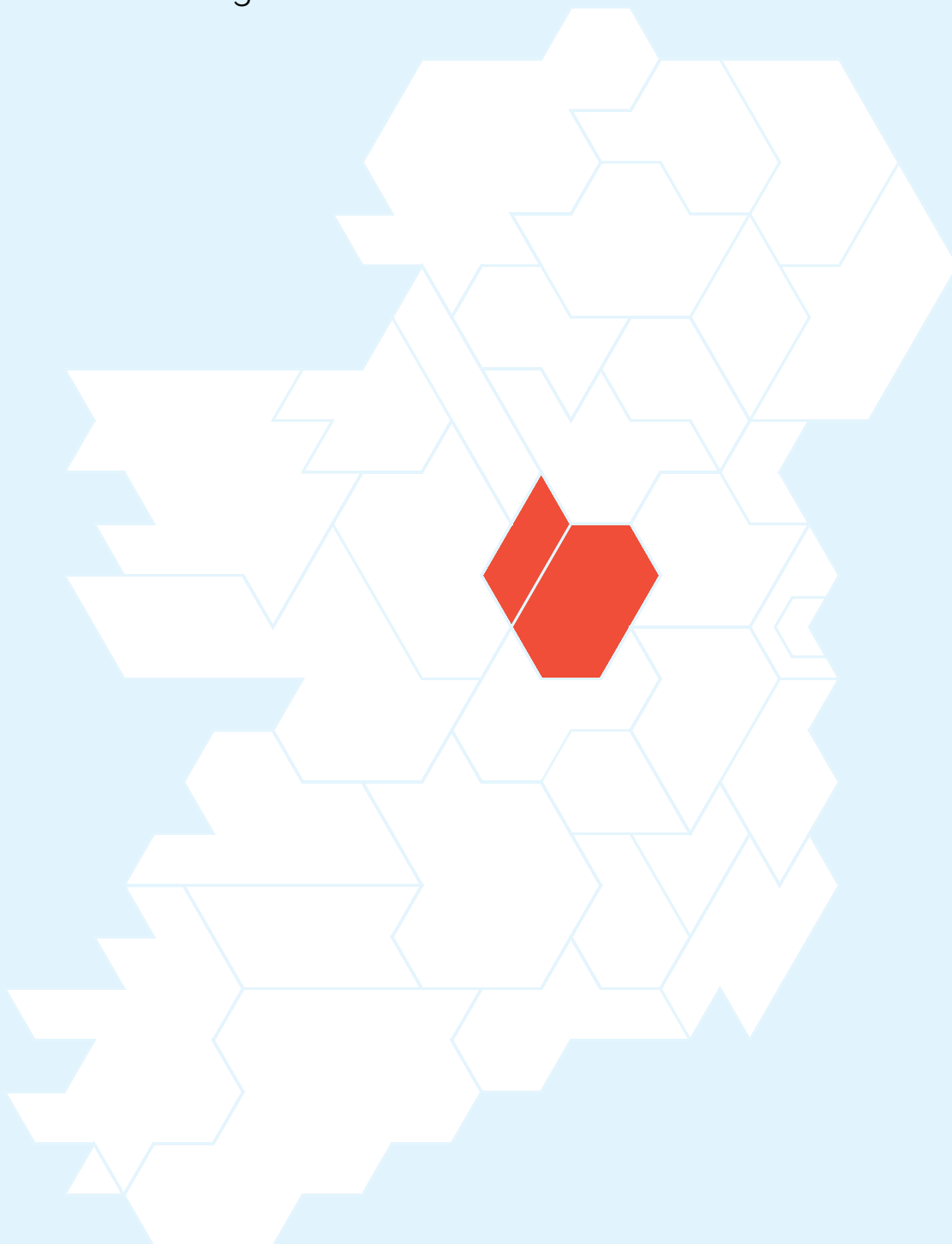


Strategic Performance Agreement 2018 – 2020

Longford and Westmeath
Education and Training Board



European Union
Investing in Your Future
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1. Introduction



Introduction

This agreement between SOLAS and Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) sets out the context, strategic priorities and ETB contribution to achievement of key national further education and training (FET) sector targets over the period 2018-20. It also articulates the ETB's commitment to supporting the implementation of a range of national policies and strategies relevant to FET provision and identifies the key risks and challenges which must be mitigated and addressed in order to ensure successful delivery of this agreement. The agreement is the product of extensive dialogue and engagement between SOLAS and Longford and Westmeath ETB, with independent input and validation from a panel of experts with an understanding of Irish and international good practice in further education and training systems.

2. Profile of the ETB Region



Section 2

Profile of the ETB Region

The LWETB region has the smallest population of any ETB in Ireland. In 2011 the population was 125,164 and then increased to 129,643 in 2016. This increase of 3.4% is slightly lower than the national average increase. There are high levels of youth population within the region with 38,711 or 29.8% under the age of 20. There is a considerable number of non-Irish nationals in both counties with the figures from the 2011 census being slightly above the national average of 12%. Longford has the second largest increase in their non-Irish national population in the country since 2011. Longford also has the highest number of travellers per head of population in the country.

2.1 Learner Profile

In terms of the Learner Profile, Learners within LWETB are split 48% Male and 52% Female. With regard to the economic status of learners, they come from a variety of backgrounds and are motivated in different ways, however approximately 12% are employed, 42% are unemployed and of these approximately 25% are long term unemployed. In relation to the educational levels of learners, on average 40% have NFQ Level 3 or less. LWETB spans ages from 15 to 90 with a predominate population in the 25-44 category. 10% of learners have identified themselves as persons with a disability and the majority of these learners engage in part-time provision courses. Learners participate in a diverse range of subject areas with the largest cohort engaging in entry level/progression focussed programmes, in particular the adult literacy programmes which are not mutually exclusive but also provide a progression pathway from part-time non-accredited/entry level to full-time QQI Level 6 programmes.

LWETB ETB Area 2016



(Source: 2016 Census)

POPULATION

129,643

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY COUNTY

LONGFORD 19.6%

WESTMEATH 15.9%

2.2 Enterprise Base

2.2.1 County Longford

County Longford is the second smallest county in Ireland. Longford Town is the county town with a population of 10,008 (2016), the other main towns include Edgeworthstown, Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesboro and Newtownforbes.

Active Enterprises: Approximately 93% of enterprise in Co Longford have under 10 employees and only 1.2% employ over 250 employees: 44% of persons engaged are in the under 10 employees, while 35.4% are engaged in the 20-249 size.

The most significant sectoral employment is in Commerce and Trade, then Professional Services. Longford Town is a centre of employment for those involved in Wholesale, Retail Trade, Transportation and Storage, Accommodation and Food Service, while the North East and South West have concentrations of employment in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is in the North East and South West. In relation to employment within County Longford it is notable that a significant number of workers travel from other counties for work every day. Of those workers in Longford who commute approximately 40% of those are commuting to either Dublin City or Leitrim and are employed in Information and Communication, Financial, Real Estate, Professional, administration and support service activities).

2.2.2 County Westmeath

Mullingar is the county town with a population of 20,928 (2016), the other main towns are Athlone, Moate, Killbeggan, Kinnegad, Killucan and Castlepollard.

Active Enterprises: Approximately 93% of enterprise in County Westmeath have under 10 employees and only 1.2% employ over 250 employees. Some 44% of employees are employed in these micro-enterprises, with 7% employed by large firms in the over 250 category.

24% are employed in Professional Services, while 23% are in Commerce and Trade. The participation rate in Agriculture is higher than the state average. Athlone has a strong pharma (Alkermes, Jazz), engineering (Lund, Extrusions) and public service employment base.

The manufacturing sector in the Midlands is a key employer in the region, only surpassed by the Wholesale/Retail and Health/Social Work sectors. The vast majority of agency supported employment in the Midlands region is in the Manufacturing Sector (10,993), with over a third of these employed in the Food Processing Sector. Over half of these use low to medium technology processes. Irish owned manufacturing companies based in the region span a range of sectors including Food, Engineering, Life Sciences, Cleantech, Electronic, and Paper, Print and Packaging.

