

Kerry Action Plan

1. Background

Entrepreneurship and enterprise development in Kerry is strong. It was one of the first regions to be awarded EER status in 2011 and has continued to embed an entrepreneurial culture across the region. It is governed and influenced by several policies at national, regional and local tiers. Kerry is peripheral in location in relation to Dublin, Ireland's capital. However, it is serviced by air, rail and road networks. ICT infrastructure has improved significantly in recent years, but deficits and challenges remain, as experienced by other EER partners.

Kerry is led by high levels of collaboration among key players in the region working to achieve common goals. The Munster Technological University (MTU), the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) through its agencies in the region, Enterprise Ireland (EI) and IDA Ireland (IDA) together with Kerry County Council, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), Údarás na Gaeltachta (ÚnaG) and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) will play a leading role in supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, investment, exports and jobs growth over the period.

Models of good practice in the region include the annual [Kerry Month of Enterprise | A spotlight on entrepreneurial activities \(kmoe.ie\)](#) which uses one month to showcase the supports available to the full enterprise continuum throughout the year. Other models of good practice include the *Kerry Angel Network* [Kerry Angel Network makes first investment as part of €270,000 HBAN funding in home-buying platform Lintil](#); *Kerry Hub Network* [Kerry Hub Programme - Tom Crean \(creancentre.com\)](#), the attention given to and enabling innovation in the agri sector through *ACE* [The ACE Team - ACE AgriTech Centre of Excellence \(agritechexcellence.com\)](#) the agriculture centre of excellence and the *Circular Economy Cluster* [Home - Circular Bioeconomy Cluster South West \(cbcsw.ie\)](#) and the LEADER led *social farming* programmes and *Kerry Scitech* [Home - KerrySciTech](#) which aims to attract and retain talent in the region and *Cantillon* [Home - KerrySciTech](#) – A Global annual forum that fosters fresh thinking. Kerry benefitted from this project learning through other models of good practice such impact measurement *Maria 01*, the *Social Value Act* from Northern Ireland, *Havel Valley* from Brandenburg, and *MF Nextequity* Crowdfunding from Marche and lessons in impact measurement from the *Circular living lab* of Laurea University of Applied Sciences and the *Scaling Academy / Scaling Forum* – an education oriented supply for regional companies and potential scalers from Brandenburg.

2. Key findings from the gap analysis

CEED – the Centre for Economic and Entrepreneurial Development at MTU conducted a desk-based exercise in early 2022 on behalf of the other Kerry iEER partners and a number of purposeful semi structured interviews with some SMEs, to identify and gaps in the region post Covid-19.

Gaps identified included lack of access to finance, supported continued for start-ups yet less attention was dedicated to scaling organisations; remote working was welcomed and enabled with an improved broadband infrastructure yet mental wellness was increasingly become an issue due to association of social isolation with this model of working.

Whilst uncertainty was generated due to lockdowns and different levels of restrictions; some business sectors such as hospitality tourism and retail suffered much worse than those involved IT and online sectors who saw increased revenue during. The evidence of social innovation initiatives and female led organisations became more apparent as did the need to support them much more going forward. The growth in digital start ups was noted yet the ability to know by how much and its impact was unknown due to the lack a regional assessment framework. This gap was also reported by all of the other iEER partners. There certainly was an awareness of the UN SDGS, but less was known how the multi-stakeholders in the region could work individually and/or collaboratively on developing and scaling new offerings aligned with the SDGs. The low level of ESG reporting and its knock-on effect on access to green financing was noted. However, the research activity and enterprises engaging in Ag Tech, Biodiversity and the Circular Economy was identified as positive but in need of much more support and policy engagement. The proactive and interoperation approach taken in the Kerry Region and led by the economic unit of Kerry County Council was extremely effective in developing a 189 action Covid-19 recovery plan for the region.

