborate with the Mid-West Region to build regional research, education and training capacity for emerging renewable energy opportunities in the Shannon Estuary and surrounding region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Shannon Foynes Port Company Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan University of Limerick TUS: Midlands Midwest MTU Kerry	Mid-West Regional Skills Forum Limerick, Kerry and Clare ETB Griffith College Future Mobility Campus Ireland and others	Q4 2022

**Rationale:**

The Mid-West region has over 25,000 third level students across a number of locations, with significant academic expertise and infrastructure present. As the climate emergency worsens, it is imperative that academic stakeholders in the region support and prepare for a greener future, by providing thought leadership and enabling the development of the leaders of tomorrow.

The establishment of the Mid-West Renewable Energy Cluster is an initiative jointly undertaken by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan, Shannon Foynes Port Company and a comprehensive list of research, education and training providers in the region to build capacity to support renewable energy projects. The cluster will contain two subgroups, each made up of representatives from across the region: (1) the Mid-West Renewable Energy Education and Training Working Group (ETWG), (2) the Mid-West Renewable Energy Research Working Group (RWG).

The ETWG will be tasked with driving and supporting a growing talent pipeline in skill areas of emerging talent need. The establishment of the group can provide assurance to potential investors in the region that the education and training sector in the region is responsive to their skills requirements and as a basis for engaging investors to understand their skills requirements.

The RWG will be tasked with identifying and delivering on research opportunities aligned with renewable energy generation projects and the more general decarbonisation goals of society. This group can help respond to industry technical challenges and support the development of national and international collaboration to assist the pursuit of common climate goals and grand challenges.

**Action Outcome:**

ETWG outcomes:

- forecast and report the future education and training required for floating offshore wind energy and hydrogen production activities in the Mid-West.
- act as contact points for prospective employers.
- develop new programs, perform outreach and public engagement to deliver pipeline of human resources to support new projects.

RWG goals:

- supporting industry in the development of new and innovative solutions to renewable energy challenges.
- providing long-term perspective / guidance for the future of national energy system.
- attracting national and international funding for research activities aligned with renewable energy generation projects and the more general decarbonisation goals of society.



### Action 5.7: Develop funding applications for Innovation Programmes and infrastructure facilities for Climate Action, Blue Economy, Circular Bioeconomy, Energy, Sustainable Port Activities, and Just Transition.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MaREI Energy Cork Circular Bioeconomy Cluster South-West IT@Cork	CARO Local Authorities UCC Southern Regional Assembly	Q4 2022

#### Rationale:

Funding applications are required for programmes and infrastructure to enable a just transition in the region. A collaborative approach to these applications ensures coherence on action and builds on the work of all the partners involved to date.

#### Action Outcome:

Project proposals developed for funding calls in the future.

- Project proposals and funding applications identified.
- Develop and submit for funding calls in the future emerging from national government and European sources.
- Identify and bring together project partners from industry, research institutions and clusters.
- To capitalise on emerging opportunities, including activities in ports and harbours.

### Action 5.8: Provide training and education supports to develop the necessary human capital, skills and competences required for the transition to a zero carbon and circular economy across a broad base of enterprise and industry within the South-West Region.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
ERI-UCC	LEOs Cork Chamber Local Authorities MTU	Q4 2024

#### Rationale:

A growing number of businesses require a skilled workforce who are knowledgeable in sustainability and decarbonisation, and who can place climate concerns at the heart of strategy, operations, and decision-making while at the same time maximising employment provision and profitability. UCC are leading training and education for sustainability in enterprise through the Sustainable Futures project to empower businesses to not only meet its new legal requirements in transitioning to a low-carbon future, but to develop new business opportunities while meeting Ireland's climate challenges.

#### Action Outcome:

A suite of bespoke training schemes on sustainability skills coproduced with industry and adapted to the needs of enterprise within the SW region will be developed. This will include a skills mapping of enterprise needs in the area of sustainability to ensure that training offerings meet the requirements of companies across a range of scales and sectors.



### Action 5.9: Engage with stakeholders to scope out enterprise opportunities for coastal communities in the South-West arising from the post Brexit and Climate Transition.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Local Authorities LEOs	BIM Enterprise Ireland IDA Ireland	Q4 2022
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>The Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) aims to provide financial support to the most affected Member States, regions, and sectors to deal with the adverse consequence of Brexit.</p> <p>Ireland will be the largest beneficiary of the Reserve with an allocation of over €1bn, equivalent to just over 20% of the entire Reserve. Budget 2022 announced that around €500m of the overall BAR allocation will be made available as a first tranche of funding, with the remainder available in 2023. Indicative areas for BAR funding that were identified include: enterprise supports; measures to support fisheries and coastal communities; targeted supports for the agri-food sector; reskilling and retraining.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <p>Establish a stakeholder group to explore the feasibility of maximising drawdown of available funding under the BAR for the benefit of coastal communities in the South-West Region.</p>		

### Action 5.10: Support the development of sustainable and green enterprise within the tourism economy.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Fáilte Ireland	Enterprise Ireland WDC Local Authorities IDA Ireland National Hub Network CEAI MTU Kerry Tourism Industry Federation Irish Hotels Industry Federation	Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>The development of these enterprises will support the overall National and EU climate agenda objectives. It will support the changing market dynamics of the tourism industry and market providing opportunities for sustainable growth into the future. New technologies and digitalisation will transform the tourism industry. These technologies will complement the development of sustainable and green enterprise which will assist in targeting a broader customer base, extend the shoulder season and deliver services in a cost-effective manner. New opportunities will also arise based on future technologies and market demand.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <p>Expansion of existing enterprises and establishment of new enterprises. Practical interventions in supporting the tourism sector building on environmental awareness and green practices.</p>		



