



KSE

Kildare Social Enterprise

Review of Kildare Social Enterprise

Final Report

December 2018



IRISH SOCIAL FINANCE CENTRE



County Kildare
LEADER PARTNERSHIP



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil Chill Dara
Kildare Local Community Development
Committee



COMMUNITY LOAN FINANCE
FOUNDED 1996



Department of Rural and
Community Development

An Roinn Forbartha
Inaithne agus Pobail



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas.



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Comhairle Contae Chill Dara

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Executive summary



Programme overview

Social enterprise uses business principles to address social need. Whilst it has a growing presence in Ireland, it remains relatively underdeveloped.

The Kildare Social Enterprise (KSE) programme ran between March and November 2018. It was funded through County Kildare LEADER Partnership (CKLP) and the Kildare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) under LEADER 2014-2020. The contract to deliver the programme was awarded to the Irish Social Finance Centre (ISFC) and its sister company Clann Credo.

An experienced and multi-skilled team offered a tailored programme of training and additional supports to 18 new and existing social enterprises in Kildare.

Eleven training workshops were provided on these topics: needs analysis; ideas generation; sustainability and climate change; strategy and business planning; marketing; organisation and governance; human resources; measuring social impact; financial planning; funding and sources of support; and communications. An additional seven peer support workshops provided the opportunity to develop these themes further. One-to-one support by way of site visits by social enterprise experts were also provided. The social enterprises submitted their business plans and pitched these before a panel of judges at the 'Goblin's Lair' competition. A celebratory event marked the end of the programme.

Fidelity assessment

There were very few changes to the originally envisaged programme and those that were made were acceptable. The KSE team also exceeded the original goals in various areas, thereby adding additional value for programme participants, CKLP and Kildare LCDC. A certain drop-off in engagement from those awarded a place is to be expected in a programme of this type and was not unduly concerning to the steering group.

Quality assessment

The perceived usefulness of both types of workshops and one-to-one support was very high, with an average rating of 4.6/5 – 5/5. Furthermore, in the vast majority of cases, the participants pointed to a considerable increase in their confidence as a result of these interventions. The qualitative feedback provided also pointed to a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the programme. Should a similar programme be run again, some useful suggestions for improvement were provided.

Outcomes assessment

The preliminary outcomes of the programme are modest but positive. A review of their status in 12 and 24 months' time will provide more telling results.

List of acronyms used in report

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CE	Community Employment
CKLP	County Kildare LEADER Partnership
GIY	Grow It Yourself
ISFC	Irish Social Finance Centre
KSE	Kildare Social Enterprise
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
RDP	Rural Development Programme

1 Introduction

Scope

- 1.1 This report, written by Ann Clarke and Sandra Velthuis, documents the KSE programme that ran between March and November 2018. This provided bespoke training and additional supports for new and existing social enterprises in Kildare. It was funded through CKLP and the Kildare LCDC under LEADER 2014-2020. The contract to deliver the programme was awarded to the ISFC and its sister company Clann Credo.
- 1.2 The report also reviews the following programme components:
 - Fidelity: the extent to which it delivered on the stated goals (section 3)
 - Quality: as defined by those who participated on the programme (section 4)
 - Outcomes: what happened as a result of the programme (section 5).

Social enterprise

- 1.3 Social enterprise uses business principles to address social need. Whilst it has a growing presence in Ireland, it remains relatively underdeveloped when compared to the United Kingdom, other European countries and elsewhere. Social enterprise has, however, begun to be included in programmes such as LEADER, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. Furthermore, a national policy on social enterprise is presently being devised.

Goals of the KSE programme

- 1.4 It was agreed at the outset that the programme would deliver the following:
 - Provide training and support to 15 organisations/entrepreneurs interested in social enterprise.
 - Support new social enterprises to test their ideas, to develop a business plan and to meet requirements for grant funders and social finance providers.
 - Support existing social enterprises to develop their business processes and a plan for strategic growth.
 - Provide participants with an understanding of impact: what it is, how to measure it, how to plan for it and how to report on it.
 - Support participants to explore sustainability and climate change and the relevance of these issues to their enterprises.
 - Provide a final report of publishable standard with an internal evaluation of the programme (this report).

2 People

Steering group

2.1 A steering group was established to oversee the KSE programme. This comprised:

- *Ann Clarke* (see below).
- *Brian Kelly*, Rural Development Programme (RDP) Manager with CKLP
- *Pat Leogue*, General Manager of CKLP
- *Paul O'Sullivan* (see below).

The steering group met on three occasions to plan KSE and then monitor progress.

KSE team

2.2 The KSE team comprised the following individuals:

- *Jim Boyle* is the Financial Controller and Operations Manager of Clann Credo. Jim delivered training in financial planning.
- *Ann Clarke* is an independent consultant with over 12 years' experience in social enterprise at local and national level. Ann was the KSE Project Manager and delivered training on strategy and business planning as well as providing one-to-one support.
- *Edel Moloney* is a psychologist, trainer and facilitator who works in a social enterprise: the Speedpak Group. Edel facilitated the peer support workshops and delivered training in sources of funding.
- *Cathy Moore* is a media specialist currently working in the Rehab Group. Cathy delivered training in marketing and communications.
- *Roisin Mulligan* works with Clann Credo. She is a researcher and analyst with a strong academic background and industry experience. She supported Cathy Moore with the communications training workshop.
- *Davie Philip* has been active promoting sustainable development in Ireland since 1996. He hosts events and facilitates groups working on collaborative approaches to help their localities flourish. Davie delivered training on ideas generation, sustainability and climate change.
- *Frank Roche* is the former head of the Smurfit Business School and has a particular interest in entrepreneurship. He chairs the Dublin Business Innovation Centre. Frank delivered training on strategy and business planning and provided one-to-one support.
- *Paul O'Sullivan* is CEO of Clann Credo. Paul is a member of the Social Enterprise Task Force and sits on the European Commission's Expert Group on the Social Business Initiative (GECES). Paul delivered training on human resources, organisational structure, governance and funding sources.

