

Good Practice template

- All Good Practices identified by an Interreg Europe project and reported in the progress reports have to be submitted to the Programme.
- In order to submit a practice, you will have to register in the Interreg Europe website. Online submission will be available the first semester of 2017.
- NB: in orange: 2 optional fields. All other fields are compulsory.

1. General information	
Title of the practice	Local Enterprise Office
Does this practice come from an Interreg Europe Project	No

In case 'yes' is selected, the following sections appear:

Please select the project acronym	LEO
--	-----

Specific objective	Improving innovation Delivery policies. Rural SMEs to consolidate and overcome barriers to their growth and competitiveness	
Main institution involved	Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) and Enterprise Ireland	
Location of the practice	Country	Ireland
	NUTS 1	
	NUTS 2	South West region
	NUTS 3	

2. Detailed description



Detailed information on the practice

Since 2014, Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in the region have provided advice, information and support. The LEO is the *First Stop Shop* for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. The Local Enterprise Office provides advice, information and support to those starting up or growing their business. With 31 dedicated teams across the regions (by Local Authority area) in Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices offer a wide range of experience, skills and services. The Local Enterprise Office is for those already in business or those thinking of starting-up a business including; entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, start-ups and small business looking to expand. Since the establishment of the LEO structure, all categories of business – including sole traders, micro businesses and small and medium sized companies –have access to Government supports and advice. Each LEO, embedded in a local authority is charged with developing a local plan for boosting enterprise, with targets including new business start-ups, business expansions and jobs created or sustained as well as wider economic impacts such as exports, mentoring, training and enterprise promotion. The initiation of LEO structures represented a fundamental reform of local government with the aim to ensure that services are delivered and decisions made closer to the people.

The LEOs are embedded within the Local Authority structures and provide vital support for local business across a range of actions. The structure provides a service which amalgamates national enterprise policy and local business supports in order to strengthen the local business culture and environment. The LEO structure is overseen by a dedicated National Centre of Excellence in Enterprise Ireland.

LEO Policy direction and funding is provided by Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The LEO network aims to support those aiming to develop business ideas:

- to drive the development of local enterprise, putting local micro and small business at the heart of job creation in Ireland
- to drive and support business start-ups and promote a ‘can-do’ business culture
- to increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses
- to increase the number of innovative businesses with potential to export
- and to be proactive in response to the needs of our clients

A Local Enterprise Office provides:

- direct financial supports to micro businesses,
- advise on the range of alternative funding options available,
- offer business information, advisory services and enterprise support,
- deliver high-quality training to meet the needs of business



including; Start Your Own Business, Managing Your Business e.g. Marketing, Sales, Financial Management, Strategy and Business Planning,

- mentoring with experienced experts in the area of expertise,
- guidance on the most relevant supports for growth and development of a business,
- advice on local authority regulations, planning, accessibility, environment, procurement and other issues affecting a client business,
- connect a client business with appropriate state resources including relevant agencies such as the Department of Social Protection: Enterprise Supports; Microfinance Ireland: Business Loans; Revenue: Start Up Relief for Entrepreneurs; Education and Training Boards: Business Courses; Credit Review Office: When your bank has refused credit

Furthermore, a local LEO creates progression pathways for high-potential companies in the respective region to access Enterprise Ireland, advise on local property solutions for start-ups and business expansions, organises key enterprise events; facilitates effective business networking; promotes entrepreneurship education in the local community.

Financial Supports - Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) provide a range of financial supports designed to assist with the establishment and/or growth of enterprises (limited company, individuals/sole trader, cooperatives and partnerships) employing up to ten people and meeting required criterion. These include Feasibility/Innovation Grants; Priming Grants; Business Expansion Grants. These financial supports are designed to provide a flexible suite of supports to LEO clients and potential clients.

First Stop Shop -The Local Enterprise Offices are the local first-stop shop for new entrepreneurs and existing micro-enterprise and small business owners. The LEOs are the front door through which all information on State supports for small and micro-businesses can be accessed and signposted and through which other supports and bodies with programmes relevant to small business as well as important local services and compliance requirements can be provided. Importantly, the LEOs are a business connection into the Local Authority, Enterprise Ireland and all State agencies that can help grow a client business. This includes the following key agencies to ensure you will have access to all Government supports e.g. Revenue; Dept of Social Protection; Education and Training Boards; Skillnets; Microfinance Ireland; Credit Review Office; Fáilte Ireland.



