The aim of SICAP is to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration.

INOU Submission to Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2024+

February 2023

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) *"is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions. The INOU represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment and cannot obtain it. We promote and campaign for policies to achieve full employment for all. We also campaign for an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents. The INOU is an anti-sectarian, anti-racist, non-party political organisation which promotes equality of opportunity within society."* (INOU Mission Statement)

The organisation has almost two hundred affiliated organisations and six hundred individual members. We work at the local and national level on issues affecting unemployed people through the provision of training and welfare rights information services; analysis of Government policies and related advocacy work; and working with a wide range of other organisations on issues of common concern.

The INOU welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the development of the *Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2024+* and this submission will follow the template recommended in Section 3 of the consultation document.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SICAP

Under this heading two questions are posed:

➢ What is your organisations perspective of what works well within the current SICAP?

The INOU regards the focus of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to be particularly important, as the consultation documents notes SICAP *"provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies."*

For many years a key ask for the INOU in our pre-budget submissions has been the acknowledgement of the work of community based organisations who are seeking to tackle the socio-economic exclusion unemployed people and others distant from the labour market experience.

During the 2008 crisis funding was lost to community development work, on the scale of budgetary expenditure a lot of this funding was small, but it was an important investment in local areas and for community based organisations working on particular issues, and its loss is still keenly felt. And though SICAP itself is not a large programme, its funding has been an important support and critical to developing work that is inclusive of people and communities who are on the margins of Irish society and its economy.

As the Pobal website notes *"SICAP addresses high and persistent levels of deprivation through targeted and innovative, locally-led approaches. It supports disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups."*

In the Citizens' Summary of the Annual Implementation Report 2019 of Ireland's ESF funded Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020[1] it states "*The "My Journey: Distance Travelled" Tool was developed and validated in 2019 following an 18 month development process. Full project information is available on the project page <u>here</u>. SICAP is now unique in the*

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[1] This report is available at <u>https://eufunds.ie/publications/</u>

Irish context in having a tailor made tool to measure individuals soft skills and to assess change over time in five components, which have been found to impact on progress into education and training."

The development of this tool was critical as it is essential to capture the progress people who have engaged in programmes and supports have made, especially if they find getting a job extremely challenging. Such a scenario may arise for personal reasons, or it may arise because the person has had few opportunities to participate, or it may arise because others are unwilling to offer opportunities to people coming from particular circumstances or communities.

➢ What could be improved?

Increased funding for a programme of this nature would be important, poverty and socio-economic exclusion remains a reality for many people living in Ireland, and supporting the development and maintenance of community lead initiatives is vital.

Enhanced communication about the role and value of such a programme. Many people involved in this type of work are keenly aware of its importance, but it can be hard for people outside of this work to fully appreciate this, yet such an appreciation is essential to deepen the impact of the work a programme like SICAP supports and develops.

It would be important that the learning coming from SICAP programmes, in particular the learning coming from work with people who are often seen as hard to reach, is feed into the design and delivery of programmes that are seen as mainstream ones. To realise the aims and objectives of policies like the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion* and *Pathways to Work,* in particular the forth strand which is called *Working for All – Leaving No One Behind,* will only be achieved if we change and adapt programmes and supports to suit people, rather than expect people to slot into an option that may not be the best one for them, which is also not an effective way to use limited resources.

HORIZONTAL THEMES

The current SICAP programme is underpinned by three horizontal themes, which cut across all areas of Programme Implementer's work:
  i. Promoting an equality framework with a particular focus on gender equality and anti-discrimination practices.
 ii. Applying community development approaches to achieve the participation of disadvantaged and marginalised communities in the wider local development context.
iii. Developing collaborative approaches with stakeholders to improve how mainstream policies and programmes are delivered so that they impact more positively on the socially excluded.

In the consultation document two questions were posed.

➢ Are these horizontal themes appropriate for the new SICAP programme and if not, how could they be improved?

Yes, these horizontal principles should be maintained and developed in the new SICAP programme.

