



cetb

Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Chorcaí

*Cork Education and
Training Board*

Strategy Statement

2022 - 2026

A PATHWAY FOR EVERY LEARNER

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CNS	Community National Schools
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DoE	Department of Education
ETB	Education and Training Board
FET	Further Education and Training
ICT	Information Communications Technology
Learners	Individuals who are engaged in the education and training provision across all Cork ETB services
MTU	Munster Technological University
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Stakeholders	Bodies with whom Cork ETB engages with for the resourcing, development and provision of education / training courses and/or services
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UCC	University College Cork
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VLEs	Virtual Learning environments
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
WSE-MLL	Whole School Evaluation of Management, Leadership and Learning



Message from the Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive of Cork Education and Training Board

It is with great honour that we jointly present Cork ETB's Strategy Statement 2022 to 2026. This Strategy Statement sets out the vision, mission, values, goals and objectives of Cork ETB.

Cork Education and Training Board was established under the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013 with responsibility to provide education and training across a broad range of services in the Cork City and Cork County Councils' local authority areas.

Since its establishment Cork Education and Training Board has evolved and grown into its role as a key stakeholder in Cork for the provision of a broad range of education and training services. The development of this Strategy Statement has given stakeholders and staff an opportunity to reflect on where we have come from and to identify values, mission and priorities which define the future path for the organisation.

These priorities and objectives are of equal importance and are to support Cork ETB in achieving its vision and mission. We are confident that by following the pathway identified through extensive consultation that Cork ETB remains relevant, responsive and will continue to evolve as an education and training provider of choice for the Cork region.

Finally, thank you to all who have contributed to the development of the Strategy Statement. Your input is invaluable in ensuring our values are reflective of our culture, that our priorities support the continued growth of Cork Education and Training Board. The quality of the engagement ensures that this Strategy Statement places Cork Education and Training Board in a pivotal position to respond positively to an everchanging environment at local, national and international level.



Cllr. Patrick Gerard Murphy

Cathaoirleach,
Cork Education and Training Board



Denis Leamy

Chief Executive,
Cork Education and Training Board



Profile of Cork Education and Training Board

Cork Education and Training Board (hereinafter referred to as Cork ETB) was established under the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013 and is responsible and accountable for the proper direction and control of its functions in the Cork City and Cork County Councils' local authority areas.

The Education and Training Boards Act sets out a wide range of statutory functions for the Boards, including the option available to the Minister for Education of assigning additional specific responsibilities to a Board or Boards, as required.

As the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion and delivery of quality education and training in Cork, active participation on various boards ensures Cork ETB contributes positively to the development of Cork as a City and County of Learning with a strong economic and societal future ahead. This is further enhanced through active collaboration with many stakeholders such as Department of Education, DFHERIS, SOLAS, MTU, UCC, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Cork Chamber, Partnerships Boards, Local Community Development Committees, UNESCO, OECD Local Employment and Economic Development Forum.

Cork ETB is committed to all aspects of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with particular focus on Goal 4, the provision of quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning for all, and will carry out a number of initiatives, in collaboration with other educational institutions and local authorities in Cork to raise the profile of lifelong learning and Cork as a City and County of Learning.

To support lifelong learning and to ensure our learners are provided with a range of options

that are equality based with a focus on the provision of excellent teaching and learning, Cork ETB delivers of a wide and varied suite of education and training services, including but not limited to:

- Community National Schools (Primary Education)
- Post-Primary Schools and Colleges
- Further Education Colleges (Post Leaving Certificate)
- Training Services
- Adult and Community Education services
- Youth Services
- Creche Services
- Outdoor Education Services

The services provided bring challenges to the organisation when combined with the number of learners and stakeholders to whom we provide services and the diversity of what the expectations are in respect of outcomes.

