



STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

Supporting Local
Development Companies
to Build Vibrant,
Inclusive Communities



IRISH LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK

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Companies to Build Vibrant,
Inclusive Communities

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FOREWORD

This Strategic Plan comes at a critical juncture in the development of the Irish Local Development Network whose membership is the largest provider of community development, social inclusion and anti-poverty services in Ireland.

ILDN members offer a comprehensive range of integrated person-centred services to citizens and communities, working directly with those who are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Services include:

- ◆ **Social Inclusion**
- ◆ **Personal Development and Well-Being**
- ◆ **Early Years and Family Supports**
- ◆ **Education & Training**
- ◆ **Employment Services**
- ◆ **Enterprise and Social Enterprise Development**
- ◆ **Urban and Rural Development**
- ◆ **Climate Change and Just Transition**

The 49 member companies directly assist over 170,000 individuals and over 15,000 communities and community groups each year. Collectively they manage and deliver over €300+ million worth of Government and philanthropy funded programmes and employ over 2,000 staff with a presence in every community including rural, urban and Ireland's offshore Islands.

This national capacity, delivered on a not-for-profit basis, through community-led voluntary governance, represents a distinct and unique value to Irish citizens and the state in putting people and communities first. The partnership structure of Local Development Company boards and their commitment to community development principles significantly contributes to the principle of subsidiarity.

In supporting our members, the Irish Local Development Network facilitates research, policy development, networking, opportunities to share knowledge

and best practice and group procurement of services and supports. We also advocate on behalf of our members and the communities they serve to influence national policy. As such, the strategic direction of the network is vitally important, not just to the Irish Local Development Network and its members but also to Irish society generally.

Recent years have been described as a post-austerity era where communities still felt the effect of the recession and the disproportionate, unrestored cuts to funding – for instance funding for the national social inclusion programme remains half what it was in 2008. New commissioning and procurement models have led to the commodification of community services and an erosion of bottom-up approaches. A presumption has been allowed to grow that community services can be bought on the same basis as any other commodity without reference to the key dynamics of communities and community development approaches.



Local Development Companies have kept the flame alight in this challenging period, playing a vital role in supporting and empowering communities and enabling the state to reach people it would not otherwise reach, thus ensuring effective use of taxpayer funds.

Now these same groups and communities face the prospect of rolling an even bigger boulder up the post-COVID hill and LDCs will be there to support them.

Unlike the last downturn, there is now a statutory strategy for the Community & Voluntary and Local Development sectors entitled ‘Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities’.

This strategy recognises that ‘policy developments and funding reductions during the recession impacted the capacity of community development, local development....sector to support communities’ and that a ‘renewed community-statutory partnership is essential to bring about better outcomes for communities ... partnership underpinned by strong, autonomous community development and local development structures’ (Government of Ireland, 2019).

This is more urgent than ever, given the challenges of

COVID-19. The response to the 2020 Pandemic from the Local Development Sector has been immense, putting into focus our best attributes – agility, commitment, person-centred, value-for-money, connected to and trusted by the most vulnerable in our society.

The socially excluded have sought out their Local Development Company – over 2,200 persons per day getting in touch with a specific need. These people and groups have been hit hardest by the crisis, as they have been in every downturn and emergency. They have turned to our members at this time and it been the proud duty of Local Development Companies to respond to their needs. How we serve them in an increasingly digital future will be a huge challenge given the digital divide that many of our groups already experience. Nevertheless, we will use all our capacity and influence to herald the digital dividend that has eluded many of our communities to date.

The Irish Local Development

Jim Finn,
Chairperson

Network welcomes the government’s commitment to invest in and work in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. Now, this commitment will be tested hard. There are choices to be made between value systems and competing interests.

The Irish Local Development Network must be bold in supporting our members and the communities they serve as well as in building a network that contributes to the building of a just, equitable and sustainable society.

