



# Western Development Commission Strategy 2019 -2024

Draft for Consultation



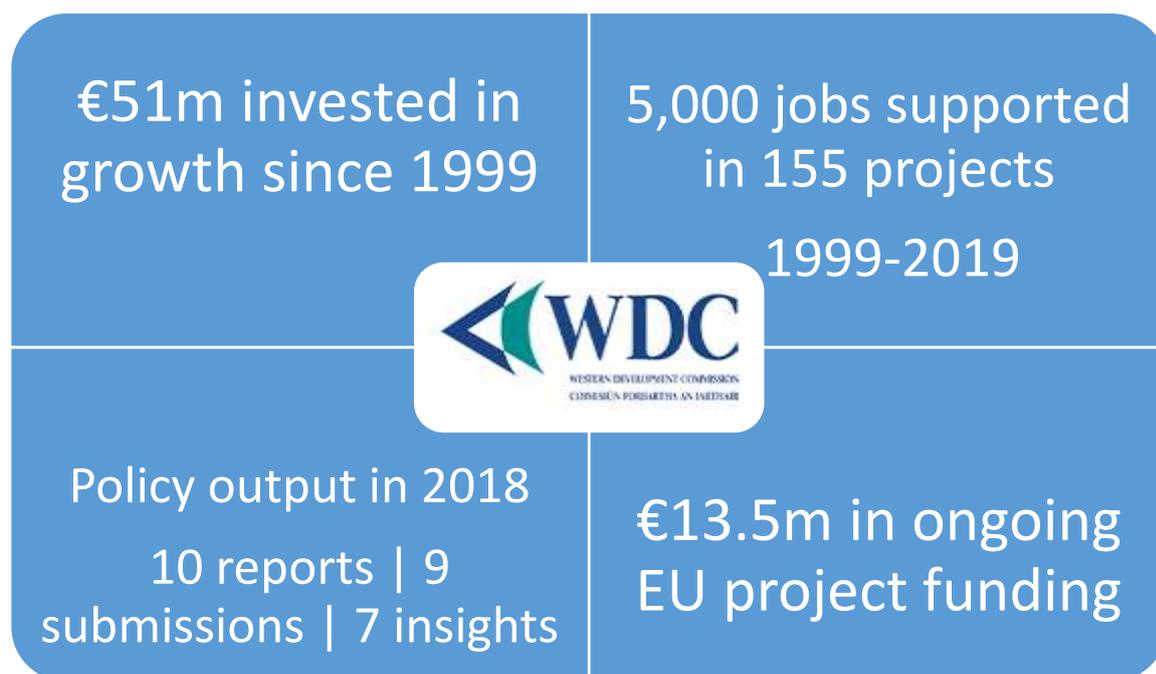
## Statement from CEO and Chair

*[To follow]*

### About the WDC

The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body that was established by statute in 1998 to promote both social and economic development in the Western Region (defined as the counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare). It has a statutory obligation to advise the Government on issues that impact on the Western Region and to promote Government policy that is directed at improving social and economic standards in the region. It manages the WDC Investment Fund to provide loans and equity to business and local communities in the Western Region.

The Commission has eleven members appointed by the Minister for Rural and Community Development. The Commission's head office is located in Ballaghaderreen Co. Roscommon, and the full time equivalent of 15.4 staff. The Western Development Commission is a trusted organisation with expertise in policy analysis, regional development, fund management and corporate governance.



### Political and economic context and environment

The WDC Strategy for the coming years acknowledges the dynamic environment in which we operate. The preparation of our strategic plan coincides with significant changes in the external environment, Brexit and climate change in particular, that will continue to shape and influence the political and economic environment during the next five years. In that context, this plan is intended to be a living document that is sufficiently dynamic to recognise and engage with these and other external challenges.

The work of the WDC is cross-sectoral in nature and as result is influenced by government policies that relate both to economic and social development and policies relating to specific sectors, including:

- Ireland 2040:
  - The National Planning Framework (NPF)
  - The National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027
  - The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
  - The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC)
- The Action Plan for Rural Development

Other influences include a range of sectoral policies and plans, regional plans, and national environmental objectives.

