



Laois Volunteer Centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Laois

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026





VISION

Laois Volunteer Centre, through its' work with volunteers and organisations aims to help create a vibrant society, where every person feels connected to their community through active participation in voluntary activities.



MISSION

Laois Volunteer Centre will promote the value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering in the county.



VALUES

Encourage civic responsibility by increasing the range and quality of Volunteering through awareness raising/promotion. Support VIOs to carry out their day-to-day operations for the benefit of community through the participation of Volunteers.

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Introduction

Laois Volunteer Centre (LVC) aims to be a 'one stop shop' for all the volunteering needs in County Laois.

Laois Volunteer Centre is an independent organisation which works with individuals and organisations to carry out a range of activities to improve communities across the County.

Following the implementation of the 2022 workplan the company wanted to prepare a strategic plan for the next 3 years (2023 to 2026).

O'Leary & Associates Training & Consultancy was contracted to facilitate the strategic planning process. The planning process consisted of a review of the 2022 workplan, review of relevant national policies in relation to volunteering and meetings with the manager and Board of Management.

The results of the review process have shaped the development of the strategic plan and five key priorities have been identified that will shape the objectives and actions of the company for the next 3 years. Under each priority a number of strategic and realistic aims will be achieved through the implementation of annual work plans. Key to the success of the implementation of this strategic plan is to develop a sustainable well governed structure that will promote and enhance volunteering within Co. Laois.

A number of recommendations have been proposed that will see the board of management expanded, committee structures established, and alternative potential revenue streams identified.

Strategic Priorities 2023-2026

Priority 1	Ensure the Organisation is Sustainable by meeting high standards of Good Governance, Accountability and Management.
Priority 2	Building Community Connections with stakeholders working in the community and voluntary sector in the county.
Priority 3	Build the Laois Volunteer Centre Brand and develop a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the many forms of volunteering and highlight it's value for individuals, organisations and communities in County Laois.
Priority 4	Provide a high-quality service which facilitates the increase in access to volunteering by matching appropriate volunteers to organisations that have identified needs.

History and Background

Laois Volunteering Information Service (Laois VIS) was set up through Laois Partnership Company in conjunction with Volunteer Ireland to source volunteering opportunities from around the county and was funded for a part time: a one day a week operation. It was envisaged where Volunteering Information Services operated, full time Volunteer Centres would be developed and in July 2018 it was announced that a funding allocation was agreed to upgrade the VISs to independent volunteer centres, including the one in Co. Laois. In 2020, a voluntary board was recruited by Volunteer Ireland to become the trustees for Laois Volunteer Centre. A constitution was drawn up and legal entity 'Laois Volunteer Centre CLG' was incorporated.

In early 2021, €121,000 in funding was allocated to the to the board of Laois Volunteer Centre for premises, staff, running costs, training and support. From 2023, core funding from the DRCD increased from €121,000 to €131,000.

Organisation Profile

Laois Volunteer Centre operates as a Company Limited by Guarantee without Share Capital (CLG) and is a registered charity. The initial board was made up of three representatives from the local community, representing key stakeholders and the geographic divisions of the County. At the close of 2021, the board comprised chairperson, secretary, treasurer and one other trustee. It is proposed that the board will be extended in 2023 to engage more local stakeholders and people with necessary skills. The board oversees the strategic direction of the organisation and delegates operational activities to the Volunteer Centre Manager.

The role of the board of management is to support the manager and staff in the day-to-day operations of Laois Volunteer Centre. They provide this support by volunteering their expertise and advice. There are three Sub-Committees; Governance, HR and Finance which meet at regular intervals. Laois Volunteer Centre is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development. In time, additional appropriate funding will be sought from other streams such as local government grants and through other national funding streams. Laois Volunteer Centre became compliant with the Charities Regulatory Authority's Governance Code in October 2022.

Board of Management

Chairperson:	Conor Ganly	Development Officer:	Karen Chadwick
Secretary:	Pauline Flanagan	Board Member:	Damian Kirwan
Treasurer:	Catherine Corbett	Board Member:	Zain Jawed-Khan
Director:	Julia O'Connor		
Manager:	Caitriona Ryan		



Area Profile

Traditionally a county dominated by rural areas, Laois has urbanised around Portlaoise, Portarlington, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen. Areas to the south of the county have not seen population grow as rapidly as Portlaoise. Census 2022 preliminary results show the population of the county was 91,657. This is an increase of 8.2% since 2016.

Population growth is centred mainly around the big towns with Portlaoise (identified as a 'key town' in Laois County Council's Portlaoise Local Area Plan (2022 - 2028) dominating the numbers. There are a total of 25,771 people living in and around the county town.

There are 7,856 people on the Offaly side of Portarlington but this number rises to 10,424 when the Offaly side of the town is added.

There are 3,147 people living in the Mountmellick urban area. However, the number rises to nearly 7,500 when surrounding rural areas are added.

Graiguecullen on the Carlow border has grown to 5,323. A further 1,665 people live in a part of Graiguecullen managed by Carlow County Council. According to the Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021, Laois has the highest population of 0-18 year-olds, as a proportion of its overall population. Nearly 39% of Laois' population are aged under 25, this compares to 36% of the Midlands population and 34% of the State's population.

11.7% of the population is either very disadvantaged or disadvantaged.

Laois has a vibrant community and voluntary sector and this is evidenced by the number of registrations in 2022: 283 people registered to Volunteer in 2022 and 172 VIOs were recruited and have registered since its establishment (36 VIOs recruited in 2022). There is a positive history of collaborative and cross-sectoral working in County Laois. At policy level volunteerism is recognised as an important element in creating a vibrant and inclusive society. The Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 is underpinned by 10 objectives of which 4 relate to the work carried out by Laois Volunteer Centre. They are;

- Enrich civic participation and empower community
- Promote equality and inclusiveness across all sectors
- Recognise and support the diverse needs of people
- Cultivate a strong Laois identity and an excellent quality of life

Create an integrated and holistic approach to education, training and employment. Funding from the Department will enable Laois to continue to promote, engage and manage Volunteerism. This is essential to meet the needs of the VIOs – organisations in the community and voluntary sector who provide essential services in the community.

Services

Services to Community & Voluntary Organisations

- Finding and matching suitable volunteers.
- Practical support and advice about volunteer engagement and management.
- Garda Vetting services for organisations who do not have an authorised signatory in their organisation.
- Free/low-cost training on various volunteer related matters such as Garda Vetting, Volunteer Engagement etc.
- Management of the I-VOL app where you can post your volunteer vacancies.

Services to Volunteers

Information about volunteering opportunities

Information about finding suitable volunteering opportunities – matching volunteer skills, talents and abilities to a suitable organisation / organisation, considering the time people have available, their interests etc.

Support and advice about volunteering

Management of the I-VOL app where you can register your interest in volunteering opportunities.

I-VOL

I-VOL is the national searchable database of volunteering opportunities in Ireland and is owned, managed and administered by Volunteer Ireland and the network of Volunteer Centres across Ireland. By signing up volunteers can register their interest in volunteering opportunities that are listed online by community groups across the country. When a person first registers on I-VOL, their application will go to the local Volunteer Centre in their county. Once a person has initially registered on I-VOL, they will be able to begin applying for roles that are active on the I-VOL database.



When a person applies for a volunteering opportunity, their relevant details (as per our terms and conditions) will be forwarded directly, or via their local Volunteer Centre, to the organisation posting the opportunity. They will receive an email each time they apply for an opportunity, acknowledging their indication of interest, and giving them further details of next steps.

Services

Stakeholder Consultation

As part of the consultation process, volunteers on the Centre's database were surveyed and interviews were conducted with Laois Partnership (Peter O'Neill), Laois County Council (Pamela Tynan), Laois PPN (Dan Bergin), Laois Chamber (Caroline Hoffman) and Laois Sports Partnership (Caroline Myers).

A total of 61 volunteers responded to the survey. The feedback was positive, and some key issues in relation to volunteering were highlighted. As is like other Counties, the main reason for a slow down in volunteering are time constraints and care duties. However, lack of awareness of opportunities and/or suitable opportunities was also stated on the returned surveys. 27% of those who responded had not volunteered in the past 12 months. Those who had volunteered had taken up volunteer positions in Charity Shops, Sports Clubs, Tidy Towns, teaching English/Literacy classes and counselling. The age profile of those who responded was primarily over 45 with 38% of respondents stating they were under the age of 45.

When asked how can LVC better support volunteers, most responded positively in relation to the current role of LVC but highlighted the need for more communication around opportunities and creating awareness.