We would like to thank, all Chairpersons, CEOs, staff of the Local Development Companies, partners, funders and stakeholders who contributed time, energy, knowledge and expertise in developing this strategy.

Joe Saunders,
Manager

THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

1.1

Local Development: a National Context

The Local Development sector makes a distinct contribution to Irish society and its unique role is enshrined in state's policy, as follows.

“Local Development promotes area-based, integrated community-led interventions based on participative democracy to address long-term unemployment economic marginalisation and social exclusion.”

(Government of Ireland, Sustainable, Inclusive & Empowered Communities, 2019, p.16)

The Irish Local Development Network embraces this definition of Local Development as espoused in the Government's strategy.

1.2

The Role of Local Development Companies

Local Development Companies are multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver a range of exchequer and philanthropy-funded programmes in promoting sustainable local development and social inclusion. Operating on a non-profit basis, Local Development Companies have a presence in every county, city, town and village in Ireland and work across urban, rural and island communities of all population sizes, profiles and densities.

Local Development Companies serve as a conduit through which resources can be directed toward disadvantaged communities and a hub around which a variety of programmes and funding sources can be moulded into a coherent strategy and a suite of services and supports tailored to the needs of local communities. Underpinned by an ethos of partnership and collaborative working they work with individuals, families, communities, civil society organisations, the private sector and the state to address local needs and promote sustainable economic and community development. Indeed, achieving sustainable development requires an integrated and balanced approach across social, economic, environmental, and cultural themes to achieve social inclusion and in meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities.

As not-for-profit organisations, they benefit from and nurture local social capital throughout

their governance and operational structures and processes. They have extensive local knowledge, reach and relationships with other local community-based organisations. They are innovative, flexible and agile in responding to community needs, and have proven capacity in quickly implementing programmes on behalf of the state and other funders. In being rooted in their local communities, Local Development Companies offer a unique value to the Irish state in enabling the delivery of a range of exchequer-funded supports to individuals and communities.

Traditionally, the work of Local Development Companies was primarily supported through state funded grants. However, in more recent times, this funding approach has shifted, and the state has moved toward competitive tendering for the delivery of social and community services. The trend toward competitive tendering is changing the relationships between Local Development Companies and the state from one of partnership and co-creation in addressing complex societal issues to a transactional relationship focused on service delivery and outputs. The appropriateness of this trend has not been subjected to the rigour of independent analysis. Whilst the value of the Local Development approach is recognised in state policy, provision for its funding and how it is engaged is not in place. This will be a key issue for Irish society and communities over the lifetime of this Strategic Plan.

49 

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES

2,100 

STAFF NATIONWIDE

15,000+ 

COMMUNITY GROUPS ASSISTED ANNUALLY

170,000+ 

PERSONS ASSISTED ANNUALLY

€330m

VALUE OF PROGRAMMES DELIVERED ANNUALLY

1.3

The Irish Local Development Network

The operational context within which the Irish Local Development Network exists is a complex and challenging one. The need for a collective voice, expressed through the Irish Local Development Network, is critical in assisting member organisations navigate this multifaceted environment - particularly in helping shape and influence policies and exchequer funded programmes, to create an enabling ecosystem for member organisations, and support their work in helping to build a more inclusive society and sustainable economy. In an ever-changing operational context, the strategic direction of the network requires ongoing review and clarification to ensure it continues to act as an accurate and useful compass in supporting members in decision-making and programme implementation.



