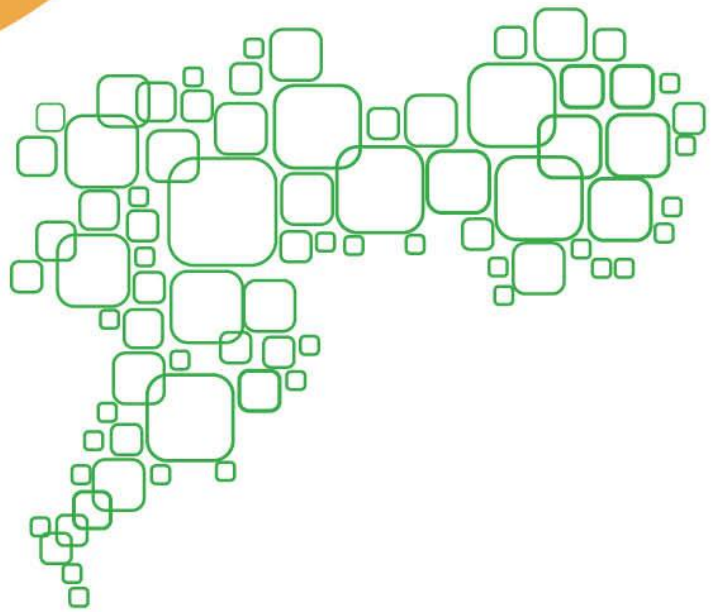




# Offaly Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan

December 2022



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## Preamble

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**A history in science, energy and connection to industry means that from the legacy of old, comes the inspiration of the new – more global and more connected but still local.**

**In the early 1840s, the Third Earl of Rosse designed and built the largest telescope in the world. With this telescope, he discovered the spiral nature of some of the galaxies, and from 1845-1914, anyone wishing to witness this phenomenon had to come to Birr. And they came, in their hundreds, from across Europe and beyond, to observe the stars with Lord Rosse or simply to marvel at this feat of engineering in the middle of Ireland.**

This Reflecting telescope remained the largest in the world for over 70 years. Today, the Irish Low Frequency Array (I-LOFAR) station is part of a European-wide network of state-of-the-art radio telescopes, used to observe the Universe at low frequencies (10-240 MHz). The I-LOFAR consortium have built cutting-edge astrophysics observing facility in same location as the original telescope connecting Ireland to the [International LOFAR Telescope](#), which is one of the most sophisticated and advanced astrophysics research projects in the world.

The legacy of the Earl of Rosse and the integration of Irish astrophysics into such a large-scale international astrophysics research facility allows Irish researchers to make ground-breaking advances in numerous fields of physics and data science, demonstrates the point of this Strategy and Plan.

Offaly has a positive future ahead – it can place itself at the forefront of significant challenges in the Irish economy in terms of energy, construction, remote healthcare, food and a new form of Tourism. To achieve this, the county will have to evolve from the traditional industries to build on the existing assets in the county, forge a renewed identity that is distinctive at a national and international level and builds out sustainable businesses that will evolve over time providing high quality employment to the people of Offaly.





# 1 Introduction

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A history in science, energy and connection to industry means that from the legacy of old, comes the inspiration of the new – more global and more connected but still local.

This Economic Development Strategy recognises Offaly sitting in the heartland of Ireland with multiple economic legacies, and creates goals and actions for the county, a specific direction to the those who support Economic Development in the county and opportunities for the broader business community to work together to make a difference.

The Strategy provides a framework to guide the activities that allow a county to gain an advantage and move beyond the current situation and uses the current transition period to forge a new position in the Irish national and international landscape.

Drawing upon extensive background research, economic analysis and consultation with local public and businesses leaders, this Strategy and Plan is a refined and focused approach to conducting economic development activities in the county. It focuses on supporting existing assets, plans and strengths at a local and regional level and enable them to grow each to their fullest potential.

It works towards a future in which there is a strong economic base in Offaly that offers opportunities and an active lifestyle with access to the unique natural assets within the county; where the residents can live and learn locally; where the best and brightest young people will make Offaly their family home with satisfying, well-paying jobs; where the villages and neighbourhoods that comprise the county identify with and realise the benefits of the entire county as a place with a vibrant cultural scene that attracts visitors who choose to re-locate here; a place that attracts professionals, creative people and educated entrepreneurs.

The Strategy and Plan builds on the work already underway and a local and regional level but outlines a means of spending time and resources differently to drive better results. It is focused on attracting and empowering people because the right mix of engaged people and human resourcefulness is what will make this work. And it is focused on place-making – because a vibrant place attracts and retains the best and brightest people.





