



Your Ref: S1263 PAC33

Ms. Sarah Cremin,
Committee Secretariat, Committee of Public Account,
Committee of Public Accounts,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2 D02.

Via email

19th April 2023

Re: DRCD information in relation of VFMs in context of Dáil Standing Order 218(2)

Dear Ms. Cremin,

I refer to your letter of 3rd April 2023 which requested information in relation to Value for Money reviews within DRCD, in the context of Dáil Standing Order 218(2).

Since establishment in 2017 the Department has completed an extensive programme of such reviews, mainly using the Department's own evaluation unit resources. The Department puts in place 3 year evaluation strategies, which sets out proposed work areas for the following 3 year period. The first such strategy was adopted for the period 2019-2021 and the current strategy covers the period 2022-2024. These strategies are approved at management board level. The approach in selecting areas to evaluate considers both the resources applied to programmes/schemes and the length of time since a previous evaluation has taken place. The evaluation work has also progressed in the context of work to build wider knowledge and capacity, including through co-operation with the ESRI.

The approach adopted has seen the main expenditure areas of the Department reviewed in recent years, with the findings helping to improve future iterations of schemes. The reviews completed are listed below, and links to all of these reports can be found on the evaluation section of the Department's website <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0a03-programme-evaluation/>. Except where noted the reviews were completed using Departmental resources, mainly the Departments Evaluation Unit which, is staffed with two IGEES members.

- Rural Regeneration & Development Fund (Focused Policy Assessment) – December 2022
- Libraries Development Programme (Focused Policy Assessment) – December 2022
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme (Focused Policy Assessment) – November 2021
- Senior Alert Scheme (Focused Policy Assessment) – October 2021
- Periodic Critical Review of Pobal – September 2021
- Local Improvement Scheme (Focused Policy Assessment) – November 2020
- Evaluation of SICAP pre-employment supports – ESRI, September 2020
- Review of the Community Services Programme – Indecon, February 2020
- Overview of the DNEIC Initiative (Focused Policy Assessment) – October 2019
- LEADER Programme (Midterm Evaluation of RDP 2014-2020) – Indecon, August 2019
- SICAP 2015 – 2017 End of Programme Report, Pobal & DRCD, September 2018
- Review of the Community Facilities Scheme and Rapid – June 2018

Replies to the specific questions detailed in your letter are set out in Appendix 1, and the summary information requested for each evaluation is set out in Appendix 2 of this reply.

I trust this information is as required, however, if there are any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,



Mary Hurley

Secretary General

Appendix 1: Specific queries related to Dáil Standing Order 218(2):

1. Do you have a systematic/cyclical approach to choosing areas/programmes/expenditure to review?
If so, please describe the approach in detail.

Response

Yes. The Department adopts 3 year evaluation plans which select the likely areas for review over the period. The strategies/plans are developed in discussion with all spending units in the Department and prioritise areas of high expenditure and areas for which evaluation has not taken place for some time, or where new schemes have been developed and have reached a point where an evaluation could be of benefit. The evaluation strategies are approved by Management Board. Two strategies have been developed to date, covering 2019-2021 and currently 2022-2024.

2. How and why you choose particular areas/programmes/expenditure to review?

Response

See above - The strategies/plans are developed in discussion with all spending units in the Department and prioritise areas of high expenditure and areas for which evaluation has not taken place for some time, or where new schemes have been developed and have reached a point where an evaluation could be of benefit.

3. Do you have a schedule of planned reviews? If so, covering what period, and at what level is it signed off?

Response

See above – 3 year strategies are put in place and implemented. These are approved by the Management Board.

4. The governance arrangements pertaining to the implementation of the recommendations arising from the reviews.

Response

All reviews are brought to management board prior to publication and the findings and recommendations considered at that meeting. The implementation of recommendations are for the consideration and future work of the specific units delivering the programme/scheme and the appropriate management board member responsible for the area. It should be noted that not all

recommendations prove to be implementable, in particular where recommendations include findings around possible need for increased resources.