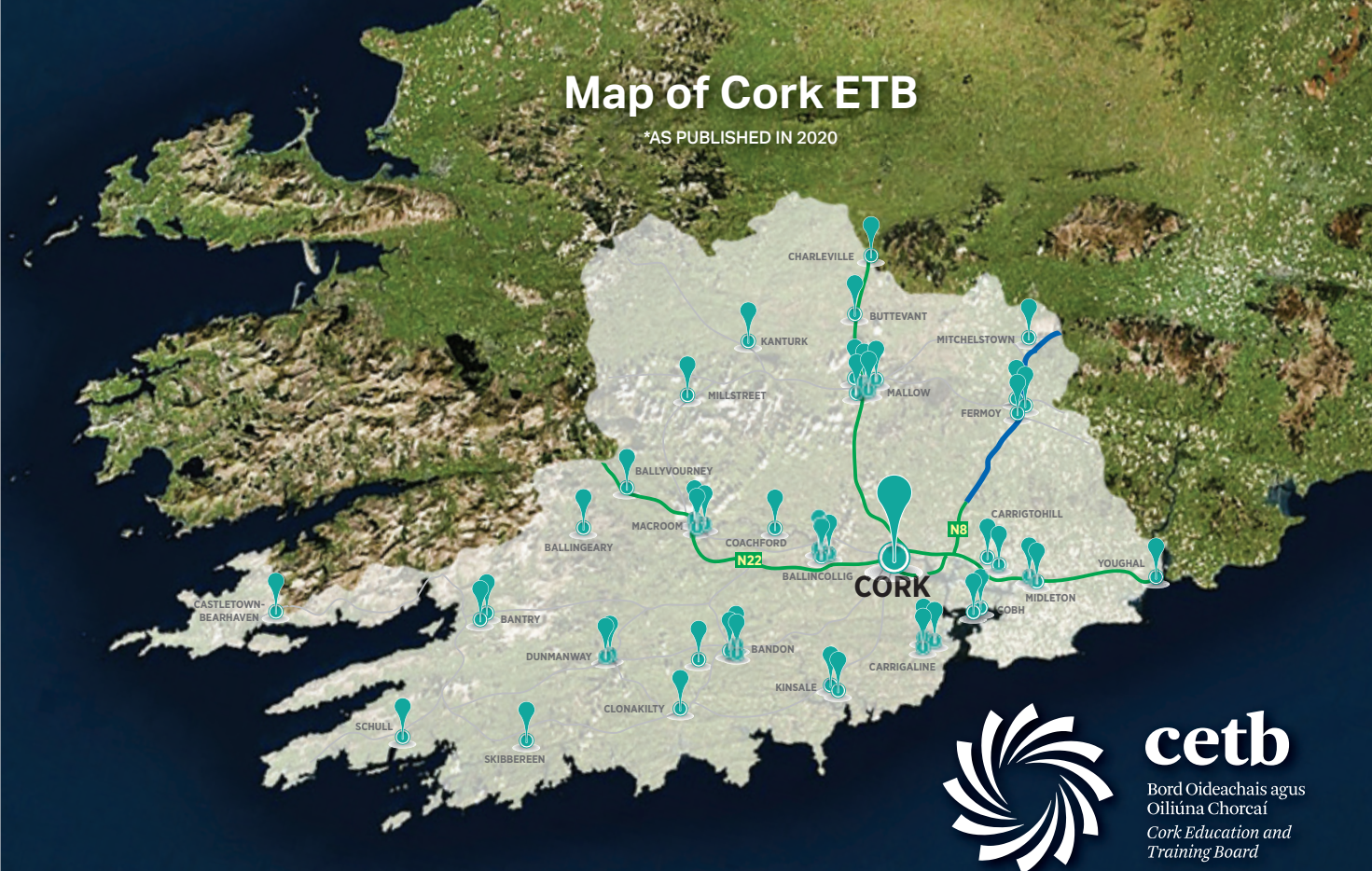
Cork ETB is one of the largest education providers in Cork, catering for 25,791 learners in 2020, across its Primary, Post Primary and Further Education and Training Services. The total staff complement of Cork ETB is 3,500 making it one of the largest employers in the region.

Cork ETB, through its engagement with the Department of Education, ensures the delivery of a broad-based curriculum to ensure our students progress from Primary and Post Primary with a high quality, well-grounded, value-based education which is based on the principle of equal opportunity for every child.

Cork ETB actively collaborates with SOLAS in the development of strategic goals to promote

Map of Cork ETB

*AS PUBLISHED IN 2020



Further Education and Training as the vehicle for development and upskilling, through the provision of specialised courses, traineeships, apprenticeships, literacy and community-based education, by which people of any age or background can progress to higher education or within the world of work.

