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Partnership development and governance for a
Just Transition in County Offaly

START support for a just transition in County Offaly

Energy

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Acknowledgements

Introduction and overview

The Initiative for EU Coal Regions in Transition is designed to assist regions in facilitating a Just Transition in communities affected by planned and ongoing phase-out of coal, peat and oil shale extraction and their application for power generation.

Technical assistance support provided through the START facility is intended to help build capacity, improve knowledge, and offer advice to public administrations and other relevant stakeholders to formulate regional transition strategies, and to plan for, govern and implement a Just Transition in coal, peat and oil shale regions.

Technical assistance support provided through the START facility is not intended as an alternative to existing support structures. Rather, it should complement existing efforts of the Member State, the Region(s) and the European Commission and other organisations that support transition in coal and other carbon intensive regions and communities. To date, START has provide technical assistance in nine EU Member States.

As regards Ireland, START originally provided support to the Midlands Regional Transition Team in 2020 to assist in a range of policy and practice areas, including transition planning, community engagement, project identification, and skills and labour market analysis.

This final report sets out the technical assistance provided by the START team to County Offaly during 2023. The support related to the creation of a new County level partnership of key local actors, including the new Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), to enable a Just Transition. The report is intended to act as a reference and resource for the partners going forward. It can also inform the process of a fair and equitable transition in the wider Midlands region.

The topic of higher education and partnership working in the context of Just Transition is one that is of growing interest to the European Commission and the START team look forward to hearing how the new partnership develops.

The START team was composed of the following members:

Name	Position	Role / expertise
Robert Pollock	Service coordinator	To coordinate the support
Andrea Broughton	Expert	To lead and deliver the support
Paul Dowling	Expert	To deliver the support
Cécile Weber	Expert	To deliver the support

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The support provided by the START team ran for nine months, from March to December 2023, and comprised the following elements:

Task 1: Identification of relevant good practices and potential just transition models around the EU and more widely around the world
1.1 Desk research and literature review
1.2 Contact with key stakeholders and networks, including in other JT regions where relevant
Task 2: Support in the development of a partnership approach to just transition in County Offaly
2.1 Identify issues and points for exploration and clarification regarding the engagement of the Technological University of the Shannon in the new partnership concept/body
2.2 Engage regional (EMRA, MRTT), national (Irish Government) and EU actors as appropriate
Task 3: Identify potential options for the creation of a new partnership/body to support just transition in County Offaly
3.1 Develop an outline of the options with regard to the nature and aims of the new partnership/body
3.2 Develop a theory of change for the partnership/body and identify actions in the short, medium and long term
Task 4: Design and deliver two workshops
4.2 To develop an outline for two workshops, to be delivered in summer and autumn 2023.
4.2 To develop an agenda for the workshops and support the planning and delivery of the workshops
Finalisation (Reporting)
Preparation and submission of START Summary Report

This final report contains an overview of the results of this technical assistance. It comprises the following sections:

- **Outcome of Task 1:** Identification of relevant good practices and potential just transition models around the EU and more widely around the world

- **Outcome of Task 2:** Support in the development of a partnership approach to just transition in County Offaly

- **Outcome of Task 3:** Identify potential options for the creation of a new partnership/body to support just transition in County Offaly

- **Outcome of Task 4:** Design and deliver two workshops, including agreed next steps.

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Task 1: Identification of relevant good practices and potential just transition models around the EU and more widely around the world

The START team carried out a literature review to identify relevant good practices of partnerships involving higher education institutions in the context of supporting a just transition. It also examined the different roles that higher education institutions can play in a just transition and gave examples of good practices from around Europe and beyond. The START team also carried out a number of interviews to support this review. A full list of interviews carried out for this project can be found in Annex 1: List of key actors and stakeholders consulted.

Higher education institutions can play a role in supporting just transitions by engaging in the following activities:

- Creating research groups focused on regional concerns, green transitions, sustainability and/or development.
- Organising and holding events aimed at educating the local, regional, and national community on selected topics, which will help the region's development.
- Changing the curriculum so that it aligns with economic, ecological, and regional needs.
- Encouraging professors, academics and students engaged in pursuing research in the fields of green energy, sustainability, policy, and regional development.

Higher education institutions can function as knowledge creators, training centres, entrepreneurial and economic boosters, technical and financial supporters, network enablers, and cultural and social enrichers. More detail is available in the review, which has been published on the START website as a report entitled Higher Education Institutions, Community Engagement and Just Transition: A Literature Review. START support to County Offaly.

The review also framed a panel discussion on the role of higher education in delivering a Just Transition in EU regions at the 8th Just Transition Platform conference in Brussels in October 2023.

Task 2: Support in the development of a partnership approach to just transition in County Offaly

The START team carried out a series of interviews with key actors at EU, national and regional levels in order to identify and highlight the main issues for County Offaly in forming a partnership to support the just transition process in the region. Meetings were held with the following individuals:

- The National Economic and Social Council (Larry O'Connell and Jeanne Moore);
- Professor Tom Collins;
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (Patrick Barrett);
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (Frank Maughan);
- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (Terry Connolly); and
- EC Representation (Jonathan Claridge and Méabh de Búrca).

The key issues highlighted by these meetings are set out below.

