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Turning the tide of unemployment
Ag tiontú taoide na dífhostaíochta
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Development of Successor Programme to current
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

We believe that SICAP 2 provides a great opportunity to build on the strengths of the current programme but only if a number of fundamental changes are made to the focus and structure of the programme. The following 8 key changes need to be made in order for the programme to be a more meaningful social inclusion and community development programme:

1. **SICAP 2 should be, first and foremost, a social inclusion programme - complementary to the existing range of activation programmes**
2. **Allow for local level determination of priority goals and budget allocations in line with local area needs analysis and existing provision**
3. **Expand focus of goal 2 caseload support from education support to social inclusion support**
4. **Expand the range of target groups eligible for social inclusion support**
5. **Rebalance caseload and non-caseload activity to further develop capacity of programme to achieve the horizontal principles**
6. **Expand focus of community development activity; re-introduce grants to community groups**
7. **Restructure the programme as a core funding and leverage model**
8. **Adjust iris systems, target outcomes and indicators**

These 8 recommendations are now discussed in more detail:

1.   SICAP 2 SHOULD BE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, A SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMME – COMPLEMENTARY TO THE EXISTING RANGE OF ACTIVATION PROGRAMMES

As the only national dedicated social inclusion programme in the country, SICAP 2 **should be a social inclusion programme in reality, not just in name.** Social Inclusion can be described as a process which ensures that all people in society have equal access to basic rights in relation to education, employment, healthcare, housing, information etc, and which seeks to eliminate the barriers which prevent people from exercising those rights.

The current SICAP programme is heavily focused on labour market activation. While supporting individuals to access education, training and the labour market is an essential component of any social inclusion programme; supporting people to access healthcare, housing, information, financial, social and cultural supports etc is equally important. In other words, it is very difficult for an individual to access the labour market when other, wider factors are at play, for example, lack of self-confidence and motivation, poor mental or physical health, poverty and debt, social isolation, lack of social networks, lack of information, transport, local services etc.

SICAP 2 **needs to take a more holistic approach to promoting social inclusion** and enable the delivery of actions and services which address a wider range of social inclusion issues, and which would complement/support existing service provision (e.g. existing activation programmes).

2.	LOCAL LEVEL DETERMINATION OF PRIORITY GOALS AND BUDGET ALLOCATIONS IN LINE WITH LOCAL AREA NEEDS ANALYSIS AND EXISTING PROVISION

In line with *Putting People First*, the *Final Report of the Local Government / Local Development Alignment Steering Group,* and the *Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland, r*esponsibility for the local management of SICAP 2, including the matching of resources to priorities, should be properly vested in the Local and Community Development Committee in each local area.

The universal approach of the current SICAP programme where prioritisation of goals (including budget allocation among goals and overall targets) is determined centrally (save for a very limited amount of leeway) greatly hampers the ability of the programme to efficiently and meaningfully address local needs. For example, in Limerick City, the relatively even split between goals (as set at national level) means that there is a significant shortfall in community development activity (goal 1) and significant potential for duplication in goal 3 (employment supports). In Limerick City, we already have an active LES and jobs club providing employment supports. SICAP should not be operating in this space. If there was more potential for local area determination of priorities and resources, we could increase the budget for Goal 1 (and hence activity) and reduce the budget for employment supports, and focus instead on self-employment/social enterprise support in Goal 3.

We suggest therefore that it is the LCDC that should determine local area priorities and budget allocations, based on robust local area analysis, and in consultation with Programme Implementers and relevant stakeholders.

3.	EXPAND FOCUS OF GOAL 2 CASELOAD SUPPORT FROM EDUCATION SUPPORT TO SOCIAL INCLUSION SUPPORT

In line with the previous recommendation, the focus of Goal 2 should be broadened into a wider social inclusion goal. By doing so, the programme will have greater capacity to engage those who are most socially and economically disadvantaged. Many of our true target groups are a long way from participating in formal education or the labour market and need a significant amount of intensive, early, pre-development work in order to move them closer to formal education, the labour market, or equal participation in society. In an already crowded environment of labour market and activation supports, SICAP 2 can play a critical role in working with people before they are in this space. By doing so, SICAP 2 can set out a clear and distinct niche for itself, avoid the risks of duplication that it currently faces, and act as a **formal referral mechanism** to other services.