Empowering our learners to reach their potential through focused teaching and learning is at the core of what our schools, colleges and centres do. However, we strive for this in an environment that is supportive and nourishing of all aspects of the learners' personal development to ensure

they are equipped with the skills, knowledge and resilience to follow their chosen pathway. The celebration of individual achievement is central to this development.

Cork ETB delivers a range of supports to our education and training provision including financial, human resource, estates, ICT, corporate services, governance support as well as educational planning support.

Information on the full range of education and training provision is available on Cork ETBs website.

The Cork Context

Population

Cork is the largest County in Ireland, covering over 7,500 square kilometres, and stretching over 20km from the most Westerly point in the County to the border with Waterford County in the East. The 2016 Census indicated a population for Cork County of 542,868 (Central Statistics Office). Of this population, 124,391 resided in Cork City, the second most populous city in the state. In 2019, following a significant consultation process, Cork City’s boundaries were extended. The boundary change took place on 31st May of that year, at which time the land area of the city area increased from 39km² to 187km², and the population within the city boundary increased to approximately 210,000.

The population is widely and non-uniformly dispersed across the region. Within the greater Cork Metropolitan area are situated the major urban towns of Carrigaline, Midleton and Cobh, each with populations in excess of 12,000 individuals, with Mallow and Fermoy located within 35 kilometres of Cork City having population of over 12,000 and 6,000 respectively.

COUNTY TOWNS	POPULATION
Ballincollig	18,621
Carrigaline	15,770
Cobh	12,800
Midleton	12,496
Mallow	12,459
Youghal	7,963
Bandon	6,957
Fermoy	6,585
Blarney & Tower	6,014
Passage West	5,843
Kinsale	5,281
Carrigtwohill	5,080
Clonakilty	4,592

West Cork is generally considered a distinct area or region within the county as a whole, with large population concentrations in Bandon, Kinsale, Clonakilty, Bantry, Skibbereen and Castletownbere.

The population in the East and North East of the county is more dispersed, with Youghal in the east, and Mitchelstown in the north east, the most populous towns.

Just over 91% of the county population at the last census indicated that they were born in or were a citizen of Ireland or the United Kingdom (88.8 and 2.6% respectively). Almost 11% indicated that they spoke another language besides English, with Polish and French being the most common other languages spoken. 15.3% of the speakers of other languages indicated that they had either only basic English language skills, or none at all.

Educational Attainment

The 2016 CSO census figures show that 28% of the population of the County were 18 years old or younger, with 24% being 15 years or younger. Almost 13% of the population were 65 years old or over. 26% of the population aged 15 or over were indicated as having a level of education at lower secondary level or below. The number of people who had completed third level education was just slightly lower than the national average of 42% at 41%.

Employment

14.6% of employment in the state (Q4, 2019) resides in the South West Region.¹ The largest economic sectors for employment include manufacturing (pharmaceutical, biopharma, medical devices) as well as information and communications technology (hardware and services), food and drink processing, internationally traded services, tourism, marine activity, mariculture, forestry and agriculture. The service sector, in particular health and care related services, also features strongly in the region.

Economic activity in the region is not only through a large foreign multinational base but rather through predominantly micro, small, and medium enterprises. Cork has over one-third (35%) of all SME's in the Southern Region (or twice the number of Limerick and Waterford combined). Outside of Dublin, Cork has had the largest number of new business formations nationally (12%), three times that of the next location (Galway, at 4%) which indicates a burgeoning indigenous business ecosystem.

Industrial productivity in the South West is well above that in other regions, at €45,000 compared to €30,000 measured in Gross Added Value (GVA).

Cork has experienced strong employment growth in recent years, and the “Cork 2050 - Realising the Full Potential” submission by the two local authorities identified the potential to generate 120,000 new jobs in the region by 2050, building on five Pillars of Interventions:

- 1. **People – Skills / Research / Education**
- 2. **Economic Conditions – Floorspace / Quality of Life / Housing**
- 3. **Connectivity – ICT / Global Connectivity**
- 4. **Business Development – Innovation / Entrepreneurialism**
- 5. **Organizational – Governance / Promotion and Marketing**

Regional Overview

The Cork Metropolitan Area is viewed as the key contributor to economic growth in the region, and the high level of productivity, which has been maintained for over 20 years, driven by Cork’s export industry sectors, has the potential to contribute significantly to economic and employment growth in the greater Munster Region.

