

## WHAT IT TAKES TO SUSTAIN A VIABLE RURAL COMMUNITY

Roscommon LEADER Partnership (RLP) believes that the contribution we could make to the Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs' meeting scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 could focus on us providing the committee members with good examples of the work we are undertaking on the ground in County Roscommon through working closely within communities and in partnership with other agencies in County Roscommon.

We would like to take this opportunity to showcase how we have been successful in developing greater partnerships over the past number of years on an interagency basis to bring about affective change and projects on the ground which are in tandem delivering on the objectives set out in the current County Roscommon Local Economic and Community Plan.

Roscommon LEADER Partnership focuses on assessing areas of real need and we have given some examples below of this work. We are very proactive in terms of delivering action plans to work on challenges and work with groups and communities to achieve better outcomes.

1. **LEADER Programme** - RLP are responsible for service delivery of the new LEADER programme through the LCDC, I want to emphasise that this is a very important aspect of the work towards supporting viable rural community. However, many more projects are ongoing within Roscommon LEADER to support local communities.
2. **SICAP Funding** – Some examples of projects funded through this stream are outlined below, in developing these projects we firstly Identified where supports were needed for certain groups and communities for example:
  - **Rural Men's Interagency Initiative** active since 2004 – this is a good example of how we are trying to support people who may be isolated, we are being practical about issues we face in rural areas. The men have successfully written and published a book which has been written by the men themselves; self-confidence and socialization are very evident from their involvement in the groups. This project needs enhanced resources and has even greater potential to support a larger number of people within rural areas. There is also a clear need from a demographics perspective within County Roscommon for increased support for this project.
  - **Roscommon Age friendly strategy** – RLP are leading the delivery of many of the actions identified under the action plan such as the trusted tradesmen initiative, small scale household repair & friendship scheme and the facilitation of Co. Roscommon Older People's Council development and associated programme of activities.
  - RLP completed a pilot training programme called '**Agriculture Digital Skills for Farm Families**' this programme is about identifying practical challenges for farmers and the need for technological support. RLP has a close team working with various agencies e.g. Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, BOI, IFA, ICA, ICMSA and Roscommon County Council etc. RLP held a launch last week to expand the programme.

- **Frenchpark Integrated Youth & Community space** – Integrated one stop shop where the services (Tusla, HSE & Foroige) will be located centrally within the community and will run their services based in the community & youth space servicing the needs identified in the community.
- **Community Resource Centre Ballaghaderreen** – Integrated Services provision within the community where the SICAP programme is the enabler of many programmes such as the Department of Social Protection jobs club, EU LEADER programme, EU Erasmus + programmes, mental health association activities, lakes & legends tourism initiative and local older peoples' day care service development.
- **Third Level Participation & Graduate Retention project** - provision of a networking & opportunities platform for graduates linking with employers and third level Institutes.

### 3. ERASMUS EU + Programme

In order to achieve the objectives identified under the County Roscommon Local Community and Economic Plan, RLP with the support of Roscommon County Council and all the projects stakeholders involved have been successful in sourcing EU Erasmus + programme funding for delivering the following community initiatives:

- a. Creative Communities igniting Change
- b. Food Incubators Transforming Regions
- c. Youth Enterprise through Arts
- d. Young Community Mediators
- e. Mainstreaming Student Entrepreneurship

The strengths of these projects are in collaboration with various agencies in order to achieve greater success, be it in terms of leveraging increased grant aid or achieving better outcomes for those involved with spin off to the local communities. The most important aspect is working with local communities in identifying opportunities these projects represent.

#### EXAMPLE: CREATIVE SECTOR

Creative Communities Igniting Change project is working to create entrepreneurial opportunities for people in this area involved in the creative sector or interested in getting involved in the creative sector. This programme will provide a free workspace and free training in Ballaghaderreen for participants taking part.

Using evidence in order to further reach potential in the Creative Sector. We know from the research completed by the Western Development Commission that the creative sector has huge potential for three main reasons - generates high quality employment and is quite labour intensive, secondly, it has strong growth and export potential and thirdly it in many cases is the catalyst for further innovation.

Enable participants in this programme, to develop their creative talent, to transfer their creative capabilities into the business environment, to network with other individuals, other businesses, third level institutions such as GMIT, employment agencies such as the Local Enterprise Office in order to have the best chance at succeeding and turning their creative idea into a successful business.