



A Year of Local Development **Annual Report 2023**

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Chairman's Statement

Gerard Mac Mahon, SECAD Chairman

During 2023, SECAD staff continued to deliver on its core mission of helping communities and individuals to reach their potential. SECAD achieves these outcomes through its activities under programmes including SICAP, LEADER, Tús, the Rural Social Scheme and through distributing funds from the Community Benefit Funds.

SECAD shows its concern for nature and biodiversity through developing modules on nature that are rolled out through primary schools which is a very commendable action. SECAD's work on biodiversity was recognised by Government with the invitation to SECAD to host an information stand at the Climate Action Seminar in Dublin Castle in November 2023.

SECAD has established itself as the leading agency in the distribution of community benefit funds because of its extensive links with communities and the efficient management and distribution of these funds.

SECAD Management and Board demonstrates their appreciation for staff through organising staff welfare days and introducing improved terms and conditions of employment. On staff welfare days, visits have been made to projects that SECAD has supported over the years, and the outcomes of these projects have been hugely impressive.

The Board of Directors and the Evaluation Committees are made up of volunteers and we are grateful for their time and expertise, and the contributions they make to SECAD.

Finally, I would like to thank Ryan Howard, the Management Team and staff for their kindness and cooperation extended to me during 2023.

Gerard Mac Mahon
Chairman
SECAD Partnership





CEO Statement

Ryan Howard,
Chief Executive Officer

Across 2023, SECAD maintained our evolution, continuing our core public services and supports, whilst looking to expand our horizons in terms of enabling communities and business to create long term partnerships with each other. Our services and approach to supporting rural development, community activation and nature based learning continued to attract attention with visiting delegations hosted from Italy, Sweden and the Czeck Republic.

During 2023, SECAD provided employment related supports and guidance to over twelve hundred people and capacity building (skills training) for many more, as well as supporting access to grants and other supports to hundreds of community groups across the Island of Ireland. In parallel with this significant workload, the SECAD team (Board and Staff) also allocated additional time to completing detailed rural development and social inclusion consultations and plans that would lead to the successful awarding of the LEADER (South Cork and West Cork) and the SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation) Programmes from 2024 forward.

The severe flooding that impacted East Cork in October caused massive issues for many of the people who work in SECAD, our clients and communities. As CEO, I am immensely proud of the work that the SECAD teams performed to help people through this period in many different ways. There are a number of lessons that we must learn from this climate event and we will ensure to focus on this as we plan our future initiatives.

It also served to remind us about the importance of connection, between people, neighbours, rural and urban, those who are local and those who are newly arrived. These connections have provided inspiration for us all to believe that we can achieve more in making this a better place for the future.

Ryan Howard
Chief Executive Officer
SECAD Partnership



UN Sustainable Development Goals

... How they link with SECAD Partnership and our Work

The UN Sustainable Development Goals were agreed in 2015 to help frame how we can consider and implement an approach to a fairer, most sustainable, and balanced world. Much of our sustainability issues arises from 'imbalance' creating societal division, greater separation between 'rich' and 'poor', powerlessness, exploitation, resource mismanagement and environmental degradation. Collectively the impacts of these will likely lead to increasing strife, poverty, war and a rapid increase in extinction events.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) invite each of us, from Governments to each of us as citizens, to consider how we can bring about the changes needed to seek a 're-balance' and a more resilient world.

Through our work, SECAD is investing in a variety of ways to positively impact the sustainability of our region, local businesses and communities, and supporting initiatives that are aimed at addressing resource gaps and the restoration of eco-systems essential to a more sustainable future.



Sections 1 and 2 of this report looks at examples of where SECAD is supporting access to employment, self-employment, rural and local business development and initiatives to support more female ownership of enterprises. These are all directly related to UN SDG's (#4, #5, #9 and #10) which promote better employment options and developing the infrastructure to support local enterprise development.

Sections 3 and 5 outline a range of supports for community and local community-led social services development that relate to UN SDG's (#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #10, #11 and #12) which offer support to the most disadvantaged, promote and provide new educational opportunities, looks to highlight and address issues of equality and integration, focusing on utilising sustainably produced produce whilst encouraging conversations about designing more sustainable rural towns and villages.

Section 4, SECAD Environmental Investments, specifically focus on an initiative developed within SECAD called 'Wild Work' which is a response to the

lack of coordinated or coherent policy instruments and investments to help communities and local businesses (and our citizens) to implement community led projects that would have a true and lasting positive impact in terms of restoring biodiversity and habitat. These in turn reflect the ambitions of UN SDG's #13, #14 and #15.

Finally, as a Local Development Company, SECAD is itself set up a 'Partnership' between the key development actors that are needed to bring about sustainable change and positive action across the 3 pillars of sustainable development (Social, Economic and Environmental) in line with UN SDG #17.

We would encourage all reading this report to consider your response to these challenges and please encourage others to do likewise. We hope this report and the works outlined will encourage more people to play an active role to get involved in positive action with the aim of achieving a more balanced, sustainable future.

SECAD Partnership's Vision & Mission

Vision

To be recognised as a leading European development organisation, enabling vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities.

Mission

SECAD is a dynamic and pioneering social enterprise which works in partnership with diverse stakeholders to provide services, facilities and investments for the benefit of the communities we serve.

SECAD Partnership Impact 2023

Fostering Enterprise

162

People received Self-Employment & Business Startup Support

35

Food & Drink Businesses supported in Sustainability Training

140

Female Entrepreneurs received Networking & Mentor Support

325

Tourism & Hospitality Personnel supported through Training & Networking Events

6

Growing Social Enterprises received Training & Grant Support



Enhancing Environment

36

Wild Work Education Sessions delivered in Communities

6

Area-based Biodiversity Action Plans developed

17

Primary Schools received 'Biodiversity for Primary Schools' Training across Cork County

1,425

Primary School Children received Biodiversity for Schools Sessions

5

Companies engaged in Biodiversity Wellness Tools for Business

230

New Communities (families) received Nature-based Wellbeing Supports



Enabling Employment



654

Individuals supported in Employment Pathways on a 1-to-1 basis

470

People supported into Accredited & Non-accredited Training

166

People progressed into Employment

110

Active Community Work Placement Participants

187

Individuals received Sector Specific Skills for Work Training

Employment Inclusion
Individuals with Disabilities

18

Supported with tailored training

9

Progressed into jobs & work experience

Empowering Communities



294

Community Groups throughout Ireland supported in Governance, Social Inclusion, Education & Sustainability

300

New Communities engaged through Community Integration Projects involving Food Diversity

82

Community Employer supported Work Placements

32

Community Food Initiative Projects supported by SECAD to deliver Healthy Eating Actions via *safefood* Programme

6000+

People across the Republic & N. Ireland supported in Healthy Eating activities through the *safefood* Community Food Initiative

130

Youth aged 14-18 supported through the Arts in Young Filmmakers Project

500

Vulnerable People received Wellbeing Supports through Nature & Art

SECTION

1

Supporting Enterprise

Supporting Enterprise

Rural Development Programme Funded Projects – Enterprise

Sustainability Training for Food and Drink Businesses in South and West Cork

Funded through the LEADER Rural Development Programme 2014-2022, this highly engaging training programme was designed to assist Small, Micro and Artisan food and drink producers in rural areas to understand and commit to more sustainable business and production practices. Delivered in conjunction with our training delivery partners The Clean Technology Centre (MTU), SustHub and Change by Degrees, the programme provided a combination of training workshops, individual business supports, best practice case study visits, and expert guest speakers.

Training workshops covered topics such as Managing Waste, How to Measure your Carbon Footprint, Building a Sustainability Culture and Sustainable Supply Chain Design. Participants had the opportunity to see some excellent examples of good practice in action with group visits to Ballymaloe Cookery School, GIY Waterford, Carbery Group and the Garryvoe Hotel. Guest speakers on the programme also included representatives from LIDL, Glenilen Farm, Keelings and FarmZeroC.



Keelin Tobin (Clean Technology Centre), James Hogan (Clean Technology Centre) and Suzanne Kearney (SECAD). Photo Credit: Brian Loughheed

Over 35 businesses participated in the programme, many of whom developed practical action plans to improve their production practices, decrease their carbon footprint and significantly reduce their operational costs. The programme also provided excellent networking and knowledge sharing opportunities for new and established food and drink producers across the area.

Compiled by Katie Kearns, Development Officer

SECAD & Tourism

SECAD supporting tourism enterprises through Ring of Cork

Ring of Cork organises and delivers collective training, networking and marketing supports for tourism businesses in Cork every year.

Marketing

In January, “Keep Moving in Nature”, a promotional interactive online guide was launched. The brochure uses stunning imagery to highlight fifteen coastal, woodland and river trails in the East Cork and Cork Harbour area, encouraging people to explore nature and walk. It contains an interactive map linked to google maps and can be viewed and downloaded at www.ringofcork.ie/outdoor.



Training

In 2023, 22 training workshops were organised for tourism enterprises. 14 of these were in person and 8 took place online. 2 focused on public relations along with 20 digital marketing workshops which were developed and offered in response to growing promotional trends and business needs.

Reels, Tik Tok, LinkedIn, Chat GPT and Canva were new workshops offered to tourism and hospitality businesses. These complimented the consistently popular Facebook, video and SEO style workshops in 2023.

Networking Events

Collaboration and co-operation, building and maintaining good relationships is one of the main focuses for Ring of Cork. In March, 'Coffee & Connect' sessions were held at 3 locations and hosted by the following members: Fota Wildlife Park (1st March), Middleton Park Hotel (15th March) and Red Store Bar & Restaurant, Youghal (30th March). These sessions provided an opportunity for tourism personnel to meet up informally, have a coffee and connect.

Three more networking events took place throughout the rest of the year. On 9th May, Ring of Cork members were hosted by Spike Island where Alan O'Callaghan, Michelle Russell and the team provided a really enjoyable, informative tour. Then on 3rd October, Orla McGovern of Castlemartyr House Gallery & Gifts hosted Ring of Cork members in her impressive gallery.



Castlemartyr Resort was the stunning venue for Ring of Cork's Annual Tourism Seminar & AGM, that was held on 7th December. Elga Ryan and Ryan Howard presented on Ring of Cork and SECAD's programme of activities and supports for tourism businesses.

Guest speakers, Derry Cronin of the Cronin Travel Group and Elaine O Halloran, Director of Sales & Marketing, Castlemartyr Resort energised and inspired the audience with their own business stories. Derry spoke about his family business from when it was founded by his father Dermot Cronin over 65 years ago and the journey and resilience it has demonstrated.

