KERRY EDUCATION SERVICE

SEIRBHÍS OIDEACHAIS CHIARRAÍ

Adult and Further Education
into the 21st Century

Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015 | Kerry Education Service

Table of Education Plan Strategic Areas & AFE Priority Results 2010-2015

EDUCATION AREA	AFE PRIORITY RESULT	OUTCOME
KES AS AN EDUCATION PROVIDER	**The standard of design and delivery of KES AFE programmes and services will have been verifiably enhanced.**	• Increased knowledge and awareness within KES of future skills / education needs. • Greater devolution / delegation of programme design and delivery achieved. • Increased capacity to develop and deliver FETAC accredited AFE programmes. • Integrated literacy strategy for AFE developed. • Co-operation / collaboration between KES AFE programmes enhanced. • Particular needs of minority groups acknowledged within programme design, in particular those of Travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. • Increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support innovative course delivery, learning and networking. • Viability of adult education centres examined, especially those with low levels of current usage. • Alternative AFE delivery models assessed and piloted. • Rules and regulations that might inhibit participation identified and addressed. • Progression routes clarified and enhanced for all learners. • Education resources upgraded. • Advance knowledge on courses and opportunities for potential learners made easily available. • New methods developed to encourage / enable learning. • Needs of different categories of learners recognised and addressed.
KES AS A PARTNER IN EDUCATION	**Strong and effective partnerships will have been developed to deliver enhanced outcomes for adult learners.**	• Single multi agency education and training portal stimulated. • Mechanisms for co-operation established with other education and service providers.
KES AS AN INNOVATIVE LEARNING ORGANISATION	**KES as an organisation will have developed and operated mechanisms and processes to monitor, evaluate and learn about the impacts of its AFE programmes.**	• Mechanisms developed to enable learner input into KES reviews and planning. • Strategy developed for monitoring, evaluating and learning from this plan mapped and supported.
KES AS AN EMPLOYER	**Human resources will have been deployed and developed to support learner centred AFE delivery.**	• Internal staff training / Induction provided for all staff /tutors. • Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities provided for all full and part time AFE staff. • Tutor Contracts / conditions enhanced. • Strategic human resource gaps addressed.
KES AS CORPORATE ENTITY	**KES will have more effectively presented itself as main provider of adult and further education in Kerry.**	• More effective external communication channels will be created. • Communication / collaboration between staff facilitated through better use of IT options. • Opportunities created for KES staff to share ideas and experiences and learning achieved in the delivery of AFE programmes as an aide to future planning.

Contents

List of Acronyms

ABE – Adult and Basic Education, commonly known as the literacy service

AFE – Adult and Further Education

COP – Community of Practice

CDB – County Development Board

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

DES – Department of Education and Skills

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

KAGS – Kerry Adult Guidance Service

KDYS – Kerry Diocesan Youth Service

KES – Kerry Education Service

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NAPS – National Anti Poverty Strategy

NESC – National Economic and Social Council

Introduction

With the publication of *Adult and Further Education Into the 21st Century; Strategic Plan 2010-2015*, Kerry Education Service – the VEC in Kerry*,* has delivered on one more commitment in our overall Education Plan for 2006-2010.

This, the first of a set of on-going rolling plans, is designed to assist us to focus on and direct our energies as an adult and further education provider in the years, and the challenges, we see ahead.

This plan uses the basic framework of Strategic Roles utilised in our first Education Plan. These are:

- ⋏ **KES as a Provider** - of Adult and Further Education
- ⋏ **KES as a Partner** – with other agencies and communities groups
- ⋏ **KES as an Employer -** of staff to deliver and support education services,
- ⋏ **KES as a Corporate Body** - with structures, assets and statutory responsibilities,
- ⋏ **KES as a Learning Organisation** - organised to facilitate learning for others, and learning to improve what we do, on a daily basis.

This Plan exposes the complexity of the provision of adult and further education in Kerry. One of our on-going challenges is to make apparent for learners, the general public, how the range of services we provide cohere as an overall service and provide people in Kerry with opportunities for progressive learning and progressive certification. The Plan also exposes the extent to which the achievements of our goals is dependent on us satisfactorily meeting the challenges – as a partner with other

providers in the county, - as an employer of over 600 staff, many of them part-time employees of KES, - as a body responsible for substantial amounts of public money each year. We have a duty to use these assets to maximum effect to support the learning of Kerry adults.

As an organisation we must adapt and change. We must learn from our failures and from our successes, as we develop the service the people deserve.

The implementation of this report will be reported on regularly to the Committee of Kerry Education Service- the VEC in Kerry, whose function it is to approve the Plan and to monitor and evaluate its implementation. The representative nature of the Committee is an important aspect of the KES/VEC structures which ensures our responsiveness and on-going relevance to the lives of the people of the county.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the great tradition of educational service to the county which has been a hallmark of the staff who have led and provided adult and further education in the county for decades. This plan aspires to continue the visionary commitment and the zeal of the service which has exemplified the Kerry VEC adult education programme.

The leadership team, the teachers and tutors, and the support staff in our centres, schools and at KES Head Office - they are all passionate about creating opportunities for quality learning for the people of Kerry. This plan is to help channel and guide that enthusiasm and vision for the practical benefit of learners.

Dr. Barney O'Reilly, CEO, Kerry Education Service.

Preface

Changing Needs – Changing Responses
A Life Long Learning Agenda for KES 2010-2015

While it is impossible to predict the future with certainty, it is both necessary and useful for a public service provider to try to predict at least the short-term future, to take account of the bigger picture, to set objectives and priorities and to allocate energies and resources accordingly. This is what we have attempted to do in this document.

We have consulted widely, and thanks to all who responded, regardless of what each had to say – while most were complimentary and encouraging, some were critical. From this feedback we learn and grow.

Within these pages we have identified five priority areas for the five year period ahead and these are broken down into a range of specific results we commit to achieving.

Importantly, we have also mapped out how we will monitor, support, revise and evaluate this plan as we go.

This is a results based plan. Simply put, this means instead of just listing our outputs - the things we will do – the plan is framed in terms of the results we want get at the end of our work. This will keep us constantly focused on the end result rather than simply on our actions.

What is outlined here is not an exhaustive list of all activities within the adult and further education work of Kerry Education Service. Each programme has its own plan, with specific aims, curriculum, supports and eligibility criteria, depending on its purpose

and the profile of the learners participating on it. Instead this additional plan attempts to map out the over-arching priorities that will be addressed collectively by all programmes. We have always believed that the drafting and preparation of the Adult & Further Education Plan should be undertaken with as wide a representative group within Kerry Education Service as possible. This is important because ultimately it is the staff of KES Adult & Further Education Programmes who will ensure the successful implementation of this plan and it is therefore essential that they support it and have ownership of it. Given the tight timeframe allowed for the development of the plan we are particularly pleased with the consultation process that was put in place and the very positive contribution made by KES staff and learners, as well as external agencies, during this process. Collaboration with all players is the key to success in these challenging times.

Over the last twelve months we have examined our strengths, weaknesses, our opportunities and threats. We have listened, argued, analysed and debated. We have set out very clear actions in relation to each of the five priority areas identified that we all want the KES adult and further education sector to achieve over the next five years.

We extend a sincere thank you to all the adult & further education staff members who have contributed to the process to date. You are our most valued resource. Your continued commitment and support is the cornerstone that will help us implement this plan over the next five years.

Sharon Browne & Shivaun Shanahan
Adult Education Officers
Kerry Education Service

Background to KES

The Kerry Education Service - the VEC in Kerry – exists to create a learning society for all in Kerry and to deliver

"a comprehensive lifelong learning service, through the provision, support and promotion of high quality education and training, through the empowerment of all KES partners and through the effective management of innovation and change"[1]

To achieve this vision KES has set as its mission to work "in conjunction with other education and training agencies and community development bodies, to create and promote the development of a learning society in Kerry, so that all who live in Kerry have access to the education and training required to fulfil their potential and needs"[2]

Like most other VECs around the country KES seeks to realise this vision through the delivery of a variety of education services, including second level schools, support for the provision of services to young people and through the provision of a comprehensive programme of adult and further education.

This plan sets out how KES will deliver its adult and further education services over the next five years from 2010 to 2015.

Adult and Further Education in KES

For KES, adult and further education comprises two core, interrelated components. On one hand KES is seen as being about the provision of education to individuals, particularly second chance education for those who, for a variety of reasons, may have become distanced from the mainstream education services. However, AFE is also about the provision of education "for communities and social organisations to facilitate their own communal learning" (KES CEO).

At the time of writing, 369 staff members are involved in the management and delivery of the span of AFE programmes, providing learning opportunities for almost 11,000 participants in 2009 alone. Of this number of staff 44 are full time and the remaining 325 are part time. It should however be noted

that this number is subject to variation depending on the courses being offered at any one time. Looked at more broadly, the AFE staff compliment represents approximately 35% of the total employed in KES as a whole. Of these the largest number are involved in the delivery of community education programmes.

In financial terms, in 2009, AFE accounted for expenditure of €10,671,579 out of a total KES budget of €41,428,091 i.e. 26% of total expenditure.

Table 1: Allocation of Expenditure in KES, 2009

General & Post Primary (Pay)	**19,574,804**
General & Post Primary (Non Pay)	**1,881,929**
Schools Programme Funding	**916,874**
Adult & Further Education	**10,671,579**
Scholarships and PLC Grants	**5,043,550**
Youth Affairs	**354,819**
Sports and Outdoor Education	**1,210,303**
Capital	**1,774,233**
Total	**€41,428,091**

By comparison, in 2009, KES employed 529 staff in its provision of second level education (teaching and non teaching), almost 50% of the total employed in the organisation. In spending terms, KES allocated €22,373,607 to second level education or 54% of the total KES budget (including pay, non pay and schools programme funding).

Delivery mechanisms for AFE in KES

To date, KES provides its AFE courses through a number of core programmes. These include Youthreach, Senior Traveller Education, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Literacy and Basic Adult Education, Community Education and self financing night classes at KES Community Colleges. In some cases these programmes are being delivered through dedicated centres e.g. Traveller education, while in another implementation is partly devolved to the Kerry Diocesan Youth

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[1] KES Education Plan
[2] Op cit

Service (KDYS), to deliver some of the KES Youthreach programme. Adult education centres, located in different parts of the county, play a key role in providing access to BTEI, Literacy and Basic Adult Education courses and a range of night classes, while in other instances there is some level of integration between the management of second level and adult education.

