SECTION 25A REPORT

REPORT DATE	PUBLIC BODY	PREPARED BY
January 2024	**Department of Rural and Community Development**	Co-ordinated Departmental wide.

The purpose of the table below is to assist the public body in completing the Section 25A (1) report to the Southern Regional Assembly. This report will be used by the Regional Assembly to complete the Section 25A (2) Monitoring Report to be submitted to NOAC and which will focus on progress made in securing the overall objectives of the RSES.

It is intended that the Monitoring Report will be succinct, covering the 2-year period 2022-2024, and therefore we would ask that the response to the questions are as short as possible and for example we do not need the full detail of each policy or programme outlined.

For further information, please contact Brigh Ryan at bryan@southernassembly.ie or Claire Breen at cbreen@southernassembly.ie

Please return the report to this office by **Friday, 2nd February 2024**.

This can be submitted by email to: **cbreen@southernassembly.ie**

PLEASE OUTLINE ANY PROGRESS MADE IN SUPPORTING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RSES WHICH ARE RELEVANT TO YOUR DEPARTMENT-
In framing your response please provide a short overview of key public investment mechanisms and proposals by reference to:

1. **Please provide an overview of progress in Securing the actions relevant to the RSES of Our Rural Future Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025 as they apply to the Southern Region.**

Our Rural Future is the whole-of-Government's policy for balanced, sustainable, regional development. It advocates a bottom-up approach, to address the needs and wants of rural communities around the country, including the Southern Region, to ensure that rural towns and villages are attractive places to live, work and study. There are more than 170 measures contained in the policy, each of which is assigned to a government department or agency for delivery. Since its publication in 2021, Our Rural Future has reported the status of measures, and incorporated new measures and actions, in a series of six-monthly Progress Reports and annual Work Programmes. These can be viewed on the DRCD website: https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/bcbca-our-rural-future-annual-work-programmes-and-progress-reports/

2. **Development of the local link Rural Transport and other sustainable transport options**

The Department of Transport (Local Link), Department of Education (School transport) and Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (Sustainable/Active transport) hold the responsibility for the majority of rural transport and transport infrastructure. Under Our Rural Future, the measures for delivery assigned to these departments are monitored for implementation, and updates are published in a series of six-monthly Progress Reports and annual Work Programmes, which can be viewed on the DRCD website: https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/bcbca-our-rural-future-annual-work-programmes-and-progress-reports/

(Ref: RPO 83 :Island and Coastal Communities)DRCD continues to invest in sustainable developments and upgrade of island infrastructures through its minor capital works programme. Island specific capital funding is made available to Local Authorities to upgrade facilities. DRCD continues to subsidise affordable, reliable, year round ferry and cargo services for the island communities to enhance the sustainability of our off-shore islands.

3. Please outline any progress made by agencies that operate under the aegis of your Department, in supporting the objectives of the RSES which are relevant to that agency

The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body that was set up to promote both social and economic development in the Western Region. It supports the delivery of Government policy towards balanced regional development across a wide variety of sectors including its work on the AEC initiative.

The Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) is the term applied to the linear network along the Western seaboard, stretching from Kerry to Donegal. The overarching objective of the AEC initiative is to maximise assets along the western seaboard in order to attract investment, support job creation and contribute to an improved quality of life for those who live there. The initiative has the potential to act as a key enabler for the regional growth objectives of the National Planning Framework.

The AEC initiative has to date enabled a number of projects to be developed, most notably the AEC Hub Network project, which has since progressed to a national initiative in the form of Connected Hubs. Connected Hubs, a Government of Ireland initiative launched in May 2021, is a single network of remote working facilities that provides users with information on, and the location of facilities available at remote working hubs throughout Ireland. It has grown substantially since its launch and now has c.340 hubs live on its online booking platform (www.connectedhubs.ie). Ultimately ConnectedHubs.ie will link over 400 hubs nationally.

Together with a booking platform and nationwide scope, Connected Hubs also enables small rural hubs to avail of a centralised billing system and applications to support hub management tasks.
It has also helped bring together rural hub teams, who previously worked alone and unsupported. By providing a professional remote working space, many rural hubs also enable holiday makers extend their time away during the summer/Easter/Christmas breaks. Through extending the tourist season, local community members and businesses in the area also benefit.

The following table provides the Connected Hubs figures for the Southern Region as at the end of 2023 –

County	Hubs on boarded	Hubs pending onboarding
Carlow	5	9
Clare	13	10
Cork	33	20
Kerry	20	8
Kilkenny	4	13
Limerick	15	13
Tipperary	14	24
Wexford	12	11
Waterford	9	9

The WDC are currently working on a strategy document for the AEC initiative.

4. Please provide details of any policy initiatives/developments that have been finalised or are in preparatory stages that support the objectives of the RSES

Our most recent Statement of Strategy was published in August 2023, and this sets out the Department's mission as "*to promote and support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland*". The Department has two overarching policies which support delivery of this mission, firstly, *Our Rural Future* the Governments Rural Development Policy for 2021-2025, and secondly *Sustainable Inclusive and Empowered Communities,* the 5 year strategy (for the period 2019-2024) to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland.

The very successful ongoing implementation of *Our Rural Future* in 2023 has been a significant achievement of the Department. The rural development investment programme continues to support investment throughout rural Ireland by delivering schemes including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the LEADER Programme, Town and Village Renewal, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the CLÁR Programme. Furthermore, policies and strategies which form part of *Our Rural Future*, including the Towns Centre First Strategy and the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy continue to be successfully implemented.

