

Press Release

Wednesday 14th December 2016

SOUTH EASTERN INITIATIVE EXPANDS TO SUPPORT FIFTEEN EXTRA CREATIVE BUSINESSES

Wicklow Local Enterprise Office have welcomed Waterford LEO as a collaborative partner on the South Eastern Creative Corridor (SECC) initiative. This opens up the opportunity for 15 Waterford AV sector businesses to join the exciting programme of training, networking and events scheduled across the South East region in 2017. The programme started last Friday 9th December in the Lyrath Hotel in Kilkenny with an action packed Regional Bootcamp Event facilitated by a team of expert facilitators, designed to kick start the networking and goal setting for the first 54 regional businesses. Registration is still open at www.creativecorridor.ie and relevant businesses from within the region are urged to take this opportunity to extend their network and grow their businesses through this development and investment programme.

Announcing the extension of the South Eastern Creative Corridor to include Waterford, Sheelagh Daly, who is Head of Enterprise of the Lead Partner, LEO Wicklow, stated "I am delighted that we have been able to respond to the interest expressed in County Waterford by extending the project and setting up a Waterford group. Our Creative Corridor now involves six counties, and the inclusion of Waterford is a really exciting and positive development that I believe will greatly enhance the outcomes of the project."

Richie Walsh, Head of LEO Waterford said of this opportunity "Waterford, with its great traditions in design and manufacture, has always been at the forefront of Irish creative thinking. It also now has a growing community involved in the new technology creative industries and Waterford's involvement in the Creative Corridor project will provide a huge stimulus and support for the further development of this sector"

The year-long initiative, which was launched at an industry Symposium attended by key stakeholders from the sector in Wickow County Campus in November, offers enterprise owners an intensive programme of business development including training, mentoring, networking and access to finance. The objective is to assist participating businesses to increase sales, improve profitability, explore new markets and take full advantage of the opportunities in the sector. Funding for the initiative, which is led by the Local Enterprise Office Wicklow, is provided by Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Action Plan for Jobs competitive fund and it is expected that the outcomes of the programme will include job creation as well as the development of a sustainable creative industry cluster in the region.

The SECC programme will roll out across the region for the whole of 2017 with a series of training workshops and peer support networking and accountability boards to be held in each County. The programme will culminate with an Audio Visual Summit in December 2017. More information is available at www.creativecorridor.ie or by contacting your Local Enterprise Office.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

About the Local Enterprise Offices

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Wicklow promotes the development of enterprise in County Wicklow by focusing on the creation of enterprise awareness, providing management training and mentoring services for small business and by providing a range of financial incentives.

Partner LEOs in the South Eastern Creative Corridor programme are:

- LEO Wicklow (lead partner). Contact: Sheelagh Daly sdaly@leo.wicklowcoco.ie Mob: 087 289 9574
- LEO Carlow, LEO Kilkenny, LEO Wexford, LEO Tipperary, LEO Waterford.

The LEOs are the 'first-stop-shop' for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own business. The LEO function is carried out by 31 Local Enterprise Offices in a partnership between Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities. For further information on the supports available see www.localenterprise.ie

About the South Eastern Creative Corridor

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) in Wicklow, in collaboration with Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford and Tipperary Local Enterprise Offices succeeded in winning funding under the LEO Competitive Fund to implement the 'South Eastern Creative Corridor' programme. LEO Waterford became project partners in December 2016. The overall objective of the programme is to encourage and support entrepreneurs and established SMEs who can sell services or products to the audio visual industry or are operating in the sector, to grow their businesses, internationalise and create new jobs in the region. The participating companies will be supported through an extensive networking, mentoring and training programme including opportunities to access finance for their business plans. This extensive programme will be running in all six counties and is being delivered by expert trainers, mentors and facilitators from The Entrepreneurs Academy www.entrepreneursacademy.ie

About the LEO Competitive Fund

The purpose of the €5million LEO Competitive Fund is to support LEOs to collaborate within their national network to fund initiatives focused on clearly defined opportunities, weaknesses or business challenges impacting micro-enterprise locally, regionally and nationally in order to grow and sustain employment and scale micro-enterprise. Priority has been given to new approaches that build on, and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem throughout the country. A prerequisite for proposals was the need to demonstrate innovative solutions to fostering and creating employment. In-line with the national remit of LEOs, the specific objectives of this fund are:

- To strengthen microenterprise locally, regionally and nationally in order to create jobs, grow enterprise and support the progression of LEO clients to Enterprise Ireland.
- To foster increased collaboration, networking and a joined up approach to national, regional and local micro-enterprise capability building, growth and job creation.
- To achieve additionally in terms of job creation and enterprise growth through connecting the LEO network regionally and nationally.
- To generate new actions that will support the Government's National Action Plan for Jobs, Action Plan for Jobs Regional and the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland.