



Coiste Gairmoideachais
Chontae Dhún na nGall

County Donegal Vocational
Education Committee

Co Donegal VEC

Consultative Document

'Towards Developing an Education Plan 2011-2015'

Co Donegal VEC

Administrative Offices

Ard O Donnell

Letterkenny

Co Donegal

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Introduction to the Consultation Process

Co Donegal VEC under the VEC (Amendment) Act (2001) is developing an Education Plan for the period 2011-2015. In developing the plan, it is important that we as an Organisation consult with all key stakeholders.

Planning for the current changed environment is most important. This consultative document sets out five key strategic themes for Co Donegal VEC with clear priorities and associated outcomes for implementation over the next five years. I hope that the new Education Plan 2011-2015 will build upon the success of our first Education Plan 2006-2010 and set out a clear framework for the Organisation.

I would be most grateful if you can read the consultation document and provide some feedback as part of a submission based on the five key themes. The successful implementation of the plan, when prepared, will require the input of all key stakeholders.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and very much look forward to receiving your feedback which will be used to inform our plan.

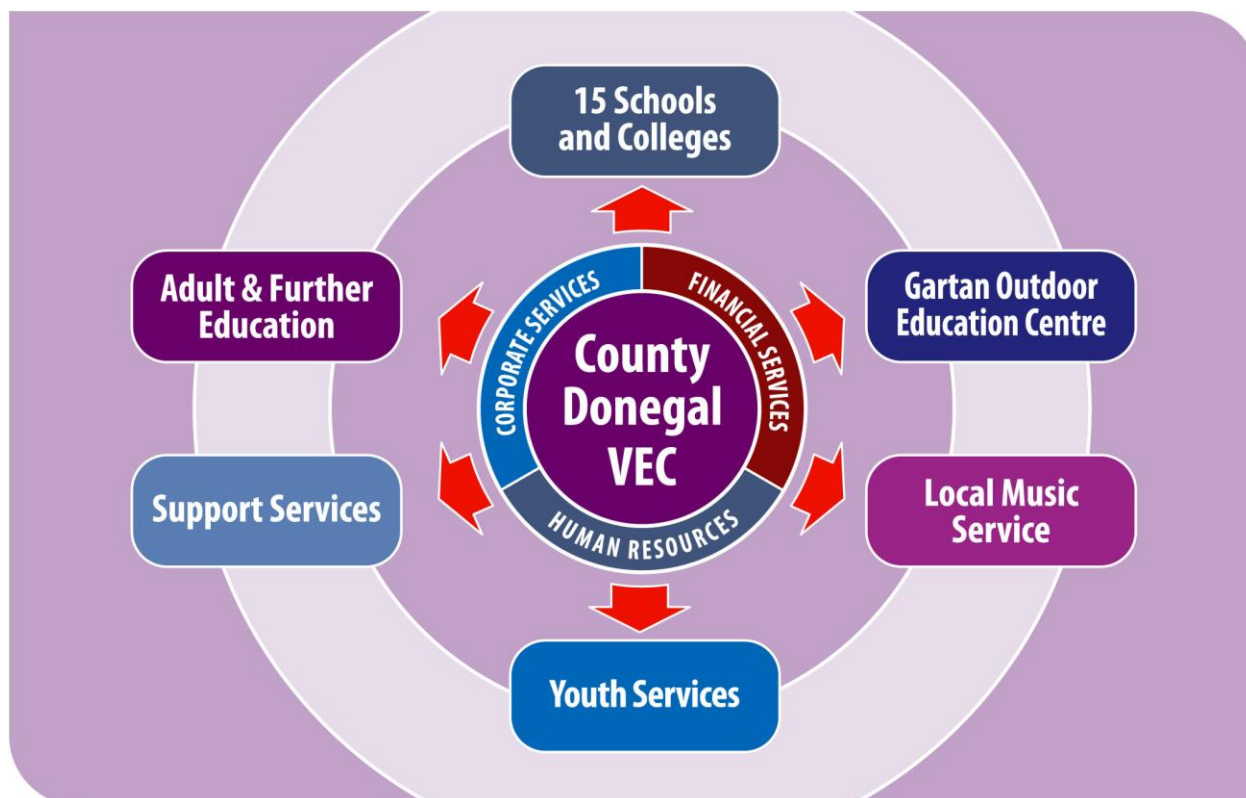
MaryAnn Kane
Chief Executive Officer
Co Donegal VEC

The Organisation - Co Donegal VEC

Co. Donegal VEC is a local statutory, education and training authority established under the 1930 Vocational Education Act. The Committee's headquarters are located in Letterkenny. Co Donegal VEC provides education and training services to a population of some 160,927 in the county. Co Donegal VEC utilises an annual expenditure of some €60m.

The VEC is a significant employer within the county with a total staff of about 1500. Some 600 staff members are employed full-time with 900 employed part-time. Co Donegal VEC manages 15 post-primary schools and colleges, 11 Adult Education Centres, an Outdoor Education Centre, a Music Education Partnership and a Youth Work Structure.

The full range of Co Donegal VEC Services is summarised diagrammatically below:



The Administrative Offices are central to Co Donegal VEC operations and act as the hub for all VEC services and centres. The Administrative functions are delivered through a three-pillar structure, comprising Human Resources, Finance and Corporate Services (including Estates Management and Student Support).

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for executive management of the VEC and has overall responsibility for the performance of the VEC schools, colleges and centres. The principals and managers of these schools/colleges/centres are responsible for their day-to-day management. The Co Donegal Vocational Education Committee has 22 members which meet on a monthly basis. The Co Donegal submits an annual Service Plan to the Department of Education and Skills.

Co Donegal VEC - Legislative Framework

The Vocational Education Acts (1930 and 2001) and associated Statutory Instruments provide the legal basis for the role and functions of all VECs, including Co Donegal VEC. The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act (2001) sets out the function of a VEC being to *'plan, co-ordinate and review the provision of education and services ancillary thereto in recognised schools and centres of education established and maintained by that Committee'*.

The 2001 Act clearly sets out that all Vocational Education Committees are required to implement long and short-term planning in the form of Education and Service Plans. Section 30 of the Act states that *'a Chief Executive Officer shall.....prepare and submit to the Vocational Education Committee for which he or she is the Chief Executive Officer a plan setting out in respect of the period of 5 years immediately following the preparation of the plan, or such other period as the Minister may direct...'*

In complying with the Act, Co Donegal VEC is now developing an Education Plan for the period 2011-2015. In order to inform the plan, Co Donegal VEC is engaging in a comprehensive consultation process with a wide range of key stakeholders. This document has been prepared as part of the consultation process.

At present, the Government is working on the preparation of legislation to give effect to the recent Government decision to reconfigure the VEC sector nationally. This will take the form of a Bill followed by an Act that will consolidate the existing nine separate tranches of legislation pertaining to VECs.

Vision – Co Donegal VEC

'Excellence in a quality, learner-centred education service.'

Mission – Co Donegal VEC

'To promote, offer and support accessible and inclusive learning which enables young people and adults to empower themselves to reach their full potential'

Co Donegal VEC: Core Values Underpinning the Planning Process

As part of the planning process in compiling the Education Plan 2011-2015, the Organisation has identified core values which underpin the work of Co Donegal VEC and relate to the work of the organisation with students/learners, staff and community. These core values are set out below in relation to students/learners, staff and community.

Co Donegal VEC shall:

Students/Learners

- Embrace a holistic approach to learning for every student
- Facilitate all students in realising their full potential through the provision of a comprehensive range of education services
- Respect each student
- . Ensure equality of access and outcome for all students and potential students

Staff

- Value staff as the primary resource of the organisation and encourage positive working environments
- Embrace initiatives and innovations in the interests of delivering a quality education service which has the student at its core
- Support the provision of quality continuous professional development
- Work with relevant partners in an integrated way.

Community

- Foster, develop and maintain positive relationships and partnerships with parents, organisations, agencies and communities
- Ensure all decision-making processes are transparent.

Co Donegal VEC and the Changing Environment

In providing a range of services, Co Donegal VEC is influenced by external factors, many of which are beyond its control. However, it is important to take due cognisance of all factors when preparing a plan for the next five years. This assists in identifying trends, influences and imminent changes.

A summary of the possible environmental factors influencing Co Donegal VEC over the coming years is set out below:

(i) Political Factors

- Rationalisation of Government Departments and Agencies
- Planned amalgamation of VECs and increased functions
- Government rationalisation of services
- Compliance with all legislative requirements
- Possible legislative changes and developments

(ii) Economic Factors

- Economic downturn, cutbacks and recession
- Rising rates of unemployment
- Moratorium on recruitment
- Changing economic bases and resulting change in skills needs

(iii) Social Factors

- Demographic change within the county
- Gaeltacht and island communities in Donegal
- Changing learner profile

- Less disposable income in households
- Changing household work patterns
- Large geographical rural area
- New categories of unemployed people

(iv) Technological Factors

- Increased usage of social network media
- Rapid rate of change in technological development
- Increasing potential of IT to deliver a wide range of services and operations (eg on-line learning, cloud computing)
- Ongoing need for monitoring and managing security of all IT-based operations

Key Themes for Co Donegal VEC (2011-2015)

Following a comprehensive analysis of the Organisation which examined the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities, there emerged 5 key themes which are outlined below. Under each theme there are clear priorities and associated outcomes outlined.