The feedback from the stakeholder organisations was very positive with all representatives interviewed stating that LVC had achieved much in a short time. Through the work of the management and staff, LVC is promoting its services successfully across the County. All organisations identified opportunities for collaboration on projects and initiatives in the future and Laois Chamber, Laois PPN and Laois Sports Partnership stated that they are already engaging with LVC on projects and events.

A recurring opportunity identified through the process was the possibility of developing a database of skilled volunteers that could be accessed by organisations seeking support or advice. A volunteer mentor panel could be formed made up of retired or employed consultants/employees in areas such as finance, marketing, law, HR, architecture and engineering disciplines. This would also provide opportunities for companies to meet their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives. Laois Chamber could potentially collaborate with LVC in promoting this through its membership.

Services

Stakeholder Consultation

Cont'd

There were also opportunities identified for joint information days, networking opportunities and collaboration around promotion of volunteering within different sectors e.g. sports, environment, tourism/festivals, social services (visitation, respite services) and mental health.

The organisations interviewed all highlighted that it is important for LVC to promote itself across the County and to develop a strong PR and communications strategy to create awareness. It was also stated that the LVC needs to be resourced properly in order to have a long-term impact on volunteering across the County.

Finally, the role of LVC needs to be clear and the responsibility for volunteers volunteering within communities for organisations also needs to be clarified in relation to oversight, accountability and liability.



Challenges and Opportunities Identified by the Board and Manager

There are factors and challenges to explore when considering the unique status of the Midland Region in regard to Volunteering:

Lack of investment and continuing recessionary residues are maintaining a high unemployment rate in this region which has a knock-on effect in regard to poverty, social deprivation and other factors. It is therefore even more crucial to maintain skills bases for people out of work, to enable and empower local people to contribute to a society.

The multi-denominational and cross ethnic elements of the region make it an ideal place for volunteering to act as a vehicle to promote integration. Increased resources to volunteering in this region will have a direct impact on the removal of racial, sectarian and social discrimination by banding people of all segments of society together for volunteer projects common to all.

Volunteering has been proven to have a positive effect on people with mental health challenges and low confidence. Volunteering can enable people in desperate situations to find a reason and meaning to maintain a life beyond the problems of their everyday existence and give them an empowering investment in their local communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed society dramatically and suddenly. This represents a challenge and opportunity for volunteering. More people are working from home and therefore may look to get involved in their own communities as their commute time has freed up and they are around in their own communities to get involved. This can be facilitated by the LVC. Covid-19 caused unemployment may also cause more people to volunteer. The nature of volunteering during the pandemic changed to include virtual/online volunteering roles which can be conducted from home.

Some charities have had to reduce their staff numbers, and while the LVC does not endorse staff substitution, the LVC may be able to work with Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO) so that they can work more efficiently with their existing volunteer base or take on new ones.

Opportunities

As a result of COVID and people adapting to working remotely and online, there has been an expansion of online opportunities to volunteer, and a broadening of opportunities to offer.

Remote working and remote lifestyle have made Volunteer Involving Organisations rethink the need to have every volunteer role in a physical space. People can give their marketing skills, graphic design skills etc. virtually. With more meetings happening virtually too it offers that flexibility for people to engage in groups they might not ordinarily have engaged with. This even extends to the diaspora and connecting people from afar.



Climate Action was viewed as an opportunity and challenge during the consultation process. The view expressed was that the Centre explore its role in participating in and creating initiatives that can have a positive environmental impact.

Board of Management Review

In June 2022 – the LVC Board agreed to undertake a Board Evaluation. The questions were formulated using the Charity Regulator suggestions and following training on Good Governance code.

The review showed that the board members are aware of their responsibilities and purposes and that the organisation is compliant with the Charities Regulator Governance Code.

The review highlighted areas for improvement and these included:

- Implementing controls and procedures to ensure the company is meeting statutory and governance compliance.
- Implement a risk register and risk management policy that is reviewed annually.
- Existing and new board members should be aware of their legal responsibilities and duties.
- The frequency and structure of Board meetings could be improved – time allotted, reporting and distribution of minutes.
- Those on the Board have relevant and useful skills , but additional board members are required, particularly those with expertise in HR, Financial and Legal expertise.

Succession planning is also required.