Elaine gave a very informative insight into their customer base which is mostly domestic and also about the importance of sales trips to the lucrative US market. Over 60 tourism businesses from across the East Cork and Cork Harbour region attended and actively engaged in networking and collaborating post seminar.



For more information about joining Ring of Cork, contact Elga at info@ringofcork.ie. www.ringofcork.ie

Compiled by Elga Ryan, Development Officer

Enterprise Support Service

For people coming to SECAD Partnership with a focus on enterprise, we worked with 162 clients during the 2023 calendar year. 9 in-house Start Your Own Business courses were funded through

the SICAP programme and 49 clients availed of supported mentoring. 20 people progressed into self-employment which was perhaps reflective of full employment in 2023.

The variation of business types included many from creative industries such as tattoo artistry to visual art, play therapy, social media and graphic design to more traditional industries such as tiling, bookkeeping and food-based businesses. A host of other training was also arranged to support new and existing clients throughout 2023 which included social media, cost reductions workshop as well as beginners and intermediate 'Canva' design training.

During 2023 many of our SICAP funded enterprise clients came from a background of self-employment in Ukraine. Although in the first instance, clients were encouraged to learn English and to take up training or jobs, it was found that many wished to enter self-employment in Ireland.

5 translated Start Your Own Business courses were delivered in 4 different accommodation centres during 2023 which allowed SICAP beneficiaries from Ukraine to understand the requirements of setting up an Irish business. There was huge learning in understanding the significantly different trading conditions in Ireland when compared to Ukraine. The photo (right) is of a Ukrainian client who availed of support via SECAD, attending a start your own business course and

mentoring as well as HACCP food safety training and progressing to open his own food business.



Collaboration is a key element of SECAD's work, allowing us to access more resources on behalf of our SICAP beneficiaries. In 2023, we linked with the national Skillnet programme – Mentorswork which was particularly relevant to those in the early stages of establishing their businesses. These clients took part in a workshop between SECAD and Mentorswork and from there they progressed into a 12-week free mentoring programme tackling their specific business issues.

Compiled by Donna Cleary, Development Officer

Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN)

This was a joint programme delivered by SECAD and Ballyhoura Development from 2020 to 2022. The programme focused on supporting women who wished to start a business and women with existing businesses that were still in the early stages and were seeking support to move forward. The programme included personal development, business related training, mentoring and networking.

The WREN programme was co-funded by the Dept of Justice and Equality and the European Social Fund as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) and finished in September 2022. However, female entrepreneurs continued to be guided on their entrepreneurial journeys with the support of the SICAP programme, and SECAD and Ballyhoura Development continued to share the delivery of this programme during 2023.

The WREN network has grown since the programme began in 2018 and it has adapted to meet the demands of its 140 plus members across Cork and Limerick. In 2023, a host of innovative workshops and programmes were delivered and funded by both Local Development Companies (LDCs). An 8-week sales maximisation programme for female entrepreneurs

was part of the offering with 20 female entrepreneurs completing this training.

Networking and sharing experiences that are unique to female entrepreneurs are a mainstay within the group. On a bi-monthly basis during 2023, invited guest speakers addressed the group with the topics varying from marketing to communications to growing your brand. The December networking meeting ended the year on a positive note with a workshop on positive mindset, juggling responsibility and having passion for your work. The network goes into 2024 with strong participation and a desire for continued support, advice and shared learning.

Compiled by Donna Cleary, Development Officer



Frances Doyle and Vicki Kelly, SECAD Development Officers

SECAD Social Enterprise

SECAD supported 6 social enterprises during 2023 with a total value of €12,545.78 comprising of €6,945.78 of grant funding and €5,600 worth of soft supports.

Social enterprises awarded SICAP grants in 2023:

- Future Orchards – €1991.20
- First Cut Youth Film Festival – €2000.00
- Irish Bee conservation Project CLG – €1520.00
- Sister Hub Aghada – €1502.40

Future Orchards

Future Orchards is a sustainable cooperative social enterprise whose focus is on food production, coordination of food waste management strategies and educational activities. They also created a private space for members with a strong emphasis on environmental appreciation and protection. Their courses on fruit tree care, apple tree pruning and grafting are delivered by a fully qualified Horticulturist. Some other members of the group also offer willow crafting, juicing and bee keeping.



They have been limited on the time they can allocate to activities and courses due to the lack of toilet facilities on site. The SICAP Social Enterprise grant has provided funding for the addition of a good quality composting toilet. The toilet will not only be of great benefit for individuals attending courses, training and other social enterprise activities, but also for the memorial garden area which is being developed by members as a native woodland walk and workspace with regular tree planting events.

First Cut! Youth Film Festival

The First Cut! Youth Film Festival took place in Youghal on 7-11 March 2023 and they availed of SICAP funding to fund associated costs including venue hire, festival promotion and equipment hire.

Audience numbers were increased from previous years with over 1,500 young people travelling to Youghal with their families, friends and crew to watch their own films and to gain from the guidance and experience of special guests who spoke during the festival. An international audience attended online for the first time on Sunday, 12th March for a day of online screenings.



First Cut! Youth Film Festival provides young filmmakers between the ages of 12 and 24 with a platform for screening their short films. It is committed to fostering the creative development of young filmmakers from every background and provides a broad range of programming from animation workshops and screenings for primary school students right up to events aimed at emerging filmmakers entering the film industry in their early twenties.

Irish Bee Conservation Project

The Irish Bee Conservation Project, founded in 2019, has been a crucial initiative aimed at enhancing our understanding of the ecosystem and recognising the pivotal role that pollinators play within it. The project identified a critical need for a robust online presence through both social media and a dedicated webpage to disseminate information effectively.



The newly designed website, funded through SICAP, serves as a central hub for information dissemination, providing a wealth of resources to educate the public about the importance of bee / pollinator conservation. The platform not only showcases the project's mission and goals but also offers educational materials, updates on ongoing initiatives, and ways for individuals to get involved. The collaboration with SECAD has been pivotal, enabling the project to make significant strides in promoting awareness and understanding of the vital role played by pollinators in our ecosystem.

Sister Hub Aghada

The Sister Hub Aghada is a multicultural support network for women in East Cork and nearby areas. It aims to promote sisterhood, diversity and social inclusion through organised activities centred on building friendships and sisterly connection, promoting mental health and well-being, personal development and empowerment.

This application for SICAP funding led to the purchase of simple PA equipment for use during off site events and the purchase of a pull-up banner. Outside of the SICAP social enterprise grant aid, SECAD provided a speaker for their Women Mean Business session. The Sister Hub Aghada were also key participants at SECAD events such as SECAD Celebrates Multiculturalism through Food and SECAD's celebration of volunteers in Trabolgan and surrounding areas during the visit of Joe O'Brien TD, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development in June 2023.

Examples of other groups assisted through soft supports and facilitation provided in 2023 includes:

- Youghal for All business plan – €800
- Comhaltas Croabh Eochaille CSP plan – €2000
- Knockraha Community Association business support for their community plan – €800
- Ballinora Community Association survey and plan – €1200.00
- Youghal & Imokilly Comhaltas – €800.00

Compiled by Toni McCaul, Social Inclusion Programmes Manager and Tara Doyle, Development Officer



SECTION

2

Enabling Employment

Enabling Employment

SECAD Employment Service

In 2023, the SECAD Employment Service team exceeded its mid-year targets, supporting over 400 individuals by May. The team intensified its focus on assisting Ukrainian refugees while continuing to address the complex needs of asylum seekers and refugees from other backgrounds in emergency accommodation and Direct Provision centres. SECAD played a crucial role in responding to the arrival of Ukrainian people through conducting on-site employment workshops multiple times per week at various locations. Across these centres, SECAD established strong rapport and trust, becoming a key contact for job-seeking, training, social welfare, wellness, and general information support.

English language proficiency remained a significant barrier to sustainable employment, leading to a range of support initiatives. These included CETB English classes, online learning programmes and on-site conversation sessions with volunteer tutors. Transportation challenges also persisted, with issues related to driving, access, and costs continuing to hinder employment and education opportunities. Despite these obstacles, SECAD encouraged residents to progress in areas like the driving theory test and alternative transport solutions to promote self-empowerment.

The team remained sensitive to the ongoing trauma and uncertainties faced by residents, providing empathetic support through all aspects of communication. Workshops offered on-site covered topics such as job seeking, CV preparation, interview skills, social welfare, family supports, and more. Referrals from the Dept of Social Protection (DSP), other agencies, self-referrals, Tús, and Rural Social Scheme (RSS) continued, although in reduced numbers.



In Macroom and its surrounding areas, SECAD continued its vital role in supporting Ukrainian refugees and other asylum seekers in emergency accommodations, including three Ukraine centres and a Direct Provision centre. The team provided guidance on job searching, CV and cover letter creation, and interview preparation, in collaboration with the local ETB. SECAD also coordinated and chaired two Adult Education meetings between January and May, bringing together local stakeholders to discuss and plan education and training needs.

SECAD's involvement extended to other areas like Midleton, Cobh, and Ballincollig, where multiple Adult Education Network meetings were coordinated, encouraging new membership and participation. The SICAP Community and Employment Teams also took part in the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival event, contributing to discussions on community education and partnership.

Throughout 2023, SECAD focused on delivering targeted employment and activation services to various cohorts, including the long-term unemployed, underemployed, and those below the labour market radar. The organisation also continued to promote self-employment as a viable route out of unemployment. In response to identified needs, SECAD offered industry and sector-specific skills training, which saw increased uptake from new communities in the area.

The year presented challenges, but SECAD met them successfully, with 157 individuals progressing into employment, 20 into business start-ups, and 471 into accredited and non-accredited training. In total, 535 individuals received direct support through our Employment Support Service, which included participation in Tús and DSP engagement days and our Employment Fair in Midleton.

SECAD also continued to support Adult Education networks across South Cork, fostering collaboration and sharing of information to enhance community responses, particularly for Ukrainian refugees. Digital skills training was rolled out to address literacy barriers, enabling residents to better engage with job seeking and online services.

Compiled by the SECAD Employment Service Team

Local Area Employment Service

The Local Area Employment Service works with clients who have been unemployed longer than 2 years. The focus of the programme is to work with each client on an individual basis for a 12 month period. During this engagement, clients are provided an holistic support where their respective caseworker takes time to explore the client's skills, strengths, interests and barriers. Motivational routes are explored and also how clients can build on what they already know. Often this will result in signposting to education and training, and in particular accessing short-term targeted training specific to industries of interest to them.

Through a mixed method approach of coaching, mentoring and signposting, we help clients develop a set of steps suitable to their context that will help them make progress. For some of our clients this may be building general confidence, working on literacy skills and for others it may be taking on a fulltime QQI 5/6 course or short-term training. Many of our clients have progressed along various avenues from developing ICT skills, completing courses with Cork ETB, securing Safe Pass, Forklift licences and more.

Over the last year we have seen clients progress in to work across construction, healthcare, ICT, medical device manufacturing, food manufacturing, office administration, retail and public service roles. Other clients have taken on opportunities via Tús or CE schemes to build confidence and key skills that will aid them in an eventual return to employment.

We also support clients to access key community supports and services to help them take the first steps to address some of the barriers that may have made the transition back to employment more challenging. This may involve providing information around medical services, mental health supports, social prescribing services, language/literacy supports and community groups that may help rebuild a person's social connections.

We believe that everyone has potential, possessing a unique blend of skills, talents and strengths. Our job is to take the client's unique blend of skills, strengths and interests and explore avenues that may suit them and will hopefully lead to them securing long-term sustainable employment in the future. The LAES service requires a strong collaborative partnership between the client and their caseworker all with a view to securing meaningful progress specific to the unique context of each person.

SECAD Jobs Fair

The SECAD LAES co-ordinated a Jobs Fair which took place on 28th September 2023 in the Midleton Park Hotel and brought together a diverse range of employers located in Cork County, who had job opportunities on offer including pharmaceutical manufacturing, bus driving, HGV mechanics, general manufacturing, healthcare, retail, construction, warehousing and logistics, electronic recycling, data destruction. There was something available for every level of experience and qualification.

The event was aimed at people who were seeking opportunities to return to employment as well as those interested in changing careers and delivered in conjunction with the LAES INTREO Partner: Local Area Employment Service.

Compiled by Kieran Butler, Coordinator, LAES



SECAD Team at the Jobs Fair

Get Job Ready Training

In terms of skills to enter the workforce or to progress to better quality employment, SECAD Partnership supported 208 clients to take part in training under the dedicated 'Get Job Ready' programme. This included manual handling, Safe Pass, HACCP food

safety training, bus license training, retail skills and customer services as well as a number of information sessions with key stakeholders such as the Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) and the Retail Skillnet.

The demand for training in 2023 was unprecedented, as SECAD endeavoured to provide free training to those who accessed our support services. Striking a balance between in-person, on-line and blended training, SECAD responded well to the needs of our client base. As an add on, we started to provide Ukrainian translation for some of our training such as Safe Pass. There was a huge up take for Safe Pass through Ukrainian due to the demand for construction staff and the necessity for this accredited training.

The 'Get Job Ready' training is open to all registered SECAD clients and we offer our training provision to clients from diverse backgrounds and abilities. During 2023, we partnered with the Strive Programme to offer our training to those with disabilities. We also continued to support those currently living in direct provision across the county. Youthreach also availed of our training programme where we linked with the Retail Skillnet to offer customer service training and assist people into jobs in retail.

We ran workshops with the Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) to introduce SECAD clients to the free training offered by CETB across the county. This proved to be very beneficial as we endeavour to make links with external training providers and encourage our clients to take up training and education opportunities.

In 2023, we saw our bus license clients from 2022 complete their training to become fully qualified bus drivers through a collaboration with the CETB. Jobs in this sector are and were hugely in demand and SECAD is proud that the drivers have now received their certification for D and D1 bus licenses. Our clients have taken up jobs with Bus Éireann and Local Link as well as many other private bus companies involved in school transportation. Two Ukrainian clients were among the graduating group in 2023.

Compiled by Donna Cleary, Development Officer

Strive Programme

During 2023, the Strive programme, built on the work carried out during the previous Ability programmes. A new approach was taken which was group oriented and also provided support on a 1:1 basis, determined by individual needs. Group sessions included Art Therapy and Work Preparation using Drama.

The types of subjects covered during the group sessions were very varied but also with a clear view of the end result – that students would be better prepared to start considering Independent Living Skills, part time or full time work, volunteering, further training and education or, whatever was most appropriate for the individual. This is very much a person centred process, where the programme participant is front and centre of any decisions or goals related to their own personal hopes and dreams.

The types of subjects that were covered in the sessions, particularly the group sessions included the following:

- How to take part in interviews, using role playing and acting.
- What are CVs, and why we need them.

- Understanding Body Language – as much of communication does not any include words, this is particularly helpful for people who find it difficult to understand body language.
- Personal Profiling – 'what are we good at, and what are the areas where we may need a bit of extra help'. This is especially important for all students who hope to find a work placement or some paid work. It is also important in all other aspects of life.
- Personal Presentation: how we look, how we take care of ourselves, physically preparing for an interview. The Do's and Don'ts.
- Know Your Rights – what are they, and why are they important.
- The basics of Employment Law.
- Building resilience

Certified training was available to the participants and included:

- HACCP Level 1 and 2
- Manual handling certification
- Safe Pass

Under Strive, SECAD worked constructively with:

- HSE Owennacurra Mental Health Services
- CASA (Caring & Sharing Association)
- Cope Foundation
- Midleton & Carrigtohill Family Resource Centres
- National Learning Network, Hollyhill
- Midleton Social Prescribers
- Crawford Gallery
- Cork Sports Partnership
- Cork ETB
- Rehab

Nora Riordan from Killeagh took part in the programme in Midleton, and also attends the Community Hub with the Cope Foundation from Monday to Friday. With the support of SECAD and the Hub, Nora secured a work placement in a retail store in Midleton. In the photo, Nora is proudly displaying her bronze medal which she won after coming third in a Munster bowling competition



Nora Riordan

Compiled by Mary Jordan, Development Officer

SECAD Health Care Initiative

Our Health Care QQI Level 5 programme came to a conclusion in 2022, which was delivered by SECAD in partnership with Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) and funded through the European Social Fund (ESF). By the end of the programme, almost 100% employment had been attained with the participants achieving two major awards. The graduation was held in the Midleton Park Hotel and was attended by the participants and their families.

One of the participants who had lived in Direct Provision used this qualification to gain employment in the caring profession during 2023 as a private carer. Her husband attended SECAD's Jobs Fair in September 2023 and sourced employment from one of the companies who had hosted a stand at the event. The two incomes combined allowed them to rent a house in the private sector and they transitioned from living in Direct Provision to living in the local community. This is just one example of how a change in educational and financial circumstances can benefit a family living in our community.



Compiled by Vicki Kelly, Development Officer



3 SECTION

**Community
Development Supports**

Community Development Supports

Rural Development Programme Funded Projects – Community

Positive Passage People – Outdoor Gym

Funded through the LEADER Rural Development Programme 2014-2022, and supported through Cork County Council, this project was led by the Positive Passage People group. Following consultation with the local community, the group had identified a need for additional community facilities within the area, particularly outdoor recreation areas where members of the community could meet or socialise within the town. Young people in the town also identified the lack of a gym facility in the town that could be accessed by all.

The project involved the development of a new, wheelchair accessible, outdoor gym facility located in Marmullane Park in the heart of Passage West. The gym equipment is ideally situated adjacent to a popular Multi Use Games Area and a busy walking loop. A true community wellbeing initiative, it provides free and open access to a range of fitness equipment in a safe, outdoor environment where users cannot only exercise, but also meet and socialise with others in their community. Designed with a strong social inclusion focus, the project has benefits for people of all ages and abilities and encourages both mental and physical fitness for all.



Churchtown South Community Hall

Churchtown South Community Council originated in 1948 as a branch of Muintir na Tire. When the parish built a new primary school in 1966, the old school was donated to Muintir na Tire for use as a community hall. Over the years, the hall had fallen into a poor state of repair and required significant upgrades to make it fit for purpose.

Churchtown South is a small, rural village with very limited local amenities and this project was seen to be critical to the sustainability and vibrancy of the area. The group was awarded LEADER funding to assist them to undertake vital upgrades which included the replacement of the roof, windows and doors and to install a new heating system and toilets.

In addition to providing a modern, comfortable and safe community hall and stage area, this project has made provision for new groups and events that have emerged as a result. The hall is now a popular location for classes, dances, parties and fitness activities for all members of the community. It is of particular importance to local older residents and young families who regularly use the centre to attend social events, meet with neighbours and friends or take part in classes. The upgrades to the hall have ensured that the hall remains in operation and that it maintains its place as a valuable asset to the community.

Compiled by Katie Kearns, Development Officer



Clonakilty Playground Refurbishment

The Clonakilty Playground Refurbishment project was granted €100,000 of LEADER funding (total project costs €189,965.56) under the theme of social inclusion – providing basic services targeted at hard to reach communities.

The former playground was over 25 years old and had become dilapidated and unsafe. The promoter recognised the need for a fit for purpose, inclusive and accessible playground for the growing population of the town, and to create a ‘destination playground’ to support the local economy.

The project aimed to provide a playground which was:

- inclusive for all ages of children and all abilities and interests;
- to make full and efficient use of the existing site to ensure an inviting and accessible space; and
- to use high quality, durable equipment

The playground was designed for local children and families as well as visitors, with special consideration of neuro-divergent children, wheelchair users and users with limited physical abilities. It provides a safe, fun, free, outdoor space for children to play, and parents and guardians to meet and connect. This is an important facility to support healthy lifestyles for children, and to ensure children and their families feel welcome and included in their community.

The playground is in a central location in the town and is accessible via a footpath from the town centre, local schools, surrounding residential areas, the Direct Provision centre, and local hotels. This in turn allows users to walk and cycle and reduces reliance on cars.

Since its official opening in June 2023, the playground is in constant and full use and has received positive feedback from local children and families, as well as visitors.



Storage Facility for Rossmore & Kilmeen Community Hall and Theatre

The storage facility for Rossmore & Kilmeen Community Hall and Theatre project received €214,687.73 LEADER funding (75% of total project costs) under the theme of social inclusion – providing basic services targeted at the hard to reach.

The construction of the storage facility enables the theatre to function at a higher capacity to benefit the community and audiences. With this safe, secure and clean storage facility for sets and equipment, the theatre space can accommodate more groups and events. The theatre offers a unique facility in West Cork as a centre of drama and theatre and has proved to be in high demand with local and national drama groups and audiences.

A key focus of this project is on the youth of the area as a way to support the growth and vibrancy of the rural community. The promoters recognise the important role that performing arts, including drama and theatre, can play in young people’s lives. The new storage facility allows for additional capacity of the main theatre, ensuring maximum use and capacity for the wider community.

The project supports the theatre as an important community facility and has the potential for increased benefits of facilitating cultural, educational and community events, and developing community and enterprise projects and networks. Since its completion in August 2023, the storage facility has been in full use by the drama and theatre group.