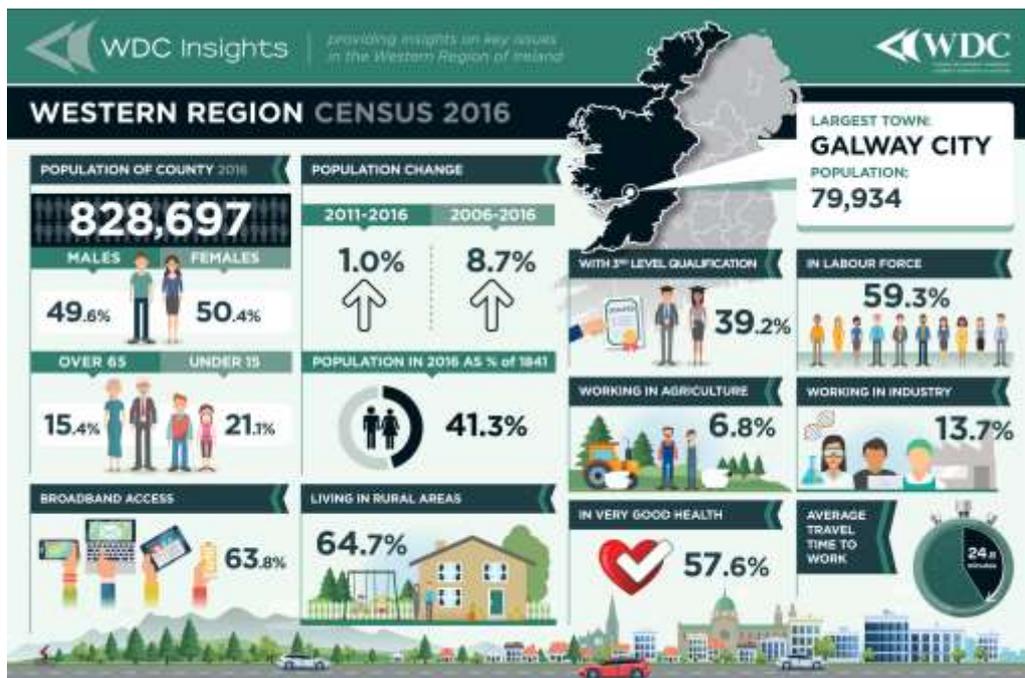
The Western Development Commission operates in collaboration with a number of other national and regional actors, agencies and policy frameworks in adding value in our region.

- Enterprise Ireland
- IDA
- Regional Assemblies
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Local Authorities
- Sectoral development agencies

We are a state agency operating in the internationally acknowledged context of the quadruple helix; state, community, industry and education.

## About the Region

The infographic below shows key information about the Western Region from Census 2016.





## The process

The work to develop a strategy for the Western Development Commission began early in 2018 with the establishment of a sub-committee of the Board to lead and oversee the work. This is a short summary of the work taken since then to inform, and develop, our new strategy.

**We reflected:** The WDC looked at the previous strategy, its key relationships and subsequent changes in the environment in the Western Region

**We looked at the world around us:** The WDC looked at comparable regions worldwide, and at government and sectoral policies

**We listened:** The WDC, with the support of an independent facilitator, undertook a detailed stakeholder consultation, arranging one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, and undertook a web based engagement with a variety of sectors.

**We undertook a critical analysis of ourselves.** The Board and Staff of the WDC separately carried out a SWOT analysis, and then brought these analyses together to fully reflect the strategic and operational issues facing the organisation. Based on this analysis, we crafted a new Vision for the organisation.

**We considered action:** Drawing on the SWOT, we considered actions that could address strengths and threats faced by the organisation and the region, and looked to how we could capitalise on our strengths and address our weaknesses.

**We identified our strategic priorities:** Based on the emerging actions, we identified common strategic themes, and within those established our strategic goals for the next five years.



