

Co. Laois Vocational Education Committee

Education Plan
2011-2015

Table of Contents

Chairperson’s Address	4
Foreword from Chief Executive Officer	5
Profile of Co. Laois VEC	6
Executive Summary	7
Introduction and Overview of the Plan	10
<u>Section One</u>	
Mission and Statement	11
Values and Underlying Principles	12
<u>Section Two</u>	
The Planning Process & Operational Context of Co. Laois VEC	13
Review of Education Plan 2006-2010	14
Key factors in Co. Laois influencing Preparation of Education Plan 2011 – 2015	19
<u>Section Three</u>	
The Consultative Process	22
SCOT Analysis	23
<u>Section Four</u>	
Goals, Objectives, Actions and Implementation	25
<u>Section Five</u>	
Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan	38
<u>Appendices</u>	
Appendix 1 – Committee Members	39
Appendix 2 – Schools, Centres and Services of Co. Laois VEC	40
Appendix 3 – Boards of Management	42
Appendix 4 – Committees involved in Development of Education Plan	43
Glossary of Terms	44

Chairperson's Address



I am very pleased to present the Co. Laois Vocational Education Committee Education Plan for 2011-2015, which reviews the Committee's Education Plan for 2006-2010 and outlines the strategy that will guide its education delivery for the next five years.

To state that the times in which we operate are very challenging is an understatement. However, it is important to note that education and training are the keys to ensuring that all our learners achieve their full potential, including participation in the labour force.

In presenting this new Plan, I want to thank all the external stakeholders who were consulted and who have contributed their critical views and creative ideas which reflect a broad spectrum of the learning community in Co. Laois. Co. Laois VEC, through its Planning Team and its Steering Committee ensured a comprehensive and wide ranging consultative process took place.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ms Anne O'Keeffe, Chief Executive Officer, and members of the VE Committee, the Planning Team, the Steering Committee, Administrative Staff, School Principals, Centre Directors, Programme Co-ordinators, Teachers, Tutors, Maintenance and Ancillary Staff who all gave so willingly of their time and expertise to prepare the Plan.

Mr Ruairi Quinn, Minister for Education and Skills, has confirmed that he intends to follow through with the decision of the last Administration to reduce the number of VECs from thirty three to sixteen. While, ideally, Co. Laois VEC would prefer to remain as a stand-alone scheme, it is incumbent on all of us to take cognisance of the challenging economic state of our country. It is proposed to amalgamate Co. Laois and Co. Offaly into one entity. This merger will probably mean drafting a different plan in due course in order to meet the needs of the whole entity, if and when, the merger occurs.

Whatever the future holds, I look forward, in my term of office, to leading Co. Laois VEC in implementing some or all of this Plan.

Cllr. Mary Sweeney
Chairperson

Foreword



It is now more than five years since Co. Laois developed its first formal five year Education Plan. A review of that initial plan would indicate that significant achievements were realised. However, there is a lot more to be done.

The population of Co. Laois has increased by 13,600 to almost 81,000 since the 2006 census. This growth is reflected in the numbers availing themselves of the Committee's education, training and support services. A significant increase in curriculum subjects, programmes and initiatives were developed on a scheme wide basis over the last five years. Quite a number of staff members availed themselves of in-service training, further education and qualifications. Appointments were established in key areas in order to meet the new programme demands including an IT officer and a Youth Officer.

A number of capital projects were also expedited including a new College in Portlaoise, extensions to St. Fergal's College, Rathdowney, and Clonaslee Vocational School. Extensive work was also completed under Summer Works and Emergency Schemes. All new capital projects had significant savings measures in their design including energy saving and water harvesting. Details of such developments are outlined in this Plan, together with our plans for the next five years.

Clearly new challenges face all VECs at every level of educational services. In the introduction to our first Plan, reference was made to how our country had changed with "levels of economic growth that were unimaginable previously" having occurred. How rapidly a situation can change! Our staff members, together with all staff of the public service, have seen, and continue to see remuneration substantially reduced.

Co. Laois VEC is proud of the services it has provided over the past one hundred years, and looks forward to continue doing so into the future. It may well be that the new proposed structure, which proposes the amalgamation of this Committee with Co. Offaly VEC, will occur during the term of this Plan. This, of course, is a matter for Government, and it will provide challenges for all of us, individually and collectively. As already stated in another document, this Committee and staff will co-operate with the DES in this process.

A sincere acknowledgement is due to the team which was involved in the development of this Plan, particularly Anne Marie Keane and Joe Cunningham who kept up the momentum. To the Chairperson, Ms Mary Sweeney and the Committee members, to staff, students, parents, and members of the public your contribution was greatly appreciated. The Plan will be reviewed annually in order to ensure we are on track to meet the stated goals for the enhancement of the service we provide.

Anne O'Keeffe
Chief Executive Officer

Profile of Co. Laois VEC

Co. Laois VEC is a medium sized VEC that provides a broad range of education services to meet the education and training needs of the county. These include:

Second Level Education: Co. Laois VEC operates three second level schools in the county – Portlaoise College, St. Fergal’s College, Rathdowney and Clonaslee Vocational School. Programmes offered in the schools include Junior Certificate, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and Junior Certificate Schools Programme.

Adult Education: Co. Laois VEC provides a range of opportunities in adult learning including:

- ▶ Adult Literacy services in Laois Adult Learning Centre;
- ▶ Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS);
- ▶ Youthreach;
- ▶ Traveller Education;
- ▶ Back to Education Initiative (BTEI);
- ▶ Community Education;
- ▶ Adult Educational Guidance and Information Services;
- ▶ Evening Classes;
- ▶ Corporate Training.

Prison Education: Co. Laois VEC co-operates with the Prison Education Service in the provision of teaching hours. There are education programmes in Portlaoise and Midlands Prisons.

Student Grants: Co. Laois VEC administers three student grant schemes, the qualifying conditions for which are approved each year by the Department of Education and Skills. They are:

- VEC Scholarship Scheme
- Third Level Maintenance Grant Scheme for Trainees (TLT)
- Maintenance Grant Scheme for Students attending Post Leaving Certificate Courses

School Transport: Co. Laois VEC administers the School Transport Service on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. Bus Éireann operates the service on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills and the Chief Executive Officer assists Bus Éireann by acting as Transport Liaison Officer.

Executive Summary

Introduction:

In accordance with the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001, Co Laois VEC is required to produce an Education Plan every five years. This Education Plan sets out Co. Laois VEC's vision for Lifelong Learning provision for 2011 -2015. It sets out a work programme for Co. Laois VEC, based on its mission, vision, values and underlying principles, together with a set of goals, objectives and actions to be achieved by the VEC as a whole and by each of its services, through their own individual five year plans.

Section One: Mission, Vision, Values & Underlying Principles

- **Mission of Co. Laois VEC**

The Mission of Co. Laois VEC is to provide, promote and support excellent education and training services which facilitate young people and adults in realising their full potential.

- **Vision of Co. Laois VEC**

Co. Laois VEC will provide, promote and support an integrated, coherent and learner centred quality assured lifelong education and training service, which is inclusive of all sectors of society, reflects community needs and is responsive to social, economic, demographic trends and labour market needs.

- **Values**

During the consultation process the following values were identified as core to the work of Co. Laois VEC; dignity of the human person, respect, equality, social inclusion, integrity, commitment, quality assurance, integration, good communication, strong leadership, lifelong learning and the role and support of the VE Committee.

- **Underlying Principles:**

The following underlying principles were identified as central to Co. Laois VEC's provision of a quality assured service:

- Respect for the dignity of every person;
- Equality, social inclusion, recognition of diversity and openness to all;
- Honesty, integrity and commitment in our dealings with each other, our learners and all stakeholders;
- Integration of services to allow learners have ease of access and progression across services;
- Quality Assurance which is integral to the provision of all programmes and services;
- Delivery of a lifelong learning education service;
- Effective internal and external communication;
- Strong leadership and professionalism of staff which is enhanced, encouraged and developed by Continuous Professional Development (CPD);
- Vision, support and encouragement from the VE Committee.

Section Two: The Planning Process and Operational Context for Co. Laois VEC

This Section outlines the planning process and the context within which Co Laois VEC operates under various headings and the implications arising from each, which had to be considered in the development of the plan.

- **The Planning Process:**

An internal and external facilitator, a Steering Group and a Planning Group were appointed to develop the Plan and facilitate the internal and external consultation. Membership and the terms of reference for each are set out in Appendix 4.

- **Review of the Education Plan 2006-2010**

A review of the goals, objectives and actions set out in the Education Plan 2006-2010 outlines the achievements to date. While many of the actions were achieved during the lifetime of the previous plan, others are on-going and are carried forward for completion or modification in the new plan.

