

Lot 29: 3 (Castlebar & Claremorris) South West Mayo Development Company: Changing Lives - Supporting Self-Employment

SICAP Theme

Although primarily a **Goal 2** project, this case study could equally be classified as a **collaboration** project with strong interagency involvement from the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection and Mayo Local Enterprise Office.

In a nutshell ...

SWMDC's SICAP 2018-2022 tender contains an action titled *Business Support*. This falls under SICAP Thematic area G2:6 (*Providing a pathway to self-employment*).

Self-employment plays a vital role in sustaining livelihoods in rural counties such as Mayo where employment options are limited relative to urban centres. SWMDC's Business Support team, supported by Mayo Local Enterprise Office (LEO), has devised a strong collaborative process with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to nurture and support SICAP clients to set up and maintain their own businesses. This support for new and emerging small enterprises is key to growing Mayo's economy.

What does SICAP support look like?

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) and the Short-Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA) provide valuable state support for eligible clients in establishing their own businesses. This allowance is administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). Applicants from the Castlebar & Claremorris SICAP Lot (Lot 29:3) are only approved on foot of a positive recommendation for the business plan from the SWMDC/DEASP Assessment committee. BTWEA/STEA applicants in the Castlebar & Claremorris SICAP Lot go through the following process:

- 1) Client presents at DEASP with an interest in BTWEA/STEA
- 2) Appointment scheduled and held between Client and a DEASP Case Officer
- 3) Assessment of suitability completed by the Case Officer and sent to SICAP Business Support team of South West Mayo Development Company CLG (SWMDC) if client is eligible and suitable
- 4) A SICAP Business Support team member mentors the client to develop a business plan and a BTWEA/STEA application. The client participates in one of the monthly Start Your Own Business (SYOB) course organised by South West Mayo Development Company CLG. This is mandatory – see overleaf for course content.
- 5) Completed application inclusive of business plan is presented by SICAP Business Support team member to one of the monthly joint SWMDC/DEASP Assessment committee meetings for recommendation
- 6) Recommended applicants supported with for tax registration
- 7) Completed applications accompanied with client's income tax registration form submitted to DEASP Deciding Officer for approval for BTWEA/STEA.

The Start Your Own Business Training Support package which is part funded by SICAP and Mayo LEO includes:

- One-to-one Business Mentoring support. These one-to-one sessions are held in SWMDC SICAP weekly outreach offices located in Claremorris, Charlestown, Kiltimagh, Castlebar, Ballinrobe and Ballyhaunis and in the full-time operational SICAP office in Balla.
- Access to additional supports through SICAP to break down participation barriers. This includes language support, transport, literacy, numeracy, technology, accessibility, dependent care supports and dietary requirements.
- Signposting and referrals to relevant supports. This includes Mayo Local Enterprise Office, Micro Finance Ireland, LEADER, Mayo Ideas Lab, established business networks and other SICAP supports
- Post training one-to-one Specialised Business Start-Up Support Sessions.
- SICAP business mentoring supports available for up to two years after business start-up.



SYOB Trainees

The SICAP and LEO-funded *Start Your Own Business* course is held in Mayo Abbey Training Centre every month and covers the following topics:

- Overview of key areas of Managing a Business;
- Business Formation and Structures;
- Planning the Business;
- Business Plan Development;
- Marketing, Market Research, Target Market, Product, Promotion and Presentation;
- Start-up Costs / Profit & Loss Accounting / Budgets / Cash Flows;
- Overview of other Grants and Supports.

Who benefits from this work?

Self-employment supports account for a significant part of SWMDC's SICAP, with approximately a third of SWMDC's clients availing of business supports. From January 2018 to June 2019, 196 people have completed the Start Your Own Business (SYOB) course, with 78 going on to successfully set up their own business.