➢ Collaboration is one of the horizontal themes that underpins SICAP – what does and should effective collaboration look like in practice and how can the new SICAP programme ensure effective collaboration with target groups, representative organisations, local community groups and/ or other local service providers?

It is important that the learning from SICAP feeds into other policy developments and their implementation. The world of work is changing and for many people distant from the labour market a developmental approach will be required to support them to be able to participate in a meaningful and inclusive manner. Collaboration needs to happen at all levels: locally across a broad range of communities, individuals availing of SICAP supports, other organisations providing local supports and

services and in particular key public bodies like Intreo; locally to regionally to nationally within and across all the relevant local players and non-government organisations working on particular issues; and a national level across key public bodies and Government Departments so that inclusive person centred services support real change in people's lives.

Target Groups

As the consultation document notes the *"current SICAP programme (2018-2023) has 12 set target groups, as well as an 'emerging needs' target group, which LCDCs may each select based on local support needs"* including:

i. People living in disadvantaged communities
ii. People with disabilities
iii. Roma
iv. Travellers
v. The Unemployed
vi. Lone Parents
vii. New communities
viii. Low Income workers/households
ix. Disadvantaged children and families
x. Disadvantaged young people (aged 15-24)
xi. Disadvantaged women
xii. The disengaged from the labour market (economically inactive)

Arising from the programme review in 2021 LCDCs and Programme Implementers were asked to consider five national priority groups when planning their work for 2022-2023 including:

i. New Communities, with a particular focus on those living in Direct Provision
ii. Mental Health (including Youth)
iii. Long Term Unemployed
iv. Travellers and Roma
v. Older People and Isolation

In the consultation document two questions were posed.

➢ Are these target groups reflective of the most disadvantaged within Irish society today? If not, what groups should be added to/ excluded from the list and why?

This list appears to be comprehensive, however there is one group that is not named, though possibly captured by other target groups e.g. long-term unemployed and people disengaged from the labour market, and that group is ex-prisoners who face particular challenges and barriers when seeking employment.

➢ What target groups should be prioritised for support within the new programme and why?

All of the target groups named face particular socio-economic challenges and a programme like SICAP can present people covered by these groups with opportunities to engage in a more meaningful way, with supports that are more attuned to their needs and how they wish them to be addressed either individually or collectively.

Ireland is facing a series of challenges not least of which is climate change which will change local job opportunities, both negatively and positively; technological change and increasing digitalisation are also changing the world of work and how people can engage with the world, including Government services and supports. Many people will welcome these changes, the opportunities they present and will have the wherewithal to engage with them constructively. But as Covid-19 illustrated for many people increasing digitalisation has added another layer to the socio-economic exclusion they

already experience. These are challenges that face many people included in SICAP's target groups, but they raise particular concerns for people who are long-term unemployed and distant from the labour market, which could further limit their opportunities of securing decent work[2], a vital opportunity if their experience of poverty is to be reduced.

Beneficiaries

As the consultation document notes here are six beneficiary types under the current SICAP programme (2018-2023), these are:

i.   Individuals

ii.   Local Community Groups

iii. Social Enterprises

iv.   Children and Families

v.   Non-Caseload Individuals who are described as "*beneficiaries who participate in specific community engagement activities under Goal 1 (Supporting Communities) or information events e.g. attend a lifelong learning information event or a jobs fair under Goal 2 (Supporting Individuals). Non-caseload events should be targeted at SICAP target groups but not all attendees need to belong to a target group.*"

vi.   Collaborations which are described as *"structures that the SICAP Programme Implementer engages with to address social inclusion and disadvantage. This could include work with other entities such as local employers or agencies and such work should be linked to SICAP outcomes to address gaps in services, improve the quality of services, and identify new approaches to address barriers to access or participation by SICAP target groups."*

In the consultation document one question was posed.

➢   Is the list of beneficiary types appropriate and, if not, how might it be improved for the current programme?

The list of beneficiaries appears to be comprehensive, though the sixth one about collaboration could do with an element that reflects the nationwide nature of the programme and how the collective learning from SICAP could inform wider programmes and policies designed to address poverty and socio-economic exclusion.