PROGRAMMES INCLUDE

- Area Based Childhood (ABC)
- Ability
- Asylum and Migrant Integration Fund
- Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
- Building Healthy Communities
- Care and Repair Services
- Community Employment
- Community Food Initiatives
- Community Services Programme
- Drugs and Alcohol Projects
- EU LIFE
- Gender Equality and Employment
- Healthy Food Made Easy
- Healthy Ireland
- Incredible Years
- Jobs Initiative
- Jobs Clubs
- LEADER/ Rural Development Programme
- Local Training Initiative
- Mental Health initiatives
- Preparing for Life
- Resettlement Projects
- Rural Recreation and Walks
- Rural Social Scheme
- Safe Food Community Food Initiative
- Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme
- Skillsnets
- Social Enterprise
- Social Prescribing
- Traveller Primary Health Care Projects
- Tús
- Volunteer Centres

2 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The process of devising this strategic plan entailed widespread consultation and reflection across the network to assist the Board in assessing the network's fitness for purpose, identifying current and emergent challenges, exploring the network's potential, its values and potential objectives.

Conducted across 2019 and 2020, the planning process included the following elements:

- ◆ Review of the 2016 - 2019 strategy,
- ◆ Development of key questions and key planning frames,
- ◆ Workshops with the ILDN Board and Council of ILDN,
- ◆ Hosting of three regional workshops attended by CEOs, Chairs and Staff of member companies,
- ◆ Interviews with external stakeholders including funders and partner agencies,
- ◆ Preparation and circulation of draft papers for Board and Members discussion,
- ◆ Agreement of key principles and content,
- ◆ Adoption by the Board and Members of ILDN.



3 VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND THEMES

3.1

Irish Local Development Network Vision Statement

A Local Development sector, operating through supportive national and local policies and structures, that plays a full role in bringing about a just and sustainable society.

3.2

Irish Local Development Network Mission Statement

To facilitate Ireland's Local Development Companies in building a more just, inclusive, equitable and sustainable society.

3.3

Irish Local Development Network Values

3.3.1 - Stewardship

Stewardship is about integrity, transparency, trust and communication. The Irish Local Development Network strives to serve as a model for good governance, to pursue membership-driven processes of decision-making, and to act as a trusted partner.

3.3.2 - Community Led

Community is about empowering the voice of communities, and engaging communities of place and of interest in processes of community development. The Irish Local Development Network strives to bring forward, through its members, the needs of communities in its work, and to enable effective engagement by its members.

3.3.3 - Equality/Equity

Equality is about dignity, fairness, diversity, and inclusion. Equity recognises that not everyone is starting from the same point in life. The Irish Local Development Network strives to advance equality/equity and promote diversity through its policy work and in its practice.

3.3.4 - Social Justice

Social Justice is about improving the quality of life of people experiencing disadvantage and to embed this in policy. The Irish

Local Development Network strives to contribute to improving the quality of life of the communities engaged by its members.

3.3.5 - Sustainable Development

Sustainability is defined as 'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Through its work the Irish Local Development Network promotes the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.





3.4

Irish Local Development Network Themes

Whilst Irish Local Development Network members have many common programmes, supports and services, it must also be recognised that there is great variety and diversity in the range of activities they implement to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

In recognising this, the network will organise along several thematic areas, that best encapsulate the breadth of work being undertaken by members, while also bringing coherence to the network's strategy.





MICHAEL BOWE
CHAIRPERSON
ILDN ENTERPRISE & EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
AND CEO, DUBLIN NORTH WEST AREA PARTNERSHIP

3.4.1 - Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion is at the heart of what Local Development Companies do. This entails assisting people and communities to achieve their full potential and participate fully in all aspects of life whatever their economic or cultural background or health status.

3.4.2 - Personal Development and Well-Being

Local Development Companies are concerned about people and their personal journey. We serve our communities by dealing with the whole person as more than an economic unit. Local Development Companies continue to develop a range of programmes and supports to assist individuals in their personal journey and to help them fulfil their goals in the widest possible sense.

3.4.3 - Early Years and Family Supports

Parenting and Early Years development present some of the greatest joys and challenges in life and society. Local Development Companies recognise that many families struggle in providing a supportive and nurturing environment for their children and so offer a range of supports to assist in these challenges.

3.4.4 - Education & Training

Education and training are key transformative processes in human development. Unfortunately, for many in our society, appropriate education and training opportunities are not always accessible, available

or affordable. Local Development Companies guide and support individuals on their education journey and match them with suitable, accessible opportunities so that they have the greatest chance of achieving their full potential.