Underpinning these programmes are other services within KES. For example, the Kerry Adult Guidance Service (KAGS) provides support to adult learners to making choices about education and progression options.

This document does not seek to provide a detailed plan for each and all of the different AFE programmes which are responsible for developing their own annual plans in line with guidelines set by the Department of Education and Science. Instead, it addresses a range of issues that cut across all programmes and, as such, offers broad guidance which should inform the more detailed programme level planning. In doing so it is envisaged that greater cross programme synergies will be encouraged and enabled.

How the plan was developed

This plan was completed following an extensive process of consultation with the staff of Kerry Education Service (KES), engagement with learners and inputs from other education partners.

The process was underpinned by the World Café methodology which has been developed to enable more open conversations to take place about questions and issues that matter[3]. A series of initial consultation sessions were held in Tralee, focusing both on past experiences in the delivery of adult and further education as well as looking at the current context and at future priorities. While these conversation sessions were primarily oriented towards KES staff, a variety of other education partners were also invited to participate, including representatives of other state organisations, community and local development organisations and a rang of civil society groups. Many of the participating organisations had a particular focus on issues of social inclusion and equality.

Additional sessions with a regional / district focus were held in Causeway, Waterville and Tralee. These sessions enabled a stronger district and rural level focus to be maintained and facilitated the wider involvement of KES staff and partner organisations.

Alongside these sessions, a number of the AFE programmes themselves undertook their own World Cafe sessions with learners to ensure that a learner perspective would inform the planning process. A summary of

the issues emerging from these sessions can be found in appendix 1.

Finally, submissions to the planning process were invited and a small number of responses were received.

To enable on-going interaction with KES staff, the conclusions emerging from these sessions were presented back to participants using a series of visual mind maps. These mind maps were subsequently refined in a process undertaken in consultation with the Adult Education Team in KES and provide the raw material for this strategic plan.

Results Based Planning

KES has committed itself to use a results based approach to strategic planning and management so as to maximise the benefits accruing to learners in Kerry. This is in line with the approach adopted in the EU Progress Programme, the EU's Employment and Social Solidarity Programme, which "is strongly committed to results-based management" based on a concern that:

"Traditionally, programme performance was judged on how managers spent their allocated budget. Attention was paid to the process: how the programme and the planned activities were run and little time was devoted to analysing the value, benefits or appropriateness of these public service expenditures and activities".[4]

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[3] World Café is an innovative yet simple method for facilitating discussion and conversation. For more on World Cafe see www.theworldcafe.com

[4] See http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=659&langId=en

KES shares this analysis and therefore has decided that a results based approach to strategic planning suits its desire to remain strongly learner centred. Thus, a number of longer term results (impacts) which KES wishes to achieve have been identified. To deliver these longer term results a series of more medium term results (outcomes) and shorter term, more concrete outputs have also been identified. As part of this approach

to planning, there is an ongoing commitment to monitoring and evaluation of the results produced. This process is described in the table below.
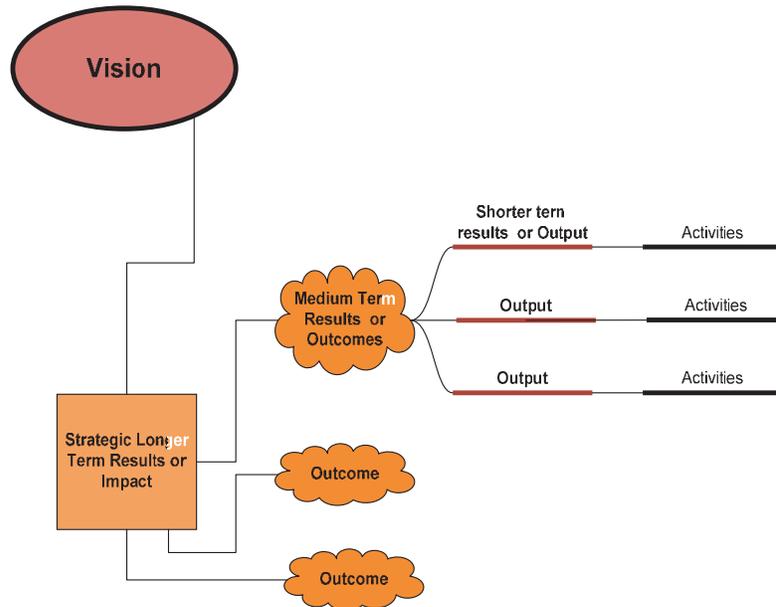

Figure 1: The logic of results based planning

> **For KES, Results Based Planning Means...**
>
> ⌃ *Focusing clearly on the results which we intend to achieve during the life time of this plan.*
> ⌃ *Recognising that if we do not know what our destination(s) is, we are unlikely to know if we have ever reached it.*
> ⌃ *Being clear that results based approaches will only work if we develop the capacity to monitor and evaluate progress.*
> ⌃ *Accepting that some of the results we intend to achieve will be longer term, big picture impacts, but that we will work towards achieving these by delivering more medium term outcomes and shorter term outputs.*
> ⌃ *Being clear that the primary results to be achieved are those that enhance the quality of life of our learners*

Proofing the Plan

In developing this plan, KES has paid particular attention to ensuring that results are generated for those experiencing social exclusion and inequality, especially those who live in rural areas. To this end, the plan has been the subject of a poverty, equality and rural proofing exercise, carried out by a group of KES staff members. This means that each area of the plan has been looked at to see if it is likely to have a positive, negative or neutral effect on poverty reduction, equality promotion or maintaining the cohesion of rural communities and those who live within them.

In Ireland over the past number of years a variety of proofing processes have been introduced. For example, poverty proofing, subsequently rechristened as Poverty Impact Assessment, was originally introduced by the Irish government in 1998. This was defined as:

The process by which government departments, local authorities and state agencies assess policies and programmes at design, implementation and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have or have had on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty with a view to poverty reduction. [5]

While poverty proofing was to be originally applied at national level, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000-2002) expanded this to emphasise the strong linkage between the NAPS and local authorities, envisaging that the Department of Environment and Local Government; the then Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency would "jointly introduce the NAPS initiative in local authorities" and that "poverty proofing will be extended on a phased basis to a local level through the local authorities and Health Boards" [6].

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[5] Office for Social Inclusion, 2006.
[6] Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000),p. 79

This illustrates why a proactive commitment to poverty, equality and rural proofing is important. There is little doubt as to the importance ascribed to the process – it has been described as "the principal instrument for mainstreaming social inclusion at central government level"[7]. It was intended that Poverty proofing would assist in monitoring the achievement of targets; enable government departments to assess anti poverty impact; ensure that policies did not exacerbate poverty but, instead would benefit people living in poverty and would subsequently aid in the overall monitoring and evaluation of the NAPS[8].

In relation to equality, a template on equality proofing has been prepared "to provide the City and County Development Boards (CDBs) with a practical template to support them and their constituent partners to equality proof their plans"[9]. This template was prepared jointly between the Equality Authority, the Directors of Community and Enterprise, and Planet (the former network of Area Based Partnerships) and emphasised the importance of "placing equality at the centre of decision making". It includes a focus on:

- Assessing the impact of plans on groups experiencing inequality.
- Resourcing participation of those affected by inequality.
- Focussing attention on equality outcomes.

Finally, the concept of rural proofing was introduced in the 1999 Rural Development White Paper. However, in practice, rural proofing has not been widely adopted in Ireland, though the types of rural proofing templates produced by the Commission for Rural Communities in the UK offers a useful framework for reviewing this draft plan.

Risk Assessment

Once a final draft of the plan was prepared, a collective risk assessment exercise was undertaken by KES staff who were trained in the process. This involved staff and management of KES identifying what factors might undermine the organisation's ability to deliver on the intended results.

Subsequently, ways of addressing or mitigating these risks were proposed. Clearly however, there is a recognition that uncertainty is part of the reality of all public sector organisations at present and not all such risks can be predicted or avoided.

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[7] National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2003-2005 (2003), p. 49
[8] See O'Connor, S. (2001) Review of the Poverty Proofing Process, (NESC).
[9] An Equality Proofing Template for County and City Development Boards, Equality Authority

Situation Analysis

The development of this strategic plan has had to take account of a variety of contextual factors, some internal to KES and others arising from the broader external environment.

Influence of recession

Clearly, planning for the ongoing delivery of adult and further education in Kerry takes place at a difficult time. The current economic recession, crisis, flux - or whatever term is used to describe it – is already creating an increased demand for access to education, not least for those who have become recently employed. In particular, demand is likely to arise from those with low levels of formal education as they seek to relocate themselves within a dramatically transformed economy and to enhance their experience and qualifications.

Inevitably, growing levels of unemployment, allied with reduced levels of expenditure on public services, will place greater pressure on social cohesion and solidarity. The weather related crises of 2009 and early 2010 were accompanied by an increasing public emphasis on collective action, social capital and community support. However, at the same time, public spending on these processes of society and community building is declining and shifting in focus. As a result, the role of KES in supporting communities will become even more important, particularly through the continued delivery of community education programmes, reflecting the reality that not all AFE outputs will not, nor should be, formally accredited.

While these challenges will be faced across the board, in a county like Kerry particular attention will need to be paid to the needs of rural areas. The decline in agriculture, combined with reduced spending on public services such as transport, have the potential to create deeper disadvantage and to increase the experience of rural isolation. In such circumstances the role and contribution of the adult education centres becomes all the more important.

Finally, more long term and ultimately deeper challenges are posed by the threat of climate change, though these have been somewhat obscured by the more immediate pressure of economic recession. This strategic plan reflects KES' commitment to make its contribution to addressing these long term issues.

Adult and Further Education Context

There can be little doubt that the AFE context is influenced or, some might say, is shaped by the types of economic scenarios described above. Indeed, as far back as 2006, it was being suggested that "recent developments in educational policy-making are increasingly shaped by neo liberal discourses that adapt education principles such a lifelong learning and emancipation for its own political and economic logic"[10]. As such, the focus on individual success allied with individualised responsibility is seen as potentially bending the adult education agenda to the service of the market place. While the degree to which the needs of the economy drive the education agenda may be debated, there can be little doubt that AFE will play a role in addressing the fallout from the ongoing recession.