Compiled by Clodagh McGuirk, Development Officer



Laptop Loan Scheme

In 2021, SECAD Partnership received funding through the SOLAS Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund which was administered by Cork Education and Training Board (CETB). The funding allowed SECAD to purchase 25 laptops, which were initially to aid educational and training endeavours amidst the pandemic. Fast forward 2 years, and the initiative now extends support to learners, entrepreneurs, and job hunters within Direct Provision Centres in Macroom and Incheegala, Co. Cork and the broader SECAD area.

During 2023, the organisation facilitated the loan of 25 laptops, primarily to participants of SICAP Employment Support, with 17 allocated to individuals in the Direct Provision Centres in Macroom and Inchigeelagh, Co. Cork. These laptops served various purposes, including healthcare training, skill enhancement, educational pursuits, CV crafting, and job searches.

The Laptop Loan Scheme is akin to a library system, with each laptop being loaned out multiple times, averaging four loans per device. Loan durations vary, ranging from a brief hour to as long as eighteen months. The programme has been met with success, evidenced by the return of all laptops in good condition.

Borrowers enter into an agreement before receiving a laptop, promising to maintain its condition and use it solely for its intended purpose, whether for study or job hunting. A SECAD Development Officer endorses this agreement, confirming the terms of the

laptop's use and loan duration. Once the laptops are returned, SECAD's IT specialist meticulously erases all data, updates the security features and software, and prepares them for the next user.

Feedback from recipients has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the significant assistance the laptops have provided in job searching, online learning, and college attendance. The following are some responses gathered from a recent survey of the Laptop Loan Service:

'...all perfect very helpful. So helpful to be able to borrow and avail of the laptop made it easier to complete work at home while kids in bed etc rather than library or borrowing off someone.'

Midleton Client, laptop used for Education and Training

'The laptop loan was really helpful, and the group are amazing people.'

Doris, Riverside, Macroom, laptop used for Healthcare Training

'With the help of the laptop and the staff I feel I would not be in the position I am today. Over COVID I availed of the laptop to enhance my skill level in a few courses so I could upgrade my CV & confidence. If I had any problems or issues Cora, Magda were there to help always, The laptop was easy to use and provided everything I needed to move forward with my career. I couldn't afford a laptop at the time so it was kindly trusted to me for a period of time.'

Compiled by Eilish Walsh. Development Officer

Community Integration

Celebrating Multi-Culturalism through Food

SECAD initiated an approach in 2018, based on the concept of bringing people from different ethnic backgrounds together at neighbourhood and community levels, through a programme that is focused on linking the development of a positive multi-cultural community through food-based events. Having fallen victim to the pandemic during 2020 and 2021, the Midleton fEAST and Macroom Food Festivals returned with a renewed vigour in 2022, to be repeated in September 2023, and SECAD returned centre stage with the multi-Cultural Event, this time with the added Ukrainian culture.



In Midleton the 'SECAD Celebrates Multiculturalism through Food' event was held at MY Place with 15 nationalities preparing food samples, while an opportunity was given for new enterprises such as SnackBerry to meet the public at the SECAD information village outside Midleton Courthouse.

In Macroom, the event was held in the Food Tent in the Square and, participants once again included residents at the Emergency Accommodation Centre and surrounding Ukrainian Group accommodation centres as well as different nationalities living in the Macroom area. An addition to the festival in 2023 was the inclusion of a parade of nations and an Indian band and dancers which drew a great crowd, despite heavy rain on the day.

Art Programmes in East and West Cork Centres

The aim of this programme was to facilitate group art classes giving participants an opportunity to develop new art skills, relax, participate as part of a group and express themselves through an art process. The projects resulted in making St Patrick's Day banners, Valentines and Christmas cards, group paintings and writing and illustrating Ukrainian traditional recipes.

When working with people who are experiencing high levels of stress and trauma, it is important to develop a sense of safety within the group and to hold the class as a wellbeing space; it is therapeutic but not therapy.



Valentines' Day Cards and Colour Theory in Inchigeela and Macroom

The art classes were held in the most accessible spaces in the centres or in community spaces such as village halls and spaces managed by Cork County Council. In spaces outside of the Ukrainian accommodation centres, we were delighted to welcome non-Ukrainian participants into these classes. Work was also shown during Midleton Arts Festival and was used as part of the local St Patrick's Day parade.

Compiled by Toni McCaul, Social Inclusion Programmes Manager and Tara Doyle, Development Officer



Cork County Arts Officer, Ian McDonagh and SECAD's Danielle Sheehy with Artwork from a Ukrainian group at the 2023 Midleton Arts Festival

Celebration of Ukrainian Community Integration

Mr Joe O'Brien TD, Minister of State for Community Development, Integration and Charities at the Department of Rural and Community Development joined SECAD for an afternoon of celebrating the friendships that have been formed between the Ukrainian Community and the local people living in the Midleton and Whitegate area.



During his visit, the Minister met with some of the Ukrainian people living in the area and sampled Ukrainian food. He also visited stands which highlighted the successful integration initiatives which are currently being delivered including the supports and programmes provided by SECAD and other agencies including the DEASP, HSE, Red Cross, Cork ETB, REALT, Tusla, Cork County Childcare Committee, CDYS and Midleton FRC.

Stands also displayed the activities organised by local volunteer groups which support inclusion including the Kalyna Place project, Midleton Hub, Fáilte Isteach groups and Aghada Sister Hub. The community projects that received Community Recognition Fund grants in the Whitegate area of East Cork were also represented.

This event provided an opportunity to recognise and showcase the integration and inclusion supports offered to the Ukrainian community over the last year through the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in collaboration with other agencies, volunteers and community groups.

The Minister said at the event:

“Today, we celebrate the integration of new arrivals into local communities and the collaboration and responsiveness of local agencies, local communities, new and existing community groups coming together to ensure that a warm welcome was extended here in East Cork.

“I am aware the numbers availing of your vital services have increased significantly over the last few years and I know this has required a huge response from you, your staff, your communities and your volunteers, all who have gone above and beyond in providing supports to those who need it most.

“I am overwhelmed by the great range of collaborative activities delivered, giving support through wellbeing activities, language supports, friendly conversation and mental health supports to combat loneliness and isolation and to ensure that all members of our diverse community feel welcomed and valued and to ensure no one is left behind.”

Compiled by Toni McCaul, Social Inclusion Programmes Manager and Tara Doyle, Development Officer



SECAD Rural Social Scheme

Tree Planting in Memory of Frances Burke

A tree planting ceremony took place to honour the memory of our former Rural Social Scheme (RSS) supervisor, Frances Burke who sadly passed away in 2022. It took place outside the SECAD Office in Knockgriffin, where family members, staff of SECAD and Rural Social Scheme workers gathered together to plant the tree as a lasting tribute to Frances.



Shared stories were recalled among those gathered with SECAD CEO, Ryan Howard speaking on behalf of the company along with Mark O’Connell, Tús Supervisor and Declan Barron, RSS Supervisor who spoke on behalf of work colleagues and RSS workers. Donal Burke, husband of Frances spoke on behalf of the family. Afterwards everyone mingled outside and inside for light refreshments and more stories about the positive impact that Frances had during her time with SECAD and throughout her life.

RSS Farmers help out in flood relief in East Cork

While Middleton and Glanmire bore the brunt of storm Babet, other local areas including, Killeagh, Mogeely, Castlemartyr and Youghal were also badly affected. Many cars got stuck in floods and local farmers including some on RSS provided assistance and pulled the cars from the floods with their tractors. Unfortunately many of the vehicles were damaged severely with the water but thankfully no lives were lost.

Compiled by Declan Barron, Rural Social Scheme Supervisor

Tús Programme

Barbara O'Connell commenced on Tús in March 2023 with a new placement provider, Wilton United. Wilton United are based in the Lee Road and they have numerous football teams in both boys and girls from six years of age all the way up to Senior Adult football. Barbara was in a joint role as an administrator and as a coach.

Barbara's main role was in coaching the young girls' teams as she is a qualified UEFA coach and currently holds a UEFA B badge. The quality of coaching provided by Barbara to these young kids has had a massive impact already as chairman, John Leonard explained, "Barbara has been involved with this club since she was a young girl herself but to have her here coaching all the girls through the Tús programme is a huge benefit to our club".

Barbara also spoke about how she benefited from her involvement with Tús, "I was delighted to come on the Tús Scheme as coaching is what I love to do, and the Tús scheme allowed me to do something that I love. I would recommend the Tús Scheme to anyone like me

that had to take time out of work for whatever reason as my confidence has really come back. "

Barbara will continue to coach and volunteer with Wilton United when her contract finishes up later this month.

Compiled by Mark O'Connell, Tús Supervisor



Cork Bike Week



SECAD staff moved one of their fortnightly staff meetings onto 2 wheels during Bike Week in 2023. Staff meetings mainly take place online so it was a great opportunity for everyone to meet in person. Over 20 staff members took part and it provided the opportunity to get back on the saddle for the people who had not cycled for a while or even since they were children and needed a refresher.

SECAD applied for funding through Cork Sports Partnership and then linked with Midleton Greenway

Bikes & Bites for the bike hire. On the day, Midleton Greenway provided a selection of bikes for staff to try out under the guidance of experienced cycle instructors. They provided a really good introduction to cycling and everyone picked up some hints regardless of their cycling experience. The bikes included hybrid and e-bikes so anyone interested in potentially buying their own e-bike was able to take one out for a good road test.

Midleton FC allowed us to use their car park for the training and afterwards, staff could choose whether to practice some more before heading out on the road. Most opted to head out on a 5 mile rural scenic route which is the same route for the Midleton AC 5 mile annual road race. This took us past the Gaelscoil, Castle Rock housing estate, and then towards Ahenesk and passing Ballyannan Castle en route back into Midleton. It was a fun morning for all and everyone got to experience the freedom, joy and health benefits of cycling and also meeting colleagues in person.

Compiled by Sinéad Conroy, Development Officer

SECTION
4

Environmental Investments

Environmental Investments

Wild Work and Wellbeing in the Community

In 2023, SECAD ran many Wild Work themed wellbeing sessions and programmes for people and community groups across the area bringing people together in nature, including those from local community groups, schools, people living in asylum, and refugees from Ukraine.

We hosted nature walks for Ukrainian people living in centres in Macroom, Inchigeelagh, Youghal and Trabolgan. For these walks, we explored forests or beaches in the vicinity and learned about the flora and fauna growing there. We exchanged knowledge about the uses of plants in Ireland and Ukraine and the folklore associated with them.

During these walks, everybody could relax and enjoy the open space, and enjoy getting to know each other better. There was always a great appreciation for the beauty of the spaces we were in, such as the White Bay Beach or Rostellan Woods. On occasion, we ventured further, making use of our SECAD vans and transported up to 20 people to sites such as Gougane Barra National Forest Park, or to the Ballycotton Cliffs. These excursions were a nice opportunity for those without their own transport to see a new location and have a nice day out with their family.