## 2 The Theme of this Economic Development Strategy & Plan

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### 2.1 Standing Up to Power Ireland's Net Zero Mandate

The theme of this Strategy and Plan is “Standing up to power Ireland’s Net Zero Ambition” which shows how Offaly, within itself and working with others, can show the ambition and matching appetite to stand up and create new national leadership positions in the various sectors that are legacy strengths in the county. This theme is about creating new from the old and allowing the county to become a recognised reference site for some leading technologies within Ireland and internationally.

This Strategy recognises that most categories of technology (mechanical, electronic, chemical, digital) refer to what is created or produced. However, the technology base in Offaly enables significant improvements in better environmental and economic outcomes, such as reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, or improving land, water, and air quality and the wellbeing of people<sup>1</sup>.

Given the urgency of the climate change mandates internationally, and the regulatory policies in place to support those mandates, almost every technology company worldwide is exploring ways to become a company that supports zero carbon ambitions, for example by expanding their product lines or making incremental improvements such as installing solar panels to power production, recycling wastewater to transitioning to biodegradable packaging. Large industry is pivoting to cleaner operations and exploring zero carbon related projects and opportunities and SMEs are compelling the switch to making sustainability a feature of life.

This Strategy and Plan places Offaly in the top 5 counties in Ireland in the next decade and as an internationally recognised centre of innovation for *specific sectors* with a vibrant and innovative SME and micro business sector. All the details live in the legacy of agricultural, nature, water, energy generation and power. At the time of writing, the county still generates the most renewable power output in the country<sup>2</sup>, stores comparably high energy levels and has a natural ecological history that enables it play into new industries. It is also the home to scientific discoveries which have been referenced throughout the world.

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<sup>1</sup> It is noted that this definition is broader than those used by some other agencies in Ireland. However, this definition is that used by other leading clusters around the world such as Canada, Finland, Sweden etc.

<sup>2</sup> Offaly has 650MW of operational renewables. These include wind, solar, hydrogen electrolyzers, biomass methanisation, and synchronous compensator. The pipeline of additional projects may raise this to c1GW of renewable energies. Battery Storage Offaly has 300 MW of permitted battery storage. Lumcloon Energy has two BESS (Battery Energy Storage Systems) in West Offaly – Shannonbridge 100MW BESS and Lumcloon 100MW BESS. Both are the largest energy storage facilities in Ireland to date.

Figure 1: Offaly Greatest Market Opportunities



This Strategy and Plan specifically references County Offaly being the national home of distinct technology competencies, competitive advantages, and ecosystem players to understand the greatest opportunities for:

1. Rapid scale-up of technologies that support zero carbon ambitions, including commercialisation, industry adoption, investment attraction and export market development in distinct areas.
2. Solving specific industry challenges including decoupling growth from emissions, repurposing used assets materials and creating diversified added value products across six sectors.

Figure 2: Six Core Focus Areas

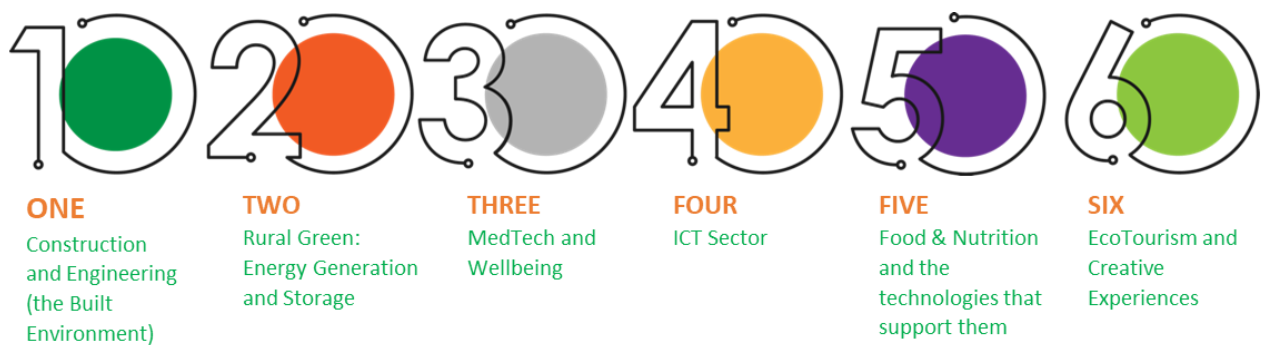


Table 1: The Rationale of the Six Areas of focus

The six areas of focus are:

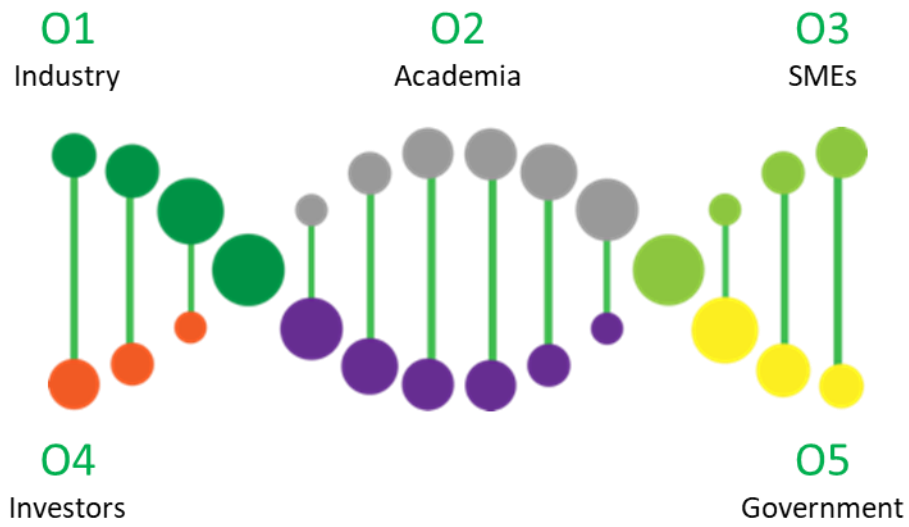
Focus area	Rationale
Construction and Engineering (The Built Environment)	The significance of the Built Environment for residential and commercial is becoming greater throughout the world. The advent of zero carbon building is achievable and in the Mount Lucas National Construction Centre, Offaly already possesses an asset to develop and evolve a greater national and international role. This report proposes a distinct area of focus for the industry to secure the Offaly position in the industry.
Rural green	The development of rural energy and conservation technologies is essential to be trialled and tested in scale operations. Offaly already possesses the Rhode Green Energy Park which can be used as a fulcrum for such national and international activities. A green economy is one that provides economic opportunities and improved human well-being in harmony with the sustainable management of all natural resources. The transition to green rural economies is about improving people’s lives and livelihoods in rural areas, balancing natural resource use with maintaining incomes, and trading the risks of making a change with the opportunities that change will bring.
MedTech and Wellbeing	In the coming decades, elderly people will account for an increasingly important share of the European population. At the same time, working age population will proportionately shrink. As a result, old-age dependency ratio will increase, that is, fewer working age people will have to



Focus area	Rationale
	support more seniors. These factors combined with budget constraints require new innovative solutions to keep ensuring high quality of seniors' life. Tullamore General Hospital is a fulcrum of the Midlands Healthcare system and an ideal position to pioneer the development of sustained living at home for elderly patients.
ICT Sector	Ireland is currently the EMEA headquarters for many of the world's largest tech companies. The fundamental driver in the industry is skills and this remains the core bottleneck in the industry worldwide. The new technologies mean that skills unique to humans such as creativity, teamwork, empathy, and innovative thinking will become increasingly more valued by employers. The Remote Working Strategy for Business whilst targeted at all sectors sees a natural synergy with the ICT sector and could be an important steppingstone for business model changes in the next years as it is unlikely that full central office usage will resume. Offaly needs to "pitch" this opportunity in a pragmatic but structured manner to ICT companies throughout Ireland. At the same time, there must be a shift in the industry – academia engagement moving beyond skills provision to research that drives innovation in the community and becomes attractive for companies to engage in Offaly as a place for their business.
Food and Nutrition & the technologies that support them	The Food industry has undergone significant changes in the past decades with changing consumer sentiment pushing an agenda for food that opens real possibilities for the future of Food production and packaging. Technology is rapidly being integrated into every part of the food industry. But accelerating adoption of existing technologies, as well a suite of new technologies emerging, creates both opportunities and challenges for food businesses. Data analytics and digital platforms offer businesses the opportunity to understand customer preferences in a way that was not previously possible. One area where technology can enable businesses to better fulfil consumer preferences is through personalised catering en masse. This is especially important in the context of increasingly complex consumer dietary requirements. Offaly is at the centre of the Midlands Food potential and the combination of the industry working with technology provides the ideal opportunity for novel products and services. The anchor for such an initiative should be the Ferbane Food Campus. The development of the zero-carbon dairy and beef farm is remarkably close.
EcoTourism & the Creative Arts	Tourism, as an industry, has changed. This is in the global context of growing tourism worldwide which are compelled by several factors. These factors are changing how tourism value is realised and in truth, some types of tourists are simply worth more than others. The analysis of Mastercard aggregated data worldwide showed that the tourism sector comprising hotels, restaurants and other hospitality services made up 30% of expenditures on a trip. The remainder were experiences – sport, leisure, arts, crafts, and healthy living. This was also related to a timing question of vacation time with most of the spending coming after day 3 in a location and increasing thereafter. Offaly needs to reposition itself in this sector – offering experiences and sport opportunities to Tourists who will spend more.