Broad policy positioning

A Just Transition Task Force, chaired by Kieran Mulvey, has been established by the Irish Government to scope a Just Transition Commission (JTC) which will become operational in 2024. The JTC will be national and cross-sectoral in focus. The Offaly JT partnership/"academy" concept could be of interest to the JTC and increase Offaly's and the new partnership's profile at national level.

More generally, Just Transition is increasingly being viewed through a national and wider sectoral focus in Ireland, potentially meaning less attention for the Midlands and Offaly in the medium to longer term. **The partnership/"academy" concept could keep County Offaly at the forefront of national awareness**.

Further, there are a number of ongoing and emergent Irish academic initiatives that may run in parallel with the "academy" concept. Therefore, the partners in County Offaly may need a compelling vision and/or narrative as a differentiator. **The link with and role in assisting affected communities and groups is a powerful and legitimising Unique Selling Point, which other areas cannot so readily replicate**. There is, however, a need for a vision/"North Star" for the partnership that

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is compelling and which clearly sets out the added value of collaboration between the partners in County Offaly, beyond optimising funding and resources. This vision could align with the following:

- restoring and reimagining the wetlands
- housing and demographic / social reinvention
- place making based on a distinct shared culture and history.

There is currently a growing interest in the role of higher education in supporting and accelerating a Just Transition and the utilisation of Just Transition Funds at the EU level. **The joined-up partnership approach being proposed in Offaly appears to be relatively innovative**.

Potential functions of the partnership

A partnership/"academy" incorporating a JT observatory could be of national, and potentially EU, interest and could grow from a local focus to an Irish focus. There is an opportunity to provide an evidence base and fore-sighting or forecasting services, for example in terms of skills supply and demand. In particular, the idea of embedding researchers / PhD students in affected communities and localities was perceived as a welcome innovation.

In terms of focus, **public and community engagement on decarbonisation and JT should be a key function of the partnership/"academy"**. It could also focus on a few key national challenges linked to decarbonisation and sustainable development (e.g. agriculture, bioeconomy, carbon capture) that could attract funding, whilst linking opportunities/benefits to affected communities and groups. For example, regional innovation valleys are being promoted for bioeconomy. There could be more discussion around how the partnership/"academy' can leverage such national policy priorities and initiatives.

Structure of the partnership and other stakeholders

The structure of the partnership/ "academy" should reflect its functions. This was discussed in the second workshop (see the section on Task 4: Design and deliver two workshops below). In general, the local authority, acting as a nexus, can promote inter-institutional collaboration at the local level and ensure that affected groups and communities are involved and engaged. Offaly County Council is seen as a good institutional lead as it is seen as an informed honest broker that is linked to its communities.

There is a need for a dedicated managing and enabling resource, and there should be a discussion about where this is hosted. There should also be discussion about other partners that could work with the partnership, such as Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority.

Overall, the partnership requires links to enterprises and particularly clusters of enterprises, rather than reinventing existing services, structures and arrangements.

Just Transition Fund

The partners have successfully collaborated in submitting a proposal for funding in November 2023. This is a great start and they should **look for further opportunities to collaborate on JTF projects and link to a common vision and narrative regarding added value**. As significant time and effort are invested in JTF applications, a focus on how to optimise coordination would be helpful. Specific JTF opportunities are set out below.

- Priority 1.3 Bioeconomy (€20 million): another call will be made at the start of 2024.
- Priority 2, relating to peatlands and carbon capture.
- Within Priority 1.2 there is €5 million for community and enterprise schemes. The partnership could try to ensure that communities are fully using this.
- There might be an opportunity in the near future for the partners to further consider synergies between their JTF applications and to promote the partnership/"academy", and consider how they can optimise their respective and joint bids.

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Task 3: Identify potential options for the creation of a new partnership/body to support just transition in County Offaly

Theory of Change

In order to support the process of creating a partnership in County Offaly, the START team designed a Theory of Change model. The partners will be able to use this to define their goals and devise the steps they need to take to achieve these goals. The Theory of Change was discussed at length in the second project workshop, held in November 2023. Revisions to the draft were then made in order to tailor it more precisely to the needs of the region.

The slides below set out the process of the discussion in the workshop and the final Theory of Change model. This model is intended as a living document for the partners, which can underpin future actions and discussions.

The process of refining the Theory of Change is set out in the PowerPoint slides in Annex 5: Process of refining the Theory of Change. The final Theory of Change, which can serve as a basis for the partners' cooperation and activities, is set out below.

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Challenge: To create a positive vision for Offaly based on the county's sense of place, culture and entrepreneurial history in peat-based industries and to take advantage of new economic opportunities as part of a just transition.

Objective: To bring together existing actors in education, community development, local administration and EU funding, as well as local communities affected by just transition, to co-create transformative economic, education and training opportunities that strengthen Offaly's position as an exemplar just transition region in Ireland and the EU.

Inputs
- Staff resource from existing and new members of the Offaly partnership
- Inputs from EU START team
- Learnings from the experience of other regions (within and outside Ireland) that have gone through a Just Transition.

Development Activities (2023-2024)
- Based on results of START mapping, identify areas of cooperation between members across a range of policy areas, not just education and training, that can deliver results quickly.
- Partners and communities together identify and trial new methods of learning to better address communities' economic and social needs.
- Partners to submit at least one project proposal for EU JTF and/or Pobal.