However this inevitably leads to questions as to the extent to which the balance between this primarily economic role and what has been described as the emancipatory or transformative function of adult education will be managed. Adequate space is needed to consider the role of adult education in preparing learners for "an active role in the public domain"[11] and to create opportunities "for learners within and outside the classroom to act on new insights in the process of transformative learning"[12]. In this respect it becomes important to consider how the results of transformative learning processes are captured, given that these are not catered for in the standard template of returns to the Department of Education and Skills.

This discussion on the nature of transformative learning itself introduces a challenge for KES to support processes of staff development that allow adult education practitioners time to update themselves on trends and developments within the AFE sector and the implications of these for local practice[13].

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[10] Grummel, B. (2007) The 'Second Chance' Myth: Equality of Opportunity in Irish Adult Education Policies. British Journal of Educational Studies, 55: 2 p.182

[11] Ranson (1990) p. 159 as cited in Grummel, B, (2007) op cit.

[12] Taylor E.W. (200) Transformative Learning Theory. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no 119:11.

[13] It has been suggested that theory of transformative learning is "a growing area of study of adult learning and has significant implications for

Amongst the significant shift noted internationally are:

⌃ Changes in the demographic characteristics of learners. In the US it has been noted that the trend is towards greater number of older learners. Meanwhile in Ireland, in terms of gender, Aontas has reported that in the early part of 2009, there was a noticeable increase in enquiries from men, a reverse of previous trends[14]

⌃ Rapidly moving changes in technology and science- these have led some to suggest we live in a disposable society where "products, knowledge and even people become obsolete in the blink of an eye" but which have equally challenged adult education to actively promote the "recycling perspective" that "invites elders into new roles such as mentors and community leaders"[15].

⌃ Trends towards the development of a more holistic approach to adult education, towards an "ever changing mosaic"[16] that produces innovative learning programmes that use multiple inputs and methods.

Of these, the impact of technology is particularly significant, having the potential to include and exclude at the same time. One noticeable example of the impact of technology is the recognition of the potential for online learning and collaboration.

Finally, in terms of the broader context, the moratorium in staff recruitment inevitably effects the provision of adult and further education in public sector organisations, such as KES. Already it has been observed that AFE staff within KES are highly committed to and focused on meeting learner needs. However, care will need to be taken to ensure that increased demand on staff does not result in undue pressure subsequent staff burnout.

Adult and Further Education in KES

In preparing this plan some of the more specific challenges facing the provision of AFE within KES were discussed. Amongst the challenges identified by participants in the consultation processes were:

⌃ The need to create deeper integration and connectedness between programmes;

⌃ Managing the complexity of delivery of an adult and further education service across a wide area, to more than 100 locations and reaching 10% of the adult population in Kerry;

⌃ Creating greater synergies between AFE and the role of schools in the community;

⌃ More effectively communicating the range of services provided by KES, both to staff and learners;

⌃ Developing more effective internal communication within the organisation;

⌃ Implementing strategies for evaluation and impact assessment, including the allocation of staff with specific responsibility in this area;

⌃ Achieving full recognition of the professional status of AFE teaching and supporting access to clear qualification pathways;

⌃ Building communities of practice within KES and facilitating continuous professional development (CPD) and training amongst staff;

⌃ Developing leadership within the organisation and building the evolving management team;

⌃ Integrating the perspectives and different skill sets of new staff, particularly those from outside the mainstream school system;

⌃ Development of capacity amongst, and allocating time to, staff to work in reflective mode, using results based planning and associated tools;

⌃ Managing a significant output of FETAC awards;

⌃ Enhancing the organisations information and community technology (ICT) systems;

⌃ Managing the work balance, for senior staff in particular, between strategic overview/planning functions and operational / administrative duties;

the practice of teaching adults. The growth is so significant that it seems to have replaced andragogy as the dominant educational philosophy of adult education" (Taylor, op. cit)
[14] See A Special Report - A Guide to Adult and Further Education, Irish Times, August 29.
[15] Eisen, M.J., (2005) Shifts in the Landscape of Learning: New Challenges, New Opportunities. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No 108:17
[16] Merriam (2001) quoted in Eisen M.J. op cit.

- Developing personnel guidelines and practices tailored to the AFE sector;

- Ensuring that the distinctive role of KES is understood i.e. that it is an education as well as a training provider.

- Operating within the boundaries set by the current industrial relations climate.

Assets and Capacities

To meet these challenges some particular strengths and capacities of KES have been identified by KES staff themselves. Amongst these are:

- Flexibility, expertise, commitment and energy.

- A recurring sense of renewal and rejuvenation amongst KES staff arising from engagement with learners.

- Ability to develop and operate good quality interagency relationships via the negotiation of a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with key partners.

- Strong analytical capacity within the senior management team.

- Established networks between KES staff, other education providers, community based organisations and other relevant statutory bodies.

- Evident care for learners and commitment to locate learners at centre of the organisations work.

- An AFE programme that offers a diversity of subjects, levels and programmes as well as diversity of delivery options.

Taking these challenges and capacities into account KES has identified a number of strategic priorities to guide its future work. These are described in the next section of the document.

Strategic Priorities

The core business of KES is to provide a comprehensive lifelong learning service and a suite of second chance education opportunities to the people of Kerry.

This involves addressing the needs of individuals, many of whom may be struggling to reposition themselves in the new economic realities, while at the same time retaining the capacity to be a provider of general education in the community.

The delivery of AFE by KES is informed by an ambition for a comprehensive lifelong learning experience, achieved "through the provision, support and promotion of high quality education and training, through the empowerment of all KES partners and through the effective management of innovation and change" [17].

This vision and mission continues to inform the operation of this Strategic Plan. In keeping with the existing overarching KES Education Plan, under which this dedicated AFE strategy is being developed, five core strategic impact areas have been identified as illustrated in table 2 where these impacts are described in more.

Education Plan Strategic Areas	AFE Priority Results 2010-2015
KES as an Education Provider	The standard of design and delivery of KES AFE programmes and services will have been verifiably enhanced
KES as a Partner in Education	Strong and effective partnerships will have been developed to deliver enhanced outcomes for adult learners
KES as an Innovative Learning Organisation	KES as an organisation will have developed and operated mechanisms and processes to monitor, evaluate and learn about the impacts of its AFE programmes
KES as an Employer	Human resources will have been deployed and developed to support learner centred AFE delivery
KES as Corporate Entity	KES will have more effectively presented itself as main provider of adult and further education in Kerry

Table 2: AFE Strategic Impacts

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[17] KES Education Plan, p.10

EDUCATION PLAN STRATEGIC AREA 1	AFE PRIORITY RESULT 1
KES as an Education Provider	**By 2015 the standard of design and delivery of KES AFE programmes and services will have been verifiably enhanced**

Delivery of a variety of education programmes is the core function of KES. For this reason it is considered important to restate some of the values that guide the KES approach as an education provider. Alongside these values, it is also worth restating some of the assumptions that underpin the organisation's work - assumptions that demand ongoing reflection and testing.

Values

The KES approach to education provision is guided by a number of core values:

- Respect - and the development of trust, both internally and externally;

- Learning - to ensure that the KES approach to education continues to be reflective, holistic, creative and flexible, serving both economic and non economic rationales as well as reflecting best practice in the AFE sector;

- Quality - there is an ethic of quality to which all staff members are expected to work, educators and administrators alike, to ensure that learners are at the centre of the organisation;

- Inclusion and Equality- particularly for those who are disadvantaged on socio economic grounds. This also includes a commitment to ensuring accessibility, in terms of physical access, socio economic disadvantage, affordability, differences between rural and urban areas etc.

Assumptions and Challenges

In keeping with these values, a number of related assumptions and challenges inform how KES approaches the delivery of AFE:

- In its approach to AFE, KES recognises that not all learners are the same; they are not a homogenous group. As a result KES is continually challenged to develop and update its learner profiles and its understandings of different learner needs and to respond accordingly in line with available resources.

- KES is committed to the concept of lifelong learning and to placing learners at the core of its AFE programmes. In practice, this poses challenges to reflect on the nature of progression and the role of the learner i.e.

  - whether progression automatically requires movement to a higher level of education;
  - recognition of alternative means of judging and supporting progression;
  - provision of adequate supports to enable learners to progress in a direction of their choosing;
  - availability of mechanisms to enable learner feedback to be obtained and to influence programme design and delivery.

- The dual focus of KES is emphasised, both as a provider of AFE serving the needs of individuals, but also supporting community development and community cohesion through the provision of supports designed to enhance social capital and active citizenship. This will require that a balance is maintained between individually oriented education offerings and those serving the needs of community and broader society.

- KES also recognises that different learners have different motivations for participation in AFE programmes, with some seeking to derive solely education benefits as opposed to others who may prioritise financial, social or therapeutic outcomes from their participation in KES courses.

- Finally, KES understands the relationship between AFE and second level education as a continuum, not as distinct and disparate elements of the organisation's work. However, it is recognised that the engagement between AFE and second level differs from place to place. There exists therefore, a challenge to understand how the post primary and AFE sectors can enhance co-operation and communication.

Taking these principles and assumptions as a guide to achieving impacts in the provision of education, KES has identified a number of core outcomes relating to the provision of AFE which will be delivered in County Kerry over the next five years.

Strategic Outcome 1.1:

By 2015 the design of all KES AFE programmes will have been enhanced.

This outcome ensures that the quality of design of AFE programmes is continually enhanced and is capable of meeting learner and societal needs. To achieve this outcome a number of concrete outputs will be targeted.

Output 1.1.1: Increased knowledge and awareness within KES of future skills / education needs.

It is considered essential that KES have a full and up to date knowledge of evolving demands for new skills and education opportunities, particularly in light of more recent economic developments but also to address the rapidly changing nature of Irish society. To achieve this output:

- A forward planning group will be established to keep abreast of on-going developments.

- A senior staff member with responsibility for forward planning in AFE will be nominated.

- Existing courses will be adjusted and new courses will be added where necessary and of relevance to the changing economy and society.[18]

- A mechanism to facilitate feedback from programme co-ordinators and the guidance service will also be established.

- Main target groups for KES programmes will be identified and appropriate targeting mechanisms will be developed.

Output 1.1.2: Greater devolution / delegation of programme design and delivery achieved.

It is also considered that an unnecessary amount of time is consumed taking decisions at higher level within KES that could more productively be managed, albeit within established frameworks, at more local or

programme levels. As a result of this plan it is intended that, where possible, there will be an emphasis on subsidiarity in the design and delivery of AFE programmes. To achieve this output:

- A framework and process within which the responsibility for district level AFE operations can be managed and supported will be developed and agreed.