Thematic Areas and Outcomes

Under the two core programme goals – supporting communities and supporting individuals – the current SICAP programme has 12 thematic areas and 29 associated outcomes, which form the basis of the Programme Monitoring Framework listed in the Appendix on pages 10 – 11.

In the consultation document three questions were posed.

➢   Are the thematic areas and outcomes appropriate to the programme's aims within the current socio-economic context?

➢   Could the thematic areas and outcomes be improved upon in the new programme and, if so, how?

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[2] International Labour Organisation definition: *"Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men"*

The list of thematic areas and outcomes appears to be comprehensive.

> ➤ How could the new programme Monitoring Framework better capture programme outcomes, with due regard for the need for national level data on programme progress and achievement, as well as the need to limit the administration burden placed on programme implementers?

Without a doubt this is a challenge, as the capture of data that highlights the work of the programme is particularly important to inform people who do not work in this area and may not fully understand the importance of community based approaches to addressing the poverty and socio-economic exclusion facing particular individuals and communities - both geographic and of interest. On the other hand, it is critical that the collection of this data does not leave the staff working on the ground feeling their work is more administrative than developmental. To that end it would be important that people working in and benefiting from SICAP see the learning arising feeding into wider policy development and how other programmes are implemented, which could then contribute to the overall aim of SICAP to *"reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration."*

Key Performance Indicators

The consultation document notes that the current SICAP programme has two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), one for each programme goal, with an additional target for the proportion of individuals supported that live in a disadvantaged area. KPI targets are set by the LCDC in each local area, based on an indicative level set by the Department, which the LCDC can adjust by 15% either way. Achievement of KPI targets is a Minimum Contract Requirement for Programme Implementers, with non-achievement subject to potential imposition of financial remedies.

The current SICAP Key Performance Indicators are:

   i.   KPIs under Goal 1: Supporting Communities
       a.   Total number of LCGs supported.
  ii.   KPIs under Goal 2: Supporting Individuals
       a.   Total number of individuals (15 years upwards) engaged under SICAP on a one-to-one basis.

In the consultation document two questions were posed.

> ➤ Are the current KPIs appropriate to the programme's aims and, if not, how could these be improved upon in the new programme? In formulating an answer, please consider how KPIs could assist in ensuring the programme is targeted at the most disadvantaged in Irish society.
> ➤ Given local level differences, as well as a requirement for national level targets/ targeting rules, could the method through which targets are set be improved upon and, if so, how?

KPIs tend to be numerical and as such only provide information up to a point. It is useful to have some sense of the numbers of local groups supported, it is one way of identifying the level of support required to ensure community based responses are being developed and their work resourced. Similarly, knowing how many people have availed of SICAP supports is important. However, the nature of the engagement, the level of support a person experiencing poverty and socio-economic exclusion may require to be able to engage with whatever opportunity SICAP is seeking to provide will not be captured by this KPI. Attempting to address this issue in a holistic way is not without its challenges, as noted under *Thematic Areas and Outcomes* the administrative burden perceived by staff working on the ground is an important issue to be considered. One way of addressing this issue would be to ensure that there is better engagement on the setting of targets

and how progress will be assessed, creating better linkages between local and national perspectives, improving collaborative working, which should ultimately feed into better outcomes.

Targeting Strategies

During the SICAP Programme Review and Consultation stakeholders shared strategies they felt were effective for engaging and supporting very disadvantaged individuals and groups including:
- Conducting proactive outreach activities, such as door to door engagement in relevant communities and engaging individuals from specific target groups who had received programme supports to act as 'champions' to promote the engagement and participation of others.
- Engaging and collaborating with target groups and their representative organisations to plan and design activities and interventions tailored to their specific needs.
- Providing supports in target group communities.
- Targeting publicity at key target groups with accessible, tailored information.
- Collecting programme data disaggregated by target group to track participation and facilitate identification of specific needs and barriers.
- Ensuring individuals from key target groups are represented on the staff and governance structures of implementing organisations.

In the consultation document two questions were posed.

➢ Do you agree that specific strategies outlined above would be effective for targeting very disadvantaged individuals and groups and, if not, why not?
➢ What other strategies, in addition to those listed above, could be employed by SICAP programme implementers to better engage and support participation of key target groups?

