

**SICAP Case Study for the Mayo Islands LOT  
Basketry Making Workshop Weekend, Clare Island, County Mayo.**

LDC name: South West Mayo Development Company CLG  
LOT Number: (29-1) Mayo Islands  
Goal Number: 2  
Target Groups: Addressing Isolation and Loneliness

**Case Study Theme**

Goal 2 – Individuals: Addressing Isolation and Loneliness - Supporting individuals to engage within their community, addressing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

**Target Group**

Individuals living in the island community on Clare Island, County Mayo.

**Introduction to the Project**

In 2021 as we emerged from Covid 19, an online basketry workshop was requested from within the community. This workshop was an attempt to bring individuals together in a safe environment, where the tutor could lead them via Zoom to create a basketry piece. This model was new for individuals on the island, working with a tutor remotely. The model worked really well and ignited an interest in basketry. Individuals requested another course, preferably over a longer period of time and with the instructor present, in person.

In 2023, Helena Golden from Helena Golden Willow came to Clare Island for an intensive two day basketry workshop. Having the tutor on hand to lead the workshop was fantastic. She gave clear instructions and instilled confidence in the students. A number of amazing baskets were produced at the end of the weekend workshop.



Clare Island Pier, Image courtesy of Teem Lens. <https://www.teemlens.com/>

### **The Role of SICAP**

The Community Development, Education and Training Officer coordinates the delivery of these projects, with direct input from the community. In answering a need within the community to ensure that people felt included and activities to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness are available is an important part of SICAP.

Direct communication with those most at risk of isolation means that when offering a workshop the programme can mould directly to the needs. Some individuals need more support to attend workshops due to high levels of social anxiety. Deep engagement in the community means the development officer can offer additional supports where needed.



Basketry workshop, image courtesy of Helana Golden. <https://helenagoldenwillow.ie/>

### **Challenges and Learning**

Delivery of any workshops on off shore islands has challenges around appropriate weather conditions for travel and the willingness of the tutor to attend. For this workshop Helena was willing to go the extra mile to get to the islands. Her materials had to be lifted on the ferry in Roonagh and off again on the island and transported to the Community Centre where the workshop was being held. This is additional work and needs to be considered with any training on the islands.

Low levels of population also raises the question of value for money for every project on offshore islands. This is continually taken into account when running SICAP in these areas.

### **Outputs and Outcomes**

A range of new skills were taught at this workshop, giving people hands on experience of basket weaving. The physical outcome from this workshop was every student produced a traditional basket and learned a new skill.

The other outcomes were engaging together as a group, learning from an external tutor and coming out into the community to participate.

The continuation of traditional island skills was also important to the group and it allowed for intergenerational work as the demographic of the group was ranged from young adult up to more mature participants.

### **Conclusion**

This project received very positive reviews from participants and the tutor also had a great experience in coming to Clare Island. The continuation of traditional skills is also important and giving the group an opportunity to learn first hand from an on-site tutor is imperative for islands projects.