- *Sandra Velthuis* is an independent consultant (Whitebarn Consulting) with many years' experience working for and with not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises. Her specialism is social impact and she delivered training on this topic.

Support staff

- 2.3 In the early days of the programme, CKLP's then Social Enterprise Coordinator (Community Employment – CE – Supervisor) *Anne Kelly* provided back-up and support to the KSE team and participants, but unfortunately this position was not retained.
- 2.4 *Helen Mulhall*, Rural Development Officer with CKLP supported her colleague Brian Kelly on the funding and sources of support training workshop.

Judging panel

- 2.5 A three-person judging panel was set up to assess the projects at the end of the programme. They were:
- *Vivian Cummins*, CKLP LEADER evaluation committee member and member of the Kildare Chamber of Commerce
 - *Jennifer Hennessy*, Lending Executive, Clann Credo
 - *Jacqueline McNabb*, Local Enterprise Office, Kildare.

3 Rolling out KSE

Programme preparation

- 3.1 A CKLP and Clann Credo initiation meeting took place on 13 March to finalise the programme.
- 3.2 The KSE team also met to plan the roll-out of the programme and finalise its design.
- 3.3 After consultation with CKLP, it was decided that, wherever possible, training would be provided in the evenings and peer support workshops would be provided on Saturday mornings. Some sessions had to be rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances, but all took place within the total allotted period of time. Most sessions were held in CKLP's offices in Naas, although use was also made of Solas Bhríde in Kildare town.
- 3.4 The final schedule is shown in Appendix 1. Not only does this clearly incorporate four of the six stated goals (namely: ideas testing, business planning, impact and sustainability), it also offers complementary elements for the development of social enterprises (including: organisational structure, governance, human resources, marketing and pitching).

Programme launch

- 3.5 Promotional material to promote KSE was developed by the ISFC, with input from CKLP. This included the creation of a logo, information leaflet and expression of interest form.
- 3.6 The programme was promoted between 3 and 24 April via electronic mailings to social enterprise contacts on both CKLP's and Clann Credo's databases, letters sent to local representatives, inserts in local newspapers and parish newsletters, direct contact with potential participants by CKLP, web links to the CKLP and local authority web sites which hosted information about KSE, and articles in The Kildare Nationalist and Kildare Leader.
- 3.7 Two information evenings were also held: one at CKLP's premises in Naas on 10 April and another in the Clanard Court Hotel in Athy on 18 April. Each attracted 17 attendees. The steering group members made presentations about the world of social enterprise and the programme. Attendees were invited to take programme material and to make an application for a place on KSE.

Selection

- 3.8 The closing date for expressions of interest was 24 April. Twenty-one applications were received. Each outlined their social enterprise idea/project, their team and how they felt they would benefit from KSE.
- 3.9 The steering group met on 30 April to go through all the applications and select the most suitable candidates for KSE. The selection criteria for projects included potential to be a social enterprise, geographic spread, capacity and compatibility with RDP objectives.
- 3.10 Sixteen projects were selected and offered a place on KSE. These projects covered tourism, heritage and culture, eco-transport, counselling and addiction supports, disability, community cafés and community hubs. Two further projects were subsequently offered places when others did not take up theirs, meaning that a total 18 of projects were offered a place on the programme, exceeding the initial goal by three. The final list of projects, including their status at the time of writing this report, is shown in Appendix 2.

Induction and needs analysis

- 3.11 All participants were invited to an induction evening held on 10 May in. Seventeen people representing 15 projects took part. (One project was unable to attend due to taking part in a meeting about LEADER grant applications. This project subsequently did not commence the programme.)
- 3.12 The evening was hosted by KSE support personnel Ann Clarke, Edel Moloney and Frank Roche. Its aim was to introduce the participants to each other and to conduct a needs analysis. Participants were invited to outline their projects, what they hoped to achieve, identify what for them would be key challenges and areas of need and to answer any queries they had about KSE.
- 3.13 The main needs identified were as follows:
- Funding models
 - Marketing
 - Sourcing premises or equipment
 - Product design
 - Feasibility testing
 - Administration
 - Developing workable business plans
 - Operations planning
 - Accessing support for individual social entrepreneurs who are not part of a community group.

These are all areas that the programme was designed to address. After each training session, facilitators were debriefed to provide feedback about needs arising from the groups attending so that these could be incorporated into the peer support workshops.

Workshops

- 3.14 In total, 18 workshops were provided during the course of the programme, both direct training and peer support workshops (including the first induction and needs analysis workshop). These combined a mix of presentation, whole group discussions and small group work. Some of the trainers also used case studies and worksheets.
- 3.15 The number of attendees and projects represented per workshop are summarised below:

Workshop	Date	Number of projects represented	Number of attendees
Induction and needs analysis	10 May	15	17
Sustainability and climate change	17 May	13	14
Ideas generation	17 May	13	14
First peer support workshop	26 May	13	15
Strategy and business planning	30 May	11	12
Second peer support workshop	9 June	9	10
Marketing	16 June	10	12
Third peer support workshop	23 June	8	10
Organisation and governance	4 July	9	11
Human resources	11 July	8	9
Fourth peer support workshop	27 July	4	5
Measuring social impact	5 September	7	8
Financial planning	13 September	7	8
Funding and sources of support	29 September	5	7
Communications	6 October	7	8
Fifth peer support workshop	13 October	7	7
Sixth peer support workshop	20 October	6	8
Seventh peer support workshop	27 October	5	5