- **Key changes in Co. Laois influencing the preparation of the new plan**

The statistical information relating to the population, age profile, educational attainments and unemployment of the citizens of Co. Laois, are set out in this section. The key issues arising for Co. Laois VEC in the preparation of the Plan were; the increase in population throughout the county, the age profile distribution, the need for greater participation in third level education, the unemployment trends and the role of the VEC in responding to these needs at local and county level. A review of the Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) factors affecting Co. Laois VEC is also provided.

Section Three: The Consultative Process

A review of the mission, vision, values and underlying principles formed part of the consultative process. This review, together with the contextual analysis in Section Two, set the scene for the internal and external consultation to determine the educational and training needs of the learners of Co. Laois and to identify the labour market requirements for them to obtain gainful employment.

- **Internal Consultation:**

The internal consultation involved the VE Committee, all Co. Laois VEC staff, Students' Councils, the Adult Education Advisory Board, and the learners. Central to the process was an information and consultation day for staff members held on the 1st November 2010. In addition to the key thematic workshops all staff members were asked to consider the strengths, the challenges, the opportunities and the threats facing Co. Laois VEC in the development of its Plan. An overview of the SCOT Analysis is presented in the Plan.

From the consultation process the key priorities and challenges to be addressed by the VEC were identified and set out in the form of Goals and Objectives, together with a set of actions and an implementation plan for the next five years.

- **External Consultation:**

The external consultation involved all members of the public. An advertisement was placed in the local newspaper inviting members of the public to visit Co. Laois VEC's website, or any school or centre within

Co. Laois VEC to complete a questionnaire evaluating Co. Laois VEC and identify the key educational priorities to be addressed by Co. Laois VEC over the next five years.

A number of outside agencies were also consulted regarding the future development of Co. Laois VEC. The issues emerging from the External Consultation were incorporated into the goals and objectives.

Section Four: Goals, Objectives, Actions, Implementation

From the issues emerging during consultation the following seven goals, each with a set of objectives and actions for implementation during the period 2011 – 2015 were agreed.

1. Create an inclusive learning environment
2. Provide quality programmes
3. Ensure Quality Assurance
4. Ensure professionalism of staff
5. Enhance the profile of the VEC
6. Develop partnerships
7. Develop ICT services

All of these goals together with their objectives and actions will be incorporated into each of Co. Laois VEC's schools', education centres' and services' individual education plans.

Section Five: Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan

Co. Laois VEC's Education Plan has identified seven goals to be achieved, each with a set of key objectives and actions for implementation during the lifetime of the plan. The success of the Plan requires the commitment of all those involved in its development – VE Committee, CEO, AEO, Board of Management members, staff in schools, centres and administrative offices, our learners, agencies and the educational partners with whom we work.

An Implementation Committee will be set up to oversee this work, to ensure that the Education Plan becomes part of the work of the VEC in each school, centre and Head Office.

Introduction and Overview of the Plan

Co. Laois VEC is a major provider of education and training in Co. Laois. The VEC provides a diverse range of services ranging from second level provision to adult, community and further education.

As a matter of good practice and to meet its obligations under legislation, Co. Laois VEC recognises the importance of planning in a strategic way, to ensure that it is in a position to meet future challenges, particularly in light of changing demographics and developments in the County. This document sets out the Five Year Education Plan for Co. Laois VEC. This Plan was developed to prepare the VEC to meet the various educational, administrative and management challenges likely to emerge up to 2015. This document includes the following:

- A statement of the Mission and Vision of Co. Laois VEC that will remain timeless and unchanging in an otherwise changing environment;
- A review of the background of Co. Laois VEC that sets the scene for its future development;
- A description of the consultative process that was undertaken as part of the planning process;
- A review of the outcomes achieved in the Education Plan 2006-2010;
- Analysis of the external and internal factors that are currently impacting on Co. Laois VEC and are likely to impact over the life of this Plan;
- A comprehensive description of the Goals and associated Objectives of Co. Laois VEC for the period up to 2015.

As required under legislation, this Plan will be supported by a series of annual Service Plans. A Service Plan will be prepared each year and will set out in detail the proposed activities of the VEC for the following year. Through the preparation of these annual Service Plans, the Education Plan will be under regular review by Co. Laois VEC during the five year period.

Section One

Mission and Vision Statement

Mission of Co. Laois VEC

The Mission of Co. Laois VEC is to provide, promote and support excellent education and training services which facilitates young people and adults in realising their full potential.

In pursuit of this Mission, Co. Laois VEC will:

- Promote equality and inclusion;
- Implement the highest standards of quality assurance;
- Provide VEC wide opportunities for Lifelong Learning and Training with progression routes and appropriate levels of accreditation;
- Continually seek to review and improve its performance in relation to service delivery and the needs of its service recipients.

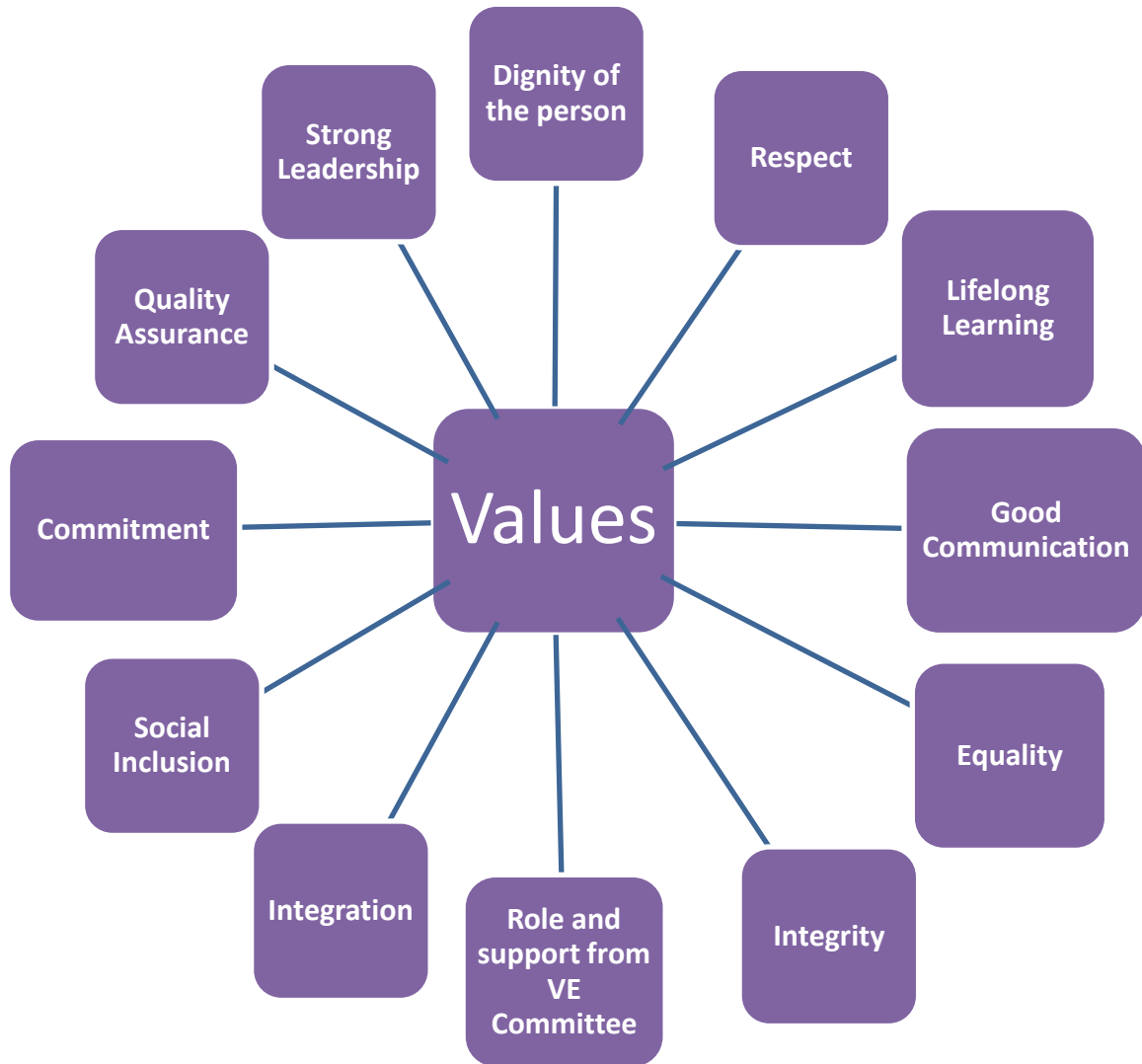
Vision of Co. Laois VEC

Co. Laois VEC will provide, promote and support an integrated, coherent and learner centred quality assured, lifelong education and training service, which is inclusive of all sectors of society, reflects community needs and is responsive to social, economic, demographic trends and labour market needs.