This strategy and plan work because it brings together a 5 Helix set of operators ensuring that each has a complementary role in determining the future of Offaly and the resumption of its national leading position.

Figure 3: The 5 Helix of Actors in the Offaly Enterprise Strategy and Plan



The achievement of the elements of this plan will raise employment, improve skills, develop, and sustain new industries and improve the GVA performance of the county whilst still enabling it to be a great place to work, live and play.

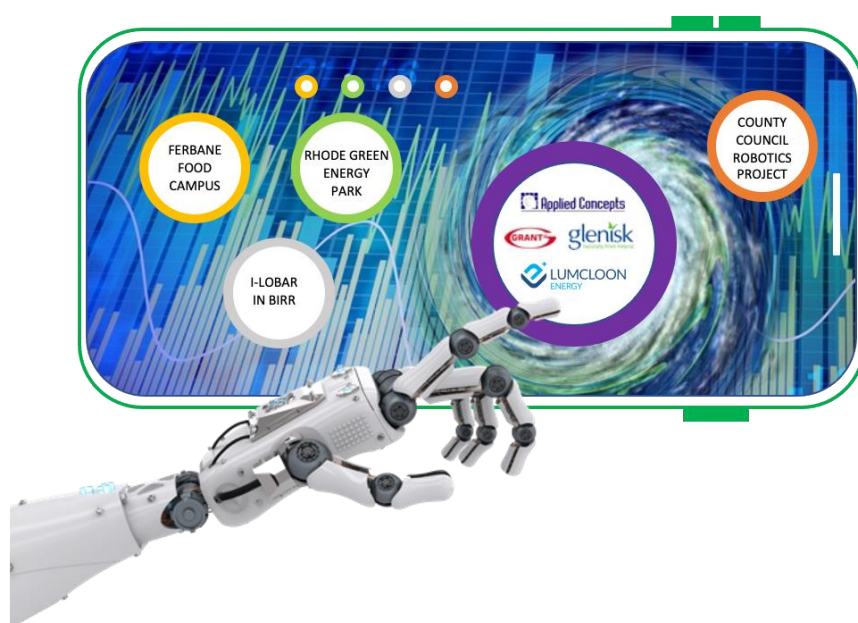


### 3 Why This Strategy and Plan Now

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Offaly has experienced a legacy challenge due to the cessation of industries like turf cutting and traditional energy generation. These industries played a national role, while providing employment for the local population and economy. Now the challenge is to find industries that relate to the legacy strengths of the county but are oriented towards the future and can bring economic resilience and growth to the county and play a national and international role.

There have been initiatives taken through Offaly County Council, the Local Enterprise Office, and the state agencies of Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, Bord Na Mona, Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (ETB) alongside multiple regional development initiatives which are manifest in the multiple activities that are already underway in the county. All these activities are recognised and acknowledged as essential and relevant.



The county has also produced successful companies such as Glenisk, Grant Engineering and innovative new companies such as Lumcloon Energy, Applied Concepts amongst others that show that companies can establish in Offaly and be capable of exporting and developing new markets – from Offaly. The development of Rhode Green Energy Park, the Food campus in Ferbane, the Shannonbridge Energy Storage developments, I-LOFAR in Birr, Co-working Hubs, and the County Council Robotics projects which is brought into secondary schools etc. show that the county has grasped the need for change – and is pursuing that change.

This current plan builds on the excellent work of the previous Local-Economic-and-Community-Plan<sup>3</sup> which has created platforms of potential growth alongside these bodies. The plan then establishes a vibrant, robust, productive, and diversified economy by reconstructing the framework within which the sectors of Offaly are transformed into a new engine of growth. This plan also builds on the work of other Midland and Offaly plans that propose activities in critical sectors such as Green Energy, Food, etc. The plan aims to change the narrative about Offaly – and move it from a place you leave to one to go to.

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<sup>3</sup> Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021



Figure 4: Mission, Vision & Strategy

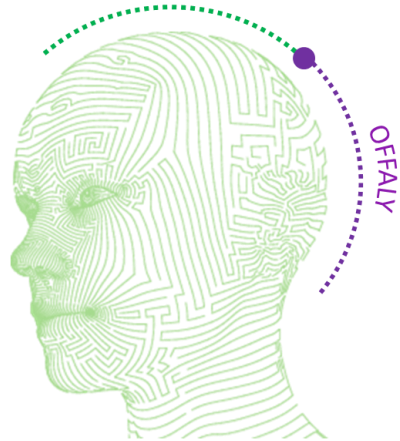
..... Standing Up to Power Ireland’s Net Zero Mandate

**VISION**

County Offaly will have become an established enterprise county with a national and international reputation for rapidly building, scaling and anchoring technology companies that address climate change across multiple sectors, enhance competitiveness and deliver shared sustainable prosperity through collaborative initiatives, ultimately supporting quality jobs and attracting investment to the county

**MISSION**

The mission of this strategy and plan is to support the Irish and European journey to a net zero economy and position Offaly as a leading centre for innovation, talent and capital for cleantech innovations across a distinct number of sectors with an internationally recognized position. The activities of the plan are based on a collaborative Helix-5 cluster model that fosters partnerships with 5 key stakeholders – industry, SMEs, Academia, investors, and government. This mission supports economic development goals of job growth, company growth, investment attraction and trade opportunities, by identifying gaps, facilitating engagement, and developing collaboration opportunities.