5. For each of the reviews for the accounting period under examination by the Committee and the preceding two years:
- details of implementation to date,
 - timelines for implementation.

Response

See detail in tables below.

6. What specific effects have the implementation of the recommendations or conclusions of each review undertaken in the last seven years had in terms of the allocation of funding within the Vote(s)?

Response

The reviews have found both strong support in Government policy, and continued relevance of the schemes reviewed, with findings generally around possible improvements to efficiency and/or effectiveness, and ongoing monitoring of schemes. The reviews have also found strong demand for the schemes in question, with the findings often feeding into Budget discussions. Funding increases have taken place for number of schemes including the rural capital schemes, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, and the Community Services Programme.

The review of RAPID and the Community Facilities Scheme resulted in the amalgamation of this funding under the B.11 subhead, which was subsequently renamed as 'B.11 Community Enhancement Programme'. This allowed for a more effective method of providing grants to small community groups

7. In accordance with [section 19](#) of the Comptroller and Auditor General Act 1993, any other evidence you might wish to provide as to:

“(b) the economy and efficiency of the Department in the use of its resources,

(c) the systems, procedures and practices employed by the Department for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of its operations”.

Response

As noted in material provided to the Committee in advance of the DRCD's appearance on 30th March, the Department has robust controls in place to ensure spend in areas occurs appropriately. This includes an internal audit function, an independent audit committee, and an inspection and compliance unit which carries out inspections of completed projects, and in some cases inspections prior to payment, where appropriate.

The Department also requests case studies on many projects which, although often qualitative, do provide useful information in terms of the outcomes and impacts of investment and the types of projects delivered under each scheme.

It should also be noted that many schemes, including the LEADER programme, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and the Community Services Programme each have very extensive metrics which are monitored on an annual basis and which provide assurance that the schemes are achieving what they set out to do.

Finally, it is also worth noting that as part of the budgetary process each year the Department does consider where existing resources may be more usefully deployed, as part of the discussion on proposed budget priorities.

8. Any other information that you, in your capacity as Accounting Officer, might wish to add to assist the Committee in forming a view as to whether you can demonstrate VFM in the context of Standing Order 218(2).

Response

The wider controls in place across the Department, in particular the internal audit function, and the inspection and compliance unit, contribute to ensuring appropriate use of funds and that value for money is obtained from voted allocations. It is also worth noting that the reviews identified here considered circa 70% of Departmental funding, which demonstrates the strong focus of the Department on critically analyzing expenditure and seeking to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of that expenditure.

Appendix 2

1. VFM Information: Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Focused policy assessment of the RRDF | Type of review: | Focused Policy Assessment |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Covered 2019-2022 – published in December 2022 | Authored by: | DRCD Evaluation Unit |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | RRDF established in 2018 as part of NPF/NDP. | Started: | Jan 2022 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | REV provision of circa €60m per annum | Completed: | Dec 2022 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 16% of total Dept budget in 2022. | Expenditure type: | Capital |
| Programme line(s): | Rural Development | Relevant subhead(s): | A.7 RRD – main scheme operating under this subhead along with Town and Village Renewal & ORIS. |
| % of total programme expenditure: | Circa 30% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The review considered the operation of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) from establishment to October 2022, analyzing the investment approved and setting out recommendations for the future operation of the fund. |
| Findings | A short executive summary, along with a one page summary table, is provided in the published report. Key findings/recommendations include (i) having a longer term outlook on funding calls to allow applicants time to develop best possible projects; (ii) work to build capacity and networks amongst relevant bodies delivering projects, (iii) work to generate projects of greater scale and scope, and (iv) ensure a continued focus on measuring and understanding the impacts of this investment in terms of socio-economic benefits. |
| Actions taken: | Review only published in December 2022 and so implementation of recommendations at early stage. Progress made in latest round of approvals in terms of generating projects of greater scale. Timelines for future calls also reflect findings of the review with longer periods between planned future calls to allow for better planning at local level. Work on other findings/recommendations generally for medium term implementation and will require ongoing work. |