In common with the national trend, the unemployment rate is declining in Longford and Westmeath. There were a total of 8,546 on the live register across the region at May 2018.

Population and Workforce 15+ Years

County	Longford	Westmeath
Population	31,400	69,000
Workforce	15,100	35,200
Unemployed	3,700	6,700
Student	3,100	7,900

Source: CSO Census 2016

Persons on Live Register (Number) May 2018

County	Longford	Westmeath
Live Register	2,845	5,701

Source: www.cso.ie website June 2018

3. ETB FET Provision

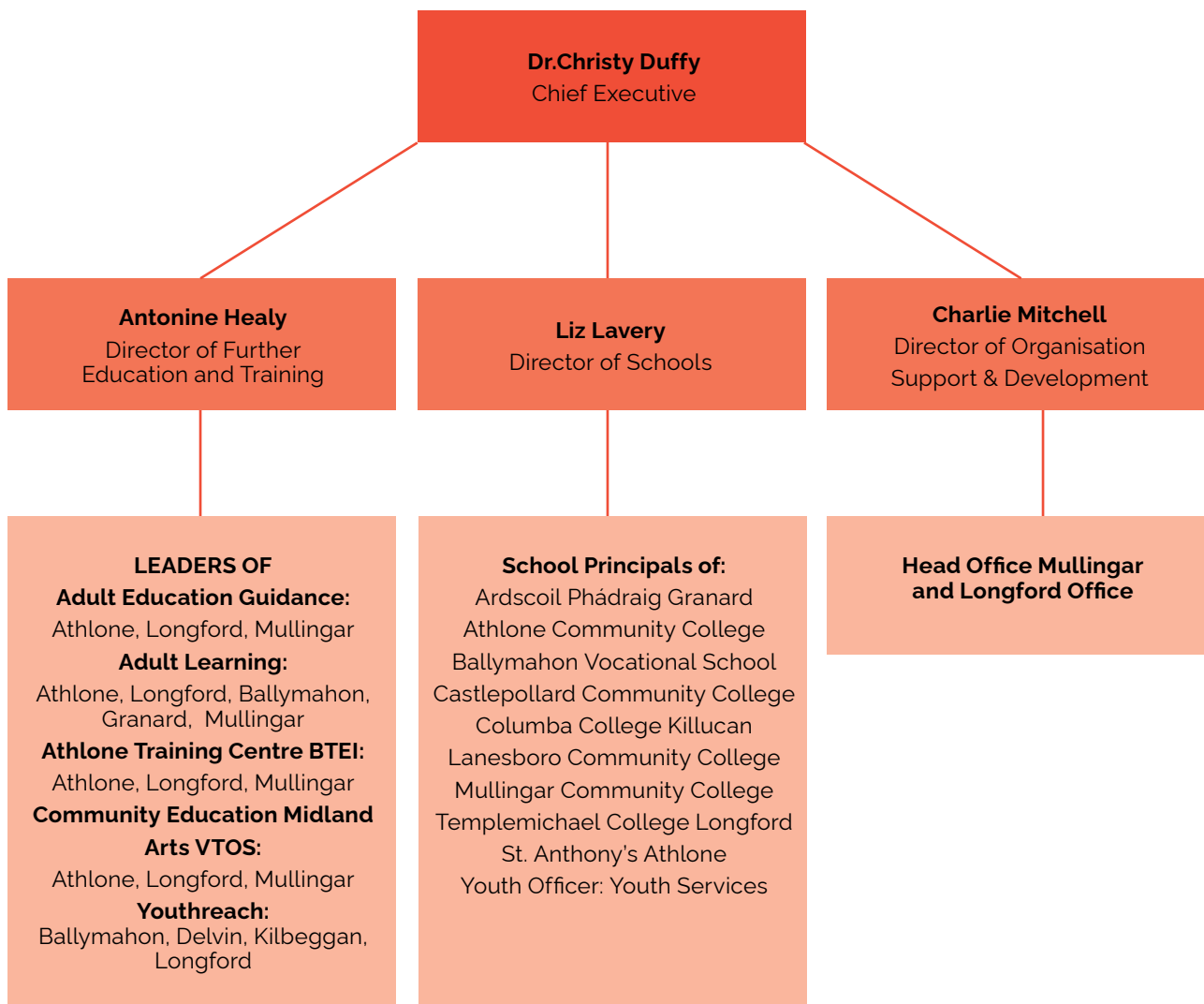


Section 3

ETB FET Provision

3.1 Staffing and Infrastructure

The overall LWETB organisational structure is set out in the diagram below.



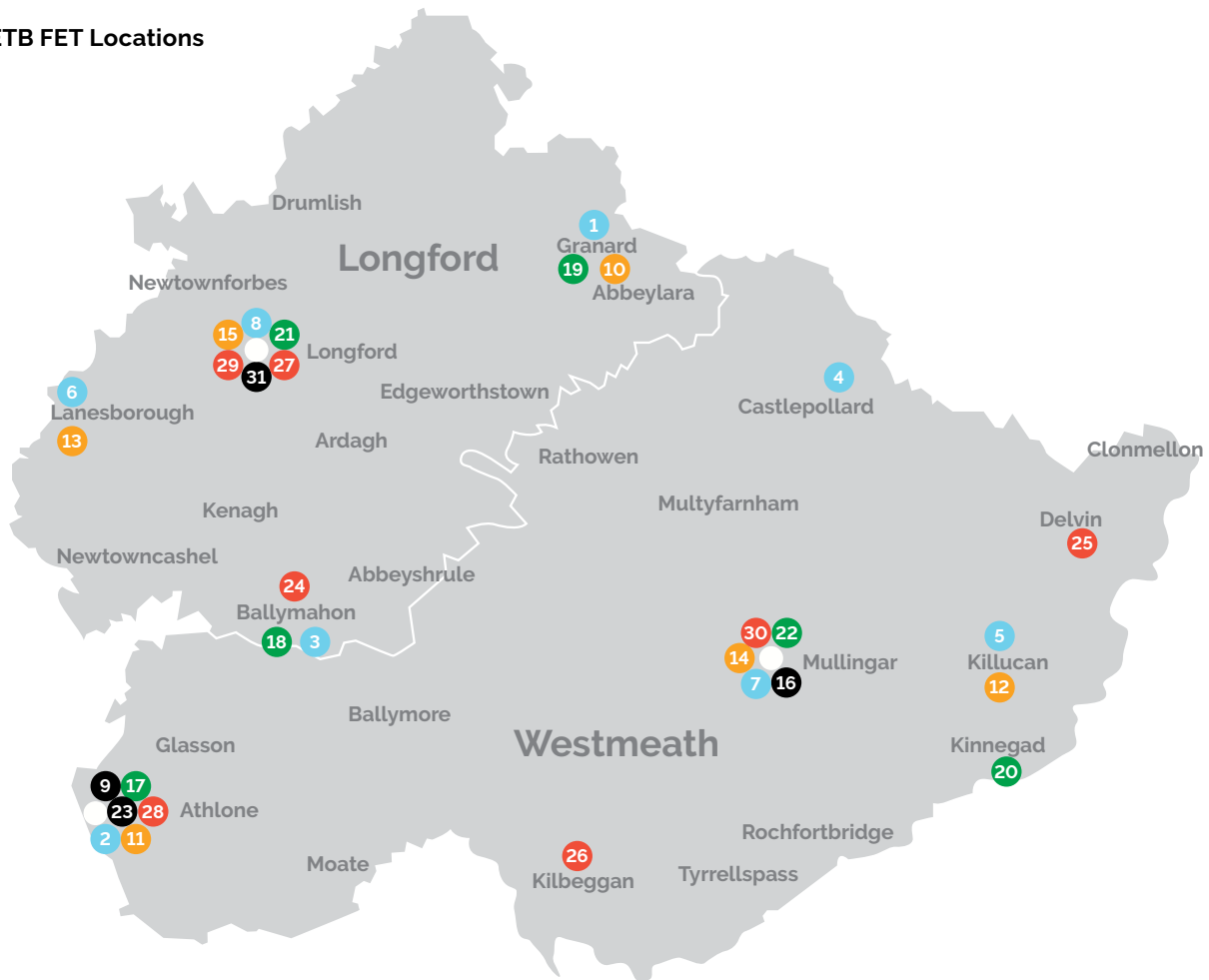
In 2018, the LWETB FET provision operated from 10 dedicated Further Education and Training Centres as well as 6 secondary schools who offered PLC options (a diagrammatic representation has been set out in the map over the page). There has been a strong emphasis on co-locating a variety of FET services within shared buildings or in a campus style setup whereby different services are located in separate buildings but on the same campus. In addition to these 6 FET Centres, there are a large number of community locations which are part of the Community Education, Community Training and BTEI Community Strand provision, some of which are regarded as semi-permanent while others are more temporary in nature.