**THREE STRATEGIC PILLARS OF ACTIONS**

**A NATIONAL LEADER IN INNOVATION & CREATIVITY**  
In Key National Sectors

**TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF OUR NATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND ASSETS**  
Exploiting our role as a national gateway from east to west with key assets

**STRONGER CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH**  
Spreading opportunity and prosperity to all sections of Offaly society

The entire plan is predicated on 3 strategic pillars of activity which work with government agencies, various industries and push academia to attain sustained enterprise growth and value, expand business activity within the SME sectors, generate more and better employment opportunities and attract in new talents and skills, enhance the competitiveness of the sector in order to increase exports, accentuate the development of human resources in tandem with the selected sectors, increase foreign direct investment inflows and improve the governance of the local economy.

Figure 5: The Pillars of this Strategy and Plan



Each pillar has a distinct set of actions that move the county from the current situation to that of being a recognised national leader in the distinct areas and internationally recognised by being connected to the Irish and international ambitions in the sector. To achieve this, Offaly must secure this national position, sustain the national and international connections, and build a framework for the conditions for growth in Offaly to ensure the benefits are seen and felt within the county. Standing Up means ensuring gains are achieved for the county whilst supporting and assisting others.

## 3.1 Pillar 1: A National Leader in Innovation and Creativity

Table 2: Pillar 1 – A National Leader in Innovation and Creativity

No.	Activity	Goal
P1.1	Data analysis per sector in Offaly	Create a spatial dataset showing all the supply chain strengths in Offaly and their connection at a national level.
P1.2	Stimulate demand led innovation in key sector projects that are structured and developed at a national level.	Create a nationally identified leadership project lead from Offaly in each sector.
P1.3	Building FDI propositions to support IDA Ireland with investment attraction in selected sectors.	FDI proposition to support IDA Ireland and use of diaspora for project pipeline
P1.4	Working with national universities to develop innovative projects in the identified sectoral areas using SFI or European Funding.	Pipeline of projects to be funded engaging Multinational, local SMEs and national universities or Technical Universities.
P1.5	Localised Account Management, from Offaly, to support the IDA in the expansion and new projects from existing investors in Offaly.	Account Management meetings to understand requirements and support local expansion.
P1.6	Increase SME internationalisation from the county with export driven capability development	Double the number of SMEs in Offaly exporting in the next 5 years
P1.7	Strengthen business support and finance access for scale-ups in the county	Double the number of scaling companies in the next 5 years
P1.8	Diaspora Engagement	Engagement of diaspora in Cluster development in at least 2 key projects.
P1.9	Increase skills and their deployment to newer industries	Achieve a growth in skills in the Offaly economy.
P1.10	Developing skills and capability	Per sector Offaly must have national and international collaboration and presence per sector. Any systemic sector work must include an international collaboration.
P1.11	Develop high quality spaces and workshops for business	Offaly needs to identify the assets in the county and repurpose them for business reasons. This is related to P1.1.
P1.12	Local and Export Market Intelligence Programme	Offaly alongside creating excellence in distinct sectors needs to also promote exports by providing export markets update.
P1.13	Sector accelerators	2 sector accelerators per annum for 12 companies

## 3.2 Pillar 2: Taking Full Advantage of Our National Connections & Assets

Table 3: Pillar 2 – Taking Full Advantage of Our National Connections and Assets

Ref.	Activity	Goal
P2.1	Harness the Just Transition potential for skills and industry development	Use Just Transition funding to manage the development of new sectors in Offaly.
P2.2	Create, publish, and promote through all channel's material for the Business and Industrial Parks in Offaly and associated assets and projects	Measure and survey the impact of outreach through this mechanism in Ireland and internationally.
P2.3	Expand the current quarterly emails and send to relevant partners and international businesses, showcasing Offaly potential for Foreign Direct Investment and the development of indigenous.	Create a newsletter and update that drives focus to Offaly website but also attracts attention and is sought after for enrolment.
P2.4	Increase the supply of viable business accommodation, housing, and high-quality employment land within landing distance of Dublin and Galway	Utilise existing physical assets in the county for the purposes of building more enterprise centres.
P2.5	Develop local and town centres through a regeneration community programme	Upgrade existing town centres
P2.6	Create the Innovafarm where creativity, art, design, innovation, and engineering can be brought together to support small businesses in the focus sectors for the county.	Birr Castle should be the location as it historically links art and science.
P2.7	Host a Hybrid Business Design Conference every year that includes business, schools, and universities.	Annual Conference for business, schools, and universities