In pursuit of this vision, Co Laois VEC will:

- Facilitate young people and adults to realise their full potential in their personal lives, in their chosen careers and as active members of a democratic society;
- Create a learning environment that is quality assured, accessible, socially inclusive, flexible, caring and strives to attain the highest standards possible;
- Ensure that all programmes are relevant to the needs of its learners, employers and Irish Society;
- Work in partnership with other agencies and relevant stakeholders from industry, educational organisations and community groups.

Values and Underlying Principles identified through consultation



During the consultation process the following values and underlying principles were identified as central to Co. Laois VEC's provision of a quality assured service:

- Respect for the dignity of every person;
- Equality, social inclusion, recognition of diversity and openness to all;
- Honesty, integrity, and commitment in our dealings with each other, our learners and all stakeholders;
- Integration of services to allow learners ease of access and progression across services;
- Quality Assurance which is integral to the provision of all programmes and services;
- Delivery of a lifelong learning education service;
- Effective internal and external communication;
- Strong leadership and professionalism of staff which is enhanced, encouraged and developed by CPD;
- Vision, support and encouragement from the VE Committee.

Section Two: The Planning Process & Operational Context of Co. Laois VEC

The Planning Process

The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 requires each VEC to prepare an Education Plan every five years. The purpose of the plan, as defined in the Act, is to set out the goals and objectives of the VEC, and the measures that will be taken to achieve these objectives. The legislation also specifically outlines that consultation should take place with teachers, students, parents and any other relevant stakeholders.

A Steering Committee and Planning Team was formed in September 2010 to lead the development of the Education Plan. An internal and an external facilitator were appointed to assist in the development of the Plan.

The Education Plan Steering Committee

The purpose of the Steering Committee was to:

- ✓ Oversee the development of the plan;
- ✓ Plan and organise the consultative process and analyse feedback from same;
- ✓ Draft the responses to the SCOT analysis;
- ✓ Draft the mission and vision statement;
- ✓ Draft the values and principles to guide Co. Laois VEC for the next 5 years;
- ✓ Identify Goals and Objectives from the consultative process and draft Action Plans;
- ✓ Set priority targets for the next five years;
- ✓ Draft the implementation Plan for each Action;
- ✓ Draft the evaluation processes to feed into the Annual Report;
- ✓ Report to the Planning Team at the agreed stages of development;
- ✓ Draft the Education Plan for final approval by the Consultative Groups, the Planning Team and the VE Committee.

The Education Plan Planning Team

The Planning Team was made up of individuals representing the various strands of the VEC service. The purpose of the Planning Team was to:

- ✓ Guide the development of the plan;
- ✓ Facilitate the consultative process;
- ✓ Review and approve the development of the plan at key stages;
- ✓ Assist in the finalisation of the Plan;
- ✓ Recommend the final draft for approval by the VE Committee.

Review of Education Plan 2006-2010

The first Education Plan prepared by Co. Laois VEC covered the period 2006-2010. As it was the first time the VEC had prepared such a plan, the process involved extensive consultation, research and analysis. It brought together people from all strands of the VEC services to examine the organisation as a whole, to consider its main strengths and weaknesses and to assess the challenges for the future. The Education Plan 2006-2010 set six goals. For each goal, there was a set of objectives and associated actions, which informed the VEC's annual Service Plans which were submitted to the Department of Education and Skills. The goals were also incorporated into the plans devised by each school, centre and service for 2006-2010. The following is a summary of the main outcomes achieved under each goal in the 2006-2010 Education Plan.

Objective	Outcomes Achieved
Goal 1. Enhancement of Education Services	
1.1 Review and renewal of Educational Programmes.	Co. Laois VEC continues to broaden the subject choice on offer to all students at all levels of educational provision. Examples of this include the provision of styling classes and horticulture as part of our adult education services.
1.2 Development and implementation of Formal Quality Assurance.	Co. Laois VEC was awarded FETAC Quality Assurance Certification in 2006. As part of our FETAC Quality Assurance Agreement, we have introduced a process of self-evaluation to ensure the quality of our programmes and services. This process provides us with valuable information about our programmes and how they can be improved. It also allows FETAC to know that our quality assurance system is fully operational.
1.3 Development of new Programmes.	Co. Laois VEC continues to review our academic programmes to ensure they meet the needs of our community. For example, in 2007, an Autism Unit was opened in Portlaoise College.
1.4 Support for, and liaison with School Principals and Centre Co-ordinators in achieving the objectives and plans of their Schools and Centres.	All schools and centres continue to work closely together to ensure that Co. Laois VEC provides the best possible service to its community. This is evidenced by the use of our schools by the Community Education service, which re-acquaints the learner with an educational environment and gives them the confidence to pursue formal programmes as a result.

<p>1.5 Continued innovation of Education Services.</p>	<p>Co. Laois VEC continues to develop links with various education partners. Laois Third Level Initiative has developed new links with third level institutions in order to expand its range of courses on offer and the SkillVEC project (providing lifelong learning to employees of the HSE) continues to operate successfully. Co. Laois VEC also delivers External Training courses e.g. BER to businesses and individuals in the county.</p>
<p>1.6 The development of Irish Culture.</p>	<p>Since 2007, as part of our promotion of Irish Culture, scholarships were awarded to a number of students from each school every summer, to enable them to attend an Irish College. Seachtain na Gaeilge is also celebrated in each of the schools with a range of events being organised each year.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Communication, Promotion and Accessibility of Educational Programmes</p>	
<p>2.1 Communication of opportunities in education and training in Co. Laois VEC.</p>	<p>As part of its commitment to communicate and promote its activities, a staff member is appointed as a Public Relations Officer in each school and centre who assumes responsibility for promotion of activities and events in each school and centre. The PRO also takes responsibility for reporting events to the wider community through media, including the Newsletter, VEC website, local newspapers and radio.</p>
<p>2.2 Co. Laois VEC will develop specific initiatives to support, recognise and reward excellence and will ensure that these initiatives are communicated externally.</p>	<p>Each school and centre holds awards evenings at least once a year to recognise the achievements of the learners.</p>
<p>2.3 Co. Laois VEC will identify and develop initiatives to assist in the on-going integration of foreign nationals into those aspects of the education system, which are within its remit.</p>	<p>The provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses is a key focus of our efforts to help with the on-going integration of foreign nationals into those aspects of the education system within our remit. The Adult Learning Centre and Community Education Service provide ESOL courses to a significant number of students each year throughout the county.</p>

2.4 Opening Portlaoise College.	Portlaoise College opened in September 2006 and was officially opened by the then Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Hanafin.
2.5 Mountrath Community School.	St. Aengus' Post-Primary School closed in June 2009 and was demolished. Mountrath Community School opened its doors on 1st September 2009. The school is an amalgamation of three schools, St. Aengus' PP, Mountrath, the Brigidine Secondary School, Mountrath and the Patrician College, Ballyfin. Twelve VEC staff members transferred to the new school.
Goal 3. Development of the Organisation	
3.1 Co. Laois VEC will review the working environment for all members of staff, to identify opportunities to improve that environment, by making it more supportive and flexible.	Co. Laois VEC has continued its efforts to provide a supportive and flexible working environment for all staff. This has been achieved through training and development opportunities for all staff, the facilitation of career breaks, parental leave, job-sharing, and flexible working arrangements. A new Time Management System was implemented in the Administrative Offices in 2007 to facilitate flexible work patterns for staff.
3.2 Co. Laois VEC will continue to review, develop and implement policies to deliver a learning environment that supports both staff and students.	A variety of policies and procedures was put in place in schools, centres and in Head Office to support both learners and staff, for example learner handbooks, Health and Safety policies, etc.
3.3 Co. Laois VEC will establish a Forum to examine student behaviour with a view to sharing best practice and develop strategies to address student behavioural difficulties.	A Task Group has been established to examine student behaviour, with a view to sharing best practice and develop strategies to address persistent misbehaviour patterns.