Much of the potential future economic development of the region is focused on further development of existing economic sectors, with Financial and Business Services, Fintech, Leisure and Tourism, Technology and Research, and Education identified as sectors that will play a significant role in delivering growth to a broad-based, balanced regional economy.

With its significant manufacturing and export base, the region is more susceptible than others to global economic trends and impacts. Of particular concern at this time is the potential impact of Brexit. For Cork and the Southern Region, the impact on the pharmaceutical industry, which contributes significantly to overall Irish export volumes and values to the UK, is a particular concern. The ESRI have stated that other sectors such as agriculture, and food and beverages, are individually more dependent on exports to the UK and so the impacts could be more severe.

Unemployment in the region stands at 5.7% (Q3 2020), lower than the national rate and down considerably from the 14.8% experienced in 2012. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted significantly on employment in the region, with over 10,000 more people or 3% of the total workforce unemployed at the end of Q3 2020 than in Q1. The sectors that experienced the greatest decline were industry and manufacturing, (-6%) and the hospitality sector (-8%).

While unemployment in the region has generally been less than the national figure, there are marked differences across the region. In Cork City there are 5 Electoral Divisions (EDs) of the 79 nationally to be classified as unemployment blackspots. With a combined unemployment rate of 32.7% (2016) this was more than double the employment rate in the county as a whole at that time. While this figure has decreased somewhat in recent years, these five areas are still significantly disadvantaged, socially, economically, and educationally.



Strategy Development Consultative Process

Our Strategy Statement is the result of a consultation and development process which commenced in January 2021. A Project Team was established to lead and manage all aspects of the process, and a Steering Group with representation from all parts of the organisation was convened to design the goals and objectives in the context of views gathered through the consultation process. Consultation through meetings and surveys was planned with a wide variety of stakeholders.

The consultation process commenced with a review of the most up to date strategic documentation issued by our parent departments, the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. In tandem with this, there were a range of meetings seeking input and engagement from the Board and senior leaders across all areas of delivery and services. Cork ETB appointed an external consultant to conduct the consultation meetings on its behalf. Feedback was also requested from external stakeholders, with an option to meet which was taken up in a number of cases.

A staff consultation was conducted by means of an online survey distributed internally to all staff within the organisation. The consultation process was concluded by a further online survey designed to seek feedback from Boards of Management, parents, learners and the general public. The wide consultation process was designed to ensure that as broad a view as possible was obtained in respect of identifying and refining our goals and objectives and to ensure that the organisation has a clear pathway for development and delivery over the next five years.

The following Stakeholders engaged with the Consultative Process:

- All Learners
- All Parents
- All Staff
- AONTAS
- Commission of the Islands
- Cork Chamber of Commerce
- ETB Board
- ETB Management Groups
- ETBI
- Boards of Management
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- Department of Education
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- General Public
- IBEC
- Local Authorities (City and County)
- Munster Technological University
- NALA
- Prison Service
- QQI
- SHEP
- SOLAS
- The Teaching Council
- University College Cork

 [Learners]	 <div>Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chorcaí Cork Education and Training Board</div>	 <div>Cork County Council Comhairle Contae Chorcaí</div>
 [All Parents]	 [Boards of Management]	 <div>MTU Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan Munster Technological University</div>
 [All Staff]	 <div>An Roinn Leanaí, Chomhionannais, Michumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth</div>	 <div>NALA National Adult Literacy Agency</div>
 <div>AONTAS The Voice of Adult Learning</div>	 <div>An Roinn Oideachais Department of Education</div>	 <div>Seirbhís Phríosúin na hÉireann Irish Prison Service</div>
 <div>CPMR ISLANDS COMMISSION</div>	 <div>An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection</div>	 <div>QQI Quality and Qualifications Ireland Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann</div>
 <div>Cork Chamber Advancing business together</div>	 <div>An Roinn Breisoidéachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science</div>	 <div>SHEP Capacity for Personal & Social Transformation</div>
 [ETB Board]	 [General Public]	 <div>SOLAS learning works</div>
 [ETB Management Groups]	 <div>ibec For Irish Business</div>	 <div>An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta The Teaching Council</div>
 <div>etbi Education and Training Boards Ireland Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Éireann</div>	 <div>Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí Cork City Council</div>	 <div>UCC University College Cork, Ireland Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh</div>