From September to November we ran 2 programmes: Citizen Science and Family Nature School. Our Citizen Science programme took participants into nature to observe their local landscape, learn how to interpret biodiversity and record what they discover. This programme showed them how being a citizen scientist can be an enjoyable and fulfilling way to tap into the wellbeing benefits of nature. It was a 3-day programme that we ran across 3 centres and aimed to help integrate the Ukrainian people with locals in the area. It was also a good opportunity for them to practise their English language skills with local people.

Family Nature School is an innovative educational approach to outdoor learning in a woodland or natural setting. Participants have the opportunity to develop their skills, self-awareness and confidence through hands-on play and engaging learning outside in nature – benefits that are confirmed by a growing body of research.

This programme ran for 5 sessions and targeted families living in asylum in Glounthane. This programme was a wonderful way to engage the residents in a nature wellbeing programme and encourage them to explore nature as a family. It was also a great benefit to the adults as it helped them develop their self-confidence and it is hoped that they will now engage in more SECAD supports.

The positive outcomes of these interventions include improved environmental education, respect for nature, respect for each other, self-development, improved sense of belonging and togetherness, resilience, stress relief, and improved mental wellbeing.

Compiled by Melanie Smith, Development Officer



Biodiversity for Primary Schools

The **Biodiversity for Primary Schools** project was delivered in schools across South and West Cork during 2023. The training project received €41,756.98 LEADER funding in each area (100% project costs), under the theme of Rural Environment - Local Biodiversity.

This was a SECAD project, delivered by a team of ecologists from Veri. The training programme engaged with primary school students to:

- explore and discover local wildlife and habitats;
- monitor quantity and quality of biodiversity in a variety of landscapes;
- develop personal relationships with nature and local landscapes;
- promote personal health and wellness through connection with nature; and
- improve social wellbeing through public participation.

The programme content included:

- Wild Work and Technology
- Habitat Mapping
- Citizen Science in Meadows
- Citizen Science in Streams and Rivers
- Supporting and Creating Habitats

The programme provided an innovative approach to biodiversity education and monitoring, and positive social and personal wellbeing for children. The programme used a range of learning approaches

including Citizen Science, technology, art and self-led learning. This allowed the children to understand and connect with nature, and to carry out nature-based activities such as creating new habitats or monitoring wildlife.

The programme was delivered to 20 schools across South and West Cork. To fit with schools' schedules, it was delivered as a full, six week course to 5th and 6th classes, and as a short, introductory course to 1st-6th classes. The participants visited a variety of local landscapes, engaged in a variety of learning activities, and spent time exploring and playing in nature.

The feedback from participating children and teachers was very positive. They enjoyed the approach and benefited from the expert led learning on biodiversity and nature connection.

Compiled by Clodagh McGuirk, Development Officer



Rivers & Streams Photography Exhibition

In Spring 2023, SECAD Partnership invited members of the public to submit their photos on the theme of Rivers and Streams. The call was open to all, with categories for Primary School, Secondary School and Adults.

The range of photos received was a great reflection on how the public use and enjoy the amazing resources that our Rivers and Streams provide here in Cork and elsewhere whether for leisure, recreation, contemplation, exploration or appreciation.

This competition which was run by SECAD Partnership and funded by the Community Water Development Fund attracted entries from all ages and from across County Cork.

The prize giving was held on Saturday, 25th November in Middleton Library who had provided the fantastic exhibition space, which allowed people to come and enjoy the display of photos. SECAD was joined in Middleton Library by many of the talented photographers, amongst them prize winners in the Primary School, Secondary School and Adult categories.

Mary Duggan from Middleton Library welcomed all including friends and family members of the photographers and Catherine Seale from the Local Authorities Water Programme outlined the importance of our waterways in our everyday lives. The prizes were presented by Nuala O'Connell from SECAD who congratulated everyone on the quality and variety of the photos submitted.

Winners included the following:



Jamie Dunne – 1st place in the Primary School category



Ruby Clifford – 1st place in Secondary School category



Dara Corcoran – 1st Place in Adult category



Primary School

- 1st: Jamie Dunne
- 2nd: Giorgio Turra
- 3rd: Ciara Kiely

Highly Commended

- Kylle Dunne, Luciana Turra, Matilda Carroll

Secondary School

- 1st: Ruby Clifford
- 2nd: Annie O’Meara
- 3rd: Isla Johnston

Adult

- 1st: Dara Corcoran
- 2nd: Mary Doyle
- 3rd: Sean Paterson

Highly Commended

- Cammy Harley, Bernadette Lynch, Paschal Sweeney, Sean McInerney, Iryna Deneka, P McAllister, Sam McCarthy, Geoffrey Eastaway, Louise Daly

Compiled by Nuala O’Connell, Development Officer

Regenerative Agriculture in Ireland Project

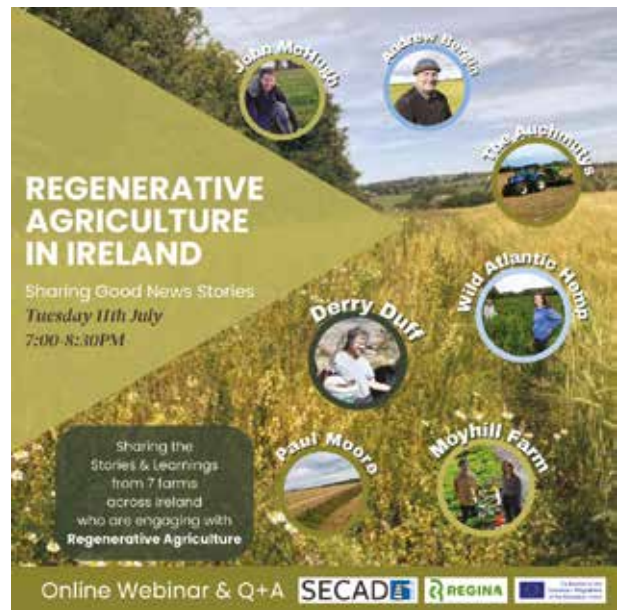
During the summer in 2023, SECAD published a series of blogs on www.secad.ie about farmers who are using regenerative agriculture practices in their farming. Then on Tuesday, 11th July 2023, SECAD hosted an evening of stories and discussion about the farms which are located across Ireland and the farmers who are engaging with regenerative agriculture and other sustainable farming practices.

The webinar involved a short introduction to Regenerative Agriculture and then an overview of each farm followed by a Q&A with the farmers. The questions came mainly from the people who joined online for the webinar and there was an opportunity to submit questions in advance.

6 of the 7 farmers were able to join the webinar and share their experience and knowledge. They included:

- **Laura Jane Foley & Daniel Lyons**, Wild Atlantic Hemp, County Clare [Hemp]
- **Andrew Bergin**, County Kildare [Arable]
- **Steve Collins**, DerryDuff Farm, County Cork [Berry Farm & Mixed Livestock]
- **John McHugh**, Clondarrig Farm, County Laois [Dairy, Beef & Community Allotments]
- **Paul Moore**, County Cork [Arable]
- **Fergal Smith**, Moyhill Farm, County Clare [Market Farm & Mixed Livestock]

Mervyn Auchmuty from Co Roscommon was unfortunately unable to take part but we were able to share some of the information provided in his case study.



SECAD's Regenerative Agriculture project is part of the Erasmus+ REGINA Project and was funded through the European Erasmus+ Project. SECAD Partnership has joined partners from Italy, Greece, Hungary and Slovenia in the Erasmus+ REGINA Project. This project stands for: 'Regenerative agriculture. An innovative approach towards mitigation of climate change through multi-tier learning.'

Compiled by Isabel Power, Graduate Development Officer



5 SECTION

Corporate & Public Services

Corporate and Public Services

Community Benefit Fund

The Community Benefit Funds during 2023 provided a valuable source of funding for the communities served and in particular the rural communities surrounding the Wind Farms. The recent census results show that there are now more people living and working in rural Ireland than ever before.

The Community Benefit Funds support communities to develop and grow great facilities and services for the whole community to enjoy. A Community Benefit Fund has the potential to bring significant positive benefits to local communities and to leave a lasting positive legacy in the communities hosting the infrastructure. Local clubs, societies, groups, charities, events and activities are supported through the Wind Farm Community Funds, with a wide variety of the types and scale of projects supported.

During 2023:

- 247 community groups were supported through the Community Benefit Funds
- Over €2 million was allocated to successful applicant groups

To account for an increase in the cost of managing facilities and services, applicants, in most cases, were awarded at least 80% of the amount they applied for, to allow them to adequately complete their projects, while also bearing the burden of increased running costs.

ESB Celebrating Community Achievements Webinar

This annual event, held on 3rd October 2023, was again a huge success. The Webinar is an opportunity to celebrate a selected number of groups who have successfully completed a project with the aid of funding from the Wind Farm Community Funds, while also providing those attending with the opportunity to be inspired by the groups presenting.

“Having watched this evening’s webinar, I’m looking forward to next year’s application!”.
Mary O’Riordan - Ballydesmond Sheltered Housing

Active Connections Project

They received €4,000 in funding from the ESB Wind Farm Community Funds for the Ember Camp West Waterford project.

“Our Ember Camps support a population of young people that all have additional needs. Our programmes are often the only respite their families get outside of school. Having funds like this open to local agencies ensures that we can do more. It means that it impacts local people”. Raymond Burke, Active Connections



Active Connections - Ember Camp, West Waterford

Buncrana Anglers Association Project

They received funding of €1,500 from the ESB Crockahenny Wind Farm for the installation of two steel pontoons and child-safe metal handrails at Fullerton Reservoir.

“The funding which you provide allows us to tackle projects which we would otherwise not be in a position to undertake. This funding has allowed the Buncrana Anglers Association to enhance the angling experience for anglers of all ages by giving them safe and easy passage into and out of our boats. Anglers of all ages and infirmities are now able to get into and out of the boats in a safe manner. We are now able to offer people with more serious mobility limitations, the opportunity to experience angling from a boat in stunning surroundings”. Sean McGuinness, Treasurer Buncrana Anglers Association



Fullerton Reservoir

Glen Rovers GAC Armoy

Funding of £7,463 from the NTR Castlecraig Community Benefit Fund was provided towards the cost of fencing the newly purchased land to be used for sporting and recreational activities.

“With the generous funding provided by the NTR, we are in the progress of providing our local community with the use of a practice area that can be used all year round. All ages, both male and female, have the opportunity to play all year and recreational use for older people in our small rural community”.

