

Waterford LEADER Partnership Clg.

Company Strategy

2017 - 2019

Overview of Company Strategy Position

Waterford LEADER Partnership Clg. has a number of Programme Strategies in place for LEADER, LES, Tus, RSS, and Social Farming. The various strategies address the needs of the various programmes/Departments, then the needs of the various clients, and laterally the needs of WLP Clg. to cover the costs of operating the programmes for the various Departments' of State.

To date, WLP Clg. has no strategy for WLP Clg. While this statement is stark, there is a contextual reason for this. Given the changed operational landscape where WLP Clg. will become more and more a bidder to provide Rural Services and administer Rural Programmes, the need for a clear Company focused strategy is important to frame the operational parameters of the organisation through the company's very own defined objectives and goals.

Context

WLP Clg. was founded by Waterford Foods Plc, Teagasc, Waterford County Council, and three local villages in 1991 in response to three main factors;

- The reality of dramatic change occurring in rural employment, and hence the viability of rural areas to hold population.
- The opportunities of the then new LEADER Programme coming from Europe.
- The creation of the Enterprise Trust by major Multi National Companies (Waterford Foods was a founder member along with Cadbury's) as a philanthropic organisation which would collect money in a tax efficient manner to invest in rural development on a 50/50 basis, i.e., the Trust would provide 50% investment from Corporate donations, and LEADER would provide 50% from E.U. Grants. In Waterford, the Coop as Waterford Foods Plc was known set up IRD West Waterford as the vehicle for such development. IRD West Waterford morphed into West Waterford Development Partnership Ltd which then became Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd. The focus of the company in the early days was rural enterprise, e.g. Microchem(Now Lancaster Labs), Mare culture, Light Engineering, Geo Park, etc. Therefore the strategy for the LEADER Programme was the strategy for the Company.

In the last 10 years, the various Departments' have with the welcome embrace of the Company sub contracted programmes to the Company on a none commercial basis for both parties. The process of awarding programmes on a non competitive basis is coming to an end. Commissioning or strategic tendering is on the way for development organisations. While competition provides downsides, the upside is that the Company does not have to accept or bid for programmes that do not directly benefit rural areas or fit the Company's strategy.

While the Company needs to maintain these contracts to survive, it also needs to plot a purpose and a strategy to attain this purpose to ensure its relevance and hence viability in Rural Waterford.

Original Purpose of WLP Clg.

The Company was originally set up to promote;

- Enterprise Creation through assisting the development of Enterprise, Tourism and Alternative Agriculture/Mare culture Businesses in West and Mid Waterford.
- Economic and Social Regeneration of Rural Villages
- Underpin the above through targeted training and animation.

The above purpose was to be achieved by engaging local actors, business people, communities, and farmers to come up with either enterprise or community projects that they as local people were willing to own, drive, and invest in, with LEADER investing with them on a 50% basis.

The actions involved in pursuing this purpose involved stimulating on a number of levels various streams of local actors through one to one meetings, public meetings, and structured community facilitation.

From this process a structured approach to investing in Rural projects came into being. The approach has been successful. This success has brought its difficulties in the form of politicisation. While this has been damaging, rather than complain about the consequences of the politicisation, it points to the need for the company to have a strategy that recognises politics, but ensures that the company remains totally apolitical in its actions and delivery of programmes and services.

What it actually does now?

The Company has become a sub contractor to various Government Departments for the delivery of the following programmes:

Programme	Department
LEADER	Dept of the Environment/Waterford Council
LES	Dept of Social Protection
Tus	Dept of Social Protection
RSS	Dept of Social Protection
Social Farming	Dept of Agriculture/Philanthropist

*WLP Ltd has lost the LCDP/SICAP Contract to WAP.

The programmes above have a very wide remit stretching from main stream unemployment services (LES/Tus) to Community Projects, Enterprise and Tourism, with no mariculture and some agri diversification.

The above programmes pay 99% of the running costs of the Company which on one level provides some solidity on an annual level to the Board, but on another level due to political change, the inability to take a reserve for running any of the programmes, and the volatility of

the contracts leaves the Board very exposed, and service delivery to stake holders in some ways precarious, as the programmes can change tack from year to year.

Strategic Analysis

WLP Clg. was established to work in collaboration with others and also on its own when needed to promote and drive socio economic development in rural County Waterford so that there would be a resultant increase in jobs and local wealth, with a corresponding decrease in social exclusion and poverty, i.e., unemployment and isolation.

Provision Landscape

When the organisation was founded back in 1991, the market or playing field that was rural development was very bare, with few institutional or NGO providers actually working on Rural Economic Development.

25 years on, the playing pitch for rural development has become very crowded, with State Agencies, NGO's etc all piling in to provide services and apply for RD funding. While the interest in all things rural has to be welcomed, many gaps still appear and rural decline is still an issue. This is in part due to the proposed solutions looking to the past, with many of the newer players coming from an urban focus.

While the number of entities providing services in rural areas has multiplied, the actual range of services has actually contracted, and many services are offering the same medicine from competing departments of state. What this means is that the rural dweller has a multiple choice of the same solution.