- 3.16 There was therefore a fall-off in attendance towards the end of the programme. Reasons for this included projects which had completed their business plan early, work commitments and changes in personal circumstances

One-to-one support

- 3.17 Participants were asked to work on their draft business plans during the summer ‘break’ in advance of one-to-one support sessions.
- 3.18 All projects were offered a half-day site visit in September to discuss their plans. Ten projects took up this offer. The site visits provided an opportunity to place the business plans in context, to delve more deeply into what groups were planning and to offer advice about their projects and how best to tell their story in a business plan. Some sessions included committee members who were not taking part in the KSE training, which was helpful.
- 3.19 The site visit schedule was as follows:

Project	Date	KSE team member
The Tanyard	5 September	Ann Clarke
Willow Counselling	10 September	Frank Roche
Athy Boat Tours	10 September	Frank Roche
Dross Evolution	11 September	Frank Roche
Athy Heritage Centre-Museum	13 September	Frank Roche
Cottage Garden GIY/WoolStock	14 September	Frank Roche
Monasterevin Community Centre	19 September	Ann Clarke
Rock Stories	26 September	Ann Clarke
Equal Part	26 September	Ann Clarke
Narraghmore Development Association	28 September	Ann Clarke

Programme completion

- 3.20 Programme participants were encouraged to take part in the ‘Goblin’s Lair’ competition for the enterprise with the most potential. They were asked to submit their business plans by 14 November for consideration by a panel of judges. All those listed in 3.19 chose to do so, with the exception of Equal Part and Willow Counselling.

3.21 The judges scored each business plan according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Maximum possible score
Capacity to address a real social or community need	30
Quality of the business plan	20
Employment creation potential	15
Sustainability	15
Potential for growth	10
Innovation	10
Subtotal	100
Bonus points for the pitch	5
Total	105

3.22 A pitching evening took place on 22 November. Twenty people were in attendance. All of the participants who submitted business plans made a pitch, bar Athy Heritage Centre-Museum which had a competing commitment. The judges were very impressed with the quality of the presentations.

3.23 After the pitches, the judges agreed collectively on the scores for each project. They decided to split the €2,000 KSE award into two categories: one for the best start-up and one for the best existing social enterprise. The prize for the former went to WoolStock and the prize for the latter went to Athy Boat Tours.

3.24 A final awards evening and celebration event took place on 27 November in the Keadeen Hotel, Newbridge. KSE participants were encouraged to invite their committee members. Other invitations were issued to the KSE team, the staff and board of CKLP and Clann Credo, and the members and staff of Kildare LCDC. Thirty-four people attended. The guest speaker was Brendan Whelan, CEO of the Social Finance Foundation and Chairperson of the Social Enterprise Task Force. He gave an overview of relevant developments at national level. Certificates of completion were presented to the KSE participants. Two media outlets covered the event: Kildare FM Radio and The Kildare Nationalist.

Fidelity assessment

3.25 It can thus be concluded that there were very few changes to the originally envisaged programme and those that were made were acceptable. The KSE team also exceeded the original goals in various areas, thereby adding additional value for the programme participants and the clients. A certain drop-off in engagement from those awarded a place is to be expected in a programme of this type and was not unduly concerning to the steering group.

4 Participant feedback

Seeking the views of those most directly affected by KSE

4.1 It was decided that the most pertinent way of assessing programme quality would be to ascertain the views of programme participants. Feedback, using a standard form, was sought on three elements of the programme (note that not all participants completed all forms):

- Training workshops (with the exception of the induction/needs analysis workshop)
- Peer support workshops
- Site visits offering one-to-one support.

Participants were asked to rate both how useful they found the workshop and the extent to which their confidence had increased as a result of the workshop. The cells with the most notable scores have been left blank in the tables below. They were also asked for qualitative commentary and example quotes are given in italics below.

Feedback on training workshops

4.2 Sustainability and climate change/ideas generation

Topics covered included the Sustainable Development Goals, how these relate to challenges faced by local communities, how these can become opportunities, and sharing and developing initial ideas for social enterprises.

Participant confidence grew considerably. The workshops were considered very useful. The most useful aspects included The Ideas Generator, networking, group work, the motivational speaker, the practical information and the realisation that others believed in the social enterprise idea. One person already familiar with sustainability found the session less useful.

‘Excellent, interesting, passionate speaker’

‘Great interaction on the day and thought provoking process’

‘Excellent day’

‘Really enjoyed all aspects of the day’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				3	10

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To identify ideas		1	4	8
To explore sustainability	1	1	3	8

4.3 Strategy and business planning

Topics included the difference between strategic and business planning, the content of a strategy and a business plan, pitfalls/risks and examples of social enterprises and strategies for growth.

Participant confidence increased considerably. The workshop was considered to be very useful. The most useful aspects included the focus and clarity of purpose, the strategy questions, the case studies, the risk analysis and associated exercises and the business plan outline and starting the process of putting it in writing. One person found the identification of potential risks off-putting and another did not find the general outline of the structure of a business plan useful.

'The business plan – what funders want to see.'

'Starting to write the plan – getting it down on paper.'

'Social enterprise functions the same as a business!'

'Strategy questions excellent for focussing the mind.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				3	9

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To develop a strategy		1	2	9
To do a business plan	1	1	2	8

4.4 Marketing

Topics included the fundamentals of marketing, the distinction between customers and beneficiaries, the role social impact plays in social enterprise marketing, how to conduct market research, identification of competition and getting the marketing mix right.