The new national islands policy, *Our Living Islands*, was published in June 2023. It is the first whole-of-Government policy for the islands to be published in 27 years. It is an ambitious ten year national policy designed to support sustainable island communities and is accompanied by an Action Plan for the period 2023-2026. The Action Plan consists of 80 new time-bound actions agreed with and to be implemented by various stakeholders, led by a nominated Government Department or State Agency.

5. Please provide a summary of the funding programmes administered by your Department (or agency under the aegis of your Department), over the last two years, which have been awarded within the Southern Region with the following details requested:[1]

- **Funding Programme**
- **County Project Name and Description**
- **Amount Awarded (€)**
- **Stage of Project**

Please also see accompanying spreadsheet for DRCD funded projects.

Libraries Development Funding Programme – Public Library supports for marginalised and disadvantaged communities under the 2023 Dormant Accounts Action Plan under 2022 Dormant Accounts Action Plan.

Library Authority	Project Name	Participating Community	Project Description	Amount Awarded	Stage of Project
Carlow	Literacy Friendly in Action (Strand 1)	Adults with literacy needs. Age friendly, Travellers, migrants.	Series of training workshops in literacy awareness, plain English and provision of literacy-friendly services.	€4,806.00	Complete
Carlow	Literacy Friendly Story Streets (Strand 2)	Adults with literacy needs. Age friendly, Travellers, Migrants.	Supporting literacy needs of parents and awareness training for facilitators.	€8,586.00	Complete
Carlow	Literacy Friendly Preparing for School (Strand 3)	Refugees and people with literacy needs.	A series of English classes for refugee children and teenagers to be held during the summer in preparation for the new school year.	€2,160.00	Complete
Carlow	Sensory Sessions	People with autism and sensory needs.	Tailored to the needs of the particular group with the main focus on sensory activities, including storytelling, singing, dancing, arts/crafts activities and games.	€3,622.50	Complete
Carlow	Sensory Wall & Sensory Toys	Children with SEN/ASD, schools and Autism networks.	Creation of a sensory wall with additional toys to support the children and parents with development of skills including gross motor, fine motor, communication and visual perception skills.	€4,635.00	Complete
Carlow	C-PENs (Assistive Reading Technology)	All children and adults with SEN/Disabilities.	C-PENs unlock a wide range of reading and learning possibilities for members of the public that require assistance with reading and/or comprehension of the written word.	€429.06	Complete

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Carlow	Lexia Core 5 and Lexia Power up Licences	Post-primary and National schools.	50 licences for differentiated instruction for pupils of all abilities. Lexia targets skills gaps, assesses pupils and places on appropriate reading level and then monitors progress.	€2,922.98	Complete
Carlow	Touch Type Read & Spell Licences	Children and Adults with learning difficulties, SEN classes.	70 TTRS licences for two years to develop literacy as well as confidence and self-esteem of children/adults with SEN. Based on the Alpha to Omega programme used by many learning support teachers/adult education tutors. Teaches vocabulary of 4K words through typing, visual and audio.	€2,633.40	Complete
Carlow	LOTE subscription	Multi-cultural and Irish families, Primary schools, Family resource centres.	Two year LOTE subscription to encourage children from all cultures to enjoy books and learn a language through storytelling. Increases language learning options for both children/adults. Increases engagement and literacy.	€333.11	Complete
				€30,128.05	

Clare	Large PC Monitor & Flexible Arm	Individuals with disabilities.	This equipment will provide an opportunity for greater access to library resources.	€1,035.00	Complete
Clare	Chairs	Age friendly and people with mobility issues.	Chairs with arm supports for older people and those with mobility issues.	€825.84	Complete
Clare	Adjustable table	People with ASD, Age friendly, people with mobility issues and physical disabilities.	Will be used in library in conjunction with a recently acquired Tovertafel table. It will allow for greater usage for those with mobility issues.	€574.15	Complete
Clare	C-PEN Readers	Visually impaired and dyslexic, Local primary schools.	C-PEN Readers. Assisting people with SEN and other impairments.	€2,544.03	Complete
Clare	Touch Type Read & Spell Licences	Primary, Post-Primary schools and Brothers of Charity members.	500 TTRS licences for one year to assist children with low literacy levels, learning difficulties and helps students with dyslexia and dyspraxia.	€3,411.00	Complete
Clare	LOTE subscription	Immigrant, refugee and multilingual families. All schools.	One year subscription for county-wide use. Translated and narrated digital e-books with audio options that engage immigrant, refugee and multilingual families. Also assists children who need additional support for literacy development.	€1,282.50	Complete
Clare	English Type Junior - Touch typing	All students.	Ten Indefinite Period licences at five Libraries. Students learn how to touch type, used for all students and those with SEN/ASD.	€315.00	Complete
				€9,987.52	

| Clare | World of Welcome Programme – Series of workshops | Refugees/Migrants | The aim of this project will be to provide a programme of cultural activities and add bi-lingual resources to stock. This will help to provide access to educational supports for social inclusion and community participation. Provide literacy supports in tandem with the national Right-to-Read Programme. | €16,756.42 | |
| | | | | €16.756.42 | |