Rural Needs

Economic and Social Need in rural areas is every bit as great as it is in urban areas. The biggest issue for rural areas is that the future in the eyes of the State, and its policy makers, the civil servants, is urban.

Urban provides cost effective infrastructure, that leads to cost effective delivery of state services for citizens, that provides critical mass to large scale employers who provide large scale job numbers to satiate political demand for quick solutions to very serious issues such as unemployment.

To date Rural Areas are seen as sources of cheap food, and in periurban settings a place where the urbanites might obtain recreation on a weekend away.

The life blood of rural areas, its young, is being drained away at 19 years of age to go to 3rd level education. Education is vital, and going to 3rd level has to be welcomed. The challenge in rural areas is to attract back those young people after college and a few years working elsewhere to return to the small villages and towns, and develop both their own lives and the areas they live in to meet the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century.

Rural villages are being decimated by technology and lack of local high quality jobs as much as by young people not coming back to live in rural areas. No more than large town centres, e-commerce is changing how rural dwellers shop and live. In the 1960's, shop vans used to

crisscross rural Ireland selling groceries to rural households and farms. Today, through online shopping, the Tesco Wagon or the Supervalu Wagon delivers the groceries that the rural dwellers have ordered online to the rural household. Online banking is now the norm, and a lot of the traditional commercial infrastructure in a village is now redundant due to technology. Counter intuitively, rural dwellers need to embrace technology.

Farming has become genuinely commercial. It will go from strength to strength, but with a much smaller cohort of larger farmers whose service needs can be addressed from large distances away, again due to critical mass. The farms employment needs will also reduce due to the massive steps occurring in agricultural technology, both in crops, livestock and machinery.

Quality rural employment is a must for rural regeneration. One of the most vibrant areas in rural Europe is southern Germany. It is home to the Mittelstand or dynamic small family owned businesses that are based in small towns and villages throughout Bavaria. They have developed from very rudimentary operations into world class manufacturers and sub suppliers. Northern Italy has a similar tradition. These businesses have a tradition of putting the brightest apprentices into 3rd level, and bringing them back into management positions in family owned operations.

Universal broadband today is now what electricity was to rural dwellers in the 1940's and 1950's. This one piece of infrastructure could revolutionise rural economics and rural life.

Opportunity for Rural Areas

While urban is the holy grail for policy makers, technology, education, communication and the human need for community provides great opportunity for Rural Areas. Many large businesses now sub contract out work to smaller more focused enterprises that are delivery focused on specialised components.

The natural environment is now very important for both urban and rural dwellers, as are healthy short food supply chains, offering both food security and quality food. Activity tourism is a growth area.

Recent U.K. studies indicate that many urban dwellers are now looking at rural villages as an ideal location to live and work in(Subject to Broadband), as commuting becomes more difficult, takes longer, and property prices in prime urban locations escalate.

The Opportunities are:

- Re-imagining rural areas, particularly villages as vibrant centres for a variety of economic activities that derive business as part of integrated supply chains for larger urban areas;
- Re-imagining the redevelopment of rural villages as places for younger people to settle in alongside older dwellers;
- Harnessing in a people centred manner the opportunities been presented through a clean environment and the need for clean energy.

- Embracing technology on farms, in local business, provision of services, housing and enterprise, be it traditional or green;
- Embracing opportunities for farm families to become suppliers of social and economic services, i.e., from Caring to Tourism;
- Embracing new financial models to fund development such as loans, equity and philanthropy.

Vision for Waterford LEADER Partnership CLG.

Our vision is to help create Communities that are economically, socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable in which all people can reach their full potential.

Objectives

- The development of infrastructure necessary for employment and sustainable living in Rural Waterford.
- To .promote Business and Tourism through investment.
- To establish viable enterprises that utilize both the natural resources of the area and or embrace new technology that are wealth and job creating;
- To promote and source funding towards Culture/Language, Heritage, and Training that promotes local talent and new thinking to deal with contract working.
- To work contractually with Statutory and other investors to establish a variety of investment sources;

Goals

- *To identify and compete for sources of funding which help to achieve the company objectives.*
- *To develop a solid linkage with the Credit Union movement and other potential lenders in terms of matched finance and investment in sustainable projects.*
- *Vibrant Villages: A programme to facilitate the growth of 15 sustainable villages within the county*
- *Engines of Growth: The development of a focused strategy for the economic development of selected areas (e.g. Blackwater Valley) where communities and local business work together on an integrated plan to create new wealth, making the rural area a more attractive place to visit or live in.*

- *Sectoral initiatives: Through Community Training, Facilitation and Scenario Planning, Set up county wide organisations /structures that are ready and willing to work quickly at community level with national programmes so that the communities have action ready strategies ready to avail of State and EU Funding opportunities as they arise.*

Company Values

Justice – the right to political, economic, social and environmental justice

Diversity – enrichment of cultural, ethnic and racial representation from work, customers and partners

Entrepreneurship – an innovative, risk-taking culture

Collaboration – partnerships with stakeholders

Customer service – continually improve quality of service

Professional development – support growth of board and staff