- Similarly, a framework and process for greater subsidiarity within the operation of existing programmes will be developed.

Output 1.1.3: Increased capacity to develop and deliver FETAC accredited AFE programmes.

The delivery of FETAC accredited programmes is a central pillar of the work of KES. In 2009, of the 10,711 learners participating in KES, AFE programmes approximately 1,386 received FETAC awards. In the current climate it is likely that the demand for accredited programmes will increase. While KES is committed to achieving a balance between accredited and non accredited programmes, it is recognised that the provision of nationally and internationally recognised certification is a continuing priority. Thus, KES considers it important that the delivery of FETAC accredited programmes be reinforced to supplement the existing roles played by a range of staff. This will involve the provision of support to and coordination of existing FETAC related processes. To achieve this output:

- A FETAC resource function will be put in place.

- A FETAC reference group will be established in KES, drawing from the different AFE programmes and centres.

- A FETAC academic council will be established for the suite of AFE programmes.

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[18] This might include courses relating to sustainable development, climate change and Transition Towns; structures and buildings; parenting; sustaining our souls; personal development; Irish language courses; skills development such as horse husbandry, welding, horticulture etc.

Output 1.1.4 Integrated literacy strategy for AFE developed

This plan recognises that while literacy and basic education is a programme in its own right, reinforcement of literacy skills is a challenge for and a component of all AFE programmes. It is considered necessary therefore to develop a stronger capacity to integrate literacy support across all AFE programmes. To achieve this output:

- An agreed protocol for meeting the literacy needs of learners will be produced based on the experiences of programmes such as Adult Basic Education (ABE), Youthreach and the Senior Traveller Education Centres.

- Literacy awareness training will be provided for all tutors who have not had it previously.

- A literacy integration policy and plan will be put in place.

Output 1.1.5 Co-operation / collaboration between KES AFE programmes enhanced

Within KES, as in most other VECs, there are close relationships between programmes such as Community Education, ABE and Back to Education Initiatives (BTEI). It is considered important therefore that these programmes achieve maximum complementarities and co-operation and avoid any competition for learners and resources. It is also important to ensure that learners are in programmes appropriate to their needs. To achieve this output:

- The core business of each AFE programme and the criteria for each will be looked at and the space for co-operation between them will be identified.

Output 1.1.6 Particular needs of minority groups acknowledged within programme design, in particular those of Travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers

This plan will ensure that mainstream KES AFE programmes are capable of meeting the needs of minority groups, particularly refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. To achieve this output:

- Specific literacy and/or language supports will be developed to enable participation on different programmes

- Cultural awareness elements will be developed and incorporated into all KES programmes.

- Efforts will be made to support the recognition of prior, accredited learning.

Strategic Outcome1.1: By 2015 the design of all KES AFE programmes will have been enhanced.		
Outputs	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activities**
1.1.1 Increased knowledge of future skills / education needs.	• Mechanism created to focus on future skills needs. • Number of recommendations generated and addressed by senior management. • Level of programme adjustment in response to identified needs. • Numbers of meetings of guidance & programme co-ordinators held (target of four per year).	• Establish a forward planning strategy group to keep abreast of ongoing developments and nominate a senior staff member with responsibility for forward planning in AFE to co-ordinate. • Adjust provision of courses where appropriate to meet the needs of the changing economy and society. • Agree main target groups for KES programmes and develop targeting mechanisms. • Establish a mechanism to facilitate feedback to and from programme co-ordinators and guidance.
1.1.2 Greater devolution / delegation of programme design and delivery achieved.	• Change in level of responsibility devolved to programme and district co-ordinators	• Develop and agree a framework and process within which the responsibility for district level AFE operations can be managed and supported. • Develop a framework and process for greater subsidiarity within the operation of existing AFE programmes.
1.1.3 Enhanced capacity to design and deliver FETAC programmes.	• Level of staff support available. • Satisfaction of tutors with the level of support available. • Increase in the number of FETAC awards delivered.	• Put in place a FETAC resource function. • Establish a FETAC reference group/academic council for the suite of AFE programmes.
1.1.4 Integrated literacy strategy for AFE agreed.	• Integrated strategy in place. • Level of impact on existing programmes.	• Produce an agreed protocol for meeting the literacy needs of learners. • Provide literacy awareness for all tutors. • Develop a literacy integration policy and plan.
1.1.5 Co-operation / Collaboration between KES AFE programmes enhanced	• Frequency of meetings between programme co-ordinators. • Existence of shared programmes / processes.	• Identify the core business for each programme and the criteria for each and the space for co-operation. • Explore the creation of an expanded AFE team structure.
1.1.6 Particular needs of minority groups acknowledged within programme design, in particular those of Travellers, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and people with disabilities.	• Numbers of learners drawn from minority group. • Changes in programme design to meet the needs of minority group.	• Develop specific literacy supports to enable participation on different programmes. • Develop and incorporate cultural awareness elements into all KES programmes. • Where possible, support the recognition of prior, accredited learning. • Develop a cross cutting strategy to enhance AFE opportunities for people with disabilities.

Strategic Outcome 1.2 Innovative delivery of AFE programmes ensured.

This outcome focuses on enhancing the delivery of AFE programmes and in ensuring that KES has the capacity to be an innovator in the delivery of AFE. A number of key outputs are planned.

Output 1.2.1: Increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support innovative course delivery, learning and networking.

Increasingly, ICT options are being deployed either as a means of supporting conventional delivery of AFE programmes or as a means of delivery in their own right[19]. KES staff members have recognised the need to exploit the potential of ICT to support learning. To achieve this output:

- KES will convene an ICT working group to develop more comprehensive proposals on how ICT might advance the delivery of AFE programmes. In the meantime...

- KES will endeavour to upgrade the computer facilities in all adult education centres, within existing resource constraints, and develop a strategy for the maintenance of existing facilities.

- The potential to introduce video conference facilities to all centres will also be explored.

- An online facility to host tutor forums will also be developed and

- An internal online gallery / resource centre to highlight the work of different tutors will be created.

Output 1.2.2 Viability of adult education centres examined, especially those with low levels of current usage

KES currently operates adult education centres in Causeway, Waterville, Caherciveen and Kenmare. While a number of these centres achieve high levels of usage, others

have been less successful in attracting students from their catchment area. This plan recognises the importance of adult education centres as a resource to the communities in which they are located, especially in rural areas. To achieve this output:

- KES will explore the potential for the integration of services and the development of multiplex centres.
- KES will also prepare sustainable development plans for the different centres. This will include development of a customised financial management model.
- As part of this process, the potential for different centres to take on responsibility for the development of a thematic specialism will be examined, building, where possible, on pre-existing specialisms.

Output 1.2.3 Alternative AFE delivery models assessed and piloted

KES is also committed to exploring the potential for alternative modes of AFE delivery. This is based on a recognition of learner difference and on the need to offer programmes in ways that enable access for the maximum number of potential learners. It is also based on a commitment to ensure that the principle of lifelong learning is visible within the suite of delivery options made available by KES. To achieve this output:

- KES will offer more taster / short courses
- Options for work experience as part of AFE courses will be explored across a greater range of programmes.
- The potential to deliver 3rd level courses in adult education centres will be assessed.
- The potential for cross over in the provision of post primary and adult education subjects e.g. music will be examined and piloted, subject the availability of resources.
- AFE programmes to support parents will be developed and delivered.

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[19] See, for example, Conceicao, S. (2007) Understanding the Environment for Online Teaching in New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education No. 113

Output 1.2.4 Rules and regulations that might inhibit participation identified and addressed.

Like any organisation of its size, KES has to develop rules and regulations to govern the operation of its programmes. However it is recognised that with the best will in the world systems of bureaucracy may, on occasion, inhibit participation in programmes. To ensure that this does not occur or is at least minimised KES will endeavour to ensure that bureaucratic 'red tape' is converted to 'green tape' to ensure that the delivery of AFE programmes is user friendly and accessible, within the confines of existing audit requirements and DES guidelines. To achieve this output:

- All KES programmes will review their rules and regulations governing access in order to identify where they may unnecessarily inhibit participation.

- Subsequently, all programmes will be facilitated to revise and lighten regulation, where possible.

Output 1.2.5 Progression routes clarified and enhanced for all learners.

As part of its commitment to lifelong learning, KES will endeavour to support learner progression, either towards further education or towards the labour market. While it is recognised that not all AFE learners will wish to participate in other education activities, KES will seek to support those that do. To achieve this output:

- KES will endeavour to develop a basic Individual Education Plan (IEP) for learners to enable progression wishes and options to be recorded.

- As part of the IEP process KES will also design and introduce 'scaffolding' processes to ensure that gaps towards progression are filled e.g. literacy, IT, personal development etc.

- KES will also develop the capacity of a core base of tutors to support and advise on progression.

- In line with the enhanced use of ICT, KES will ensure that adequate and accessible information on progression is easily available, including sample progression options tailored for different programmes.

- Finally, KES will support the development of packages to support employability progression and labour market readiness.[20]

Output 1.2.6 Education resources upgraded

Finally, to enhance the delivery of AFE programmes, the need to upgrade the availability of educational resources has been identified. While a number of the technology based options have been identified above, improvements in the availability of physical resources also need to be made. To achieve this output:

- Closer linkages with the Kerry Library Service will be developed;

- Options for creating a library of resources on the KES intranet will be explored;

- Greater use will be made of existing development education materials where relevant;

- Course specific co-ordinators will be identified to act as a support in accessing necessary course materials / resources.

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[20] This will be done in conjunction with other relevant partners in education such as FAS and Local Development Companies.