2. VFM Information: Libraries Development Programme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Focussed policy assessment of the Libraries Development Programme | Type of review: | Focused Policy Assessment/Spending Review Paper |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Covered 2019-2022 – published in December 2022 | Authored by: | DRCD Evaluation Unit |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | no | Started: | Jan 2022 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Circa €7.73 million per annum | Completed: | Dec 2022 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 2% | Expenditure type: | Current (€1.1m) and Capital (€6.6m). |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development | Relevant subhead(s): | B.10 Library Development and Archive Service |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 5% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The work examined the range of library funding supports provided by DRCD, with a view to improving understanding of the investment in the context of all libraries funding (including local authority own resources) and identifying potential operational improvements to the investment area. |
| Findings | The report itself provides a detailed synopsis of the findings and recommendations. There were two key recommendation, (i) ensuring alignment of future funding with policy objectives of the forthcoming libraries strategy, and (ii) working to improve measurement of the outcomes and impacts of the funding. |

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| Actions taken: | <p>In relation to the above recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="574 260 1438 457">(1) The call for proposals under the Library Capital Programme issued in April 2023 requires a clear alignment between the new capital proposals submitted and the forthcoming Library Development Strategy. This is also reflected in the scoring schema for the programme. Current funding provided through the vote is aligned with initiatives that are identified in the library strategy<li data-bbox="574 491 1438 653">(2) The specification for proposals under the new Library Capital Programme includes a requirement for local authorities to provide specific results and impact data for each project submitted. The quality of this data is also taken into account in the scoring schema for the programme. |
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3. VFM Information: Town and Village Renewal Scheme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Focused Policy Assessment of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme | Type of review: | Focused Policy Assessment |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | 2016 – 2020 inclusive Review published November 2021 | Authored by: | DRCD Evaluation Unit |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | No – scheme commenced in 2016. | Started: | November 2020 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Circa €20m per annum | Completed: | October 2021 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 5% | Expenditure type: | Capital |
| Programme line(s): | Rural Development Programme | Relevant subhead(s): | A.7 Rural Regeneration and Development |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 10% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The review examined the Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) with a view to identifying potential operational improvements to the Scheme. |
| Findings | The recommendations related to seeking to ensure more stability in scheme priorities from year to year; conveying how the scheme can support wider regeneration developments; giving further consideration to the scheme criteria in the context of complementarity with other DRCD schemes; improving the data and information gathered including relating to the outcomes of the scheme. |
| Actions taken: | The Review had Four recommendations: 1: Conveying how the scheme can support wider regeneration developments; Following an internal review focus is being given to broadly-based engagement with stakeholders in order to support planning of investment and programme delivery under the schemes designed to support wider regeneration developments, including the TVRS. |

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| | <p>2: Further Consideration of Scheme Criteria; each year the priorities and criteria of the scheme are reviewed in order to respond to the changing landscape, and to respond to such events as the Covid 19 Pandemic.</p> <p>3: Improvements on Data gathering; the Department is currently developing a bespoke IT system that will create a central repository for all scheme data and information gathered by each scheme in the Department, which will be available to all Units to understand the outcomes of the projects under each scheme within the Department.</p> <p>4: Improvements to measure outcomes of the scheme; The TVRS unit now requires a case study on completion of each project, and is engaging with LAs directly on how to improve the process to provide better outcomes.</p> |
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4. VFM Information – Senior Alert Scheme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Focused Policy Assessment of the Senior Alert Scheme | Type of review: | Focused Policy Assessment/Spending Review Paper |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Covered 2017-2021 information. | Authored by: | DRCD Evaluation Unit |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | Yes - | Started: | November 2020 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Circa €5.3m per annum. | Completed: | October 2021 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 1.5% | Expenditure type: | Current |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development | Relevant subhead(s): | B.3 Supports for C&V Sector and B.7 Dormant Accounts Fund |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 3% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The purpose of the evaluation was to improve the understanding of how the scheme operates, the level of demand for the schemes, and make recommendation on the future operation of the scheme. |
| Findings | Three main recommendations focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving parts of the delivery model to address matters such as take up in certain area and improving re-installation of scheme equipment respectively. Recommendations relating to measurement and reporting. Sustainability of the funding model, both in terms of the stability of the sources of funding, and financing increased demand into the future. |
| Actions taken: | Actions taken include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing procedures for the return of equipment reiterated, by raising awareness and re-engaging with local community organisations on the matter. As part of the new iteration of the scheme, service providers are required to make test calls to users every month. This will help |

