

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Consultancy Services for the Development of the County Monaghan Social Enterprise Strategy (2026 – 2031)

1. Introduction & Background Context

Monaghan Integrated Development CLG (MID) is the local development company serving County Monaghan. MID delivers a range of socio-economic development and community activation programmes, including the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), LEADER, Tús, the Rural Social Scheme (RSS), PoliRuraplus (EU Horizon 2020) and Local Area Employment Services.

As part of its social enterprise supports under the SICAP programme, MID is initiating the procurement process to select an expert consultant or consultancy company to formulate the new County Monaghan Social Enterprise Strategy (2026 – 2031).

This strategy builds on the progress of the previous County Monaghan Social Enterprise Strategy 2021–2025. While the previous baseline study mapped 68 social enterprises, the updated landscape accounts for approximately 122 social enterprises across the county (Social Enterprises in Ireland: A Baseline Data Collection Exercise) — encompassing childcare facilities, community organisations, local GAA clubs, and care centres, and integrating the newly established Co. Monaghan Social Enterprise Network.

The 2026–2031 strategy will respond to contemporary policy developments and modern enterprise trends, including:

- **National Policy:** *Trading for Impact: National Social Enterprise Policy 2024–2027* (DRCD), the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2026-2028 - Accelerating Action, the National Philanthropy Policy 2024–2028, and other relevant policies.
- **Regional & Local Frameworks:** The Monaghan Local Economic and Community Plan 2023–2029, the Co. Monaghan Climate Action Plan 2024 -2029, Regional Action Plan: Advancing Circular Economy in Co. Monaghan and Monaghan LEADER Local Development Strategy 2023–2027.
- **European Context:** The EU Social Economy Action Plan and related European structural frameworks.
- **Current Operational Trends:** Practical integration of Digitalization and AI for third-sector efficiency, Social Procurement pathways, and robust measurement of Social Impact and Trading Resilience—ensuring alignment without duplicating commercial micro-enterprise supports delivered by LEO Monaghan.

2. Strategic Objectives of the Consultancy

We are seeking a qualified consultant or consultancy firm to research, engage stakeholders, write, and deliver a practical, realistic, and high-impact 5-year strategic framework. This framework will guide the growth, sustainability, and resilience of social enterprises across County Monaghan. The specific objectives include:

- **Updated Sectoral Baseline:** Map and assess the current operational, digital, and economic landscape of the expanded baseline of 122 social enterprises across County Monaghan (including Community Facilities & Hubs, Early Years & Childcare Service, Sports, Recreation & GAA Clubs, Health, Care & Older Persons Centres, Arts, Culture, Heritage & Tourism, and Environmental, Circular & Upcycling)
- **Policy Integration & Modern Trends:** Align local social enterprise priorities with national, regional and county policy pillars local community objectives, and modern vectors like AI/digital adoption, social procurement, and green transitions.
- **Inclusive Consultations:** Execute a broad engagement methodology combining statutory, academic, community, and frontline social enterprise voices across all municipal districts.

- **Actionable Implementation Plan:** Formulate practical, non-duplicative SMART actions with key performance indicators (KPIs), lead agencies, resource estimates, and monitoring frameworks.
- **Stakeholder Consensus & Launch:** Present final strategy deliverables to key regional stakeholders and coordinate the official strategy launch.

3. Detailed Scope of Work & Methodology

The selected consultant will carry out five required activity pillars:

- **Pillar 1: Desk Study & Policy Review**
 - Review European policy (EU Social Economy Action Plan, Commission Expert Group on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises (GECES frameworks) and best social economy practices and examples on social economy.
 - Review National policies, including *Trading for Impact: National Social Enterprise Policy 2024–2027*, Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy, Social Enterprises in Ireland A Baseline Data Collection Exercise, and other relevant policies.
 - Review Regional and Local plans, including the Monaghan Local Economic and Community Plan, the County Monaghan LEADER Local Development Strategy, Monaghan Climate Action Plan, and Regional Action Plan: Advancing Circular in Co. Monaghan
- **Pillar 2: Key Stakeholder Interviews**
 - Conduct minimum **10** semi-structured interviews with statutory, educational, and sectoral bodies, including:
 - Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)
 - Monaghan County Council – planning unit, climate action, environment, and community development
 - Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Monaghan (ensuring a clear operational boundary to avoid duplication of commercial LEO supports)
 - Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) - relevant departments
 - The Local Development Companies Network and regional local development companies; Cavan and Louth
 - Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB)
 - National networks (such as Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland, The Wheel, and Social Entrepreneurs Ireland)
- **Pillar 3: Regional Focus Group Discussions**
 - Design and facilitate regional focus group discussions with a minimum of **20** active local social enterprises, community and voluntary groups, and the Co. Monaghan Social Enterprise Network.
 - Ensure participation from across County Monaghan's municipal districts for the focus group discussions (Monaghan, Clones & Ballybay, Carrickmacross, and Castleblayney).
 - Collect grassroots feedback from social enterprise operators, community leaders, volunteers, and service users on critical contemporary themes: social innovation, digitalization and AI integration, the green transition/circular economy, social finance, and social procurement.

