

INOUE STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2024

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The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) is a federation of unemployed people, unemployed centres, unemployed groups, community organisations and Trade Unions which represents and defends the rights and interests of those who want decent employment and cannot obtain it. It is unique in being the only representative organisation of unemployed people. To achieve our vision of “full employment for all and an acceptable standard of living for unemployed people and their dependents” we engage in the following activities:

- We develop and deliver a wide range of services to people who are unemployed;
- We provide training and other resources to local organisations which support unemployed people;
- We offer information and advice to public and private employment-service providers;
- We work in partnership with national organisations seeking to combat inequality, social exclusion and poverty;
- We liaise with employers in relation to recruitment and redundancy;
- We work closely with policy makers to inform and influence their work; and,
- We engage with the media to inform public opinion on the issue of unemployment.

Since its establishment in 1987 the INOUE has become a leading organisation in Ireland working with and on behalf of unemployed people. We have also gained a reputation for working efficiently and professionally with support organisations, policy makers, employers and the media. Maintaining our reputation along with our relevance to all the groups we work with underpins this Strategic Plan which will guide our work over the years 2019 to 2024.

Context and Challenges

The last number of years has seen some very significant changes and developments in the Irish economy and labour market. Some of these, such as the dramatic increase in employment and the fall in unemployment, have been very positive. Others have not, including the fact that a large number of people remain unemployed and at risk of long-term exclusion from the labour market. These, and other developments over the next five years, will provide a challenging context for our work, as well as some opportunities.

- The increase in employment and decrease in unemployment presents challenges in relation to our perceived role and relevance and in relation to public discourse around unemployment.
- The employment context will continue to be characterised by new and different types of jobs and skills, by different recruitment practices and by different forms and conditions of employment sometimes of poor quality. The impact of these developments on the ability of vulnerable workers, including those under-employed and those who are already long-term unemployed, to secure and retain employment must be a particular focus of our work.
- Against that however, savings to the exchequer arising from the fall in unemployment may create opportunities for us to influence welfare to work policies and services in order to best meet the needs of those who are unemployed.
- Similarly, the emergence of new economic sectors, including in the green economy may provide an opportunity for us to support access to employment opportunities within these new sectors for our target group.

Meeting these challenges, and exploiting the potential opportunities, requires that we can maximize our effectiveness in all our work areas. Against this backdrop, the Strategic Plan addresses the following considerations:

- How can we best work with and on behalf of those who have not benefitted from the current jobs boom?
- How can we be most effective in exploiting opportunities in a changing economy, labour market and policy context to improve the circumstances of our target group?
- What internal synergies and external relationships are needed to further our key aims?
- What organisational resources will facilitate our maximum effectiveness in the longer term?

The Strategic Plan

Strategic Aims: Over the period 2019 to 2024 our overarching aims are to:

- Work with and on behalf of unemployed people and those vulnerable in the labour market in order to bring about an improvement in their circumstances.
- Build synergies within our organisation and develop collaboration with other organisations in order to progress our aims.
- Ensure our organisation remains relevant and viable in the medium and longer term.

Key Objectives: Over the period 2019 to 2024 our key objectives are to:

1. Engage with unemployed people and those who are vulnerable in the labour market and document their views and experiences of employment and unemployment.
2. Develop and deliver quality services to people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market and the organisations which support them and provide services to them.
3. Inform and seek to influence policy, practice and public opinion on issues relating to unemployment and the labour market.
4. Engage with employers on issues relating to employment, recruitment / retention and unemployment.
5. Actively collaborate with organisations on issues that impact people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market.
6. Develop a communications strategy to generate awareness of the context, work and impact of our work.
7. Secure the longer term viability of the organisation in terms of governance and resources.

Main Actions

Objective 1: Engage with unemployed people and those who are vulnerable in the labour market and document their views and experiences of employment and unemployment.

We engage with unemployed people in a number of ways. The individual membership and the General Branch are particularly important in this, from a formal representative point of view. But so too are focus groups, the welfare rights service, and to the extent that it is provided to individuals, the delivery of training. This engagement is vital both in relation to our contact with unemployed people and in generating information on their circumstances and experiences.

Over the next five years we will:

- a. Examine the criteria for Membership and the approach to recruitment and seek to grow individual membership and participation through more innovative ways including through contact with unemployed people via welfare rights information, focus groups and training.
- b. Consider a cohort based approach to membership to ensure better representation across labour market categories and labour market experiences.
- c. Build on the model of focus groups as a form of engagement with unemployed people and those at risk of unemployment, particularly outside of Dublin.
- d. Consider the development of a thematic database of issues / information / views across all areas of direct contact with unemployed people and use this database to identify and develop synergies with other work areas.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality services to people who are unemployed or vulnerable in the labour market and the organisations which support and provide services to them.

