

2022

# THE CHANCE FOR AN INCLUSIVE & DEVELOPMENTAL BUDGET



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



# Introduction

**Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) is the national representative body for Ireland's 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs). The network's members are active in every City, County and Parish in Ireland delivering integrated social and community services based on the bottom-up community-led approach.**

In 2021 ILDN members delivered a large number of programmes including the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP), LEADER, Rural Social Scheme, Tús, Local Employment Services, Jobs Clubs, the Rural Recreation Programme, the Walks Scheme, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Social Farming, Ability, Social Prescribing and supports for Social Enterprises.

Each of our member LDCs are unique and provide services that reflect the needs of their communities. Beyond the core programmes listed, LDCs also deliver national and European initiatives that enhance the development of their

communities through enterprise, training, activation, education, health, and community supports.

Our LDCs operate in urban, rural and island communities of all population profiles and densities supporting 173,000 individuals and over 15,000 community groups annually. Through their social inclusion work our members endeavour to reach out to Communities which require extra support in the face of deprivation, unemployment, and exclusion.

ILDN as a representative body supports members through coherent policy development, research, HR support, networking, knowledge transfer, procurement, and Garda vetting. Increasingly ILDN strives to become the voice for volunteer-led, community based LDCs who understand and service the needs of all our Communities across the Country.

# Irish Local Development Network

## Members:

1. Avondhu Blackwater Partnership
2. Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership
3. Ballyhoura Development CLG
4. Bray Area Partnership
5. Cavan County Local Development
6. Carlow County Development Partnership
7. Clare Local Development Company
8. Comhar na nOileán CTR
9. Cork City Partnership
10. County Kildare LEADER Partnership
11. County Sligo LEADER Partnership Ltd.
12. County Wicklow Partnership
13. Donegal Local Development Co. Ltd.
14. Dublin City Community Co-op
15. Dublin Northwest Partnership
16. Dublin South City Partnership
17. Empower
18. Fingal LEADER Partnership
19. FORUM Connemara
20. Galway City Partnership
21. Galway Rural Development Company
22. Inishowen Development Partnership
23. IRD Duhallow CLG
24. Kilkenny LEADER Partnership
25. Laois Partnership Company
26. Leitrim Integrated Development Company
27. Longford Community Resources CLG
28. Louth LEADER Partnership
29. Mayo North-East LEADER Partnership
30. Meath Partnership
31. Monaghan Integrated Development Ltd
32. NEWKD
33. North Tipperary Development Company
34. Northside Partnership
35. Offaly Local Development
36. PAUL Partnership
37. Roscommon LEADER Partnership
38. South Dublin County Partnership
39. SECAD
40. South Kerry Development Partnership
41. South Tipperary Development CLG
42. South-West Mayo Development Company
43. Southside Partnership DLR Ltd
44. Waterford Area Partnership Ltd.
45. Waterford LEADER Partnership
46. West Limerick Resources
47. West Cork Development Partnership
48. Westmeath Community Development
49. Wexford Local Development

# Core Programmes

ILDN Members deliver over 180 Programmes in their Communities on behalf of Government Departments, State Agencies, Local Authorities, and other funding bodies.

The following is an overview of some of the core programmes delivered by our members in 2021 and the Budget 2021 allocations for each of these Programmes:

Programme	Budget 2021 Estimate €
LEADER	44,000,000
SICAP	45,000,000
Rural Social Scheme	52,193,000
Local Employment Service	25,800,000
Tús	98,776,000
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	64,821,000
Jobs Clubs	7,950,000
Ability	1,760,000

ILDN members are involved in the delivery of over €340 million in State Programmes on behalf of the Department of Rural & Community

Development, Department of Social Protection, Department of Health, Department of Children & Youth Affairs.

# ILDN Budget 2022 Priorities:

**Budget 2022 offers the Government an opportunity to reimagine how the State reaches out to the most vulnerable and peripheral Communities in our Country. The COVID19 recovery requires investment in the areas of social inclusion, Rural Development, supports for the long-term unemployed, and the Community & Voluntary Sector who led the COVID19 response nationwide.**

## **ILDN priorities for Budget 2022 -**

- ILDN proposes a nationwide Local Employment Service delivered through Local Development Companies
- ILDN calls for increased investment in the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme and the development of a Digital Inclusion Fund. Budget 2022 provides an opportunity to take a significant step towards the restoration of the SICAP Budget to 2008 levels.