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| | <p>improve understanding of the number of active users on the scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A publicity campaign is being planned to target areas of low take up.• The current version of the scheme came into effect in September 2021 and introduced a new key feature in the additional option of a digital alarm, for use with web based connections. This will allow more participants to avail of the scheme. |
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5. VFM Information – Periodic Critical Review of Pobal

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Periodic Critical Review of Pobal | Type of review: | Periodic Critical Review as part of agency governance |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | 2020 and earlier periods | Authored by: | DRCD |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | n/a | Started: | Mid 2020 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Total funding to Pobal from DRCD in 2022 was €92.5m. Review was not funding specific and focused on wider governance of the agency, which also delivers for other Departments. | Completed: | September 2021 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | Not applicable | Expenditure type: | Mainly current with some small capital elements. |
| Programme line(s): | Pobal delivers mainly for Programme B – Community Development | Relevant subhead(s): | Not applicable as Pobal delivery cuts across areas and is not sub-head specific |
| % of total programme expenditure: | Pobal in receipt of €92.5m in 2022 – 24% of total DRCD budget | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | N/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | As required under the terms of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) ('The Code'), the review focussed on the ongoing business case for the entity, its performance and efficiency and effectiveness, and its governance arrangements. |
| Findings | <p>The findings within the PCR can generally be classified in the low to medium range.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The flavour of the recommendations in relation to Pobal's operating environment range from a consideration of the suitability of the existing Memorandum and Articles of the Company, the Company's |

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| | <p>charitable status to the need for consistency of governance arrangements across all clients.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of the organisational capacity, and given the recent acceleration in the growth of the company, Pobal is being asked to consider an on-going executive structures review, ensuring that clear Terms of Reference and roles and responsibilities should emerge for all Board and Executive structures. • In relation to Organisational Performance, overall, there is a level of satisfaction among Government Departments in relation to the service provided to them by Pobal. Challenges remain in certain respects, particularly around the area of customer service and ICT. Pobal is being encouraged to actively engage with the stakeholders to build positive relationships and to provide good quality ongoing training to staff in the relevant schemes, programmes and in customer service to ensure that the level of support required is delivered on a consistent basis. |
| <p><i>Actions taken:</i></p> | <p>Pobal has confirmed that the majority of actions from the PCR (outlined above) are completed or nearing completion. Any remaining actions will be mainstreamed into 2023 strategic plan delivery. A final report on the response to the PCR recommendations is to be sent to the Department during Quarter 2 2023.</p> |

6. VFM Information – Local Improvement Scheme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Focused Policy Assessment of the Local Improvement Scheme | Type of review: | Focused Policy Assessment |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Considered long term trends but mainly 2017-2021 | Authored by: | DRCD Evaluation Unit |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | nil | Started: | November 2019 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Up to €22m per annum | Completed: | November 2020 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 6% | Expenditure type: | Capital |
| Programme line(s): | Programme A: Rural Development | Relevant subhead(s): | A.4 Rural Supports |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 10% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The objective of the review was to assist with improving the understanding of the scheme, and informing the future operation of the scheme, in particular in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. |
| Findings | The key findings/recommendations were around (i) seeking to have more stability in terms of annual funding levels for the scheme; (ii) considering changes to terms and conditions which could bring more consistency to cost/funding per km for projects across all local authorities; (iii) seeking to better understand overall level of demand for the schemes within each local authority and in aggregate. |
| Actions taken: | <p>Work has concluded with an LGMA working group on recommendations made under the Focussed Policy Assessment. These include the desirability of ensuring funding stability for LIS, better managing cost variations by introducing maximum contributions (cost/km), a tiered approach to local contributions, improved data collection and efforts to estimate the extent of the non-public road network.</p> <p>The working group have now submitted their report and the 2023 Scheme Outline will be updated to reflect these, the main salient points are;</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cap on individual road projects – no one project will be in excess of 20% of the total allocation to a Local Authority. The existing 25% cap on use of funding for amenity roads to remain.• No individual LIS project should be prioritised for additional funding within a 3-5 year period, unless expressly agreed with the Department in the case of exceptional need.• Local Authorities required to certify that before and after geo-coded photographs are available before funds are drawn down. This will bring LIS requirements in line with other rural schemes. <p>Separately, the DRCD has engaged with Local Authorities to better understand overall level of demand for the scheme within each local authority and in total.</p> |
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7. VFM Information –SICAP