Cork City	Bags of Welcome - Books for Babies	Early years children, DEIS area residents and Direct Provision residents.	Book bag distribution.	€10,865.01	Complete
Cork City	Coding Classes	Adults in DEIS areas, unemployed and early school leavers.	Boost IT and coding skills, improve confidence and employability, encourage return to education.	€1,188.00	Complete
Cork City	Conversation Café	New communities, unemployed, residents of DEIS areas and DP Centre.	25 - 30 participants meet once a month for a 90 minute informal conversation around a particular theme. Sessions facilitated by ThinkSpeakDo.	€4,374.00	Complete
Cork City	Creative Dance	Age Friendly/Older adults.	Creative dance is associated with positive aging. It is a great way to improve fitness, balance and flexibility and by following dance routines, mental agility and wellbeing.	€675.00	Complete
Cork City	Digital Storytelling	Early school leavers, unemployed, older people, residents in deprived areas.	Will give participants an opportunity to learn current digital media techniques including video making, sound recording and production. Participants will then create their own digital 'story' using the techniques learned.	€594.00	Complete

Cork City	Down Memory Lane	Older people with Dementia.	Music and Crafts. Provide opportunities for participants to reconnect with memories through singing, learning new crafts that support hand co-ordination, memory triggering to re-connect with others around them.	€5,472.00	Complete
Cork City	Music Lessons	DEIS schools.	A series of music classes in the library in partnership with Music Generation Cork.	€5,040.00	Complete
Cork City	Parent Coaching	New Irish, people with literacy needs and older people.	Provide an interactive workshop and conversation for parents in a group setting, facilitated by a professional in this field. A safe forum where parents can share ideas/challenges and support each other.	€810.00	Complete

Cork City	Reading Garden	People with autism, sensory, intellectual difficulties, visually impaired.	Revolves around theme of inclusive reading. Project will result in a multi-faceted reading art installation in Cork City Library. It will be the result of the work by students through workshops and will include: books created by the students, audio recordings of orated books, interactive screen, music etc.	€3,150.00	Complete
Cork City	STEAM	DEIS students up to the age of 12years.	Science Workshops by the Life Time Lab@ Old Cork Waterworks for children from DEIS schools in the setting of the library.	€900.00	Complete
Cork City	Tin Whistle	New Irish, Age Friendly, migrants and residents of deprived areas.	Workshops teaching participants how to play the tin whistle.	€921.60	Complete
Cork City	C-PENs	Children/adults with Autism, sensory needs and visual impairments.	C-PENs for ten libraries which will assist all ages with SEN/Disabilities.	€2,781.00	Complete
Cork City	Hearing Loop Systems	All users with hearing impairment.	Signet portable induction loop system for three library branches.	€723.60	Complete
Cork City	LOTE subscription	All children 3-10 years old and families including refugees in local schools.	One year LOTE subscription. LOTE is translated and narrated digital e-books with audio options that engage immigrant, refugee and multilingual families. Also for students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties.	€2,573.78	Complete
Cork City	Edtech Word Shark 5	Children and young teens.	200 indefinite licences. For students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties	€1,601.94	Complete
				€41,669.92	

Cork County	Sensory 22	Children and adults with an ASD, Autism, Sensory needs.	Series of talks held regionally in libraries throughout Cork County by professional Occupational Therapists aimed at families, schools, and support organisations. Online content by professionals in OT. Purchase and distribution of sensory toys to the 29 branches.	€10,260.00	Complete
Cork County	C-PENs	Age friendly, visual impaired, SEN, ASD adults and children.	20 C-PENs. Assisting people with SEN/Disabilities and learning English.	€4,825.56	Complete
Cork County	LOTE subscription	DP Centres, Refugees, Non-Nationals, families of pre-school and primary children.	One year LOTE subscription. LOTE is translated and narrated digital e-books with audio options that engage immigrant, refugee and multilingual families. Also for students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties. Assists children who need additional support for literacy development.	€3,150.00	Complete
				€18,235.56	

Kerry	Honouring the past and working with the present	Age friendly and dementia sufferers.	A programme of local history events, mobile museum at care centres, art and gardening.	€4,999.50	Complete
Kerry	C-PENs & Sensory Toys	Children and adults: Visually impaired, SEN/ASD, Disabilities.	C-PENs for nine library branches and sensory toys in Listowel Library. C-PEN technology is used for assisting people with SEN/Disabilities and for those learning English. Sensory toys will complement the sensory Cubbie already in place in Listowel.	€5,040.00	Complete
Kerry	LOTE	Immigrant, multilingual families, NS, ELC and Naoinraí and Gaelscoileanna.	One year subscription. Helps children enjoy books and to learn language through storytelling. Facilitates multi-user access and titles "as Gaeilge" due to be added very soon.	€1,485.00	Complete
Kerry	Times Tables Rock Stars	Primary Schools, LCA classes, SEN classes and Gaelscoileanna.	20 annual licences. Programme of daily times table practice. Aids students developing numeracy skills, suitable for post primary and resource classes also.	€2,880.00	Complete
				€14,404.50	

Kilkenny	OWL	People with literacy needs.	The Oral, Words and Language programme is a series of webinars, workshops and talks on literacy, strategies for progressing reading and learning skills. Support for parents, teachers and SNA's of children with literacy difficulties.	€10,800.00	Complete
Kilkenny	C-PENs	Dyslexic, visually impaired, immigrants, school pupils, age friendly.	18 C-PENs to assist people with SEN/disabilities, those learning English and the visually impaired.	€4,800.24	Complete
Kilkenny	Touch Type Read & Spell Licences	Schools, ETB centres, Dyslexia Association.	100 two year licences to assist children with low literacy levels, learning difficulties and helps students with dyslexia and dyspraxia.	€3,990.60	Complete
				€19,590.84	

