**Building a Network of Micro Economies With Imaginative Training and Job Creation Programmes (2013-2016)**

**Dr. Senan Cooke**

**January 2013**

This paper contains two proposals (1) Programme for Economic Self Reliance (PESR**)** on creating jobs in local communities (rural and urban). (2) Realising the Potential of the Unemployed (RPU**)** which is a comprehensive work experience /training programme for the unemployed and the establishment of a new employment model of work and training for life for every person of working age. The two programmes are interdependent.

As government works on a solution for the worst financial crisis in the history of the state there is an urgent need to create new jobs and retrain the unemployed to fill new job vacancies. Economic indicators confirm high unemployment and emigration will remain while the burden of sovereign, bank and personal debt is being addressed. If the government jobs strategy of 100,000 additional net jobs by 2015 is achieved (means 200,000 gross) there will remain a total of 350,000 unemployed with a growing number unemployable. Both proposals are cost neutral or at best financially positive to the state. In current financial circumstances it is essential they are given serious consideration by political leaders and policy makers.

There is a need to begin with key definitions of four concepts essential to understanding both proposals.

**Four Definitions:**

**(1) Community**

The term community in this paper is a geographic area where people share a common range of and social interaction through membership of local sports clubs, church, schools, village, pubs, shops and social, recreational and cultural activities. The population of these communities may range from 200 to 2,000 and more. There are over 3,000 in the country in 2013.

**(2) Community Enterprise** in this paper includes social and private enterprise in communities. Social enterprise includes fully state funded services, part state funded services and fully self sustaining profit making services / enterprises commercially run for a social purpose without remuneration for voluntary board of directors. Community enterprise covers all three categories of social and private enterprise as they are often nurtured and encouraged by local social enterprises.

Members of households in small tightly knit communities are involved in both categories. Some individuals own and manage a private enterprise while leading and driving a local community enterprise. There are many examples of community enterprises led by successful private entrepreneurs and senior business managers including CEOs of major private and semi-state organisations. Tallow, Piltown, Skibbereen, Kilmacow, Dunhill and Charleville are just six examples with high calibre people sitting on boards as directors

.

**(3) Dormant Resources**

The mobilisation of voluntary commitment is essential in the current financial crisis. The need to develop a growth strategy without access to additional finance is required. The many rich dormant resources that can make a significant impact job recreation has to be explained before proceeding any further. There are dormant assets available in state agencies, communities and private sector if activated will treble the amount of resources currently available for job creation and for training the unemployed at no additional cost to the state. (See appendix 1, 2 and 3)

**State Agencies** – examples (a) there is much more knowledge and expertise to be activated in support of job creation and up skilling/re-skilling the unemployed in the state agencies. Agency objectives and job descriptions could be adapted to focus more on job creation while retaining most of current responsibilities with dramatic effect. (b) greater co-ordination of resources in a complex and fragmented state agency support sector would create additional resources and would same time, money, mistakes and frustration for the customer! Community enterprise worker (c) the opening up of tendering for public procurement contracts for small community based enterprises would open up so many new possibilities for enterprise development and job creation (d) church assets due to the state in compensation should include the handover of land and buildings for community enterprise use (e) NAMA property through its social clause should be activated for community benefit (f) other property such as garda stations should be offered up for good business plans submitted by community groups (f) The Irish Philanthropic fund which is close to launch should be directed at community enterprise and jobs. Everything not currently being done by state to support community enterprise could be termed a dormant resource and there are many towards the end of this paper.

**Rural Communities** - include the best educated, most business literate, experienced, travelled, networked, confident and concerned population in the history of the state. They are currently upset and ashamed at the legacy of debt being handed down to their children and grandchildren. They will engage in job creation in their local communities if provided with the opportunity and incentive to do so. Among these people are close on 500,000 retirees with time and a wealth of experience and business knowledge on how to get community based enterprises (social and private) off the ground. These people are best able to identify and activate many dormant assets including land, buildings, materials, equipment, funding and support from overseas without additional cost to the state.

**Private Sector** – only voluntary community personnel have the capacity to leverage many resources from the private sector free of charge for worthwhile projects including expertise, mentors, material, equipment, networks, sponsorship, joint ventures and sub-contracts.

**(4) National Economic Recovery Solidarity Pact.**

To be able to mobilise these assets and achieve the best results from them there is a need under Croke Park 2 to establish a National Economic Recovery Solidarity Pact in which relevant stakeholders, government, employers including small and medium enterprise sector , voluntary organisations, trade unions, , farmers and construction industry including small companies red circle unemployment and involuntary emigration. Within the new framework they will agree to work together to free up many dormant resources at no cost to the state and without prejudice to positions held on any other issue in the future.

**Proposal 1. ‘Programme for Economic Self Reliance’ (PESR)**

(temporary title!)