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Evaluation of SICAP pre-employment supports | Type of review: | Review considering sub-element of the wider SICAP programme |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | 2017 to 2019 | Authored by: | ESRI |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | VPM 12 - Review of SICAP 2015-2017 | Started: | 2019 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | See VFM 11 regarding SICAP. Pre-employment supports are one element of the SICAP programme. | Completed: | September 2020 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | As above | Expenditure type: | Current |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development Programme | Relevant subhead(s): | B.4 SICAP & other local/regional development supports |
| % of total programme expenditure: | As above. | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | <p>The study's five key objectives were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore the role played by SICAP in assisting those who are further away from the labour market; • provide a detailed profile of individuals participating in pre-employment programmes/initiatives; • provide a counterfactual assessment of the impact of the pre-employment programmes/initiatives in assisting individuals who are further from the labour market to employment and further study/training; • analyse the routes through which individuals access the pre-employment programmes/initiatives; |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access the experiences of programme participants. |
| <i>Findings</i> | <p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobseekers who engaged with SICAP employment supports in 2018 were approximately 18 percentage points more likely to have progressed into employment or self-employment after 3 to 6 months than similar individuals who had not received such supports. These supports were particularly effective in boosting involvement in self-employment. • One-to-one employment supports were found to be key drivers of programme success. These tailored supports covered a range of activities, for example, encouragement, mentoring, job search assistance, CV preparation, and facilitating help in the areas of literacy and mental health, aiding participants to overcome a wide range of practical barriers to employment and self-employment. • SICAP employment supports were found to have distinctive features enhancing their work with more marginalised groups, including flexibility, a holistic approach, staff skills and links with other providers/services. The nature of overall provision is heavily client-led and strongly informed by the kinds of employment available locally. • SICAP beneficiaries interviewed were very positive about the assistance they received, valuing both the one-to-one support and the courses provided. All described a trajectory from low self-confidence to a renewed ability to engage with courses and/or apply for jobs, a pattern they attributed to the ongoing coaching provided by LDC staff |
| <i>Actions taken:</i> | <p>The findings were disseminated to help Local Development Companies further improve their delivery of employment supports under the current iteration of the SICAP programme, which was underway at the time.</p> <p>Also, these learnings are being considered when developing the next iteration of the SICAP programme, which will run from 2024 onwards.</p> |