Limerick	Crafting Connections	Inter-generational.	Engaging with a number of nursing homes and schools to facilitate a shared crafting and art project to encourage intergenerational learning and building connections.	€4,500.00	Complete
Limerick	Outreach to Men/Women Shed Groups	Age friendly/older people.	Tailored workshops, seminars and events on wellbeing, staying active, digital literacy, book groups and writer visits, handcraft and artwork workshops to various shed groups around the county.	€7,193.30	Complete

Limerick	Sensory Toys	People with sensory and mobility needs.	Sensory toys for two library branches which will support children and parents with development of skills including gross motor, fine motor, communication and visual perception skills.	€3,592.40	Complete
Limerick	C-PENs	Children and adults: Visually impaired, SEN/ASD, disabilities.	Seven C-PENs to assist people with SEN/Disabilities and learning English.	€1,626.92	Complete
Limerick	TTRS - Touch Type Read & Spell	National and post primary schools and families.	1200 one year TTRS licences to assist children with low literacy levels, learning difficulties and helps students with dyslexia and dyspraxia.	€3,670.20	Complete
Limerick	Reading Eggs	Children 7-10 years.	200 one year licence to be used with older pupils who need to focus on phonics/sight words and developing their reading skills.	€1,144.80	Complete
				€21,727.61	

Tipperary	Library Induction	Junior infant to 2nd class, National School children - Traveller community.	A six-week library induction programme delivered in conjunction with Tipperary Rural Traveller Project targeted at the younger group of children (Junior Infants to 2nd Class) who participate in their Family Learning Programme. Each week, the group will visit the library and participate in literacy building activities like story time, rhymes and song, drawing and writing.	€5,085.00	Complete
Tipperary	Music Therapy	Pre-school children with language development needs.	Music therapy workshops facilitated by a clinical music therapist who works within the fields of ABI (Acquired Brain Injury), rehabilitation, older adults, intellectual disability and children in mainstream and special education settings with a variety of needs. Workshops will be run for children attending Tús Maith, the child development centre for pre-school aged children, run by the Brothers of Charity in Tipperary town.	€1,773.00	Complete
Tipperary	Where in my Head	Early school leavers	A visual artist will collaborate with trainees and tutors from Clonmel Youth Training Enterprise in a creative workshop.	€2,196.00	Complete
Tipperary	C-PENs	General public People with dyslexia/SEN and those visually impaired.	18 C-PENs designed to promote independent learning and useful for a person who has reading difficulties or visually impaired.	€4,500.00	Complete

Tipperary	Age Friendly Meeting Room Chairs	Roscrea Library elderly users.	Seating suitable for the large number of elderly people who use the exhibition space.	€531.36	Complete

Tipperary	Touch Type Read & Spell Licences	All children and adults including those with SEN.	400 licences to improve reading/spelling and help users to learn to touch-type. Specifically designed for those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia/dyspraxia but can be used by all.	€3,322.80	Complete
Tipperary	LOTE - Languages other than English	Immigrant, refugee, and multilingual families.	Translated and narrated digital e-books that engage immigrant, refugee and multilingual families. Annual subscription.	€1,687.50	Complete
				€19,095.66	

Waterford	West Waterford Story Collector Project 2022	Elderly people.	Elderly interviewees across West Waterford will be nominated as candidates for long form ethnographic oral history interviews. This will involve direct engagement with the facilitator and an in person series of recordings, undertaken according to the Diverse Waterford Oral History Methodology. Two large 'Memory Events' will be held in West Waterford/Waterford City to disseminate the material collection in the programme.	€13,540.50	Complete
Waterford	Word Time - Dyslexia	6-8 year olds / 9-12 year olds.	12 week high-quality course designed for primary school children with dyslexia who wish to develop their reading, spelling and comprehension skills. Activities delivered through drama, arts/crafts, small group work, one-to-one reading, story-time and physical activities.	€7,488.00	Complete
Waterford	C-PENs	People with dyslexia, SEN and those who are visually impaired.	20 C-PENs to promote independent learning and useful for a person who has reading difficulties or visually impaired. Waterford Libraries has a strong relationship with Waterford Dyslexia Workshop. The DAI Workshops offer specialist, individual tuition in small groups.	€5,130.73	Complete
Waterford	Touch Type Read & Spell, Times Table Rock Stars	DEIS schools, children with SEN and intellectual difficulties.	400 TTRS licences, 30 Times Table Rock Stars licences. Will assist children and adults of additional needs and residing in disadvantaged areas with literacy, numeracy and digital skills.	€7,438.11	Complete
				€33,597.34	

Wexford	Social Skills LEGO Play Therapy	People with autism / autistic spectrum disorders.	This is a social development programme for children with social communication difficulties. Helps encourage joint attention, shared goals, mutual purpose and social communication.	€971.97	Complete
Wexford	Online in No Time	Older people.	Intensive digital literacy support and tuition to older people both in a day care centre and 4 branch libraries. Real-life digital literacy needs of older people will be addressed in these sessions and will be practical, targeted and delivered in partnership with the day care centre and Age Friendly Coordinator with Wexford Co.Co.	€4,158.00	Complete