Implementation Activities (2026-onwards)
- Develop additional coherent programmes of training and learning between different partners, closely aligned to sectors prioritised in the Offaly economic development plan
- PhD researchers from TUS (and other HEIs) are routinely conducting research projects embedded in the county
- All activities will contribute towards the national target of net-zero no later than 2050.

Outputs
Development stage outputs (2024-2026)
- Strengthened partnership based on experience of collaborative working on at least one project proposal for EU JTF funding
- Partners and communities have together begun identifying and trialling new methods of learning to better address communities' economic and social needs.
- Complete mapping of education and learning provision across partner organisations, regularly updated, and used to inform decisions on cooperation.

Implementation stage outputs (2026-36)
Economic/livelihood outputs
- New transformative and coherent programmes of learning are available to people in County Offaly which reflect Offaly's history and culture and which also align closely to sectors prioritised in the Offaly economic development plan.
- PhD researchers (coordinated by TUS in an observatory role) are producing research outputs that are being used for economic and social gain
- Offaly stakeholders have an evidence-based and coordinated approach to explaining the Offaly just transition experience to other regions in Ireland and the EU.

Outcomes
Economic/livelihood outcomes
- New projects and programmes in place (possibly benefitting from local and EU funding) in support of local strengths and priorities.

Social outcomes
- Diverse and coherent range of transformative learning opportunities available to communities linked to their economic and social needs

Environmental outcomes
- Improved environmental condition due to rehabilitated peatlands, more sustainably farmed agricultural land, and more deeply embedded circular economy practices.

Impacts
- Agile and diverse economy with strengths in multiple sectors.
- Improved physical, cultural and mental wellbeing of people living in County Offaly.
- Offaly is an exemplar just transition region within Ireland and the wider EU.

Assumptions
- Partnerships and stakeholder engagement align and maintain support for JT objectives.
- New and continued engagement from local community.
- Partnership with TUS created and developed to underpin reskilling and upskilling of the community
- Developments in renewable energy, tourism and ecosystem services continue to provide viable income-generating opportunities.

Risks
- Partners are unable to devote sufficient staff resource to deliver on project goals
- Unable to access additional internal and external funding
- Lack of engagement from communities in County Offaly
- Duplication of effort

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Partnership models

In order to underpin the partnership and place it on a formal footing, the START team have offered two potential types of partnership model, presented in Annex 3: Partnership model 1 and Annex 4: Partnership model 2, for consideration by the partners.

Annex 3: Partnership model 1 is based on the 'partnership template' for the EU's Pact for Skills. Ecorys is contracted by the European Commission to provide the Support Service for Pact for Skills and it has developed partnership templates which organisations such as companies, municipalities, higher education institutions, VET institutions and lifelong learning providers are using when creating sectoral skills partnerships or regional skills partnerships. While the focus of the Offaly Partnership is wider than skills training, members of the partnership could adapt the template as they see fit, using the contents of the Theory of Change and based on their ongoing discussions.

The second model is based on a consortium agreement whereby several organisations agree to collaborate in responding to calls for proposals and other funding opportunities. The model sets out how the partner organisations could work together in responding to such funding opportunities – see 'Option 2: Offaly Partnership Consortium Agreement'.

These potential models are indicative and Members of the Offaly Partnership may wish to combine elements of both models and/or incorporate elements of alternate models.

Task 4: Design and deliver two workshops

In accordance with the SLA, the START team designed and organised two workshops in order to foster discussions between the partners and move forward the development of the partnership. The first workshop was held on 13 September 2023 and the second workshop was held on 27 November 2023. The second workshop identified a number of key next steps, which are included in this section. The agendas for both workshops are appended to this report in Annex 2: Agendas of the two workshops.

Workshop 1: Building Sustainable Communities and Partnership Working in County Offaly

Date	13 September 2023
Location	Tullamore, County Offaly
START Team	Robert Pollock, Andrea Broughton, Paul Dowling, Cécile Weber
Applicant organisation	Offaly County Council: Caroline Dempsey, Ann Dillon, Lourda Giles, Orla Martin, Andrew Murray, Brian Pey
Other organisations / representatives attending the workshop	• Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT): Sarah Morgan • Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA): Terry Connolly, Bernie Roe • Offaly Local Development Ltd.: Louise Larkin, Roisin Lennon; Sarah Kennedy, Brendan O'Loughlin • Laois & Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB): Padraig Boland, Tony Dalton, Anne-Marie Keane • Technological University Shannon (TUS): Martin Breen, Maura Clancy, Seamus Hoyne, Tony Johnston • Individual experts: Tom Collins, Gerard Corcoran

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Background

This workshop was organised as part of the technical assistance support package provided to Offaly County Council by the EU START (Secretariat Technical Assistance to Regions in Transition) team. It was the first of two workshops scheduled under Task 4: Design and deliver two workshops of the Service Level Agreement between Offaly County Council and the Secretariat of the Initiative for EU Coal regions in Transition. The aim of this first workshop was to bring together key stakeholders in the region, foster discussion of partnership activities between these key stakeholders, and think about how to develop a roadmap of engagement partnership between the partners.

The workshop was held in Tullamore, County Offaly, on 13 September 2023 and attended by 26 participants, including representatives from Offaly County Council, Offaly Local Development Ltd., Laois & Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), the Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT), the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and individual experts, in addition to four members of the START team.