The provision of services is an important part of our work, reaching thousands of unemployed people, incentivising affiliate membership and generating income. In the coming years, it will be important for our services to individuals and organisations to remain relevant to challenges faced by people as they negotiate their way through increasingly complex labour market and employment conditions.

We will:

- a. Ensure that all work plans agreed with funders are effectively and efficiently implemented in order to maintain our high quality service provision to unemployed people.
- b. Maximise the impact of our Welfare Rights service by ensuring that the substantial database generated contributes to other areas of our work.
- c. Develop our role as a niche training provider to both organisations and individuals and actively seek new sources of funding for the delivery of training in relevant areas.
- d. Produce information leaflets for specific groups / cohorts within the labour market to link them to key Welfare to Work Programmes and other supports including in-work supports.
- e. Monitor all services to ensure they continue to be relevant to changes in the labour market, in recruitment and retention, and to the experiences of people seeking and retaining employment.

Objective 3: Inform and seek to influence policy, practice and public opinion on issues relating to unemployment

Seeking to influence policy, practice and public opinion is difficult in any context. In the current circumstance of low unemployment, it will be particularly challenging to maintain focus on the unemployed and those most vulnerable. Embedding our work on behalf of the most vulnerable within an analysis of contemporary employment, and the challenges faced by those seeking work, can maximise awareness of the issues, our response to them and our ongoing relevance.

We will:

- a. Inform and seek to influence public policy and practice to bring about changes to employment, education and training policies so that they are better equipped to needs of those most vulnerable on the contemporary labour market.
- b. Maximise the use of data generated by our direct engagement with unemployed people and those vulnerable in the labour market in informing policy, practice and public opinion.
- c. Develop an explicit engagement with and analysis of new forms of employment, including precarious employment, and the relationship between this and unemployment.
- d. Develop an annual campaign of awareness based on one key issue per year and promote this widely.

Objective 4: Engage with employers on issues relating to employment, recruitment / retention and unemployment

In recent years we have established a good track record in working with employers, including on the issue of redundancies. In the contemporary context there are opportunities to engage with employers on a broader range of issues, including recruitment, retention and advising them of the benefits of employing unemployed people.

We will:

- a. Seek to involve employers in discussions of the future of work, new forms of employment and mechanisms of recruitment and retention.
- b. Develop links between employers and local employment service agencies and promote to employers the benefits of recruiting unemployed people and the supports available to do so.
- c. Develop information and guidance for employers, including in new sectors, on favourable methods for the recruitment and retention of unemployed and insecure workers.

Objective 5: Actively collaborate with organisations on issues that impact unemployed people and those at risk of unemployment.

We have developed very good working relationships with organisations working in areas of relevance to unemployed people. As the employment and labour market context continues to change and new issues emerge, it remains important for us to maintain and expand our collaboration with these and other organisations on the issues we wish to take forward.

We will:

- a. Continue to work with relevant organisations on issues affecting unemployed people and those vulnerable in the labour market.
- b. Seek and / or develop collaboration with other organisations to advance our programme of work including EU based organisations, Trade Unions, Employers and Employer Organisations and Universities.
- c. Seek strategic partners in all sectors to enable us to demonstrate effective services / supports for unemployed people and those at risk of unemployment.
- d. Develop strategic partnerships with organisations, agencies and initiatives working in communities and with groups that are particularly affected by unemployment and precarious work.

Objective 6: Develop a communications strategy to generate awareness of the context, work and impact of our work

In the current context of low unemployment, ensuring public awareness of the ongoing problems faced by unemployed people will be difficult but necessary if we are to improve their circumstances and counter negative public opinion.

We will:

- a. Develop a publicity strategy with emphasis on social and digital media to promote awareness of the context, work and impact of our work and generate discussion of relevant issues.
- b. Where possible, make more use of national, local and regional print and broadcast media to create awareness of our services to unemployed people particularly outside of Dublin.
- c. Develop a policy on responding to negative media contacts and negative views/questions regarding unemployment and disseminate responses.
- d. Develop and disseminate a series of case studies to highlight the need for our work and its impact and to generate awareness of the issues, beyond the statistics.

Objective 7: Secure the longer term viability of the organisation in terms of governance and resources.

In the context of ongoing change in the economic and labour market environment it is essential that our organisation is robust across all aspects. The period of the strategic plan will be used to review governance and resources and ensure we are in as strong a position as possible at the end of the implementation period.

We will:

- a. Conduct a further review of our constitution and governance structures to establish their appropriateness and viability in the current and future context and plan for future developments including in relation to personnel.
- b. Develop a strategy to broaden our funding base incorporating involvement in service delivery contracts, EU programmes and through seeking support from philanthropic organisations and other funders.
- c. Restructure and remodel the internal forums and committees to secure better synergies across work areas, better data capture and analysis, better internal communication flows and enhanced promotion of our work and impact.
- d. Continue to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme of staff engagement, support, training and development.