

MAYO COMMUNITY FUTURES

Mayo Community Futures is a partnership of Community and Agencies and was established as a sub-committee by the County Community Forum in 2005 to:

- Assist communities prepare Community Action Plans
- Encourage more people to become active in their communities
- Strengthen and develop local community organisations
- Enable communities to identify and progress priority projects and actions
- Enable communities to effectively represent their interests at local, county, and national levels

Members of the Community Futures Management committee represent; Mayo County Council (Declan Turnbull) Community Representation (Michael Hughes, Philomena Browne, Bernie Finan, XXXXX), Mayo LEADER (Norita Clesham SWMDC, Justin Sammon MNE), and Tochar Valley Rural Network (John Cannon). The programme is coordinated by Mary Wrafter, MCC and is supported by 2 temporary parttime Development Workers Sheila Coll and Geraldine Leneghan.

1 PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES

Communities are requested to apply for the programme. They undergo an interview process to determine their readiness and capacity.

- Ballycroy, Ballyhaunis, Carramore-Lacken and Islandeady successfully completed the pilot programme with Action Plans 2007 – 2010 launched in January 2007
- Balla, Carracastle/Rooskey, Louisburgh/Killeen and Partry participated in phase 2 and their Action Plans 2008 – 2011 were launched in 2008
- Foxford, Killawalla, Mulranny and Turlough participated in 2009 and the plans were launched in 2010.
- Ardagh, Kilkelly, Newport and Tourmakeady completed the process in 2011
- Belcarra, Carnacon, Kiltane parish and Swinford in 2012
- Clare Island and Straide started the programme in early 2013
- Crossmolina, Charlestown, Killala and Inishturk joined the programme in 2014

2 FUNDING

Mayo Community Futures is financially supported by Mayo County Council. LEADER and the MSLTEB (VEC) have supported training in the past. South West Mayo Development Company supported the communities with the printing of the plans.

3 WHAT'S INVOLVED IN EACH COMMUNITY?

Communities taking part in Community Futures must set up a **Community Futures Steering Group** which brings together representatives from a broad selection of local clubs and organisations to help steer the planning process locally.

The Steering Groups is assigned a **Community Support Volunteer** who assists them carry out the community consultation that informs the plan.

Community consultation typically involves

- A household survey
- Meetings with different individuals and sectors of the community
- The preparation of a community profile detailing community facts and figures
- Community futures workshops and meetings

At the end of the consultation a **Community Action Plan** is written which summarises:

- The vision for the future of the community
- The community' current situation
- The main issues that need to be addressed
- The main priorities for projects and actions
- The plan is distributed to all households and to relevant public agencies

4 HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED FOR STEERING GROUP MEMBERS?

The steering group is supported by the Community Support Volunteer who assists with gathering the information and writing it up. Typically this takes about 40 days over a six month period. However, Steering group members are expected to lead the process locally, attend regular meetings, organise the distribution & collection of survey forms, a community open day/workshop & Launch.

5 HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Typically the work takes about 6 months in each community.

6 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Most of the cost is absorbed by Mayo Community Futures. There is some cost to the community e.g. envelopes, refreshments for the Community Workshop Day, some matched funding for the printing and the Launch of the plan in the community.

7 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

A clear statement about our community

Community Action Plans prepared with the full involvement of the community provide a clear statement of the community's needs and aspirations. People often think they know what these are but they are rarely written down in a community owned plan that has been prepared following on from detailed community consultation.

Evidence for funding priority projects

The Plans identify the projects that the community as a whole thinks are most important for the future of their community. As such the plans help to answer the funder's most asked question – how do you know this (project or service) is important to the community?

Strengthen our ability to represent the community

Community Action Plans enable community organisations, councillors and others to represent the community at area, county or national meetings. They have a document that clearly states what the main views of the community are and they are less easily dismissed as perhaps not being fully representative or just talking about their own pet projects or coming from just one perspective.

A guide for public agencies plans and service delivery

Community Action Plans serve as a useful guide to public agencies interested in ensuring that their own plans and services are sensitive to community needs and aspirations. The Community Futures Action Plans are 'brokered' by the County Development Board and feed into strategic planning across the County.

Getting more people involved in the community

One of the aims of the Community Futures planning process is to involve more community people in thinking about and discussing the future of their community. This usually leads to more people becoming involved in taking forward the projects that are identified through this participatory process.

Strengthening community organisations

A direct result of this participation is that more people become involved in existing and new community organisations. This can help take the burden off the handful of individuals who are often at the forefront of much of the work in the community.

8 THE COMMUNITY FUTURES PROCESS

Community Futures Steering Committee

- Set up a local Community Futures Steering Committee
- Represents a broad section of clubs & organisations active in the community
- The Steering Committee drives the programme locally

Community Support Volunteer (CSV)

- Trained in the process
- Acts as a support to the Steering Committee
- Reports to the Co-ordinator
- Reimbursed for expenses
- Approx 40 days over the 6 month period
- Collates material and produces summary reports

Stakeholder Interviews

- Approx 20 interviews conducted with key people/sections of community by CSV
- Stakeholder Report

Community Views Survey

- Survey to all households
- 4 questions about community: what you like, what you do not like, what would make it better, top priorities
- Steering group organises distribution and collection
- CSV collates and produces Summary Survey Report

Community Profile

- A snapshot of the community now
- Steering group organises the collection of facts and figures
- CSV puts it together into a Community Profile

Community Day Workshop

- Everyone in community invited
- Celebration day, clubs/organisations “show their ware”
- Results of survey & stakeholder interviews displayed
- Themes and actions displayed on tables
- Public prioritises actions by voting with sticky dots
- CSV produces Workshop Report

Agency Day

- Agency personnel invited
- Organised by Coordinator
- Communities give a presentation on the strategies and actions emerging from the process to date
- Aim to inform Agencies
- Exchange contact details & make introductions

Final Community Action Plan

- Draft Plan presented to Steering Group
- Photographs agreed & Plan approved for printing
- Some discussion on how to make it happen - what community structure best suited to take overview and support sub structures
- Plan Launched by the community
- Plan distributed to all households in the community

Monitoring

- An annual evaluation of actions to date to be submitted to the Community Futures office – template provided
- A process is in place to renew the Action Plans after the 5 years – approx 3 months.

9 CONCLUSION

Overall, the intention of the **Mayo Community Futures Programme** is to support stronger more proactive communities throughout Mayo to have a greater say over their future.

Within **communities**, the aim of the programme is to encourage the interest and participation of more people in community issues and organisations and to involve all sectors in the process of preparing community action plans

The programme helps **Public Agencies** to understand the needs and aspirations of communities and should assist them in shaping their policies, plans and service delivery to reflect and benefit the communities they serve.