The aim of PESR is to target the creation of ten jobs in every community (rural and urban) and 20,000 jobs countrywide by December 2016. There is a need to launch a new national job creation programme supported by agency facilitators from local ‘One Stop Shops’ to mentor and guide community enterprise groups in identifying dormant assets and starting new enterprise projects. Under the new programme every community in every county will be offered the same opportunity. Both proposals should be considered under Croke Park 2 and EU funding negotiations for 2014-2020. By December 2016 it is targeted to involve 2,000 communities and achieve the 20,000 jobs with many exceeding and others falling short of the ten jobs.. The first two years will involve getting the programme off the ground with a target of six communities per county in 2014 and doubled in 2016 with the remainder engaging in 2016. There are many community enterprise groups already in existence meeting and surpassing the target of ten jobs providing visible proof of how others could follow with equal measure of success. They are achieving in circumstances far removed from the better organised and more collaborative enterprise environment envisaged under the two proposals in this paper.

A successful community enterprise developmentmodel is available from ’Communities Creating Jobs’ (CCJ) a national voluntary community enterprise company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Its mission is to share solutions, ideas, replicable enterprise projects, enabling tools, site visits, funding sources and other vital information free of charge to communities aiming to create jobs. It will help communities avoid mistakes, waste of time, money, materials and many other valuable resources. CCJ has currently members with a rich bank of successful community enterprise projects. It is willing to share full information on what, who and how with every other community free of charge in the national interest.

**Starting a Community Enterprise Group**

One person can recruit a number of interested others to meet and brainstorm on assets and enterprise options in their local community

or

A general meeting of the community can be organised to discuss setting up a community enterprise group to provide new job opportunities in the local community

or

An agency can send in a facilitator / animator to help organise an enterprise group explaining the supports and opportunities available for job creation local communities.

The group has access to an **‘**Assets Identification Questionnaire’, A Variety of Replicable Projects and an Open Invitation to Visit Community Enterprise Sites of Interest through ‘Communities Creating Jobs’ (CCJ) free of charge.

The new ‘One Stop Shop’ in every county should provide the new enterprise group with a facilitator to guide and support them through seed funding applications, complex paper work, interpretation of funding criteria and how best to network with key enablers within and across sectors. The ‘Community Enterprise Group’ is likely to begin with a project that is well within its capacity to complete. Early success is essential for confidence building, team bonding and in delivering the first job/s all which serve to rally the entire community in support of the new enterprise group.

\*In successfully completing its first enterprise project the team will have identified local assets they never knew existed. These will include many people with diverse expertise who will have mastered the complex state agency system, gained in confidence and will have built up a network of supports to proceed and create 20, 30, 40 and 50 jobs in their community. In voluntary community enterprise nothing succeeds like success.

**Proposal 2.**  **‘Realising the Potential of the Unemployed (RPU)**

(temporary title)

 This programme is again best considered under a **‘**National Economic Recovery Solidarity Pact’ to achieve the all round co-operation necessary to free up dormant resources. The Croke Park Reform Programme would help as only small but critical changes in structure and attitude is required from the stakeholders involved. At its core it involves employers and voluntary organisations offering permanent work experience/ training places on a twelve month roll over basis to skill up the unemployed.

There are over 200,000 employers/ voluntary organisations in the country covering the broadest skill and knowledge base. These organisations have much work to be done and are capable of providing appropriateup-skilling /re-skilling experiences for the 435,000 unemployed and returning them to full- time-part time paid work. Solas and its affiliate education and training institutions will assess, co-ordinate and manage the education, training element of the programme providing accreditation as relevant.

RPU will enable government provide for people of working age (including the disabled) a life cycle of ‘full/part-time work - work experience-training in continuous rotation’ without additional cost to the state.

To support the new ambitious strategy a new narrative which moves the debate from ‘burden’ to ‘asset’ to be assessed and developed is required to help solve the unemployment issue. A ‘Department of Social Protection and Potential’ (DSPP**)** will take the lead responsibility in developing the new strategy in collaboration with other departments.

This programme will deliver major benefits to the state, employer/voluntary organisations, the unemployed, employees and the national economy. There is a great need and opportunity for the Irish government faced with a mammoth and tragic situation do something really imaginative and lead the EU in how best to deal with its 20m unemployed people.

A new EU Economic Recovery Solidarity Contract (EERSC) should be developed and piloted in Ireland providing every person of working age with work and training for life. It would speed economic recovery and create a new civic and political order. It should be supported with special EU research and development funds to allow for extensive research and dissemination of the completed contract throughout the EU.

In an era of rapid and transformational change the workplace is by far the best training location. The work experience element can be supplemented with part time education after work and/ or accommodate work breaks for specialist training modules.

 Training and learning in the workplace allows for the immediate transfer of skills and is cost effective. RPU is a golden opportunity for the low skilled and disabled those with obsolete skills, those wishing to change career paths including professionals to begin a new career. They will be provided with the opportunity to acquire new skills and new work experiences in the most appropriate work location.