The majority of LWETB FET centres are accessible and equipped with up to date facilities and equipment. Every one of the management team is focussed on providing premises and facilities which are professional, "fit-for-purpose" and up to date. Over the last 5 years each of our premises have been reviewed and modernised in terms of repairs, upgrades, replacements and/or change of provision offered. This approach has been taken with a view to expanding and developing facilities on an annual basis to meet the needs of learners, employers and staff.

LWETB has ambitious plans for the further development of its facilities and premises in Longford and Westmeath. To date LWETB has progressed a

number of projects, however for the future of its service it is critical that capital funding is allocated to see these plans realised.

LWETB FET Locations



● Schools

1. Ardscoil Phádraig, Granard (PLC)
2. Athlone Community College (PLC)
3. Ballymahon Vocational School
4. Castlepollard Community College
5. Columba College, Killucan (PLC)
6. Lanesboro Community College (PLC)
7. Mullingar Community College (PLC)
8. Templemichael College, Longford (PLC)

- 9. St Anthony's JEC

● PLC Provision

10. Ardscoil Phádraig, Granard
11. Athlone Community College
12. Columba College, Killucan
13. Lanesboro Community College
14. Mullingar Community College
15. Templemichael College, Longford

- 16. LWETB Head Office Mullingar

● Further Education and Training Centres

17. Athlone FET Centre
18. Ballymahon FET Centre
19. Granard FET Centre
20. Kinnegad FET Centre
21. Longford FET Centre
22. Mullingar FET Centre

- 23. Athlone Training Centre

● Youthreach and VTOS

24. Ballymahon Youthreach
25. Delvin Youthreach
26. Kilbeggan Youthreach
27. Longford Youthreach
28. Athlone VTOS
29. Longford VTOS
30. Mullingar VTOS

- 31. Longford Office

3.2 FET Provision

LWETB received SOLAS funding of €24.9m in 2017 to support a range of programmes from Levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications as set out in Table 1. In summary these funded programmes provided FET opportunities to 8,249 beneficiaries.

*Beneficiary numbers include those already enrolled at 1st January 2017

Table 1 **Range of FET Programmes**

Profile of FET Programmes in LWETB		QQI Level	Delivery Type
Full-Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – VTOS – PLC – Youthreach 	3-6	Day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bridging & Foundation Training – Specific Skills Training – Traineeships Training – Apprenticeship Training – Local Training Initiatives – Specialist Training Provider – Justice Workshops – Community Training Centres 	3-6	
Part-Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Voluntary Literacy Tuition – Adult Literacy – ESOL – ITABE – DEIS Family Learning – Refugee Resettlement – BTEI – BTEI Community Strand – FET Co-operation Hours – Skills for Work – Community Education 	1-5	Day and Evening
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Evening Training – Blended Learning 	3-6	

It should be noted that, in addition to providing FET opportunities to those who are unemployed, LWETB also provides programmes which are attended by those in employment. These are individuals who are actively engaged in lifelong learning activities. In 2017, options available included evening training (in which 815 individuals participated), skills for work and traineeships. In tandem, LWETB delivers programmes to learners on a self-financed basis across a number of its second level schools. These programmes are delivered in the evening and encompass both hobby and certified options (in which, 723 individuals participated).

Provision can also be analysed by skills cluster, and this is set out in Table 2. This highlights the strong focus on transversal skills development within the general learning and core personal categories. However it also highlights strengths in provision in key specific skills areas including business, ICT, arts and crafts, health and the built environment.

Table 2 LWETB FET Provision by Skills Cluster

	Total Actual Beneficiaries	% of Total Beneficiaries
Agriculture, Horticulture and Mariculture	113	1.37%
Animal Science	22	0.27%
Art, Craft and Media		
Arts & Crafts	318	3.86%
Built Environment	340	4.12%
Business Admin & Management		
Business Administration	700	8.49%
Core ICT	238	2.89%
Core Personal	3,091	37.47%
Engineering	28	0.34%
Engineering (Electrical)		
Engineering (IT)	27	0.33%
Engineering (Mechanical)	272	3.30%
Engineering (Transport)	31	0.38%
Entrepreneurship	23	0.28%
Financial Services	18	0.22%
Food and Beverage	46	0.56%
General Learning	1,231	14.92%
Hairdressing, Beauty and Complementary Therapies	225	2.73%
Health, Family other Social Services	584	7.08%
Information Technology	289	3.50%
Management	82	0.99%
Manufacturing	21	0.25%
Media Graphics Communications	65	0.79%
Natural Resources		
Research and Education Training	36	0.44%
Sales & Marketing	116	1.41%
Sampling Skills		
Science and Technology		
Security, Guarding & Emergency Services	142	1.72%
Skills Sampling, General Learning & Core Personal	12	0.15%
Sport and Leisure	48	0.58%
Tourism	66	0.80%
Tourism and Sport		
Transport, Distribution & Logistics		
Web Development & Design	65	0.79%
Total	8,249	

The FET service also operates a range of other support services which are set out in Table 3.

Table 3 **FET Services**

Profile of FET Services in LWETB	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adult Guidance Counselling – Recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Impartial Career Advice – Recruiting Learners to Programmes – Focused on progression to Further/Higher Education and Employment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Apprenticeship Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Employer Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Online Test Centre – Certification – Quality Assurance – Training Standards System 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A Range of Awarding Bodies, Professional Qualifications – QQI Levels 1 – 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Literacy Supports for Phase 2 Apprentices in-centre 	

4. ETB Strategic Priorities



Section 4

ETB Strategic Priorities

4.1 ETB FET Strategic Priorities

LWETB has set the following strategic goals to frame its development over the period 2017-2022

LWETB STRATEGIC GOALS 2017-2022	
Goal 1	Deliver professional, high quality, learner- centred education and training services
Goal 2	Enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for learners
Goal 3	Foster effective communication, collaboration and partnerships
Goal 4	Progress the development of effective organisational structures
Goal 5	Support a culture of continuous development with staff

Within the above strategic goals, LWETB will focus on the following areas to further develop FET provision in its area.

4.1.1 Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)

For the learner TEL will support alternative ways of learning in a more flexible way. It uses available technology to enhance the learning experience and supports active learning. For FET practitioners it provides tools and new methods to help learners move through the learning process and engage with lifelong learning in a way that responds to learner needs in a rapidly changing environment. The availability of learners who can engage in full-time programmes is declining in direct response to the reduction in the unemployment rate hence more flexible part-time options must be offered. TEL will provide one solution to this challenge while also providing a more cost effective, timely response. LWETB will use TEL to provide greater access to FET programmes to achieve positive outcomes for learners, enterprise, and the economy. LWETB will do this through enhanced programme design, learning content, continuous professional development and technology infrastructure.