## Strategic Objective 6:

### Ensure a strong pipeline of talent in the region, focusing on sustainable high-quality jobs

#### Context

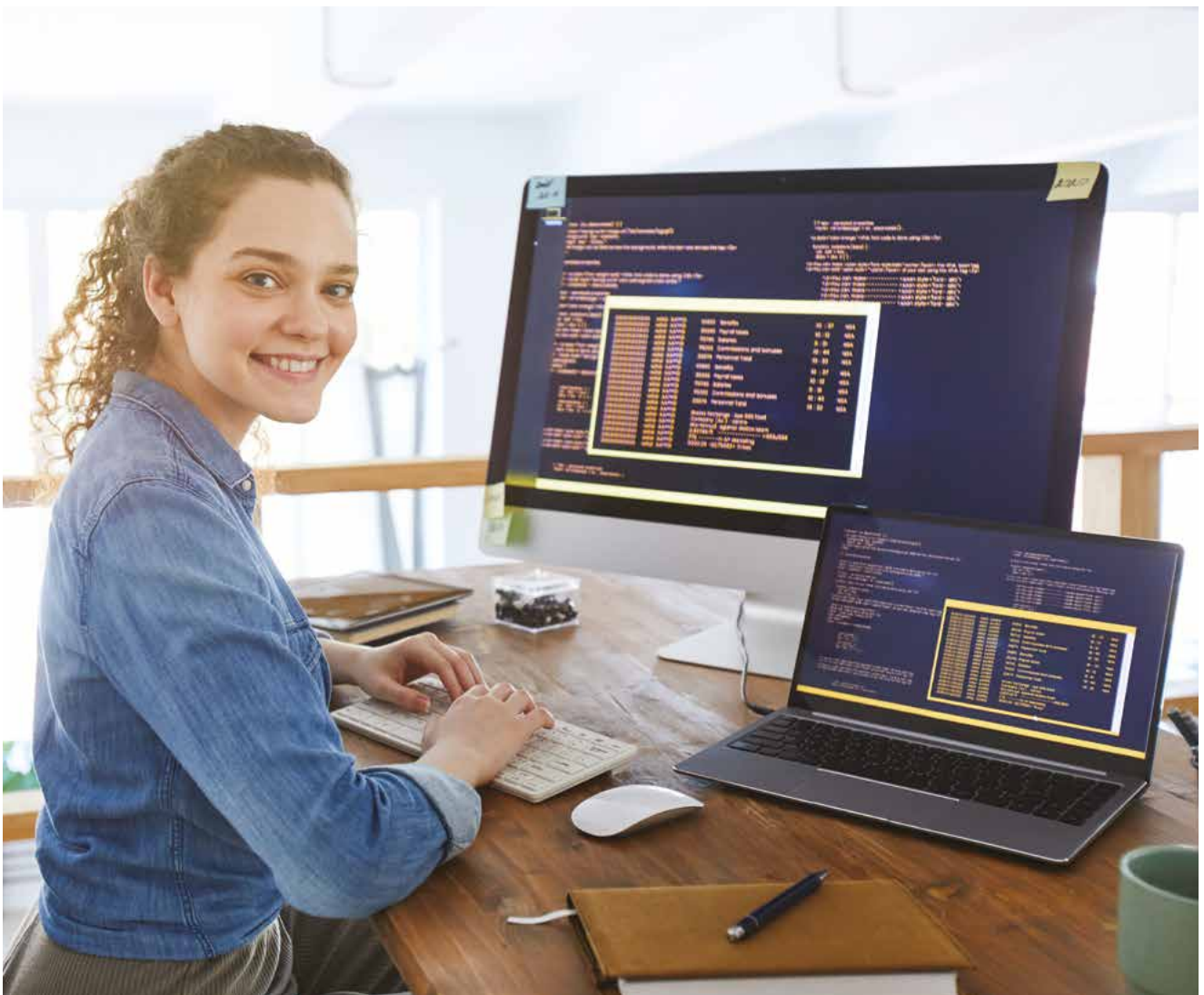
The South-West Region has an excellent track record in producing world class graduates and highly skilled workers as well as attracting investment in the region. Equipping SMEs in the region to meet challenges such as climate change and international competition requires their staff to have the skills and tools necessary to meet these challenges. The South-West Region will need to ensure that it can continue to educate and equip emerging talent; ensure agile and adaptable upskilling supports; and position itself as a magnet to attract talent from overseas.

While other regions can claim to also offer an excellent work/life balance, the South-West can set itself apart with the careers prospects it offers, its connectivity, location of two universities, and a thriving mix of indigenous and multinational corporations that can provide high quality sustainable jobs. Resource efficiency and innovation (in all of its forms) will be determining factors in terms of the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs in the South-West.

This Strategic Objective is linked and aligned with the national policy themes of **Resilience and Recovery** and **Placemaking for Regional Competitiveness**

#### Vision

That business development and growth in the South-West continues to benefit from the availability of appropriate skills and talent and that appropriate responses are mobilised to meet the need of a dynamic and mobile job market



## Strategic Objective 6: Actions to 2024

### Action 6.1: Develop Innovation and Design Thinking Training and Development Programmes to prepare SMEs to supply the SW FDI companies.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	UCC IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland LEOs Regional Skills Forum	Q4 2023

#### Rationale:

Integrating user centred design and design thinking into programmes has become a standard in prestigious international universities including Stanford, Oxford and MIT. Both MTU and UCC have Design Thinking teaching, learning and research expertise. MTU has delivered a number of design thinking programmes and projects with public sector, multinational and SME organisations. It is becoming a standard in industries including healthcare, pharmaceuticals, software development and government. To ensure SMEs in the South-West are prepared for the sub supply opportunities regionally, nationally and internationally, knowledge of and experience of Design Thinking methodology will be an important tool to evaluate and meet the ongoing needs of customers and potential customers.

#### Action Outcome:

Develop a linkage programme involving SME's and MNC's and thus greater supply chain links between indigenous SMEs and MNCs using design thinking methodology and training. Form new and sustainable partnerships between SME's and MNC's in the region.

### Action 6.2: Introduce supports for the services industry to achieve resource efficiency through targeted training initiatives.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
MTU	UCC IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland LEOs Regional Skills Forum CARO	Q4 2023

#### Rationale:

The implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals, EU Circular Economy Policy, and the Irish Climate Action Plan, are among a number of current policies that are designed to influence business rationale to address climate change, green supply chains and become more sustainable overall. Through its Circular Bioeconomy Cluster and MTU's Clean Technology Centre, MTU has identified that SMEs need assistance with managing key resources such as energy, water and raw materials. Many SMEs have limited expertise and understanding of managing key resources and that it is possible to significantly reduce costs, improve productivity and competitiveness in businesses, by building the capacity of management to understand resource efficiency and implement *no cost* and *low-cost* solutions.

#### Action Outcome:

New training initiatives introduced and operational.





**Action 6.3: Provide training and education supports in the synthesis and continuous processing of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) to meet the demand for highly skilled postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers in the pharmaceutical industry in the South-West Region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
ABCRF-UCC	Pharma Industry Enterprise Offices Cork Chamber Local Authorities	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Recent advances in technology such as continuous processing and biocatalysis offer new approaches to large scale synthesis of pharmaceuticals. With increased activity in Process R&D in the Irish sites of pharma companies there is a need for increased numbers of skilled PhD chemist's adept at the latest approaches to synthetic chemistry including continuous flow processing, biocatalysis and green chemistry. Through UCC's Structured PhD Programme in Organic and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, early career researchers will be empowered with the skills need to underpin enhanced Process R&D in the sector.