## What success looks like

### Mission

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*To foster and promote economic and social development in the Western Region*

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The Western Development Commission Act of 1998 sets out a clear and wide ranging mandate for the organisation. This mandate extends to supporting business, social enterprises and projects with the aim of encouraging economic and social development in the Western Region. It provides for the WDC to co-operate with, and co-ordinate national, regional and local state bodies and to promote infrastructural and other initiatives that will support business and social enterprise in the region.

The Act provides for the WDC to consult with the Minister for Rural and Community Development and other Ministers of the Government on any matter relating to its mandate insofar as they relate to the Western Region.

The Act also provides for the WDC to operate an Investment Fund to enable it to further the economic and social development of the region.

### Vision

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*To develop a globally competitive region of vibrant connected communities that work smarter and live better*

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**Work Smarter** – Connectivity and sustainability are key drivers, supporting and creating sustainable business that supports communities across the Western Region, in a way that protects our unique environment.

Working collaboratively with others, we will support and create opportunities that balance the needs of our region, its people, and future, building on existing and emerging sectoral and indigenous strengths.

**Live Better** – We will promote the Western Region as a globally competitive region with an exceptional work-life balance. We will work to mitigate regional disparity, both within the region and with other regions, and lead in offering a balance of smarter working opportunities and equality of opportunity and access to state supports for all citizens across the region.

**Our vision** for the next five years is to work collaboratively to promote our region at a global level, and to identify, analyse and seek to mitigate and overcome the challenges at a regional level to ensure vibrant, connected communities.

**We recognise that** despite significant, and on-going, social, environmental and technological change, the Western Region of Ireland offers a work life balance and personal and professional opportunities to progress that are among the best in the world.



## Values

These values set out the way we work, how we collaborate, communicate and deliver

1. **Leadership:** As a trusted organisation we will advocate for, influence and advise on issues affecting the Western Region and on regional issues nationally.
2. **Sustainability:** We are committed to sustainability, both in sustaining vibrant communities and business and to sustaining the natural resources in the beautiful region in which we live.
3. **Innovation:** We will put innovation at the core of everything we do, embracing change and balancing risk and opportunity to bring bold ideas to life.
4. **Collaboration:** We will work with others to make the best use of available resources.
5. **Public Service:** We will act with honesty, integrity and impartiality in serving the public, our use of state resources and working for the public good.
6. **Equality, Dignity and Respect:** We will create a positive and accepting work environment where each member of staff is treated equally, with dignity and with respect.

## Strategic Themes

We have identified these three strategic themes which will align the work that we do to ensure that we best respond to the region’s needs.

For each of these strategic themes we have set out key projects that will form the basis of our annual work plans for the next five years. We will review progress, and adjust course as required, on an annual basis.

Regional Promotion	Regional Leadership	Sustainable Enterprise
<p>We will promote the Western Region, engaging people in the work that we do.</p> <p>Working with others, we will inform and support those living, working or drawn to the renowned quality of life and beautiful region in which we live.</p>	<p>We will take a lead role in informing, and where appropriate, delivering, national and regional policies and programmes.</p> <p>We will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to build a globally competitive region</p>	<p>Taking the long-term view, we will identify, support and develop key sectors to build a sustainable future.</p> <p>We will invest to grow business and employment; sustaining the region’s natural resources, unique culture and vibrant communities.</p>

## Regional Promotion

We will promote the Western Region, engaging people in the work that we do.

We will work with others to inform and support those drawn to, or living and working in, the beautiful region in which we live.