Confidence in the topic was grown. All workshop content was considered to be useful. The most useful aspects were the practical exercises that applied the learning, sources of market research, networking, the marketing strategy and actions required. Participants valued this workshop (and the associated workshop on communications and related peer workshops) and suggested that even more time could have been devoted to these topics.

'Exercises forcing us to apply learning to our own specific projects.'

'Finding out questions that I need to ask about the business idea.'

'Hand outs very good. Tutor very good.'

'Breaking down the marketing strategy and being clear, concise.'

'Focussing on the actions required to promote and develop the project.'

'We covered a lot but it was energising.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				1	10

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To develop a marketing plan	2		1	8
To communicate effectively with customers	2	1		8

4.5 Organisation and governance

Topics included different types of organisation, legal structures, the Governance Code, charities regulation, and the role of boards and trustees.

Confidence improved. The most useful aspects were looking at the various options for organisations and charitable status. One person did not find the review of definitions useful as they were already familiar with them. The governance workshop contained considerable content and it was suggested that it might have benefitted from being split into two sessions with more time included for question and answer sessions and case examples. Additional content suggested included child safeguarding/Garda Vetting, health and safety and data protection. It was also suggested that there could have been more about roles and boundaries within organisations. Including practical examples to illustrate governance concepts was also recommended.

‘Governance – however would have liked a checklist of the Code.’

‘Tutor – very good content.’

‘Charitable organisation and information.’

‘The full programme of the night.’

‘Full of pertinent information.’

‘Hand outs.’

‘Charity and charitable trust and types of incorporation.’

‘Comparing various entities, considering the options available.’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			3	4	4

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
About governance responsibilities	1		2	8
About having the right organisational structure	3		2	6

4.6 Human resources

Topics included an introduction to employment law, grievance procedures, natural justice, the negotiation process and equality legislation.

Confidence about managing human resources and responsibilities as employers improved. The most useful aspects were employment law, negotiating skills, the discussion and advice provided with real examples. Three people found some aspects to be less useful. These were the section on bargaining, the different types of employment and legislation relating to employee contracts.

'Live story examples.'

'Case studies. Common sense approach.'

'The element on effective negotiating.'

'The information given and the advice given.'

'Tutor discussion, PowerPoint slides handouts and discussion were very good.'

'The rights of employers and employees.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			2	1	6

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
About managing human resources			3	6
About employer responsibilities	1		1	7

4.7 Measuring social impact

The workshop explored what social impact is, how to plan for it and how to measure and demonstrate it.

Confidence levels once more improved. This topic may not feel of immediate relevance to emerging social enterprises and perceptions of its usefulness were more tempered. The most useful aspect related to the examples given and the use of a worksheet during the session. One person did not find the small group work useful. More examples would have been appreciated.

'Write the problem. Show how you can solve it.'

'Put the social impact in better context for me.'

'Lovely tutor. All explained in plain English.'

'The worksheet and working through it throughout the whole session.'

'All very useful.'

'Lots of social impact information that will vastly improve the business plan.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			1	4	3

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To identify social impact		1	1	6
To measure social impact			2	6

4.8 Financial planning

The workshop explored financial planning, cost control, cash flow, budgeting, record keeping, funding strategies, tax and common pitfalls.

Confidence once more improved. The most useful aspects related to practical exercises and discussion. One person did not find the information on accounting principles useful as they are not yet at this stage of development in their project. Another person also did not find this useful, because they were familiar with it already. More time was recommended, especially in respect of cash flow management, taxation and book-keeping. Including a list of definitions and terms would also be beneficial as well as practical examples to illustrate financial concepts.

‘All information presented was very useful.’

‘Examples.’

‘Exercise and discussion around cash flow and funding sources.’

‘Practical worksheets.’

‘Definition of terms.’

‘Discussion.’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				3	5

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To work through financial aspects of business plan			2	6
To develop a cash flow forecast	1		1	6

4.9 Funding and sources of support

The workshop explored the LEADER programme, other sources of local support, philanthropy and social finance.

Confidence about knowing where to source funding and how to source other relevant supports improved. All of the information provided was considered to be very useful.

However, because of the crucial nature of funding, it was suggested that information on funding could have been incorporated throughout the training sessions.

‘All very good.’

‘Massive information on funding possibilities.’

‘All really useful.’

‘Really good info on Clann Credo.’

‘Lots of relevant information.’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			1	1	5

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
About knowing where to source funding			2	5
About knowing how to source other relevant supports	1			6

4.10 Communications

This included a recap on marketing, making a short ‘elevator pitch’ presentation to potential funders, press releases and doing interviews.

Confidence improved. All of the content and exercises were considered useful. For future workshops, one person suggested more interaction and another suggested giving examples of good and bad types of presentation.

‘Looking at the bigger picture.’

‘The press release and presentation.’

‘Eye opening information. Instils belief that communication and marketing really help an enterprise.’

‘Fantastic work.’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents					4

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To communicate effectively	4			4
To present business plan/strategy to others	4		1	3

Feedback on peer support workshops

4.11 First peer support workshop

The focus of this workshop was on feasibility testing.

Confidence levels improved for all members of the group. The most useful aspect related to helping participants to obtain clarity over what problem they were trying to address. Participants also benefitted from the general discussion and from meeting others with the same or similar issues. Two people felt too much time was spent on specific projects. Apart from this, the others found all aspects useful.

'Focusing on the 'why' of my project – what's the problem I'm solving as opposed to the benefits.'

'Naming the problem.'

'Direct discussion with the tutor/facilitator.'

'What was the problem issue I was trying to fix.'

'To the point – direct and functional, an eye opener, informative and educational.'