## 3.3 Pillar 3: Stronger Conditions for Growth

Table 4: Pillar 3 – Stronger Conditions for Growth

Ref.	Activity	Goal
P3.1	Capacity Building – 10-year horizons	One roadmap plan per cluster to be updated annually.
P3.2	A key component of cluster development is to engage SMEs and entrepreneurs to enter the value chains within their sector.	Value Chain initiatives should target a growth of 10 Offaly's SMEs per sector into value chains per annum. This means selecting 10 SMEs every year and ensuring they are integrated into a larger value chain of their respective sectors by developing the company directly to deal with that value chain. For example, BMW value chain.
P3.3	Expand the existing Offaly County Council ICT and Robotics project into all schools in the county and extend the capability into the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Level Institutions.	Competition amongst Offaly schools and develop competency with industry involvement.
P3.4	Formalise the creation of cluster teams within the county charged with demonstrating capability in Offaly in all focus sectors	Create cohesive teams of businesses – large and small – working together towards common goals
P3.5	Create local demonstration facilities in the county to show alternative local energy production and storage, Biomass usage in businesses, public lighting, and control	Create a centre of excellence that demonstrates the low carbon future of energy, energy protection and living.
P3.6	Run a national Green Energy Conference in Offaly every year.	A meeting point for all to come and hear potentials.
P3.7	Create new housing and retrofitted housing projects as demonstrators of technologies being used in Offaly	A reference point for the national agenda on new homes.
P3.8	Sector and Technology Roadmaps Research Report	Working with Enterprise Ireland to create, review and revise technology adoption roadmaps



To identify and understand the sectors to focus on, this document has reviewed similar geographical identities with similar topologies. Hence, examples are drawn from New Zealand, Canada, and Germany – each demonstrating how local economies can achieve focussed leadership positions that support the national economy.

Table 5: Examples of How Local Economies Can Achieve Focussed Leadership Positions.

Country	Summary	Lessons Learned
Germany	Germany has two experiences of transitioning away from fossil-fuel based sectors and employment, with the phasing out of both hard coal mining (beginning in the 1990s), and lignite mining and coal-fired power generation. Hard coal was mined in urbanised and strongly industrialised regions. The decision to close the last hard coal mines was made in 2007 for economic reasons. The aim of the transition was to wean mining communities off coal onto new enterprises to avoid the structural decline across western Europe due to competition from cheaper extraction costs elsewhere and a diversifying energy mix.	From 1990, Germany started to reduce coal subsidies which led to a tripartite agreement in 2007 to completely phase out hard coal mining in the Ruhr Valley and adjacent regions by 2018, but not coal-fired power stations or manufacturing <sup>4</sup> . Employment in hard coal mining was downsized from 473,000 (1957) to 11,448 (2013) and then to zero by 21 December 2018. The focus of the transition was on improving the resilience of, and diversifying the development of, the entire region. The Ruhr Valley has undergone a fundamental transformation from coal production and steel to a knowledge-based economy. The region now has a diverse profile, including environmental compliance, eco-tourism, leading universities, renewable energy manufacturing and high-tech hubs.
New Zealand	In 2018, New Zealand’s Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment established a Just Transitions Unit (JTU) to facilitate the transitioning of New Zealand to a low emissions economy. This followed the NZ Government’s announcement that there would be no new offshore oil and gas exploration permits. The impact of this would be strongly felt in Taranaki, where the oil and gas sector are a large part of the local economy. Taranaki was the first regional transition and so provides key lessons learned on how to successfully transition to a low carbon economy.	In the first instance, there was a development to work partnership with the local government, and the Taranaki community and businesses to develop the Taranaki 2050 Roadmap. The content was designed by the people of Taranaki, with over 700 people participating in 23 workshops on defined transition topics. Following the finalisation of the roadmap, 11 Transition Pathway Action Plans (TPAPs) were published covering issues including infrastructure and transport, people and talent, and energy. The full list of TPAPs can be viewed here. Within each TPAP, a specific set of actions were identified to ensure the successful transition to a low carbon economy and will provide the support needed within the region to pivot away successfully and sustainably from its traditional sectors. In the People and Talent TPAP, for example, actions include upskilling educators to understand industry skills and needs, support for the labour market adjustment in the transition, development of a skills hub and a focus on talent attraction <sup>9</sup> .
Canada	The Canadian government decided to accelerate the phasing out of coal burning to generate electricity in 2016. With an ambitious target to have 90% of the country’s power generated by non-emitting sources by 2030, the plan would affect multiple provinces in Canada and directly affect 3900 workers in the industry. It was apparent that this decision may impact regions, workers, and society unequally and, therefore, the government established the “Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal and Power Workers and Communities” <sup>15</sup> .	The Task Force was relatively small, (9 members and two co-chairs) however its members included workers representatives from trade unions, the coal sector, affected communities, advocates and experts for the environment, sustainability, and community development. Therefore, it had a distinct set of perspectives and expertise on the specific issues concerned <sup>16</sup> . Equally, clear government and political commitment to phasing out coal by a target date ensured the success of the taskforce. Finally, as in the New Zealand example, the engagement of local communities and a wide range of stakeholders ensured the actions and challenges identified were representative of the people who would be most directly affected. This ensured that the recommendations were based on first-hand exchanges of those who may be most affected.