4.1.2 Quality Assurance (QA)

As part of the process of continuous improvement in Quality Assurance and in compliance with QQI statutory guidelines an Executive Self-Evaluation Report (ESER) has been completed and a Quality Improvement Plan to 2022 (QIP) is being activated with identified actions and milestones. Each task identified in the QIP has been aligned to a new QQI Policy Area and also to one of our five strategic goals. This Plan will form the basis of an internal working document to track work flow and the progress of our QIP goals. It will be reviewed and revised periodically as an agenda item for the Quality Assurance Implementation Group (QAIG) while work continues on the development of our new quality system.

4.1.3 Improvements to Course Outputs and Learner Outcomes

Particular improvements are planned as follows:

- Assessment of Learners – the implementation of more formalised methods of learner assessment prior to their commencement on programmes. This will help determine the most appropriate level and type of programme and bring about increased retention rates
- Modular Approach – provide the learner with more part-time options whereby they may build towards a major award by achieving minor awards. This approach will be particularly suitable for those who are in employment
- Structured Work Placements – it is planned to review a number of specific programmes with the purpose of providing enhance work experience in relevant industry clusters. The benefit of doing this would be an increase in placement into employment for learners where there are identified skill shortages.
- Awarding Bodies – as well as an improvement plan for QQI, there is also the need to investigate and offer alternative certification which may be more appropriate for certain industry requirements. At present LWETB has access to alternative certification however LWETB will start to explore this further with a view to expanding our available awarding bodies.

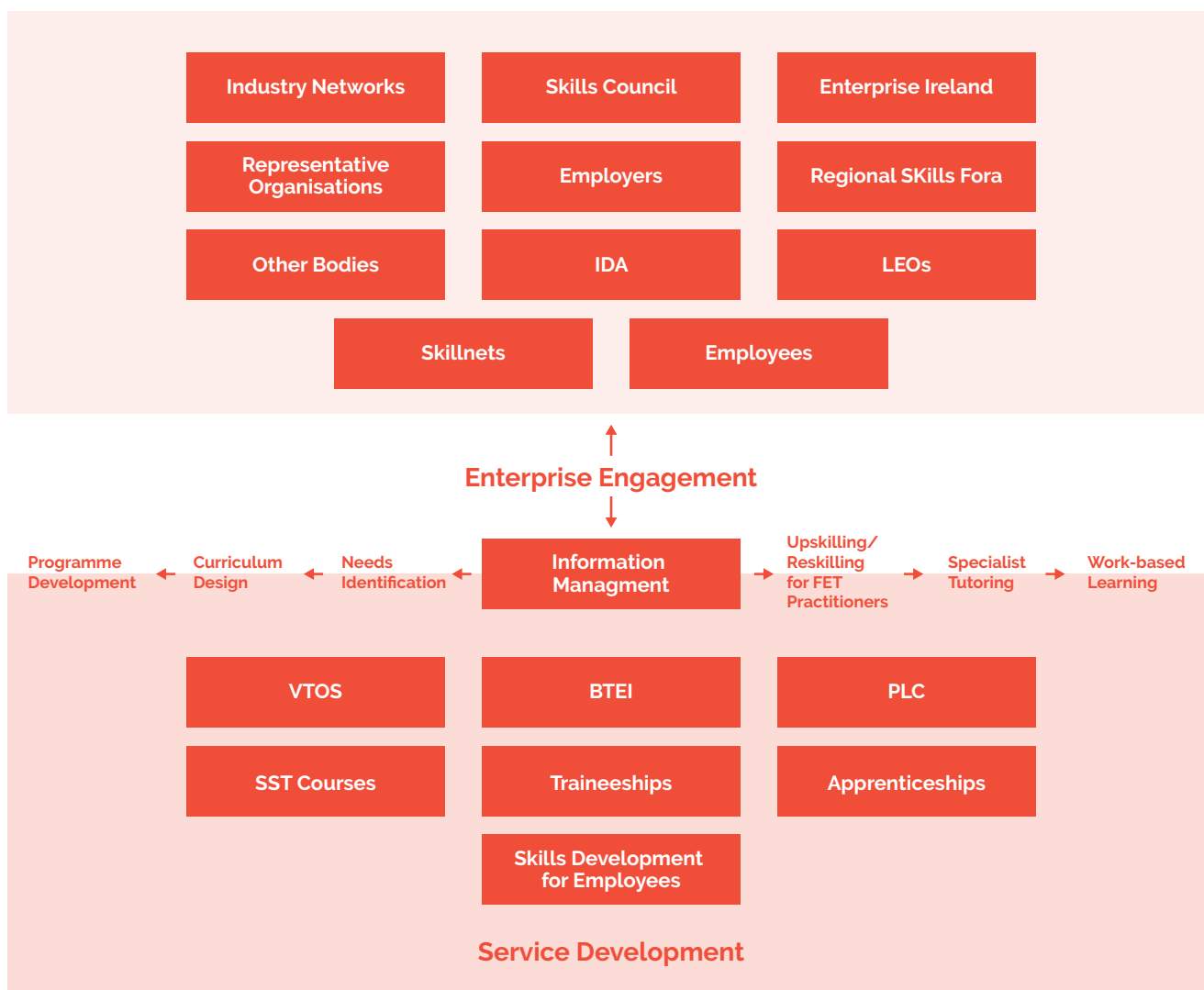
4.1.4 Enhanced Employer Engagement Mechanisms

LWETB will continue to build its enterprise engagement resources and is seeking to appoint a dedicated Enterprise Engagement Coordinator. The approval

of this key role will help to fulfil our responsibility to employers/enterprise which will create, consolidate and improve LWETB links with the business community. It will also help to bring about informed and responsive programme development which is aligned with industry needs. Once this role is approved it will allow for the establishment of an enriched Enterprise Engagement Team which spans our entire FET provision.

LWETB's approach to employer engagement is an enterprise engagement team which is supported by the enterprise engagement coordinator. The role of the enterprise engagement coordinator will be to act as the main point of contact with employers and enterprise. They will also interact with all LWETB FET leaders and management around industry training needs. The vision for the coordinator role is for them to:

1. Advance the branding of LWETB and FET in Longford and Westmeath
2. Promote LWETB as a provider of Further Education and Training opportunities for those who are in employment
3. Be very well informed and knowledgeable about all LWETB FET provision and supporting services and how that can be aligned and used by employers
4. Act as a conduit between enterprise and LWETB
5. Help identify upskilling and reskilling opportunities for industry
6. Collaborate with employers in the planning, development and delivery of new programmes in response to enterprise requirements
7. Work with other stakeholders in the Further Education and Training and Higher Education sphere
8. Can provide feedback on existing FET provision with a view to making informed decisions around course content and delivery methods
9. Will work across all industrial sectors, and will bring in subject matter experts as appropriate
10. Capitalise on the strong industry links which already exist within LWETB
11. Along with FET management they will chair meetings with FET leaders to both inform and update them on the developing needs of industry which will help to identify LWETB's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the external environment
12. Help identify upskilling and reskilling opportunities for FET practitioners



Source: SOLAS 2017 – Enterprise Engagement Model

4.1.5 Evolving and Innovative Labour Market Focus

LWETB has planned an incremental increase in activity across predominantly labour market focused programmes from 2018-2020 of 64%. This will be achieved through short modular courses, course delivery using blended learning and an expansion of evening training provision.

The manufacturing sector in the Midlands is a key employer in the region, only surpassed by the Wholesale/Retail and Health/Social Work sectors. Irish owned manufacturing companies based in the region span a range of sectors including Food, Engineering, Life Sciences, Cleantech, Electronic, and Paper, Print and Packaging. While there is still a need for skills at the operative level in areas such as production, welding and fabrication, which is captured in LWETB's plan, more and more industries are looking at the adoption of next generation manufacturing technologies including CNC and automation.