'Forcing us to focus on the core objective of our ideas.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				5	9

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To identify ideas			3	11
To explore sustainability	1		3	10

4.12 Second peer support workshop

The workshop explored business planning in more depth and took the participants through their initial sketch and what each needed to do to develop their plans. There was considerable discussion about company structure and governance issues. Sources of market research information were also explored. Some projects were becoming clearer on their purpose and business model while others had a way to go.

Five people did not respond to the question posed about changes in confidence to develop a business plan: this may reflect the nature of the group discussion on the day. Confidence levels improved for the remainder.

The most useful aspects were the group discussion, sharing experiences, and the information on governance and General Data Protection Regulation. One person found it difficult to focus on the detail of other projects and another did not find the project introductions useful.

'Good discussion.'
'Governance and other people's experiences.'
'Hearing others were struggling and their stories.'
'Great facilitator.'
'Sharing knowledge.'
'To see a clear path.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				3	7

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To develop a business plan	5		1	4

4.13 Third peer support workshop

The main intention of the workshop was to explore marketing in more depth, but there was considerable discussion about the business ideas in general. The discussion helped some to achieve greater clarity about their product and customers.

Confidence to work through the marketing aspects of the business plan improved, but slightly less than for some other workshops. The most useful aspects related to learning from others and being helped to reassess ideas and decide what needed to be included in the business plans. There was nothing considered the least useful.

'Clear path to where I want to go.'
'What I need to put on paper and what not to.'
'The opportunity to hear and discuss other participants' experiences and concerns.'
'Deciding the enterprise is now 2 products, not just 1. Brings a lot more clarity.'
'Communal information.'
'Connections and learning from other people's experiences.'
'The sessions are making me ask and answer the hard questions that has to be done and I might have been avoiding!'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			1	2	6

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To develop a marketing plan	2		4	3

4.14 Fourth peer support workshop

The workshop explored what progress participants had made with their projects and their plans for their operations, structuring and staffing.

Confidence improved. People found the discussion useful as they learnt from each other. There was nothing considered the least useful.

‘Everyone’s issues are relevant and become useful exercises’

‘Discussion – one to one was very good’

‘Individual discussion on each project’

‘Redirection to other areas of potential suppliers’ organisations. Non-response to date doesn’t mean we’re dead in the water’

‘Broadens the mind – opens your eyes, gives nuggets/gems of info.’

‘Peer support workshops – very educational’

‘Peer support workshops are very important for this course’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents					5

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To develop an operations plan			1	4
About having the right structure			2	3

4.15 Fifth peer support workshop

The workshop focused on supporting participants to develop the executive summary of their business plans and developing their elevator pitch. There was also considerable discussion about governance.

Confidence about ability to complete an executive summary improved. Participants found the examples provided and the ensuing discussion the most useful. One person felt they would have got more out of the workshop if their business plan had been more developed.

‘Explanation of the executive summary do’s and don’t’s’

‘The discussion, interaction, examples of problems and issues’

‘Peer information and support’

‘Other participants’ experiences’

‘The sessions are energising’

‘Discussing template of executive summary, structure of organisations, boards and governance’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			1	2	4

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To complete the business plan executive summary			1	6

4.16 Sixth peer support workshop

The workshop focused on supporting participants to further develop their executive summaries and business pitches. Confidence levels improved. The most useful aspects were group discussion and hearing about other people's experiences.

'More focussed on the pitch and a much better idea on how to approach it.'

'Peer support. Edel's objectivity – breath of fresh air.'

'Sharing specific experiences of other project members and pitch discussions.'

'Talking around the group.'

'Hearing everyone's potential pitch.'

'Discussion about the presentation.'

'Fantastic course pushing me to the limit.'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents			1	2	5

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To complete an executive summary	1		1	6

4.17 Seventh peer support workshop

The final workshop supported participants to prepare for the Goblin's Lair competition.

Participant confidence about their social enterprise ideas further improved. The most useful aspects related to sharing of experiences and the information provided by the facilitator.

'Brill enthusiasm: recycling, upcycling, etc.'

'Feedback and sharing with other groups'

'Peer support and information and leadership from Edel'

'Delighted I did the course'

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				2	3

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
About the social enterprise			1	4

Feedback on one-to-one support

4.18 The one-to-one support was warmly welcomed. All but two respondents felt that they had received enough support. The most useful aspects of the site visits centred around the individualised and practical advice provided by the two independent KSE team members, because it brought all aspects of the training together. One person commented that hearing hard truths might cause a deflation of ego. Levels of confidence increased considerably for all but one participant, for whom it improved slightly.

‘Frank telling me straight what he thought and he made me think of what needed more attention and direction.’

‘The feedback and analysis and advice going forward.’

‘I found this exercise grounded you, it made you focus and highlighted issues that were obvious but I hadn’t included.’

‘Frank gave me some very useful tips and advice on completing my business plan.’

‘Going through the business plan and helping to reorganise it.’

‘Ann was great in how she was so effective and convincing in sharing her knowledge and her thoroughness of the project. I have learnt so much thanks again.’

‘Having a chance to show and explain our project to someone with fresh eyes, and an unbiased view.’

‘I’m not sure if it’s that I’m not confident about the work I have done in putting the business plan together or I’m not sure what exactly I need.’