STRATEGIC PLAN



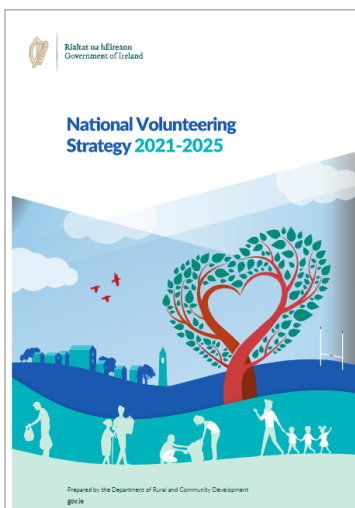
Strategic Context

Government Commitment

Following on from commitments in previous programmes for Government, the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future (2020) affirms the contribution of the community and voluntary sector in building a more just and prosperous society and underlines the strong focus on urban and rural regeneration within the sector. The Department of Rural and Community Development is a key enabler of these commitments. The Department is central to developing policy and supporting the development and growth of volunteering in Ireland. This is reflected in its mission to “promote rural and community development and to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland” and its strategic objective to support the community, voluntary and charity sector and to strengthen its capacity to contribute to civil society. This role is recognised in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, 2020- 2025. The roadmap acknowledges the important role of volunteering in Irish society and includes a target for increasing the rate of volunteering.

The Department also provides a framework of support for the voluntary sector to develop volunteering infrastructure. To this end, funding is provided to a number of organisations to help strengthen and foster volunteering in Ireland and to build a support structure that will develop volunteering locally from the bottom up. This includes funding and supports for Volunteer Ireland, Volunteer Centres and Public Participation Networks (PPNs), which give volunteer-led groups a direct voice in local government. PPNs also enable groups to connect with others in their locality and provide capacity-building opportunities such as training and workshops. Volunteering is also supported by other Government Departments under their various programmes, policies and strategies for which they have responsibility. Likewise, many Government initiatives and policies rely heavily on Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs), communities and volunteers to deliver their initiatives.

National Volunteering Strategy



The purpose of the National Volunteering Strategy is to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contribution of volunteers to Irish society. The Strategy also provides an opportunity for the Government to acknowledge how important volunteering is to Ireland's well-being and to steer the delivery of an agreed and ambitious vision.

The [National Volunteering Strategy](#) has influenced the development of this Laois Volunteer Centre strategic plan.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 interconnected objectives that are at the centre of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The SDGs represent a global call to action to end all forms of poverty, to tackle climate change and to fight inequality and injustice, recognising that a collaborative response is required from all countries, irrespective of their income levels or geographic location.

This strategy supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Strategic Priorities are aligned with the following Goals:

Reducing Inequalities – supporting access to volunteering opportunities for everyone in our community and supporting VIOs that are working with marginalised and under-represented groups and individuals.

Sustainable Cities and Communities – supporting VIOs in promoting and developing sustainable initiatives and projects across communities in Co. Laois.

Peace Justice and Strong Institutions – strengthening local organisations through volunteer support, labour and services.

Partnerships for the goals – working in partnership with local organisations, local authority, local development companies, and the private sector in promoting volunteering and creating opportunities for volunteers and VIOs.



<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weakness
Highly engaged supportive Board. Good skill base within the Board of Management. Supportive mentor support through Volunteer Ireland. Bank of resources from Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Network. Financial reserve at the end of 2021. Established outreach within communities. Highly accessible service – facilitated by use of hub spaces. Substantial cost savings due to hub use. Enthusiastic public – willing to Volunteer – over 1,000 Volunteers on our database.	Board of Management needs to be expanded. Covering all the county with limited staff resources. Relationship building takes time and trust must be garnered prior to the development of projects/activities and collaboration. Fewer VIOs than Volunteers – too many Volunteers for too little Volunteering Opportunities. Lack of awareness of the service. Getting VIOs to register/engage with the service is time consuming – on average it takes 2-4 visits/contacts by LVC to secure registration. I-VOL system is complex and limited support and training on its use.
Opportunities	Threats
Networking and relationship building opportunities with VIOs. National Strategy leading to potential future grant opportunities. Marketing and Awareness campaigns promoting new initiatives and resources for VIOs and Volunteers.	Further decline in economy putting pressure on all organisations. Reduction in core funding. Loss of key staff and voluntary board members (staff and voluntary directors' retention). Reliance on grant aid as only revenue stream. Liability and legal challenges. Poor succession planning.