The Action Plan for Jobs saw the setting up of a Centre of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing processes and technologies and more recently the formation of a Skillsnet in Robotics and Cobotics. LWETB is involved in this new venture and with the success of its current Automation Course which focuses on upskilling and cross skilling of learners, LWETB will design a new Level 6 Traineeship in Robotics. LWETB and The ICBE (Irish Centre for Business Excellence Network) which comprises approximately 200 FDI and indigenous companies are planning a new Traineeship in the latter half of 2018. ICBE member companies will provide input to the Traineeship training methods and content and facilitate learner placements.

LWETB through the Regional Skills Forum is currently working with IDA Ireland in promoting the Midlands as a centre for Financial Services companies to locate. LWETB is currently designing a Level 5/6 Financial Services course with Local Industry. This course will have formal QQI certification but also include industry specific qualifications. Initial meetings have taken place with existing companies and also possible new ones through the local IDA. What is emerging to date is the need for a "Financial Services Training Hub" where both new entrants and existing employees will be upskilled in the most relevant qualifications. LWETB will also consider potential for linking this to, and becoming involved in, the new apprenticeship programmes around financial services. This will be part of a wider strategy to provide a location for the delivery of new apprenticeships and work in collaboration with other ETBs in the development of new apprenticeships.

LWETB has applied for an innovation fund through the Regional Skills Forum which will see the industry specific qualifications developed and delivered online. This is in response to the needs of Industry to up-skilling existing workers. This will also deliver on the TEL Strategy.

LWETB has been chosen by Center Parcs UK to deliver their initial planned training courses to the new employees of this fabulous development in Ballymahon. These courses commenced in January 2018 with the first employees of what is estimated to be a potential of 1,000 jobs. To reflect the needs of this major development LWETB has expanded the clusters of Sport and Leisure, Tourism, Beauty and Complementary Therapies to reflect the need to address the skills need of this new development. LWETB has identified along with Center Parcs a number of LWETB locations which will be used for the delivery of training on their behalf this is an important development for LWETB and a model which LWETB is keen to replicate.

4.1.6 Staff Profile

LWETB is committed to developing a Professional Development (PD) plan for FET staff. In line with the SOLAS FET PD Strategy, LWETB will be focusing on the following key areas:

- Working with and supporting FET learners
- Teaching and learning
- Vocational upskilling and reskilling
- Employer engagement
- Quality assurance
- Technology enhanced learning
- Information and communications technology
- Management and leadership

As part of this process, LWETB will also establish a PD monitoring and recording system.

The process of re-engagement with QQI has offered an opportunity for the establishment of a LWETB QA team to provide support and direction for teaching and learning within the FET services. As noted above, the development of an Enterprise Engagement team will allow LWETB to build and expand important relationships that have been built up with employers over many years.

LWETB recognises the importance of data as a driver of knowledge in the context of the planning process and the need to ensure the quality of the data input around PLSS. It also intends to use the generation of further evidence of progression and employment outcomes as a result of the linking of PLSS to other national databases via SOLAS and the CSO to facilitate more effective planning. A role with responsibility for the systems within FET for recording and tracking learner data will be established. Its function will be to provide training across the organisation to ensure consistency in both entry and understanding of the data required and its purpose. The system will then, contribute towards ensuring that there is robust data, which allows for efficient data collection at a local and national level, meets the demands from the exchequer and EU investment but also supports and facilitates operational and budgetary planning and functions at local ETB level.

4.2 Risks and Challenges

A series of risks and challenges have been identified which could constrain LWETB's ability to successfully deliver on the commitments within this agreement and these are set out below:

- Availability of Learners – with the reduction in unemployment levels, the availability of learners to attend full or part-time FET provision is reducing. The challenge will be to attract new clients who are in employment to attend life-long learning options. For the Youthreach and CTC services, the increased retention rates within secondary level schools has resulted in a declining number of early school leavers.
- Duplication of Provision – competition from other providers (e.g. SkillsNet, partnership companies) where programmes may be delivered over shorter durations and may be uncertified can result in an oversupply of specific programmes relative to the learner population.
- Management of Time and Resources – due to the multiplicity of systems, FET managers are spending increasing amounts of time on systems versus learners. The learner needs to be at the centre of everything LWETB does. Additional staff must be funded to meet all the emerging demands of our Outcome/Outputs focused system.
- National Agreements – some national labour agreements with categories of staff do not take full account of the needs of the FET service. Going forward, this may present major challenges when LWETB wants to respond to requests from industry and other stakeholders in a timely and flexible way.
- Capital Requests – the amount of available funding in this category does not meet the needs of the ETB sector. LWETB has a number of projects which it would like to progress but cannot under the current restrictions. Without additional capital allocations it will be impossible to maintain professional, up-to-date buildings, facilities and equipment.
- Upskilling of FET Staff – a dedicated Professional Development (PD) Coordinator is required to carry out a role which will allow LWETB to identify and deliver on the local and national requirements for the upskilling of FET staff. The availability of funding for PD is also an important element. Both are critical if LWETB is to deliver on the SOLAS FET Professional Development Strategy
- TEL – a dedicated TEL developer is necessary to provide support and direction to staff during implementation and into the future. The enhanced use of TEL in LWETB is an important direction for us to take and invest time in. This role will allow LWETB to deliver on the SOLAS Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training Strategy 2016-2019.
- Staffing – there are essential roles which align with identified target areas in the FET strategy. However, the funding and sanction for these roles is not always awarded.
- Traineeships and Apprenticeships - LWETB's ambition for traineeship and apprenticeship (as the leader or a collaborative provider) will present some challenges including:
 - Delivering programmes in a timely and responsive way due to the require regulations
 - Budgetary commitment
 - Staff resources and upskilling of staff
 - Capital investment and availability of facilities
 - Gaining consensus when working with stakeholders
 - Providing appropriate certification which achieves industry recognition

4.3 Delivering on FET Relevant Policies and Strategies

In developing this strategic agreement, LWETB is formalising its commitment to National Legislation and

Regulation, FET related Policies/Strategies and Public Sector Reform. Table 4 provides a summary of FET relevant policies and strategies.

Table 4 **FET Relevant Policies and Strategies**

Legislation and Regulation	Policy Development	Public Sector Reform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Education and Training Boards Act 2013 – Further Education and Training Act 2013 – Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SOLAS The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 – SOLAS FET Professional Development Strategy – DES Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 – SOLAS Technology- Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training Strategy 2016-2019 – Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025 – Action Plan for Jobs – The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with a Disability – Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy – Professional Development Strategy – Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 2020 and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy – Developing Best Practice in Work-Based Learning - An Evaluation of the Career Traineeship Pilot – Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship Provision 2016-2020 – Best Practice Toolkit on Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy at Levels 1-3 – Review of ESOL – Integrating Literacy and Numeracy Report – Supporting Working Lives and Enterprise Growth in Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public Service Reform Plan 2011 – PMO – eGovernment – Public Sector Shared Services

LWETB is also committed to the wider process of programme reform across the FET sector and of responding to the findings and recommendations arising from programme reviews, evaluations and subsequent SOLAS responses and guidelines. In particular to the:

- Evaluation of Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) provision and SOLAS response
- Reviews of and guidelines issued on traineeship provision
- Evaluation of Youthreach/CTC provision (to be published in 2018)
- Evaluation of VTOS/SST provision (to be published in 2019)
- Evaluation of BTEI (to be published in 2019)
- Evaluation of Specialist Training provision (to be published in 2019)

On a wider level LWETB is cognisant of the:

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The RSES identifies the Midland region’s key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges and set out policy responses to ensure that people’s needs – such as access to housing, jobs, ease of travel and overall well-being – are met, up to 2030 and beyond
- Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021
- Westmeath County Development Plan 2015-2021 - The purpose of each County Development plan is to set out a framework for the sustainable physical development of a County, while considering the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. It also aims to carefully consider the needs of all groups and individuals within the County and promote equal opportunities.
- Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017: Midland Region. the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation published eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs of which the Midlands was one and which was aimed at raising employment levels in each region and facilitating them to achieve their economic potential.