3. List of actions

The pillars of growth from the collaborative process are presented in Table 1 and the priority areas of focus for Kerry post the pandemic are presented in Table 2 below:



Table 1: Pillars of Growth for Kerry – Source: County Kerry Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

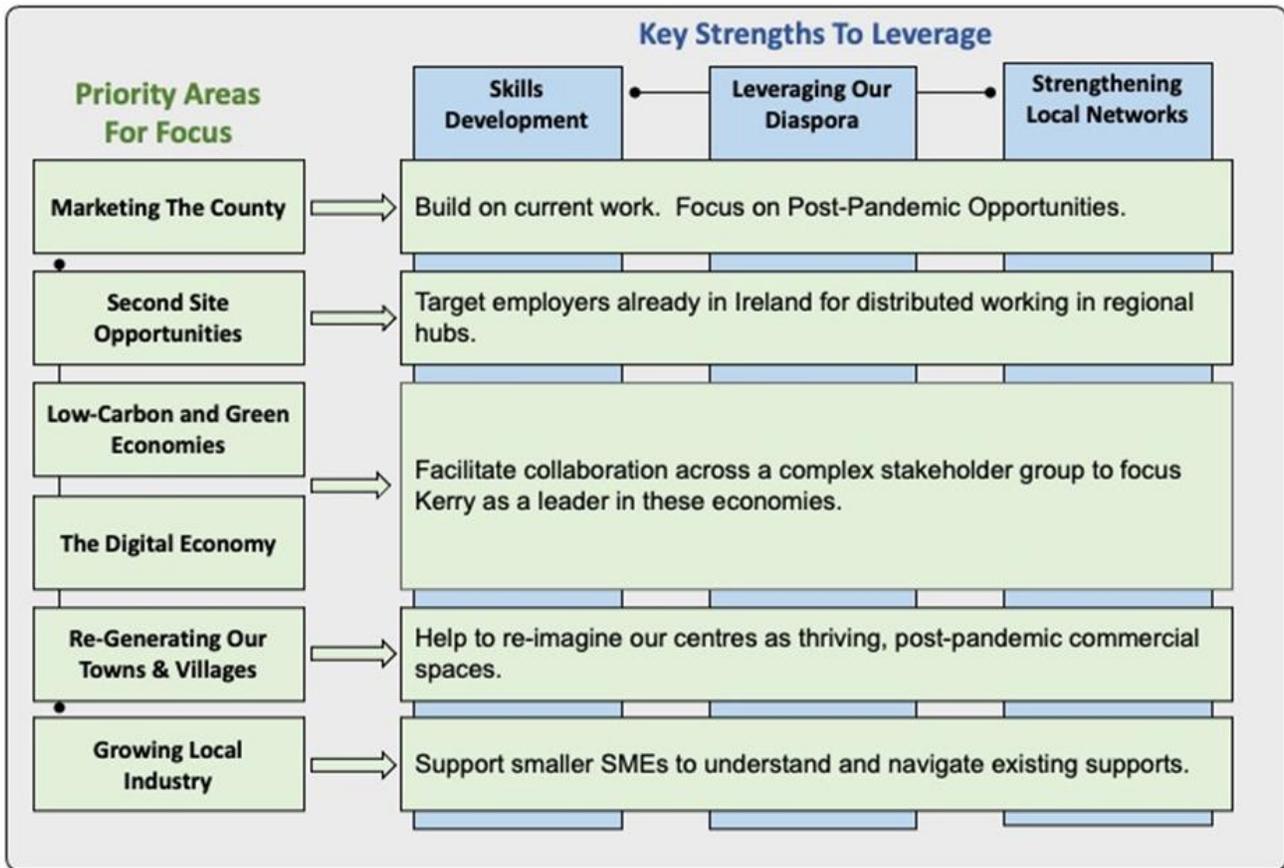


Table 2: Priority Areas of Focus for Kerry - Source: County Kerry Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

3.1 To foster and enable a mentally well workforce and ecosystem.

Hold an expert led event to discuss the issues of living with mental illness and its impact on talent acquisition and retention, engage in the co-design of digital solutions with both the service providers and service users of mental wellness supports.