Most of the SWMDC supported enterprises receive BTWEA/STEA, though some avail of other DEASP supports such as Job Seekers Self-Employment, Lone Parent Self-Employment, Carer's Allowance Self-Employment or Disability Allowance Self-Employment. A small minority progress into self-employment without DEASP support.

What is SICAP's role?

SICAP has an essential, niche role in supporting new self-employment in Mayo and in ensuring that strong, viable businesses avail of DEASP self-employment supports. SICAP resources allow for the individualised mentoring sessions for clients. SWMDC SICAP and Mayo LEO resources augment each other to ensure that each client interested in self-employment receives structured training through the SYOB course. The collaboration with DEASP through the monthly DEASP/SICAP assessment meetings held in the SWMDC Balla office ensures a robust and rigorous assessment process.

DSP staff offered the following praise for the collaboration:

Our observation to date is that this is a very successful and beneficial process from the point of view of both parties involved and as a result many people have established very successful businesses.

Staff from Mayo LEO, Mayo's "first stop shop" in the county for anybody thinking of starting their own business or wishing to expand their business venture were effusive in their praise for SWMDC's SICAP Business Support programme and offered the following testimonial:

Collaboration with SWMDC to help deliver the dedicated Start your Own Business programme as part of the SICAP offering facilitates a wider cohort of people to avail of the opportunity to learn more about becoming self-employed, as well as having the follow up support of one-to-one mentoring to help the participants take that crucial step and establish their business. The partnership also helps increase awareness of the overall

supports of LEO Mayo and vice versa with SWMDC, illustrating how a county wide collaborative approach helps foster a comprehensive supportive eco-system for new and emerging small enterprises.

Personal stories – in our clients' words ...

Are you suffering from a mental health problem?

Elaine Browne, Claremorris, feted as Mayo's Inspirational Woman for 2018, tells her distressing story and her recovery from illness

Aiden Henry

ELAINE Browne, who resides in Claremorris, is a lady who has suffered mental health problems in her life which brought her to a very low ebb and tortured her for many years. Indeed, such were the issues she experienced, they brought her to the point of trying to end her life.

People with mental health problems sometimes experience a crisis, such as breaking down in tears, having a panic attack, feeling suicidal, or experiencing their own or a different reality.

But above all else they are constantly living a life on a daily basis, 24-hours a day, which is a total nightmare. People with such a problem, more than not, keeps it bottled up inside as they just don't want to talk about it. As a result the inner suffering of such a person never improves and usually gets worse.

The sufferer of a mental health problem also feels no one can understand what they are going through, be it a family member or friend. While there are many services where help is available, going and talking to someone can be very difficult.

"My real self was increasingly dying inside, disappearing day by day as the reality of pain, unending stream of thoughts, nightmares, anxiety and physical symptoms took over and became harder to hide. My fight for life for a long time was that I worried for my family and what it would do to them if I took my own life.

other mental health services. She can be contacted on (085) 7297451. For further information on meetings, contact the Family Resource Centre in Claremorris at (094) 7377838.

Elaine's Story

For mental health sufferers the following is Elaine Browne's story which I am sure will offer those presently in turmoil with a lot of hope for the future.

She writes: 'With gratitude, I sit in my kitchen this morning with peace



Elaine Brown kindly granted us permission to share her self-employment story as part of this case study. Elaine's business is called **Perspective** and was established in September 2018. Elaine is a qualified Mental Health Peer Specialist with lived experience of mental health issues and has been in recovery for 20 years

In Elaine's words:

*I originally approached Breda Murray from SICAP in Claremorris outreach in 2017 with my idea for **Perspective**. As my role is very niche and I would be the first peer support worker in the community, Breda supported me in testing the market for need. I felt that it had potential and people signed up for my original workshop and following group. Slowly things began to develop. The thoughts of doing a business plan was new to me but through collaboration with Breda, I fine-tuned my business plan and vision for my company.*