5. ETB Contribution to National FET Strategy and Targets



Section 5

ETB Contribution to National FET Strategy and Targets

5.1 Skills for the Economy

LWETB is at the fore of employer engagement; with the formation of an Enterprise Engagement Team. LWETB has representation on all relevant fora and has a proven track record in designing and delivering specific courses for new start-ups and enterprise expansion. Another key strength is that LWETB can tailor courses to ensure that local people are suitably trained for local business needs. All courses can be scheduled with a quick turnaround time to ensure that once a business need is identified it can be responded to quickly.

In 2017, Athlone Training Centre (ATC) responded to employer needs with new courses in manufacturing, retailing, and the hospitality sector. These courses were unique as they were addressing entry level skills for occupations which employers were finding hard to recruit. LWETB has addressed the need to expand this provision over the next 3 years with the proposal to develop new traineeships in the areas of Engineering, Tourism and Hospitality, Healthcare and the Financial Services sector.

While there is a demand for courses offering the traditional QQI certification, LWETB is seeing a greater emphasis from employers for industry specific qualifications. To this extent, LWETB offers learners the option to look at industry recognised qualifications that are available through eCollege courses, while ATC has recently upgraded its on-line test centre, offering on-line tests and practical advice to e-learners. Certification options available in the test centre include: Pearson VUE. (CompTIA etc.), Microsoft – Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Certified Professional, Adobe and City & Guilds on line tests.

The identification of clearer learning pathways for those in employment considering upskilling or reskilling is a major focus of the Adult Guidance Service. With the changing demographic of ETB client moving from the "unemployed" to the "in employment" there is an emerging need for employers and employees to consider what is required in terms of lifelong learning for their continued and future business success and for success of the Irish economy. The Adult Guidance Service will support this process. Further impetus will also be provided by the recent launch of 'Supporting Working Lives and Enterprise Growth', a 2018-2021 FET policy framework for skills development of people in employment, and LWETB will work with SOLAS to support its effective implementation.

In addition, in line with the recommendations of the PLC evaluation, LWETB will look at rebalancing PLC provision to ensure a greater labour-market focus, moving away from more general broad-based provision to that targeting specific skills needs. It is also acknowledged that PLC provision plays a critical role in facilitating progression to higher education, and it is estimated that 10% of PLC completers in 2016/2017 went on to study in higher education.

5.2 Active Inclusion

LWETB will continue to consider and prioritise support to address the needs of particular cohorts of learners including the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, jobless households, travellers and other under-represented groups. In line with DES recommendations LWETB has identified the following as key priorities for 2018-2020:

- The expansion of Community Education into identified unemployment "black spots" within Longford and Westmeath
- Priority for places on Adult Learning Support (ALS) programmes for unemployed adults and those adults with literacy levels 1 or 2 and those with only a primary education or less
- A review of current enrolment policies with a view to developing one standard policy across the ALS provision in LWETB, to include a common assessment system on entry
- The development of a common, formal language assessment process linked to the CEFR for languages
- Monitoring of provision to ensure more intensive tuition as part of mainstream programmes is offered where possible
- Look at opportunities and innovative ways to promote numeracy through the service
- Develop clear, formal links between Home School Community Liaison Networks with bi-annual meetings to determine priorities and plans for the term ahead
- Develop a meeting and communication structure between ALS and Adult Guidance to standardise the support and relationship across the ETB
- Continue the reduction of one to one tuition offered in favour of more group related ALS and this will continue to be the focussed direction
- LWETB will use the SOLAS best practice toolkit for the Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy at NFQ levels 1-3
- Building on the findings of the "Integrating Literacy and Numeracy" report, expand the delivery of

integrated literacy and numeracy (ILN) support across FET, including making ALS available to apprentices both before and after off-the-job training in the ATC.

- Implementation of recommendations from the review of English language provision and language assessment for low-skilled and unemployed migrants which was published in 2018

5.3 Quality Provision

A strong focus is being placed on development of Quality Assurance during 2018 with some re-organisation of the quality function within LWETB. A quality improvement plan (QIP) is in place and the challenge will be to meet the demands of QQI while developing one QA system which meets all FET requirements and transforms six individual quality systems into one.

In tandem with the development of a new LWETB QA system a curriculum development group will be established which is resourced appropriately, has the necessary skillset and can plan, design and develop new programmes based on stakeholder feedback, enterprise engagement and the identification of an industry need. LWETB has seen how TEL will play a key role in improving the quality of provision and also the importance of professional development to ensure continuous improvement of provision.

LWETB is ambitious for the development of new apprenticeships and traineeships by 2020. A review of specific skills programmes has taken place and several very successful programmes could easily convert to the traineeship model. This change would be of benefit to both the learner in terms of gaining practical experience in an appropriate working environment with a greater possibility of securing employment while at the same time responding to employer needs and addressing skills shortages within a sectoral area. LWETB has identified a number of new traineeships in the areas of Robotics and Financial Services which are a major priority for us. As part of LWETB's vision for an integrated FET response by 2020 there are opportunities to use the traineeship model in services such as VTOS and PLC which would add value to the learning experience for both learners and outcomes for FET.

To support learner progression, LWETB has an agreement with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) which provides a clear route from FET to HE for learners who complete QQI level 5 and level 6 programmes. The VTOS provision in particular has used this pathway. Other third level options are available nationally and LWETB will continue to see a minimum of 10% of its PLC learners' progress to HE. The feedback from HE institutions is that they welcome FET learners because they are generally very well prepared, extremely focused, have high retention rates and make a major contribution to the institution they attend. Over the

next three years LWETB will strengthen its links with HE institutions as a progression option for its learners. LWETB also has representation on the FE to HE Network with Maynooth University. The Adult Guidance Service will make a major contribution to the promotion of clearer learner pathways both within FET and onto HE. However, it is important to note that while LWETB is committed to maintaining and establishing HE links, SOLAS and the ETB sector need to work together to ensure an approach that facilitates the movement of FET learners from FET provision along clearly articulated pathways into all HE institutions.

5.4 Outcomes-based Planning and Funding

To ensure that the system is robust, efficient and effective and to meet this goal LWETB will be focusing on the following key areas:

- An audit of the understanding and level of expertise among key staff in relation to PLSS and FARR
- Development of a training plan to address gaps in skills and knowledge
- Agree a FET approach to the data gathering and system population to ensure consistency across the FET provision
- Reconfiguration of forms across all provisions to capture outputs and outcomes relevant to FARR and PLSS
- A dedicated staff member to oversee regular monitoring of FARR and PLSS and who will address issues as they arise
- Training for FET management and leaders in relation to report building as an aid in the practical use of the system for operational and budgetary planning functions at local level in the ETB
- LWETB will provide representation on the PLSS working group.

This will ensure a robust approach to data gathering and data quality which will support the future analysis of performance.

5.5 Standing of FET

LWETB recognises the challenges in relation to the standing of FET as a post-secondary education choice, however LWETB has a strong tradition of high quality, responsive and flexible education and training options and will continue to build and develop this over the period 2018 – 2020. Key focus areas will include:

- The development of a LWETB Communication Strategy
- FET Centre Open Days with an interagency service provision approach
- Continued work on Media and Social Media Presence
- The promotion of the service with employers through the Enterprise Engagement Team and the Skills for Work Regional Coordinator

- Participation on local and regional Fora e.g. Regional Skills Forum, Local Community Development Committees, FET to HE Network and DEASP
- Clearer learning pathways for FET learners by using the Adult Guidance Service as the intermediary to deliver on this for LWETB

LWETB will also work with SOLAS to maximise the value and impact of a national campaign to promote further education and training in 2018 and 2019.

5.6 ETB Contribution to National FET Targets

Longford and Westmeath ETB commits to making the specific contribution to each of the six core national FET targets over the period 2018-2020 set out below. A summary showing how the contribution to each target is driven by activity within different skills clusters is provided as Appendix A. The definition underpinning each target is explained in Appendix B.