Both proposals have the capacity to form the foundation of a new engine for growth, building a new economy with greater levels of flexibility, competitiveness, learning and innovation involved. The proposals will ‘get much more from the same or less’ at a time of scarce financial resources. Ireland will become the most innovative, productive and competitive country in the EU and the preferred location for foreign direct investment and new business start ups. A new inclusive, learning economy and real sustainable prosperity is possible.

**Pressurized Workplaces.**

The most pressurized employer will gain if unemployed person’s skills and requirements are matched with the employer’s needs and capacity to up-skill the trainee. Solas and its affiliate organisations will provide back up support making the placement a seamless and positive experience for both employer and trainee. The employer will be required to have a clear set of work tasks and job specification and the trainee a personal employment /career profile following assessment by Solas and its affiliates. It may be that the proposed county ‘One Stop Shops**’** will house the career guidance assessment facilitators along with the enterprise facilitators, both developed from redeployed personnel under Croke Park Reform Programme. Private sector retraining will have to be matched by public sector retraining providing better long term job prospects for both sets of employees in the future.

**Allocation of Work Experience/Training Places.**

For organisations with 0-100 employees / members 1-2 permanent places on roll over basis

Organisations with 101-500 employees/members 3-6 places

Organisations with 501-1000 employees / members 7-10 places

Organisations with 1001 plus employees / members 11-12 places

**Payments and Funding**

Payment will amount to current social welfare entitlement plus premium at three levels

Level 1. €100 per week for managerial/professional work

Level 2. €60 per week for craft/ technician work

Level 3. €40 for general, retail, security work

The state will pay 50% of the premium and employer/voluntary organisation pay 50%

State payments will be recouped from savings on social welfare fraud (and savings on social welfare payments as people return to full-part time paid work). Employers / Voluntary organisations will recoup from work tasks completed, additional productivity and competitiveness new services, new activities and improvements.

**RPU Programme Benefits**

1. State (rural Ireland) will benefit from a new work order prioritising contribution over entitlement, a better trained workforce, increased productivity, improved work ethic and infrastructure, new culture of shared responsibility for solving the financial crisis, greater social and economic cohesion and greater respect between state institutions, the political system and the people.
2. Employers will benefit from improved productivity and competitiveness, improved employee relations, enhanced social responsibility, completion of additional tasks and ready access to a new pool of trained workers developed in competitive work locations. The will have also made a small additional contribution to the turn around.
3. Unemployed /trainees will improve their skills and employability status; enhance their career options /change career, improved morale, better health, transformed attitude and outlook and better social integration with increased ambition and expectations.
4. Education and training institutions will benefit from engagement with unemployed in workplace training locations. They will have addressed the skills shortage in partnership with workplace personnel gaining deeper insights into needs and how to build future partnerships with employers and employees. They will be better positioned to lead in developing communities, counties and regions on economic and social issues in the future.
5. Society will benefit from increased solidarity, inclusion and cohesion, economic progress and an improved economic skill base, greater equality of opportunity and greater respect for the value of people potential, the institutions of the state and the political system.

**Key implementation steps- under Croke Park Agreement 2.**

1. Government to accept both proposals and include them in the 2014-2020 funding programme negotiations with EU Commission and in discussions under Croke Park 2 negotiations 2013.
2. Establish a ‘National Economic Recovery Solidarity Pact’ to provide a supportive environment in tackling unemployment and involuntary emigration only without prejudice to positions on other issues.
3. Appoint current minister/s for state to take responsibility for the implementation of each programme. Current Ministers for State for Skills and for Jobs.
4. Appoint secretariat from redeployed personnel to support management and implementation process.
5. Appoint voluntary national and county enterprise fora (without remuneration) to welcome and analyse ongoing proposals/ submissions on jobs and provide ongoing advice on co-ordination and deployment of resources.
6. Co-ordinate relevant state agencies through **‘**One Stop Shop’ network in developing and implementing both programmes putting a greater emphasis on recording, dissemination, replication and results.
7. Key stakeholders to accommodate a comprehensive upskilling/ reskilling work-training experience for the unemployed and every person of working age.
8. State support system to expand capacity beyond administration, regulation and control to reaching out to communities, recruiting, facilitating, advising and resourcing enterprise groups countrywide.
9. The narrative on unemployment and the unemployed to move on from burden to asset believing that the unemployed can make a major contribution to the national economic recovery programme if their potential can be harnessed and put it to work.
10. The gains from the implementation of both proposals go far beyond jobs and trained workers extending out to establishing a new republic, an inclusive economy and society, a new form of democracy with much greater respect for the institutions of the state and its political leaders and political parties**,** more self reliant and resilient communities and people capable of building and sustaining a new economy and prosperity that will improve life opportunities and life skills and styles for all categories of people.