Wexford	Now & Then	Traveller Community	Traveller children, their parents and grandparents will create a permanent record about how life has changed over the generations. The children will explore and talk with artists and story facilitators who will work to help participants create images (drawing/photography), developing the narrative and transcribing oral accounts.	€5,580.00	Complete
Wexford	Sensory Toys & Assistive Resources	Age friendly, sensory, visually impaired, dementia sufferers.	Improving memory of people with dementia. Age friendly collection of resources that can be borrowed by carers and family. Will collaborate with the Memory Technology Resource Room (MTRR) in New Ross, one of a network of Assistive Tech Memory Libraries in Ireland run by the HSE.	€5,001.37	Complete
Wexford	Reading Eggs, Nessy, TTRS, LOTE, TT Rock Stars, Mathseeds Licences	All children, adults, refugees and those with special educational needs.	Licences for six apps to assist with literacy, numeracy, digital skills.	€5,023.62	Complete
				€20,734.96	

Libraries Development Funding Programme – Public Library supports for marginalised and disadvantaged communities under the **2023** Dormant Accounts Action Plan.

Library Authority	Project Name	Supported Community	Project Description	Amount Awarded	Stage of Project
Carlow	Sensory toys, booklets and Sensory walls.	People with autism and sensory needs	The provision of sensory toys and equipment in Carlow Town, Muine Bheag and Borris library branches.	€5,012.16	Complete
Clare	Sensory Toys, age friendly chairs and age friendly seating.	People with autism and sensory needs. Elderly.	Sensory toys for people with autism and sensory needs. Also age friendly furniture.	€5,024.55	Complete
Cork City	Tovertafel games	People with autism, users with disabilities/mobility issues and older people.	Two year subscription for Tovertafel (magic table) games in Holyhill, Tory Top & Douglas library branches for people with autism or dementia.	€5,043.65	*Complete
Cork County	C-Pen ReaderPens, sensory toys & equipment.	People with reading difficulties, dyslexia and visual impairments.	10 C-Pen ReaderPens for all branches to support people with reading difficulties, dyslexia or visual impairments and sensory toys & equipment.	€4,809.80	Complete
Kerry	Mini trollies, seating, ACORN tablets, 24 inch monitors, A4 page magnifiers & stands.	Older people. People with additional needs and visual impairments	This equipment will help older people in the community, those with additional needs and visual impairments. 7 mini trollies, 5 age friendly seating units, two 24 inch" monitors, 2 ACORN tablets, two A4 magnifiers & stands.	€4,999.50	Complete

Kilkenny	Magic Table 360	People with autism, visual impairment and dementia.	This new Magic Table 360 in City Library Kilkenny will allow users to interact socially and complete cognitive exercises.	€5,020.35	Complete
Limerick	Games for Magic Table	People with sensory needs or autism	Access to a suite of games for Magic Table to provide fun and stimulation through interactive activities.	€5,040.33	Complete
Tipperary	Age friendly seats, Age friendly mini trolleys, Hearing loop system, C-Pen ReaderPens.	Older people. People with hearing impairments, reading difficulties, dyslexia or visual impairments.	7 Age Friendly seats, 5 mini trolleys, 1 Hearing Loop system and 3 C-Pen ReaderPens to support people with reading difficulties, dyslexia or visual impairments.	€5,032.91	Complete
Waterford	Sensory toys and equipment. Printing of sensory catalogue.	People with autism and sensory needs	A collection of sensory toys to help people with autism and sensory needs. Production of a sensory catalogue.	€5,024.96	Complete
Wexford	C-Pen Reader Pens and interactive games.	People with reading difficulties, dyslexia, visual impairments, dementia or older people.	10 C-Pen Reader Pens Reader to assist people with reading difficulties, dyslexia or visual impairments. Also assists those learning English. Omi Mobii Vista interactive Dementia software games for New Ross & Gorey library branches.	€4,993.10	*Complete

Libraries Development Funding Programme – ICT Funding 2023 – Complete

The Department provided €1.278m to 28 local authorities for the provision of ICT Infrastructure in public libraries, including additional devices where required, as per the new public library strategy for 2023-2027. The aim of ICT Funding 2023 is to further develop public libraries as enablers of digital services and facilitators of digital skills development while also recognising the importance of enhancing digital inclusion and providing up-to-date ICT infrastructure.

Carlow

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	7	€4,081.14
24" Monitor with built-in docking station, webcam, speakers and mic	€235.00	7	€2,023.35
Wired Keyboard and Mouse	€15.00	7	€129.15
Apple iMac	€1,110.43	2	€2,731.66
Apple Mac Studio	€1,651.94	1	€2,031.89
Apple iPad Pro	€802.67	2	€1,974.57
Total			€12,971.75

Clare

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	74	€43,143.48
Standard Notebook	€580.00	18	€12,841.20
Detachable 2-in-1	€1,236.00	26	€39,527.28
24" Monitor	€130.00	73	€11,672.70
24" Monitor with built-in docking station, webcam, speakers and mic	€235.00	1	€289.05

Apple MacBook Pro	€1,145.60	1	€1,409.09
Apple iPad	€334.01	3	€1,232.50
Total			€110,115.29

Cork City

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Mini Desktop	€415.00	33	€16,844.85
24" Monitor	€130.00	33	€5,276.70
Total			€22,1221.55