- ILDN urges the Government to provide the maximum permitted level of Exchequer co-funding for the purposes of LEADER

- ILDN calls for a successor to the Ability Programme to be announced in Budget 2022 to provide long term certainty to those who benefit from the Programme now and who may do so into the future.

- ILDN underlines the importance of deeper investment in Social Enterprise

- ILDN recommend reforms of Tús, Community Employment & Rural Social Schemes in order to maximise eligibility and participation

- ILDN suggests the introduction of a Core Costs Model to ensure the future sustainability of the Local Development Sector

# Social Inclusion

The Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is Ireland's primary social inclusion intervention. The programme aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals via community development, engagement and collaboration. SICAP is a national programme delivered by 46 ILDN Local Development Companies. Currently, the Social Inclusion budget stand at less than 50% of what it was in 2008 - (€39m spend in 2020, €84.7m in 2008) and Ireland ranks high internationally for social exclusion.

The COVID19 pandemic has pushed SICAP target groups further into poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. As the National Social Inclusion Programme, more investment is needed to tackle the issues that pre-existed and are now compounded by COVID. The effects of national responses to COVID such as lockdown, social isolation etc. have also compounded issues for disadvantaged groups across the country such as access to basic services, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, unemployment, food poverty etc.

Increased investment in SICAP is urgently needed to support a focus on:

Roma and Traveller Target groups	Food Poverty
New communities	Wellbeing and mental health
People with disabilities	Education, Training & Lifelong learning
Domestic Violence	Digital literacy (Digital divide)
Rural Isolation	Early years supports
Older Persons Services	Social Enterprise
Transition from Direct Provision of Asylum Seekers to housing	Community development
The Unemployed	The Long term unemployed & most distances from Labour Market

As we move into the COVID19 recovery phase, digitization and the remote delivery of services will become more normal across society and are part of Government strategy. The ILDN are concerned that this will cause further disadvantage to groups with poor access to and experience of digital platforms.

To protect vulnerable groups, typically SICAP target groups, **ILDN proposes a Digital Inclusion Fund (DIF) to be administered by Local Development Companies in conjunction with SICAP.** This will have three principal elements –

- It will provide a Digital Enabler in each Local Development Company who will work internally but mostly externally with target groups (e.g., Local Community Groups, Social Enterprises) to provide 'Going Back to Work' and Ongoing Supports to adapt and innovate in the new environment. As Local Community Groups and Social Enterprise use LDCs for ongoing advice on Health & Safety and other Compliance issues, the DIF will resource Health &

Safety/Compliance Officers in LDCs who will also be deployed to ensure the Social Inclusion Target Groups are supported to participate fully in civic society for the benefit of their own members.

- The digital challenge also requires support for Target Groups in the provision of hardware and software if they are not to be further distanced.
- New Programmes and Training for specific Target Groups such as Travellers, Roma, Migrants, and those not in employment, education or training.

Whilst specific funding is required, the DIF will benefit from existing integrated services and facilities within LDCs. An adequate DIF provision for 1.5 staff, programming and grants to beneficiaries will cost circa €7.84 million at an average of €160,000 per LDC.



The ILDN recognises that poverty, homelessness, social exclusion, isolation, and marginalisation have a negative impact on the wellbeing of individuals and the communities they live in and/or belong to.

We ask that the budget reflects a sense of real urgency in addressing the various crises that we have seen steadily worsen over the past number of years - increasing homelessness, social isolation, a growing educational divide, climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse. The ILDN also wishes to highlight the increase in child poverty over the previous decade and our commitment to early intervention and family support to address inequality and support integration.

We want to see these issues named and highlighted in the budget and the transformational change now required to tackle these issues equally reflected in spend allocation and targets. Budget 2022 provides an opportunity to take a significant step towards the restoration of the SICAP Budget to 2008 levels.