**Background**

**Two Proposals to aid Job Creation in Rural Ireland**

**2014-2020/2025.**

The following background context indicates the mammoth task confronting government and stakeholders in turning the economy around over the next decade. There are 435,000 people unemployed and 40,000 people emigrating annually, many involuntary. There are 20m people unemployed in the EU with few positive growth signs on the horizon.

1. Endemic unemployment in Ireland has one in five houses without an employed adult. 50% of these homes have an adult or child with a disability (ESRI December 2012 Irish Times)
2. IDA and EI can only expect to make small gains over and above replacing jobs lost in any year. They are unlikely to make major inroads into substantially reducing unemployment over the next decade without some extraordinary development.
3. The 2012 budget removed €3.5B of consumer spending in the domestic economy nullifying to a degree a number of incentives offered to SMEs.
4. The EU and Ireland are in recession and variations of old solutions will not work to any significant degree in the short or medium term in substantially reducing unemployment and emigration.
5. Government jobs strategy to create 100,000 net jobs (200,000 gross) by 2015 will be very difficult to achieve. If achieved 340,000 people will remain unemployed, many becoming unemployable.
6. In the Celtic Tiger full employment years of early 2000s the construction industry employed 330,000. Construction numbers are now down to 40,000 jobs. While improvement is expected over next few years the drop in numbers employed will remain at over 200,000 jobs from that which existed in the boom years.
7. There are green shoots appearing on exports mainly driven by foreign direct investment companies and agriculture. Improvement is expected in tourism and hospitality, energy and other areas. The extent of our financial difficulties leaves little room for major investment programmes to stimulate new growth in the economy.

**A Platform for Growth Already Exists**

Many voluntary groups have already been extremely successful in developing and upgrading community, heritage, tourism and sporting / recreational facilities in their communities. The ‘Programme for Economic and Social Progress (1991-1993) (PESP)’ set up Leader and County Enterprise Boards to promote and support a ‘bottom up’ volunteer led approach to socio-economic regeneration in rural (and urban areas). In parallel since 1991 the GAA engaged in the most courageous and imaginative developments ever seen in rural communities on a voluntary basis. There is now available a wealth of experience on the successful management of substantial projects costing significant sums of money in rural Ireland today. There is a track record of success in problem solving and a confidence that can now be focused on enterprise and jobs over the next decade.

Community’s and GAA clubs have every reason to engage as they witness the lifeblood and social fabric being of their community being undermined by unemployment and involuntary emigration. It is now becoming a case of survival for many communities and GAA clubs with little sign of significant change in the negative trends existing and forecasted. Much of the hard work on community development of the previous twenty years is being wiped out by the financial crisis in terms of employment and people in the community. Significant infrastructural developments are in place but it is the people who are unemployed and emigrating that are most needed to build on that good work and retain the socio-economic dynamic in the community.

Community enterprise has yet to capture of the attention and support of government in any real positive way. There is a lack of belief in state agencies of its sustainability, job creation capacity, management and true worth within the ‘voluntary’ context. Ireland lingers way behind the UK and EU in the promotion of community / social enterprise. The current financial crisis provides an opportunity for government to fill this gap in performance with thousands of sustainable jobs at minimal cost. The performance of many strong voluntary organisations covering sport and recreation, social and cultural, hobby and historical that have lasted over a century disputes the perceived weaknesses identified in the minds of the policy makers and political leadership class. The nature of what drives community activities and volunteerism in communities is not fully appreciated or understood.

Community/social enterprise needs to be adopted as the third arm of a three pronged national job creation strategy including public, private and community/social enterprise for 2014-2016-2020-2025 periods. A strategic restructuring of relevant state agency policies, practices and programmes will open up many new possibilities for the community/social enterprise sector.

 When the full range of the dormant resources in public, community and private sectors is known and assembled the true size of the opportunity available will be known. Thousands of new job opportunities can be created from this new resource bank through these two programmes.

**A Threat and an Opportunity**

 In this time of financial crisis with so many community leaders frustrated with the debt being passed on to the next generation are willing to engage in job creation in rural communities. The flight of young people and families and the remaining unemployed at home has severely weakened community and club structures causing great alarm and concern. This represents both a crisis and an opportunity as competent and concerned people are being moved to action on new job creation initiatives.

**Innovation and Replication**

Social enterprise in the EU represents an average 7% of GDP and in Ireland 3% of GDP. There is a massive gap that if bridged that would create 100,000 jobs by 2025. Taking Scotland (same size and population) and remainder of the UK our near neighbours there is scope for collaborative research and the replication of best practice. The lessons and experience in growing social enterprise the UK and EU will serve to inform on opportunities for Ireland. Greater co-operation with Northern Ireland on community enterprise will open many new opportunities for job creation in the Republic.