Usefulness out of 5	1	2	3	4	5
Number of respondents				1	6

Level of confidence	No response	No change in confidence	Confidence increased slightly	Confidence increased considerably
To develop a business plan for the social enterprise	3		1	6

Quality assessment

- 4.19 The perceived usefulness of both types of workshops and one-to-one support was very high. The lowest rating received was 3/5 and the highest was 5/5. The median and mode rating was 5/5 (very useful) and the mean rating was 4.6/5.
- 4.20 Immediate levels of confidence as a result of both types of workshops and one-to-one support was also very high. No change in confidence was expressed in only six instances. In 46 instances, a slight increase in confidence was noted. However, in the vast majority of cases – 175 – a considerable increase in confidence was expressed.
- 4.21 The qualitative feedback provided also points to a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the programme. Some useful suggestions for improvement were provided. Further ones, not mentioned elsewhere, include:
- Developing a programme website with all programme resources and further information
 - Using an online group sharing platform such as a closed Facebook group or WhatsApp
 - Having more guest speakers
 - Including more good practice case examples of social enterprises.

5 Results

The challenge of discussing results

- 5.1 It is difficult to talk meaningfully about programme results as only a short time period has elapsed between programme completion and this review. Nonetheless, the immediate and some projected outcomes of KSE are described below.

Feasibility testing

- 5.2 An implicit aspect of the KSE programme was testing the feasibility of social enterprise ideas/growth plans. The feasibility testing process confirmed for the majority of projects that their ideas had potential. Two projects pivoted their original idea as a result of feasibility testing (Equal Part and Cottage Garden GIY). Feasibility testing also helped two projects to recognise that their ideas were not viable at this time (Pedal Bus and Rent-a-Bike).

Business plans

- 5.3 Ten business plans were developed with the support of the KSE team. These can be used by the projects when trying to secure further investment. The eight projects that submitted their business plans for consideration by the judging panel and the seven that made a pitch at the Goblin's Lair availed of the opportunities to practise 'selling their wares' and receiving independent feedback on their plans.

Grant applications

- 5.4 A number of the projects have made grant applications since the programme commenced:
- Athy Heritage Centre-Museum was successful in its application to LEADER for funding towards a feasibility study and is planning to apply for capital funding.
 - Monasterevin Community Centre has made an application to LEADER for capital funding.
 - Narraghmore Development Association successfully applied for grant aid to Kildare County Council to redevelop the premises it will use for its social enterprise and is in the process of a community fundraising drive to raise the balance of funds required. It plans to apply to LEADER for funding to equip its centre.
 - The Tanyard in Ballitore has submitted an expression of interest to LEADER and plans to apply for capital funding.

Employment potential

5.5 The current and projected staffing of the most promising KSE social enterprises are shown in the table below:

Project	Current staffing			Projected staffing 2023		
	Full time	Part time	CE	Full time	Part time	CE
Athy Boat Tours		1	6	1		6+
Athy Heritage Centre-Museum	1	1	2	4	1	2+
Cottage Market GIY and Woolstock		3		4		
Dross Evolution	1			1	2	
Equal Part					5	
Monasterevin Community Centre			4		1	4
Narraghmore Development Association				1	1	1
Rock Stories		1			2+	
The Tanyard						1
Willow Counselling	1			1		
Total		21			38+	

5.6 Note that over 50 volunteers are presently involved in the committees of the KSE projects and a further 35 are engaged as volunteer workers. Volunteer numbers are also likely to rise as projects develop.

Networking

5.7 The peer support process supported a core group of seven to ten participants to come together on a regular basis to share experiences, learn from each other and form bonds. Some interest has been expressed in continuing this type of network. A support mechanism to facilitate the network would be necessary for success, however.

5.8 Furthermore, a number of the projects in the south of the county (in or near Athy) have been discussing the opportunities to work together on developing a visitor trail and on cross-referral of tourists to each other's projects.

Outcomes assessment

5.9 The preliminary outcomes are modest but positive. A review of their status in 12 and 24 months' time will provide more telling results.

6 Case studies

Overview

6.1 This section provides three sample case studies:

- An entirely new social enterprise at the very early stages of development (Woolstock)
- A new social enterprise offering from an existing organisation (Narraghmore Development Association)
- An existing social enterprise in expansion mode (Athy Boat Tours).

WoolStock

On learning about the environmental degradation and human rights abuses associated with the global cotton trade, sustainability activist Deirdre Lane set about researching the wool trade. Although wool is a biodegradable and renewable material, the production of which consumes significantly less energy than manmade fibres, she nonetheless discovered many problems. Irish sheep farmers are paid very little for raw wool, which is then either stockpiled or exported, including to countries where child and slave labour are used to process it. At the same time, processed wool, largely from unknown sources, is imported into Ireland. This has significant negative economic, environmental and social implications.

WoolStock is an emerging Newbridge-based social enterprise that seeks to address these issues. Aligning with eight of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, WoolStock will develop a ‘land to label’ circular economy for Irish wool. This will include – amongst other things – extensive research, the formation of a Wool Board, the establishment of the Irish Wool Museum, a wool festival and the KnitFit wellbeing through woolcraft initiative.

Deirdre joined KSE with Evonne Boland under the guise of Cottage Market GIY: WoolStock is a spinoff from this initiative. The aspects of the KSE programme that she found particularly useful were the workshops on social impact and funding sources and the Globin’s Lair evening at which her project won a prize. She would have valued a workbook for ‘homework’ between sessions, more detailed feedback on her draft business plan, advice on intellectual property matters, assistance with accountancy and grant applications, as well as introductions to potential investors.

It is hoped that in due course, WoolStock will not only create employment and deliver other economic benefits, but will also contribute to improved health, waste reduction, community resilience, preservation of heritage, as well as invoke a renewed pride of place.

Narraghmore Development Association

Like many rural communities in Ireland, the village of Narraghmore (population 823) was gradually losing local businesses and opportunities for social activity, including the loss of its post office in October 2018.