# LEADER

Irish Local Development Network represents the 35 members who deliver the LEADER Programme nationwide. Since its launch in 1991, the LEADER programme has helped rural communities across the European Union to actively engage and direct the local development of their areas, through community-led local development.

The next EU LEADER programme will not commence until 2023. To bridge the gap to the start of the next programme a Transitional LEADER Programme has come into effect with a Budget of €70 million to the end of 2022. To date demand under this Programme is high. **ILDN are calling for supplementary exchequer funding for the Transition Programme for 2022.**

The LEADER Programme offers the ideal vehicle for the delivery of development funding to Rural Areas in the most effective manner. Community-Led Local Development acts at European level as a multi-fund approach - that is that by joining different funding programmes

and instruments you can achieve greater results. **We believe that there is merit in the adaptation of a CLLD//Multi fund approach through LEADER to ensure rural communities' benefit from all available EU and State supports.**

Preparations for the next LEADER Programme 2023-2027 are reaching an advanced stage. Budget 2022 must set out the Government's ambitions for the next LEADER Programme. it is critical that Government allocates the maximum percentage allowable of exchequer co-funding for the purposes of LEADER 2023-2027. **ILDN are calling for an increased exchequer contribution to the Transitional LEADER Programme for 2022 & a commitment to providing the maximum allowable exchequer funding for the 2023-2027 Programme.**

The ILDN are also seeking implementation of the Programme for Government commitment to deliver LEADER through Independent Local Action Groups supported by Local Community Development Committees.

# Rural Social Scheme (RSS)

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) is aimed at low-income farmers and fishermen/women. To qualify for the RSS an applicant must be availing of a social welfare payment. In return, RSS participants provide services that benefit rural communities.

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) has overall responsibility for policy in relation to the Rural Social Scheme, including eligibility criteria.

The Department monitors the implementation of the RSS and supports the various bodies that manage the RSS locally. At a local level, the Scheme is managed by implementing bodies such as local development companies and in the Gaeltacht areas, by Údarás na Gaeltachta.

The Rural Social Scheme requires participants to work for 19.5 hours per week and is administered in a farmer/fisher friendly manner, allowing participants to work flexible hours.

- In February 2017 – the Six-year rule was introduced by the Department of Social Protection for the Rural Social

Scheme (RSS). This meant that all new participants coming onto the RSS after February 2017 would be limited to 6 years on the scheme. This 6-year rule was introduced following a review of the scheme in 2015.

- The 2015 review of the RSS seems to have been informed by a 'A focused policy assessment of the Rural Social Scheme' by the Dept. of Public Expenditure & Reform published in January 2014 which noted the following 'The Scheme provides an income support to people in rural occupations – typically operating small farm holdings or small fishing vessels – that are economically unsustainable, in the broader context of social cohesion. It is not designed as an employment activation scheme and was not set up to help people into sustainable employment. This may not be in participants' best interests in the long-term, and it is out of line with current Government policy which is focused on integrating income support schemes with activation.

In light of this, the paper proposes that future decisions on the funding and structure of the Scheme should be informed by the reform of other income and employment support schemes, which reflect recognition of the need for a back-to-work component.'

- As of February 26th, 2021 – there are 3098 participants on the scheme nationally. The scheme has a max national quota of 3340 places.
- Following a national survey commissioned by the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) to ascertain the potential impact of the six-year rule on the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) - the following are the key findings:

The impact of retirements & the six-year rule on the RSS Scheme nationally is set out below -

- Currently, an average of 150 (5%) of participants leave RSS through retirement each year
- In 2023, 460 will leave on 6-year rule and 152 through retirement: **Total 612**
- In 2024, 425 will leave on 6-year rule and 134 through retirement: **Total 559**
- In 2025, 278 will leave on 6-year rule and 120 through retirement: **Total 398**
- **In the years 2023 -2025, 51% of RSS will leave due to 6-year rule (38%) or retirement (13%)**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
6 Year Rule			460	425	278	1168
Retirement	146	159	152	134	120	706
Total	146	159	612	559	398	1874

The negative impact of the Department of Social Protection changes from 1st February 2017:

- Due to changes to payment structure introduced on 1st February 2017 the RSS is now operating under different rules for different participants.
- The 6 Year rule was introduced 1st February 2017. This will create major problems with declining number of participants in the years ahead. (See survey results above)
- The number of Farmers/Fishers joining the RSS each year is declining nationally.
- ILDN member is for the first time are finding it difficult to fill quotas of places.
- RSS is not attractive to the 6,000 farmers on weekly Farm Assist Payments.