Training Programmes -The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) provide an extensive range of supports to local business communities. Our confidential advisory service is open to anyone exploring self employment as an option or for those who are currently operating a business. To assist the small business community in meeting the challenges of the business world, LEOs provide a wide range of high-quality training supports which are tailored to meet specific business requirements. Whether it is starting a business or growing a business there is something suitable for everyone.

The Mentor Programme is designed to match up the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business practitioners with small business owner/ managers who need practical and strategic one to one advice and guidance. The mentor contributes independent, informed observation and advice to aid decision making. All applications for mentor assistance are dealt with individually and are preceded by a business needs analysis to assess the key needs of the business and determine the most imperative mentoring objectives.

Trading Online Voucher Scheme – up to €2,500 grant available

Grow your business with help from this Government grant scheme, designed to assist small businesses. It offers financial assistance of up to €2,500 along with training and advice to help a business trade online. Participating in this scheme can make the process of trading online much easier for you. **Making informed decisions** is vital for all business, so the free help and training provided by a **local enterprise office** puts a business in a position to decide what is best for the business. **Cutting the cost** of developing an online trading capacity by up to 50% can make the investment very affordable for many small businesses out there.

Over 2,000 businesses have already benefitted from the scheme.

In partnership with the **Enterprise Europe Network**, Local Enterprise Offices across the country support SMEs to become more knowledgeable and competitive in global markets, leading to greater international business opportunities.

As a specific example of a LEO in the Cork region, LEO South Cork's vision is to act as the catalyst and advocate for the establishment of a best practice enterprise culture among start-ups, micro and small businesses; and also to promote enterprise and self-employment as a viable career option among the wider population. This objective is being implemented through a wide range of programmes, supports and activities, including, for example Start Your Own Business (SYOB) training, a wide suite of general business training programmes, management development training programmes, mentoring, promotion and delivery of Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE), working with Community Enterprise Centres, Enterprise Europe Network and entrepreneurship education modules at both second



	<p>and third level.</p>
	<p>In conclusion, it is contended that the availability of such key supports via the Local Enterprise Office network across the region and indeed nationally, is critical in supporting businesses to achieve their innovation and business potential and therein is an example of Best Practice regionally which has the potential to be replicated internationally.</p> <p>The level of supports and diversity of supports which are offered by local LEO offices within their region is what sets the LEO structure in Ireland apart as displaying a Best Practice approach to supporting the local business community. Overall the LEO structure aims to promote and develop an encouraging and supportive environment for business growth and innovation across Ireland and within the regions, and within the context of the RATIO project, the Cork region. The Cork region which is home to three dedicated LEO teams operating within the remit of the respective local authorities. Within Cork, there is the Local Enterprise Office South Cork mentioned previously, the Local Enterprise Office Cork North & West, and the Cork City Local Enterprise Office. For the purpose of the RATIO project, the South Cork LEO and the Cork North and West LEO are those that are relevant within the rural context.</p> <p>Finally, as a local LEO office provides a First Stop for those wanting to grow and improve their business, the LEO is central to a regions ability to support business from within, with the LEO acting to bring together a comprehensive support structure reflecting the needs of the respective region. The LEO facilitates the improvement across all areas such as innovation, training, internationalisation and/or process improvement, with the specific area of good practice focusing on the enabling of a supportive business environment via training, education, and networking and information provision (of which includes funding streams).</p>
<p>Resources needed</p>	
<p>Timescale (start/end date)</p>	
<p>Evidence of success (results achieved)</p>	<p>The Local Enterprise Offices have proven hugely successful in providing a range of supports to individuals and businesses within their respective regions. Within the Cork region context, the support of Cork County Council has played a crucial role in supporting the economic development of County Cork. In addition to providing many of the services underpinning economic growth, Cork County Council have invested almost €5m in a specific Economic Development Fund to give additional support to local enterprise from 1% of commercial rates collected annually. As an example of the specific impact of one LEO on the surrounding region, please see below a number of metrics from LEO South Cork which display the impact of the LEO on the local</p>



	<p>Cork region within its remit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The target number of training programmes for 2015 was 54, with 650 participants. By focusing specifically on areas of interest for enterprises in South Cork, 1,005 participants were trained through 84 training programmes. ▪ Overall target of grants approved for 2015 was set at 35. ▪ Mentoring proved very popular with businesses and entrepreneurs, providing access to the Head of Enterprise, enterprise team and other approved mentors.
Difficulties encountered/ lessons learned	
Potential for learning or transfer	
Further information	https://www.localenterprise.ie/
Contact details	
Name	<i>Ciara McGee</i>
Organisation	<i>South Cork Local Enterprise Office</i>
Email	ciara.mcgee@leo.corkcoco.ie
Expert opinion	