Philip Christie, Treasurer

Compiled by Elaine Barrett, Community Benefit Fund Coordinator



Members of the Glen Rovers GAC Armoy Team

Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit Fund

Following its appointment as Fund Administrator for EirGrid’s €2.4 million Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit Fund, SECAD Partnership worked closely with the local Community Forum and EirGrid’s Community Engagement team to develop a community led fund strategy which would support those living within a 2km radius of the significant new East Cork grid infrastructure project.

The €2.4 million fund will be released on a phased basis as the project progresses:

- **Phase 1** releases 40% of the total fund at the start of the construction phase.
- **Phase 2** releases 30% of the total fund mid project; and
- **Phase 3** releases 30% of the total fund when the project goes live (when the line becomes a part of the electricity grid and electricity runs through it).

An in depth community consultation process was undertaken to provide an opportunity for those living and operating within the area to have a say in how the fund would be prioritised. Through a series of workshops, interviews, an online survey, webinars and community clinics, SECAD identified a range of strategic priorities for investment under the fund’s three core streams of i) Community, ii) Sustainability and iii) Biodiversity. The final strategy, the first to be implemented nationally following the launch of EirGrid’s new Community Benefit Policy, was signed off by the local Community Forum in April 2023.

The following principles are at the centre of the Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit Fund strategy.

The fund:

- must support projects that are community-led.
- will leave a positive legacy within communities that host the Celtic Interconnector infrastructure.
- will support projects which align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Between April 2023 and July 2023, SECAD worked closely with EirGrid to develop a detailed set of fund guidelines and the Community Benefit Fund opened for online applications under Phase 1 in July 2023. The first fund phase, valuing €960,000, remained open for applications until September 2023, throughout which time SECAD provided support to local community and voluntary groups to prepare and submit their applications. The fund received a significant response in the local community with a total of 52 applications received and €3.95 million requested in grant aid.

Compiled by Katie Kearns, Development Officer



Michelle Walsh, Community Liaison Officer, Celtic Interconnector; Suzanne Kearney, SECAD Partnership and Sinead Dooley, Head of Public Engagement, EirGrid

Community Food Initiatives



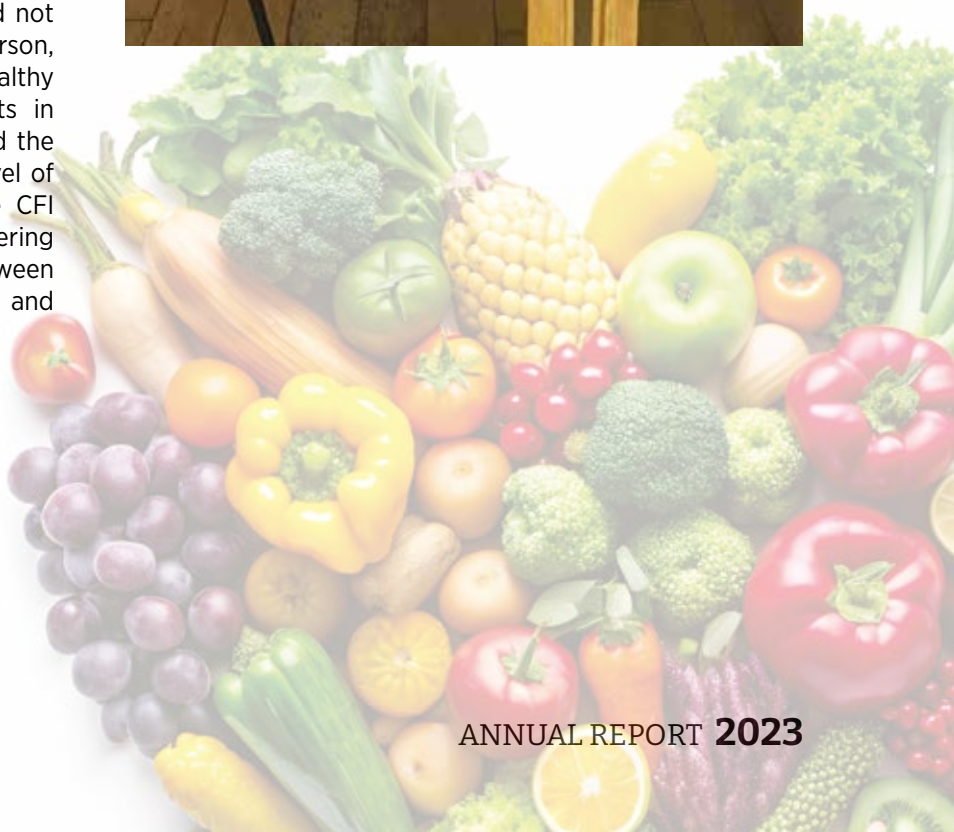
SECAD has been administering the Community Food Initiatives (CFI) on behalf of **safefood** since 2016. It aims to equip members of the community with the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthier food choices. The core components of the CFI are the small projects and community events that are informative, practical and engaging and based around the 6 CFI themes. The support is provided through community events and small projects.

The small projects aim to provide an introduction to healthy eating and include the development of cooking skills, understanding food labels and the various food groups, and the importance of a balanced diet. Under the guidance of cooking tutors and nutrition experts, participants learn to prepare healthy, simple meals using affordable and accessible ingredients. These sessions can also cover cooking techniques, food safety, and meal planning and budgeting.

The purpose of the community events is to extend the reach and impact of the CFI and can take the form of collaborative projects with local schools, community organisations, sports clubs, etc. The intention behind running these events is to spread the healthy eating message out into the wider community.

During 2023, the CFI has reached into communities around the island of Ireland, with participation from different age groups and nationalities. The introduction of the CFI at Home programme has added a new dimension to the CFI and allows people, who would not be in a position to attend classes in person, the opportunity to improve their healthy eating skills. Feedback from participants in the small projects, community events and the CFI at Home projects indicates a high level of satisfaction and the involvement of the CFI implementing organisations in the Steering Groups has strengthened partnerships between community organisations, public bodies and agencies in the local areas of operation.

Compiled by Sinéad Conroy, Development Officer





6 SECTION

National & International Partnerships

International Partnerships

West Cork Communities Environment and Climate Action Seminar and Project Week

The seminar, held from 24-27 April 2023, brought together community groups and stakeholders from West Cork to discuss community-led initiatives addressing climate and biodiversity crises. Activities included a seminar at CECAS in Leap and a three-day learning journey in West Cork, exploring community initiatives in Clonakilty, the Hollies, Enniskeane, and Bere Island.

The aims for the seminar included providing opportunities to:

- Discuss challenges and opportunities for sustainable solutions.
- Share knowledge on community-led sustainable development.
- Focus on locally specific solutions for resilience.

Attendees included West Cork and other Irish community groups involved in environment, climate, and biodiversity projects, as well as international

TWINLAG Co-operation partners LAG Ykkösakseli and LAG EMO. The event showcased community engagement in transitioning to a sustainable future, supported by SECAD. It was an opportunity to deepen relations and celebrate learnings between partner organisations.

The Community Groups who attended included: Wexford Environmental Network, CECAS, ECOLISE, Cultivate, Irish Doughnut Economics Network, Edible Kinsale, Transition Town Kinsale, StreamScapes, BEAG, Baltimore Community Market, Clogheen Marsh, Clonakilty Biodiversity Group, Clonakilty Tree Planting, Clonakilty Community Garden, Clonakilty Tidy Towns, and Sustainable Energy Communities.

Speakers during the seminar included Donal Chambers, Alice Glendinning, Moze Jacobs, Jonnie Goyer, Ana Ospina, Liam Doyle, and Valerie Kingston.

Several practical steps were identified for replication by community groups:

- Nature Value Farming: encourages biodiversity-friendly farming with low external inputs.
- Tree Planting and Nurseries: community-led tree planting initiatives and nurseries support biodiversity.
- Removal of Non-Native Species: clearing invasive species to promote native woodlands.
- Green Spaces: repurposing spaces for biodiversity gardens and community events.
- Citizen Scientists: training citizens in ecosystem monitoring and data collection.
- Renewable Technology Training: training tradesmen in renewable technologies.
- Micro Hydroelectricity Generation: exploring hydroelectricity for energy independence.
- Routes to Market: facilitating market access for self-reliant households.
- Expertise and Skill Sharing: leveraging skills for community-led climate action.
- Co-working Spaces: developing co-working spaces in rural areas.
- Permaculture Training: providing training for sustainable living practices.
- Diversity: ensuring diverse stakeholder involvement for holistic initiatives.
- Social and Celebratory Events: using events to foster community pride and future initiatives.
- Community-Led Bike Services: promoting bike repair and circular economy practices.
- Household-Level Sustainability: encouraging micro-enterprises and resilience.
- Lease Procurement: assisting in leasing spaces for community projects.
- Seaweed Harvesting: promoting seaweed as a fertilizer and food source.
- Glass Crushing: replicating Bere Island's glass recycling innovation.



Drawn on the day by Hazel Hurley, Visual Storyteller



Climate change is a complex, unpredictable, and multi-faceted issue which endangers biodiversity, our global ecosystems, and the well-being of communities worldwide. Consequently, no one individual can solve this problem alone. It requires collaboration between humanity across and between the local, regional, national, and global levels. This challenge will require that we, as communities, commit to collaboration and work towards shared goals and visions orientated toward a sustainable, fair, and equitable future for all.

The seminar highlighted the importance of community engagement in addressing climate and biodiversity crises. Collaboration at local, regional, national, and global levels is essential for a sustainable future. The event underscored the role of community-led initiatives in the global movement for environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

Compiled by Eilish Walsh, Development Officer. Original report supplied by Oscar Mooney, ECOLISE





SECTION
7

Funds And Programmes
Managed By SECAD

Funds & Programmes Managed by SECAD

SECAD Partnership CLG

SECAD Partnership CLG is a Local Development Company established in 1995. SECAD is a not for profit, community led organisation with charitable status. SECAD works with a range of stakeholders in rural areas including community and voluntary groups, disadvantaged target groups, job seekers, businesses (including private and social enterprise), farmers, schools, the corporate sector and academia.

SECAD provides a range of innovative rural development and social inclusion supports, to motivate and enable our communities to create a more vibrant, sustainable and inclusive society, in partnership with public, private, academic and community partners.

SECAD has evolved from managing a single funding programme in the mid 1990's to the management and delivery of a wide range of funds and services including, social investment and employment supports, on behalf of the Irish Government, State Bodies and the EU.

SECAD currently delivers a number of major programmes alongside other smaller schemes and initiatives, including LEADER, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, the Rural Social Scheme and Tús.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The aim of SICAP is to reduce disadvantage and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. Its vision is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or unemployed through community development approaches, targeted supports and interagency collaboration, where the values of equality and inclusion are promoted, and

human rights are respected. SECAD has delivered various iterations of SICAP since the mid-1990s.