ILDN Proposal to reform the RSS and address the issue of declining numbers:

1. The Department of Social Protection need to do an independent value for money review of the RSS. The last Social Cost benefit analysis of the RSS was published in January 2009 and found that FOR every €1 of cost to the exchequer there are €2.89 of quantifiable benefits. An updated value for money review is required.
2. After 2023 - Any Farmer on Farm Assist should be allowed avail of the RSS once there is a place available and community work to be done.
3. Increase top up to €50 per week for participants with no IQA to attract single farmers from the 6,000 on farm assist who currently don't see the RSS as being attractive. This is required to cover the costs of going out to work.
4. Promote the social aspect of the RSS through a national campaign.

5. Increase disregard on off farm employment when carrying out the farm assist means test. This will allow more farmers to qualify for the RSS.

6. Allow RSS participants to maintain IQA if partners wages are under €400/week in order to encourage participants partners to take up off farm employment.

7. DSP to refer farmers to the Implementing bodies through the circulation of 'new opportunity letters' each year to farmers on Farm Assist. The voluntary nature of the scheme must continue to be respected.

8. Remove the 6-year rule for participants over 55 years of age in line with other activation schemes.

9. In line with any increases in the retirement age beyond age 66 – RSS participants if willing, should be allowed remain on the scheme until they reach the increased retirement age.

# Tús

The Tús initiative is a community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people. The work opportunities are to benefit the community and are provided by community and voluntary organisations in both urban and rural areas. The Tús initiative is managed by Local Development Companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta for the Department of Social Protection (DSP), which has overall responsibility for the scheme.

The contribution of the Tús programme to both jobseekers and communities has been significant. There have however been difficulties with referrals and with an imbalanced exit and entry process which has depressed numbers being referred to the Tús initiative.

## **ILDN propose the following reforms to the Tús scheme:**

- Reduce the period from which a Tús participant who has completed a placement can access another Tús placement from 3-years to 1-year. This approach allows the maximum number of jobseekers possible access to the

scheme and its benefits from a productivity, educational and societal perspective.

- Extend employment contracts for participants identified as needing increased support to ensure their eventual progression. It is evident that the 12-month Tús contract for those coming from long-term unemployment is simply not sufficient to allow many participants to break the cycle of unemployment and fully re-integrate with the open labour market.

- Update the eligibility criteria to increase access to the Tús programme to more jobseekers. The current eligibility excludes those who may have engaged in pro-active job seeking activities in the previous year.

- Furthermore, there are a cohort who while jobless may not be on the Live Register and may welcome an opportunity to pursue a scheme such as Tús. Examples of how eligibility could be extended include:

- Reducing the qualifying period for Tús to 6 months

- Allowing all periods of training, work experience and short-term employment to count towards Tús eligibility

- Extending eligibility to those not in receipt of a DSP payment but have training or those who are coming off a payment and are considering pursuing employment again

- Extend employment contracts for Tús participants aged 62 or over. Job opportunities for the over 60's are limited for a range of reasons. In order to provide fulfilling opportunities for those over 62 who wish to remain on the Tús scheme for an extended period consideration should be given to allow this age cohort to remain on Tús until statutory Retirement or until they attain full-time employment

## Community Employment Scheme (CE)

ILDN propose the following reforms to the Community Employment Scheme:

- Participants who leave the CE Scheme, or who do not take up another year within their current placement when their contract ends should be eligible for CE again after a 3-month period.

- Reinstate the CE scheme training budget to €500 per participant per annum in order to maximise training

opportunities for participants beyond the current options.