**Action Outcome:**

UCC PhD graduates and postdoctoral researchers with expertise in pharma synthesis including continuous processing, biocatalysis and green chemistry aligned with the needs of the pharmaceutical industry in the South-West Region.

**Action 6.4: Establish an agreed and coordinated approach to life-long learning, skills and talent development and retention across regional stakeholders.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
South-West Programme Manager	Cluster Organisations, MTU, UCC, Local Authorities, ETBs, Regional Skills Forum, Southern Regional Assembly	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Knowledge diffusion is a key enabler to our Region's economic resilience and growth. Supports to Higher Education Institutes and Education and Training Boards, the Regional Skills Fora and funding actions for life-long learning are needed to nurture skills and talent development and retention. Lifelong Learning initiatives are an essential component of a strong economy, as exemplified in the Southern Region by Cork and Limerick's attainment of the UNESCO Learning City status and extending the UNESCO Learning City status to Waterford city. Learning City Initiatives can be driven region wide. Recommendations under the SRA's Towards a Learning Region will support actions and funding towards education and training sectors in support of this action.

**Action Outcome:**

A coherent talent roadmap for the South-West that articulates the role for each stakeholder involved.



## 3



## Implementation

The consultation process to develop the South-West Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2024 was enhanced by an understanding amongst stakeholders of the importance of ownership, collaboration, and the definition and delivery of specific measurable actions that could add value to the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant bodies involved in supporting enterprise development. These priorities are reflected in the implementation structure for the South-West REP to 2024.

Implementation of the REP will be overseen by a Regional Enterprise Steering Committee. The Steering Committee for the South-West Region will continue to be chaired by Patricia Quane, and this is welcomed by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The functions of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Oversee and drive delivery of the REP.
- Nominate and secure Public and Private Sector leads, where appropriate, to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives.
- Oversee the formation of working groups as necessary to drive implementation of actions.
- Explore and propagate new ideas and opportunities for collaborative projects and funding opportunities.
- Provide a forum for the sharing of updates and information by members on key enterprise development initiatives including those set out by the Agencies and LEOs in this Plan and other pertinent updates (incl. REDF, RSES, URDF, RRDF Project Ireland 2040 etc.).
- Oversee, contribute to and sign off on Progress Reports to the Department.

The Chairperson will convene at least two meetings of the Steering Committee per year and will present a progress update on the implementation of the Plan. The Chairperson will also lead the Committee in the preparation of both a mid-term and a final progress report, to be submitted to the Department. These reports will be the subject of a meeting between the Chairperson and/or the Steering Committee and the Minister during one of the biannual meetings.

The South-West Regional Steering Committee will oversee the formation of working groups to drive delivery of each of the strategic objectives and their list of actions in the REP. Working Groups will convene as frequently as is required and will report on progress to the Chairperson and the Regional Steering Committee.

The Department will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of the REPs at national level. A National Oversight Group (NOG), which all Chairpersons attend, will oversee implementation of the new REPs. This group will be chaired by Ministers of State Robert Troy and Damien English and will provide a fora for the Chairs to share good practice and identify potential areas for inter-regional cooperation.





# South-West Enterprise Agencies and Local Enterprise Offices

The Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 are based on a collaborative approach to regional enterprise development. The Strategic Objectives and actions identified are set alongside and complement the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). Each Agency have corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as activities that support specific regional enterprise development potential. This Chapter provides an overview of those Agency activities and that of the LEOs in the South-West Region to 2024.



## 4.1 Enterprise Ireland: Focus to 2024

Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Enterprise Ireland work in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and achieve international growth. In this way, Enterprise Ireland support sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment.

Balanced regional development is central to Enterprise Ireland's remit. Enterprise Ireland manage a number of regional development funds on behalf of Government and work in collaboration with key stakeholders in all regions to deliver regional enterprise infrastructure, strengthen the enterprise base and deliver regional growth.

Strengthening regional enterprise development is a key focus in the new *Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2022-2024*, reflecting the varying needs and opportunities of enterprise across the different regions.



## Recent developments in the South-West Region

Enterprise Ireland's team of Development Advisors and capability specialists work with over 546 companies employing more than 29,560 people in the South-West Region.

Between 2018-2020, Enterprise Ireland invested €58m in client companies in the South-West Region supporting employment creation, innovation, competitiveness and expansion including investment in 21 High Potential Start Ups (HPSUs).

Strong regional clustering is important to enhancing regional enterprise success. Under the Regional Technology Cluster Fund, Enterprise Ireland approved funding to the Cyber Security SME Cluster; The AgriTech Cluster and the Circular Economy Cluster South-West. The region's tech clusters, IT@Cork and Kerry SciTech continue to be supported under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF).

Investment into regional infrastructure that supports innovation and entrepreneurship is central to Enterprise Ireland's regional development strategy. The region benefits from important well-established supports such as the four Local Enterprise Offices in Cork and Kerry, the New Frontiers Programme at MTU Cork and Kerry and Cork BIC.

An important element of strengthening Ireland's economic prospects, is growing Ireland's base of exporters and encourage more SMEs to become first-time exporters. Enterprise Ireland has increased resources in this area and has recently recruited a dedicated Development Advisor to the South-West Region to support first-time and growing exporters in the Region.

Enterprise Ireland continues to dedicate significant investment in supporting the regional development initiatives and investments across the South-West Region. Ambitious enterprise development projects that have been supported by the REDF will be significant catalysts and economic drivers for the South-West including the RDI Hub, AgriTech Centre of Excellence and the Firies Food Hub in Kerry and the Synbio Hub; Seirbhisí Forbaithe Gnó and the Ludgate Innovation Hub in Cork, the Sneem Digital Hub, MoI Teic in Kerry and Benchspace and Cork Urban Enterprises in Cork.

Enterprise centres are another critical enterprise development support to which Enterprise Ireland has committed significant funding over several years. In 2020, recently, Enterprise Ireland approved over €1.22m funding for 16 community enterprise centres in Cork and Kerry in 2020 to help them make strategic and capital investments addressing the challenges of COVID-19.

## Enterprise Ireland objectives for the South-West Region to 2024

Enterprise Ireland's development objectives for the South-West to 2024 focus on the dual priorities of delivering an effective and supportive enterprise ecosystem and driving entrepreneurship activity across the South-West Region.