The foundation of the Strategy and Plan is to assist:

- **Aligning Strategies with Regional Strengths (Pillar 2)**  
This strategy and plan will be successful because it is based on pre-existing activity and aligned with regional strengths. Much has already been done regionally and within the county itself. This strategy and plan ensure that they line up competitive advantages in domestic and international markets.
- **Creating a Market Driven Approach (Pillar 1)**  
An approach that takes SMEs and industry needs into consideration is key, as these are the stakeholders who are creating wealth and jobs in regions. It's important for academia, government, and investors to be aligned with this market driven approach to seed their role in an effective cluster.
- **Creating Value Early (Pillar 1)**  
The strategy and plan require publicly sourced fund in the initial one-to-three years and needs to demonstrate value to the constituents through their programs and services within a short time frame. Once the constituents start seeing value, they start to pay for the services and government funding can decrease, a sliding scale model.
- **Ensuring a Robust Governance Model (the entire Strategy)**  
The overall framework has designed a robust governance model that retains accountability to government funders, but also allows for impact-oriented, agile delivery is important. The governance structure should:
  - Be representative of the Helix-5 (Industry, SMEs, Academia, Investors, Government Agencies)
  - Include a Board to ensure funding and services are delivered effectively and
  - Include sector specific advisory committees of experts to help prioritise sector activities.
- **Securing Commitment from Key Players (the entire Strategy)**  
The development of the plan brought a diverse range of stakeholders together within each sector that feel galvanised and are committed to achieving economic outcomes. It is accepted from learning elsewhere that whole system transformation for Offaly requires (as much as possible) whole system collaboration. This will ensure that effective programs are designed, and networks are created that foster talent, build skills, and develop technology competencies that contribute to the economy over the long-term.
- **Aligning Cluster Strategy with Policy (Pillar 2)**  
To be effective, the strategy and plan have strong and consistent alignment with national, provincial, and local green economy policies and strategies, while remaining an entity separate from government.
- **Developing Strong, Mission-Driven Branding and Marketing (the entire Strategy)**  
We envisage that the implementation will be a brand for the county as an independent agent of change with a clear mission supports collaboration efforts, program activities and international marketing.
- **Developing Strategic Funding Models (the entire Strategy)**  
Leveraging both public and private capital to support cluster activities and programs that benefit the constituents of the cluster.

### 3.4 The Key Performance Indicators of this Strategy and Plan



No strategy and plan are meaningful without clear measurements of success that demonstrate that all the activity has been worthwhile and relevant. The collective efforts of the three pillars of activities in placing Offaly at the centre of the zero-carbon landscape in Ireland and Europe can be measured by the following key performance indicators of this plan with their targets which reflect the ambition of the Strategy and Plan. In the initial stage of this plan, there will be a need to baseline these individual measurements to show the starting point and how progress is being made.

Table 6: The Key Performance Indicators of this Strategy and Vision

	Key Performance Indicators	Indicator	Target in 5 years	Target in 10 years
	<b>Strengthen local and international partnerships to accelerate activities for Offaly to lead as a Zero Carbon incubator (Pillar 1)</b>	Number of partnerships	30	40
	<b>Showcase Offaly as a place to invest in clean technology companies and projects (Pillar 1,2,3)</b>	Amount of Capex and Opex attracted	125 million and 80 million	500 million and 200 million
	<b>Facilitate and engage stakeholders and communities for collaborative zero carbon projects in Offaly (Pillar 2 and 3)</b>	Number of new projects	22	60
	<b>Build talent and skill for zero carbon technologies commercialisation and scale up in Offaly (Pillar 1 and 2)</b>	Number of jobs created	2,500	7,500
	<b>Promote opportunities and programmes to increase international exports from county Offaly (Pillar 1)</b>	Increase in export revenue	55 million	120 million