*By August 2018, I couldn't believe the progress I had made through the steps, mentoring and support received by Breda and Elaine Moyles from Mayo LEO. I registered my business as a company and had the invaluable training with the Start Your Own Business Programme (SYOB) delivered by SWMDC. Michael Kilcullen [SYOB trainer] made himself available for any support and I will also be meeting him again next week. I set up my business **Perspective** in Claremorris in August 2018 supported by the Back to Work Enterprise Programme which has given me vital financial stability during the start-up phase and access to the Enterprise Support Grant.*

I have never felt alone in this while process of setting up my business. The knowledge, advice and support have helped me continue and be where I am today. This year I was the recipient of Mayo's Inspirational Woman and that's simply from putting myself out there. I wouldn't have been able to do it alone.

*The best thing is, the support continues. I know that I will be connected with Breda, Elaine and Michael on an ongoing basis and I don't feel silly in asking any questions that I have. This support has motivated me, kept me going in times of doubt and helped me stay focused. **Perspective** is a unique service that promotes social change and I really had to be brave to set it up. Without the vast range of supports I received from the*

We asked two other clients about their experiences of SWMDC's SICAP Business Support. Client X, a man who does not speak English as a first language, provided the following testimonial

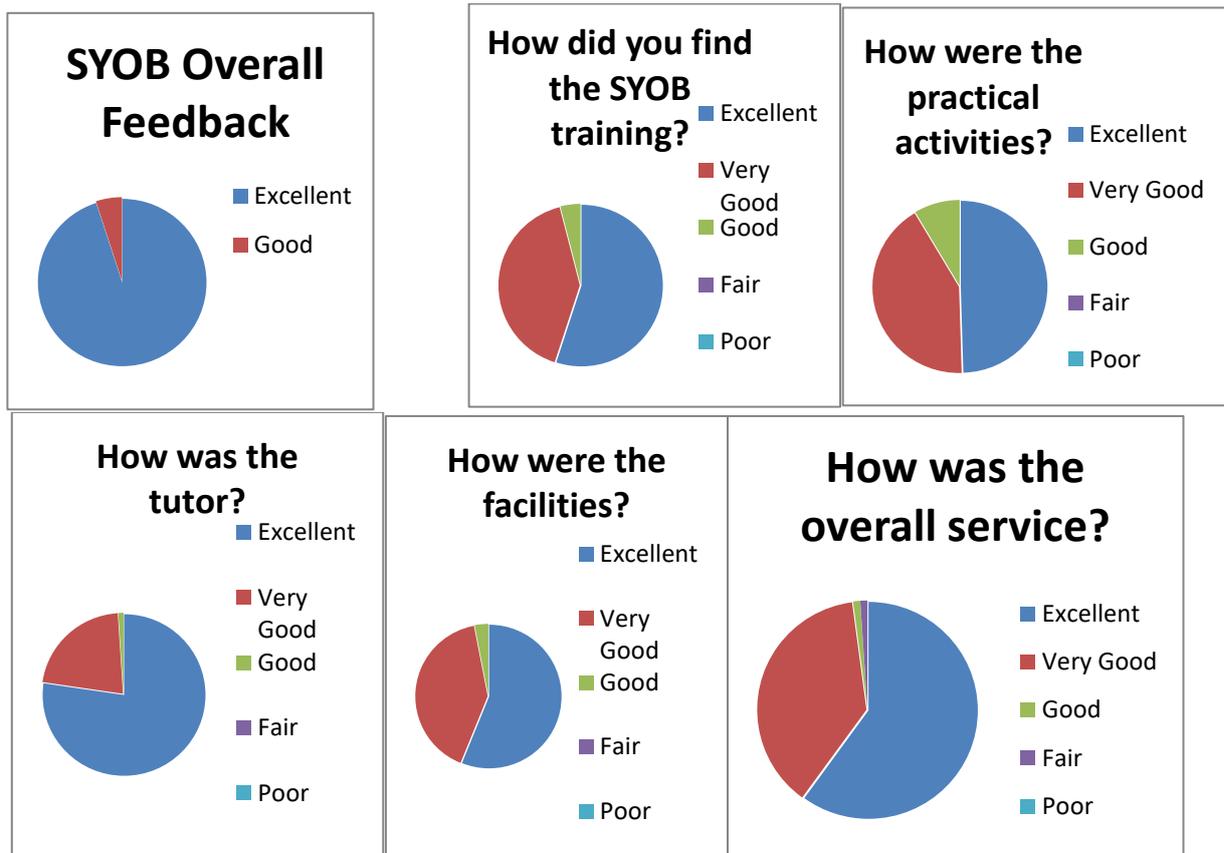
It took me 2 years to really understand what my project is really about, received plenty of help to understand the importance of having a precise idea. The writing of the business plan is in itself the biggest help I received in order to really project realistic goals and I received precise pieces of advice concerning the manner I should prioritise my research. The passage to BTWEA itself is tough and reality brings a whole lot of surprises particularly concerning self-employment, but I can still ask for advice and don't feel isolated