To support these objectives, our strategic priorities for the South-West to 2024 include:

- The successful delivery of projects funded under the regional development funds including the REDF, the Regional Technology Clustering Fund (RTCF) and the Powering the Regions Community Enterprise Centre Scheme.
- Enterprise Ireland's sectoral and capability specialists working clients across the South-West Region to support their growth plans and assisting companies on transformation initiatives such as climate change, digitisation and sustainability.
- Collaboration with local stakeholders to identify gaps in the South West's enterprise ecosystem and to plan and help fund essential regional enterprise-enabling infrastructure.
- Work with partners such as the LEOs, the BICs, HEIs and regional accelerators to deliver initiatives that support entrepreneurship and foster an exciting new generation of innovative and ambitious start-ups in the South-West.
- Broadening and strengthening the South-West's exporting base by identifying and supporting first-time exporters, growing knowledge and capability and supporting SMEs to scale-up their exporting strategies.
- Drive strong and effective regional clustering and collaboration in the South-West with existing and emerging clusters.
- Continue to strengthen linkages between the South-West's third level and research institutes and industry through the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF), the Commercialisation Fund, Innovation Partnerships and Innovation Vouchers
- Work with the South-West Regional Skills forum and our clients to ensure availability and development of appropriate skills and talent to support company growth.



- In partnership with Údarás na Gaeltachta, promote initiatives to attract and retain entrepreneurs to the Múscraí Gaeltacht and West Kerry.
- In collaboration with Teagasc promote Ireland and the South-West as a world class destination for Dairy and Food foreign direct investment.
- Supporting the development of the 'Blue Economy' in Ringaskiddy, Cork building from the base of circa thirty companies in the Maritime and Energy sectors.

Enterprise Ireland is a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the South-West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the South-West Region.



## 4.2 IDA Ireland: Focus to 2024

IDA Ireland's mission is to partner with multi-national companies (MNCs) to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland. IDA Ireland works with key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors to deliver on this mandate. IDA Ireland partners closely with Enterprise Ireland across the Regions on multiple initiatives, including under the Regional Enterprise Plans and in relation to the provision of property solutions to the indigenous base, where appropriate.

IDA's strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024* was developed in the context of the Government's National Economic Recovery Plan and positions IDA to respond to the emerging trends that are accelerating as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. It identifies the opportunities for sustainable growth among IDA's established base of clients through a focus on transformative investments to increase the productivity of Irish operations and their workforce through RD&I, digitisation, training, and actions on sustainability. Crucially it also maintains a focus on attracting the next generation of leading MNCs to locate in Ireland, further driving sustainable growth and maximising the impact of FDI in Ireland to 2024 and beyond. The Strategy has five pillars:

- 1 Growth pillar** – win investment to support job creation and economic activity
- 2 Transformation pillar** – partner with clients for future growth in Ireland
- 3 Regions pillar** – win investment to advance regional development
- 4 Sustainability pillar** – embrace an inclusive and green recovery; and
- 5 Impact pillar** – maximise FDI's positive impact on local businesses and communities

Regional development is at the centre of IDA's strategy. Although FDI cannot be the sole contributor in addressing the challenges facing Ireland's regions – from Brexit to COVID-19, digital transformation to the climate transition – it can have a significant impact in propelling economic recovery and realising more balanced growth. IDA is targeting half of all investments (400) from 2021-2024 to regional locations and is maintaining the same high level of investment as targeted in IDA's previous strategy for each region of the country.

Under the Regions pillar of *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth*, IDA Ireland will:

- Win investment to propel recovery and support development in each region;
- Partner with existing regional clients to transform through innovation and upskilling;
- Develop clusters to support transformation, spill overs and linkages;
- Collaborate with clients and stakeholders to facilitate remote working opportunities; and
- Continue to roll-out IDA's regional property programme, including delivery of 19 Advanced Building Solutions (ABS) to regional locations over the course of the strategy.

The global competition for FDI is intense as countries compete for investment to support economic recovery. It is in this context – of greater competition for potentially fewer projects – that IDA wins investment for Ireland and engages with MNCs on the benefits of choosing regional locations for their investment projects.



Key to IDA's success in the past and essential to success in the future is strategic collaboration with national and local stakeholders to ensure that each region has the necessary conditions in place to foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. The delivery of necessary infrastructure and property solutions, the availability of a skilled and future ready workforce, and an emphasis on quality of life and placemaking in each region are pre-requisites to winning continued investment from MNCs.

### Regional Economic Impact of FDI

IDA client companies directly employed almost 145,000 people outside of Dublin in 2020. Combined with indirect employment of 116,000, an estimated 260,000 jobs in the regions were supported by FDI in 2020. Clients in regional locations had an annual spend of €7.9bn on payroll, €2.7bn on Irish services and €2.2bn on Irish materials in 2019. They contributed a further €1.3bn on in-house R&D. These linkages support diverse, innovative, and vital local economies.

### Over the period 2021-2024 IDA Ireland will:

- Win 800 total investments to support job creation of 50,000 and economic activity
- Partner with clients for future growth through 170 RD&I and 130 Training investments
- Win 400 investments to advance Regional Development
- Embrace a green recovery with 60 sustainability investments
- Target a 20% increase in client expenditure in Ireland to maximise the impact of FDI

Read more about IDA's 2001-2024 Strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth* at [www.idaireland.com](http://www.idaireland.com).

## IDA Ireland objectives for the South-West Region to 2024

There are 211 IDA client companies in the South-West Region, and with 46,009 people employed, the region has the highest concentration of FDI employment of any region outside Dublin across 26 unique locations in Cork and Kerry. FDI performance in the region has been strong over the past five years with employment among IDA clients increasing by 30%.

The region has a strong Life Sciences sector supported by global business services, process engineering consultancies and a range of specialist service providers serving the Biopharma and Medical Technologies industry. The region is also home to a large cluster of technology companies, strong engineering and manufacturing operations, and a significant number of International Financial Services companies.

Under IDA's *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth Strategy*, IDA will target 118 investments for the South-West Region in the period 2021-2024, focusing on high value manufacturing, innovative technology solutions, international services, and RD&I opportunities building on established regional clusters and operational expertise in Life Sciences, Technology, International Financial Services, Global Business Services, and Engineering and Industrial Technologies. Emerging technology trends will continue to create opportunities across the region in areas such as cybersecurity, data analytics, artificial intelligence, smart manufacturing, FinTech, AgTech and Marine Renewables as well as new approaches to working such as home working and hub working.

IDA will deliver an Advanced Building Solution in Tralee over 2021-2024, while continuing to work closely with the private sector in the South-West to secure the provision of appropriate and cost-effective building and property solutions for client companies. Additional upgrade works and investment are planned for IDA Parks in the region to ensure a robust value proposition for clients.



IDA client companies in the South-West Region include Liebherr, Astellas, JRI America, Enercon, Apple, VMware, Amazon, Stryker, Eli Lilly, Pfizer, Temmler, MSD, Sanmina, Gilead, and Clearstream.

Over the last two years, there have been multiple new name and existing client company investments in the region; these include: Opentext, Qualcomm, Pfizer, Thermo Fisher, Hovione, Gilead, Amazon, Cadence Design Systems; Moz; SMS; Remitly, Tigera doTerra, Eli Lilly, Varonis, Merck Millipore, Huawei, Logitech, Alter Domus, Tigera, Ellab, SGS, Innowatts, CH Robinson, Accenture, Microchip and Qorvo.

MNCs across the region are supported by two industry focused Universities and internationally renowned research centres including University College Cork, Munster Technological University in Cork and Kerry, Tyndall National Institute, and a number of SFI Research Centres.

Cork Airport's continued investment programme and rebuilding of its routes network post-pandemic provides important connectivity for multinational companies in the region. Kerry Regional Airport also provides additional connectivity with connections to Dublin, the UK and Europe.

IDA Ireland is a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the South-West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the South-West Region.



## Local Enterprise Office

### 4.3 Local Enterprise Office: Focus to 2024

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster 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.

The Local Enterprise Office is the *First Stop Shop* for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland.

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 and capable individuals
- Fuel regional growth

### Recent developments in the South-West Region

Regions	Client Numbers 2021	Total Jobs 2021	Net Job Change 2021
South-West	929	4,119	285

The South-West is an economically active and diverse region with particular strengths in agri-food, pharma, life sciences, ICT and tourism. This is underpinned by significant transport and educational infrastructure. Significant investments, underpinned by Regional Enterprise Development Fund has seen projects such as Benchspace, Ludgate and RDI Hub lay strong foundations for continued growth and development in the region.

While much of the activity from March 2020 has been focussed on working with their client base to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the South-West Local Enterprise Offices have a strong track record in delivering targeted initiatives to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Examples include the Cork-Kerry Food Fair – an annual showcase of new and emerging artisan food producers in the region and LEO involvement in initiatives such as Taste Kerry and Taste Cork.

Female entrepreneurship is actively encouraged and supported through targeted programmes and ongoing assistance to local chapters of Network Ireland and The Kerry Business-Women's Network. Work has also commenced with the New Irish migrant community.

Craft and design is an important sector in the South-West and active and continuing support is provided to Cork Craft and Design and Original Kerry.

The South-West LEO's are involved in a number of initiatives with other regions. Examples include the Munster Animation Forum, to encourage and support animation production in the province and regions as well as the LINC Engineering Cluster, initially focussed on the needs of engineering companies in the North Cork and Limerick areas.



The South-West LEO's have successfully delivered a number of programmes of LEAN for Micro as well as new initiatives such as Green for Micro and the Client Stimulus Scheme.

### Local Enterprise Office objectives for the South-West Region to 2024

The principal areas of focus for the South-West LEO's over the lifetime of this plan will be in the following areas:

- The survival and recovery of our client businesses as the economy deals with the aftermath of COVID-19.
- Working with our business to mitigate risks but also seek out and take advantage of opportunities in a post Brexit, COVID-19 world through new supply chain challenges/risks and new (remote) work practices.
- Encouraging Entrepreneurship, including targeted initiatives focusing on demographics such as female entrepreneurs, migrant entrepreneurs, older entrepreneurs, young entrepreneurs and new entrepreneurs.

- A focus on improving the Competitiveness and Digitalisation of our client portfolio.
- Encouraging Innovation and Internationalisation and improving the Export capability of client businesses.
- Pursuing the Green and Sustainability agenda with our client portfolio.
- Continue to work with and encourage the further growth and development of the Networks and Clusters across various geographic, industrial and demographic sectors.
- Work with adjacent Local Enterprise Offices and Regions on initiatives such as LINC and the Munster Animation Forum.

Local Enterprise Offices Kerry, Cork City, South Cork and Cork North and West are members of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the South-West Region and looks forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the South-West Region.





# 5

## Complementary Strategies and Initiatives



### 5.1 Fáilte Ireland: Focus to 2024

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the long-term sustainable growth in the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of tourism to Ireland. In addition to helping to develop destinations, Fáilte Ireland also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business supports and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fáilte Ireland's mission over the next three years is to support the survival and drive the recovery of the sector in order to maximise the sustainable economic, environmental, cultural and social contribution of tourism to Ireland. It is also Fáilte Ireland's objective to spread the benefits of tourism more evenly around the country.

The South-West Region is served by two of Fáilte Ireland's regional tourism brands, Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East. Fáilte Ireland is currently preparing a suite of four Regional Tourism Strategies (one for each of the four Regional Tourism Brands), which will be published in early 2022.

Through these regional brand development initiatives, Fáilte Ireland has worked closely with a wide range of industry and stakeholder partners towards the sustainable development of tourism in the South-West.

Since March 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, Fáilte Ireland has delivered significant business supports, by way of direct grant-aid, mentoring and training. Destination Recovery Task Forces were established to provide targeted supports to tourism businesses.

At the same time, Fáilte Ireland has remained focused on the medium-to-long term sustainable recovery and development of tourism in the region. For example, the preparation and implementation of Destination and Experience Development Plans in Cork (3) and Kerry (4). These plans are aimed at unlocking the tourism potential of the region through a range of targeted strategic initiatives.



## Fáilte Ireland's objectives for the South-West Region to 2024

The overall tourism objective for the South-West Region continues to be to increase visitor numbers by raising awareness of the region as a visitor destination through sustained domestic marketing and sales promotion; and by substantiating the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East brand propositions with exciting saleable visitor experiences that appeal to our target audiences. Fáilte Ireland will also work with Tourism Ireland to ensure awareness of all that's new in the South-West Region such that it informs their international marketing activity as well.

Priority areas of focus for Fáilte Ireland over the coming three years in the region include:

- Working with a range of industry and stakeholder partners to prepare and implement the series of 5-year Destination and Experience Development Plans. These plans are agreed by all stakeholders and outline agreed shared development priorities that will improve both the destinations' appeal and the experience they offer on the ground; and by extension, help to increase visitor dwell time and spend in the region. These are the key tourism plans to which the REP and other regional strategic plans such as Regional Spatial Strategy, County Tourism Plans etc. can align with so as to optimise resources and impact.
- Continuing to raise awareness of the region as a visitor destination and of the range of things for visitors to see and do.
- Providing a range of business supports focused on meeting the particular needs of tourism businesses in the region in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic over the next three years.
- Work with local authorities to deliver key capital projects i.e., Dursey Cable Car.
- Work with the local authorities to deliver Fáilte Ireland funded Destination Towns, Urban Animation and Outdoor Dining Enhancement schemes to improve the public realm for the visitor and resident alike.
- Activate the Cork harbour tourism economy through projects identified in the DEDP (to be published in Q1 2022)
- Develop an International standard Greenway network in Cork City, Harbour and East Cork.
- Helping tourism providers to secure new business by introducing them to new markets and buyers and helping them to secure incremental sales. In particular, helping them to hone their saleable experiences to ensure they are picked up by domestic and international tour operators.
- Liaising with Local Authorities and other State Agencies such as Coillte, NPWS, the OPW and Údurás Na Gaeltachta in optimising the benefit of state assets and attractions for tourism, in particular through the development of Greenways, Blueways and walking trails, which can be leveraged by tourism enterprises to create new jobs.
- Complete the development of a master plan for the Beara Breifne Way with a view to unlocking its potential to become a significant south-north strand in the lattice work of trails with the South-West Region.
- Ensuring that the potential of existing strategic tourism infrastructure, assets and facilities is fully explored and that they are fully leveraged by tourism businesses in order to create new enterprises and jobs, in particular, the Tralee to Fenit Greenway and North Kerry, South Kerry, and Mallow to Dungarvan Greenways, among others.
- Establishing and assisting a range of effective commercially focused tourism business networks throughout the region and helping them to cross-promote and cross-sell one another.
- Aiding the digital transformation of the tourism industry in the region through a 'Digital that Delivers' initiative, aimed at providing improved online presence and book ability for tourism businesses, enhancing their connected distribution and improving their digital skills.
- Develop and execute a sustained strategy for Tourism Skills and Careers to both attract and retain staff within the tourism industry – the absence of staff represents an existential crisis as businesses capacity to trade is being restricted.

As a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee for the South-West Region Fáilte Ireland looks forward to continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on its ambition for the South-West Region.





## 5.2 Regional Skills Forum: Focus to 2024

The *National Skills Strategy to 2025*, provides a framework for skills development that drives Ireland's growth both economically and societally. One of the key elements of the Strategy was the development of a National Skills Council (NSC) and 9 Regional Skills Fora (RSF). The Fora structure fosters engagement and collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies, the education (Further and Higher) and training system, and enterprise.

The RSF seek to bring people together at local and regional level, to identify, interrogate and validate skills needs, and to ensure that employers and enterprise are linked with the appropriate resources across the education and training system. The RSF provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The RSF work to ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the region's economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

The Regional Skills Forum leads a number of key activities in each region:

- acting at local and regional level, to drive forward the National Skills Strategy;
- assisting local enterprises identify skills needs to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity;
- linking (once skills needs have been identified) companies with regional education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need; and
- assisting with actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.

The South-West Regional Skills Forum (SWRSF) includes a strong mix of industry leaders from across key regional employment sectors, industry associations, enterprise development agencies (IDA, EI), County Councils and DSP who collaborate alongside UCC, MTU, Cork and Kerry ETBs and Skillnets in ensuring local education and training provision is as well aligned to local industry needs.

The collaborative approach of the Forum and the sectoral specific industry groups established through the Forum in manufacturing/engineering; pharma/biopharma; food and drinks; ICT; hospitality and construction, have facilitated targeted skills development responses addressing current skills needs reported by industry. The Forum has also responded to emerging needs as industry and subsequent skills requirements evolve.

Initiatives developed through these structures include new upskilling programmes in validation, process safety, process data analytics, computerised production and inspection, CNC, BIM, supervisory management, leadership, and front of house and bar and food and beverage skills development supports, amongst others. Courses have targeted new talent pipeline development through the ETBs and colleges in addition to upskilling existing staff across multiple roles in industry.

The SWRSF also provides one to one support to companies, particularly SMEs, in identifying company specific education/training solutions to address their skills requirements and also works with and facilitates introductions to the relevant education/training providers to address skills needs identified by wider industry and state agency partnerships working in the region.

Over the period of the South-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, the SWRSF will continue to:

- facilitate a collaborative approach to existing and emerging skills needs identification and solutions planning across industry and education/training in the South-West Region in line with the Forum's operational plan;
- work with the Forum's industry groups in building targeted skills solutions to the needs of existing and emerging industry sectors where demand exists;
- provide ongoing one to one education/training signposting supports to South-West companies requiring assistance; and
- support and facilitate linkages between our education/training members and wider regional industry networks, industry cluster groups and wider regional stakeholders including the REPs to support these groups in addressing skills needs where demand exists.





Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt  
Southern Regional Assembly

### 5.3 The Regional Assembly

The [Southern Regional Assembly \(SRA\)](#) covers nine counties containing 10 Local Authorities namely – Carlow, Clare, Cork City, Cork County, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford.

#### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

One of the principal functions of the Assembly is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which sets out the strategic regional development framework for the region. The primary aim of the RSES is to implement Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework (NPF), at the regional tier of Government and to support NPF policy for achieving balanced regional development.

The Region's priorities for investment are identified in the RSES and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) and set a 12-year strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development for the region in line with vision and objectives for national change in the NPF and the National Development Plan (NDP).

The Regional Assembly's RSES also aims to develop a sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient regional economy. Key to delivering this vision is ensuring the region develops a strong and diverse economic base and with immediate challenges such as COVID-19, Brexit, Just Transition and potential vulnerabilities for Ireland's enterprise base.

Alignment of the economic principles of the RSES and Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) is critical to underpin the achievement of national strategic outcomes at the regional and local level and give regional support for the implementation of actions identified through the REP. This is also of key relevance for EU cohesion funding in Ireland for the period 2021-2027 and the development of priorities under the ERDF 2021-2027 Programme. The Regional Assembly has an enhanced role in the management of this programme which will have a focus on smart cities and a smart region, lower carbon emissions, climate resilience and urban regeneration, themes that support priorities and actions under the REP.



### 5.4 Local Authorities – Local Economic and Community Plans

Local Authorities are the key agents of government responsible for local and community development at local level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 strengthened the role of Local Authorities towards economic, social and community development.

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has statutory responsibility for the LECPs overall and additional responsibility for the Local Community Development Committees who are charged with the development and the delivery of the Community elements of the LECP. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) have statutory responsibility for the Economic elements of the LECP. The local authorities are responsible for the development and implementation of the economic elements of the LECP through the relevant Strategic Policy Committee.