Target	National Sectoral Target	Longford and Westmeath ETB Contribution
1. More learners securing employment from provision which primarily serves the labour market	10% over 3 years	64% over 3 years, equating to 401 learners securing employment in 2020
2. More learners progressing to other further or higher education courses from provision which is primarily focused on this purpose	10% over 3 years	64% over 3 years, equating to 579 learners progressing to other courses in 2020
3. Increase in the rate of certification on courses primarily focused on transversal (social mobility) skills development	10% over 3 years	116% over 3 years, equating to 1,010 completers certified in 2020
4. Increase in adults seeking FET level provision engaging in lifelong learning interventions	10% over 3 years	18% over 3 years, equating to 5,274 starting LLL relevant programmes in 2020
5. Increase in learners securing relevant qualifications in sectors where employment growth/skills needs have been identified	10,000 learners per annum	Average annual increase of 399 and more than doubling the number of learners by 2020 compared with the 2017 level
6. New traineeship registrations in the period 2018 to 2020	13,900 over 3 years	626 over 3 years or a 42% increase

6. Performance Agreement



Section 6

Performance Agreement

In entering this agreement, Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board commits to pursuing the priorities and actions set out in the previous sections and making the stipulated contribution to each of the six core FET targets over the period 2018 to 2020, subject to the risks and challenges identified and set out in Section 4.2 of the agreement. LWETB also commits to adherence to legislative requirements, the Overarching Planning and Funding Requirements for FET and SOLAS funding Terms and Conditions.

SOLAS commits to supporting the delivery of these priorities, actions and targets wherever practical subject to and within its existing resource constraints and competing commitments. The realisation of the targets will be monitored on an ongoing basis via the PLSS and FARR systems, and it is proposed that a formal mid-term review will be undertaken in September 2019, including a further strategic dialogue session between the two parties at this point.

Signed:



Paul O'Toole

Chief Executive, SOLAS

Date: 09/10/2018



Dr. Christy Duffy

Chief Executive, Longford and Westmeath
Education and Training Board

Date: 09/10/2018

Appendix A



Appendix A

LWETB Contribution to FET Sector Targets by Skills Cluster

Further Education & Training Provision	Target 1		Target 2		Target 3	
	2018-2020		2018-2020		2018-2020	
	Sector Provision 10% More Learners will secure employment from provision which primarily serves the labour market.		Sector Provision 10% more learners will progress to other further or higher education courses from provision which is primarily focused on this purpose.		Sector Provision 10% increase in the rate of certification on courses primarily focused on transversal (social mobility) skills Development.	
	Expected overall Increase in Completers Securing Employment		Expected overall increase in Completers Progressing to FET or HET		Expected overall increase in Completers certified	
Skill Clusters	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Mariculture	0	0%	2	20%		
Animal Science	0	0%	0	0%		
Arts and Crafts	-10	-56%	0	0%		
Built Environment	18	900%	0	0%		
Business Administration	34	67%	18	900%		
Engineering	0	0%	0	0%		
Engineering (Electrical)	0	0%	0	0%		
Engineering (IT)	4	0%	0	0%		
Engineering (Mechanical)	3	8%	0	0%		
Engineering (Transport)	0	0%	0	0%		
Entrepreneurship	0	0%	0	0%		
Financial Services	16	800%	0	0%		
Food and Beverage	0	0%	3	150%		
Hairdressing, Beauty and Complementary Therapies	19	127%	0	0%		
Health, Family other Social Services	15	50%	-23	-53%		
Information Technology	13	186%	0	0%		
Management	0	0%	0	0%		
Manufacturing	13	100%	10	0%		
Media, Graphics Communications	0	0%	0	0%		
Natural Resources	0	0%	0	0%		
Research and Education-Training	0	0%	0	0%		
Sales & Marketing	14	127%	0	0%		
Science and Technology	0	0%	0	0%		
Security, Guarding & Emergency Services	2	17%	0	0%		
Sport and Leisure	0	0%	0	0%		
Tourism	10	0%	-8	-80%		
Transport, Distribution & Logistics	5	0%	0	0%		
Web Development & Design	1	20%	0	0%		
Core ICT			29	138%	255	0%
Core Personal			117	82%	990	-18%
General Learning			79	65%	645	1488%
Language			0	0%	520	0%
Skills Sampling,			0	0%	0	0%
Key Skills			0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	157	64%	227	64%	2410	116%

[1] This target could be subject to upward revision following the benchmarking process.

Target 4		Target 5		Target 6	
2018-2020		2018-2020		2018-2020	
Sector Provision 10% increase of adults, who are seeking FET level provision, engaging in lifelong learning interventions[1]		Sector Provision Increase in Relevant Qualifications across FET programmes. Increase of 10,000 learners per annum securing relevant qualifications in sectors where employment growth/skills needs have been identified.		Traineeship Programmes. Traineeship National Target of 19,000 (2016-2020) - 13,900 - (2018-2020) Commencements on Traineeship (Skill Clusters By Starters) Labour Market Skills	
Expected overall contribution to the National Target for increase in Starters and ETB capacity %		Expected overall annual average contribution to National Target for Completers Certified & ETB Capacity %		Expected overall contribution to National Target and ETB capacity %	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
3	4%			0	0%
0	0%			0	0%
-183	-61%			0	0%
-2	-4%	29	138%	0	0%
157	44%			57	0%
0	0%	28	0%	0	0%
0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	11%	25	0%	0	0%
45	18%	90	180%	0	0%
0	0%	10	0%	0	0%
13	57%	11	0%	0	0%
18	100%			90	100%
17	63%	17	200%	0	0%
61	142%			0	0%
74	49%	40	52%	165	33%
32	15%	86	614%	138	0%
-13	-19%			0	0%
3	14%	0	0%	32	0%
18	0%	12	400%	0	0%
0	0%			0	0%
11	31%			0	0%
44	51%	37	336%	54	6%
0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
20	14%			0	0%
42	233%	0	0%	54	0%
15	100%	10	83%	36	0%
51	0%			0	0%
19	73%	4	29%	0	0%
111	77%				
-124	-8%				
-76	-8%				
435	0%				
0	0%				
0	0%				
794	18%	399	142%	626	42%

Appendix B



Appendix B

Explaining the Targets

In agreeing the SOLAS Corporate Plan 2017-19, the Department for Education and Skills specified a range of targets to be met by the further education and training sector over a three year period:

- Target 1 – Employment Outcomes: 10% more learners will secure employment from provision which primarily serves the labour market.
- Target 2 – Progression: 10% more learners will progress to other further or higher education courses from provision which is primarily focused on this purpose.
- Target 3 – Transversal Skills Development: 10% increase in the rate of certification on courses primarily focused on transversal (social mobility) skills development.
- Target 4 – Lifelong Learning: 10% increase of adults, who are seeking FET level provision, engaging in lifelong learning interventions (this target could be subject to upward revision following the benchmarking process).
- Target 5 – Relevant Qualifications: From 2018, for three years, an average increase of 10,000 learners per annum securing relevant qualifications (e.g. special purpose awards) in sectors where employment growth / skills needs have been identified (e.g. Construction, ICT, Food and Beverages, Hospitality, Wholesale / Retail, Biopharma / Pharmachem, Health / Other Care, Digital Media, Sport and Fitness, Engineering, Enterprise Skills needs).
- Target 6 – Apprenticeship and Traineeship Provision: 30,500 new apprentice and trainee registrations in the period 2017 to 2019 which will represent an increase in registrations from circa 6,000 in 2016 to circa 12,400 in 2019.

Also in 2017, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (D-PER) conducted a spending review of further education and training. A key aspect of this review involved analysis of programmes delivered by the ETBs by categorizing each programme as one of the following:-

- Predominately Labour Market Focus FET Programmes
- Predominately Progression Focus FET Programmes
- Predominately Social Mobility (Individual Transversal skills) FET Programmes

The setting of these three year national sectoral targets and broad categorisation of targets provided a framework by which strategic performance agreements between SOLAS and ETBs could be developed, highlighting the planned contribution of each ETB to their realisation. However to ensure that this

contribution could be clearly understood and linked to development of activity across FET programmes, some definitions and parameters were placed around each target, and these are discussed for each in turn below.