8. VFM Information – Community Services Programme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Review of the Community Services Programme | Type of review: | Independent review in context of closing one programming period and designing the next Programme |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Covered the programming period 2014-2019 | Authored by: | Indecon Economic Consultants |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | Pre-dates DRCD role in CSP | Started: | 2019 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Annual funding of circa €49m per annum | Completed: | February 2020 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 12% | Expenditure type: | Current |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development | Relevant subhead(s): | B.12 Community Services Programme |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 28% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | <p>The review examined, among other things -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • options for expanding the range of eligible services and participants, • how funding might be provided to a greater number of applicants, • options for restructuring the scheme having regard to the range and scale of organisations supported by the programme, • the scope to refine or expand eligible activities to strengthen synergies with other programmes, and • the types and levels of CSP support. |
| Findings | <p>The final report set out 11 key objectives, which are listed below, and was accompanied by a High Level Action Plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A renewed and clear vision for CSP, which aligns with the Department of Rural and Community Developments mission and strategic objectives, should be articulated and communicated by the Department to all stakeholders. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Existing CSP Programme Strands should be replaced with a number of sub-programmes, focused on key strategic objectives. 3. Separate targets should be set for each sub-Programme area 4. Rates of funding and eligibility criteria should be tailored to reflect variance in each sub-head programme area. 5. For projects focused on enhancing social inclusion and support for sustainable communities, resource prioritisation should be informed by levels of social disadvantage. 6. A streamlined application process is recommended. 7. Facilitation of investment in skills should be integrated into the new Programme. 8. The Department of Rural and Community Development should explore the scope for alternative approaches to supporting specific areas. 9. A percentage of overall annual funding should be allocated to facilitate a periodic call for proposals. 10. Significant enhancements are recommended to support monitoring and evaluation. 11. New performance indicators should be set. |
| <p>Actions taken:</p> | <p>The Department and Pobal have undertaken significant work on the restructuring of the programme, in consultation with a Consultative Group.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a new vision for the programme and re-defined sub-programme objectives • A differentiated funding rate allocation model was designed and is in place since January 2023. Under this model, the level of funding provided to supported positions takes account of the level of disadvantage in the community served, the percentage of positions filled by employees from the designated target groups and the income earning capacity of the organisations. This new model will ensure enhanced value for money and will further reduce deadweight investment • An open Call for Organisations was announced in March 2023. Applications are being accepted under 2 strands: Strand 1- <i>Organisations operating in the circular economy which are owned and led by traveller organisations and/or provide employment primarily to members of the traveller community</i> Strand 2- <i>Demonstrate their proposal meets one or more of the CSP strategic objectives and the horizontal principles of the programme</i> <p>Further work on additional aspects eg monitoring and evaluation and development of a new ICT system is continuing in 2023.</p> |

9. VFM Information – Dublin North East Inner City Initiative

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Overview of the Dublin North East Inner City Initiative | Type of review: | Focused Policy Assessment/Spending Review |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Considered period since funding commenced (i.e. 2016/17) to 2019 | Authored by: | DRCD Evaluation Unit |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | Not applicable | Started: | Jan 2019 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Circa €6.5m per annum | Completed: | October 2019 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 2% | Expenditure type: | Current and capital with split depending on needs identified by oversight group. |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development | Relevant subhead(s): | B.6 Supports for Disadvantaged Communities |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 4% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The purpose of the review was to present a high level overview and initial consideration of the Dublin North East Inner City (NEIC) initiative. The aim of the initiative is to support the long term social and economic regeneration of the NEIC area. Given the wide range of outputs of the initiative, the review focused on a case study of the Pilot Social Employment Programme (PSEP) which aims to support the delivery of childcare, youth-work, eldercare and environmental services in the area |
| Findings | The review noted the integrated approach to community supports that is in place under the initiative. It highlighted the progress being made across key areas for action (tackling crime and drugs, improving the physical landscape, etc.) through the implementation of a wide range of projects. |

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| Actions taken: | This work continues to be funded by DRCD, with oversight from the Department of the Taoiseach, with an NEIC Strategic Plan put in place which covers the period 2020 to 2023. |
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10. VFM Information – LEADER Programme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Mid-term evaluation of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 | Type of review: | Review commission by DAFM on wider RDP of which LEADER programme is one element. |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | Considered programme delivery over the programming period | Authored by: | Indecon Economic Consultants |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | Ex-post evaluation of RDP 2007 - 2013 completed Jan 2017 | Started: | 2019 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | DRCD expenditure of circa €50m per annum on average over recent years | Completed: | August 2019 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 13% | Expenditure type: | Capital |
| Programme line(s): | Programme A: Rural Development | Relevant subhead(s): | A.5 LEADER |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 25% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The report concerns the mid-term evaluation of Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) (2014-2020). The EU Regulations, which govern the RDP, require that a review be carried out on each Member State's programme. The LEADER measure is a component of the RDP and it aims to foster local development in rural areas. |
| Findings | <p>The review noted that Ireland's Rural Development Programme had an objective of promoting balanced regional development and this was supported by measures such as LEADER. Survey data collected from beneficiaries indicated that 77% believed that they would not have been able to secure alternative funding without LEADER support.</p> <p>In addition over 600 jobs were sustained by LEADER at end of 2018, as well as over 6,600 young people participated in rural youth projects supported by LEADER.</p> |