Strategic Priorities

1	Ensure the Organisation is Sustainable by meeting high standards of Good Governance, Accountability, Management and focus on employee wellbeing.	
2	Building Community Connections with stakeholders working in the community and voluntary sector in the county.	
3	Build the Laois Volunteer Centre Brand and develop a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the many forms of volunteering and highlight its value for individuals, organisations and communities in County Laois.	
4	Provide a high-quality service which facilitates the increase in access to volunteering and promotes the quality of volunteering by matching appropriate volunteers to organisations that have identified needs.	

Strategic Priority 1:

Ensure the Organisation is Sustainable by meeting high standards of Good Governance, Accountability and Management.



Objectives

- Recruit additional board members and expand the committee structures as well as establishing an advisory panel with experienced people in areas such as finance, human resource management and law.
- Ensuring that governance structures, practices and policies meet best practice standards within our sector.
- Review and update where required all company policies and procedures relating to governance, health and safety, employment, finance and reserves, risk management and succession planning.
- Maintain compliance with the Governance Code.
- Review all liability and legal responsibilities for the company and its directors and ensure all appropriate measures are taken to protect the company and its directors.
- Managing financial resources carefully and transparently to ensure compliance with funder and regulatory requirements, and to ensure the sustainability of the organisation.
- Seek sources of additional finance outside of the core funding provided by the DRCD.
- Developing annual work plans aligned with the overall strategy and company objectives and evaluating the workplan on an ongoing basis.
- Provide learning and training opportunities for board members and staff to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.
- Role model environmentally and family friendly work practices by continuing to engage in hybrid working in a co-working space where day to day activities are carried out in a more sustainable manner and resources are shared.

Expected Outcomes

- Board is strengthened and supported by skilled sub-committees.
- All corporate and governance obligations are honoured.
- Sustainable funding and finance is secured and accounted for.
- Meet full compliance with the Charities Regulator, Revenue and funding organisations.
- The organisation is sustainable, constantly innovating and maintaining the highest standards of service delivery through a supported and skilled workforce.

Strategic Priority 2:

Developing and enhancing connections with stakeholders in the Community and voluntary sector, statutory and non-statutory agencies and the corporate sector across Co. Laois.



Objectives

- Develop strategic alliances and partner opportunities with Laois Partnership, Laois County Council, Laois PPN, Laois Sports Partnership and Laois Offaly ETB. Identify key people within each organisation that will 'champion' the role of volunteering within their organisation.
- Develop the Community Volunteers Programme with Laois County Council so that a 'ready to go' group of Volunteers can be deployed for community festivals/events and emergencies such as flooding etc.
- Reach out to the corporate sector and support companies in implementing Corporate Social Responsibility goals which involve volunteering within the community and providing supports to community initiatives.
- Representation on committees, boards and advisory groups locally where input is aligned with our own aims and objectives and where we can make sure that volunteering is included in development of policies and plans at County level.
- Representation on relevant national regional and or national structures that support volunteering and that will identify supports and funding opportunities that can be secured for Laois.
- Advocating for and participating in the development of public policy that impacts positively on volunteerism at local and national level.
- Along with other Volunteer Centres Seek to influence policy at national level which will benefit the community and voluntary sector e.g., Garda vetting process, funding supports, reducing bureaucracy.
- Through ongoing consultation identify areas where Laois Volunteer Centre can complement the work of other organisations, collaborate on community led initiatives, add value through facilitating volunteer support. Identify needs and gaps and prevent duplication and displacement within the delivery of supports and services to the community and voluntary sector.
- Supporting and highlighting the work of other agencies through our social media platforms, partnership opportunities and co-hosting events.

Strategic Priority 2, cont'd

Expected Outcomes

- Increased Collaboration between Laois Volunteer Centre and key stakeholders which leads to greater benefits to VIOs, Volunteers and has a positive impact on the work of the stakeholder organisations.
- Volunteering is recognised and included in local strategies and plans and that the voluntary sector is central to the development of these plans.
- The Community Volunteers Programme becomes a 'go to' service for VIOs in Laois.
- New collaborative projects are delivered between Laois Volunteer Centre and other organisations.