The strategies listed above have the potential to improve engagement with people and groups who are hard to reach, who may be wary of engagement as their previous experiences may not have been as meaningful or sustainable as they had hoped for or expected.

It is important to note that these strategies take time, that building on smaller programmes and support measures can create openings that will lead to better engagement, and hopefully outcomes, once the resources are maintained and all concerned appreciate that this work rarely moves forward in a straight line.

To that end engaging with representative groups is important to learn from work they undertake or are aware of in other areas that could be of assistance to designing local responses to particular issues. Networking is another important tool, bringing people together whose collective experiences have much to contribute to the work of a programme like SICAP.

Community Development Approaches

The consultation document noted that actions across both goals in the current SICAP programme must be underpinned by community development approaches and principles. A community development approach ensures that Programme Implementers:
- Develop the capacity of communities and target groups so they will have the opportunity to input and determine the core needs that SICAP actions respond to.
- Increase the participation of those who are the most marginalised by engaging people through pre-development mechanisms such as outreach work.
- Ensure that their own governance and decision-making structures are reflective of community development principles and that SICAP target groups are participating in decisions that determine the work of SICAP locally.

In the consultation document three questions were posed.

➢ Are there additional core components of a quality community development approach, apart from those listed above, if so, what do these look like in practice?
➢ How can the new SICAP programme better promote and embed the components of a community development approach outlined above, including any additional components identified in response to the previous question (e.g. how can target groups be better supported to identify and address their own needs and how can this be better embedded with annual local SICAP action planning?).
➢ How can the new SICAP programme better capture implementation of a quality community development approach? Are there any specific indicators of progress/ implementation that might be useful in this regard?

Properly resourcing community development not only withing SICAP but throughout other programmes would be an important development. In particular, providing communities with the wherewithal to work collectively to identify and address the challenges they are facing; while creating a supportive policy environment to ensure that these issues are responded to appropriately both locally and nationally. Such a development would be in keeping with the *Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector* document published by the Government in 2022[3]. The values include social justice; empowering communities; sustainable development; active participation; human rights, equality and anti-discrimination; and social inclusion.

Key Emerging Areas for Consideration

Under this heading Pobal posed five additional questions and the INOU will address the first four.

➢ Social enterprise is a key and growing component of the current SICAP. What role should social enterprise play in the new SICAP programme?

In the *Economic Recovery Plan 2021* the Government noted *"Supporting Social Enterprise, which can provide access to jobs for the most marginalised in society, including through the National Social Enterprise Policy 2019 – 2022 and the Working for Change: Social Enterprise and Employment Strategy;"* (p55) The INOU has called on the Government to properly support community led social enterprises seeking to address exclusion from the labour market and improve access to affordable supports and services.

➢ Climate change initiatives and just transition (i.e. ensuring that the transition to a greener economy and society is carried out in an equitable manner) are emerging issues in society and are key national and European policy priorities. How should this be reflected in the new SICAP programme?

This is an issue where acknowledging and addressing the needs of people who have few resources, whose lived experience is one of poverty and socio-economic exclusion can appear to pull in the opposite direction to the policies required to address the implications of climate change. A programme like SICAP could provide the resources to facilitate local communities to explore this issue and how it should be addressed in a truly just, inclusive, and sustainable manner.

➢ The area of mental health has been an emerging issue in Irish society, compounded during the Covid period. How might this be reflected in the new SICAP programme, without

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[3] This publication is available at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4445-values-and-principles-for-collaboration-and-partnership-working/

provision of clinical services and supports, which would be outside the remit and expertise of SICAP Programme Implementers?

A programme like SICAP can create spaces were people collectively and individually can articulate and tease out issues of concern; identify potential solutions; and if these are not available through SICAP provide guidance on where more appropriate supports may be available.

➢ As SICAP Programme Implementers are not public bodies, they are not legally required to implement the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. However, the Public Sector Duty has significant synergies with the community development approach and with SICAP's underpinning horizontal themes. Supporting capacity and implementation of the Public Sector Duty in community and voluntary organisations is also a stated action in Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a 5-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland (2019-2024). How could capacity around and implementation of the Public Sector Duty be better promoted and supported in the new SICAP programme?