<p>3.4 Co. Laois VEC will ensure that it provides such premises for all Schools and Centres that staff and participants can work in a safe, healthy and attractive environment.</p>	<p>All schools and centres have completed Health and Safety Audits as required by legislation and Co. Laois VEC is committed to maintaining such standards. In the last five years, a number of projects have been undertaken to improve our schools and centres:- a new school was built in Portlaoise; Clonaslee VS acquired four additional classrooms and offices, Mountmellick FEC had new classrooms added, Mountmellick FEC and St. Fergal's College, Rathdowney had upgrades in their heating systems and a lift was installed in Abbeyleix FEC.</p>
<p>3.5 Co. Laois VEC will continue to implement best practice in Corporate Governance.</p>	<p>All appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, procurement and assets' disposal were followed. Government policy on pay was complied with at all times.</p>
<p>3.6 Development of ICT systems and structures and establishment of wide area network to improve the application of technology to support the planning and delivery of education.</p>	<p>WAN (wide area network) has not yet been established in Co. Laois VEC due to limited resources. However, it is hoped that this will be achieved within the period of the Education Plan 2011-2015.</p>
<p>3.7 ICT Advisory Service will work in collaboration with Co. Laois VEC schools.</p>	<p>An IT Officer, who assists the schools, centres and Head Office with IT related issues, was appointed in 2008.</p>
<p>Goal 4. Development of Youth Services</p>	
<p>4.1 Co. Laois VEC will act as a lead partner in the planning and development of youth work in Co. Laois.</p>	<p>Co. Laois VEC appointed a Youth Officer to expand and develop youth services in the county. It is the responsibility of the Youth Officer to identify and liaise with partners in the provision of youth services to ensure that there is maximum coordination of ideas and resources around the county.</p>

<p>4.2 Co. Laois VEC will identify potential partners and opportunities for developing youth work initiatives across the county.</p>	<p>Co. Laois VEC has developed effective working relationships and partnerships with other relevant statutory and voluntary organisations that has led to a number of new initiatives been developed for e.g. Laois Youth Council (Comhairle) and the hugely successful Trick 'R Street Halloween Festival.</p>
<p>Goal 5. Achievement of Public Relations Objectives</p>	
<p>5.1 Co. Laois VEC will develop a coordinated and consistent approach to the production and publication of information and other material.</p>	<p>All Co. Laois VEC information booklets, advertisements and leaflets display the Co. Laois VEC logo, crest and colours.</p>
<p>5.2 Development of IT to support Co. Laois VEC Public Relations.</p>	<p>Co. Laois VEC continues to develop its use of ICT to communicate and promote its activities. A new, more modern website was introduced in 2010 and it is reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure key information is readily accessible to prospective students and interested parties.</p>
<p>Goal 6. Creation of Strategies in Pursuit of Partnership</p>	
<p>6.1 Co. Laois VEC will seek to enhance existing partnerships to strengthen current, or to create new initiatives.</p>	<p>Co. Laois VEC has established strong links with a variety of local, public, private, and voluntary bodies. These partnerships are working very well and continue to deliver benefit to all stakeholders concerned. Some of the main partnerships to date include: The Laois School of Music, Laois County Council, Laois County Enterprise Board, Laois County Development Board, Mountmellick Development Association and other VECs.</p>
<p>6.2 Co. Laois VEC will commit to playing a key role in the delivery of education objectives in the County Development Plan.</p>	<p>Co. Laois VEC is represented on the Laois County Development Board. It played a role in the development of the County Development Plan and is implementing key recommendations of the Plan, as they apply to Co. Laois VEC.</p>

Key factors in Co. Laois influencing Preparation of Education Plan 2011-2015

Population

According to the 2006 census, the population of Co. Laois is 67,059 – 34,409 males and 32,650 females. This represents an increase of 14.09% since 2002. The population growth rate in County Laois exceeded by almost 30% that for the Midland Region (11.6%) and by almost 60% that for the State as a whole (8.2%).

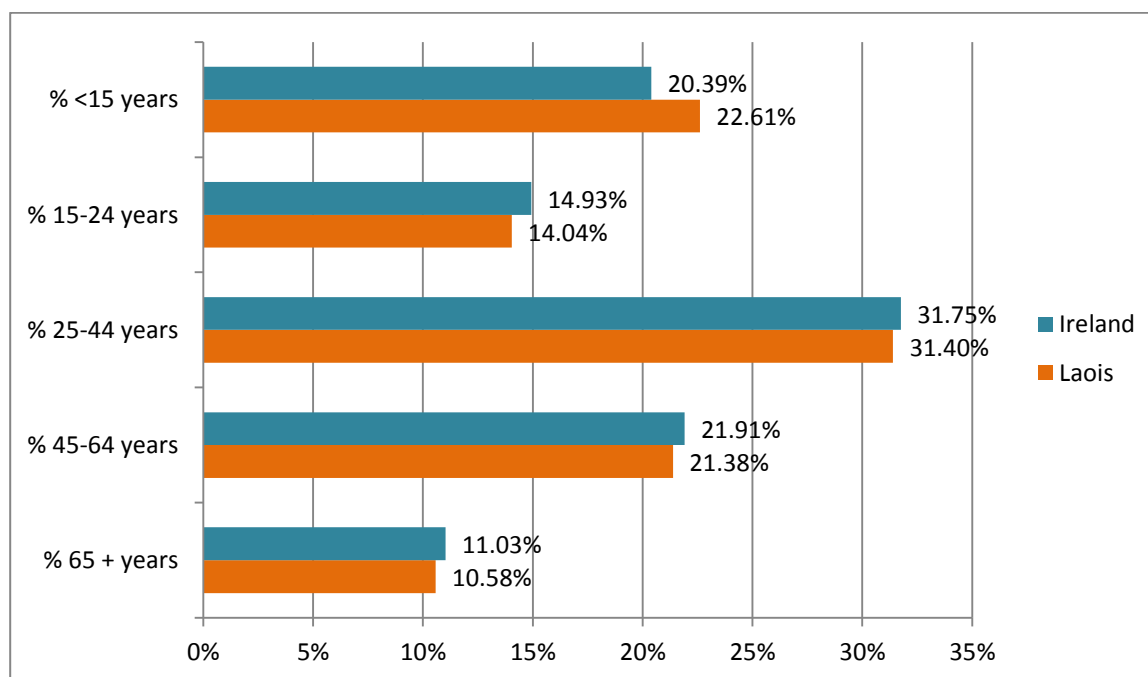
Population changes by age cohort in Co. Laois 2002-2006

Age Group	2002	2006	% Change
0-24 years	22,645	24,575	8.52%
25-44 years	17,359	21,056	21.3%
45-64 years	12,123	14,341	18.3%
65 years +	6,647	7,087	6.62%

The main areas of population growth in Co. Laois were Portarlington, Portlaoise and Mountmellick. The population of Portarlington increased by 59.5% between 2002 and 2006, Portlaoise's population increased by 20.5%, while the population of Mountmellick increased by 21.07% in the same period.

Age Profile

The chart below shows the age profile in Co. Laois, as compared with the age profile of the population of Ireland in general.



Education

Level of Educational attainment in Co. Laois

In 2006, the percentage of persons over 15 years of age in Co. Laois who left school with no formal education, or primary education only, was 21.4%, compared to a national figure of 18.9%. 22.1% of males and 17.5% of females have lower secondary level education only; while 25.8% of males and 26.4% of females have upper secondary level education only. 19.3% of people in Co. Laois have a third level qualification, which compares to 24.6% nationally (in 2006). It would appear that Co. Laois has a lower educational attainment level than the national level.

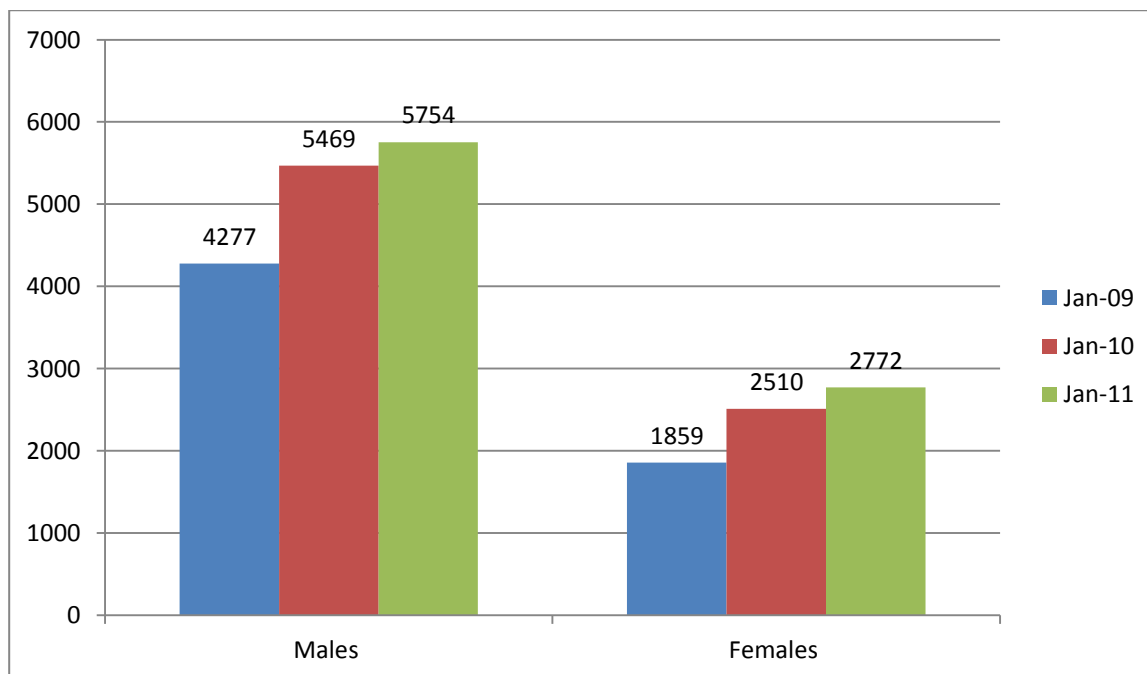
Co. Laois is under-represented in national and provincial Third Level participation rates – see table below:

	Total aged 15+ years	Third Level Non-Degree	Third Level Degree or higher	Total Third Level	Third Level Participation rate
Laois	45,118	3,251	3,659	6,910	15.3%
Leinster	1,664,380	138,419	241,691	380,110	22.8%
Ireland	3,089,775	250,429	396,408	646,837	20.9%

Source: Laois Draft County Development Plan 2012-2018

Unemployment

The Live Register Statistics (CSO January 2011) show that 8,526 people are signing on in Co. Laois. This is an increase of 2,390 (28%) from 6,136 people in January 2009. The chart below shows the number of unemployed males and females from 2009 to 2011.



Political Factors:

- The European, national and local political environment is characterised by a high level of uncertainty, particularly in relation to national spending priorities and the future shape of the public services, including education.
- Decisions have already been taken in relation to the VEC sector, with a reduction of VECs from 33 to 16.
- There is an increasing emphasis on quality assurance and value for money, which may give rise to tensions between policy makers and education practitioners.
- There is currently debate in relation to the future patronage of primary schools.

Economic Factors:

- The significant reduction in government spending has affected the amount of money allocated to education.
- There is a moratorium on recruitment of staff.
- There are high levels of unemployment among people under the ages of 24 who have low educational attainment.
- The rising costs of education may exclude a significant number of people from participating.

Social Factors:

- Greater value is now put on education and a general acknowledgement that it can make a difference to people's lives.
- The population has significantly risen in the country in general and in Co. Laois in particular.
- The results of the Census of 2011 are awaited. We will need to take account of any further changes in population.

Technological Factors:

- There have been rapid and significant changes in the technological environment in recent years, with the wider availability and use of the internet having an impact both on people's lives and on education.
- Familiarity with information and communications technology is becoming a prerequisite, not only for employment, but for everyday life.
- The government has emphasised for a number of years the importance of ICT in order to have a highly skilled workforce that will attract foreign investment.
- Challenges exist for us, particularly in the limited availability of high speed broadband.

Section Three: The Consultative Process

A review of the mission, vision, values and underlying principles formed part of the consultative process. These are set out in Section One. This review, together the contextual analysis and the review of the outcomes of the previous plan, outlined in Section Two set the scene for the internal and the external consultation designed to establish how Co. Laois VEC can deliver its programmes and services to the highest standards over the next five years.

There were two elements to the consultation process.

- Internal Consultation
- External Consultation

Internal Consultation

The internal consultation involved the VE Committee, all Co. Laois VEC staff, Students' Councils, the Adult Education Advisory Board, the learners and related services. Central to the process was an information and consultation day for staff members held on the 1st November 2010.

The purpose of the internal consultation was to:

- Examine and evaluate our current mission and vision statement;
- Identify the core values and underlying principles which should underpin the work of Co. Laois VEC;
- Identify and evaluate the Strengths, Challenges. Opportunities and Threats (SCOT Analysis) facing Co. Laois VEC over the next five years;
- Use the SCOT Analysis to set Goals and Objectives for the next five years;
- Develop Action and Implementation Plans to achieve the Goals and Objectives.

External Consultation:

The external consultation involved all members of the public. An advertisement was placed in the local newspaper inviting members to visit Co. Laois VEC's website, or any school or centre within Co. Laois VEC, to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to establish:

- Which aspects of Co. Laois VEC users find particularly good;
- Which aspects of Co. Laois VEC could be improved;
- Key priorities for Co. Laois VEC in next five years, bearing in mind the current economic climate;
- Any general feedback on any aspect of the running or development of Co. Laois VEC.

A number of outside agencies were also consulted regarding the future development of Co. Laois VEC.

SCOT Analysis - Identified through consultative process

A key element of the consultation day was the workshop on the SCOT analysis which identified the strengths, the challenges, the opportunities and the threats facing Co. Laois VEC as it prepared its Education Plan 2011-2015. The issues emerging from this analysis fed into the goals and objectives set out in the Plan.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commitment and expertise of staff ● Support of VE Committee ● Commitment to Quality Assurance ● Commitment to lifelong learning ● Accessibility of programmes and services ● Identifying and responding to local needs ● County wide structures and infrastructure ● Quality of programmes and progression routes ● Equality of special needs provision ● Networking and communication systems ● Variety of provision e.g. prison education 	<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local and community educational needs ● Labour market needs ● Aggregation of VECs ● Economic recession ● Up skilling and retraining of unemployed ● Networking ● Wider role in further education and training ● New programmes and progression routes ● Development of youth services ● Availability of universal broadband ● Integration of services
<p style="text-align: center;">Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current economic downturn ● Funding, staffing and resources ● Profile of the VEC ● Aggregation of VECs ● Forward planning ● Demographic Trends ● Maintaining and developing infrastructures ● Establishing links with other agencies & partners ● Developing IT Services 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of funding and resources ● Aggregation of VECs ● Moratorium on staffing ● Economic recession ● Effects of recession on programmes ● Competition from other services and providers ● Rationalisation of programmes and services

Section Four: Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Implementation

Goal 1: Create an inclusive learning environment

To create an inclusive learning environment that promotes effective teaching and learning, which, in turn, encourages the development of the individual at every stage of his or her life.

Objectives	Actions	Implementation
1.1 To create a student centred learning environment that values and respects the uniqueness of every learner equally.	<p>1.1.1 Encourage parents, families and communities to play an active part in supporting children’s education and personal development contributing to successful results in a culture of lifelong learning.</p> <p>1.1.2 Encourage the holistic development of the learner through recognition of personal development and individual non-academic achievements.</p> <p>1.1.3 Improve ancillary facilities and other student centred activities (library, canteen, sports, societies, recreation) in all schools and centres.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, AEO, Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals / Centre Directors, Staff, Parents, Adult learner representatives, Community groups, Student Councils, Representatives of adult learners.</p> <p>How: Consultative Fora, regular meetings, develop action plans and review mechanisms.</p>
1.2 To promote and facilitate self-directed and negotiated learning in the context of lifelong learning to encourage self-motivation and initiative.	<p>1.2.1 Develop methodologies that promote independent learning.</p> <p>1.2.2 Develop entrepreneurial skills to enable students to look to themselves rather than society.</p>	<p>Who: Principals /Centre Directors and staff of schools and centres.</p> <p>How: Staff CPD, in-service and up-skilling.</p>
1.3 To develop learning programmes at all levels which will be learner centred, accredited and cater	<p>1.3.1 Provide career guidance and counselling to identify each student’s needs.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, AEO, Guidance Counsellors.</p> <p>How: Core provision in allocation.</p>

<p>for the full range of individual learner needs as they progress through lifelong learning.</p>	<p>1.3.2 Promote, encourage and provide student induction at each school and centre.</p>	<p>Who: Each school and centre. How: Integral part of school policies.</p>
<p>1.4 To build on the current facilities, supports and infrastructures that promote academic excellence for learners of all ages and abilities, with particular attention being paid to gifted learners as well as those with special educational needs.</p>	<p>1.4.1 Strive towards excellence and provide accreditation at the appropriate level on the NFQ in each school/centre.</p>	<p>Who: VE Committee, Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals / Centre Directors. How: Support of CEO.</p>
	<p>1.4.2 Build on the commitment, professionalism and expertise of the management and staff in each school/centre to promote an effective learning environment that reflects the diversity of learners needs.</p>	<p>Who: Management & Staff. How: Review outcomes of programmes, courses and results on a regular basis and build on same.</p>
	<p>1.4.3 Engage with all the partners involved in the school or centre, both internal and external, who can contribute to developing the learning environment.</p>	<p>Who: Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals / Centre Directors. How: Discuss and implement recommendations of reports.</p>
<p>1.5 To recognise, cater for and support cultural diversity and celebrate difference.</p>	<p>1.5.1 Develop and implement an intercultural education policy in all schools and centres. 1.5.2 Develop links with the appropriate support services.</p>	<p>Who: VE Committee, Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals / Centre Directors and staff. How: Develop and implement intercultural policies.</p>

Goal 2: Provide Quality Programmes

To develop and deliver programmes that are accessible, socially inclusive and relevant to the needs of learners, employers and Irish society.