This first workshop built upon the engagement thus far between the partners in terms of aiming to set out the region's priorities for its social and ecological future. It concentrated on the visions, priorities, and resources of the key partners around the table. Its key aims were:

- To explore issues around building local capacity (economic, social, community) to enable a just transition for places and individuals affected by peat phase-out in the context of current strategies / plans, organisational resources and funds.

- To consider the development of a new partnership in the areas of education and training, transition research, and related community development and engagement, which ensures that the needs of key groups are met.

- To discuss partnership working between Offaly County Council, the Laois Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), Offaly Local Development Ltd and the newly created Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) to build higher education into their collective programme of activities to promote a just transition in a manner that builds on respective strengths, functions and experiences.

Morning session

The START team opened the meeting and set the scene by placing the workshop within the context of START support. Ann Dillon, Padraig Boland and Brendan O'Loughlin then outlined their views on the form that they believed the partnership in the region should take, with particular reference to issues such as renewable energy, the need for a long-term strategy but within that context also the need to engage and act immediately where possible. This was followed by a general introductory discussion on the themes of lifelong learning, knowledge creation, sustainable communities and local partnership.

Tom Collins then gave a short presentation on the potential role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in local development, and particularly the role of universities as an observatory of what is happening in the world and how this affects communities.

After the coffee break, Cécile Weber presented the findings of the START team's exploratory research on the role of HEIs in a Just Transition, focusing on the key roles that higher education can play in engaging with local communities. This research also contained a number of examples of relevant good practices from around Europe and beyond. This research was submitted to the partners in August 2023 as a literature review.

Maura Clancy from TUS then presented TUS's vision for its role, along with some practical steps that TUS could take to support the partnership. This was followed by a discussion around engagement between TUS and the other stakeholders, and the precise form that this should take, based around the following points:

- TUS executive management strongly supports the concept of just transition

- The TUS President and VP Research, Development & Innovation is available to meet START team (this has now been arranged for October 2023)

- A number of current TUS activities within the sustainable development agenda could be incorporated as just transition activities (e.g. bioeconomy demonstration site Mount Lucas, TUS Learning Gates)

- TUS will explore the possibility of funding a secondee as a project manager

- TUS will support the embedding of PhD research students in Offaly to conduct just transition-related research

- TUS is identifying Flexible Learning programmes for provision in the community

Terry Connolly, EMRA, then presented the various funding options available to regional actors through the EU Just Transition Fund.

A discussion then followed, in which a number of issues were raised, such as whether it was best to put into place a structure first, or whether it was best to start to engage and allow a structure to develop around actions. There was also a view that engagement should not be reliant on individuals, but should be embedded within organisational strategy and goals.

Afternoon session

After lunch, it was agreed that the discussion would continue in plenary, rather than the participants moving into smaller breakout groups. The discussion was wide-ranging, touching on issues such as how to apply for EU funding to support development in Offaly, and the areas on which it could be advantageous for the region to focus, such as renewable energy, elder care and social enterprise.

Key takeaways

A number of key takeaways emerged from the day's discussions, which can be summarised as follows:

- **County Offaly has a number of unique qualities and strengths**. These include geographical factors such as its flat land and the river Shannon, its industrial and historical links to the distilling industry and infrastructure such as mills and canals, and the resilience of the Offaly people. These unique qualities could be harnessed for the economic and ecological future of the region.

- **The Offaly community should remain at the centre of the Just Transition**. Participants noted the feelings of hurt and cynicism amongst the community towards Bord na Mona (BnM), and that BnM schemes may not address their concerns. It was felt that projects developed in the context of a Just Transition must address the concerns of the most disadvantaged first, and that community needs must be at the forefront. Initiatives related to social inclusion, social solidarity, and the circular economy were stressed throughout.

- **Offaly County Council stressed the importance of economic diversification**, focusing on six potential economic sectors: ICT; food and drink; sustainable tourism; renewable energy; construction; and engineering.

- **Renewable energy is a key area of development for the region**, with the potential to produce 5GW in solar and wind energy in the near future. The region's current familiarity with renewable energy and the resources of the river Shannon and disused mills (which could be re-purposed for hydropower) form a solid basis for developing the renewable energy industry in the region. This also has the potential to improve air quality and quality of life for the community. Using renewable energy would also in the longer term reduce energy costs for the community. However, the region would need to consider the technicalities of focusing on renewable energy, such as manufacturing and administrative resources, and workforce development. It would equally need a

concrete plan to benefit financially and socially from renewable energy, as it may burden the region if it is not properly executed. TUS could contribute by offering training in the renewable energy industry, disseminating knowledge of current and future energy trends, as well as developing policy help in the area of community-owned energy and engaging with national-level decision-making bodies.

- **There was a sense of urgency** to agree on joint action and engagement, with a clear call to action from all present. There was a determination to agree a course of action before the end of the day.

- **A discussion took place about how to set the pace of engagement**. There was a view that there is a need for immediate action, and also a view that a long-term vision needs to be developed. It was generally agreed that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, however – immediate engagement will help certain parts of the community, while a longer-term strategic view can also be developed, which would leave a legacy of change for the region.

- **The need for an over-arching structure was put forward**. TUS presented its idea of a Just Transition Academy, which it saw as a loose initiative under which all just transition activities could be streamlined. A discussion followed on the merits of focusing on establishing a structure first rather than starting with a project(s) and letting the structure develop afterwards.