Client Y, a young woman who went from being unemployed to running her own business shared the following:

[Through SICAP] I was given the skills to start the business. After my business plan was approved, I felt confident enough to start trading, because I knew that people believed in me and my business idea, this was very important in giving me the start I needed. I would not have been able to start my business without the financial backing of the scheme but more importantly the support of everyone in SICAP who helped me, the business course I was provided with and receiving general support made my business idea a reality. I would like to thank everyone involved who helped me in SICAP in Balla and Social Welfare in Castlebar, I am very proud to be self-employed and will continue my hard work as I now enter my second year of self-employment

Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

Please see below findings and summary of feedback:



- Between January 2018 and June 2019, 196 individuals completed the Start Your Own Business Training One to One Business mentoring sessions are offered to all participants attending the training. To date there has been 41 mentoring sessions completed as a follow on from the Start your Own Business Training.
- 78 new enterprises have been established with SICAP support.

- As part of the Mentoring process, facilities are available to the Mentor and the participant, this includes a private meeting space equipped with PC, printer and internet access.
- All scheduled training dates agreed by contract have been carried out to date
- When required barriers to access have been removed by working with and communicating with participants to ensure that everyone can fully avail of this training. Examples include Transport, Childcare, Language Support, ICT etc.
- To date all reporting and administration has been carried out within a structured timeframe to ensure the effective coordination of this training for all stakeholders while meeting the required tender criteria.

Learning and conclusion

SWMDC, along with DEASP and supported by Mayo LEO, has devised a robust and rigorous process to support SICAP clients into self-employment. SICAP has been the catalyst for this. Under SICAP, SWMDC procured a two-year contract for the Start Your Own Business Training and follow-on business mentoring support. Detailed feedback has been an integral part of this contract and the evaluation of feedback from participants and trainer has enabled the objectives of the programme to be met and for continuous improvements to be made throughout the year.

Some of the most common feedback that we have received to date is outlined below. As this service is due to be procured again in the future, we will use the below feedback to refine our request for tender.

What did you like most about this training?

- Networking Opportunity
- The sharing of information
- The open conversation
- The approachability of the Trainer

- Creating quotation/invoice
- ROS

What aspects of the training could be improved?

- More time needed
- The training needs to be over two days
- A lot to cover in one day

Please list four things you learned today

- Business Plan
- Marketing
- SWOT
- The power of networking
- Hidden Costs
- Tax

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

- Additional time needed
- Excellent training and facilities
- Increased confidence
- Knowledge gained
- Possible follow up

Overall, SWMDC is very proud of our SICAP Business support model and the work that our SICAP Enterprise team carries out to develop enterprise within Mayo. Our work provides structured support for clients who wish to pursue self-employment and is rigorous enough to ensure that robust plans are supported. SICAP support also ensures clients are supported to overcome access barriers at every stage. Through this work, we are making a tangible impact on Mayo's economy and helping to ensure local employment.