Objectives	Actions	Implementation
2.1 To locate and deliver mainstream and flexible educational programmes and services in Co. Laois with particular attention to areas affected by the current economic crisis, high unemployment, marginalisation and learners with specific needs.	<p>2.1.1 Conduct research to identify the education and training needs of the county.</p> <p>2.1.2 Provide short term, modular adult/further education courses with flexible learning opportunities to meet the identified needs of learners.</p> <p>2.1.3 Integrate literacy in a whole-centre approach within all further education programmes.</p>	<p>Who: Senior management.</p> <p>How: Implement outcome of the research.</p>
2.2 To adapt and extend the current range of programmes and supports to meet the needs of foreign nationals, cultural groups and other ethnic minority groups served by Co. Laois VEC.	<p>2.2.1 Review the educational needs of the various groups and develop appropriate courses to meet their needs.</p> <p>2.2.2 Liaise with the relevant bodies representing these groups.</p> <p>2.2.3 Provide in-service courses to enable staff up-skill in teaching methodologies appropriate to the needs of the learners.</p>	<p>Who: AEO, Advisory Boards, Ad Hoc Adult Education Board, Principals and Centre Directors.</p> <p>How: Set up regular meetings with the various representatives collectively and individually. Encourage staff to participate in in-service training.</p>

<p>2.3 To ensure Co. Laois VEC is at the forefront of education and training provision in line with current and evolving labour market requirements.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Conduct research to identify the current local labour market needs and develop programmes relevant to the current and future career opportunities of our learners.</p> <p>2.3.2 Prioritise languages, mathematics and science at Higher Level Leaving Certificate in line with the requirements of industry.</p> <p>2.3.3 Provide all curricular subjects at Higher, Ordinary and Foundation levels.</p> <p>2.3.4 Provide work-based training certified by FETAC.</p>	<p>Who: Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals / Centre Directors, Teaching staff, Ad-Hoc Adult Education Board.</p> <p>How: Set up Working Groups with clear terms of reference and outcomes to be achieved.</p>
<p>2.4 To ensure all programmes are accredited on the NFQ and will allow for progression routes to employment and / or further and higher education in local, national or international institutions.</p>	<p>2.4.1 Develop a unified approach to the provision of further education and training programmes offered by Co. Laois VEC.</p> <p>2.4.2 Establish progression routes from courses to employment, further or higher education at home and abroad.</p>	<p>Who: Senior Management.</p> <p>How: Liaise with the relevant progression authorities.</p>
<p>2.5 To develop online programmes and distance learning courses.</p>	<p>2.5.1 Develop a range of online courses.</p> <p>2.5.2 Maintain extra supports at PLC level.</p> <p>2.5.3 Enhance cross curricular and extracurricular focus in school.</p>	<p>Who: IT Officer assisted by a working group of IT experts and relevant staff.</p> <p>How: Internet networking, intranet.</p>
<p>2.6 To make research and development integral to the provision of programmes and services.</p>	<p>2.6.1 To use the expertise within Co. Laois VEC where possible.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, HR Department, Principals / Centre Directors and staff.</p> <p>How: Identify expertise and assign projects as necessary.</p>

Goal 3: Ensure Quality Assurance

To ensure all programmes and services meet the highest standards of quality assurance.

Objectives	Actions	Implementation
3.1 To provide a VEC-wide level of service that is of the highest possible standard.	3.1.1 Develop VEC-wide policies which underpin QA.	<p>Who: VE Committee, CEO, AEO, Senior Management.</p> <p>How: Identify a QA Officer. Set up a VEC Policy Committee to oversee the development of policies and necessary staff training.</p>
	3.1.2 Foster staff development, training and leadership qualities.	
	3.1.3 Provide comprehensive training to staff.	
3.2 To ensure that all schools/centres achieve the required standards recommended by WSEs, subject inspections, FETAC monitoring, and self-evaluation.	3.2.1 Implement the recommendations of WSE and subject inspections.	<p>Who: Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals/ Centre Directors and staff.</p> <p>How: Review implementation on regular basis.</p>
	3.2.2 Implement the recommendations of FETAC Monitoring.	
	3.2.3 Carry out Self Evaluation of programmes and services on a regular basis.	<p>Who: Principals / Centre Directors, Programme Co-ordinators and staff.</p> <p>How: Implement guidelines of Awarding Body.</p>
3.3 To review our QA agreement with FETAC to ensure all programmes and services meet the highest standards required.	3.3.1 Continue to implement, plan and review QA commitments with the appropriate bodies.	<p>Who: Management and staffs.</p> <p>How: Co-operate fully with FETAC in review of QA agreement.</p>
	3.3.2 Implement fully FETAC QA Agreement in Co. Laois VEC Schools and Centres.	
	3.3.3 Develop FETAC-specific resources and dedicated web page.	<p>Who: IT Working Group.</p>

3.4 To continue the modernisation and refurbishment of premises and facilities with a particular focus on disability access and to acquire new facilities to meet the needs of programmes and services as they arise.	3.4.1 Conduct a regular audit of all Co. Laois VEC premises and identify priorities.	Who: Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, Principals / Centre Directors and staff.
	3.4.2 Build on the work done during Education Plan 2006-2010.	Who: VE Committee, CEO.
3.5 To ensure that all schools and centres meet the standards required by all relevant stakeholders in the provision of Co. Laois VEC's programmes and services.	3.5.1 Implement support systems to ensure that schools/centres meet the standards set by external quality assurance bodies.	Who: Principals / Centre Directors, AEO.
3.6 To ensure that all relevant youth service providers meet the standards required by the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work.	3.6.1 Co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work.	Who: Youth Officer

Goal 4: Ensure Professionalism of Staff

All staff throughout the VEC will be respected, valued and supported in their professional roles.

Objectives	Actions	Implementation
4.1 To create an environment where all staff members feel valued and respected.	4.1.1 Ensure that all members of staff have a clear understanding of their role and its contribution to creating a quality teaching and learning environment.	Who: Head Office, Management in all schools and centres. How: Regular participative staff meetings.
	4.1.2 Recognise the unique environments within which some Laois VEC employees work, e.g. prisons, community settings etc.	
	4.1.3 Provide appropriate induction programme to all new staff.	Who: Head Office.
	4.1.4 Improve communication systems between Head Office and staff members in all schools and centres.	Who: Head Office. How: Staff Handbook, Newsletter, Email, Website.
	4.1.5 Encourage social interaction between all staff members.	Who: Staff Social Committee.
4.2 To develop support structures to enhance staff development and welfare.	4.2.1 Provide staff handbook which includes all relevant information for staff.	Who: Head Office.
	4.2.2 Heighten awareness among staff of the support services available to staff e.g. Employee Assistance Service, Mediation Service.	Who: HR Department, Principals / Centre Directors. How: Staff Handbook, Staff Meetings, Newsletter, Email, Website.
	4.2.3 Encourage line managers to engage with staff members reporting to them on a regular basis.	Who: VE Committee, CEO, AEO, Senior Managers.

4.3 To encourage and support staff to engage in CPD to respond to the diverse and changing profile of learners, their individual needs and the teaching methodologies required to meet these needs.	4.3.1 Identify staff needs and devise CPD programmes to meet these needs.	Who: HR Department, AEO, Principals / Centre Directors, Line Managers.
	4.3.2 Provide adequate accessibility for staff to use IT facilities.	Who: Principals / Centre Directors, IT Officer, Head Office.
	4.3.3 Provide specialised staff training to enable staff to cope with a diverse range of student needs e.g. language difficulties, behavioural difficulties.	Who: Principals / Centre Directors. How: Employ specialist trainers as appropriate.
4.4 To provide opportunities for staff to share good practice, resources, knowledge and expertise with each other and between schools/centres.	4.4.1 Develop the VEC website and an intranet to create virtual networks of co-workers, subject teachers, administrative task groups and groups working on current issues.	Who: IT Officer, Working group of staff members with expertise. How: Appoint Working Group
	4.4.2 Provide an annual VEC Staff day.	Who: CEO, Head Office.

Goal 5: Enhance the Profile of the VEC

To promote Co. Laois VEC as a major educational provider in the county.