3.4.5 - Employment Services

Local Development Companies are to the forefront of assisting people into meaningful and sustainable employment. Programmes include Local Employment Service (LES), Tús Community Work Placement Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Jobs Clubs, SICAP Pre-Employment Supports, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Community Employment (CE), Community Service Programme and Back to Work Enterprise.

3.4.6 - Enterprise and Social Enterprise Development

Social enterprises are businesses whose core objective is to achieve a social or environmental impact. Like other businesses, they trade in goods or services on an ongoing basis but any surpluses they generate are re-invested into achieving their social purpose. Local Development Companies support social enterprises throughout Ireland through LEADER, SICAP and other programmes. We also support individual enterprise through LEADER and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance programmes.

3.4.7 - Urban and Rural Development

Local Development Companies were initially set up to respond to the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion through a locally responsive, innovative, integrated approach, built on a partnership model, with local ownership' (OECD 2005). Today they offer place-based solutions to the challenges of urban and rural development across Ireland. There are 14 urban and 35 rural Local Development Companies, covering the entire state and implementing place-based solutions based on local knowledge and input.

3.4.8 - Climate Change and Just Transition

Climate Action is a key challenge for our time requiring coherent responses at community level. Local Development Companies are working across several facets of this challenge. For example, a Just Transition is required to assist many communities and sectors to adapt to climate change without undue personal cost or community impact. Local Development Companies are working with communities suffering fuel poverty as well as those where fossil fuel-related employment must adapt to new circumstances.

3.5

Achieving Change

The implementation of the Irish Local Development Network's vision of a sustainable Local Development Sector that improves society through multi-sectoral partnership requires a strengthening of Local Development Companies so that they:

- ◆ Are enabled to deliver services and supports that respond to the needs of disadvantaged communities
- ◆ Have access to core funding for sustainability
- ◆ Are afforded the space and opportunities to innovate

The achievement of this change requires changes in national and local policymaking so that

- ◆ Relevant national policies, programmes, and programme related processes are put in place across all policy areas that recognise and enable the potential of sustainable local development and the unique role of Local Development Companies
- ◆ Local authority level structures, such as Local and Community Development Committees, and processes, such as the Local Economic and Community Plan, interact appropriately with Local Development Companies

The achievement of these changes, in turn, requires change by the Irish Local Development Network, externally and internally, such as:

- ◆ The Irish Local Development Network develops the capacity, relationships and partnerships to effectively influence relevant policy areas.
- ◆ The network begins to operate more strategically in developing relationships with other key Government Departments and stakeholders that have a role in promoting and supporting sustainable local development across the key thematic areas in which members operate
- ◆ In acting strategically, the network balances the needs of member organisations in delivering specific programmes and moves to developing specific policies across thematic areas in promoting sustainable development
- ◆ The Irish Local Development Network effectively mobilises its members' expertise and secures their full engagement in the implementation of this strategic plan.



Women's Programme
RePower & SAVE

Adult Education



THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN. A GUIDE FOR POLICY MAKERS

New Water Colour Painting Class

International Women's Day

4

IRISH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4.1

OBJECTIVE 1

Secure an Enabling Policy Context for the Irish Local Development Network's Vision for Local Development

The Irish Local Development Network offers a space where Local Development Companies, communities, Government Departments, Local Government and policy makers intersect. It provides a collective voice for Local Development Companies to influence and inform policy.

4.1.1 Objective 1 – 2 Actions

- ◆ Share learning, develop and communicate policy positions from the experience and expertise of members in serving their communities and delivering programmes.
- ◆ Champion relevant research priorities to be pursued at national level.

4.2

OBJECTIVE 2

Build Strategic Relationships and Partnerships with Key Stakeholders across all Sectors

The Irish Local Development Network provides a channel for stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally to engage with Local Development Companies as a collective. It serves as a practical resource for its members in advancing their work.