Target 1: Employment Outcomes

This target takes a broad strategic approach by considering FET provision in terms of the programmes that are primarily focused on leading to employment. The D-PER spending review identified programmes which had a predominantly labour market focus and to ensure consistency with this review, the measuring of employment outcomes under Target 1 was related only to programmes within this category:

Full-Time	Apprenticeship Training	Blended Training
	Local Training Initiatives	PLC
	Specific Skills Training	Traineeships Training
	VTOS	VSCCS PLC
Part-time	Evening Training	On-line Learning (eCollege)

The target itself is calculated by looking at the actual completers from these programmes in 2017 logged on PLSS or via FARR who were recording as achieving an employment outcome, and then asking each ETB to set out a plan for the numbers completing who it expects to achieve an employment outcome in 2018, 2019 and 2020, calculating the expected change from this 2017 baseline. Currently therefore the contribution is self-declared by the ETB, based on its understanding of a learner outcome and with the assumption that all employment outcomes have been logged comprehensively within the system. It is however acknowledged that work to integrate FARR and PLSS and to ensure comprehensive and quality learner data input into PLSS is still progressing, and it is likely that the baseline for each ETB in 2017 may be higher than initially estimated.

SOLAS and the ETBs intend to move to a more robust method of setting the baseline by using access to revenue and jobseekers databases held by the CSO to establish independently the employment outcomes of learners on these programmes in 2017. This should not change the ambition for number of completers securing employment outcomes in 2018, 2019 and

2020 but could revise the baseline which will mean the overall ETB contribution to meeting the target (i.e. the percentage change in completers securing employment outcomes) over the three year period could be updated.

Target 2: Progression

This target takes a broad strategic approach by considering FET Provision in terms of the programmes that are primarily focused on facilitating progression to other further education and training and higher education courses. The D-PER spending review identified programmes which had a predominantly progression focus and to ensure consistency with this review, the measuring of progression outcomes under Target 2 was related only to programmes within this category.

Full-Time	Justice Workshops	Youthreach
	Bridging & Foundation Training	Community Training Centres
	Specialist Training Programmes	
Part-time	BTEI Groups	Skills for Work
	VSCCS BTEI	

The target itself is calculated by looking at the actual completers from these programmes in 2017 logged on PLSS or via FARR who were recorded as having progressed to other further and higher education courses, and then asking each ETB to set out a plan for the numbers completing who it expects to achieve such a progression outcome in 2018, 2019 and 2020, calculating the expected change from this 2017 baseline. As with Target 1, currently the contribution is self-declared by the ETB, based on its understanding of a learner outcome and with the assumption that all progression outcomes have been logged comprehensively within the system. It is however acknowledged that work to integrate FARR and PLSS and to ensure comprehensive and quality learner data input into PLSS is still progressing, and it is likely that the baseline for each ETB in 2017 may be higher than initially estimated.

As with target 1, the baseline may be revised once learner outcome data from access to CSO databases (which also includes higher education learner data) is available. This should not change the ambition for number of completers securing progression outcomes in 2018, 2019 and 2020 but could mean the overall ETB contribution to meeting the target (i.e. the percentage change in completers securing progression outcomes) over the three year period could be updated.

It is also acknowledged that PLC provision has an important role in facilitating progression, particularly to higher education, yet the categorisation approach to ensure consistency with the spending review within the targets, where a programme can only be either predominantly labour market focused **OR** predominantly progression focused, meant that it was only included in the former when setting proposed ETB contributions in the formal target template. However, each ETB has been asked to articulate the current level of progression from PLC provision, and state any ambition for change in the progression rate over the lifetime of the agreement. Given the focus on this area and wider national work of FET to HE transitions, it is expected that the current rate of progression to HE from PLC across all ETBS will be at least maintained between 2018 and 2020.

Target 3: Transversal Skills Development

This target takes the same strategic approach as Targets 1 and 2 by considering FET Provision where the aim is primarily focused on programmes which build transversal skills. The D-PER spending review identified programmes which had a primary focus on transversal skills development and to ensure consistency with this review, the measuring increases in the rate of certification under Target 3 was related only to programmes within this category.

Full-Time	Irish Deaf Society provision	
Part-time	Adult Literacy	ESOL
	FET Co-operation Hours	ITABE
	Libraries Training	Refugee Resettlement
	Voluntary Literacy Tuition	NALA Write on (p/t on line)

The target itself is calculated by looking at the actual completers from these programmes in 2017 logged on PLSS or via FARR who were recorded as having achieved certification, and then asking each ETB to set out a plan for the numbers completing who it expects to achieve such a certification outcome in 2018, 2019 and 2020, calculating the expected change from this 2017 baseline. In contrast with Target 1 and 2, the data should for 2017 should be robust as it relates to certification rather than perceived outcomes.

Target 4: Lifelong Learning

The lifelong learning activity measured under Target 4 used the EU definition of lifelong learning which relates to people over 25 years. As comprehensive data for all FET learners aged over 25 is not available in 2017 (as the PLSS was rolled out during the year), the target focuses on activity (measured by numbers starting courses) within programmes that predominantly address the needs of learners over 25. This base can be reviewed at the end of 2018 when there is a full dataset available through PLSS, and where it should be possible to isolate the cohort of learners aged over 25 across all FET. In the meantime, the baseline and plans have been build up those starting or expected to start courses in the following programmes over the period 2018-2020.

Blended Training	Specific Skills Training
Traineeships Training	Traineeship Employed
VTOS	Evening Training
On-line Learning (eCollege) (p/t)	Bridging & Foundation Training
Specialist Training Programmes	BTEI Groups
Irish Deaf Society	NALA Write on (p/t on line)
Skills for Work	Adult Literacy
Voluntary Literacy	LTI
ITABE	Refugee Resettlement
Community Education	

Deriving the target in this way means that it does not fully compare to wider national lifelong learning targets, or to new targets for employee development and workforce upskilling, but it does nonetheless provide an insight and ambition to grow lifelong provision across FET in a way that can be robustly tracked over the course of the performance agreement.

It is also important to note that FARR and PLSS does not currently record the self-financed evening course provision which takes place in FET facilities, most commonly in PLC further education colleges. SOLAS has asked ETBs to estimate the extent of this cohort if possible within the agreements.

Target 5: Relevant Qualifications

This target attempts to increase the focus of FET provision on key skills areas with an ambition to grow qualifications in these areas by an average increase of 10,000 learners per annum. Relevant qualifications can include special purpose awards and are measured in the following skills clusters as part of this target.

Built Environment (Construction)	Engineering
Engineering (Electrical)	Engineering (IT)
Engineering (Mechanical)	Engineering (Transport)
Entrepreneurship/ Enterprise Skills	Food and Beverage - Hospitality
Health, Family other Social Services	Information Technology - ICT
Manufacturing	Media, Graphics Communications - Digital Media
Sales & Marketing - Wholesale/ Retail	Science and Technology - Biopharma/Pharmachem
Sport and Leisure - Sports and Fitness	Tourism - Hospitality
Web Development & Design	

The number of certificates awarded in 2017 sets the baseline for this target and ETBs are then asked to project the number of certificates within these skills clusters that they expect to award in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Target 6: Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Drawn from the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeships and Traineeships 2016-2020, this sets a national target of 30,500 new apprentice and trainee registrations in the period 2018 to 2020. Pre 2016 apprenticeships are coordinated centrally by SOLAS while new apprenticeships are in a development stage and more difficult to plan in terms of specific course roll-out. In the performance agreements therefore, we have asked ETBs to focus on three year plans for expanding traineeship provision, asking them to project numbers starting traineeships in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Action Plan defines a target over the period 2018-2020 of 13,900 new registrations.

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