Outcome 1.2: By 2015 more innovative delivery of AFE programmes will be visible.		
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
1.2.1 Increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support innovative course delivery, learning and networking.	• Level of enhanced ICT capacity e.g. WiFi, video conferencing etc. in adult education centres. • Existence of ICT platforms to enable access to learning resources.	• Convene an ICT working group to develop proposals to enhance ICT capacity. • Explore potential to upgrade computer facilities in adult education centres, including wireless access, computer facilities, video conferencing and Skype. • Develop an online facility to host tutor forums. • Develop an internal online gallery / resource centre to highlight the work of different tutors.
1.2.2 Strategies developed on the future role and function of adult education centres examined, especially those with low levels of current usage.	• Strategies developed and implemented. • Elements of future sustainability for the centres defined.	• Prepare sustainable development plan for all KES adult education centres. • Explore the potential for the integration of services and the development of multiplex centres. • Explore the potential for "centres of excellence" in particular thematic areas. • Develop a financial management model for adult education centres.
1.2.3 Alternative AFE delivery models assessed and piloted.	• Number and quality of alternative models developed and piloted. • Feedback from learners and tutors on pilot models.	• Offer more taster / short courses. • Examine options for work experience as part of AFE courses. • Explore further delivery of 3rd level courses in adult education centres, in association with 3rd level bodies, especially the ITT. • Examine potential for cross over in the provision of post primary and adult education subjects e.g. music. • Develop AFE programmes to support parents.
1.2.4 Rules and regulations that inhibit participation identified and addressed.	• Programmes revise and lighten regulation, where possible.	• All KES programmes review their rules and regulations governing access to identify blocks to participation.
1.2.5 Progression routes clarified and enhanced for all learners.	• IEP in place for each learner. • Number of tutors trained to support progression / career path planning e.g. by Guidance Service. • Learner satisfaction on access to progression information. • Quality of hand over procedures for learners moving between programmes.	• Develop basic Individual Education Plans (IEP) for learners to enable progression wishes and options to be recorded[21]. • Develop the capacity of a core base of tutors to support progression. • Ensure that adequate and accessible information on progression is easily available, including sample progression options tailored for different programmes. • Design and introduce 'scaffolding' processes to ensure that gaps towards progression are filled e.g. literacy, IT, personal development etc. • Develop packages to support employability progression and readiness. • Develop an inter programme protocol for learner referral.
1.2.6 Education resources upgraded.	• Inventory of additional resources provided. • Tutor and learner satisfaction with the resources available.	• Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County Library Service to enhance co-operation in the provision of AFE resources. • Explore development of intranet based resources. • Make greater use of existing development education materials where relevant. • Identify course specific co-ordinators to act as a support in accessing necessary course materials / resources.

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[21] This should build on the learning gained in the 2nd level sector.

Strategic Outcome 1.3
All KES learners supported to gain the maximum from participation in AFE programmes.

This outcome articulates KES' commitment to place learners at the core of what AFE is all about. As such it builds on existing learner support activities and introduces additional support elements.

Output 1.3.1 Advance knowledge on courses and opportunities for potential learners made easily available.

KES recognises that the support function begins even before learners sign up to an AFE programme. In reality, learner support commences with the availability of good quality information about the programmes on offer and the potential that may arise from them. To achieve this output:

- KES will produce more comprehensive and accessible information on the programmes on offer, on course content, entry level requirements, end of course requirements etc.

- KES will also ensure that this information is available in multiple formats e.g. in hardcopy, on line etc.

Output 1.3.2 New methods developed to encourage / enable learning.

Underpinning this plan is a commitment to ensure that the teaching and learning methods employed on KES programmes take account of current best practice and optimise the education experience of learners. To achieve this output:

- KES will develop a handbook and associated training course for tutors on teaching and supporting the adult learner.

- KES will also develop and deliver study skills programmes where necessary and relevant as part of a learner induction component built into courses on an ongoing basis.

- Finally, KES will providing training and support to increase use of Problem Based Learning (PBL) as an educational tool.[22]

Output 1.3.3 Needs of different categories of learners recognised and addressed.

Amongst the almost 11,000 learners who participated in AFE programmes in 2009 there are many different categories of learner, albeit that there is also recognition that no two learners are exactly the same. However, by identifying different categories of learners at a more general level it becomes possible to reflect on the degree to which the needs of these different categories are being met. For example, deeper awareness of the needs of older people or of young people, people with mental illnesses will enable more effective and targeted programme design and delivery. During the lifetime of this plan KES will develop more comprehensive profiles of the different categories of learners participating in AFE programmes with a view to enhancing their participation and progression. To achieve this:

- KES will undertake a process to identify different categories of learners and to facilitate cross programme analysis of particular learner needs.

- KES will also undertake regular learner surveys in order to develop learner profiles at a district and county level.

- KES will also work to ensure that different categories of learners have full access to KES programmes. As such it will develop links between adult education centres and transport providers to explore access issues.

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[22] Problem Based Learning is "a broad umbrella term used to describe approaches to learning that are driven by a process of enquiry," (O'Rourke and Kahn, 2005:1) Students are supported to engage is active engagement with scenario based problems about which they are encouraged to identify responses and possible solutions.

Strategic Outcome 1.3 By 2015 all KES learners will be supported to gain the maximum from participation in AFE programmes.		
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
1.3.1 Advance knowledge on courses and opportunities for potential learners made easily available.	• Variety of information mechanisms offered. • Change in the number of first time applicants. • Change in levels of recorded withdrawal rate due to poor course choice. • Improvements in completion rates.	• Produce more comprehensive and accessible information on the programmes on offer. • Ensure that this information is available in multiple, plain English formats e.g. in hardcopy, on line etc and in multiple locations e.g. post offices, health care centres, social welfare centres.
1.3.2 New methods to encourage / enable learning developed	• Number of new methodologies developed and/or adapted. • Number and regularity of targeted evaluations to demonstrate link between teaching methods and learning.	• Develop a handbook / course for tutors on teaching / supporting the adult learner. • Develop and deliver study skills programmes. • Provide training and support to increase use of Problem Based Learning (PBL).
1.3.3 Needs of different categories of learners recognised and addressed	• Visibility of adjustments to meet the needs of different learner groups. • Level of and change in participation, transfer and progression rates by a broader range of learners.	• Identify different categories of learner and facilitate cross programme analysis of particular learner needs. • Undertake regular learner surveys to develop learner profiles on a district and county level. • Develop links including options for Memoranda of Understanding between adult education centres and transport providers to support access to programmes.

Education Strategic Area 2:	AFE Priority Result 2:
KES as a Partner in Education	**By 2015 strong and effective partnerships will have been further developed to deliver enhanced outcomes for adult learners**

KES is one of a number of statutory and community organisations concerned with the provision of AFE in Co. Kerry. As such, KES is committed to working in collaboration with a variety of other providers and has demonstrated this commitment by engaging in a number of formal partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and informal partnerships which are vital to enable the organisation to be responsive and flexible. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are formal agreements to set out the rationale and structural mechanisms for deeper co-operation and collaboration between agencies.

MOU's currently exist with South Kerry Development Partnership, North and East Kerry Development, FAS, IT Tralee and the Local Employment Service. In the context of current economic and societal pressures and those posed by the challenge to develop sustaining and sustainable communities, there is need for organisations to work collectively and break beyond narrow silo mentalities.

This plan will seek to ensure that KES is an active and innovative education partner. As such the commitments of the existing KES Education Plan (2006-2010:32-34) will be pursued i.e. co-operating on the development of intercultural educational strategies, supporting the community and voluntary sector, ensuring a focus on equality and social inclusion and supporting the use of the Irish language.

To achieve this impact a number of outcomes will be delivered.

Outcome 2.1
Adult learners have comprehensive information on and access to a range of education and training possibilities.

Output 2.1.1 Single multi agency education and training portal stimulated.

Many learners may be uncertain about where to find information on programmes suitable to their interest, skills, qualifications etc. To ensure that accessing AFE programmes is as straightforward and simple as possible, KES will promote the development of a single, multi education and training portal, through which general information on learning opportunities will be facilitated. This output will be achieved by:

- Encouraging the County Development Board to convene a senior level group from relevant agencies to explore the interest in and means of developing a shared access portal.

- Encouraging the CDB to convene interagency programme development groups to explore the potential for offering shared programmes.

- Promote local level meetings between different agency staff to ensure that existing information processes are mutually supportive.

Output 2.1.2 Mechanisms for co-operation established with other education and service providers.

To deliver this output KES will:

- Review the operation of existing MOUs to explore how they might be improved.

- Explore the potential for programme level agreements.

- Explore the development of new MOUs with other education and related service providers from the statutory and the community and voluntary sector.

Strategic Outcome 2.1 Adult learners have comprehensive information on and access to a range of education and training possibilities.		
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
2.1.1 Single multi agency education and training portal stimulated.	• Issue of the training portal visible in CDB agendas and discussions. • Existence and operation of CDB sub structures to progress the concept. • Level of Progress made towards establishing the portal.	• Encourage the Learning Forum of the County Development Board to convene a senior level group from relevant agencies to explore the interest in and means of developing a shared access portal. • Encourage the CDB to convene interagency programme development groups to explore the potential for offering shared programmes. • Promote local level meetings between different agency staff to ensure that existing information processes are mutually supportive.
2.1.2 Mechanisms of co-operation established with other education and service providers.	• Number of MOUs in place. • Added value deriving from the MOUs.	• Review the operation of existing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to explore how they might be improved. • Explore the potential of programme level agreements. • Explore the development of new MOUs with other education and related service providers from the statutory and community / voluntary sector.

Education Plan Strategic Area 3: KES as an Innovative Learning Organisation	AFE Priority Result 3: By 2015 KES as an organisation will have developed and operated mechanisms and processes to monitor, evaluate and learn about the impacts of it's AFE programmes

The current KES Education Plan commits KES to a number of priorities to ensure that it functions as a learning organisation. In particular, KES seeks to "encourage, promote and embed an ethos of innovation and comparative analysis across all sectors of the organisation" through dissemination of good practice and innovation and support for analysis and reflection. Moreover, there is a desire to promote the characteristics of a learning organisation through embedding an ethos of strategic thinking and developing problem solving / improvement networks.

Finally, there is a commitment to move towards an evidence based approach to planning and to foster a culture of dialogue, discussion and debate within the organisation. These ambitions are supported by the introduction of management information systems, improving the quality and relevance of data collection and providing appropriate training for management members.

In this AFE plan the commitment to the development of KES as an innovative learning organisation is maintained.

Outcome 3.1 Learning and reflection processes within KES optimised.

KES staff members are committed to ensuring a high quality learning experience for those participating in KES AFE programmes and to ensuring that learners are constantly at the centre of all KES processes. Moreover, there is a parallel commitment to ensure that programmes are responsive and up to date and are capable of creativity and lateral thinking.

- Developing learner profiles and ensuring the relevance of programmes to different learner categories.
- Developing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure consistency of standards amongst tutors and full time staff delivering programmes.

