



Summary Minutes of National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group

Meeting 1

Trinity Point, Leinster Street South, Dublin 2

6th December 2019, 10.30am

Attendees:

Andrew Forde (AF) Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD),
Michael Clifford (MC) Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI),
Vinnie Monaghan (VM) DBEI,
Mary MacSweeney (MM) Dublin City Council and City Management Association,
Deiric O'Broin (DOB) Dublin City University,
Bríd O'Brien (BOB) Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed,
Senan Cooke (SC) Dunhill Ecopark,
Ivan Cooper (IC) The Wheel,
Tammy Darcy (TD) The Shona Project,
Richard Deane (RD) Pobal,
John Evoy (JE) Social Innovation Fund Ireland,
Larry O'Neill (LON) Irish Local Development Network,

Also in Attendance:

William Parnell (WP) DRCD, **Richard Gavin** (RG) DRCD, **John Ryan** (JR) DRCD

Apologies:

Brendan Whelan (BW) Social Finance Foundation, **Phyllis Kelly** DBEI, **Therese Molyneux** DoJE, **Frank Maughan** DCCAE, **Ronan O'Dalaigh** SEDCo.

1. Agenda

Following a welcome by WP the Agenda was approved as proposed.

2. Background

AF presented the context and background leading to the development and publication of the National Social Enterprise Policy

3. Terms of Reference

The purpose of the National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group was discussed, the following points were noted:

- The Department of Rural and Community Development is responsible for delivery of measures
- Measures will be delivered in the spirit of partnership with the full spectrum of social enterprise stakeholders
- The National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group is primarily advisory in nature to oversee and advise on implementation

The Draft TOR was introduced and members of the group were invited to submit any observations through the Chair for consideration.

A number of topics were discussed including:

- Communication/Dissemination with the wider Social Enterprise community -
It was suggested that summary minutes be placed on the DRCD's website, with links to materials including updates on any actions.
- Frequency of meetings of the Group -
It was suggested that the Group meet a minimum of 3 times annually, as per TOR, and consider meeting in locations other than Dublin / teleconferencing should be considered.
- The role of sub-groups and their relationship with the Group-
It was noted that such groups would report to the Implementation Group and members would be entitled to participate.

4. Preliminary Conclusions - National Social Enterprise Conference 2019

An overview of the first National Social Enterprise Conference was provided noting in particular:

The Conference took place on the 21st November 2019 in Croke Park and brought together some 200 stakeholders with over 50 Social Enterprise stands being exhibited. 100+ Specific action priorities were gathered on the day and there were rich parallel discussions in the afternoon. There was a significant focus on Awareness-raising. It was noted that the interactive elements on the day, e.g. the table discussions, were informative and provided a

good opportunity to highlight priority issues. Regarding timing of the Conference, it was agreed that future events should be coordinated between actors more closely to ensure maximum participation, including the possibility of scheduling a series of events by different actors over the course of a “Social Enterprise Week”.

It was noted that while the quality of those making presentations at the conference was very high, more should be done to ensure a more balanced gender representation amongst speakers.

It was also noted that there was a strong emphasis on policy implementation and that following some reflection and improvements the conference has the potential to be a cornerstone for networking among the social enterprise community in the years to come. It was agreed that the Implementation Group should have a role in shaping the programme for the National Social Enterprise Conference in 2020.

A Conference Conclusions document will be prepared by DRCD and tabled to the Implementation Group at a future meeting.

5. Planned outputs in 2020:

RG made a presentation to the NSEPIG highlighting the planned outputs for 2020.

- Awareness Strategy for social enterprises is the highest priority
- Review of Training and Mentoring Pilot scheme for social enterprises – and consideration of potentially repeating the scheme
- Review of Small Capital Grants Scheme
- Social Enterprise Impact Fellowship in co-operation with the Irish Research Council – Selection process underway
- Regional Networking Events to be held in the course of 2020
- Higher Education Institutions Group established
- Social Consideration in public procurement work ongoing
- International engagement – NI, EU, British/Irish Council, OECD
- Social Enterprise Supports Table/Database being prepared
- 2nd National Social Enterprise Conference (19th November 2020)

In relation to the role of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), MC stated that grant funding provided by LEOs is primarily limited to enterprises who are bottom-line driven and who are either exporting or in manufacturing. He added that LEOs do not grant fund in areas such as locally traded services or retail as this is considered to give rise to unacceptable deadweight and/or displacement of other businesses in the market. However, MC noted that the LEOs offer soft supports (Measure 2) such as training, mentoring and management building and that these supports are open to all enterprises including trading social enterprises.

In discussion, a variety of experiences of interactions with LEOs were shared by members of the group. JE noted that SIFI had some very positive interactions with LEOs, such as in 2018 when fourteen social enterprises had been assigned LEO mentors which worked well whereas TD noted that the experience of social enterprises with LEOs is not consistently positive.

MC suggested to invite a representative from the LEO Centre of Excellence to participate in the NSEPIG to provide further clarifications regarding the role of the LEOs. AF welcomed this, noting there may be an opportunity to bring greater clarity of understanding and consistency in terms of the interactions between LEOs and social enterprises in line with the limits of LEOs functional remit.

It was acknowledged that more broadly there is an opportunity to raise awareness amongst a wide range of local actors of social enterprise.

A discussion ensued around the challenges facing social enterprises in the area of public procurement. AF recognised this and noted that discussions on this issue are ongoing and progress was being made in collaboration with the OGP. The example of the new government [Circular 20/2019: Promoting the use of Environmental and Social Considerations in Public Procurement](#) was given, which has an explicit reference to social enterprise.

There was discussion around the scale and prevalence of social enterprise. The idea of a census of social enterprises in Ireland similar to one held in Scotland and the possibility of having a register of social enterprise was discussed. AF noted that while it is one of many priorities, opportunities to explore this with other organisations better placed to analyse available data would be the starting point. The Department plans to meet with Benefacts in the near future on this issue.

It was noted that Skillnet Ireland is not open to social enterprise and that this issue deserves further consideration.

6. Any Other Business:

It was further emphasised that social enterprise awareness is the main priority for 2020, and that social enterprise needs to become more mainstream, e.g. by taking part in traditional business conferences and B2B networking events.

ILDN noted an intention to host an exhibition of social enterprise in Q1 or Q2 of 2020.

MM informed the meeting that a report is due out shortly regarding the issue of space for social enterprises to operate, and will circulate to the members when available.

Meeting 2 of the NSEPIG will be in late February 2020. Members will be informed of the date and time of meeting 2 in the coming weeks.

There being no other business the meeting of the NSEPIG was brought to a close.

Actions as a result of Meeting 1 of the Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group:

Action No.	Action Description	Responsible	Target date
Action 1	To revert to John Ryan with any suggestions for additions to or improvements to the Terms of Reference for the Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group.	All members	13 Dec 2019

DRCD

December 2019