Guiding Principles

Vision, Mission, Strategic Priorities

In developing strategic priorities, Cork ETB gave particular cognisance to the vision and mission of the organisation which was developed through a consultative process with our staff and stakeholders. Our strategic priorities are to further develop our vision and mission statements for the organisation. All aspects of our strategy are underpinned by the guiding principles and values that have been identified by staff and stakeholders as being an integral part of what it means to be a part of Cork ETB and also what Cork ETB is to stand for.

Vision

Cork ETB is a driving force of education and training in Cork, providing high quality services which are innovative, responsive and inclusive.

**Through Cork ETB,
there is a pathway
for every learner.**

Mission

Cork ETB plans, provides, supports and co-ordinates education, training and youth services in Cork to empower our learners and communities to reach their potential by incorporating leading national and international practice in the delivery of learning.

Strategic Priorities

Learning and Teaching
Our Team and Organisation
Communication and Connecting
Supporting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Infrastructure

Cork ETB will always act in the best interests of learners. The following principles and values underpin our strategic thinking, planning, decision making and our everyday actions.

Guiding Principles:

- Prioritising the needs of learners
- Delivering a high quality service
- Acting with professional integrity
- Doing the right thing
- Treating people with dignity and respect
- Being fair, open and accountable
- Ensuring value for money
- Operating to the highest ethical, professional, moral and legal standards.

Values:

BRAVE

COMMITTED

POSITIVE

LEADING

INNOVATIVE

CARING

INCLUSIVE



What our Values Mean

BRAVE



WHAT IT MEANS

We put our learners' needs first and are not afraid to make the hard decisions required to deliver the best possible service.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

- Make the right call
- Push the boundaries to get the best outcome
- Be tenacious in pursuit of improvements for learners
- Support good decisions and change bad ones
- Be happy to explain our decisions
- Stand up for what we believe in
- Advocate for learners and communities

COMMITTED



WHAT IT MEANS

We have a clear vision and purpose with which we are fully engaged and on which we are determined to deliver.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

- Work hard
- Go the extra mile
- Put learners' needs first
- Be persistent
- Be loyal to the organisation
- Support colleagues
- Work as a team member
- Be co-operative
- Have a strong work ethic
- Be focused on getting results

POSITIVE



WHAT IT MEANS

We are optimistic and confident about our opportunities and challenges and believe we can make a positive difference to the lives of the people we serve.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

- Be optimistic
- Respond positively
- Be proactive
- Look for opportunity and act on it
- Embrace change
- Deal with issues promptly
- Be part of the solution

LEADING



WHAT IT MEANS

We expect our people to be leaders - to have a clear vision, take the initiative, and to inspire and motivate learners and colleagues through their example.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

- Have a vision
- Step up to the challenge
- Communicate
- Motivate
- Encourage
- Aspire
- Build trust
- Tell the truth
- Act as a role model
- Be results-oriented
- Drive innovation
- Influence
- Collaborate
- Demonstrate personal integrity

INNOVATIVE



WHAT IT MEANS

We are focused on constant improvement and being at the forefront of change and innovation in education and training.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

- Try new approaches
- Be creative
- Drive change
- Be flexible
- Seek to improve
- Find solutions for problems
- Support new ideas
- Contribute positively to change

CARING



WHAT IT MEANS

We adopt a respectful approach to our learners and staff and strive to ensure that each person using our services reaches his/her potential.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

- Engage with learners and colleagues
- Be genuine
- Be understanding
- Be empathetic
- Acknowledge effort
- Be sensitive
- Look out for colleagues
- Treat people well
- Ask for feedback
- Support those who need it

INCLUSIVE



WHAT IT MEANS

We recognise the diversity of our learners, staff and communities, and strive to actively support their differing needs, remove barriers to engagement and promote a culture which fosters and appreciates this diversity.