Output 3.1.1 Mechanisms developed to enable learner input into KES reviews and planning

This output will be achieved by:

- Holding review clinics for learners on a number of occasions per year.
- Improving learner feedback to adult education centres.
- Undertaking follow up surveys with learners who leave AFE programmes.
- Reintroducing the adult learner forum.

Output 3.1.2 Strategy developed for monitoring, evaluating and learning from this plan mapped and supported.

To ensure that these elements remain central KES will:

- Developing a strategy for monitoring, evaluation and learning management, including self evaluation mechanisms.
- Explore what potential exists for documenting innovation and developing comparative analysis.
- Provide training for staff members in evaluation and monitoring.
- Allocate human resources to support monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Outcome 3.1 Learning and reflection processes within KES optimised.		
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
Output 3.1.1 Mechanisms developed to enable learner input into KES reviews and planning.	• Presence of mechanisms to enable learner input. • Number of review / planning meetings held with learners. • Number of written inputs from individual learners or groups of learners and number presented to KES management. • Level of learner satisfaction with the opportunity to feed into programme review and development.	• Hold review forums for learners on a number of occasions per year[23]. • Improve learner feedback to adult education centres. • Undertake follow up surveys with learners who leave AFE programmes. • Reintroduce the adult learner forum. • Develop learner profiles and ensure the relevance of programmes to different learner categories. • Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure consistency of standards amongst tutors and full time staff delivering programmes.
Output 3.1.2 Strategy for monitoring and evaluating and learning from this plan mapped and supported.	• Presence of a strategy (to be developed by February 2011). • Relevant data and data gathering processes identified and in place. • Level of usage of learning oriented, reporting templates • Visibility of monitoring and learning in monthly reports. • Number of evaluations conducted during the lifetime of this plan.	• Develop a monitoring / evaluation and learning strategy. • Explore potential for recognising innovation and developing comparative analysis. • Develop data capture mechanisms. • Provide training for relevant staff in monitoring and evaluation. • Clarify and allocate human resources needed to support and undertake monitoring and evaluation activities.

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[23] These should build on the positive experiences of existing consultation processes with learners

Education Plan Strategic Area 4: KES as an Employer	AFE Priority Result 4: By 2015 KES will have enhanced its human resources capacity to support learner centred AFE delivery

In 2009 KES employed 369 people to support its adult and further education activities. This number included 44 full time AFE staff and 325 part time tutors. Given these numbers it is inevitable that the role of KES as an employer should feature as a core issue in this strategic plan. While this section is primarily concerned with direct employment issues, the section on KES as a corporate entity also addresses related issues of communication and co-operation.

In terms of employment the fact that KES employs such a large number of part time staff introduces particular challenges, not least relating to the provision of support to those working in more isolated circumstances.

As an employer KES faces the ongoing challenge to build in sufficient flexibility within the organisation to ensure that its capacity to respond to changing circumstances is optimised. This presents challenges both to organisational systems and to staff cultures and working practices, requiring both to be consciously mindful that learners are the core business of the organisation.

It also requires KES to develop systems and capacities that enables employment within AFE to be "as well structured as it is for full time permanent school based staff" (KES CEO).

Outcome 4. 1:
Staff training and support provided to enable staff to deliver high quality AFE.

To deliver this plan, KES recognises that the delivery of an effective AFE service relies on the contribution of dedicated, well qualified staff. And while KES staff members are already highly skilled, there is a recognition that an organisation wide focus on training and support is necessary. This outcome will be delivered through delivery of a number outputs:

Output 4.1.1 Internal staff training / Induction provided for all staff /tutors

This output relates primarily but not exclusively to the employment of part time tutors whose familiarity with the organisation and its ethos may not be as close as those working in a full time capacity. It envisages the provision of staff training and induction for all new staff looking at the history of KES, its main aims and objectives, its ethos, the particular role of AFE, organisational processes and procedures, roles and structures etc. In the first year of this plan this training will be opened up to all staff who may still not be fully familiar with how KES operates. To achieve this output KES will:

- Establish a focused, short term staff training / induction task group to devise and organise induction training.

- Further develop the existing handbook for part time tutors.
- Review the current staff information handbook.

Output 4.1.2: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities provided for all full and part time AFE staff.

KES also recognises that in order to maintain a high quality AFE service all KES staff involved in the design, delivery and administration of AFE programmes need to continually update their skills and understandings of the environment within which AFE operates. Thus, there is a need to focus on the ongoing professional development of those that oversee as well as those that directly deliver AFE programmes. To achieve this output KES will:

- Conduct a survey of CPD needs;
- Organise professional development workshops on specific thematic areas;
- Provide specific training to tutors in adult education to improve facilitation capacity;
- Provide subject related IT training for tutors where relevant;
- Maintain a record of all tutors and their teaching areas;
- Develop an annual calendar of CPD events and opportunities.

	Strategic Outcome 4.1: Staff training and support provided to enable staff to deliver high quality AFE	
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
4.1.1 Internal staff training / induction provided for all staff /tutors.	• Numbers of staff participating on induction programmes annually. • Number of induction / training sessions provided. • Level of satisfaction with programmes provided.	• Establish a focused, short term staff training / induction task group to devise and organise induction training. • Further develop the existing handbook for part time tutors. • Review the current staff information handbook
4.1.2 Continuous Professional Development opportunities provided for all full and part time AFE staff (see also 1.3.2).	• Resources allocated to and expended on CPD • Numbers of staff taking part in CPD opportunities annually. • Balance of take up of CPD opportunities between full and part time staff • Variety of CPD opportunities on offer, • Numbers participating in IT related CPD. • Quality of CPD offered (with particular reference to the requirements of the Teaching Council of Ireland).	• Conduct a survey amongst staff on CPD needs. • Organise professional development workshops on specific thematic areas, linked to the strategic priorities of this plan. • Provide specific training to tutors in adult education to improve their capacity as facilitators. • Provide Subject related IT training for tutors where relevant e.g. use of digital photography. • Maintain a record of all tutors and their teaching areas will be maintained. • Develop an annual calendar of CPD events / opportunities.

Outcome 4.2:
Increased support provided for tutors

A recurring message during the development in this plan was the commitment of existing tutors to the delivery of high quality AFE. However, along with this was a clear sense from many tutors that uncertainty about the future makes personal and professional planning more difficult. At the same time, KES as an organisation is mindful that current and future constraints on resources will make it more rather than less difficult to provide the types of commitment that part time tutors might desire. In an effort to reconcile these tensions this plan will seek to deliver a number of outputs.

Output 4.2.1 Tutor Contracts / conditions enhanced

Within the constraints of existing resources, efforts will be made during the lifetime of this plan to enhance the employment conditions of KES tutors. To achieve this output KES will:

‣ Devise an annual planning model for AFE personnel requirements.

‣ Pursue and advocate optimum conditions for tutors in line with national guidelines.

‣ Provide increased information about supervision / psychological support for KES staff.

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Strategic Outcome 4.2:
Increased support provided for tutors.

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Output

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Indicators

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Indicative Activity

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4.2.1 Tutor Contracts / conditions enhanced in line with national guidelines.

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• Level of positive enhancements in tutor contracts.

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• Devise an annual planning model for AFE personnel requirements.
• KES will pursue and advocate optimum conditions for tutors in line with national guidelines.
• Provide increased information about supervision / psychological support for KES staff.

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Outcome 4.3 AFE is supported by an effective and focused human resource base.

Output 4.3.1: Strategic human resource gaps addressed.

During the preparation of this plan a number of human resource weaknesses have been identified that potentially inhibit the maximisation of KES' capacity to deliver AFE programmes. While the preparation of this plan did not allow for a more detailed examination of the current AFE staffing configuration, it has been possible to identify some of the origins of these weaknesses. In some cases these originate in non availability of staff to take on responsibility for key functions while in others, they stem from staff taking on responsibilities that distract them from other, more important, strategic functions.

In the course of developing this plan a number of particular human resource gaps have been identified.

i.   Despite FETAC being such an intrinsic part of the delivery of AFE programmes, there is limited capacity to centrally co-ordinate and/or support the development of accredited programmes in KES.
ii. At this point in time, senior level Adult Education Officers have been taking responsibility for such an array of administrative functions that they have had little time to devote to shaping the strategic, future direction of AFE provision.

iii. KES has not been sufficiently effective in communicating it's role in the delivery of AFE.
iv. AFE would appear to be insufficiently represented at all senior management discussions within KES by comparison with the post primary sector. This may, in part, be responsible for the weakness of strategic vision and overall evaluation of AFE programmes.
v.   Finally, there is a need to recognise that both the increase in and varied profile of KES learners can pose particular challenges for KES staff. Additional supports may be necessary to address these challenges.

To achieve this output
⮝ A FETAC resource function will be created.
⮝ The administrative burden of AEOs will be reduced by more full time operational support personnel.
⮝ An existing member of staff will be assigned responsibility for reviewing AFE external communications to ensure consistency and quality of communication.
⮝ A learning management function will be allocated to ensure that adequate monitoring and evaluation of this plan is undertaken.
⮝ Establish strategic capacity to develop stronger ICT platforms and management information systems (MIS).

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Strategic Outcome 4.3
AFE is supported by an effective and focused human resource base.

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Output	Indicators	Indicative Activity
4.3.1 Strategic human resource gaps addressed.	• Decisions made on allocation / reallocation of staff responsibilities and resources to support implementation.	• Establish a stronger FETAC support function. • Reduce the administrative burden on AEOs by providing more substantial operational support. • Assign a new / existing member of staff to review AFE external communications. • Allocate a learning management function to ensure that adequate monitoring and evaluation of this plan is undertaken. • Establish strategic capacity to develop stronger ICT platforms and Management Information Systems (MIS).

Education Plan Strategic Area 5: KES as a Corporate Entity	AFE Priority Result 5: By 2015 KES will have enhanced its corporate capacity as the main provider of Adult and Further Education in Kerry

This priority addresses how KES as a corporate entity can more effectively operate to support the provision of AFE programmes. The key issues addressed are ways in which KES can more effectively manage external communication as well as enhancing flows of information within the organisation.

Outcome 5.1: **KES will have more effectively presented itself as main provider of adult and further education in Kerry**

In order to ensure that a comprehensive AFE service is available to the people of Kerry it is essential that KES effectively communicates both the range of education services provided and the diversity of mechanisms used to provide them. This will ensure that potential learners are equipped with the necessary information to enable them to make fully informed choices about the types of programmes that might suit their learning needs and objectives.