4.2.1 Objective 2 - 3 Actions

- ◆ Engage with local and national government, relevant agencies, EU and international bodies to ensure the development and sustenance of the optimum funding and institutional infrastructure for local development.
- ◆ Provide coherent representation for Local Development Companies to all government departments and state agencies with a role in local development.
- ◆ Engage with community sector organisations, philanthropic organisations, private sector organisations, trade unions and academia to advance the ILDN vision for local development.



4.3

OBJECTIVE 3**Serve as a Platform for Irish Local Development Network Members to Network and Share Experiences**

The Irish Local Development Network is the key platform for member companies to learn and share their experience of rural and urban development to benefit local communities.

4.3.1 Objective 3 - 2 Actions

- ◆ Serve as a learning community and peer support hub for members by developing Communities of Practice, linked to the Irish Local Development Network thematic areas.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for members to engage in discussion and analysis at a conceptual level to build shared perspectives on common challenges.



4.4

OBJECTIVE 4**Strengthen the Potential and Processes of the ILDN Network****4.4.1 Objective 4 - 5 Actions**

- ◆ Sustain an internal infrastructure, including internal communications mechanisms, that enables participation by members, mobilises their expertise, and allows their expectations to be realised.
- ◆ Implement the structures, policies and procedures required to ensure high standards of governance and management within the ILDN.
- ◆ Develop a strong brand to enable a better understanding of and recognition for the Irish Local Development Network and Local Development Companies and their capabilities.
- ◆ Develop an effective communications strategy for the Irish Local Development Network and establish the capacity and resources required to implement the strategy.
- ◆ Facilitate group procurement and shared services where beneficial to the entire membership.
- ◆ Continually act to ensure the availability of the resources required to carry out the strategic actions in this Plan.

The Irish Local Development Network's work is rooted in the expertise and experience of its members and staff. To fully realise the network's potential and that of its members, additional resources need to be secured to deliver upon the strategic objectives and the actions outlined in this document.



5 INDICATORS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Irish Local Development Network's strategic goals and actions will have appropriate qualitative and quantitative targets set annually. These will be used to assess progress using the following output and impact indicators:

5.1

Output Indicators

- ◆ Appropriate internal structures in place to facilitate internal communication,
- ◆ Appropriate Tools and mechanisms in place to elicit member views and generate policy development in coherent, inclusive manner e.g. surveys, intranet, workshops, events etc.
- ◆ Development of shared positions, sharing of best practice and policy development
- ◆ Surveys and research projects commissioned to inform Irish Local Development Network policy.
- ◆ Appropriate external interfaces established and sustained with funders, policy makers and other stakeholders.
- ◆ Communications strategies to ensure that the ILDN and Local Development Company voice is present in relevant national and local discourse through clear, consistent messages.
- ◆ Sustained engagement with relevant EU institutions and parliament.
- ◆ Training programmes for members developed and delivered.

- ◆ Effective Policy position papers developed.
- ◆ Effective monitoring and implementation of the work and impact of ILDN.

5.2

Impact Indicators

- ◆ Evidence that Irish Local Development Network members have access to inclusive, collaborative opportunities to set and implement network policy and administration.
- ◆ Evidence that Irish Local Development Network members have access to best practice-sharing, networking, training and group procurement opportunities.
- ◆ Evidence that Irish Local Development Network's vision for local development and the role of Local Development Companies is widely accepted and articulated through national and regional policy.
- ◆ Evidence that Irish Local Development Network's policy positions are influencing programmes and practices of funders and policymakers.
- ◆ Evidence that the Irish Local Development Network's knowledge and expertise is shaping the tools and approaches developed by funders and policymakers to evaluate and measure social impact

on issues on which Local Development Companies work.