The Strategy and Plan also has several internal measurements that have a higher frequency of measurement and can be categorised as:

Table 7: Internal Measurements of the Strategy and Plan

KPI	Measurement	Frequency	Significance
<b>New Business Created</b>	New Business Licenses	Quarterly	Demonstrates level of new activity
<b>Sector Growth</b>	Revenue	Quarterly	Show development in each sector
	Jobs	Quarterly	
	GVA	Quarterly	
	R&D	Annually	
<b>Flagship Project Progress</b>	No. of companies engaged (MNC, SME, Micro)	Annually	Show leadership position developing.
	Spend per annum	Annually	
<b>Development Curve</b>	Number of companies who export per sector	Annually	GVA development
	% Of GDP on R&D per sector	Annually	
	% Of companies developing new products / services per sector	Annually	

### 3.5 The Governance

There is a core Governance issue to be addressed in Offaly. Currently there are many agencies engaged and many cross-cutting agendas which are focussed correctly. Whilst all of these are performing to their remit, they can inadvertently create silos between various bodies. This may occur even though innovations and development may exist at the intersections of these agencies as opposed to within the agencies themselves. For example, in the Food sector Enterprise Ireland has a role as has Bord Bia and the proposed initiative sits between both bodies. Therefore, there is a need to create a taskforce to steer the implementation of this plan and to measure the outputs achieved – and this follows the best practice as outlined earlier in this summary.

It is proposed to have a Taskforce chaired by a private sector individual in Offaly with a secretariat from the Local Enterprise Office. This taskforce would cover all the agencies engaged in Offaly and ensure that the plans agreed are being implemented, measured and co-ordinated appropriately. The Taskforce would meet quarterly and report quarterly for the first year and then bi-annually subsequently.

This taskforce should be a small unit which is chaired by a private sector individual. Each pillar of the Strategic Plan will have a specific team assigned to it. Each team will consist of 5 individuals of which 3 will come from the private sector, 1 from the support sector and 1 from either the University system or Laois Offaly ETB. The team will use the same secretariat and be responsible for driving the specific actions and measurements under each pillar as specified in this report. This approach to Governance has been seen to work in locations such as Surrey City, British Columbia, Canada, and various regional initiatives in New Zealand and initiatives in Limerick. The mechanism is also used in the UK through the Local Enterprise Partnerships and in other regional economies in Europe.

It is recognised that co-ordination of this type presents overhead to the agencies involved and concerned. The DG Reform report on the Just Transition outlined the same collaboration as did the key findings of the studies of Canada, Germany and New Zealand. However, such as regional collaboration does not preclude Offaly creating its own governance structure which can feed into any such regional body.



The reasoning for this is two-fold:

1. Firstly, all economic development happens locally and not regionally. It can be co-ordinated of-course regionally and nationally however the work must be done locally. This is in line with the Stand-Up concept of this Strategy.
2. Secondly, all relevant experience shows that local actors working locally and co-ordinating regionally and nationally make sustainable progress. The alternative, working regionally or nationally creates aggregations of activities that leave communities and locations behind.



## 4 Concluding Comments

This Strategy and Plan is a living document and framework that presents a process by which the public sector, business and non-governmental sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation within county Offaly. It's about continually improving their investment climate and business enabling environment to enhance their competitiveness, retain jobs and improve incomes and taking a leadership position which is recognised nationally and internationally.

The entire Strategy and Plan is designed to focus and refine activities of the county. It is focused on talent and community building within the county, and positioning and reputation building outside the county. Working the strategy will:

1. Unite and amplify the strengths of existing business owners and combine them in new ways to propel growth in Offaly.
2. Better serve the needs of business, support the creation of new jobs and businesses building on the legacy of the past and creating the pride of a leadership position nationally and internationally.
3. Engage the business leaders and the children of Offaly in determining and writing their own future.
4. Improve the reputation and recognition of county Offaly as a desirable community for business and life and a national leader in zero carbon capability and companies.

Figure 6: Key Outcomes of the Strategic Plan



To be successful, the plan must be implemented. To do this it is important to use the Governance approach outlined to develop operational plans that can be monitored and reported on an annual basis for the county. As was true for the development of this document, this work will be done in partnership with the business, the public sector, and the people of Offaly to implement, refine and share the results.

Historically, Offaly has always been a compliant and engaging player in the national landscape. In doing so, it has developed assets and capabilities that are not always clearly recognised or appreciated. This Strategy and Plan moves Offaly beyond this position and transforms the county beyond a sense of competition with others to where it is standing up to take leadership positions at a national and international level whilst bringing sustained and value employment to its people and ensuring Offaly is a place to come to and stay and live.