Output 5.1.1: More effective external communication channels will be created

To achieve this output:

⬩ A core number of staff will be provided with public relations training to ensure that the role and remit of KES AFE is clearly communicated;

⬩ Following this, an overall PR strategy will be developed, focusing on the promotion of each KES AFE programme, service and the different adult education centres.

⬩ The option of an AFE newsletter will also be looked at;

⬩ A dedicated staff member will be assigned to stimulate AFE communication;

⬩ A more user friendly AFE website will be developed ;

⬩ A strategy around KES branding will be also be developed with expert, external input and rolled out during the life time of this programme;

⬩ KES staff will more actively develop links with services such as the Home Schools Community Liaison officers.

Strategic Outcome 5.1 The delivery of AFE programmes will have been enhanced by an improvement in external communication and collaboration.		
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
5.1.1 More effective external communication channels created.	• Learner satisfaction with AFE communication. • Visibility of AFE in local media. • Level of development in Web based communications.	• Provide a core number of staff with public relations training to ensure that the role and remit of KES AFE is clearly communicated. • Develop an overall PR strategy for AFE, including a newsletter, focusing on promotion of each KES service and of the different adult education centres. • Assign a dedicated staff member to stimulate AFE communication. • Develop a more user friendly AFE website with a community section to allow uploads as well as downloads • Develop a strategy around KES branding with expert, external input and roll out during the life time of this programme. • Further develop links with Home Schools Community Liaison officers.

Outcome 5.2: The delivery of AFE programmes will have been enhanced by an improvement in internal communication and collaboration.

The need for more effective communication and collaboration between all of those involved in the design, delivery and administration of AFE programmes has emerged as an area of strategic importance for this plan. To achieve this outcome a number of outputs will be pursued:

Output 5.2.1: Communication / collaboration between staff facilitated through better use of IT options

Increasingly, ICT platforms are seen as an essential component in ensuring effective communication within organisations. KES will endeavour to put in place a more effective ICT based communication model to serve the needs of its full and part time staff and to supplement rather than replace other forms of direct face to face engagement.
To achieve this output:

⌃ KES will undertake a detailed systems analysis with a view to designing and implementing a more comprehensive ICT based system to optimise internal communication and the potential for collaboration. This would include an analysis of IT training implications for existing AFE staff;

⌃ As part of this, the potential for enhanced IT systems to support information provision will be assessed.

Output5.2.2: Opportunities created for KES staff to share ideas and experiences and learning achieved in the delivery of AFE programmes as an aide to future planning.

Over the years, a vast body of experience and knowledge on the delivery of AFE has been amassed in KES. However, only limited opportunities have been available to promote sharing of this learning amongst KES staff. And while some, though not all, AFE programmes have developed effective systems for sharing information and knowledge, there remains a need for cross programme learning and actions. During the lifetime of this plan this situation will be addressed. To achieve this output:

⌃ Thematic Communities of Practice (COP) will be created to provide a basis for exchange and development of knowledge. Part time tutors will be facilitated to participate in these COPs,

either by access to ICT systems and/or in person as a component of their paid hours.

- ⬥ COPs will be initiated and supported staff by a variety of members.

- ⬥ In addition, individual adult education centres will be identified as thematic hubs for the development of specialised

competencies which can then be shared with other parts of the organisation.

- ⬥ KES and individual programmes will organise regular events and processes for staff to share knowledge and experiences.

- ⬥ District level meetings of all KES staff will be held, at least twice per year.

Strategic Outcome 5.2 The delivery of AFE programmes will have been enhanced by an improvement in internal communication and collaboration.		
Output	**Indicators**	**Indicative Activity**
5.2.1 Communication / collaboration between staff facilitated through better use of IT options.	• ICT strategy in place. • Change in the usage of IT options for staff communication. • Staff satisfaction with IT based communication options.	• Undertake a detailed systems analysis with a view to designing and implementing a more comprehensive ICT based system to optimise internal communication and the potential for collaboration within the AFE service. This would include an analysis of IT training implications for existing AFE staff. • As part of this assess the potential for enhanced IT systems to support information provision.
5.2.2 Opportunities created KES for full and part time staff to come together to share ideas, experiences to collaborate, plan and consolidate the learning achieved in the delivery of AFE programmes.	• Number of opportunities created for staff collaboration. • Variety and location of such opportunities. • Level of staff involvement in planning and running collaboration events. • Level of resources / staff time allocated to support organisation of collaboration events and to support tutor participation. • Level of senior management participation in staff collaboration events. • Impact of collaboration events on decision making. • Quality and nature of recording of learning from staff experiences.	• Create a number of thematic Communities of Practice (COP) to provide a basis for exchange and development of knowledge. • Facilitate part time tutors to participate in these COPs, either by access to ICT systems and/or in person as a component of their paid hours. • Encourage staff members to initiate and support the COPs. • Identify and develop individual adult education centres as thematic hubs for the development of specialised competencies which can then be shared with other parts of the organisation. • Organise regular events and processes for staff to share knowledge and experiences within the AFE sector. • Hold district level meetings of all KES staff will at least twice per year.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Implementation

The successful implementation of this plan will require the ongoing commitment of all those involved in its development. However, it requires more than this. A plan that is everyone's responsibility also runs the risk of becoming a plan that is nobody's responsibility. For this reason a key element of the implementation of this plan will be the allocation of responsibility for overseeing, monitoring and evaluating implementation to a single, senior level staff member. Clearly, such a staff member cannot be responsible for the delivery of each and every outcome. However, they will be expected to be responsible for monitoring and reviewing progress on behalf of the senior management group and for an AFE subcommittee.

The "overseer" effectively assumes responsibility to identify gaps and /or blockages in implementation while it remains the responsibility of senior management to address the gaps and overcome blockages.

Establishing and AFE sub committee

To support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this plan KES will establish a subcommittee drawn from a range of relevant organisations. It is intended that this subcommittee:

- will have a clear role and be focused.
- will be inclusive but not so big as to inhibit smooth working.
- will report to the main KES committee.
- will be advisory in nature.

A key function of this committee will be the regular monitoring of the Plan's implementation. The subcommittee will also be responsible for ensuring production of an Annual Results Oriented Report (AROR) which will outline how progress towards the plan's desired results is proceeding.

Individual programme responsibility

This plan presents an overall strategy for AFE within KES. As such, each and every AFE programme and service will take account of the priorities, outcomes and outputs of this strategic plan and should incorporate its priorities into a process of annual work planning. Such plans will explicitly identify how the overall AFE plan is to be progressed. In doing so they will look, in particular, at opportunities for cross programme / centre synergies and co-operation

Leadership responsibility for particular outputs

Each output will be allocated a designated staff member who will be expected to assume a leadership role in overseeing and/or supporting its implementation. It is not assumed that these staff members will be solely responsible for delivery but they will be tasked with stimulating the involvement of those necessary to ensure that the output is produced.

Finally, KES senior management will review its own processes and AFE team structures to examine how arrangements for implementation, monitoring and evaluation can be optimised.

Monitoring and evaluation

A central feature of any results based approach is a commitment to monitoring and evaluation as the basis for establishing progress towards achieving intended results.

Monitoring is understood as the "*The regular collection and analysis of information to assist timely decision making, ensure accountability, and provide the basis for evaluation and learning*".[24]

Evaluation, on the other hand, is a systematic (and as objective as possible) examination of an on-going or completed project. It aims to answer specific management questions and to judge the overall value of an endeavour and supply lessons to improve future actions, planning and decision making.[25]

Implicit in these understandings is a commitment to the collection of data on learner experiences and programme delivery; to the analysis of this

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[24] IFAD Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook, see http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm
[25] IFAD Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook, see http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm

data and a willingness to act on the issues raised therein.

Any data needs to be quantitative and qualitative, it needs to be rich and deep and needs to focus not just on the volume of inputs or outputs produced but also on the quality of these inputs and, even more importantly, the quality of the outputs. As such it needs to capture the richness of learner experience and narrative.

However, the collection of data requires effective and up to date management information systems and will require all programmes to collect data from their various users.

A key challenge for this Plan, therefore, will be the development of a more effective, cross programme monitoring and evaluation framework. It is intended that this will be undertaken as a priority action to be completed no later than February 2011. A necessary prerequisite for the operation of this framework will be the establishment of base line positions for all of the Plan's outputs so as to enable progress to be charted and measured.

The Annual Results Oriented Report (AROR) mentioned above will be accompanied by an annual World Café event to enable wider engagement of staff and relevant stakeholders with the review process.

Renewing individual staff commitment

During the preparation of this plan KES staff members also identified that they as individuals could contribute to the delivery of high quality AFE by:
- Committing to up-skill, access on-going learning and participating in relevant training;
- Be willing to network from a personal and professional point of view.
- Be more creative and more open and have faith in their own abilities and capacity.
- Commit to internal and external evaluation.
- Continue to be willing to go the extra mile for those who need support

Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Undertaking strategic planning exercises in the current economic, social and political context is a particularly challenging exercise. As part of the preparation of this plan staff of KES undertook a collective risk assessment and risk mitigation exercise to identify factors that might undermine the Plan's ambitions and how these risks, where possible, might be lessened. The outcomes of this process are described in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Risk Assessment and mitigation

Risk Factor	Risk Mitigation Options
External economic factors • may have an impact on the availability of resources. • may introduce a pressure to shape programmes to meet a narrow range of economic objectives. A combination of general resource constraints and cuts in particular programme resources may present particular challenges for the continued delivery of AFE programmes in a way that maintains the strong inclusion and equality oriented ethos of KES.	KES has no control over the external economic environment. However, it can seek to ensure that the economic environment does not cause it to lose sight of or commitment to it's prevailing ethos. • KES will explore further resource sharing options with other agencies / groups. • There may also be some scope to raise resources locally through increased provision of paying courses. • KES will also seek to feed its experiences and learning into national policy making processes.
External institutional factors The recent redesign of government departments has seen the allocation of responsibility for skills development to the new Department of Education and Skills. This may lead to a closer, local level integration between the work of FAS and the VECs and a danger that increased emphasis will be placed on labour market oriented programmes, at the expenses of other, community oriented programmes such as Community Education.	KES will ensure that the social and economic value of all its programmes are visible, thereby enabling it to present value for money as well as social benefit analyses.
Loss of personnel Short and long term gaps in personnel, for a variety of reasons, including career breaks, the public sector moratorium, cuts in resources etc.	KES will ensure that information on supports for staff are easily available.
Increased demand for programmes Due to the current economic situation there is likely to be an increase in demand for KES courses. Dealing with additional numbers will inevitably place greater pressure on existing staff, particularly if the earlier risk of personnel being lost and not replaced becomes a reality, as is likely. This brings with it a real potential for staff burnout, as they deal not only with increasing demand but with learners that themselves may be under a variety of personal, social and economic pressures.	To mitigate this risk: • KES will remain mindful of the need to avoid reacting to every new demand and trend and will seek to prioritise its core areas. • However it will review and monitor its operating environment on a regular basis and will seek to maintain as much flexibility as possible. • As part of this processes to encourage and enable flexibility amongst staff to take on different roles will be explored.
Industrial relations issues **There is no doubt that the current industrial relations climate presents a significant challenge for all public sector organisations.**	To ensure that industrial relations issues do not impact negatively on learners, KES will seek to continue to have positive engagement with local unions.