Flagship projects;	Key Goals 2019-2024
Lookwest.ie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will make lookwest.ie the platform of choice to inform and engage those drawn to living or working in the Western Region of Ireland.</li> <li>• We will develop an online talent and skills pipeline, with labour market insights, for employers and employees in the WDC and AEC areas.</li> <li>• We will work with private and public organisations to develop an Atlantic Economic Corridor marketing and communications network to share content and stories to promote the Western Region.</li> <li>• We will strive for excellence in communication and governance.</li> </ul>
Community and diaspora engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work with, and inform the work of, regional and local authorities and state agencies to support and sustain communities in the Western Region.</li> <li>• We will work with communities to optimise the regional drawdown of national and EU funding through increased community engagement and support.</li> <li>• We will increase the take-up of WDC bridging finance and enterprise investment in the Western Region.</li> <li>• We will promote the west to the Irish diaspora working with, and through, state agencies and county networks abroad</li> <li>• We will strive for excellence in engaging with, and serving, the public.</li> </ul>

## *Regional leadership*

We will take a lead role in informing, and where appropriate, delivering, national and regional policies and programmes.

We will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to build a globally competitive region

<b>Flagship projects;</b>	<b>Key Outputs 2019-2024</b>
Atlantic Economic Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will co-ordinate, inform and, where appropriate, lead the work of the Atlantic Economic Corridor; building a region of scale from Donegal to Kerry; a key goal of Ireland 2040.</li> <li>• We will collaborate with others to develop and promote a cohesive network of enterprise hubs, resources and supports along the AEC.</li> </ul>
Creative Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will lead the development of the Creative Economy in the Western Region, working collaboratively with regional and national agencies to develop a 10 year plan to 2030.</li> <li>• We will provide dedicated funding mechanisms for the Creative Economy in the Western Region through the Western Investment Fund e.g. Western Region Audiovisual Producers (WRAP) Fund and Micro-Loan Fund.</li> </ul>
Policy analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a trusted organisation we will continue to provide evidence based policy analysis that informs and advises public policy on issues that impact on regional and rural development, propose actions based on this analysis and where appropriate promote and lead those actions.</li> <li>• We will continue to advocate for growth, for a sustainable, low carbon economy and for vibrant communities with access to services that reduce inequality and income disparity across the region.</li> <li>• We will agree policy work programmes with the Department of Rural and Community Development, higher education institutions and other agencies to further the scope and impact of our work.</li> </ul>

## *Sustainable Enterprise;*

Taking the long-term view, we will identify, support and develop key sectors to build a sustainable future.

We will invest to grow business and employment; sustaining the region’s natural resources, unique culture and vibrant communities.

<b>Flagship projects;</b>	<b>Key Outputs 2019-2024</b>
Western Investment Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will address funding gaps in the Western Region by providing risk capital to new and expanding SMEs through the WDC’s Business Investment Fund.</li> <li>• We will support jobs and companies through the prudent management of a balanced investment and lending portfolio.</li> <li>• We will support and develop collaborative Regional Accelerators to build out the enterprise and funding support ecosystem for start-ups in the region.</li> <li>• We will strive for excellence in project management and governance.</li> </ul>
Social Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will support the implementation of a National Policy on Social Enterprise and continue to lend and invest in social enterprise in the Western Region.</li> </ul>
Emerging Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will analyse, identify and support emerging sectors that will build a sustainable competitive advantage for the region in the long term.</li> </ul>

## Key Enablers

These are the key areas of focus and capacity within the organisation which will enable us to achieve our strategic aims

Resources	We will align our organisational resources and capacity to best deliver our strategic themes. We will engage proactively to ensure that we have sufficient human and financial resources to deliver our goals on an on-going basis.
Growth	We will seek to grow as an organisation to best meet the region's needs as it enters a significant phase of growth
Communication	We will ensure excellence in internal and external communication, to promote the region, to further the impact, and raise the profile, of our work.
Collaboration	We recognise that more efficient use of state resources will be achieved through active engagement with others.
Cohesion	We will align our activities, engagement and outreach to act as one organisation to achieve more, with greater impact.
Regional Outreach	We will increase our visibility and profile to ensure that we represent, and engage with, stakeholders in all parts of our region.
Governance	We will ensure that our governance, controls and systems are continuously reviewed, maintained and improved to meet the needs of a dynamic and growing public service organisation.
Project Delivery	We will ensure excellence in project management and delivery, liaising with central and local government to deliver regional needs.