Key Stakeholders



Strategic Priority 3:

Build the Laois Volunteer Centre Brand and develop a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the many forms of volunteering and highlight its value for individuals, organisations and communities in Co. Laois



Objectives

- Develop an annual marketing plan focusing on building the Laois Volunteer Centre brand through community and stakeholder engagement through in person meetings, events, activities and online via the centre website and social media platforms.
- Building and maintaining public relations connections and media to highlight the positive benefits of volunteering and promote existing opportunities when possible.
- Promote the centre and volunteering opportunities with groups such as active retired, youth groups, clubs/societies and schools.
- Reduced carbon footprint – reduced commuting/travel and staff benefitting from a better work/life balance.
- Implementing a communication strategy for regular contact with Stakeholders, and elected representatives
- Engage with the corporate sector directly or through local chambers and business associations and identify potential sponsorship and partnership opportunities.
- Develop an online resource for information, templates, materials and tutorials that will direct volunteers and organisations to the website as a 'one-stop shop' for information.
- Continue to promote the centre and its services throughout the County through the out-reach programme and hosting public information events.
- Continue to sponsor the Community and Voluntary Awards in collaboration with Laois County Council and Laois PPN.
- Develop at least one key annual event which raises the profile of Laois Volunteer Centre and showcases its services e.g. a Volunteer Fair/Expo. Seek out sponsors and branding/PR opportunities with companies to support the programmes/initiatives.
- Hold at least one awareness raising event on Volunteerism during National Volunteering Week.

Expected Outcomes

- Greater awareness of Laois Volunteer Centre across the County and within communities and organisations.
- Services offered by Laois Volunteer Centre are more widely known and understood.
- There is a greater awareness of the value of volunteering to both individual and organisations.
- Increase in number of VIOs and volunteers availing of the services offered by Laois Volunteer Centre.

Strategic Priority 4:

Provide a high-quality service which facilitates the increase in access to volunteering and promotes the quality of volunteering by matching appropriate volunteers to organisations that have identified needs.



Objectives

- Work with VIOs to carry out volunteering needs analysis and identify skills and resource gaps within their organisation (at board, committee and operational level).
- Recruit and assess potential volunteers and match their skills, experiences and interests to volunteer roles within VIOs across the County.
- Delivery of an outreach service around Laois and relationship building with increased access to volunteering by offering a support service to the public and VIOs.

Laois VC commits to working with VIOs, volunteers and local agencies to advance climate action initiatives that will help meet goals set out in the Climate Action Plan 2023 and enhance biodiversity locally.

- Build relationships with VIOs to map their volunteer engagement level using data collected through I-VOL.
- Deliver a high-quality information support and advisory service through one-to-one meetings, calls, texts, emails, information events, online resources, newsletters and communication through local print and broadcast media.
- Advocate for diversity and promote volunteering and volunteerism to people of different backgrounds and circumstances in our community.
- Identifying projects and programmes which build capacity in and enhance participation of people of different backgrounds and circumstances with volunteering in our community.

Expected Outcomes

- A skills and opportunities analysis is carried out with VIOs and volunteers are identified and recruited to meet these skills gaps and opportunities.
- Potential volunteers have access to relevant and meaningful volunteering opportunities across the county.
- There is an increased capacity to engage volunteers in the community.
- Volunteers report a positive experience of volunteering in the community.
- Greater collaboration and support given to VIOs and other stakeholders in helping them to achieve their Climate Action goals.

Implementation and Evaluation

This strategic plan is a framework under which Laois Volunteer Centre will operate over the next 3 years. The strategic priorities will be achieved through the development and implementation of annual work plans prepared at year end following a review and consultation process with stakeholders. The annual work plans will allow for flexibility in the delivery of the strategic priorities and the work plans will reflect changes in the volunteering landscape, social and economic challenges, legislation, and funding opportunities.

The ultimate responsibility for the successful delivery of this strategic plan lies with the Board. It is therefore recommended that the current board is expanded and that the Board is supported through the formation of the following sub-committees, Governance, HR and Finance. It is also important that the company has the resources i.e., Staff and Funding to implement the annual work plans and achieve the priorities identified for the next 3 years.

Evaluation

Through ongoing consultation, LVC can identify areas that need to be addressed, identify needs within the community, and respond accordingly.

By evaluating its work LVC can measure results against the workplan and objectives and promote the achievements to the community and external stakeholders.

