

CARLOW SOCIAL ENTERPRISE NETWORK

SEConsultation@drcd.gov.ie

Social Enterprise Policy Consultation

Department of Rural and Community Development

Trinity Point

10-11 Leinster Street South

Dublin 2

D02 EF85

12th May 2019

Re: Submission on Draft National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

To whom it may concern

WHO WE ARE

Carlow Social Enterprise Network was founded in 2018 by a group of new and established social enterprises across the Carlow following the completion of a locally funded course on Social Enterprise by Carlow SICAP.

While we are an early stage network our members have acquired valuable individual community and voluntary experience ranging from five to forty years each.

OUR VISION

“To value and encourage social enterprise as a sustainable model to strengthen rural communities and address social needs in the County of Carlow”

OUR AIMS

- Encourage the growth of Social Enterprise within Carlow
- Provide peer to peer support for new and existing Social Enterprises
- Promoting awareness, knowledge and training to Social Enterprises
- Support the development of existing Social Enterprises

REVIEW OF DRAFT POLICY

As a newly formed rurally based social enterprise network we welcome the establishment of the Department of Rural and Community Development and their growing awareness of and support for social enterprise (SE) in Ireland. We have reviewed the draft document and welcome the opportunity to submit our thoughts as part of this consultation process.

GENERAL COMMENTS

We are a proactive result driven network and we feel an opportunity has been missed by developing a National Social Enterprise Policy instead of a ***National Social Enterprise Strategy***.

The draft policy contains 21 separate measures that the government could carry out implementing the policy. In order to ensure effective implementation each measure should be broken down in more detail to set out ***specific deliverables*** in the form of clear outputs and actions so progress and results can be clearly identified, and results measured.

The ***policy should contain a clear vision for Social Enterprise in Ireland***, this would provide a focus we can all collectively work towards.

The use of the term non for profit throughout the document is contradictory to the essential profitability required to achieve sustainability in any enterprise. In order to reinvest profit under charitable status and enterprise must first operate efficiently and make a profit.

Within the document there are insufficient references to social inclusion which is a key component of the social aspect of social enterprise.

POLICY DELIVERY

Drawing on our collective experience of working in community, non for profit, business, social enterprise sectors as well as decades of experience working with existing public sector agencies such as local authority agencies, enterprise offices and development companies.

We believe successful implementation of the policy is important but of greater importance is providing appropriate agency support to newly established social enterprises as well as existing non for profits groups transitioning from rural community-based organisations into more formal sustainable community social enterprises.

Working with early start enterprises, community groups and volunteer sectors requires a ***supportive encouraging culture as well as clear enterprise development knowledge and experience***. The successful delivery of the Town and Village Renewal Schemes across the country has clearly demonstrated how this can be rolled out successfully by working closely in partnership with communities through their Local Enterprise Offices.

Working with early start SE and community groups requires a ***reduction in bureaucracy and at times an incubator style supportive approach*** to assist in their development.

We need to be cognisant when working with communities where there are limited personnel and potentially limited experience of enterprise. It is therefore important to encourage and ***foster their entrepreneurial flame and not overburden them particularly in the early stages of their development.***

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

To effectively deliver and promote social enterprise in rural areas a ***community awareness programme*** should be developed and delivered with consideration given to developing a ***community activation programme*** tailored to the specific needs of rural communities.

Based on our experience we would suggest a pilot model for community activation be developed in a small number of communities to design and perfect a standard model with a view to rolling out nationally upon completion.

The key benefit would be a consistent standard of implementation across the country resulting in a greater adoption of SE leading to improved take up and greater sustainability in the long run.

Community and ***volunteering social capital should be taken into consideration*** and utilised as their equity contribution when required as a condition of grant making.

Community and voluntary sectors should be represented at all stages of implementation locally and nationally.

Yours Sincerely

Carlow Social Enterprise Network

[REDACTED]