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty is an important development and one that could create a mechanism through which learning from a programme like SICAP is feed into the work of key Government Departments and public bodies. This Duty needs to be more than a reporting exercise, and must inform how Government Departments and public bodies undertake their work, ensuring that people and communities most excluded in Irish society are not further marginalised as Ireland seeks to progress and become a better place in which to live and work.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION

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Appendix

Thematic Areas and Outcomes under Goal 1: Supporting Communities

Thematic Area 1: Promote Community Engagement and Stronger Communities

Outcomes under Thematic Area 1:

- Needs of local communities and groups are identified, represented and integrated through local planning and service delivery.
- Local social inclusion and equality issues are addressed by LCGs.
- There is increased participation in social, cultural and civic activities among SICAP target groups due to the support of community groups.
- A strengthened sense of community.

Thematic Area 2: Build Capacity of Local Community Groups

Outcomes under Thematic Area 2:

- LCGs progress along the community development matrix.
- LCGs have a greater capacity to address the social inclusion needs of the communities they serve or represent.

Thematic Area 3: Support Participation in Decision-Making Structures

Outcomes under Thematic Area 3:

- SICAP target groups and community groups are represented and actively participate in decision-making structures.

Thematic Area 4: Promote Collaborative Engagement

Outcomes under Thematic Area 4:

- LCGs work with local service providers to develop and implement initiatives addressing social exclusion and inequality.
- Collaboration and co-operation between relevant stakeholders in addressing social exclusion and inequality is increased.

Thematic Area 5: Support Social Enterprises that Contribute to SICAP Outcomes

Outcomes under Thematic Area 5:

- Contribute to a social enterprise sector locally and support social enterprises contributing to achieving SICAP outcomes.
- Social enterprises supported by SICAP are stronger and more able to contribute to local economic and community development.
- Social enterprises supported by SICAP provide training, volunteering and employment opportunities for SICAP target groups.

Thematic Areas and Outcomes under Goal 2: Supporting Individuals

Thematic Area 1: Promote Personal Development and Wellbeing

Outcomes under Thematic Area 1:

- SICAP clients have improved personal skills, wellbeing and capabilities.
- SICAP clients increase their participation in civic life, education and/or employment.

Thematic Area 2: Provide Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Outcomes under Thematic Area 2:

- SICAP clients receive information about opportunities for lifelong learning.
- SICAP clients participate in lifelong learning.
- SICAP clients achieve higher levels of qualifications as a result of participating in lifelong learning.

Thematic Area 3: Provide Preventative Supports for Children and Young People

Outcomes under Thematic Area 3:

- Local communities and statutory stakeholders develop holistic approaches to address early school leaving.
- Children and their families are supported in education and personal development.
- Young people at risk of early school leaving remain within the education system.

Thematic Area 4: Prepare People for Employment and to Remain in Work

Outcomes under Thematic Area 4:

- SICAP clients are better prepared to enter the labour market.
- SICAP clients are supported to remain in work through receipt of ongoing in-work supports.
- Local employers are supported to have a more inclusive approach to recruitment.

Thematic Area 5: Promote Better Quality and Sustainable Employment

Outcomes under Thematic Area 5:

- SICAP clients, the unemployed and those on low incomes, move into more sustainable and better quality employment.
- Local employers are supported to create better quality and sustainable jobs.

Thematic Area 6: Provide a Pathway to Self-Employment/ Social Entrepreneurship

Outcomes under Thematic Area 6:

- Individuals are supported into self-employment (including social entrepreneurship).
- SICAP clients who have progressed into self-employment (including social entrepreneurship) are supported to ensure the sustainability of their businesses.

Thematic Area 7: Address Barriers and Gaps in Lifelong Learning and Employment

Outcomes under Thematic Area 7:

- Gaps in labour market and education provision are identified and addressed through joint planning and service delivery.
- More joined-up referral systems are developed to help individuals access the right services.