- **The idea of the Just Transition Academy was popular overall**. A Just Transition Academy (JTA) could address many of the needs expressed throughout the day: giving voice to the local community; acting as an observatory to enable the region to keep up to date with energy trends, an observatory for establishing the needs of the community, and a policy hub; acting as a project management hub that might help actors with funding applications; and a vehicle for researching energy poverty. However, it was stated that any research from such an observatory would have to help the community directly and lead to action, and that re-skilling initiatives would need to directly address those affected by the closure of the peat industry.

- **In addition to a JTA, TUS suggested several initiatives which could directly help the region**. These include: placed-based academic initiatives or research, such as a new PhD programme which focuses on the region and sustainability; an academic interest in local industry and economic diversification; the creation of a new project management role within the university, focusing on Just Transition in the region; the potential formation

of a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) for the Just Transition activities. While the idea of a CLG received mixed reviews, as it would require a budget plan and resources to set up, the need for an overarching structure to streamline the region's partnership and Just Transition activities was supported by several participants.

- **The issue of funding was explored**. There was discussion about whether it was better to allocate regional funds to smaller initiatives or to larger structural initiatives which would create lasting sustainable and social changes for the region. There is a need to be strategic about fund allocation, and for chosen projects to be well-managed so they can reach their full potential – TUS may be able to help in this regard by providing project management assistance or funding application assistance. The afternoon's open discussion concluded with an agreement that developing a strong project proposal, which has the potential to secure funding (potentially from the EU Just Transition Fund), could provide tangible progress for the community.

- **It was agreed that the best way to move forward** would be to consider the projects on which the participants could collaborate. To do this, they would need to establish which resources and capacities they currently possess, and how they might work together on one or two strong, achievable projects.

Areas of support and next steps

The next steps were as follows:

- It was agreed that the **second workshop** would take place on 7 November 2023. This was subsequently reorganised to 27 November due to a date clash.

- The START team and other key participants would meet the TUS senior leadership team in October 2023 for further discussions around TUS's role.

- The START team would develop a **mapping template**, which the participants would then fill out with information on existing initiatives related to education and economic development in the context of a Just Transition, and which resources they have available for future projects. This mapping would help the participants to gain an overview of the activities and resources already in place, avoid duplication, and identify gaps in provision. Once the mapping exercise is done, it will be possible to **assess which funding schemes the partnership should target**, and which projects seem the most feasible.

- The START team would circulate a draft **Theory of Change**, which will set out the long-term goals for the region and the actions that need to be taken to reach these goals. This will enable participants to determine short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives and the actions that need to take place to reach these objectives. This will be discussed at the second workshop.

Workshop 2: A Future Partnership for a Just Transition in County Offaly

Date	27 November 2023
Location	Athlone, County Roscommon and County Westmeath
START Team	Andrea Broughton, Paul Dowling, Cécile Weber
Applicant organisation	Offaly County Council: Ann Dillon; Caroline Dempsey
Other organisations / representatives attending the workshop	• Technological University Shannon (TUS): Maura Clancy, Seamus Hoyne, Tony Johnston, Shane O'Sullivan, Catherine Corcoran • Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA): Terry Connolly • Offaly Local Development Ltd.: Louise Larkin, Roisin Lennon, Sarah Kennedy • Laois & Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB): Padraig Boland • Individual experts: Tom Collins, Gerard Corcoran

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Background

This second workshop was hosted by TUS at its campus in Athlone, on the border of County Roscommon and County Westmeath, on 27 November 2023. It was attended by 17 participants, including representatives from Offaly County Council, Offaly Local Development Ltd., Laois & Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and individual experts, in addition to three members of the START team.

The key aims of this second workshop were:

- **To expand on previous collaboration** and discussions between development and education actors in County Offaly in relation to addressing community needs and the economic, environmental, and social impact of the closure of the peat-based energy generation industry.

- **To develop a framework for a partnership** between Offaly County Council, the Laois & Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), Offaly Local Development Ltd, and the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), which would work towards a just transition in the County.

- To assist the future partnership by **assessing potential areas of collaboration between all actors**, as well as the financial and human resources at their disposal, and by setting short-, medium-, and long-term goals and actions for the partnership to enable a just transition in County Offaly.

- **To present potential partnership models** and discuss the most feasible form of partnership for the area.

Morning session

The START team opened the workshop and handed the floor to Tom Collins, who set the scene for this second workshop by setting out a unifying vision for County Offaly towards which the partnership can work. He noted that a just transition should be measured by a variety of means, and in particular the focus should be on fostering growth that measures social capital and green advancements, as well as economic and GDP growth. There should also be a focus on overall wellbeing rather than medical wellness. In the case of County Offaly, the area is defined by water: peatlands and the River Shannon. It would therefore make sense for future just transition projects to focus on water, including preservation of the peatlands and also the protection of the Shannon. Culture also plays an important role in the region, and this is characterised by peat. It is therefore important to ensure that this cultural heritage is not lost.

Another important issue is to ensure that the partnership works with the Offaly community. This could be through different types of research, such as developmental research, action research, participatory research, and citizen science, for example using the community to measure and monitor local biodiversity or water pollution. He characterised the specific role of TUS in this partnership as enhancing meaningful knowledge, advancing education for all age groups, redistributing opportunities among the population, particularly in small towns, and promoting cohesion and diversity.

