### G2: Facilitate Innovation and Entrepreneurship – Actions

#### Enterprise Start-Up

Goal G1 aims to advance economic activity and employment creation through the provision of targeted supports. Goal G2 complements this by harnessing Kilkenny’s economic and locational strengths, and references the availability of a skilled labour pool, and the ability of the county to attract a workforce with new and emerging skills.

The common outcome that is anticipated from the actions emerging from G2 is the creation of a dynamic business environment that caters for the needs of entrepreneurs in establishing new businesses or upscaling existing enterprises. This will be achieved through positive engagement with key players, including LEO Kilkenny, the Kilkenny Leader Partnership, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, ConnectIreland, South East Business Innovation Centre and 3rd Level Academic Institutions. Additionally, closer alliances between local employers and the enabling State Agencies will increase the opportunity to foster new and sustainable employment options.

**Strategic Client Support**

One of the main objectives of Goal G2 will be to identify and provide strategic supports to scalable start-ups and existing small businesses with high potential and job creation. The South East BIC will facilitate this process in conjunction with EI and LEO Kilkenny, to include provision of intensive mentoring and other specialist support. The South East BIC has access to the European Business Network – EBN and Business Angels and Seed Capital Funds, including the Halo Business Network (HBAN) in the South East.

#### Abbey Creative Quarter

Kilkenny is the driver of growth for the county at a sub‐regional level and also supports Waterford City in its role as a Gateway. Under the South East Regional Planning Guidelines, Kilkenny City has a target population of 28,200 to be reached by the year 2022. The acquisition of the former Smithwicks Brewery site affords the opportunity to re-plan the city to enhance the role of Kilkenny City as an economic driver.

The Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan and the Kilkenny City Centre Local Area Plan, also establishes conservation, sustainability, public realm and urban design strategies for the site. These will deliver a mix of uses to ensure that this new quarter will be a vibrant and successful addition to the medieval core. It will see the delivery of the following: -

* A new linear park on the banks of the River Nore;
* A new landscaped walk along the City Walls and Bregagh River;
* Conservation of historic buildings on the site;
* New public, landscaped spaces including a public square at St Francis Abbey;
* Sustainable and energy efficient strategies for individual buildings and the overall site;
* A university quarter centred on the regenerated industrial buildings to be retained on site;
* A new residential /student residential district;
* Indigenous and international knowledge economy uses on key sites; and
* Cultural, retail and tourist related uses on defined sites.

The LECP will facilitate the agreement of a phased development strategy for capitalising on the Brewery Site potential taking into account the Abbey Creative Quarter, and 3rd and 4th Level Educational Provision. It will also facilitate the provision of enterprise incubation and advance office space, and enterprise support mechanisms focusing on innovation and research.

#### *Design Thinking* Initiative

The brand name *‘Kilkenny’* is synonymous with creativity and quality design. The *'Design Thinking'* initiative will also focus on young people, and will deliver enterprise skills. The initiative will be designed to assist those who have a digital business concept to bring it to a pre-commercial or commercial stage.

It will also be suitable for those who have recently started a new digital based business and wish to further develop their skills in technical and business areas.

#### Social Enterprise

The European Commission has placed the social economy and social innovation at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy, and the Programme for Government 2011-2016 recognises the important role of social enterprise in the country and contains a commitment to promoting the development of a vibrant and effective social enterprise sector. The Action Plan for Jobs 2014 identified social enterprise as a growing enterprise sector that can bring further job gains and deliver economic potential. At national level it was estimated that the social enterprise sector employed between 25,000 and 33,000 people in over 1,400 social enterprises, with a total income of around €1.4 billion.

Social enterprises tend to be set in the heart of rural and urban communities, and often employ those that are most marginalised, and who find it most difficult to get jobs. Typically they provide local services, and so jobs are created in local communities. As well as the multiplier effects from the direct jobs in the sector, further indirect jobs are created either by enabling the development of other enterprises, for example by social enterprises that assist economic and community development, or by providing services that bring people to a community such as local festivals.

The consultation process for the LECP identified a number of significant social enterprises in the County falling into four categories: -

1. Economic and community development organisations;
2. Those creating employment opportunities for marginalised groups;
3. Those that deliver services that bring people to a community such as local festivals or events; *and*
4. Those with commercial opportunities that are established to create a social return.

This action will investigate further opportunities by developing a socialenterprise strategy taking into account specific needs of local communities. To achieve this, the action will build upon the experience of successful local social enterprises, and will identify models of successful social enterprise that are relevant to communities across Co. Kilkenny.

#### Incubation Workspace

As a complementary measure to that of Goal 1, an audit of potential enterprise incubation workspace in Co. Kilkenny will be undertaken. The audit will include vacant buildings, office and industrial space. The emerging profile will provide an evidence-base to identify the need for additional space.