WE EXPECT OUR PEOPLE TO:

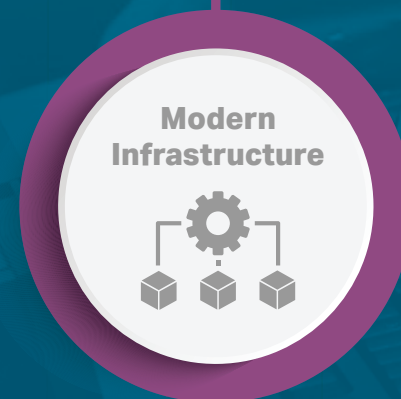
- Listen
- Support preferences
- Recognise the differing needs of the diversity of our communities
- Treat all members of the learning community with dignity and respect
- Provide a safe environment
- Identify barriers
- Take the initiative
- Encourage engagement
- Challenge preconceptions
- Be self-aware

6 Our Strategic Priorities, Goals and Objectives

Strategic Priorities

Our strategic plan contains five primary pillars:

- 01 **Learning and Teaching**
- 02 **Our Team and Organisation**
- 03 **Communicating and Connecting**
- 04 **Supporting Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**
- 05 **Infrastructure**



01. Learning and Teaching

GOAL:

To meet the various requirements and needs of all our learners and other stakeholders we will improve and enhance our education and training provision by:

- ▶ Actively pursuing opportunities in Cork to:
 - (i) increase the number of Community National Schools (CNSs),
 - (ii) enhance Gaelcholáistí provision,
 - (iii) support progression between Cork ETB areas of provision,
 - (iv) develop learning in culture and arts
- ▶ Positioning Cork ETB as the 'partner of choice' for post leaving-cert, adult and community learning, apprenticeship and further education and training
- ▶ Placing Cork ETB's schools as the 'schools of choice' for parents in meeting the educational and developmental needs of their children
- ▶ Researching, adopting and promoting best practice in course/programme design, teaching, learning, assessment and reporting
- ▶ Researching, developing and offering innovative solutions to: (i) address learning needs and (ii) enhance course/programme choice and availability throughout the Cork region
- ▶ Proactively engaging with employers and learners to systematically identify: (i) knowledge/skill needs, (ii) the most suitable pedagogical approaches and (iii) practical/work experience requirements
- ▶ Increasing the use of technology to offer remote and blended learning solutions to those in employment, based remotely or with other access limitations
- ▶ Reorganising courses and programmes to ensure efficiency, value-for-money and the development of specialisms at our major campus locations



02. Our Team and Organisation

GOAL:

In pursuit of operational and educational excellence, we will develop our collective capabilities by:

- ▶ Establishing Cork Education and Training Board as an employer of choice
- ▶ Attracting and retaining high calibre candidates for all positions
- ▶ Identifying routes for career progression, facilitating internal mobility and planning for succession
- ▶ Developing the leadership capacity of our staff through the provision of customised leadership and related supports
- ▶ Systematically identifying and addressing staff training and developmental requirements to consolidate our position as a learning organisation
- ▶ Determining scope for remote working and ensuring equity in the application of objective criteria
- ▶ Periodically reviewing our culture, working environment, team satisfaction and identify scope for enhancement
- ▶ Delivering value-for-money and ensuring effective governance, risk management, probity and responsibility in meeting stakeholder expectations



03. Communicating and Connecting

GOAL:

To enhance inclusive educational participation, we will optimise awareness of the range of our services, opportunities and learning pathways by:



- ▶ Communicating Cork ETB's values
- ▶ Ensuring learner engagement is central to what we do
- ▶ Collaborating with our partners in education, communities and community organisations
- ▶ Continuing to develop our capacity to mainstream the use of Irish as a working language across the organisation
- ▶ Reviewing, developing and enhancing our systems, policies and protocols to ensure the effectiveness of our internal communications
- ▶ Developing an integrated marketing and promotional strategy which defines clear learning pathways and highlights associated value for all learners
- ▶ Developing a resource pack to support all staff in the promotion of our identity, pathways and approach to offering life-long learning opportunities



04. Supporting Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

GOAL:

To promote inclusion and support equality, we will encourage diversity and provide pathways for all internal stakeholders and prospective learners by:



- ▶ Sharing a common understanding of inclusion and diversity within the Cork ETB community
- ▶ Leading and working collaboratively, across communities, to support educational participation, increase student completion and ensure that we offer a pathway for every learner
- ▶ Proactively identifying and addressing obstacles to access, participation and engagement (for both students and staff), while also expanding the supports required to enhance retention rates
- ▶ Designing and developing dedicated Access Programmes (for young people, school leavers and mature students) which are informed by research and best practice
- ▶ Undertaking assessments of our buildings and courses/programmes to ensure that those with a disability are not precluded
- ▶ Working to support and increase diversity amongst and across our staff and learner population



05. Infrastructure

GOAL:

To support our staff and learners, we will ensure that our capacity and infrastructure is modernised and upgraded by:

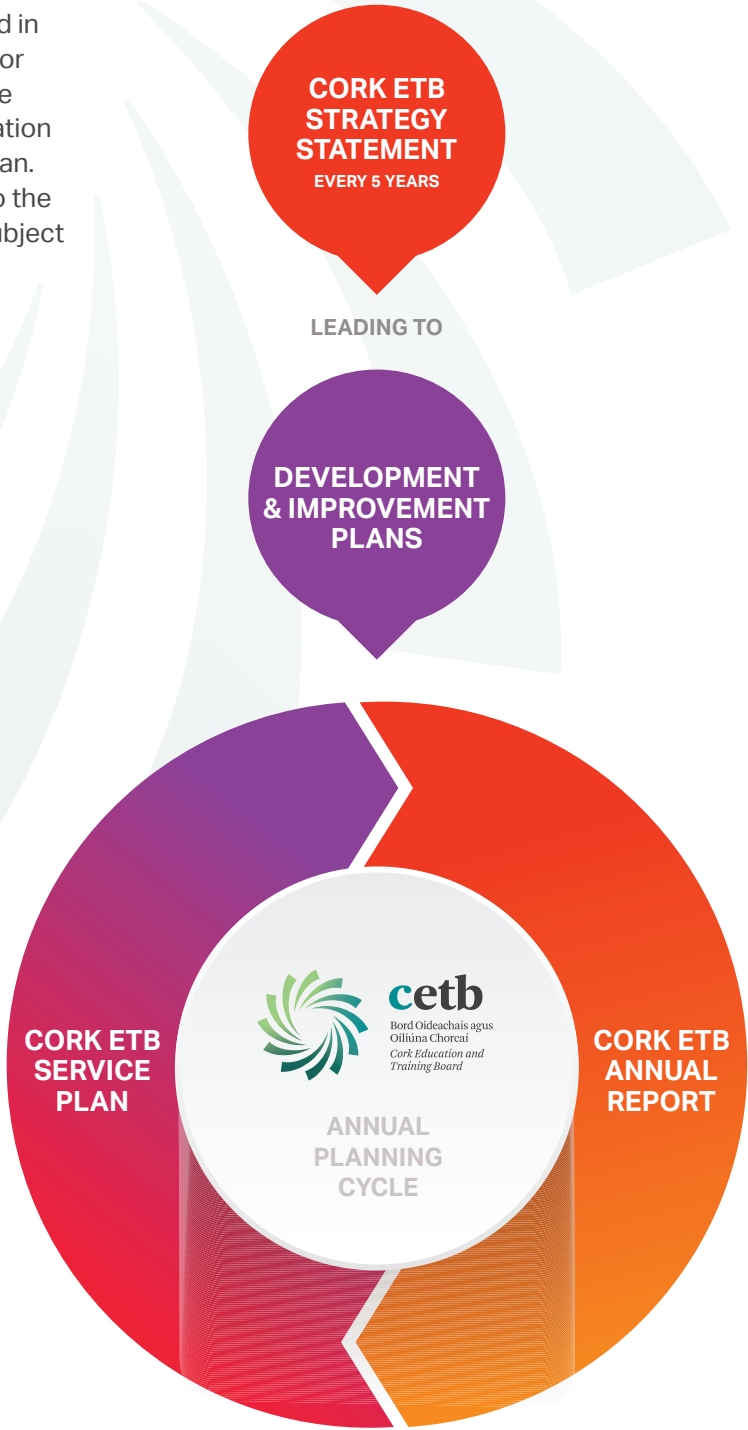
- ▶ Assessing requirements, determining priorities, addressing building and physical infrastructural needs
- ▶ Evaluating ICT investment and the training required to enhance administrative efficiencies and deliver blended learning effectively
- ▶ Securing funding for capital and ICT investment to address identified priorities and Cork ETB infrastructural development needs
- ▶ Incorporating and applying sustainability principles and initiatives
- ▶ Developing our own knowledge, capability and capacity to support, design and plan capital projects



Implementation

The priorities, goals and objectives outlined in the strategy statement will form the basis for implementation plans for each strand of the organisation. Actions from the implementation plans will form part of the annual service plan. While the organisation is fully committed to the five-year Strategy, it's implementation is subject to the availability of resources.