TEACHING & LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

	Priorities	Outcomes
1	Offer educational programmes and support services that meet the rapidly changing needs of individuals, society and the economy.	Responsive education programmes are provided in all schools, colleges and centres.
2	Integrate generic skill (literacy, numeracy, inter-personal skills, etc.) development within all education programmes.	A pool of staff is developed supporting integration of generic skills in education programmes.
3	Maintain and enhance quality standards across all education programmes and centres.	Quality assurance frameworks are in place for all programmes offered by Co Donegal VEC.
4	Proactively promote accreditation as a part of programmes provided by Co Donegal VEC.	An increase in the provision of accredited programmes provided by Co Donegal VEC
5	Consolidate the provision of guidance to prospective students enrolling on programmes.	Students/learners make appropriate learning choices.

ENSURING A MODERN, ACCOUNTABLE ORGANISATION

	Priorities	Outcomes
6	Adapt the structures and systems of the organisation to enable it carry out new and enhanced functions.	An organisation which is able to provide a service relating to new and enhanced functions for VECs
7	Review the legislative / governance requirements underpinning Co Donegal VEC and ensure implementation of outcomes of the review process.	Full compliance with all legislative and governance requirements underpinning Co Donegal VEC
8	Redefine organisational priorities and corresponding job roles	Clear evidence of effective systems, working relationships and job roles within the Organisation

CHANGE MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

	Priorities	Outcomes
9	Adopt a planned approach to leadership development at all levels, and in all sections, of the organisation.	Clear recognition of the expertise and commitment of its staff, and the use of this expertise to build the capacity of the organisation
10	Support staff in adapting to a rapidly changing work environment.	A wide and varied range of supports are available to staff.
11	Identify specific competencies and expertise of staff members and match to key organisational tasks.	Good staff motivation and morale with low levels of dissatisfaction and absenteeism
12	Provide a range of staff learning opportunities to build organisational capacity and enhance the quality of educational provision.	A dynamic organisation that responds quickly and effectively to change

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

	Priorities	Outcomes
13	Develop and implement an integrated ICT Strategy for Co Donegal VEC.	<p>Significant ICT developments in which maximise and build-on prior investments in hardware and infrastructure</p> <p>Clear, up-to-date information on all VEC education provision is available online.</p>
14	Use new and emerging technologies to support developments in teaching and learning, management of information, communication and collaboration.	<p>Increased usage of relevant Information & Communication Technologies by teaching, administrative and ancillary staff in the course of their day-to-day work</p> <p>All students have access to digital learning opportunities, systems and tools.</p>

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

	Priorities	Outcomes
15	Develop and implement a progressive Public Relations Strategy for Co. Donegal VEC.	The Organisation has a positive image with effective communications systems in place.
16	Build on relationships already established with relevant partners to work towards shared goals.	Strengthened partnerships providing more focused approaches to learning.
17	Promote an approach that values the working with partners in the planning and delivery of services at local, regional and national level.	Models of good practice in place, at local and national levels, that demonstrate effective integrated planning, delivery and evaluation
18	Provide improved structures for the development, integration & support of Youth Work activities across the County.	Clear awareness of structures pertaining to Youth Work activities across the County.

Response Framework

You are welcome to respond in your own manner to this document but it would assist us to analyse your response if:

- a) comments were ordered in relation to the headings in the document and referred to by page numbers when commenting on them.
- b) you used the questions below to frame your response:

a	Has Co Donegal VEC analysed the context and environmental factors correctly?	
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b	Has Co Donegal VEC identified the relevant themes?	
c	To what extent do you agree with the priorities and outcomes?	
d	How workable are the themes within the current and expected context for the next five years?	

e	How can Co Donegal VEC ensure equality of access for students and potential students?	
f	Have you any other suggestions that should be included in the Education Plan?	

Co Donegal VEC is most grateful to you and your organisation for taking the interest and time to feedback to the consultative document.

Submissions should be sent back by 31st September 2011 to:

Ms Eileen Dennison Co Donegal VEC Administrative Offices Ard O Donnell Letterkenny Co Donegal	074 9161600/ 074 91 61525 eileendennison@donegalvec.ie www.donegalvec.ie Thank you for your participation.
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Thank you for your participation.