Time Frame: This will be a hybrid event, led by the MTU UNESCO World chair of inclusion through sport and the National Health Service Agency held on September 22nd supported with in person and online breakout sessions and open to all iEER partners and relevant agencies. The second day will be dedicated to scaling up the project group formed specifically to tackle this issue in the region – Aclú- Empowering Recovery in Enduring Mental Illness. Overall spend of circa €9K.

Indicators: Funded R&D, PhDs and evidence of talent retention in existing and new scaling organisations.

3.2 To develop an inter European Scaling Strategy for all types of entities including but not only commercial enterprises.

3.2.1 A Pilot Hackathon with Brandenburg in the field of scaling a business.

A Pilot action is planned for November 2022. Students, successors and successes are coming together in a (hybrid) hackathon to widen the idea of business transfer and scale with a spend of €2K.

Timeframe: November 2022.

Indicators: Number of participants and its impact on entrepreneurial scaling mindset activation; Knowledge transfer and identifying leaders of scale.

3.2.2 Co-Design, Co-Deliver and Co-Evaluate a Pan European MSc in Scale

Kerry through the Munster Technological University will lead an application for an EU Mundus Masters in Scale with interested iEER partners.

Timeframe: Quarter 4 2022. Seek feasibility funding to develop this of circa €50K.

Indicators: Number of interested project partners and successful Erasmus Mundus Masters' application.

3.3 To foster green and digital transition with European Regional Development Fund 2021-2027

Kerry in 2022 and beyond will promote green and digital entrepreneurship as part of the European Entrepreneurial Region year. The Kerry LEO – Local Enterprise Organisation and Enterprise Ireland are offering increasing financial and mental support for digital and/or green sustainable initiatives. Promote collaboration between the dedicated agri tech, AI, and circular economy research centres at MTU with industry and funding agencies.

Timeframe: Spring 2022 to Spring 2023, the launch and rollout of the digital and green support roadshow in Kerry. Incorporated with other scheduled events and so cost neutral.

Indicator: Funded projects supporting green and digital entrepreneurship initiatives and funded collaborative research initiatives.

3.4. To develop an impact-driven entrepreneurial culture and innovation ecosystem in Kerry

There is a growing awareness, attention and action being taken in the Kerry region by individuals and academia to actively engaging and promoting with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This is less evident in policy and practice at a regional level although it. There is a need to address this and to increase and develop an impact driven entrepreneurial culture and innovation system in Kerry. A number of initiatives are being developed to support a more sustainable and socially impact-driven inclusive recovery from the Covid pandemic in the Kerry Region. These include the collaboration of the multi stakeholders in the region and are not confined to those listed below:

3.4.1 To foster and develop links between hubs in the South West with international peers to support learning and knowledge exchange, collaboration and investment.

Timeframe: March 2023. Total spend €4K.

Indicator: To enable a pilot inter EER familiarisation trip to launch the EER hub network Action Plan.

3.4.2 To initiate discussion amongst the Kerry Multi-stakeholders in policy, practice and academy of the development of an impact-driven entrepreneurial culture and innovation ecosystem in Kerry in collaboration with the Kerry Hub Network.

Timeframe: March 2023. Spend of €1K.

Indicator: Attendance at events and subsequent policy development and support of impact driven entrepreneurs and public procurement funding.

3.4.3 To develop, launch and implement the Kerry *Spotlight* Social Entrepreneurship programme.

Timeframe: August 2022 to November 2022. Total spend acquired of €11K.

Indicator: Attendance at events and subsequent applications for support in social driven initiatives in the region.

3.5 Participation in a new Interreg Europe / I3 / Innovation ecosystems project supporting the development of an impact-driven entrepreneurship ecosystem

Timeframe: Autumn 2022-spring 2023 for proposal preparation, winter 2023 to 2025 for implementation

Indicators: Number of partners involved and number of policies addressed.