The START team then presented the Theory of Change model that had been developed for this workshop. Paul Dowling presented the thinking behind the Theory of Change, emphasising that this is a document that the partnership can use to map its overall objectives and the means it can use in order to achieve these objectives. The specific areas of the Theory of Change were then presented, starting from the final impacts and tracking back to the inputs. Each area was discussed in detail, with workshop participants giving additional context and contributing ideas and further thoughts. The finalised Theory of Change document is presented in the section of this report covering Task 3: Identify potential options for the creation of a new partnership/body to support just transition in County Offaly above.

Afternoon session

Cécile Weber from the START team presented research on different potential models of partnership in order to stimulate discussion on the way forward for this partnership. The results of the mapping exercise were also discussed in order to enable the workshop participants to understand the areas in which joint action could be taken. More details on this mapping exercise can be found in the section of this report covering Task 3: Identify potential options for the creation of a new partnership/body to support just transition in County Offaly above.

Key takeaways and next steps

The remainder of the afternoon was spent in discussions about the way forward and next steps for the partnership, with all parties willing to commit to joint working in the future.

There was a consensus on a less formal working agreement, as the parties do not want to be tied to a big, resource intense partnership structure. The main areas of agreement on joint action were as follows:

- The partnership has been given a real boost by the joint submission of a funding paper in November 2023. This has developed working relationships and will provide a basis for future collaboration.

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- All parties are committed to the partnership and there was a shared recognition of the importance of TUS to a new type of collaborative model for creating a successful local Just Transition.

- The partners agreed to devise a timetable and agreed to meeting regularly, possibly once a month. It was agreed that this commitment would give accountability and structure to the partnership. It is envisaged that these would be one-hour meetings with an agreed list of actions. The START team has devised potential terms of reference for the partnership, which are appended to this report in Annex 3: Partnership model 1 and Annex 4: Partnership model 2.

- In practical terms the next vital step is to organise the first meeting, potentially in January 2024, during which a concept paper for joint actions will be scoped and subsequently developed.

- A working group consisting of 3-4 people will be formed to move things forward and build on the commendable and notable momentum that has been achieved.

- A SharePoint or other virtual sharing system will be set up in order to share documents.

As previously noted, the Theory of Change, which is presented earlier in this document, can serve as a basis for the partners' cooperation and activities and evolve and be refined over time.

Annex 1: List of key actors and stakeholders consulted

Name	Institution
Dr María Belarmina Díaz Aguado	Director General for Energy, Mining and Reactivation, Asturias, Spain
Patrick Barrett	Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
Professor Tom Collins	Independent expert
Terry Connolly	Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
Jonathan Claridge and Méabh de Búrca	EC Representation, Ireland
Dr Sufyan El Droubi, Dr Fernando Fernandes, Dr Edzia Carvalho	University of Dundee, Scotland
Dr Dionysios Giannakopoulos	Centre for Research and Technology Hella, Greece
Professor Sabin Irimie	Petrosani University (UPET), Romania
Professor Ronnie Lessem	Independent expert
Frank Maughan	Irish Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
Katja Muller	Former project manager for Just Transition in Saxony, Germany
Larry O'Connell and Jeanne Moore	Irish National Economic and Social Council
Professor Ken Spours	Emeritus Professor of Post-Compulsory Education, University College London
Professor Lefteris Topaloglou	Regional & Cross Border Studies, University of Western Macedonia, Greece

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Annex 2: Agendas of the two workshops

Agenda for the workshop of 13 September 2023

	Morning Session (3hrs)		
10:00	**Introductions and setting the scene**	Moderator: Andrea Broughton, START team	10 mins
10:10	**Introductory discussion: Lifelong learning, knowledge creation, sustainable communities and local partnership working**	Ann Dillon Padraig Boland Brendan O'Loughlin 5-minute overview from each contributor, followed by 15-minute general discussion involving all participants	30 mins
10:40	**The opportunity of HEI engagement in local development**	Tom Collins	15 mins
10:55	**Continuation of discussion and Q&A:** How this can be relevant to County Offaly	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	25 mins
11:20	**Coffee break**		15 mins
11:35	**Higher education and building local capacity** Presentation of relevant experiences from other EU communities undergoing transition	EU START team representative: Cécile Weber	20 mins
11:50	**Key issues and focus area for the engagement of the community partners** • Overview of issues for engagement for Offaly County Council, LOETB and Offaly Local Development Ltd. • Technological University of the Shannon's vision and ambition for the area • Areas for practical engagement	Coordinated by TUS With input from Offaly County Council/ LOETB/Offaly Local Development Ltd	30 mins
12:20	**Discussion and Q&A: Options for collaboration and partnership**	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	30 mins
12:50	**Summary of key discussion points**	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	10 mins
13:00	**Lunch & Networking**		
	Afternoon (2hrs 30mins)		