The Narraghmore Development Association has a track record in identifying and addressing community need. In 2017, it decided to embark on a social enterprise project to revamp a long-derelict hardware store in the centre of the village into a community hub. It was successful in securing an €80,000 Town and Village Renewal Scheme grant from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The organisation very much welcomed gaining a place on the KSE course in 2018. Being on a structured programme forced the committee members to give time and thought to the various aspects of developing its social enterprise, from forecasting to marketing, governance to cashflow management, and everything in between. Finding out the nitty gritty of legal structures, taxation, insurance and the like was very useful and helped in refining the business plan. Hearing the stories of fellow social entrepreneurs was inspiring and many useful tips and contacts were picked up along the way. The one-to-one support was also gladly received. It was felt that a further one-to-one session at the start and more clearly defined judging criteria for the final Goblin's Lair would have made the course even better.

An extensive community consultation was carried out in the summer months, which not only aided the committee's market research, it also informed and engaged the villagers. A community fundraising target of €10,000 is well on the way to being reached and some 40 people have already signed up to help next year.

After a competitive tender process, refurbishment works commenced in August 2018 and the building is due to be officially opened in January 2019. It will house a community shop, a bakery/tea room, a local heritage section, a repair café/Men's Shed, and working/retail space for a number of micro-enterprises. It will also be possible to host events and pop-up shops. Initially to be staffed by volunteers and CE workers, it is envisaged that within three years, there will be two to three employees.

The future for the people of Narraghmore, both young and old, now looks far brighter, both socially and economically.

Athy Boat Tours

Over the past 10 to 15 years, there have been a range of official reports noting that Ireland's waterways are a greatly underexploited resource. The heritage town of Athy lies on the convergence of the River Barrow and the Grand Canal and was pinpointed as a suitable location for a water-focused recreation hub. Kildare County Council saw the potential for boat tours running from Athy and secured capital funding via the Rural Economic Development Zone scheme. A 59-foot wheelchair accessible passenger barge "Freedom on the Water" was purchased in early 2016 and was ready for use by June of that year.

The project was, and for now continues to be, housed and managed by Athy Community Enterprise Centre. CE participants have been trained as skippers. Tours can be run year-round, but the greatest demand is for weekends during the months of May to September. Tours are in any case weather-dependent. The clientele includes private individuals/families as well as groups from disability organisations, photography clubs, nursing homes, corporations, and so on. Themed events and parties also take place.

It was recognised that there are further opportunities that can and must be tapped in order to make Athy Boat Tours into a sustainable social enterprise in the longer-term. The Manager of the Athy Community Enterprise Centre was therefore very pleased to gain a place on the KSE programme. She found the programme most useful, especially the elements that focused on marketing. The ongoing opportunities to engage with other participants were also appreciated. A visit to one or more thriving social enterprises might have made a welcome addition to the programme. Athy Boat Tours was delighted to receive a prize at the end of the programme.

Considerable work was done on developing the project's business plan. It is intended to establish the social enterprise as an independent entity. In addition to the CE skippers, there will be a dedicated manager and volunteer involvement will be sought to support the growing project. Canoe and cycle hire are being added and LEADER funding has been secured for this. There are plans to market the offering to a far greater extent in order to secure greater number of both local and international tourists. Discussions are currently taking place with a number of the KSE participants about developing joint tourism packages. The local economy will undoubtedly benefit.

Appendix 1: KSE programme schedule

Programme element	Delivered by	Date and time
Information evening Naas	Ann Clarke, Brian Kelly, Pat Leogue & Paul O'Sullivan	10 April 19.00 – 20.30
Information evening Athy	Ann Clarke, Brian Kelly, Pat Leogue & Paul O'Sullivan	18 April 19.00 – 20.30
Induction and needs analysis workshop	Ann Clarke, Edel Moloney & Frank Roche	10 May 19.00 – 22.00
Sustainability and climate change workshop	Davie Philip	17 May 10.00 – 13.30
Ideas generation workshop	Davie Philip	17 May 13.30 – 16.00
Peer support workshop: feasibility testing	Edel Moloney	26 May 10.00 – 13.00
Strategy and business planning workshop	Ann Clarke & Paul O'Sullivan	30 May 19.00 – 22.00
Peer support workshop: starting the business plan	Edel Moloney	9 June 10.00 – 13.00
Marketing workshop	Cathy Moore	16 June 10.00 – 13.00
Peer support workshop: marketing and sales	Edel Moloney	23 June 10.00 – 13.00
Organisation and governance workshop	Paul O'Sullivan	4 July 19.00 – 22.00
Human resources workshop	Paul O'Sullivan	11 July 19.00 – 22.00
Peer support workshop: operations and structure	Edel Moloney	27 July 10.00 – 13.00
<i>Summer break (drafting of business plans)</i>		
Site visits (one-to-one support)	Frank Roche & Ann Clarke	5 – 28 September
Measuring social impact workshop	Sandra Velthuis	5 September 19.00 – 22.00
Financial planning workshop	Jim Boyle	13 September 19.00 – 22.00
Funding and sources of support workshop	Helen Dowling, Brian Kelly, Edel Moloney & Paul O'Sullivan	29 September 10.00 – 13.00
Communications workshop	Cathy Moore & Roisin Mulligan	6 October 10.00 – 13.00
Peer support workshop: finances	Edel Moloney	13 October 10.00 – 13.00
Peer support workshop: finalising the business plan	Edel Moloney	20 October 10.00 – 13.00
Peer support workshop: preparing to pitch	Edel Moloney	27 October 10.00 – 13.00
The Goblin's Lair competition	Ann Clarke, Vivian Cummins, Jennifer Hennessy & Jacqueline McNabb	22 November 19.00 – 22.30
Celebration event	Pat Leogue, Edel Moloney, Paul O'Sullivan	27 November 19.00 – 20.30

Appendix 2: KSE project profiles

Athy Heritage Centre-Museum

This is an existing social enterprise in the growth stage of development that is a community heritage centre and museum in the old court house in the centre of Athy. Originally based on the ground floor, it is taking over the second and third floors to develop a Shackleton museum, including a research facility. The project completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan. The project requires significant further investment as well as additional staff to operate its redeveloped coffee shop and to meet and greet visitors.