Objectives	Actions	Implementation
5.1 To raise the awareness of Co. Laois VEC as a quality assured provider of lifelong education and training.	5.1.1 Ensure the name and logo of the VEC is included on all Co. Laois VEC schools, centres and public communications.	Who: Senior management.
	5.1.2 Ensure a wide circulation of VEC newsletters.	Who: Newsletter Committee.
	5.1.3 Update the VEC and school / centre websites on a regular basis to include new developments and achievements in schools and centres.	Who: Administrative staff and those with information from schools and centres.
5.2 To lead the development of high quality educational programmes for lifelong learning in Co. Laois.	5.2.1 Utilise local media to communicate the range of programmes and services offered by Co. Laois VEC.	Who: VE Committee, CEO, AEO, Senior management, relevant staff.
	5.2.2 Engage with IVEA in developing the VEC's role as a provider of lifelong learning.	Who: CEO, VE Committee.
	5.2.3 Conduct research in order to identify future educational opportunities for Co. Laois VEC.	Who: Senior management. How: Employ appropriate expertise as required.
5.3 To offer learners a VEC-wide integrated educational service with appropriate progression routes and levels of accreditation.	5.3.1 Empower all management and staff in schools, centres and programmes to work in an integrated manner across Co. Laois VEC.	Who: VE Committee, CEO. How: Meetings of Principals and Centre Directors to agree integration. Review agreement regularly.
	5.3.2 Produce a comprehensive guide of all programmes and services offered by Co. Laois VEC.	Who: Head Office in consultation with Principals, and Centre Directors, and Programme Co-ordinators.

	5.3.3 Provide an annual open day for Co. Laois VEC to showcase its services.	Who: Head Office, Senior Management
5.4 To increase the usage of all Co. Laois VEC's premises and facilities by the community.	5.4.1 Provide a wider range of lifelong learning programmes. 5.4.2 Rent facilities to external groups within the community for appropriate uses.	Who: Head Office and Senior Management in schools and centres.
5.5 To develop internal and external systems to improve communication across Co. Laois VEC services.	5.5.1 Establish a Q&A forum on the website on programmes and services. 5.5.2 Provide an intranet service across the county. 5.5.3 Publicise achievements of learners on a regular basis.	Who: Head Office, Senior Management, IT Officer, IT Working Group.
5.6 Manage the aggregation in a planned manner.	5.6.1 Set up a Task Group to identify and manage the issues arising in relation to the amalgamation. 5.6.2 Consult with the administrative staff on issues arising. 5.6.3 Liaise with the DES, IVEA, the other VECs involved, and unions, etc on the way forward.	Who: CEO, Task Group. How: Regular Meetings.

Goal 6: Develop Partnerships and Links

To foster links/partnerships with industry, other relevant organisations and community groups at national and international levels.

Objective	Actions	Implementation
6.1 To work in partnerships with other educational providers and support services on joint initiatives for sourcing funding for common objectives.	<p>6.1.1 Establish a Partnership Forum, representative of VEC and all local agencies, employers etc.</p> <p>6.1.2 Research national opportunities to work in partnership with other agencies on joint initiatives.</p> <p>6.1.3 Develop local, national and European links with key funding organisations to maximise value for money locally.</p> <p>6.1.4 Develop systems for on-going communication with industry to survey and assess their up-skilling future skills needs.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, AEO, VEC Partnership Forum.</p> <p>How: Regular Meetings.</p>
6.2 To adopt a partnership approach to programmes and educational initiatives relating to local and community development issues in Co. Laois VEC.	<p>6.2.1 Participate actively in County Development Boards, Local Development companies and other local development structures.</p> <p>6.2.2 Collaborate with employers and service providers particularly for work experience and work placement.</p> <p>6.2.3 Share information between local groups e.g. Social Protection, HSE, sports and FÁS.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, AEO, and their representatives, VEC Partnership Forum, Career Guidance Counsellors, Work Experience Co-ordinators in schools and centres.</p> <p>How: Regular meetings, sharing of information, use of internet and website.</p>
6.3 To develop and integrate a European dimension into the programmes provided by Co. Laois VEC.	<p>6.3.1 Source European funding for joint projects.</p> <p>6.3.2 Access European training and development opportunities for staff.</p>	<p>Who: AEO, Adult education staff.</p>

<p>6.4 To have representatives on local, national and EU Educational Bodies.</p>	<p>6.4.1 Appoint key personnel who will actively participate on all relevant educational forums to represent Co. Laois VEC and report to VEC, CEO, and AEO as appropriate.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, VEC, Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, AEO.</p> <p>How: Attend meetings, and prepare reports.</p>
<p>6.5 To create further links with other academic institutions e.g. third level colleges and universities.</p>	<p>6.5.1 Develop progression links with third level colleges and universities.</p> <p>6.5.2 Twin with other education and training institutions, nationally and internationally.</p> <p>6.5.3 Develop joint CPD online courses with colleges and universities.</p>	<p>Who: Boards of Management, Advisory Boards, AEO, Principals, Centre Directors.</p> <p>How: Appoint key staff to link with colleges, training institutions and universities to achieve the objective.</p>
<p>6.6 To develop links with other VECs to provide opportunities for collaborative developments and efficiencies in the provision of services.</p>	<p>6.6.1 Work in partnership with other VECs to develop common programmes and initiatives.</p>	<p>Who: Principals and Centre Directors.</p>
	<p>6.6.2 Appoint key personnel to IVEA Task groups.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, VEC Committee.</p>
<p>6.7 To work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary youth organisations to ensure a more integrated and planned approach to the development of high quality youth service policy and practice across the county.</p>	<p>6.7.1 Establish a VEC Youth Work sub-committee.</p> <p>6.7.2 Collect, analyse, evaluate information and data and actively engage with the youth work sector to develop a VEC Youth Service Plan.</p> <p>6.7.3 Work in partnership with other VEC's and NYWAC to support the implementation of the Youth Work Act.</p>	<p>Who: CEO, VE Committee, Youth Officer.</p> <p>How: Regular meetings, sharing of information, use of internet and website.</p>

Goal 7: Develop ICT Services

To develop effective information and communications technology (ICT) systems throughout the scheme.

Objective	Actions	Implementation
7.1 To develop a wide area network for Co. Laois VEC, with provision for any new entity arising from the proposed amalgamations of VECs.	7.1.1 Conduct research to source the ICT system that best suits the needs of Co. Laois VEC and the proposed new entity.	Who: Senior Management, IT Officer.
	7.1.2 Develop the system to meet the research specifications.	Who: IT Officer, third party providers.
	7.1.3 Provide training for all staff as necessary on the use of the new system.	Who: Facilitated by IT Officer.
7.2 To enhance organisational communication throughout the scheme using ICT systems and to promote more effective information sharing and integration.	7.2.1 Increase the electronic transmission of all data relevant to administrative services.	Who: Head Office and relevant staff in schools and centres.
	7.2.2 Use electronic media tools to improve communication on a scheme wide basis e.g. video conferencing, intranet, etc.	Who: Senior Management, IT Officer.
	7.2.3 Increase the use of ICT to promote VEC programmes and services e.g. website, social networking, texting.	Who: Management and staff.
7.3 To increase the use of ICT to enhance the teaching and learning experience for staff and students.	7.3.1 Provide up to date equipment and technology in all schools and centres including data projectors, interactive white boards, digital cameras, etc.	Who: Senior management in schools and centres.
	7.3.2 Provide the necessary technology to support online learning and teaching.	Who: Senior Management and IT Officer.

	7.3.3 Use appropriate software to support the delivery of programmes and services e.g. enrolment /registration, attendance, full academic profile, submission of returns to appropriate bodies.	Who: Senior Management and IT Officer.
7.4 To promote appropriate and relevant ICT training to all staff on a scheme wide basis.	7.4.1 Conduct an audit of training needs and develop and implement a training plan.	Who: Senior Management.
	7.4.2 Provide training as required to support the introduction of new ICT technology and applications.	Who: Senior Management.
7.5 To provide support and maintenance for ICT infrastructures.	7.5.1 Ensure appropriate levels of support are in place to meet the demands of users.	Who: Senior Management.
	7.5.2 Develop and expand the ICT technical support department and services.	Who: Senior Management and IT Officer.

Section 5: Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan

Co. Laois VEC's Education Plan has identified seven goals to be achieved, each with a set of key objectives and actions for implementation during the lifetime of the plan. The success of the Plan requires the commitment of all those involved in its development – VE Committee, CEO, AEO, Board of Management members, staff in schools, centres and administrative offices, our learners, agencies and educational partners with which we work.

The goals, objectives and actions as set out in the Plan, present a road map for all our schools and centres in the development of their own five year Plan. In this way, the mission, vision and values of Co. Laois VEC will be embedded in the plans for each school and centre. An Implementation Committee will be set up to oversee this work, to ensure that the Education Plan becomes part of the work of the VEC in each school and centre.

The Implementation Committee will set out the timelines for the implementation of the actions associated with each goal. At the end of each year, those assigned responsibility for the actions associated with the achievement of objectives will submit an evaluation to the VEC for inclusion in its Annual Report.