- Develop a broader range of criteria for what is deemed acceptable in terms training options. This will allow for enhanced participation and improve post scheme career opportunities while also catering for participants with literacy & numeracy issues as well as other learning-based difficulties.



# Ability Programme

The Ability Programme is a pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities. The funding for this programme amounted to around €16 million over a three-year period and is being provided jointly under the EU's ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) Operational Programme 2014-2020 and the Irish Exchequer. The programme supported over 2,600 young people with disabilities between 15 and 29 years of age.

The aim of the Ability Programme is to help bring young people with disabilities who are not work-ready closer to the labour market through engagement in training and personal development activities, to be followed by an incremental exposure to work.

The programme is being delivered by 27 community and voluntary groups from around the country including a number of Local Development Companies, selected on foot of a competitive process. The projects being funded have been designed to assist young people

in their transition from school to further education and employment.

The current Ability Programme is due to end in 2021. The 2,600+ young people who registered and engaged across the 27 projects all around the country require ongoing support to continue their journey through education and training towards employment if they are to realise their full potential.

For this support to continue a solution needs approval to ensure these young people avoid early school leaving and unemployment.

**ILDN calls for a successor Programme to be announced in Budget 2022 to provide long term certainty to those who benefit from the Programme now and who may do so into the future.**

# Local Employment Services

'Pathways to Work' - the Government's strategy to tackle unemployment puts forward a new model of employment service nationwide (Regional Employment Service) which departs from the successful Local Employment Service model delivered by Local Development Companies in 23 locations across the Country for the past 25 years. Local Employment Services and Jobs Clubs services will cease at end of 2021.

The service model offered by the Regional Employment Service Request For Tender published on May 30th 2021 differs in 2 significant respects to the existing model:

1. For - Profit Model: The proposed model is a for-profit model that has not been proven to work anywhere in the world for those who are distant from the labour market. It is predicated on providers being paid for placement rather than personal progression using a guidance approach. This cannot meet the needs of the Long-term Unemployment and also excludes many cohorts including carers, Lone Parents

and those referred from complementary programmes such as SICAP etc. It is not fit for the purpose of meeting the needs of the Long-term Unemployed.

2. State Transferring all Risk to Charities:

The proposed model shifts a long-standing relationship of the state and community sector working together to address a deep-rooted problem into a transactional relationship. Providers (who are Charities), rather than the Funder (DSP) must provide the cost of running the service and recoup it through the unit fee for each user referred by the funder. DSP is guaranteeing less than 300 annual referrals per 100,000 of population – not nearly sufficient to fund a service capable of meeting the employment challenges we face today. Under the financial model proposed, the income from delivery of the service will be variable dependent on client throughput, (unlike the cost met model that is currently in place) whilst many of the costs of delivering the service such as staff, rent etc., are fixed. The cost of delivering the service may also have to be front-loaded.

This financial model is not viable or sustainable for charitable not-for-profit companies. This low number of guaranteed referrals when combined with a variable income against fixed costs puts huge financial risk onto Local Development Companies. The transfer of risk to the voluntary, charitable sector will lead to closure of many organisations, impacting ancillary programmes such as the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme.

In areas with existing operations, the LES are providing an effective service and can be easily and rapidly upscaled in response to local needs. The 2019 independent Indecon Report records full-time employment placement in these services at 28.8% of hard-to place long-term unemployed, as well as significant levels of part-time work placements. In addition, 89% of employer respondents indicated that their engagement with the Local Employment Services had helped them to find suitable candidates for available jobs.

In the remaining 14 counties, the country's Local Development Companies are currently closely engaged with jobseekers through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Jobs Clubs, BTWEA and Tús, and they have been preparing to deliver LES type services for some time. Whilst they have not operated the LES programme, they do offer comprehensive rural employment services and have been preparing to add LES. They benefit from best practice sharing and networking to existing LES operators through the ILDN network.

Given the uncertainty in the labour market, the high numbers requiring activation over the next two years and the capacity available to the state through Local Development Companies, now is not the time to embark on a realignment of existing LES operational areas and the introduction of a dual strand procurement process that will fundamentally disrupt activation services when they are needed most. Instead, we need to release and mobilise the existing capacity.