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	Morning Session (3hrs)		
14:00	**Support from the regional level** • Overview of potential support from the regional government • Discussion about support and funding at national and EU levels	Terry Connolly, Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly representative	20 mins
14:20	**Potential options for the creation of a new partnership/body to support just transition in County Offaly** Break-out discussions #1: *What would a partnership/body look like? What would be its main areas of focus?* [Up to 6 people per group]	Facilitators and rapporteurs	30 mins
14:40	**Outline of potential partnership** Break-out discussion #2: *What would a roadmap of engagement look like? Which roles and activities could be assigned to each of the partners? What funding options could be available?* [Up to 6 persons per group]	Facilitators and rapporteurs	30 mins
15:10	**Feedback from break-out discussions and further discussion**	Rapporteurs	20 mins
15:30	**The way forward for engagement and partnership** • Short-term, medium-term and long-term actions • Open discussion	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	45 mins
16:15	**Summary and next steps** • Summary of points discussed and outline and timetable of follow-up actions	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	15 mins
16:30	**Close of workshop**		

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Agenda for the workshop of 27 November 2023

	Morning Session (3hrs)		
10:00	**Introductions and setting the scene**	Moderator: Andrea Broughton, START team	15 mins
10:15	**The big picture: A unifying vision for County Offaly that the partnership can work towards**	Tom Collins	10 mins
10:25	**Presentation: A Theory of Change for County Offaly**	Paul Dowling, START Team	15 mins
10:40	**Discussion: Goal setting for the region / Theory of Change** Collaborative discussion on the short- medium- and long-term outcomes for the region.	Moderator: Andrea Broughton, START Team	50 mins
11:30	**Coffee break**		15 mins
11:45	**What are the partners already doing? Overview of current and potential areas of collaboration for the partnership**	START Team and all	15 mins
12:00	**"Easy wins": key potential areas for collaboration** Discussion between actors, opportunity for them to explain their mapping tool, the resources at their disposal, and how they would like to use them in the partnership.	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	45 mins
12:45	**Summary: TOC + Mapping** Linking the TOC (goals) to mapping (concrete actions), exploring / narrowing down on potential plan for action.	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	15 mins
13:00	**Lunch and networking**		
	Afternoon (2hrs 30mins)		
14:00	**Presentation of different types of partnership model**	Cécile Weber, START Team	15 mins
14:15	**Discussion on partnership models** • *Partnership options: Which partnership model(s) would be most useful and suitable?* • *How would this work practically in County Offaly e.g., dedicated management / coordination resource?*	Open discussion	30 mins
14:45	**Immediate next steps** • *Considering the form of the partnership and the goals chosen, what can each actor provide in the coming weeks and months to bring the partnership to life?* • *Are there other local, regional or national actors who should be involved / consulted?*	Open discussion	30 mins

	Morning Session (3hrs)		
15:15	**Tea break**		15 mins
15:30	**The way forward for community engagement and partnership** Open discussion summarising 3 main points: 1. The form the partnership could take 2. The short- and medium-term goals for the partnership in supporting the transition of the county 3. 1 or 2 concrete actions that will set the partnership off to a good start, including potentially coordination of Just Transition Fund bids	Moderator: Andrea Broughton	45 mins
16:15	**START in county Offaly 2023: Lessons learned and next steps** Overview of progress made this year Final deliverables of the START project Next steps	START Team	15 mins
16:30	**Close of workshop**		

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Annex 3: Partnership model 1

Option 1: Offaly Partnership

This option is closely linked to the Pact for Skills Guidance Handbook: introducing and setting up skills partnerships. As a starting point for filling in this template, please refer to section 4.6 of the Guidance Handbook available on the Pact for Skills website here, and in particular to the points to consider when setting up a skills partnership, in Box 36.

The challenge

This section should include a description of the local or regional skills/training/learning gaps or challenges which your partnership will support in addressing. These may include:

- Structural changes brought by the green and digital transition impacting the workforce
- Shift from place-based industries (coal mining, ship-building, car production, etc.) towards supply-side issues of enterprise, innovation, skills and knowledge
- Low employment rates and high levels of unemployment in specific part of the region(s)
- Low skills levels in the population and ageing workforce
- Persistent skills shortages faced by employers

The ambition

In this section you should provide the long-term vision for skills/training/learning in the region. This should set out the ideal future that your partnership will work to support. A long-term vision provides the strategic framework for the partnership and its members. You should also link this vision if relevant to sectoral strategies or to regional economic development or skills strategies that may address multiple economic sectors.

For further information and examples, please, refer to section 3.1.1 of the handbook.

The proposal

You should list at least 2-3 concrete commitments which will contribute to achieving the ambition set out above and which are in line with the priorities set out by members of your partnership.

Commitments may include:

- Delivering a certain number of training and development opportunities for the workforce, as relevant to your region/sector
- Bringing together relevant stakeholders in your region/sector to enhance training capacity and quality
- Contributing to skills intelligence on skill needs and opportunities, etc.

A focus on commitments related to actual up- and reskilling of the workforce in the remit of the partnership is of particular importance. Examples of partnership commitments are included below:

- The partnership commits to working with local/regional stakeholders to develop/ implement training and skills development opportunities that respond to local/regional skills needs
- The partnership commits to establishing a joint strategy to design and implement a sectoral education, training, upskilling and reskilling framework which maximises competitiveness of all actors involved, and enhances job attractiveness and retention in the region/sector.
- The partnership will increase the use and accessibility of mentoring and apprenticeships schemes in EU-27 countries through a dedicated support programme for the region/sector.
- The partnership commits to help reach the EU Digital Decade targets to equip 80% of people with basic digital skills, achieve gender convergence, and have 20 million ICT specialists employed by 2030.