The figure opposite shows the relationship between the overarching strategy and the actions for each part of the organisation.



APPENDIX 1

National and European Context

Education and Training Landscape in Ireland

LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

The Education and Training landscape has changed significantly in the last 10 years, with the establishment of QQI, SOLAS, Education and Training Boards, Education and Training Boards Ireland and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 established ETBs as statutory agencies operating under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills, providing education and training locally in accordance with government policy and strategy, while having the flexibility to cater to local education and training needs. ETBs have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate community national schools, second-level schools, further education colleges, and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes.

Under the Further Education and Training Act 2013, SOLAS was established as a statutory agency, with responsibility for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring further education and training (FET) provision and ensuring that it is responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a changing economy.

The Department of Education has become the Department of Education with the establishment of a new department, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science bringing together the further and higher education sectors.

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) was established as a state agency under the Quality Assurance and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI's mission is to sustain public confidence in the quality of education and training, promote trust in the National Framework of Qualifications and drives a culture of continuous improvement by education and training providers. QQI is responsible for making awards and setting standards for awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. QQI also validates education and training programmes in the Further Education and Training sector including those provided by Education and Training Boards and establishes statutory quality assurance guidelines for Education and Training Boards. These guidelines are applicable to ETBs and to any relevant education or training institution established and maintained by an ETB.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

In a national context, Education and Training Boards play an important role to the realisation of government policy around innovation, employment, responding to climate change and in education, and training. The National Skills Strategy 2025 sets out that all education and training providers will place a stronger emphasis on providing skills development opportunities that fit the needs of learners, society, and the economy.

Other national policy initiatives and debates centre around Community National Schools, the implementation of the new junior cycle, the role of the Irish language (Scéim Teanga), the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, the role of ICT in education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), value for money and policy review of youth programmes. At a micro level there are initiatives around new management structures for ETBs, greater levels of employer engagement and stronger relationships with business.

EUROPEAN CONTEXT

There is a strong consensus that education is essential for the economic, social, and political development of Europe. A strong emphasis is placed on the promotion of life-long learning, the implementation of the European Framework for Quality in Education and the development of transversal skills and competencies.

At all levels within Europe, policymakers, teachers, education leaders and managers are focused on enhancing both the quality and capacity of education and training. These policy priorities are emphasised in a variety of reports including Europe 2020, Youth on the Move, New Skills for New Jobs and Towards a Job Rich Recovery. These reports cumulatively emphasise life-long learning and investment in skills. On-going European sectoral social dialogue is fundamental to the development of a sustainable labour market.

There are also significant EU policy initiatives around skill deficits in the workforce, ageing societies, multicultural societies, technological developments, and global competition. Furthermore, debates around life-long learning and mobility remain.

CLIMATE ACTION

One of the greatest global challenges we, and future generations face, is how to address climate change. The impacts of climate change will affect all sectors of society and we all need to consider how Ireland and the Education and Training Board sector can best contribute to the solutions. We have a limited window for real action to ensure that current and future generations can live sustainably in a low carbon and climate resilient world.

The Climate Action Plan (DCCAE, 2019) sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to tackle climate breakdown. In addition to the contribution of the proposals contained in this Plan to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, many of the changes that are required will have positive economic and societal co-benefits, including cleaner air, warmer homes, and a more sustainable economy for the long term. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), climate action must be seen as complementary to other important policy objectives, such as promoting sustainable economic development pathways, improving energy security, and addressing air pollution impacts on human health. For example, a significant shift away from internal combustion engine vehicles in the transport sector, and the retrofitting of existing buildings with electricity-powered heat pump systems, are expected to result in significant improvements in local air quality metrics and health outcomes.



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