As required under legislation, this Plan will be supported by a series of annual Service Plans. A Service Plan will be prepared each year and will set out in detail the proposed activities of the VEC for the following year. Through the preparation of these annual Service Plans, the Education Plan will be under regular review by Co. Laois VEC during the five year period.

Appendix 1 – Committee Members

Co. Laois Vocational Education Committee

- ▶ Cllr. Mary Sweeney (Chairperson)
- ▶ Cllr. Rotimi Adebari
- ▶ Cllr. William Aird
- ▶ Ms Linda Bergin
- ▶ Cllr. John Bonham
- ▶ Cllr. Pat Bowe
- ▶ Mr Patrick Buggy
- ▶ Monsignor John Byrne, P.P.
- ▶ Ms Winifred Champ-Cox
- ▶ Ms Emma Dunne
- ▶ Cllr. John King
- ▶ Cllr. Paul Mitchell
- ▶ Mr Declan Moore
- ▶ Ms Irene Murray
- ▶ Cllr. Kathleen O’Brien
- ▶ Mr Gerry Quinn
- ▶ Cllr. Brian Stanley

VEC Audit Sub-Committee

- ▶ Monsignor John Byrne, P.P. (Chairperson)
- ▶ Cllr. William Aird
- ▶ Cllr. Pat Bowe
- ▶ Ms Irene Murray
- ▶ Cllr. Brian Stanley

VEC Finance Sub-Committee

- ▶ Cllr. Pat Buggy (Chairperson)
- ▶ Ms Linda Bergin
- ▶ Ms Winifred Champ-Cox
- ▶ Ms Anne O’Keeffe, CEO
- ▶ Ms Mary Sweeney

Ad Hoc Adult Education Committee

- ▶ Cllr. William Aird
- ▶ Monsignor John Byrne, P.P.
- ▶ Mr Jim Enright
- ▶ Mr Ken Farragher
- ▶ Ms Anne Goodwin
- ▶ Ms Vivienne Graham
- ▶ Mr Finbar Heneghan
- ▶ Ms Carmel Hoolan
- ▶ Mr Michael Lynch
- ▶ Mr Gerry Maher
- ▶ Ms Teresa McEvoy
- ▶ Mr Dominick Reddin

Appendix 2 – Schools, Centres, and Services of Co. Laois VEC

Adult Education Services

Adult Education Officer: Joe Cunningham

Centre	Centre Director	Contact Details
Abbeyleix Further Education Centre, Mountrath Road, Abbeyleix.	Helen Kavanagh	Telephone: 057 8731127 Email: hkavanagh@abbeyleixfec.ie
Adult Learning Centre, Ridge Road, Portlaoise.	Kathleen Bennett (Adult Literacy Organiser)	Telephone: 057 86 61338 Email: adlit@eircom.net
AEGIS (Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service) No. 2 Meehan Court, Portlaoise.	Carmel Hoolan (Guidance Co-ordinator)	Telephone: 057 8672963 Email: info@laoisaegis.ie
Community Education Service, Ridge Road, Portlaoise.	Teresa McEvoy (Community Education Facilitator)	Telephone: 057 8661890 Email: termce@gmail.com
Mountmellick Further Education Centre, Harbour Street, Mountmellick.	Mary Kavanagh	Telephone: 057 8624196 Email: yrlaois@eircom.net
Portarlinton Adult Education Centre, Bracklone Street, Portarlinton.	Margaret Morrin	Telephone: 057 8623161 Email: mmorrin@portarlintonaeac.ie
St. Canice's Senior Traveller Training Centre, Kea-Lew Business Park, Portlaoise.	Bernadette Moran / Michael Brennan	Telephone: 057 8621413 Email: canices2@eircom.net

Second Level Schools

School	Principal / Deputy Principal	Contact Details
Clonaslee Vocational School Clonaslee	Principal: Noreen Sweeney Deputy Principal: John Lee	Telephone: 057 86 48044 Email: clonvs.ias@eircom.net
Portlaoise College, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise	Principal: Colette Dunning Deputy Principal: Noel Daly	Telephone: 057 8621480 Email: info@portlaoisecollege.ie
St. Fergal's College, Rathdowney	Principal: Aine O'Neill Deputy Principal: Sean Conroy	Telephone: 0505 46357 Email: stfergalscollege@eircom.net

Prison Education Centres

Centre	Head Teacher	Contact Details
Midlands Prison Education Centre, Portlaoise.	Linda Tynan	Telephone: 057 8672110 Email: mided@eircom.net
Portlaoise Prison Education Centre, Portlaoise.	Mark Kavanagh	Telephone: 057 86 21318 Email: eduport@eircom.net

Youth Service

Address	Youth Officer	Contact Details
Youth Service, Portlaoise College, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise.	Patricia Cullen	Telephone: 057 8666300 Email: pcullen@portlaoisecollege.ie

School Completion Programme

Address	SCP Co-ordinator	Contact Details
SCP Office, Portlaoise College, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise.	Brenda Tynan	Telephone: 057 8621480 Email: btynan@portlaoisecollege.ie

Appendix 3 – Boards of Management

Clonaslee Vocational School – Board of Management

- ▶ Ms Noreen Sweeney (Secretary)
- ▶ Mr Pat Bowe
- ▶ Ms Cathriona Callally
- ▶ Mr John Cusack
- ▶ Ms Emma Dunne
- ▶ Mr John Lee
- ▶ Ms Irene Murray
- ▶ Ms Martina O’Donovan
- ▶ Fr. Thomas O’Reilly
- ▶ Ms Anne Thompson

Portlaoise College - Board of Management

- ▶ Cllr. Mary Sweeney (Chairperson)
- ▶ Cllr. William Aird
- ▶ Rev. Hilary Dungan
- ▶ Ms Colette Dunning (Secretary)
- ▶ Mr William Flanagan
- ▶ Mr John O’Brien
- ▶ Cllr. Brian Stanley
- ▶ Fr. Kevin Walshe
- ▶ Ms Sheila Whelan

St. Fergal’s College, Rathdowney - Board of Management

- ▶ Ms Breda Bergin
- ▶ Mr Patrick Buggy
- ▶ Cllr. John Bonham
- ▶ Mr John Casey
- ▶ Rev. Fr. Eamon Foley
- ▶ Mr Eamon Fortune
- ▶ Ms Olga Hyland
- ▶ Cllr. John King
- ▶ Ms Brioda McCabe
- ▶ Rev. Archdeacon J. Murray
- ▶ Ms Áine O’Neill (Secretary)
- ▶ Mr Edmund Sheeran

Mountmellick Further Education Centre – Board of Management

- ▶ Cllr. Pat Bowe
- ▶ Ms Laura Connolly
- ▶ Mr Joe Cunningham
- ▶ Mr Eric Gaughren
- ▶ Mr Pat Jones
- ▶ Ms Mary Kavanagh

Appendix 4 – Committees involved in development of Education Plan

Education Plan Steering Committee

- ▶ Anne O’Keeffe – Chief Executive Officer
- ▶ Joe Cunningham – Adult Education Officer
- ▶ Sadie Aherne – Assistant Principal Officer
- ▶ Phil Hibbitts – Administrative Officer
- ▶ Noreen Savage – Administrative Officer

Education Plan Planning Team

- ▶ Anne O’Keeffe - Chief Executive Officer
- ▶ Kathleen Bennett – Adult Literacy Organiser, Laois VEC Adult Learning Centre
- ▶ Patricia Cullen – Youth Officer, Co. Laois VEC
- ▶ Joe Cunningham – Adult Education Officer
- ▶ Colette Dunning – Principal, Portlaoise College
- ▶ Carmel Hoolan – Adult Education Guidance Co-Ordinator, Laois AEGIS
- ▶ Helen Kavanagh – Centre Director, Abbeyleix Further Education Centre
- ▶ Mark Kavanagh – Supervising Teacher, Portlaoise Prison Education Centre
- ▶ Mary Kavanagh – Youthreach Co-ordinator, Mountmellick Further Education Centre
- ▶ Teresa McEvoy – Community Education Facilitator
- ▶ Bernadette Moran / Michael Brennan –Centre Directors, St. Canice’s Training Centre
- ▶ Margaret Morrin – Centre Director, Portarlinton Adult Education Centre
- ▶ Áine O’Neill – Principal, St. Fergal’s College, Rathdowney
- ▶ Noreen Sweeney – Principal, Clonaslee Vocational School
- ▶ Linda Tynan – Supervising Teacher, Midlands Prison Education Centre

Glossary of Terms

AEGIS	Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service
AEO	Adult Education Officer
BOM	Board of Management
BTEI	Back To Education Initiative
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FEC	Further Education Centre
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
LABEL	Laois Action for Business and E-Learning
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality Assurance
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centre
SCOT	Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
WAN	Wide Area Network
WSE	Whole School Evaluation