Risk Factor	Risk Mitigation Options
Lack of commitment While there has been a very positive and broad engagement by staff with this plan it is possible that, over time, commitment to this plan may decline.	To maintain ongoing commitment to the plan KES will: • Ensure clarity about who is responsible for the implementation of the plan. • Ensure the plan is on the agenda for team meetings. • Establish a KES subcommittee with responsibility for overseeing implementation of the programme. • Each Programme / District must prioritise elements of the plan. • Devolve responsibility.
Poor communication and information about progress In achieving the plans ambitions may create an impression of a plan that exists on paper also. Measuring progress and communication about the results of this will be important to help maintain impetus and motivation.	To ensure that progress on the implementation of this plan is recorded and impetus is maintained KES will: • Undertake and publish an annual review of the results achieved • Develop a standard template as part of monthly reports to capture progress in implementing the plan. • Ensure staff resources allocated to manage learning process.
Dependency being developed amongst some target groups.	To address this issue efforts will be made to develop and monitor a basic Independent Education Plan (IEP) for all learners so as to encourage independence and self directed progression.
Requirements for tutors to register with the Teaching Council of Ireland by 2015 There is a risk here that tutors who do not meet registration requirements may not be able to act as KES tutors, thereby creating gaps in the AFE delivery capacity.	To address this risk KES will: Develop CPD arrangements to support tutors to meet these requirements in conjunction with the IVEA and 3rd Level Institutions.

Model of Risk Management[26]

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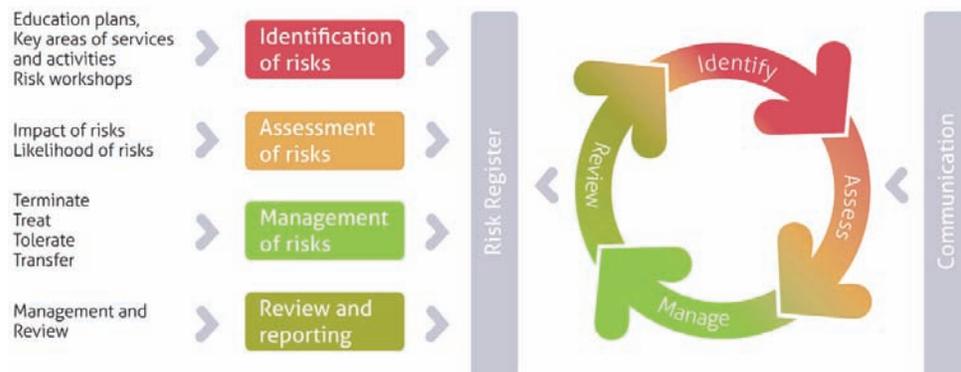
[26] VEC Risk, Excellence in governance through best practice risk management. Published by Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.

Appendix 1

Feedback from learners

Feedback was received from learners on a number of the KES AFE programmes. Learner input was facilitated by programme co-ordinators using the World Café methodology where appropriate. A number of issues were referred to by learners.

General issues

- The feedback from the Community Education session emphasised the balance between learning based on community needs as opposed to individual learning needs i.e. learning programme for groups such as carers, older people, women, men – all as a means of maintain social contact and helping to keep community alive.

- Thus, it was suggested, there is a social value of learning for local communities, which must be valued and recorded like every other programme.

- In this regard, local is seen as a nearby, own community facility-not the nearest KES School or Centre.

- For many local groups who engage with KES, there is a focus on those who most vulnerable in their own communities. Many community education groups provide an opportunity for discussion, analysis and sometimes problem solving on local issues. So, while a craft course may be the surface offering, this can often be a vehicle for keeping local issues "on the agenda".

- The provision of programmes for community groups/community education learners is seen as all the more important as these groups are trying to come up with strategies to survive within the current crises, a term that they themselves used**.**

Accessibility, types of courses

- There was a sense amongst some learners that programmes such as BTEI; VTOS etc do not necessarily cater for women who have stayed at home to care for family and who want to return to learning at a later age. Hence, other educational opportunities are needed.

- Personal development was referred to again and again, in particular, development courses in communities for women to get out of the house, to meet other women to have an "excuse" to regain social contact.
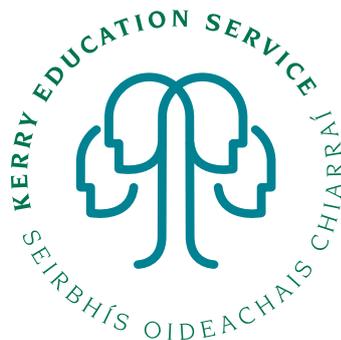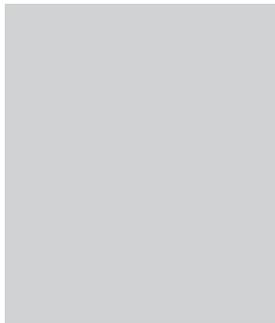
- In some instances the potential for "Jobs Clubs" as a style was promoted as another successful community based education programme, with the potential to link personal and employment skills.

- Fun was mentioned again and again, and fun being especially important in light of the context of 'crisis' mentioned above.

- A number of learners also suggested that there should be more access to FETAC and that that KES should provide self financing FETAC programmes as an option.

Delivery and quality

- For learners, the "quality" and skills of the teacher were seen as very important. Outside of formal evaluation methods, local groups indicated that they themselves are very capable of evaluating this, with a successful and enjoyable course very soon "known" through word of mouth.

- For some learners, the option of participating in courses every second week instead of every week was raised, bringing with it a reduced dependency on tutors, increased opportunity for long term sustainability and potential to pursue more self directed learning.

- On the issue of sustainability, it was also suggested that skills within groups will have to be maximised in order to stimulate groups to continue courses voluntarily once the community education tutor leaves. Here, there may be a role for KES to provide some support. Another option raised was for different community groups to share courses.

- Finally, in terms of some of the types of courses that might be provided, practical skills, building on what people already know were prioritised by some learners. Examples offered included stone wall building, landscaping, decorating, gardening and motor vehicle maintenance. Learners wanted to improve their knowledge and skills and learn to do these things "properly". It was felt that these would be more useful in everyday life than "classroom" learning.

- Also, there was a desire to enhance capacity in relation to new technologies, including instruction in using text messages on mobile phone, in sending and receiving e-mails and having "another go at computers" as some felt that they had only begun to understand the technology.

Table of Education Plan Strategic Areas & AFE Priority Results 2010-2015

EDUCATION AREA	AFE PRIORITY RESULT	OUTCOME
KES AS AN EDUCATION PROVIDER	**The standard of design and delivery of KES AFE programmes and services will have been verifiably enhanced.**	• 1.1.1: Increased knowledge and awareness within KES of future skills / education needs. (Pg 16) • 1.1.2: Greater devolution / delegation of programme design and delivery achieved. (Pg 16) • 1.1.3: Increased capacity to develop and deliver FETAC accredited AFE programmes. (Pg 16) • 1.1.4 Integrated literacy strategy for AFE developed. (Pg 16) • 1.1.5 Co-operation / collaboration between KES AFE programmes enhanced. (Pg 16) • 1.1.6 Particular needs of minority groups acknowledged within programme design, in particular those of Travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. (Pg 16) • 1.2.1: Increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support innovative course delivery, learning and networking. (Pg 19) • 1.2.2 Viability of adult education centres examined, especially those with low levels of current usage. (Pg 19) • 1.2.3 Alternative AFE delivery models assessed and piloted. (Pg 19) • 1.2.4 Rules and regulations that might inhibit participation identified and addressed. (Pg 19) • 1.2.5 Progression routes clarified and enhanced for all learners. (Pg 19) • 1.2.6 Education resources upgraded. (Pg 19) • 1.3.1 Advance knowledge on courses & opportunities for potential learners made easily available. (Pg 21) • 1.3.2 New methods developed to encourage / enable learning. (Pg 21) • 1.3.3 Needs of different categories of learners recognised and addressed. (Pg 21)
KES AS A PARTNER IN EDUCATION	**Strong and effective partnerships will have been developed to deliver enhanced outcomes for adult learners.**	• 2.1.1 Single multi agency education and training portal stimulated. (Pg 23) • 2.1.2 Mechanisms for co-operation established with other education and service providers. (Pg 23)
KES AS AN INNOVATIVE LEARNING ORGANISATION	**KES as an organisation will have developed and operated mechanisms and processes to monitor, evaluate and learn about the impacts of its AFE programmes.**	• 3.1.1 Mechanisms developed to enable learner input into KES reviews and planning. (Pg 25) • 3.1.2 Strategy developed for monitoring, evaluating and learning from this plan mapped and supported. (Pg 25)
KES AS AN EMPLOYER	**Human resources will have been deployed and developed to support learner centred AFE delivery.**	• 4.1.1 Internal staff training / Induction provided for all staff /tutors. (Pg 27) • 4.1.2: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities provided for all full / part time AFE staff. (Pg 27) • 4.2.1 Tutor Contracts / conditions enhanced. (Pg 28) • 4.3.1: Strategic human resource gaps addressed. (Pg 29)
KES AS CORPORATE ENTITY	**KES will have more effectively presented itself as main provider of adult and further education in Kerry.**	• 5.1.1: More effective external communication channels will be created. (Pg 30) • 5.2.1: Communication / collaboration between staff facilitated through better use of IT options. (Pg 31) • 5.2.2: Opportunities created for KES staff to share ideas and experiences and learning achieved in the delivery of AFE programmes as an aide to future planning. (Pg 31)