Rural Ireland is ready and open to absorb a major drive on sustainable community enterprise (social and private) projects than many countries in the world. Its social and economic fabric, level of entrepreneurial spirit and know how, widespread voluntary ethos and networks, current array of competent and successful volunteers and a vast range of dormant resources lying idle in communities provides plenty of scope and encouragement for new job creation and innovation.

**Collaboration, Co-ordination in the National Interest**

Government with key stakeholders operating under a ‘National Economic Recovery Solidarity Pact’ must urgently tackle unemployment and involuntary emigration. The two interlocking proposals will work if properly organised, co-ordinated and resourced. The opportunity is there to build a new network of micro-economies, empower communities to become more self reliant and entrepreneurial and move people and groups from entitlement to contribution and development.

 **Time to Light the Fire**

 Rural and urban communities are ecosystems whose relative prosperity has been built on the strength of a deep set of community values with the ‘meitheal’ system at its heart. Rural Ireland in particular consists of an interconnected network of entrepreneurs engaged in entrepreneurial activities. The interactions, interconnections and networks were developed through extended family and voluntary organisation affiliations as best exemplified by the GAA. People involved in farming, construction, engineering, family businesses, retail, tourism and hospitality, performing arts, professional practices, sport and recreation and practising and retired managers in private and public sectors are ready to contribute on job creation beyond their normal activities at this time.

In this regard the ‘Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas’ (CEDRA) due to report back to the Ministers for Environment and Agriculture in October needs to become the spark that lights the fire on job creation in rural Ireland. Once up and running it will spread like wildfire throughout the country creating thousands of new job opportunities in 2014-2016-2020-2025.

**‘Working our way through to economic recovery’.**

**Sixteen recommendations to improve job creation and training in rural Ireland**

1. **Leadership and Direction**

The current minister for state should be given responsibility for the development of community enterprise and jobs (both rural and urban). A secretariat working under a current secretary-general (from existing staff) should be appointed to co-ordinate state agency, community and private sector resources. The secretariat needs the authority to interpret and adapt the regulations in response to changes in local and national economies. What is essential in 2014 may be irrelevant in 2020 as happened between 2007 -2013. Some EU review mechanism should be included in the next programme to facilitate the best deployment of scarce funds throughout its time period.

**(2) ‘National Enterprise Development Forum’** (without remuneration) should be appointed to advise on strategy to achieve the maximum number of enterprises, jobs and trained employees under both programmes in rural Ireland, ensuring synergy and best use of resources and best results.

 Every county should have its own **CountyEnterprise Development Forum** (without remuneration) to build synergy and the most effective use of resources. The local ‘one stop shops’ should have the expertise and guidance from the forum to develop a formidable set of resources driving progress on job creation and upskilling.

**(3)** **Central Online Library:** The National Secretariat/ National Enterprise Forum should oversee the establishment of a Central Online Library to host information from Leader, CEBs, Interreg, Third level and CCJ relevant to the development of community enterprise. The information to be channelled to create a learning economy (with community enterprise as a key element). Solutions developed in Waterford and Kilkenny should be made available in Donegal and Kerry and vice versa

.

All reports, research, information on job creation, numbers, types of enterprises and jobs, projects, partnerships, barriers, solutions, best practices, contacts, networks, research outcomes, learning outcomes, potential partners at home and overseas, funding sources, funding programmes and other information of value to be fed into the library for widespread dissemination and learning. The secretariat to promote and champion this shared learning approach through which many savings and efficiencies can be gained.

**(4) ‘Enterprise Intelligence Units’** should be an essential part of the structure of the ‘One Stop Shop’ network located in every county. The intelligence units should be proactive in researching and building up new resources for dissemination among community enterprise groups on job creation. The **‘**One Stop Shops’ would also feed information into the national on-line library for general use. The ‘One Stop Shops’ to become ‘centres of excellence’ identifying and servicing the resource needs of a continuously changing community enterprise environment.

**(5 ) Overseas Intelligence Units**

Following on from ‘The Gathering’ overseas intelligence units of voluntary experts and networks located in the main markets should beestablished and linked into the national and county enterprise development forum network and through them into the national on-line library. The overseas units will filter through intelligence on export markets, import substitution, inward investment enquiries, new product opportunities, partners for transnational funding programmes, relevant research findings and much more all focused on informing on development and opportunities in the global economy for community enterprise groups in communities. The Diaspora will be invited to engage in community enterprise development projects from afar which may lead to being able to return home to paid employment or starting up a new business. They will also answer queries from the ‘national and county boards’ and ‘one stop shops’

**(6)** **Global Network of Information and Expertise:** A new global network of information and expertise will be developed to support new job creation in rural (and urban) communities. This global network will become a game changer in driving the regeneration of rural Ireland. It will bring the global market place to rural (and urban) Ireland’s community network providing many new and exciting enterprise opportunities throughout the 2014-2020-2025 period.

