

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
RURAL REGENERATION
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**



**A RESPONSE FROM
EQUAL Ireland**

TO

**THE NATIONAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE POLICY FOR
IRELAND 2019 –2022**

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

May 2019

IN SUMMARY....

- **EQUAL Ireland a 'not for profit' community based social enterprise**
- **Working in collaborative partnership arrangements**
- **Acknowledging and supporting the role of social enterprises in job creation, social integration and equality**



INTRODUCTION

EQUAL Ireland is a 'not for profit' community based social enterprise engaged in the design, development and delivery of 3rd Level education and training programmes. Our main interest is in the area of business, social enterprise and community development addressing employment and quality of life issues.

We are in collaborative partnership arrangements with Athlone and Letterkenny Institutes of Technology, Social Partners and Community Organisations.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Draft Strategy, which in Chapters 1 and 2 acknowledges the synergy between the community/voluntary sectors and social enterprise development, as do EQUAL Ireland.

The Draft Strategy sets out evidence to support the role of social enterprises in job creation, social integration and equality and in developing innovative solutions to societal problems, particularly in peripheral areas.

EQUAL Ireland regularly and successfully reaches and partners with non-traditional learners, disadvantaged by location or social issue (see Position Paper attached), many of whom see enterprise development, be that self, social or commercial, as their most likely vehicle to address their reasonable employment and quality of life requirements.

This then is the context for the EQUAL Ireland 9 Point Response.

WELL WORTH CONSIDERING...

Linking 'social enterprise education' with 'community development'

Changing the relationships between Higher Education and the Disadvantaged Community

Introducing 3 to 5 year joint partnerships between the Community and the Higher Education Provider

Recruit local participants using a combination of

- **A Community Skills Audit**
- **An 'assertive outreach' (Downs 2017) methodology**
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes with 'one to one' RPL Mentor Facilitator supports**
- **A particular, but not exclusive, goal of engaging Women and Youth**



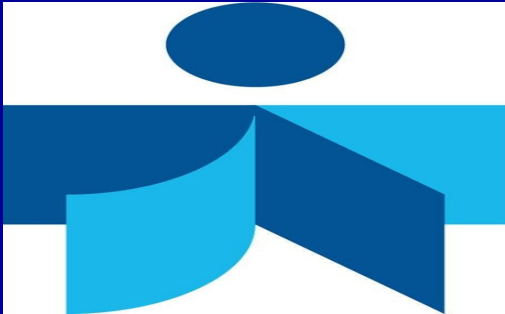
Policy Objectives 1 and 2 - Raising awareness, Initiating social enterprise development and Growing and Strengthening the sector

Given our years of successful experience in this difficult and challenging area of endeavour EQUAL Ireland welcomes the acknowledgement in the Draft Strategy of the role of Higher Education in Social Enterprise Development.

We especially welcome it when that role involves the location of such social enterprise development in peripheral areas populated by disadvantaged communities in urgent need of rural regeneration. In such situations the rules of engagement between Higher Education and the Disadvantaged Community requires a much more profound and nuanced relationship than heretofore, if it is to result in the successful initialisation of local and sustainable Social Enterprise Development.

With this fully in mind EQUAL Ireland would propose that the Draft Strategy, in contemplation of a final Government Policy in this area, should focus on supports for interventions which can:

1. Purposefully link 'social enterprise education' with 'community development' within a planned awareness raising campaign among potential target communities
2. Involve Higher Education Providers in collaborative partnership with Community Based Social Enterprises
3. Decisively select target local communities
4. Strategically engage with the target local communities for a planned 3 to 5 year joint partnership between the Community and Higher Education Provider, which would include the provision of on-going (post programme delivery) Social Enterprise Development mentoring supports
5. In the context of having agreed locally delivered tailored education programmes recruit adults from the locality with the potential to both benefit from these programmes and to contribute to the identification and development of local Social Enterprise by using a combination of:
 - a) A Community Skills Audit
 - b) An 'assertive outreach' (Downs 2017) methodology
 - c) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programmes with 'one to one' RPL Mentor Facilitator supports
 - d) A particular, but not exclusive, goal of engaging Women and Youth
6. Using the established Collaborative Partnership identify and deliver tailor made education programmes, accredited and or non accredited, to meet the education and training needs of existing Social Enterprises



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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7. Having assessments based on service learning with authentic assignments enabling learners to link their learning with practical social enterprise development i.e. Assignments would be focussed on the practical aspects of real time, real world, actual proposals for the development of local social enterprise (s)
8. Apply flexible hybrid delivery methods (distance learning, blended learning, flipped classroom approach) so as to engage people many of whom may be time poor with caring responsibilities etc.
9. Build a community of learners through supportive workshops, peer group learning, community engagement and using service-learning (Enos 2015) as a model which we believe will contribute to a more grounded, applied learning journey

References

Downes, Paul 2017 "Bridging the credibility gap: The need for an 'assertive outreach' strategy to engage adult early school leavers". Epale newsletter 31/07/17 <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/bridging-credibility-gap-need-assertive-outreach-strategyengage-adult-early-school-leavers>

**EQUAL Ireland
LOCAL LEARNING CENTRES**

