

- 1.4.7 Research project on best practice in economic development of areas distant from good employment centres and how this might be applied to the Slieve Felim CLÁR Area.

Co-ordinating Partner

Tipperary Institute.

This is a new action adopted by the County Development Board in November 2002.

Update March 2004:

Under the auspices of the ADM Rural Development Advisory Committee, Tipperary Institute has led research which sought, primarily through a literature review, to identify the critical success factors for the establishment of viable long-term enterprises in the rural areas that are remote from larger urban centres. The output of the research is a 'critical success factor' enterprise development model that could be applied in any remote rural area. This report on Phase 1 of the project will be launched in April 2004.

Phase 11 of the project will seek:

- ❑ To test the 'critical success factors' enterprise development model in two pilot areas (CLÁR Area 4 and West Offaly) over a 21 month period (research into practice)
- ❑ To evaluate the impact of the application of the model on the two pilot areas and publish and disseminate the findings.

CLÁR area 4 covers the Slieve Felim area and crisscrosses three county boundaries as well as two regional (NUTS 111) boundaries. It has the advantage of being a target beneficiary of the CLÁR policy initiative. The area is within the Southern and Eastern Regional (NUTS11) area and the Tipperary LEADER Group area. For the purposes of the pilot action, four additional EDs in County Limerick have been added as there is no village in the CLÁR area of that county (see attached map). The additional area is seen locally as part of the Slieve Felim's.

The West Offaly Pilot area includes 12 Electoral Districts with a population of 5350 in one administrative county, one NUTS 111 region and the Border Midlands and Western Regional Assembly Area (see attached map). It is not designated as a beneficiary of the CLÁR programme. Part of the area is covered by a Community Partnership. The main centres of population are the villages of Ballycumber, Pollagh and Shannonbridge.

Stages in the process of Phase 11:

1. Development of indicators that will be used to measure the success or otherwise of the project

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2. Development of a range of mechanisms that might be used to deliver the critical success factor measures
3. Consideration of the inclusion of control areas in the study to eliminate the effect of general national or regional economic activity that might impact on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures being implemented.
4. Establishment of a local steering group within each of the target areas to assist in the identification and delivery of the measures that would reflect the critical success factors
5. Development of an index to categorise the various areas and to assist in the subsequent evaluation.
6. Baseline study in the target areas which would include -
 - a. A range of relevant socio-economic data and of the trends in that data
 - b. An audit of the enterprise supports available in the target areas
 - c. An audit of the usage of those enterprise supports
 - d. An audit of the extent to which the critical success factors are present within the target areas including local attitudes to enterprise development, confidence, resources and so on.
 - e. An audit of the area's economic resources
 - f. An audit of the level of enterprise intent and willingness in the area
 - g. An audit of any remaining categorisation index factors
 - h. An audit of attitudes to investing in the area and of the perceived barriers to investment by those external to the areas.
 - i. An audit of enterprises in the pilot areas.
7. Development of the measures appropriate to each area in consultation with the local steering groups and the mechanisms through which they would be delivered.
8. Development of a programme for the implementation of the identified measures. All measures will not be introduced at once and the programming of their introduction will be of some importance.
9. Establishment of mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of the impact of the various measures. These processes may include focus group meetings, analysis of enterprise activity data, sample surveys, in-depth interviews and so on. Some degree of ongoing evaluation is necessary in order to try to ensure that inefficient mechanisms or those that display no success are amended.. This process must also, however, have regard to the relatively long time frame associated with some of these interventions.

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10. Implementation of the measures identified in the programme and review on an ongoing basis; implementation needs to take into account potential barriers to achieving objectives and how these can be overcome.
11. Review of the measures and amendment as necessary on an ongoing basis.
12. Final evaluation and review and writing of report.

A submission is being co-ordinated by the promoters to the Rural Development Fund to part fund Phase 11 of this project.

It is planned (subject to securing funding) to commence the project in May 2004 and complete the project (including the evaluation) by April 30, 2006. The final report will be printed and ready for dissemination by the June 1, 2006.

Update September 2003:

The Steering Group set up to implement the action agreed a programme of work to complete the research phase by January 2004. A researcher, Marie Moran, has been recruited by Tipperary Institute to carry out the research. Marie is supported by a Tipperary Institute Project team made up of Ciaran Lynch – Social and physical planning, community development expertise; Clifford Guest - agriculture, rural development and renewable energy; Bridget Kirwan - training, personal development aspects and has carried out work with farm relief services and TEAGASC; Eileen Reidy, market research and research design; and Marion Carroll who is a human resource specialist.

The title of the project is now changed to: Remote Rural Enterprise. The problems of remote rural communities are well documented. It is more difficult to address these problems. The normal strategies to counter these problems are capacity building of the indigenous potential of an area and the attraction of external investment, be it people, finance or enterprises.

A key output of phase 1 of the remote rural enterprise project will be to list the range of factors as to what would define success? Success is clearly linked to sustainability or to the adapting of the employment base of an area to sustain itself over time. Two methodologies were suggested in relation to the research. The first was to examine and detail two types of case studies – areas that have sustained employment and enterprises. The second method was to compare and contrast the experience of areas and enterprises that have succeeded with areas/enterprises that have failed. Starting with the area first – profile where it is not happening – compare against areas where it has happened.

The next meeting of the Steering group is scheduled for September 5 2003.

Action Status: January 2003

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This integrated pilot programme will consist of research on Alternative Enterprise Opportunities in Remote Rural Communities. The pilot will be explored and developed under the auspices of the Rural Development Advisory Committee of ADM. Two phases are envisaged: 1) dedicated desk research phase, which will inform and guide and ii) a more comprehensive operational pilot programme – developed on the basis of the learning from the research, which will be both local and international.