The aims of ongoing evaluation will be to:

- Measure performance against stated objectives.
- Identify needs within the community as they arise.
- To maintain a high level of quality and service.
- To communicate achievements to all stakeholders.
- Review the plan and adjust based on new opportunities or risks.
- Review the key priorities and related objectives where necessary.

Evaluation methodology will include:

- Ongoing monitoring through I-Vol.
- Monthly feedback on progress against actions at monthly board meetings
- Formal evaluations with, volunteers, VIOs and stakeholders 2 times per year by way of survey.
- Annual review to include consultation with volunteers, VIOS and Stakeholders.
- Quarterly Review of budgets and funding.
- 6 monthly review and planning workshop with Board, Management and Staff.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Action Plans

Strategic Priority 1: Ensure the Organisation is Sustainable by meeting high standards of Good Governance, Accountability and Management

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/Partner	Indicators
- Recruit additional board members and expand the committee structures as well as establishing an advisory panel with experienced people in areas such as finance, human resource management and law. - Identify potential reps from Laois Partnership, Laois County Council, LOETB, Laois Sports Partnership, Local Companies (Chamber of Commerce). - Through networking identify employed or retired individuals with skills and experience that will be of value to the organisation. - Establish additional subcommittees – fundraising/marketing.	Q2 2023	Board External Agencies for representation Local Companies	Board is strengthened and supported by skilled sub-committees
Review and update where required all company policies and procedures relating to governance, health and safety, employment, finance and reserves, risk management and succession planning.	Annually	Board Charities Regulator Company Solicitor	Full Compliance with Governance Code
- Review all liability and legal responsibilities for the company and its directors and ensure all appropriate measures are taken to protect the company and its directors. - Seek advice on liability and insurance from an experienced broker and company solicitor. - Prepare terms of references and terms of engagement with VIOs and volunteers.	Annually	Board Company Solicitor Insurance Broker	Insurance in place All legal obligations met
- Prepare annual budget. - Review costs regularly. - Review all revenue and grant sources - Identify new grant and revenue opportunities that will provide medium to longer term sustainable funding. - Produce annual financial reports.	Annually	Board Charities Regulator Funding Organisations Revenue Company Accountant	Reporting complete Audit complete Profit achieved Positive cash balance at year end

Strategic Priority 2: Developing and enhancing connections with stakeholders in the Community and voluntary sector, statutory and non statutory agencies and the corporate sector across Co. Laois.

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/Partner	Indicators
- Develop alliances and collaborate on initiatives with Laois PPN, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois County Council, Laois Chamber and Laois Partnership. - Organise regular meetings with staff and management of these organisations to identify opportunities for new initiatives that will support volunteering and support VIOs. - Consult on an annual calendar of events.	Ongoing	Board and Manager Laois County Council Laois PPN Laois Sports Partnership Laois Chamber Laois Partnership Other organisations/ representative bodies	New initiatives and projects developed in collaboration with LVC.
- Represent LVC at board/committee meetings. - Represent LVC at county, regional and national meetings/events in relation to volunteering.	Ongoing	As above	LVC voice represented on County and National structures. Information gathering and networking opportunities that will benefit volunteering in the County.
Engage with Laois County Council on the consultation process for the preparation of the Local Economic Community Plan (LECP).	Q2 2023	Manager Laois County Council	LVC priorities and the objectives supporting volunteers in the County are reflected in the new LECP.

Strategic Priority 3: Build the Laois Volunteer Centre Brand and develop a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the many forms of volunteering and highlight its value for individuals, organisations and communities in County Laois.

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/Partner	Indicators
- Establish a Marketing team to include: - Manager - Board Member - Social Media Consultant, Photographer (retained or voluntary)	Q4 2023	Board and Manager	Marketing Team in place.
- Develop an annual marketing plan to include: - PR and Media Plan - Social Media Plan - Stakeholder Consultation and Communication	Q4 2023	Marketing Team	Action based marketing plan in place with identified budget
Promote/Fund a volunteer recruitment awareness campaign using existing networks and in partnership with Laois PPN.	Q4 2023 and annually	Manager Laois PPN	Campaigns and Events organised resulting in recruitment of new volunteers and increased engagement with VIOs.
Provide outreach programme and public information events	Ongoing	Manager and Outreach worker	Increase in recruitment
Provide public information and outreach programmes to enable people to volunteer from marginalised communities from ethnic minorities with disabilities.	Ongoing	Manager and Outreach worker	Increase in number of volunteers from marginalised communities
Target people who have retired or are approaching retirement age to promote volunteering as an opportunity to stay active and engaged.	Ongoing	Board and Manager Active Retired Groups PPN Laois Chamber	Promotion of volunteering as an option in retirement. Increase in number of volunteers who have retired.
Target students (third level and TY students) with work experience opportunities.	Start of each school / college term	Manager Third Level , TY Coordinator	Student placements and graduate placements in LVC and in VIOs
Promote the marketing and goodwill value of volunteering and CSR opportunities for private sector companies and smaller businesses.	Ongoing	Manager Laois Chamber, Laois Partnership, Laois LEO	Volunteers with specific skills and experience available. Increase CSR activity within the private sector.