Cork County

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	16	€9,328.32
Standard Notebook	€580.00	2	€1,426.80
24" Monitor	€130.00	18	€2,878.20
Wired Keyboard and Mouse	€15.00	18	€332.10
Apple iMac	€1,110.43	2	€2,731.66
Apple iPad	€334.01	12	€4,929.99
Total			€21,627.07

Kerry

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	25	€14,575.50
Mini Desktop	€415.00	8	€4,083.60
Standard Notebook	€580.00	1	€713.40
Lightweight Notebook	€580.00	24	€17,121.60
Ultraportable Notebook	€620.00	10	€7,626.00
Convertible 2-in-1	€932.00	30	€34,390.80
Detachable 2-in-1	€1,236.00	10	€15,202.80
24" Monitor	€130.00	28	€4,477.20
Apple MacBook Pro	€1,145.60	1	€1,409.09
Apple iMac	€1,110.43	2	€2,731.66
Apple iPad	€334.01	48	€19,719.95
Total			€122,051.60

Kilkenny

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	36	€20,988.72
24" Monitor	€130.00	36	€5,756.40
Total			€26,745.12

Limerick

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	10	€5,830.20
Convertible 2-in-1	€932.00	21	€24,073.56
24" Monitor	€130.00	10	€1,599.00
Wired Keyboard and Mouse	€15.00	10	€184.50
Total			€31,687.26

Tipperary

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Mini Desktop	€415.00	79	€40,325.55
Standard Notebook	€580.00	21	€14,981.40
24" Monitor	€130.00	79	€12,632.10
Apple Mac Studio	€1,651.94	2	€4,063.77
Apple iPad	€334.01	19	€7,805.81
Total			€79,808.64

Waterford

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	12	€6,996.24
Standard Notebook	€580.00	19	€13,554.60
24" Monitor	€130.00	12	€1,918.80
			€22,469.64
Total			€22,469.64

Wexford

Device	Cost (ex VAT)	Number	Amt Awarded
Standard Desktop	€474.00	21	€12,243.42
Mini Desktop	€415.00	50	€25,522.50
Standard Notebook	€580.00	10	€7,134.00
Ultraportable Notebook	€620.00	8	€6,100.80
24" Monitor	€130.00	69	€11,033.10
24" Monitor with built-in docking station, webcam, speakers and mic	€235.00	6	€1,734.30
			€63,768.12

DRCD Libraries Development Funding Programme– *My Open Library* Funding 2022

Through the *My Open Library* service, library members can use their public library outside of staffed hours from 8am to 10pm, 365 days of the year.

Local Authority	Amount Awarded	Project Description	Stage of Project
Carlow	€93,600.00	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Tullow branch library	Ongoing
Clare	N/A		

	Amount	Project Description	Status
Cork City	€377,031.51	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Glanmire, Blackpool, Bishopstown libraries & upgrade the existing service in the Douglas branch.	Glanmire & Douglas complete
Cork County	€307,141.07	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Carrigaline and upgrade the existing services in Kinsale, Macroom, Fermoy, Bandon branch libraries.	Fermoy & Bandon complete
Kerry	N/A		
Kilkenny	N/A		
Limerick	€154,499.40	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Newcastlewest & upgrade the existing service in Cappamore branch libraries.	Ongoing
Tipperary	€72,270.00	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Cashel branch library	
Waterford	€311,909.23	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Tramore & upgrade the existing services in Dungarvan, Lismore branch libraries.	Lismore & Dungarvan Complete
Wexford	€131,878.80	To provide the *My Open Library* service in Gorey & New Ross branch libraries.	Complete

DRCD Libraries Development Funding Programme – Library Lease Subsidy (Annual)

2022	Amount Awarded	Project Description
Carlow	N/A	
Clare	N/A	
Cork City	€50,000.00	Douglas library branch annual lease subsidy
Cork County	N/A	
Kerry	N/A	
Kilkenny	€12,697.38	Loughboy library branch annual lease subsidy
Limerick	N/A	
Tipperary	N/A	
Waterford	€22,500.00	Ardkeen library branch annual lease subsidy
Wexford	N/A	

2023	Amount Awarded	Project Description
Carlow	N/A	
Clare	N/A	
Cork City	€50,000.00	Douglas library branch annual lease subsidy
Cork County	N/A	
Kerry	N/A	
Kilkenny	€12,697.38	Loughboy library branch annual lease subsidy
Limerick	N/A	
Tipperary	N/A	
Waterford	€22,500.00	Ardkeen library branch annual lease subsidy
Wexford	N/A	

Libraries Development Funding – Libraries Capital Programme
The Libraries Capital Programme (2016-2022) invested c. €29m of Exchequer funding supporting 17 library infrastructure projects.

- Clare County Council was awarded €3m for the Ennis Library project. This was in addition to €1 million in EU funding received from the Southern Regional Assembly's Operational Programme 2014-2020.

- Kilkenny City Council was awarded €2.245m for the new Mayfair library through additional funding that was announced July 2021. An additional allocation was provided in 2023 of €108,456.55 for OGP inflation costs.