SECAD is currently delivering SICAP II which began on 1st January 2018 and runs until December 2023, across the South Cork area, with an annual contract value of over €900,000. SECAD also delivers the Ukrainian Support Fund alongside SICAP since 2022.

LEADER

SECAD has delivered the LEADER Programme since 1995. SECAD is an Implementing Partner for LEADER 2014-2022 in two 'Local Action Group' areas, South Cork and West Cork with a budget of over €5m across the two LAG areas, and additional funding through the LEADER Food Initiative and LEADER Co-operation.

The LEADER Programme supports projects across a diverse range of themes including: rural tourism, enterprise development, rural towns, access to broadband, basic services targeted at hard-to-reach communities, rural youth, protection and sustainable

use of water resources, protection and improvement of local biodiversity, and development of renewable energy.

SECAD is also accessing funding through the national LEADER Food Initiative for food enterprises and food related initiatives. In addition, SECAD is delivering significant LEADER Co-operation projects (within Ireland and with European partners) with funding coming from the national LEADER Co-operation project. LEADER is co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

STRIVE (Strive to achieve your potential) September 2021-December 2023

The STRIVE project is funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund – Supporting Disability. It is a strengths-based approach to increasing labour market participation of people with disabilities through a range of person-centred and wrap around supports in order to enhance opportunities for career progression, increase opportunities for paid and voluntary employment and support greater engagement in community life.

This regional project is delivered within the territories of IRD Duhallow (North West Cork, South East Kerry and Mid Cork), Ballyhoura Development (South and East Limerick and North Cork) and SECAD (South and East Cork) and is a follow on project to 'Ability' funded

through the Programme for Employability Inclusion and Learning (PEIL).

As public services have been scaled back and reduced in rural areas, there are fewer opportunities for people with disabilities to access education, training and employment. While the scale of social exclusion is beyond the scope of this Dormant Accounts Programme alone, the programme represents a very important employment activation vehicle in enabling people with disabilities to achieve their potential. SECAD is working intensively with 18 people with disabilities to provide them with work placement opportunities and enhance their engagement in the broader community.

Tús – Community Workplace Initiative

The roll out of the Tús Programme was announced by the Irish Government in December 2010, as a direct response to the downturn of the Irish economy, which caused unemployment numbers to rise considerably. The aim of Tús is to provide short-term, quality work opportunities for those who are unemployed, by providing 12-month work placements in local not for profit/community organisations, who provide services of benefit to local communities.

While responsibility for the operation of Tús rests with the Department of Social Protection, it is managed at a local level, on the Department's behalf, by Local Development Companies (LDCs) like SECAD. LDCs (and in the Gaeltacht areas, Údarás na Gaeltachta) were selected by Government to deliver Tús which SECAD began operating in July 2011. SECAD has a current allocation of 293 places for people coming from the Live Unemployment Register and can employ up to 11 Tús Supervisors to manage those placements.

Rural Social Scheme (RSS)

The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) was launched in 2004 by the Irish Government and is aimed at supporting low-income farmers and fishermen/women. The RSS was set up to provide income support for farmers and those in the fishing industry who are in receipt of long-term social welfare payments, and to provide services of benefit to rural communities.

The RSS allows those on low-incomes, who are unable to earn an adequate living from their farm holding or from fishing, to earn a supplementary income in return for 19.5 hours work per week, undertaken within the community and voluntary sector. SECAD delivers the RSS on behalf of the Department of Social Protection.



Community Food Initiative (CFI)

In 2016, **safefood** invited tenders for the management of their Community Food Initiatives (CFI). SECAD was the successful tenderer and was awarded the contract. SECAD has re-tendered and will continue to administer the CFI until the end of 2024. **safefood** is an all-island organisation set up to promote awareness and knowledge of food safety and nutrition issues on the island of Ireland. Since 2016, SECAD Partnership has delivered **safefood**'s Community Food Initiatives (CFI) to positively influence the eating habits of low-income families and to identify and promote best practice in communities.

On behalf of **safefood**, SECAD works with 13 community-based organisations across the Island of Ireland – 4 in Northern Ireland and 9 in the Republic of Ireland. Each of these organisations (CFI Leaders) has a 'social inclusion' focus and experience of working with local communities e.g. Local Development Companies. SECAD supports CFI Leaders to act as champions for the CFI in their area, to develop strategic links with key agencies and to deliver a combination of large-scale workshops and smaller initiatives with target groups.

Community Benefit Funds

Since 2015, SECAD has had the role of Grant Making Organisation for a number of developers to administer their Community Benefit Funds across the island of Ireland. The aim of Community Benefit Funds is to make a contribution back to local community activities and projects. SECAD is currently contracted by ESB, Coillte, NTR, RWE, EirGrid and others to manage their community funds.

SECAD's role involves engaging with community representatives and other stakeholders in the vicinity

of windfarms, solar farms and other infrastructural developments, forming local community panels where necessary, designing the fund, managing the grant application process, screening and assessing fund applications, presenting project recommendations to the developer, managing and distributing grants to successful applicants and preparing reports and case studies for the developer. SECAD also provides capacity building supports to community groups / potential applicants in the area of benefit.

Wild Work

SECAD has a long history of involvement in environmental projects and initiatives. Wild Work is a unique initiative developed by SECAD with biodiversity at its heart. Wild Work 'helps people, help nature, help people' and has a particular focus on connecting business and communities with biodiversity. Wild Work also supports the work of both local and national organisations involved in the conservation and protection of our natural environment.

Wild Work supports employment activation, providing work experience for people interested in nature and biodiversity and also employs workers who have been long term unemployed, to undertake physical works

such as the creation of wildflower meadows to support pollinators. Awareness raising, training, technical support and physical works are among the services provided by Wild Work to promote biodiversity e.g. for communities or industries to develop biodiversity action plans and physical work on public and private land.

SECAD has provided services to a range of bodies and organisations in the area e.g. Cork County Council, Cork Airport, local Tidy Towns organisations, Pfizer Ireland Pharmaceuticals, Midleton/Fermoy Garda Youth Division, Hovione Cork, Dairygold, GSK, Crann Centre, Glenilen Farm Ltd., and PJ Hegarty among others.

Community Development Initiative (CDI)

The Community Development Initiative (CDI) is an initiative developed by Cork County Council in partnership with LEADER Implementing Partners across the County of Cork and its three Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). SECAD is a LEADER Implementing Partner for LEADER South Cork and LEADER West Cork. CDI funds are distributed periodically (e.g. every two to three years) over the seven years of the fund. The aim of the initiative is to fund local community and voluntary groups for small scale capital projects to

a minimum of €1,000 and a maximum of €25,000 per project, to improve the range and/or quality of community based facilities and amenities within Cork County, thus leading to a better quality of life.

During the first three years of the fund (valued at €1.5m) SECAD managed 130 applications, preparing them for evaluation by the LCDC, monitoring progress and processing claims for payment by Cork County Council.

Local Area Employment Service (LAES)

The INTREO Local Area Employment Service (LAES) supports people who are long-term recipients of Jobseekers payments who are referred to the service by the Department of Social Protection. The LAES works with each client on an individual basis to support and assist them into employment. We deliver our LAES services in a friendly and supportive environment with a view to providing a high-quality, personalised service to help each individual to get back into paid employment through a multi-strand approach consisting of supports to access education,

training, work-placements and monthly one-to-one meetings to support the progression of their respective job hunts.

LAES Cork is delivered by Cork City Partnership (Lead partner) and sub-partners SECAD Partnership, IRD Duhallow, Avondhu Blackwater and Ballyhoura Development. SECAD provides the LAES service across East and West Cork spanning Youghal to Bantry.

Consultations & Applications for Funding during 2023

LEADER

As part of the LEADER Strategic Plan, SECAD initiated the public consultation and engagement process with a community meeting in Carrigaline in April 2023 focusing on economic, social and environmental opportunities. Area wide consultations across South and West Cork were coordinated and facilitated by SECAD with a target to include all communities and stakeholders that SECAD had engaged with during previous programmes, in addition to targeting new potential beneficiaries. An on-line consultation process was also rolled out from mid-April by the LCDCs in conjunction with the Implementing Partners. Community consultations were undertaken by SECAD in Youghal, Ballintotis, Carrigtwohill, Carrigaline, Ballingeary, Kinsale, Rosscarbery, Skibbereen and

Ballinascarty. SECAD's community consultation meetings concluded in late May with a meeting in the Múscraí Gaeltacht.

Meetings were mostly held in community halls and facilities that were upgraded or developed through LEADER support, giving the host groups a chance to showcase their project. Thematic meetings were also held as part of the process e.g. biodiversity planning in Leap and Ballintotis as well as an on-line consultation process that continued during June. Wider stakeholder engagement was undertaken with agencies and organisations of relevance to the LEADER Strategic Plan.

SECAD was part of the consortium with Avondhu Blackwater in South Cork and with Comhar na nOileán and Avondhu Blackwater in West Cork, in the LCDC proposal to manage the LEADER Programmes for South Cork and West Cork from 2023 onwards. Draft

plans were endorsed in June 2023 with the final submission date in July 2023. It was anticipated that decisions on the award of contracts would be made in early 2024.

SICAP Strategy 2024-2028

SICAP planning meetings commenced in June 2023 as part of preparations for a new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). This included a review of the current plan, identifying key trends emerging, and considering areas of work that could be adjusted or expanded based on new programme requirements and needs across the South Cork area. The main outcome from this review was to agree and design a consultation process focusing on specific target groups. This initial consultation process

was completed by the end of June which led to a second phase of consultations with potential partners and service providers that would be key to supporting the identified target groups and disadvantaged areas.

SECAD was awarded the contract to deliver SICAP and it was announced that the contract would begin on 1st January 2024. With the city boundary expansion and a decrease in the South Cork population, there was a related cut to the SICAP budget.

WorkAbility

SECAD Partnership submitted an application to Pobal / Dept of Social Protection in September 2023 for a five year plan for WorkAbility Cork. As part of the plan, SECAD would set out to support people with disabilities, aged 16+, to access employment, including self-employment as well as education, training, personal development and confidence building, to improve their progression opportunities and employment outcomes. SECAD submitted

the application with Cork Chamber as a partner, to support the employer engagement element in particular. WorkAbility would support a wide range of participants with a disability as defined by the EIST, i.e. persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2021-2027

SECAD Partnership submitted a proposal in December 2023 to the Dept of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth following a call for applications under Objectives a and b of the AMIF. The focus of the fund is on Third Country Nationals, i.e. any person who is not a citizen of the European Union, including

but not limited to International Protection applicants; Beneficiaries of International Protection; Beneficiaries entitled to Temporary Protection (BOTP - those fleeing conflict in Ukraine). SECAD has applied for funding for up to four years commencing in 2024.