- **Pillar 4: Strategy Document Formulation**

- Draft a practical, modern, and innovative strategy document strictly adhering to the following structural outline:
 1. Executive Summary & Strategic Roadmap
 2. Introduction, Policy Context & Modern Alignment (incorporating EU, national and regional policies, social enterprise, circular economy, philanthropy, and others)
 3. Expanded Sectoral Baseline & Landscape Assessment (mapping 122 social enterprises including all sectors)
 4. Stakeholder Consultation Findings & SWOT Analysis (evaluating internal operational capabilities, trading, and external dynamics)
 5. Strategic Pillars & Actionable Framework (2026–2031), incorporating the four core pillars (expected but limited to):
 - Capacity Building & Trading Resilience
 - Digital Transformation & AI Adoption
 - Social Procurement & Market Access
 - Social Innovation & Cross-Sector Collaboration
 6. Practical Implementation Action Matrix & Strategic Recommendations (translating the pillars into non-duplicate actions, lead/collaborating bodies, timelines, and SMART KPIs)
 7. Governance, Risk Management & Monitoring Structures
 8. References
 9. Appendix 1: Consultation List

Pillar 5: Stakeholder Presentation & Official Launch

- Present the draft document to MID management, stakeholders, and key partners.
- Incorporate feedback and deliver final print-ready and digital copies (note: consultancy fees cover research, facilitation, and report writing, but do not include physical printing/publication costs).
- Facilitate and coordinate the official public launch event.

4. Key Deliverables & Project Schedule

Project Phase	Key Output / Deliverable	Target Deadline
Proposal Submission	Technical & Financial Proposal Submission	30th October 2026
Contract Inception	Contract Agreement Signed & Inception Meeting	1st week of November 2026
Phase 1: Desk Study	Inception Report & Policy/Trend Synthesis, and First Instalment	27th November 2026
Phase 2 & 3: Consultations	Stakeholder Interview & Focus Group Reports	26th February 2027
Phase 4: Draft Strategy	Draft Strategy Document (2026–2031)	26th March 2027
Phase 5: Launch	Final Strategy Presentation, Sign-off & Formal Launch	30th April 2027

5. Experience & Competency Requirements

Applicants (individual consultants or consultancy companies) must demonstrate:

- **Track Record:** Proven experience in social enterprise research, local economic strategy development, and public policy analysis in Ireland.
- **Policy & Sector Expertise:** In-depth knowledge of national frameworks, active labour market initiatives, local development structures (SICAP, LEADER, LCDC), and modern social enterprise trends (digitalization, AI, social procurement, and impact trading).
- **Facilitation Skills:** Experience conducting qualitative interviews and regional focus groups.
- **Local Understanding:** Familiarity with County Monaghan's rural economy, community sector, enterprise landscape, and the distinct operational models of community assets (childcare, GAA, community hubs).
- **Knowledge on Social Innovation:** Familiarity with New Solutions Social Innovation Hub, Social Innovation Europe (SIE), Social Business Initiative (SBI), and Social Investment Package (DG Employment and Social Affairs).
- **Quality Deliverables:** Strong report writing, layout presentation, and communication capabilities.

6. Proposal Submission & Evaluation Criteria

Submission Details

- **Deadline:** **30th October 2026 by 5:00 PM.** Submissions must be sent via email to jantony@midl.ie
- **Submission Format:** Tenders must include a Technical Proposal (methodology, timeline, CVs, and past work examples) and a Financial Proposal (fixed fee broken down by task, inclusive of VAT and all expenses).
- **Referees:** Bidders must name the lead researcher and/or person with overall responsibility for the project and provide full contact details for two professional referees from recent similar assignments.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Mandatory written disclosure of any actual or potential conflict of interest.

Tender Evaluation Matrix

The Services Contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender(s) in accordance with the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Weighting
1. Understanding of the Brief & Context	Demonstrated comprehension of County Monaghan's social enterprise landscape current national policies, and the local strategic context	30 Marks
2. Proposed Methodology & Work Plan	Quality, clarity, innovative and depth of the proposed research, consultation design across municipal districts, and practical frameworks addressing modern trends	35 Marks
3. Qualifications & Track Record of Consultancy Team	Proven professional experience of the proposed personnel in social enterprise research, local development strategy, policy analysis, and stakeholder facilitation in Ireland.	15 Marks
5. Financial Value for Money	Total cost efficiency, clarity of fee breakdown relative to proposed outputs, tasks, and project duration.	20 Marks

- **Minimum Qualifying Threshold (60 Marks Rule):** In the event of only 1 quotation being received by the closing date, the bidder must achieve a minimum score of **60 out of 100 marks** for a contract to be issued, ensuring quality control governance for Local Development Companies.

7. Terms of Payment & Financial Provisions

- **Contracting Body:** Monaghan Integrated Development CLG.
- **Funding Stream:** SICAP Programme – Social Enterprise Supports.
- **Payment Schedule:**
 - **1st Instalment (50%):** Released after submission and approval of the Inception Report on or before 27th November 2026.
 - **Final Payment (50%):** Released upon final submission, approval, presentation, and formal launch of the completed strategy document by 30th April.

8. General Contractual & Governance Conditions

- **SICAP Horizontal Principles:** Tenders and the final strategy execution must have explicit regard to SICAP's horizontal principles
- **Formal Prohibited Practices & Exclusion Criteria:** Explicit grounds for excluding a tenderer include being bankrupt or wound up, subject to insolvency/liquidation proceedings, conviction for professional misconduct, or failure to fulfill obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions and taxes.
- **Tax Clearance & Compliance:** The selected contractor must hold a valid Tax Clearance Access Code/Details and comply with public spending guidelines.
- **Insurance:** The consultant must maintain adequate Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance throughout the project term.
- **Data Protection & Confidentiality:** All primary consultation findings, survey data, and documents remain the exclusive property of Monaghan Integrated Development CLG and must comply fully with GDPR guidelines.

Contractual Enquiries

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