2022	Amount Paid	Project Description	Stage of Project
Carlow	N/A		
Clare	€1,701,985.07	Ennis Library Building Project due to open Q2 2024	Ongoing
Cork City	N/A		
Cork County	N/A		
Kerry	N/A		
Kilkenny		Kilkenny City Library Building Project due to open in Q1 2024	Ongoing
Limerick	N/A		
Tipperary	N/A		
Waterford	N/A		
Wexford	N/A		

2023	Amount Paid	Project Description	Stage of Project
Carlow	N/A		
Clare	€847,933.13	Ennis Library Building Project due to open Q2 2024	Ongoing
Cork City	N/A		
Cork County	N/A		
Kerry	N/A		
Kilkenny	€2,036,229.00	Kilkenny City Library Building Project due to open in Q1 2024	Ongoing
Limerick	N/A		
Tipperary	N/A		
Waterford	N/A		
Wexford	N/A		

DRCD Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) 2024
The Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) is a €6 million capital fund to provide supports essential for small community and voluntary groups and organisations, particularly those who serve disadvantaged areas in rural and urban areas. There will be a particular focus on small capital works/improvements, and the purchase of equipment for community use.

Funding Programme	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)	Amount allocated
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Carlow	€142,867.38

Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Clare	€166,056.66
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Cork City	€232,204.83
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Cork County	€245,559.11
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Kerry	€179,945.75
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Kilkenny	€151,822.82
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Limerick	€228,687.46
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Tipperary	€213,655.17
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Waterford	€190,945.68
Local Enhancement Programme (LEP 2024)	Wexford	€216,850.62

DRCD Community Support Fund (CSF)

The Community Support Fund (CSF) announced in November 2022, was a €10 million fund set up to provide small grants to a wide and diverse range of local community groups, to assist with their running costs such as energy or insurance bills. Groups could also use the funding to carry out small upgrade works and to purchase equipment to support their activities.

Funding Programme	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)	Amount allocated *
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Carlow	€283,141
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Clare	€301,325
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Cork City	€353,332
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Cork County	€362,678
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Kerry	€312,671
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Kilkenny	€290,749
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Limerick	€350,592
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Tipperary	€338,885
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Waterford	€320,195
Community Support Fund (CSF 2022)	Wexford	€340,233

*Details of projects funded under the Community Support Fund are available at:
https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/63c7a-community-support-fund/

Connected Hubs Call

The Department provided €14 million in funding to almost 200 projects via the Connected Hubs Calls in 2021 and 2022 under the umbrella of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
This funding enabled successful applicants to add additional capacity to existing remote working infrastructure in digital hubs and Broadband Connection Points across the National Hub Network.

A breakdown by county of 2021 and 2022 Connected Hubs Call funding has also been provided below

County	2021	2022	Total
Carlow	€103,320.00	€74,296.33	€177,616.33

Clare	€209,700.00	€144,923.00	€354,623.00
Cork	€425,456.33	€515,970.80	€941,427.13
Kerry	€746,091.06	€291,468.00	€1,037,559.06
Kilkenny	€235,438.00	€210,620.00	€446,058.00
Limerick	€404,687.88	€464,531.40	€869,219.28
Tipperary	€426,110.36	€265,929.43	€692,039.79
Waterford	€240,890.00	€0.00	€240,890.00
Wexford	€319,029.00	€31,950.00	€350,979.00

Please provide any other comments that you would like to make with respect to your Department (including any agencies under the aegis of your Department) in implementing the RSES and addressing the issue of balanced regional growth, to fully realise the ambition and targets set out for the Southern Region under *Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework* and the RSES. This may include any recommendations that you consider would improve the implementation process and provide a greater focus on addressing regional imbalance.

Community Policy

In order to create a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive society, communities need to be empowered to develop and sustain their own wellbeing.

In August 2019, the Minister for Rural and Community Development launched Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities; A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland. The strategy was co-produced by Government and people from the community development, local development, community and voluntary and local government sectors through a Cross Sectoral Group (CSG).

In order to support the Department's mission to "promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland" the Strategy seeks to use a mix of policy initiatives and funding supports for communities, non-profit organisations and the community and voluntary sector, while also working with other Government Departments and agencies that support communities.

The Strategy sets a general direction of travel for government policy in relation to the community development, local development and the community and voluntary sectors for the coming decade.

Values and Principles

One of the key achievements of the five-year Strategy to support the Community and Voluntary Sector was the agreement of a set of clearly defined, shared Values and Principles, which guided the strategy's development and form the basis for collaboration and partnership working in the pursuit of the best outcomes achievable.

The adoption of these values and principles fulfils Action 1.2 in the strategy: Adopt an agreed set of values and principles for collaboration and 'partnership-working' at national and local level.

The Values and Principles were agreed by Government and adopted on a whole of government basis in May 2022 and formally launched by Minister of State for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD, on 19 October 2022.

These Values and Principles will be used by all Government Departments and Agencies as a basis for their interaction with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Participation of Marginalised Communities in Decision-Making Structures

This was a Dormant Accounts Funded project that built capacity, as well as providing resources and toolkits to support the engagement of marginalised communities in consultation and decision-making processes at local level. An updated resource guide, entitled 'A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making – Version 2' was launched by Minister of State Joe O'Brien on 25 October 2023. A showcase event was held at the above launch in Dublin with presentations from three LCDC led pilot programmes of Clare, Wicklow and Galway City. There were also presentations from LGBT Ireland, NASC and IHREC along with panel and group discussions on the day. As part of the project training has been delivered to local authorities and related stakeholders on inclusive engagement, intercultural awareness, the Public Sector Duty and in facilitation skills. A series of training videos to work in tandem with the guide are currently being finalised and will be released in early 2024.

LECP

DRCD in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and an LECP Advisory Group developed LECP guidelines which were published in 2021.