SECTION

8

SECAD Governance

SECAD Governance

SECAD Partnership CLG is a not-for-profit, community-led organisation with charitable status. SECAD strives to ensure that it operates to the highest standards through, for example, implementing the 'Governance Code for Charities' which sets out a wide range of checks and counterchecks to ensure that proper systems and procedures for the management of funding, private and public, are maintained.

SECAD also invests in the governance skills of our Board and staff each year. SECAD continues to invest in technology to protect our processing of financial and personal data adopting appropriate policies, practices and systems to record and store all information gathered as part of our work.

SECAD's Quality Assurance Systems

SECAD's Quality Assurance Systems comprises of the following key quality assurance principles:

1. **Leadership and Commitment**
2. **Employee Engagement**
3. **Excellent Business Systems & Procedures**
4. **Customer Experience**
5. **Results**



1. Leadership & Commitment

SECAD's Constitution and Corporate Governance Policy helps support the company to achieve excellent leadership and commitment in all aspects of management and decision making.

SECAD's Constitution (Memorandum & Articles of Association)

SECAD operates within the bounds of its Constitution which includes the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and regularly refers to these documents to ensure that the company is continuing meet the objectives of the organisation and that the company

is operating within the confines of its own governing document.

SECAD's Corporate Governance Policy

SECAD will be guided by its Corporate Governance Policy which is overseen by the Board of Directors. As a charity in Ireland, SECAD is obliged under the Charities Acts and must operate solely in the pursuit of its charitable objective. SECAD operates in accordance with the Charities Governance Code and is in compliance with the reporting requirements of the Charities Regulator.

2. Employee Engagement

SECAD considers its employees to be the single most important resource available to the company and strives to support its employees in every possible way. Following a review of the company's HR function in 2021, SECAD implemented a number of the actions that were highlighted in the review report and recommendations. The first of these actions was to completely review and update all company policies

and to introduce other HR related policies that were deemed necessary. This action was carried out by the Officers Subcommittee (Officers of the Board) with the support of the Management Team and a HR consultant. All new and updated policies were reviewed by the Management Team, the Officers Subcommittee and the staff. This period of review and consultation was undertaken during 2022.

The second action undertaken was to introduce, for the first time, an online HR management information system, called HR Locker, to the company, the aim of which is to assist with the efficient management of SECAD's entire team seamlessly, whether working remotely or in-office. HR Locker helps maximise SECAD's HR performance by automating absence management, holiday management, timesheets, and training in a GDPR-friendly cloud-based format. The new system was developed and customised by the management team with the assistance of a team from HR Locker during 2022 and will be launched in 2023

SECAD's Health & Safety Management System (ISO 45001)

To ensure the health and safety of its employees, trustees, beneficiaries, customers etc. SECAD has adopted the standards of ISO 45001 for Health & Safety within the organisation. ISO 45001 is an International Standard that specifies requirements for an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system, with guidance for its use, which

enables SECAD to proactively monitor and continually improve its OH&S performance in preventing injury and ill-health. ISO 45001 enables SECAD, through its OH&S management system, to integrate other aspects of health and safety, such as worker wellness/wellbeing.

SECAD's Employee Wellbeing Supports

SECAD has in place an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is available to all employees. The company also has in place an Employee Wellbeing Programme which includes wellbeing through nature events, volunteering events, social events, peer supports etc.



3. Excellent Business Systems & Procedures

SECAD's Internal Financial Procedures (IFP)

This is an internally developed document which clearly outlines the way in which SECAD carries out its financial operations. The IFP are reviewed and updated regularly by the Finance Team and are reviewed and approved by the Finance & Audit Subcommittee.

SECAD uses a financial accounting system called 'Insight' (developed by Herbst). Herbst Insight is an intuitive & fully integrated solution designed from a management perspective. The system allows the user to access real-time accurate information. Insight is a modular IT solution which is flexible and scalable as required.

The benefits of Herbst Insight are:

- Modular software – allows for a scalable and flexible options
- Optimises company operations

- Creates a leaner business approach – removes duplication and spreadsheets
- Centralises information
- Real time data for managers
- Integrated financial and management information capabilities
- Flexible nominal structure and advanced reporting utilities
- Integrated VAT and RCT payment retention
- Money control – live accounts
- Complete customer/supplier CRM
- Security – user level access control with complete audit trail.

Regular **forecasting and budgeting** ensures that SECAD is prepared for an ever-changing environment factoring in internal and external considerations and ensuring that SECAD has resources in place for any commitments undertaken.

4. Customer Experience

SECAD's principle charitable objective is to promote, support, assist and engage in (a) social development, (b) enterprise development to facilitate rural and urban regeneration or (c) community development,

designed to benefit and promote the welfare of local communities or to deal with the causes and consequences of social and economic disadvantage or poverty.

All SECAD's activities are undertaken in the pursuit of this objective and to ensure that the company continues to achieve this the company places very high value on the experience of our customers, beneficiaries etc. Customer feedback is built into every action undertaken by the company e.g. training events, grant beneficiaries, volunteers, community development events etc.

SECAD regularly carries out a cross section of case studies (written and/or video format) to assist with reviewing and analysing the impact of its work. Grant beneficiaries are required to complete end of project reports which allows SECAD to assess the benefit and impact of grant aid investment.



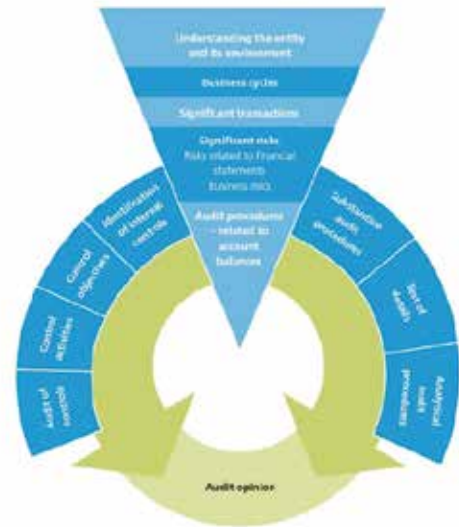
External Audits

An independent external audit is undertaken annually on SECAD's financial statements to include an examination of company financial transactions for completeness, valuation, existence, correct presentation and disclosure, and compliance with relevant company law accounting standards. This is coupled with an independent review by the external

auditor of the company's going concern position, financial procedures, systems of internal control and involves extensive analytical reviews.

The external auditors issue an annual audit report as part of the financial statements together with an audit opinion letter and audit findings letter. By following best practice and continually striving to improve, SECAD continues to receive positive feedback from its external independent review process.

Although not yet compulsory for Irish Charities, SECAD chose to produce its financial statements (since 2019) in compliance with Charities SORP FRS 102 and the Companies Act 2014 as amended by the Companies (Accounting) Act 2017. It is expected that the Charities Regulator will, in the near future, make this accounting standard compulsory for all charities in Ireland.



5. Results

SECAD has systems in place to track and monitor all areas of its operations. SECAD is required to track and monitor results for each of its funders and to submit reports as required. The company is also subject to audit from its funders e.g. Local Authority, Government Departments, Comptroller and Auditor General, Revenue, EU Commission, European Court of Auditors, other funders etc.



The following people are central to the management and operations of SECAD Partnership CLG.

Our Board Members 2023

Our Board Members 2023

- Gerard Mac Mahon (Chair)
- Tim Hoban (Vice Chair)
- Michael O' Brien (Treasurer)
- Sharon O'Mahoney (Joint Company Secretary)
- John Colbert
- Bill Ramsell
- Andrew Whitaker
- Yvonne Murphy
- John Clifford
- George Bulman
- Evin Gyves

- Tom Hughes
- Anthony Barry
- Oliver Sheehan
- Michael McCarthy
- Denis Ring
- Adrienne Harrington
- Caroline Gallagher
- Harry Bollard
- Mary Hickey Griffin
- Sinead Morgan
- Susan Gallagher
- Joe Burke (LEO South Cork)
- Deirdre O'Mahony (LEO West Cork)
- Sean O'Callaghan Cork County Council (LEO South & West Cork)

Project Evaluation Committee

- Mark O'Keeffe
- Christy O'Sullivan

Our Team 2023

Management Team

- Ryan Howard – CEO
- Suzanne Kearney – Assistant CEO & Operations Manager
- Laura Mason – Finance Manager & Joint Company Secretary
- Toni McCaul – Strategy & Programme Manager

- Vicki Kelly
- Cora O'Donnell
- William O'Halloran
- Karen Loxton
- Donna Cleary
- Tara Doyle
- Elaine Barrett
- Clodagh McGuirk
- Olena Gorb

Finance & Administration Team

- Mary McCarthy (Company Accountant)
- Magdalena Bosiacka
- Anne Coughlan
- Miriam Montagne
- Li Chai
- Catherine Scully
- Eilish Walsh
- Sandra Fedakova
- John O'Connell
- Nataliia Vorona

Tús Community Work Placements and Rural Social Scheme Supervisors

- P.J. Dennehy (Co-Ordinator)
- Declan Barron
- Joe Dilworth
- Aoife Fouhy
- Magdalena McLeod
- Barry O'Sullivan
- Mark O'Connell

Development Officers – Enterprise, Employment and Community

- Nuala O'Connell
- Elga Ryan
- Sinéad Conroy
- Katie Kearns
- Danielle Sheehy
- Frances Doyle
- Margaret Hartigan

Local Area Employment Service (LAES)

- Kieran Butler (Co-Ordinator)
- Anne Brett
- Catriona Harrington
- Donna Scully
- Laura Byron
- Deirdre O'Leary

Summary of SECAD Financial Accounts for 2023

SECAD Partnership CLG

(A Company Limited by Guarantee and not having Share Capital)

Income & Expenditure Account Financial year ended 31 December 2023

2023

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Operating Income | €4,796,309 |
| Operating Expenditure | - €4,745,328 |
| Surplus of Income over Expenditure | €50,981 |

Balance Sheet As at 31 December 2023

2023

Fixed assets

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Tangible assets | €176,268 |
|-----------------|----------|

Current assets

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Debtors | €1,833,279 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | €1,483,532 |
| | €3,316,811 |

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Creditors: amounts falling due within one year | €2,372,552 |
|---|-------------------|

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Net current assets | €944,259 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Total Assets less current Liabilities | €1,120,527 |
|--|-------------------|

Charity Funds

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Restricted funds | €6,424 |
| Unrestricted funds | €1,126,951 |
| Total Charity Funds | €1,120,527 |



Annual Report 2023

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