4.	EXPAND THE RANGE OF TARGET GROUPS ELIGIBLE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION SUPPORT

This recommendation follows on from the previous 3 recommendations. In order to be an effective social inclusion programme, it needs to be able to meaningfully deliver supports to all groups who are experiencing social exclusion or who are at risk of social exclusion, including those who are experiencing exclusion and disadvantage for non-economic reasons. Based on our experience of

delivering the current programme, we know that there are people who need support (including one-to-one support, information and guidance) but are not entitled to access that support under the current programme. Most often this is due to their age (too old) or the fact that their address is not in a disadvantaged area. In line with Recommendation 1 above, the prioritisation of target groups at local level should be determined by the LCDC, based on local area needs analysis. In the Limerick city area, the following target groups are being excluded despite having clear social exclusion needs:

- Older people (aged 65+)
- Individuals in full or part-time education, not living in a disadvantaged area, but who live in a low income household
- Individuals:
  - living in social housing/in receipt of rent supplement – in particular those who were **relocated from Regeneration communities**
  - living in support accommodation/refuge centres/hostels
  - in housing crisis/difficulties
    (if located in a non-disadvantaged area and not currently economically active)

5. REBALANCE CASELOAD AND NON-CASELOAD ACTIVITY IN ORDER TO DEVELOP CAPACITY OF PROGRAMME TO ACHIEVE THE HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

The current programme is heavily focused on one-to-one caseload support. While we agree that this is an essential strand of the programme (particularly if its scope is expanded as per recommendation 3 above), there should be a rebalancing of caseload versus non-caseload activity in order for the programme to develop innovative approaches to developing communities, addressing inequalities, and to develop collaborations with other agencies and stakeholders.

Currently, the need to allocate so much of the programme's resources to meet targets for caseload work means that there is limited scope (i.e. time, management, overhead, staff and research resources) within the programme to **plan, develop, pilot, implement evaluate, and document new and innovate projects and activities**. SICAP 2 needs to provide the space for this type of activity and develop target outcomes accordingly, i.e., softer outcomes that are achieved over a longer period of time.

6. EXPAND FOCUS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY; RE-INTRODUCE GRANTS TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

The role of community development has become very narrow in the current SICAP programme – focusing mainly on supporting individuals into decision-making structures. The focus of Goal 1 in SICAP 2 needs to change from supporting groups to engage with stakeholders towards a much simpler statement of capacity building to address key social inclusion affecting the area. A more nuanced progression path for groups should be developed to capture this work, with recognition that for some groups, 'progression' is not a necessary objective. There are far more stages of capacity and support needs than is reflected within the current model. Furthermore, scope for grant allocations to local community groups should be re-introduced.

7.   RESTRUCTURE THE PROGRAMME AS A CORE FUNDING AND LEVERAGE MODEL

Local Development Companies (LDCs) have a long history of managing and implementing core local development programmes. For many years, LDCs have used the core local development programme to successfully lever funds from other sources. This in turn enables the delivery of a range of services and programmes which meet gaps in existing service provision, and so are complementary, and add value, to the core local development programme. Prior to SICAP, this co-ordination and leverage role of LDCs was recognised as a key component of the Local Development Programme, and LDCs reported to Pobal/Department on their effectiveness in this area. This has not been the case within the context of the current SICAP programme. This should be reversed in SICAP 2 with recognition given once more to the leverage role of SICAP, and with LDCs required to report on their effectiveness and impact.

8.   ADJUST IRIS SYSTEMS, TARGET OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

The changes advocated in Recommendations above, if implemented, will require accompanying changes to reporting systems, target outcomes and indicators. Much of this type of work is slower, takes place over a longer period of time, often requires desk-work by staff, and generates softer outcomes rather than hard economic outcomes.

The caseload work described in recommendations 3 and 6 in particular demands more intensive and qualitative work to be undertaken with less numbers of community groups and people (albeit the most disadvantaged). This change of focus must be reflected in the overall targets for numbers of people and groups supported and the range of target outcomes and indicators set for the programme. It demands a shift towards more qualitative supports, qualitative outcomes and qualitative reporting, with a greater focus on 'distance travelled' outcomes.

While the type of activity described in Recommendation 5 is more suited to qualitative reporting, the level of supports provided can still be captured on IRIS if amendments are made to the beneficiary entities on the system., i.e., amend the 'Structure and Network' beneficiary to become a 'Social Inclusion Initiative'. The current parameters for Structures and Networks on IRIS exclude some valuable social inclusion work from being recorded due to the fact that there may not be an independent structure in place yet for it.

Similarly, social enterprises are not currently recognised as a beneficiary entity in their own right. Supports to social enterprises can only be recorded on IRIS if they are managed by a formal community group. This is not always the case and so it is not always possible to capture the true extent of social enterprise support provided by SICAP.

Likewise, the focus on recording meetings only on IRIS means that much of the essential development, desk-based work undertaken by SICAP staff is not documented. This is particularly the case in relation to supports provided to community groups and social inclusion initiatives. This also needs to change in the IRIS system for SICAP 2.