Strategic Priority 4: Provide a high-quality service which facilitates the increase in access to volunteering and promotes the quality of volunteering by matching appropriate volunteers to organisations that have identified needs.

Action	Timescale	Responsibility/Partner	Indicators
Introduce flexible volunteering options through the delivery of a time and needs match programme, including event volunteering, that will facilitate volunteering in local communities without long-term commitments.	Ongoing	Manager VIOs Stakeholder Organisation	More targeted placement of volunteers and improved volunteer retention.
Support VIOs to create more diverse roles e.g. short-term, virtual, and one off volunteering.	Ongoing	Manager VIOs Stakeholder Organisations	More targeted placement of volunteers and improved volunteer retention.
Work with VIOs to carry out volunteering needs analysis and identify skills and resource gaps within their organisation (at board, committee and operational level).	Ongoing	Manager VIOs	Improved placement of volunteers based on their skills and choices. Increase in recruitment.
Build relationships with VIOs to map their volunteer engagement level using data collected through I-VOL.	Ongoing	Manager VIOs	Improved volunteer engagement and retention
- Develop a volunteer mentor panel that allows individuals with specific skills and qualifications to volunteer hours that are then matched with the needs of VIOs e.g. finance, HR, legal, marketing, business development, engineering, design, printing, trades etc. - This panel would be facilitated and managed through LVC (similar to the Local Enterprise Office Mentoring Process).	Ongoing	Manager Laois Chamber Laois Partnership Laois LEO	Mentor Panel in place Access to skills, advice and supports to VIOs.
Advocate for diversity and promote volunteering and volunteerism to people of different backgrounds and circumstances in the community.	Ongoing	Manager Laois PPN VIOs	Increase in volunteers from diverse backgrounds.
Laois Volunteer Centre commits to working with VIOs, volunteers and local agencies to advance climate action initiatives that will help meet goals set out in the Climate Action Plan 2023 and enhance biodiversity locally.	Ongoing	Manager Laois County Council Laois PPN VIOs	Realisation of Climate Action goals, targets achieved.

Appendix 2 - Policies and Procedures

Policies and Procedures and Documentation

The following policy and procedures documents should be prepared and updated at least annually. The documents will be stored in electronic format on a password protected shared drive.

- Company Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Lease agreements (if applicable)
- Insurance Policies
- Tax Reference number and Access Number Details
- Safety Statement
- Risk Management Policy
- Equality Policy
- Employee Handbook and Contracts
- Volunteer Policy
- Children and Vulnerable Persons Protection
- Financial Procedures Checklist
- Funding Agency Reporting Checklist (if applicable)

Finance and Risk Management

- If the Volunteer Centre raises funds from the public, we will follow the Charities Regulator's guidelines on handling publicly raised funds and make sure that the Centre adheres to them as they apply. We will make sure to have appropriate financial controls in place to manage and account for the Company's finance other assets
- Identify any risks the Company might face and how to manage these.
- Make sure the Company has appropriate and adequate insurance cover.
- Have written procedures to make sure that we comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- Make sure there is a formal risk register that the board regularly reviews.

Finance shall be raised for to fund:

General operational, administration and management costs.

- Research and planning
- Training and Capacity Building
- Identified Project Development

Sources of finance may include but not be limited to:

Core Funding (Grant Aid)

- Identified Grant Aid
- Social Finance
- Sponsorship
- Philanthropy
- In Kind Supports (voluntary time, equipment, services etc.)
- Fees for membership, services etc



Laois Volunteer Centre

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Registered charity number (RCN): 20206150
Company Registration Office number: 676229
Revenue CHY Number: 2293

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