 **(7) Third Level Support for Community Enterprise**

Third level colleges should be mandated by government / department of education and skills to create regional/ community development research centres to support job creation from existing resources. They should provide valuable support to volunteer community groups on a wide variety of economic and social issues. Third level should create new knowledge and transfer it to practice driving a new enterprise culture in the regions. Third level colleges should contribute new solutions, insights, ideas for development, capacity building measures and involvement as partners in enterprise community programmes. Third level colleges should involve master’s and doctorate students in addressing live rural enterprise topics in assignments and theses... Third level students should be assigned to community enterprise projects for a 6 / 12 months practical as part of their degree programme.

**(8) Open University for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship**

Agencies need to demonstrate as much interest in results and dissemination as in eligibility criteria and management of funds. The national ‘Secretariat /National Community Enterprise Forum’ should create an **‘**Open University for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship’ (OUEE) for the more isolated communities and regions.

OUEE should become a national ‘One Stop Shop’ for all education and training programmes currently available in third level, VEC and Fas education and other training institutions.

 OUEE in collaboration with National and County Enterprise Development Forums and county based ‘One Stop Shops’ should develop ‘Education and Training Outreach Centres’ in the regions enabling current providers deliver relevant programmes currently out of the reach of people (mature students/ unemployed / disabled/ elderly and unemployed youth). The programmes can be delivered through a blended learning and webinar process. The outreach network will provide the necessary support and back up for people with low education or away from education for a time. It will improve overall student numbers, the cost effectiveness of current providers and address the education needs of isolated rural populations. There will be no additional cost involved. The rent of outreach centre and refreshments for face to face groups and online sessions will be included in the normal fee involved. The benefits are many for people, institutions, local economies, national economy and society in general. Customised training programmes on specific issues should be developed, accredited and made available countrywide through OUEE.

 **(9) Change in Priority and Funding**

New funding programme criteria should be radically changed to place more emphasis on how important outcomes are best developed and progressed in the future. A new emphasis should be placed on recording results and learning points to facilitate the widespread dissemination of best practices throughout county, region and country. There is massive waste and lost opportunity currently in closing off the best of projects without retaining and disseminating the learning gained in any meaningful way. The investment of finance, voluntary time and effort expended by voluntary directors and the state (taxpayers funds) is significant. There needs to be a new fund made available from existing resources that takes inventive and successful outcomes and ensures the widest dissemination and replication in creating additional jobs countrywide.

 **(10) New Seed Funding Programme**

FutureNational and EU funding programmes should have:

1. **Core funds –** to complete projects following successful applications as currently
2. **Pilot funds-** to bemade available for imaginative proposals on job creation that involves testing imaginative concept and strategies that have (a) potential for replication in region and / or countrywide an (b) potential exports.
3. **Dissemination funds** - to be made available for projects whose outcomes are deemed worth disseminating widely based on positive effect on job creation. Applications are following completion of project with short application turnaround time. The application outlines dissemination strategy and how it will lead to additional jobs in other locations. Added to the additional jobs will be the development of a new collaborative and learning community of interest. Projects for dissemination will share outcomes with many other communities.

**(11) New seed funding application criteria**

In current financial circumstances new criteria are required to make much better use of seed funding under mainstream funding programmes. They should include:

* Quality and potential of project application /business plan
* Number of jobs involved
* Track record of applicant
* Potential for replication
* Potential for exports
* Potential for future partnership development projects
* Potential for social impact
* Plan to share information and expertise widely (local communities, county, region and countrywide).
* There should be 95% seed funding for first community enterprise project followed by 90% for second, 85% for third, 80% for fourth and 75% for all others.
* Deminimis rule should be reviewed with financial cap extended to €1M. The grant will only be made available to deliver jobs and other improvements.
* Matching funding requirements should include value of site, buildings already in place, voluntary labour and expertise and the contribution of materials, equipment, machinery, furniture and expertise from private individuals and companies.
* An agency enterprise facilitator (as in old agricultural instructor role) should be made available to work with community enterprise group from concept to start up. The one gap in voluntary community expertise is an understanding of agency funding criteria. The agency facilitator should walk the community enterprise group through this process thus avoiding so much unnecessary hardship and additional workload for the volunteer.
* Applications to be presented by applicant to an evaluation sub group in Dragon’s Den format**.** Applicant is given a chance to explain and answer all queries face to face prior to it been submitted to private evaluation committee for final decision.

* Unsuccessful applications should be able to appeal to independent authority once.
* There is much to be gained in lining rural and urban communities on job creation i.e. rural community enterprises producing food products for marketing and sale by urban community enterprises. Rural community enterprises partnering with third level colleges countrywide.

**(12) County Enterprise Hubs (Rural)**

Special funding and support should be provided for the development of hubs and clusters in counties to enable research, development, dissemination and replication. Hubs can involve food, craft, technology, green solutions, research, performing arts, art and design, tourism, social services, exports and others The purpose of the hub is to create scale and sufficient resources to develop brands, partnerships with agencies at home, transnational partnerships, build funding applications to a range of institutions and cover much more issues and opportunities than stand alone small and medium social and private enterprises can attempt.

**(13) Support Agencies and Staff**

Evaluation of performance should be linked to the team results (not individual). The results should include number of ideas considered, projects supported, research information produced, partnerships created, enterprises developed, projects initiated, jobs created, reports and products produced, width and depth of supports developed and shared, improvements in services, quality of records, end of year reports and dissemination of best practices.

To make progress full-time staff need to reach out beyond half way to encourage the best volunteers and community enterprise groups and build a support and trust that will activate the maximum resources and achieve the best possible outcomes. This new approach will make agency jobs more interesting, challenging, rewarding and secure.

**(14) Building New Relationships**

State agency support system is set up to administer, regulate and control community enterprise groups on funding and planning only. Community enterprise groups with business people and /or/ business executives are prepared to contribute in a voluntary capacity as leaders, innovators, creators and motivators in creating jobs in their own communities.

To respond adequately to this level of commitment there is a need to adapt their mission, objectives and job descriptions and act as part facilitators, researchers, enablers, advisors and initiators integrated into their administrator/ controller role.

**(15) Leadership Programme**

A special community enterprise and up-skilling leadership programme should be developed, accredited and made available countrywide to increase capacity and success rates of community enterprise projects. The open university for enterprise and entrepreneurship could develop it through its affiliates. Dunhill developed a leadership academy and an excellent leadership programme in 2012 and successfully ran one programme with private industry employees which was very successful. It is now developing a community focused leadership programme as part of the CCJ package of enabling tools.

 Community enterprise projects are less likely to fail than private enterprise given the spread of expertise and the widespread interest and support of the community. There is still a need to establish best practices on leading and envisioning, business development, corporate governance, people skills and co-ordination, legal and financial competence, director duties, teamwork, objective setting, collaborating and negotiating, conflict resolution, strategic communications and other skills so essential to running any voluntary community based organisation but particularly an enterprise group and at in a period of transformational and rapid change.

**(16) Performance Enhancers**

A major change is required in the area of regulation and enforcement of standards. The narrative has to change from regulation, enforcement, consequence and cost to quality performance, enhancement and recognition with an improvement all round in standards, attitudes and relationships. The ‘Performance Enhancer’ has to replace the department regulator developing a supportive relationship with his clients. The burden of regulation has to change to the challenge of competitiveness to be achieved through continuous communications, improvement and learning.

Standards have to be achieved in the context of long term viability of the business. Instead of choking and frustrating hard pressed entrepreneurs it has to inform, educate and encourage entrepreneurs from an informed perspective and voluntarily reach the standards required and celebrate that achievement.

**Appendix 1. Opportunities for Community Enterprise in Rural Areas.**

**Everyday Services**

Childcare

Home help / care

Pre and Post School Centres

Information and Communication Technology

Assistance for young people facing difficulties

Charity projects and programmes

Meals on Wheels

**Quality of Life Services**

Housing Improvements

Security / Community Alert / First Response

Local Transport Services

Landscaping and Maintenance of Public areas

Local shops

First Response/First Aid/ Ambulance services

**Cultural and Leisure Services**

Tourism and Hospitality

Cultural Heritage

Audio-visual services

Performing Arts

Music, Song, Dance, Theatre

Community Radio

Photography

**Environmental Services**

Waste Management

Management of Water Services

Protection and Maintenance of Natural Areas

Regulation and Monitoring of Pollution Control and Installations

Litter Collection

Waste Water / Effluent Treatment

Green Solutions

**Energy Saving and Renewable Energy**

Recycling Composting Schemes

Renewable Energy Schemes

Domestic Energy Service Companies

Recycling, Reuse and Renew (furniture/ paper/ scrap / clothes)

Fuel Supplies- firewood, turf, coal, oil, gas, etc.

**Regional Food Markets Involving Pacts between Producers and Consumers**

Box Schemes

Subscription Farming

Food Co-operatives

Country Markets

Organic Gardening/Farming

Small Scale Arts and Crafts Industries

Art education and training

**Community Based Housing Provision**

Homes for the Elderly

Self Build Projects

Self-Repair Projects

Resident Management Co-operatives

Health Centres for HSE rents

Maintenance building contracting

**Community Based Work Space Provision**

Building of Enterprise Centres

Restoration and Renovation of old Buildings

Self Build for Work or Community Use

**Education and Training**

IT Centre

Training Centre

Craft Centre

Garden Space for Vegetables and Horticulture

Outreach Programmes - Third Level Education, Fas, Teagasc, VEC, EI and others.

Montessori / special education/ training and development areas

Research Centres

**Local Organisations/ Clubs / Hobbies**

Parish Pastoral Council

GAA Club with Facilities

Other Clubs with Facilities – Soccer, Squash, Pitch and Putt

Hobby Interests – Sailing, Boating, Beekeeping, Gardening, Orienteering

Walking, Cycling, Pony Trekking, Birdwatching, Fishing, Shooting, Card playing

Genealogy

Painting and Decorating

Landscaping

**General Opportunities**

Import substitution – €48b per annum

Public tendering- €20b per annum – replacement of foreign suppliers

Sub-contracting to foreign direct investment companies

Inventing and patenting

Franchising

DIY Services

Information Technology Admin Services to Global Economy

Engineering technology and services

Consultancies across all sectors

Mentoring Services across all sectors

Capacity building across all services

Overseas consultancy services

**Appendix 2. Growth areas for community enterprise** (Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd Interreg ACTION Project, July 2012)

**Areas identified:**

* Heritage/ Genealogy/ Tourism
* Training, Education, Learning, Hobbies
* Waste and Recycling
* Healthcare and Transport
* Renewable Energy and Green Solutions
* Communications/ Technology
* Sport and Recreation
* Artisan Food and Organics
* Public Procurement and Social Services
* Youth and Childcare
* Performing Arts and Creative Industries
* Global Connections

**Appendix 3. Resources Available To Community Enterprise Groups**

**Examples:**

**State Agencies (free to community and funded by state)**

Co. Council, Co. Enterprise Board, Leader Partnership Board, Failte Ireland, Fas, VEC, Teagasc, Interreg, Foundations, Philanthropic Funds, NAMA, Irish Peatlands Conservation Council, Geological Survey of Ireland. Many other organisations such as Heritage Council, Crafts Council, Bord Bia, EPA, Wildlife Service, Historical Societies, IFA, ICA, Macra na Feirme, Government Departments and many more will provide assistance

**Every Community Has Many Resources (free of charge)**

Wide range of voluntary expertise – diverse, committed, unlimited

Related networks- every person involved has an extensive network

Public property – land, garda stations, old schools, halls, derelict sites, heritage sites

Church- old churches, priests houses, convents and land

Funding, sponsorships, wills and bequests, fund raising potential

Successful people from community living outside it including the Diaspora

Many voluntary organisations including parish councils, GAA, sporting and recreation clubs, local schools, development associations, hobby clubs, charities will contribute

**Private Sector Will Support Every Good Community Project (free of charge)**

Expertise, mentors, contacts, funding, joint ventures, materials, equipment, furniture, land, old farmhouses, business contracts, influence with decision-makers, project management and problem solving contribution, special deals on old creameries, vacant shops, pubs, farmhouses, land, landmarks, forestry, post offices and others will contribute.

**Diaspora (free of charge)**

Funding, expertise, sponsorships, access to markets, returning emigrants, foreign investment projects, overseas contacts and much more.

* It is only the volunteer/voluntary group/club that will ask for the help and receive it free of charge for good projects/causes given the special economic circumstances.

 **Appendix 4.**

|  |
| --- |
| **Building a More Dynamic and Inclusive Rural Community for the 21st Century** |
| **20th Century**  | **21st Century** |
| Church of the clergy | **\*Church of the laity- pastoral councils + sub committees** |
| Schools | Schools |
| Shops | Shop/mini markets network |
| Pub | Pub / restaurant? |
| GAA Club | **\*GAA Club + social, health, cultural and recreation facilities** |
| Post Office and Postman | Postman |
| Parish Hall | Community Centre |
| Creamery | Community Development Group |
| Local Businesses – Farming and SMEs  | Local Businesses-Farming and SMEs |
| Garda Station | Garda Network/ Community Alert/ First Response |
| Local Voluntary Organisations | Local Voluntary Organisations-more of them |
| Public phone system | Mobile phones, texting, emails |
| Local Papers | Local Papers + on line editions |
| Local Deliveries | Local Deliveries |
| Public Transport | Rural Transport |
| Tidy Towns | Tidy Towns |
| Services to the elderly | Community Care/Homes for the Elderly |
| Community Improvement Projects | **\*Community Enterprise Groups** **(as facilitator/catalyst)** |

\*CEDRA has decided not to engage in new research to inform its findings and recommendations. New research is needed to inform context and new framework for job creation over the next decade. Rural communities as are the Irish economy and society in transition. Age old institutions are closing down such as post office, creamery, garda stations while other institutions are changing and new institutions forming bringing a new social and economic dynamic to rural communities. Community enterprise groups, developing GAA clubs and an emerging church of the laity is bringing new life to rural communities. Two negative issues is reversing progress threatening future prosperity, unemployment and involuntary emigration.