Athy Boat Tours (see case studies)

This is an existing social enterprise in the growth stage of development that provides day trips on the Barrow out of Athy using a restored canal boat. It plans to add canoeing and cycling along the towpath as additional attractions. The project completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan. The project's main development needs are in respect of staff to undertake project management and marketing. It won one of the two final programme awards.

Cottage Market GIY

Cottage Market GIY, which stands for Grow It Yourself, is an existing social enterprise that promotes and provides space for homemade and homegrown produce in the heart of the community. The market currently has 35 stalls. The team explored the feasibility of setting up a sustainable development hub. As feasibility testing progressed, they began to focus on promoting food sustainability and addressing food poverty in disadvantaged areas, commencing in Newbridge. The project completed the KSE programme. (A spin-off initiative from Cottage Garden GIY called WoolStock is described separately below.)

Cuan Mhuire

This was an idea to develop an early intervention programme for young people at risk of addiction. The promoter attended some of the initial workshops and then dropped out.

Dross Evolution

This is an existing social enterprise that is an art centre providing creative opportunities for children and young people. It plans to grow its business. It uses recycled materials and provides a range of programmes, classes and camps for children of all ages. It also does

recycling workshops and creates recycling campaigns for corporates, schools and colleges. The project completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan.

Equal Part

This is a pre start-up social enterprise based in St. John of God that originally planned to provide employment for people with disabilities and address food poverty by sourcing non-perishable food from wholesalers for sale in the community at affordable prices. A preliminary business plan was developed. However, as feasibility testing proceeded, sourcing a wholesaler willing to work with the project proved problematic, partly because of the success of another social enterprise called Food Cloud. In the meantime, it emerged that another social enterprise, Recreate, was seeking to establish hubs around the country. Recreate uses recycled materials to supply art materials to teachers and others interested in arts and crafts. Preliminary discussions took place towards the end of the KSE programme with a view to establishing a Recreate hub that would be staffed with people with disabilities. The project completed the KSE programme.

Kildare Travellers' Association

A place was offered to a member of the Traveller community who was interested in setting up a social enterprise. The place was not taken up.

Monasterevin Community Centre

This is an existing social enterprise in the early stages of development that hires out meeting rooms and its hall, which includes a stage, to local businesses and groups. It has over 30 groups currently using its space. It plans to upgrade its facilities so it can hold concerts, provide a one-stop information centre, educational and life skills classes and a start-up enterprise space. It completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan. It requires investment to develop the second and third floors of its building, which will enable it to have more income generating activities.

Narraghmore Development Association (see case studies)

This is a start-up social enterprise based in Narraghmore set up in response to the loss of the village post office/shop and other village facilities. It is renovating an old hardware store to provide a hub that will have a community shop, bakery/ tea room, micro-home enterprise space, and repair café/Men's Shed and a local history area. It completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan. It now needs to source staff and to purchase equipment.

Pedal Bus

This was a pre start-up idea that planned to provide a pedal bus to bring children to school in Naas, modelled on pedal bus services available on the continent. During the feasibility testing, it emerged that sourcing a suitable pedal bike was extremely challenging and subsequently the promoter decided not to proceed with the project.

Rathangan Community Centre

This was a pre start-up that intended to set up a community café in its community centre. The group attended the first few workshops but subsequently dropped out.

Rent-a-Bike

This was a pre start-up that planned to introduce a bike rental scheme for Newbridge similar to what is available in Dublin. Towards the end of the KSE programme, the promoter's work commitments changed and it became impossible for him to complete the programme or to pursue the idea to start-up phase.

Rock Stories

This is a start-up social enterprise that produces gift rocks to tell a personal story or to give a personal message. It plans to model self-employment as a progression pathway for people with disabilities in St. John of God. The project completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan.

Teach Dara Community and Family Centre

This is a community centre based in Kildare town that planned to extend its services by developing a repair café, community tool bank, community health promotion and a healthy eating programme. The group attended one session but dropped out due to time constraints.

Teach na Daoine

This is a centre for the elderly based in Kilcullen. A place was offered to the group but it was not taken up.

The Tanyard

This is a start-up that has restored part of the old tanyard in the Quaker village of Ballitore to create a central focal point for the community and for visitors to the historic village. It plans to open a café and community meeting space, gallery and exhibition space and to provide a one-stop information centre. It has engaged the local historical society to research the history of Ballitore so that its story can be used in marketing the village. The project completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan. It now needs to invest in equipment and to staff its café.

White's Castle

This was an idea by the Athy Lion's Club to convert White's Castle into a Fitzgeraldine museum. A place on the KSE programme was offered to the group but they did not take up the place on offer.

Willow Counselling

This is an existing social enterprise based in Athy that provides counselling services for substance misusers who are not yet 'clean'. Other services in the area require clients to be clean before a service is provided. The project completed the KSE programme. The project's main development needs are more space so it can expand its therapeutic capacity.

Woolstock (see case studies)

Woolstock is a spin-off venture from Cottage Market GIY (see above). It is promoting the benefits of wool as a natural, sustainable material in a wide range of industries and creating 'land to label' transparency in wool products. It works closely with local producers on sustainable farming practices and wool harvesting techniques. The project completed the KSE programme and submitted a business plan. It won one of the two final programme awards.