- ◆ Evidence that Irish Local Development Network Policy positions are reflected in new statutory and local government policies and programmes and in reviews of existing policies and programmes.
- ◆ Evidence of growing brand awareness and capability for the Irish Local Development Network and its members amongst government departments, statutory bodies, national and regional media and the public.

5.3

Monitoring and Evaluation

Priorities for the network will be identified by the Board on an annual basis, and discussed and agreed at the Council, in line with this plan. Annual targets will be set for each indicator, based on the resources available to ILDN. An external evaluation of this strategic plan will be commissioned by ILDN in 2022.



6 IRISH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK STRUCTURE

The Irish Local Development Board, comprised of 14 Directors, is responsible for the effective governance and oversight of the network, its staff and resources and in ensuring the network operates in the interest of its members. Comprised of both Chairpersons and CEOs of member companies the Board is elected by the Council Members.

The Irish Local Development Network's Council is comprised of the Chairpersons and CEOs of the 49 member companies. It serves as a central platform through which the ILDN members engage.

ILDN Board

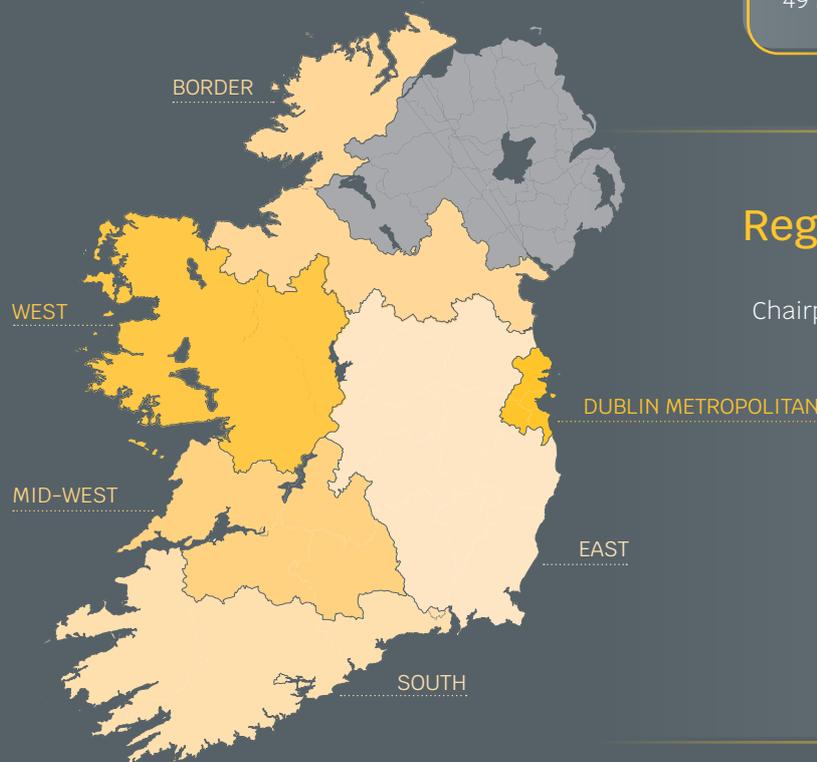
14 Directors

ILDN Council

Comprised of 49 Member Organisations

ILDN Regional Groups

Comprised of Chairpersons and CEOs from each ILDN Region



ILDN Board Committees

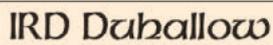
Comprised of CEOs and staff of Local Development Companies

- ☞ Research & Evaluation
- ☞ LEADER/Rural Development
- ☞ HRM
- ☞ Audit and Risk
- ☞ Employment & Enterprise
- ☞ Social Inclusion

ILDN Staff Fora

- ☞ LEADER
- ☞ Social Inclusion
- ☞ Enterprise
- ☞ Local Employment Service
- ☞ Administrators

MEMBERS





Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Irish Local Development Network CLG is also supported by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.



The members of Irish Local Development Network CLG pay an annual subscription fee to support the work of the organisation.



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