#### G2: Actions Summary

**A12:** Provide a seamless information, advice and training support service for entrepreneurs throughout the enterprise lifecycle from start-up through to up-scaling, expansion and growth. Particular emphasis will be placed on accelerating the growth of high potential start-ups and businesses with job creation potential.

**A13:** Develop partnerships with all frontline access points for business, including banks and accountants, to ensure there is maximum awareness of the supports available to entrepreneurs, in particular from KLEO.

**A14:** Develop support initiatives to target Back-to-Work Enterprise Allowance participants.

**A15:** Establish a panel of local business leaders, entrepreneurs and enterprise role models that will champion entrepreneurship and enterprise in Co. Kilkenny.

**A16:** Promote enterprise and innovation opportunities among young farmers, in conjunction with Kildalton College. This should include hosting of an annual Enterprise event specifically aimed at young farmers and also examination of the potential of incorporating enterprise related elements into the curriculum of mainstream courses.

**A17:** Agree a phased development strategy for capitalising on the potential of the Brewery Site as a Creative Quarter, with particular emphasis on 3rd and 4th level education provision, incubation and advance office space, innovation and research.

**A18:** Develop a strategy to promote and further expand Digital Media, Animation and Design activities in County Kilkenny, building on the past experience of the Kilkenny Design Workshops. The strategy should include a ‘Design Thinking’ initiative to deliver enterprise skills to young people

**A19:** Develop a social enterprise strategy facilitating access to a range of social enterprise supports and services and learning through other models of success. This will include building on the experience of the REDZ initiative; and designing support structures tailored to suit both urban and rurally based social enterprise initiatives, creating jobs and providing potential services into local communities. This should also include an examination of co-op type community shops selling local produce in rural villages.

**A20:** Undertake an audit of industrial and incubation workspace throughout the County and assess gaps and/or need for additional space so as to better inform the market and highlight zoned and serviced lands in the County.

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| **High-Level Goal** | **High-Level Outcome** | **Objective** | **Co-Ordinating Body** | **Key Partner Organisations** | **Timeframe** | **Project Milestones** | **Actions** |
| **G2:** Facilitate Innovation and Entrepreneurship | The creation of an attractive and dynamic business environment that caters for the needs of both existing and new employers and employees. | **O2**: Provide an integrated support structure conducive to enterprise start-up and growth. | KCC  KLEO | LEO (**L**); EI; SEBIC | 2016-2021 | Enhanced service established.  Develop SLA with SEBIC. | **A12:** Provide a seamless information, advice and training support service for entrepreneurs throughout the enterprise lifecycle from start-up through to up-scaling, expansion and growth. Particular emphasis will be placed on accelerating the growth of high potential start-ups and businesses with job creation potential. |
| LEO (**L**) Banks; Local Accountants | 2016-2017 | Establish access. | **A13:** Develop partnerships with all frontline access points for business, including banks and accountants, to ensure there is maximum awareness of the supports available to entrepreneurs, in particular from the LEO. |
| LEO (**L**); Kilkenny Leader Partnership | 2016-2017 | Support initiatives. | **A14:** Develop support initiatives to target *Back-to-Work Enterprise Allowance* participants. |
| LEO; Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce (**L**) | 2016-2017 | Panel established. | **A15:** Establish a panel of local business leaders, entrepreneurs and enterprise role models that will champion entrepreneurship and enterprise in Co. Kilkenny. |
| Kildalton College (**L**); Teagasc; Farming Organisations | 2016-2019 | Event established. | **A16:** Promote enterprise and innovation opportunities among young farmers, in conjunction with Kildalton College. This should include hosting of an annual Enterprise event specifically aimed at young farmers and also examination of the potential of incorporating enterprise related elements into the curriculum of mainstream courses. |
| KCC Planning | 2016-2017 | Agreement of strategy. | **A17:** Agree a phased development strategy for capitalising on the potential of the Brewery Site as a Creative Quarter, with particular emphasis on 3rd and 4th level education provision, incubation and advance office space, innovation and research. |
| 3rd Level Institutes | 2016-2019 | Publication of strategy. | **A18:** Develop a strategy to promote and further expand Digital Media, Animation and Design activities in County Kilkenny, building on the past experience of the Kilkenny Design Workshops. The strategy should include a ‘*Design Thinking’* initiative to deliver enterprise skills to young people |
| Kilkenny Leader Partnership (**L**); PPN | 2016-2017 | Publication of strategy. | **A19:** Develop a social enterprise strategy facilitating access to a range of social enterprise supports and services and learning through other models of success. This will include building on the experience of the REDZ initiative; and designing support structures tailored to suit both urban and rurally based social enterprise initiatives, creating jobs and providing potential services into local communities. This should also include an examination of co-op type community shops selling local produce in rural villages. |
| LEO (**L**); EI; KCC Planning | 2016-2021 | Phased publication of audit. | **A20:** Undertake an audit of industrial and incubation workspace throughout the County and assess gaps and/or need for additional space so as to better inform the market and highlight zoned and serviced lands in the County. |