The purpose of the community elements of the LECP is to promote local and community development and to ensure the coordination of relevant public funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where they are most needed and maximises benefits for communities. The focus of the community elements of the LECP should be on the social and economic issues that have relevance and can be addressed at a community level.

The development of the economic elements of the LECP is part of the wider role of economic development in local government. Revised guidelines on the development of LECPs to assist with the development of local area plans were published in November 2021.

As the framework for the economic and community development of the local authority area, the LECP is also the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.



Local authorities in the South-West Region (Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Kerry County Council) all play a key role in local economic development. The broad range of economic functions span from planning and development, economic strategies, to delivery of property solutions such as enterprise hubs and business parks, regeneration schemes that deliver office space, provision of enabling infrastructure along with a suite of placemaking and regeneration measures that enhance the attractiveness the region's urban and rural areas for investors and visitors alike. In addition, local authorities provide significant operational supports to businesses, from licencing, to presentation of local areas. Development

Plans contain key economic objectives for local areas, that gives a statutory basis to support the economic actions of the Regional Enterprise Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plans. Importantly, local authorities work with local community groups to progress bespoke actions and projects designed to enhance the economic performance of their areas. Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Kerry County Council work with state agencies such as IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to advance key economic actions locally.



# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Membership of the Regional Steering Committee

<b>Chair Regional Enterprise Plan:</b>
Patricia Quane – Retired VP and General Manager 2020 – Astellas Ireland
<b>Programme Manager:</b>
Jonathan Hoare
<b>Membership of the Committee:</b>
Enterprise Champions
Cork County Council
Cork City Council
Kerry County Council
Kerry Local Enterprise Office
Cork North and West Local Enterprise Office
South Cork Local Enterprise Office
Cork City Local Enterprise Office
Enterprise Ireland
IDA Ireland
Southern Regional Assembly
Regional Skills Forum: South-West Region
Cork Education and Training Board
Kerry Education and Training Board
Údarás na Gaeltachta
Fáilte Ireland
InterTrade Ireland
Ibec
Bord Bia
Teagasc
Bord Iascaigh Mhara
University College Cork
MTU
Cork Chamber of Commerce
Dingle Chamber of Commerce
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Department of Rural and Community Development



## Appendix 2: South-West Regional Statistical Snapshot

Constituent counties	Cork and Kerry			
South-West Population	690,575 <sup>2</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment	359,300 <sup>3</sup>			
ILO Participation Rate	65.1% <sup>4</sup>			
ILO Unemployment Rate	5% <sup>5</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)	193,200 <sup>6</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)	166,100 <sup>7</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q1 2015 <sup>8</sup> – Q3 2021	Q1 2015	Q3 2021		
	294,800	359,300		
Actual Increase in Employment between from Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	64,500			
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	21.8%			
Persons on Live Register in the Border at 01/12/2021	19,689 <sup>9</sup>			
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 07/12/2021 in the South-West	6,218 <sup>10</sup>			
Unemployment blackspots <sup>11</sup>	6 <sup>12</sup>			
Irish-owned Companies – Total Employment in the South-West, 2015-2020 <sup>13</sup>		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	27,177	30,610	+3,433
Foreign-owned Companies – Total Employment in the South-West, 2015-2020 <sup>14</sup>		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	36,786	47,221	+10,435

2. 2016 CSO Census

3. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (South-West)

4. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (South-West)

5. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (South-West)

6. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (South-West)

7. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (South-West)

8. Launch of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs

9. CSO Live Register

10. <https://www.gov.ie>

11. Unemployment Blackspots are defined as Electoral Districts with at least 200 people in the labour force and an unemployment rate of 27% or higher

12. Unemployment blackspots in the Region: Cork City (1) and Tralee (5)

13. Annual Employment Survey 2020

14. Annual Employment Survey 2020





## Appendix 3: Other State Agencies and Bodies Supporting Enterprise Development

### Bord Bia

Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, is responsible for the development of new markets and the promotion of Irish food, drink and horticulture, reporting to the Department of Food, Agriculture, and the Marine. The agency's mandate covers trade development, promotion, quality programmes, information provision and marketing support especially for export markets. Bord Bia operates in thirteen overseas locations. Its Origin Green programme is the only sustainability programme in the world that operates on a national scale, uniting government, the private sector and food producers.

### Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

BIM is the state agency with responsibility for developing the Irish sea-fishing and aquaculture industries. BIM's mission is to lead the sustainable development of a competitive, market-led, innovative and quality-driven Irish seafood industry, maximising the returns to industry stakeholders and the socio-economic contribution to communities in coastal regions in particular. BIM is focused on expanding the volume, quality and value of output from the Irish seafood industry. It provides a range of advisory, financial, technical and training services to all sectors of the Irish seafood industry. BIM's Strategy 2013-2017 is an action plan that aims to deliver 1,200 jobs and €1bn seafood sales by building scale and enhancing competitiveness in the Irish seafood sector.

### InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland has been helping small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready for over two decades.

Based in Newry, our services include supports for sales growth and innovation, plus funding and business insights for SMEs across the island who are looking to grow their business. Through our dedicated Brexit advisory service we also help companies to manage the new trading relationship between Britain and the EU, via a range of supports and services.

InterTradelreland has also introduced a number of specific COVID-19 supports focused on funding and recovery. As one of the cross-border bodies, InterTradelreland is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland.

### Skillnet Ireland

Skillnet Ireland was established in 1999 and is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills. The primary objective of Skillnet Ireland is to increase participation in enterprise training by companies. Skillnet Ireland fosters an enterprise led approach to workforce development. The process of determining training needs and coordinating the delivery of training, is primarily owned by the enterprise groups engaged with Skillnet Ireland. Skillnet Ireland operates under a joint investment model, part-funded by matching contributions from participating businesses in our learning networks. Encouraging enterprise to lead the process in this way helps ensure that programmes delivered through Skillnet Ireland are highly relevant to the needs of industry. This approach also enables cohesive enterprise networking and the flexibility to respond to ever-changing skills demands through both formal and informal learning. Through 65 plus Skillnet Learning Networks, Skillnet Ireland allocates funding to groups of companies in the same industry sector (or region) and with similar training needs, so they can deliver subsidised training for their teams. Skillnet Ireland also plays a key role in supporting and enabling Skillnet funded groups to reach their full potential.



## Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)

Science Foundation Ireland is the national foundation for investment in scientific and engineering research, operating under the auspices of DBEI. SFI invests in academic researchers and research teams who are most likely to generate new knowledge, leading edge technologies and competitive enterprises in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths. SFI has supported the establishment of 17 National Research Centres, aligned with the research priority areas set out in Ireland's research prioritisation exercise (which is currently being refreshed). SFI plays a key role in developing international relationships in the research and innovation domain. It is instrumental in raising Ireland's profile and visibility as a location of research excellence in international markets, thus strengthening Ireland's attractiveness for overseas investment.

## Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

The purpose of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. SEAI provides a range of programmes and services to homes, businesses, schools and communities. It is a key actor in providing research and advice to Government on sustainable energy policy, including renewables and energy efficiency.

## Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta was established in 1980 as the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations. Údarás supports businesses in developing new markets, technologies, products and strategic alliances through research and development.

## Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement in 1999. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, promotion and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes. The waterways under the remit of the Body are the Shannon-erne Waterway, the Shannon, the Erne Navigation, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Lower Bann, and the Royal Canal.

## Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established under statute in 1998 to help tackle population decline in the West of Ireland. Its remit covers seven counties: Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, and Clare. The WDC works to ensure that economic and social policy and practice meet the development needs of the Western Region effectively. Activities include conducting research on regional and rural issues, promoting specific initiatives including sectoral opportunities, and managing and administering the WDC Investment Fund (WIF). This dedicated fund provides risk capital on a commercial basis to projects and businesses through equity and loans.



## Appendix 4: Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

### Introduction

*Our Rural Future-Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* is the most ambitious and transformational policy for rural development in Ireland for decades.

The vision of the policy is for a thriving rural Ireland which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, which is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment.

The policy contains more than 150 commitments for delivery across the whole-of-Government for both short-term recovery and longer-term development. It has a five-year timeframe, with updates on delivery provided by a series of Progress Reports. Annual work programmes allow for the review and revision of priorities contained in the measures for delivery.

### Policy Objectives

The policy aims to bring about improved opportunities and a better quality of life for people who live and work in rural areas, through balanced regional development, benefitting individuals, families, communities and businesses.

We want to see more people living and working in rural Ireland, rural towns as vibrant hubs for commercial and social activity, reduced regional income disparities, improved access to public services such as transport links, rural Ireland benefitting from the transition to a more sustainable future and rural communities – especially young people – having an active role in shaping their future.

### Funding streams

The level of activity across Government in recent months highlights delivery of the Policy's ambition. The Government's commitment to rural Ireland is also evidenced in the unprecedented capital investment of €850m provided under the revised *National Development Plan* for rural development projects to 2025, across a range of areas such as remote working facilities, rural regeneration projects and outdoor amenities. This includes huge levels of support for important projects under the Department of Rural and Community Development's (DRCD) Rural Development Investment Programme.

### DRCD supports include:

- Revitalisation of rural town centres through the €1bn Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Investment of €220m through the LEADER Programme.
- Provision of funding for other programmes such as the Small-Scale Rural Projects (CLÁR), Town and Village Renewal, Local Improvement Scheme for non-public roads, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and Connected Hubs Fund.



## Appendix 5: Regional Enterprise Development Funding

### South-West Regional Enterprise Development Fund and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) supports the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can enable and sustain enterprise and employment growth in the regions. Under the RETS and the three calls of the REDF to date, the South-West has secured over €19.3m in funding for 15 enterprise projects.

#### Projects approved for South-West Region

Projects approved award	County	Project description
AgriTech Centre of Excellence	Kerry	Global AgriTech Centre of Excellence
Cork Urban Enterprises	North Cork City	Centre for enterprise growth
IT@cork CLG	Cork	Cluster development initiative for the ICT sector
Kerry SciTech	Kerry	Enterprise cluster to support the growth of science and technology
MOL TEIC CLG	Kerry	Community Enterprise job creation initiative
RDI HUB CLG	Kerry	Digital Innovation Hub
Sneem Innovation & Tech Services	Kerry	Digital Hub
CIT Consortium Projects DAC	Cork, Kerry	Build start-ups from undergraduates
Ludgate Operations CLG	Cork	Establishment of a Ludgate Innovation Centre
Vista Agri 4.0 Hub CLG	Cork, Kerry, Waterford, Tipperary	Agri-Innovation Hub
Firies Business Hub DAC (call 1 and call 3)	Kerry	Food production facilities
Seirbhísí Forbartha Gnó (SFG) Designated Activity Company	Cork	Regional Development Hub
SynBioHub Designated Activity Company	Cork	Develop Ireland's first Life Sciences 'BioHub'
Benchspace Cork CLG	Cork	Grow new enterprise
KerrySciTech	Kerry	Cluster for the growth of the science, technology and engineering sector
<b>Total South-West REDF and RETS Funding</b>		<b>€19,314,946</b>



## Appendix 6: Methodology

The process to develop these Regional Enterprise Plans involved the following steps:

<b>January 2021</b>	A round of initial consultations with key stakeholders was undertaken by the Department including the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees, Agency representatives, Programme Managers, and other key organisations represented on the Regional Steering Committees. The bilateral discussions focused on what worked/didn't work well over the period of the outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans.
<b>February-March 2021</b>	In February 2021 the Tánaiste wrote to the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees formally setting out the Department's intention to develop new Plans to 2024.
<b>February-May 2021</b>	The Tánaiste and Ministers of State formally launched the commencement of the process to develop Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 with meetings of the nine Regional Steering Committees in virtual sessions around the country. Each Committee established a Project Delivery Team for the process, led by the Steering Committee chairperson.
<b>March-May 2021</b>	Each of the Project Delivery Teams met to review the outgoing Regional Plans and considered future thematic areas of focus and agreed an approach for a formal stakeholder consultation with the wider Steering Committee members and other relevant stakeholders.
<b>May-August 2021</b>	An online facilitated Stakeholder Consultation event was held in eight of the nine regions; with a series of bilateral stakeholder engagements and focus group discussions undertaken in the South-East Region. Participants considered topics including: enterprise resilience, smart specialisation, placemaking, transition-climate, digitalisation.
<b>July-October 2021</b>	The Project Delivery Teams re-grouped to consider the consultation outcomes and further develop emerging themes into Strategic Objectives and to identify suitable actions for delivery in the period to 2024
<b>November-December 2021</b>	The Draft Final Regional Enterprise Plans were signed off by the Project Delivery Teams and Steering Committees.
<b>February 2022</b>	Memo for Government considered by Cabinet and noted the Department's intention to publish the nine Regional Enterprise Plans.



**An Roinn Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta**

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

23 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 TD30

23 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 TD30

T +353 (0)1 631 2121, 0818 302 121

[www.enterprise.gov.ie](http://www.enterprise.gov.ie)

[www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)

[info@enterprise.gov.ie](mailto:info@enterprise.gov.ie)

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Enterprise, Trade and Employment  
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