The aim of the guidelines is to provide support to Local Authorities and relevant local partners to help them to develop and implement comprehensive and flexible 6-year plans that will support the sustainable development of their areas over the lifetime of the plan. The plans will form the basis for interventions at a local level that are complementary to and consistent with the RSES, the City and County Development Plans and the relevant national strategies and policies listed in Appendix 6 of said Guidelines. Some LECPs are finalised and most local authorities are now getting approval of the final drafts through the Municipal Districts, SPCs and LCDCs and final approval by the full councils.

DRCD also hosted a series of training webinars in 2022 to ensure that each LCDC has the necessary knowledge and skills to develop and implement their LECPs. One LECP support Webinar focussed on Economic/Infrastructure/Local Enterprise including spatial planning and public infrastructure – urban and rural, green and recreational spaces and sectoral/enterprise strategies (including social enterprise).

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

SICAP addresses high and persistent levels of deprivation through targeted and innovative, locally-led approaches. It supports in need groups and communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income and members of the Traveller and Roma community. This type of support will continue over the lifetime of the current programme, which runs from 2018 to 2023.

The procurement for the next iteration of SICAP 2024-2028 is currently ongoing. Of the 53 SICAP Contract Areas, 48 have completed procurement and signed contracts for programme delivery. Extensions to the current SICAP programme have been granted in the remaining areas, to allow for the procurement process to conclude whilst also ensuring continuation of SICAP services.

In 2023 SICAP supported over 2,797 Local community groups & 32,563 individuals.

Funding Programme	County	Project Name and Description	Amount Awarded (&)	Stage of Project
SICAP 2023	Carlow	SICAP LOTS	655,941.00	N/A

	Tipperary North		657,968.00	
	Tipperary South		812,300.00	
	Waterford		1,319,399.00	
	Wexford		2,003,976.00	
	Kilkenny		771,216.00	
	Cork City		1,455,587.00	
	Cork County		2,318,146.00	
	Clare		1,045,905.00	
	Limerick		2,461,354.00	
SICAP 2024	Carlow	SICAP LOTS	700,184.00	N/A
	Tipperary North		702,348.00	
	Tipperary South		867,090.00	
	Waterford		1,408,392.00	
	Wexford		2,139,144.00	
	Kilkenny		823,235.00	
	Cork City		1,709,143.00	
	Cork County		2,319,127.00	
	Clare		1,116,451.00	
	Limerick		2,627,372.00	

Town Centre First (TCF):

The TCF policy provides a coordinated, whole-of-government policy framework to proactively address the decline in the health of towns across Ireland and support measures to regenerate and revitalise them. This policy was co-created by the Department of Rural & Community Development and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The implementation of the policy is underpinned by schemes such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), the Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS).

Key elements of the policy include the establishment of the National TCF Office, the appointment of Town Regeneration officers in eligible rural Local Authorities and the completion of TCF Plans.

A Town Regeneration Officer has been appointed in each county within the Southern Regional Assembly's remit.

A TCF plan reimagines the potential of an individual town, focusing in particular on its town centre and immediate surroundings and identifies potential future projects in the area. TCF plans were completed in the following counties within the Southern Regional Assembly's remit:

Local Authority	Town Selected to complete a TCF Plan (Phase 1)
Carlow	Tullow
Cork	Skibereen
Clare	Sixmilebridge
Kerry	Milltown
Kilkenny	Urlingford
Limerick	Abbeyfeale
Tipperary	Roscrea
Waterford	Portlaw
Wexford	New Ross

All 26 pilot plans have now been completed. The Department is currently making preparations to implement further supports under the TCF policy and are expected to be announced in January 2024. Regarding TCF plans, it is expected that a similar approach will be taken where one town from each county will be selected to complete a plan.

The Community Volunteer Programme

The Community Volunteer Programme, introduced in the National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025 and supported by the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 Plan for Living with COVID-19, is a measure to build on existing volunteering capacity to meet future, intermittent needs and to provide for future events.

Community Volunteers are fully trained in Urgent Support response through the national network of Volunteer Centres and can support Local Authorities, the Civil Defence, the Red Cross and other Blue Light organisations when extreme weather events occur.

Community Volunteers are a national team of volunteers who already have experience volunteering together in their local community. They can be engaged quickly and have the willingness and availability to assist in their community when extreme weather events occur. These volunteers are an essential resource for our local communities when short term urgent support is required, by providing an invaluable service, without cost, to supplement the emergency services in their roles.

LEADER

The LEADER Programme is a key intervention of Our Rural Future, the Government's Policy for rural development which aims to deliver a range of actions to rural communities over the lifetime of the policy. The LEADER programme supports private enterprises and community groups who improve the quality of life and economic activity in rural areas through a CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) approach. Under the 2014-2022 LEADER Programme this support was provided to projects under the following themes:
- Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation
- Social Inclusion

- Rural Environment
-

Under the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme there will also be a requirement for the Smart Villages concept, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be over-arching elements of LEADER Interventions.

The 2023-2027 LEADER programme will support a broad range of activities which aim to respond to the diversity of the local needs of our rural areas. Projects will be supported under the key themes of:
- Economic Development and Job Creation,
- Rural Infrastructure and Social Inclusion,
- Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

PLEASE PROVIDE A CONTACT POINT IN THE EVENT THAT WE NEED TO CONTACT YOU ABOUT THIS FORM.

Name: Anthony McCarthy
Position: Higher Executive Officer
Email: anthony.mccarthy@drcd.gov.ie
Contact phone number: 01 773 6900