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| | The report outlined that it was expected that project approvals would ramp up considerably in 2019 and 2020. |
| Actions taken: | <p>The LEADER programme effectively commenced in the second half of 2016, following the signing of Funding Agreements with most of the LAGs. In 2017, following consultations with the LAGs, DRCD introduced 31 actions to improve the programme. This package included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a significant reduction in the number of checks that are carried out on project applications; • a standardised application form to assist applicants and streamline the approval process; and, • a revised and clarified procurement arrangements. <p>A number of additional changes, over and above the package of 31 actions were also introduced to further simplify the project approvals process.</p> |

11. VFM Information – SICAP Programme

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | End of Programme Report for SICAP 2015-2017 | Type of review: | Review of the programme in context of designing next programming period. |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | 2015-2017 | Authored by: | Pobal/DRCD |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | n/a | Started: | 2017 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Annual Funding of circa €44m per annum. | Completed: | September 2018 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 12% | Expenditure type: | Current |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development Programme | Relevant subhead(s): | B.4 SICAP & other local/regional development supports |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 26% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The report presented the summary of SICAP programme achievements and outlined experiences related to programme implementation over its lifecycle (2015-2017). |
| Findings | The review noted that over the lifetime of the programme, SICAP supported 110,044 individuals on a one-to-one basis and 5,028 Local Community Groups (LCGs). The review also highlighted improvements for the next iteration of the programme, as outlined below. |
| Actions taken: | <p>The design of the new SICAP programme was tailored to take into account feedback received through this review.</p> <p>The following key changes were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer funding commitment – the current programme cycle is for a longer six year period. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction to having two Goals (Goal 1: Supporting communities and Goal 2: Supporting individuals).• A simplified registration process.• More target groups to ensure better coverage and greater access for marginalised people.• Grants to support local community groups and individuals.• Greater focus on quality community development and more intensive engagement.• Fewer headline indicators and targets.• Measurement of the barriers that SICAP clients face.• The age limit has been removed to allow people of all ages to avail of SICAP supports.• A new specialised SICAP tool to measure personal progression has been designed. |
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12. VFM Information – Community Facilities Scheme & RAPID

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| Title of ex-post review of expenditure | Review of Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development programme and the Communities Facilities Scheme | Type of review: | Review two schemes to determine if improvements should be made prior to a new launch in 2018. This review was carried out to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the schemes. |
| Accounting period(s) to which it relates: | 2017 - 2018 | Authored by: | DRCD |
| Related review(s) previously undertaken: | Value for Money & Policy Review of Clár and Rapid Leveraged Expenditure Approach (2011) | Started: | February 2018 |
| Quantum of expenditure covered by review: | Circa €4.5m per annum | Completed: | June 2018 |
| % of total voted expenditure covered by review: | 1.9% | Expenditure type: | Capital |
| Programme line(s): | Programme B: Community Development Programme | Relevant subhead(s): | B.6 RAPID & B.11 Community Facilities Fund |
| % of total programme expenditure: | 3.4% | If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number: | n/a |

VFM details

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| Objectives: | The review of RAPID and CFS was carried out to determine if improvements should be made prior to a new launch in 2018. This review was carried out to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the schemes. |
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| <i>Findings</i> | The Department has decided that the schemes be amalgamated under a new name – Community Enhancement Programme. The Department decided to review relevant scheme documentation and incorporated suggested improvements where feasible. |
| <i>Actions taken:</i> | In 2018, the Department merged the RAPID and CFS under a combined scheme titled – Community Enhancement Programme. Practical improvements were made to the process including a simplified application form and more clear and concise guidelines |