What ILDN proposes is:

- All Local Development Companies that do not have an existing LES would be contracted to provide an LES-type service, reflective of the Covid-19 context and changing Socio Economic profile.

- In this period, existing LDCs with LES contracts will continue to deliver the current LES service but provide enhanced services.

This proposal offers an agile response to the inevitable high demand for employment services -

- There is integration with existing rural employment and inclusion services.

- There is no requirement to develop further office infrastructure.

- There is no disruption to existing services from realignment of operational areas or loss of skilled staff.

# A Sustainable Local Development Sector

**ILDN is seeking the introduction of a core cost funding model as a more sustainable and equitable approach to supporting the inclusion focused and anti-poverty work of Local Development Companies country wide. This model is based on a full cost recovery system in line with Objective 4 of the Government's Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities strategy.**

LDCs are responsible for implementing a range of programmes and initiatives, funded by the state and EU sources, to address poverty, disadvantage, exclusion and discrimination experienced by key target groups and marginalised communities. Based on over 25 years of successful delivery, a strong and robust trusted partner working relationship has been developed with many Government Departments and state agencies. LDCs are currently funded on a programme-by-programme budget scenario. Within this programme-by-programme funding milieu there is a degree of fragmentation and disjointed provision that act as impediments to maximising of the programmes remit and the resulting

investment return opportunities. As such the current funding approach does not contribute to a sustainable operational framework.

The introduction of a fit for purpose core costs funding model to must be dynamic and premised on a full costs recovery system. The core costs funding model proposed will provide the necessary scope for LDCs to better achieve outcomes related to Government inclusion focused policy objectives and will help simplify matters in the recording, reporting and verification of integral management and administration functions involved in multiple programmes delivery. Properly resourced LDCs will continue to provide the state with transparent and credible systems for programmes delivery country-wide that meet best practice governance standards, high level quality performance and achievement and regulatory compliance.

# Social Enterprise

Social enterprises are businesses whose core objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact. Like other businesses, they trade in goods or services on an ongoing basis. However, any surpluses they generate are re-invested into achieving a social impact.

Ireland is highly reliant on social enterprise and has the potential to create many more services and jobs in the sector. Forfás has estimated that Ireland's social enterprise sector supports over 25,000 jobs but has the potential to create at least a further 65,000.

Local Development Companies have a long and proud tradition of initiating and supporting social enterprises around the country that bring a multi-layered set of benefits to disadvantaged communities in rural and urban Ireland. Currently, approximately 40 LDCs employ a dedicated staff member to work with and support social enterprises in every part of Ireland. In addition, LEADER and SICAP programme staff work with social enterprises.

ILDN are collaborating with the Department of Rural & Community Development in the delivery of the €1 million Social Enterprise Regeneration Programme.

Supports include:

- Local Development Companies exclusively operate the SICAP and LEADER Programmes which have social enterprise as component activities under EU Partnership Agreements.
- Developing and directly managing social enterprises.
- Strong experience in upskilling others to develop and manage social enterprises.
- Provision of Governance supports to companies including the Social Enterprise Regeneration Programme 2021.
- Using 'on-the-ground' knowledge to ensure that services are relevant to local needs and making connections with local communities.

- Pre-Enterprise Training Supports including 'Start your Social Enterprise' programme which is complemented by mentoring and advice.

- Grant Assistance for Social Enterprise Start-up/Expansion: Grant assistance to social enterprises is allocated through a variety of programmes e.g., LEADER and SICAP.

- Provision of Placements: The opportunity to employ individuals through activation and other schemes bridge an important resource gap for the social enterprises at the start-up and scaling stages. Schemes such as Community Employment Schemes, Tús, RSS and Job Initiative are the most frequently used programmes.

- Meaningful training and employment opportunities for marginalised individuals who are in many instances excluded from mainstream employment opportunities (individuals with disabilities, ex-prisoners, ex-offenders, early school leavers etc).

Investment in Social Enterprises provides the State with the opportunity to meet a range of objectives in terms of job creation and the provision of services.

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