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For further information and examples, please, refer to sections 3.1.2 and 3.3 of the handbook.

Activities

This section should outline the activities (at least 3-5) that your partnership will collectively undertake to achieve the commitments outlined above. Activities should be clear and focused and support in delivering upskilling and reskilling opportunities that address the different social and economic needs for your region/sector. Examples of activities you may wish to consider include the following:

- Activities which provide up- and re-skilling opportunities to the workforce in your region/sector: e.g., identifying, creating and disseminating training opportunities; developing education, training and VET curricular in your region/sector.
- Activities which broaden and extend the partnership's reach including: communication activities e.g., measures to keep members up to date with partner activities and skills opportunities; membership recruitment and networking activities, e.g. workshops, events or promotional activities; sharing of good practices, e.g. through setting up communities of practice.
- Activities which develop skills intelligence including: carrying out an in-depth assessment of skills needs in the region/sector; developing processes to share skills intelligence between members/across the region/sector.
- Activities which bring together relevant regional/local stakeholders to coordinate actions and maximise the impact on upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

For further information and examples, please, refer to section 4.1 of the handbook.

Tracking your impact

To help track the impact of the partnership, and showcase the work you are achieving, commitments should be accompanied by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs should translate commitments into practical outcomes to be achieved by a certain timeframe, with milestones that can be measured and tracked over time. Specific KPIs may include:

- Number of members included in the partnership
- Level of participation and engagement in partnership activities (for example, number of events held, or number of online communities of practice developed)
- Number of training opportunities delivered by the partnership collectively
- Level of investment attracted, or funding opportunities secured
- Established forums with VET providers
- Percentage of workforce reskilled or upskilling within a specific part of the region

We also encourage organisations to define one to three milestones per KPI to help you organise your work towards your long term aspirations for this partnership.

KPI	Target	Timeframe for achievement	Key Milestones
[to be filled in] e.g. Number of members of the partnership	[to be filled in] 30	[to be filled in] By 2026	[to be filled in] • 10 members by 2024 • 20 members by 2025

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Partnership arrangements
Please outline the overarching governance structure of your partnership, considering for example the following elements:

- Coordinating organisation/steering group
- Types of organisations in the membership
- Ways of working, frequency of meetings of members etc.

In the handbook, please refer to section 2.2, on principles to be considered, and sections 3.1.3 and 3.5 for further information and examples.

If your skills partnership builds on an existing initiative, project or cooperation arrangement, please ensure the skills partnership has its own distinct governance structure.

Supported by:
Please include the logos of key regional and/or local partners as well as supporters of the regional partnership. If possible, classify in categories such as industry, education and training providers, social partners etc.

Contact and more information: [Insert email and contact details] of coordinating organisation

Annex 4: Partnership model 2

Partnership agreement

The purpose of this Agreement is to lay down the general terms of co-operation between the Partnership in carrying activities in line with the Partnership's Theory of Change.

The following organisations:
Offaly County Council
[Insert address]

and

Technological University of the Shannon (TUS)
[insert address]

and

Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC)
[insert address]

and

Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB)
[insert address]

and

[insert company name and address]

hereby enter into this Agreement for the purpose of responding to [calls for proposals for funding].

1. **Purpose of this agreement**

    1.1. The purpose of this Agreement is to lay down the general terms of co-operation between the Partnership Partners.

    1.2. The Partnership Partners designate [insert organisation name] as Leader of the Partnership [*please note that this is optional*].

    1.3. The contact information for the Partnership Partners is:

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TABLE 1: PARTNERSHIP PARTNER CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Contact details
Offaly County Council	Contact person: Mob: Email:
Company name	Contact person: Mob: Email:
Company name	Contact person: Mob: Email:
Company name	Contact person: Mob: Email:

1.4. The Partnership Partners will act in good faith towards each other and expect that the operation and internal selection or project teams and project leadership positions will be guided by sound quality principles and management.

1.5. This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the Partnership Partners and supersedes any previous agreement.

2. *Duration*

2.1. The duration of the Partnership is [insert date]

Or

For as long as the individual partners wish for it to exist.

3. *Partnership*

3.1. All Partnership Partners accept the rules and regulations of the Partnership specified in this Agreement by signing this Agreement.

3.2. For the purposes of this agreement, 'Assignments' refers to funding opportunities or projects that the partners may wish to pursue collectively. Assignments will be led by one of the Partnership Partners who will be the Assignment Lead Partner. This Partner will take full responsibility of a specific contract in terms of budget, quality, management and outputs.

3.3. The Partnership will refrain from the use of outside sub-contractors which are not part of the Partnership, unless Partnership Partners generally agree on the necessity and added

value of involving such an outside sub-contractor and pending the written authorisation of their involvement by the Contracting Authority when required.

3.4. In the case that a Partnership Partner seriously fails in its obligations or if there are repeated complaints from the Contracting Authority with respect to a Partner's experts or a Partner causes or threatens to cause serious disruption in the operation of the Partnership, this Partner can be made a Sleeping Partner of the Partnership by a unanimous decision of the remaining Partners made by the Partnership Board. If the Partnership Leader underperforms causing a threat or disruption to the Partnership's operation, the Partners are able to bring the Partnership Leader to account, this can only be done by a unanimous decision by all Partners. The Partnership Leader must then raise the quality of work which will be reviewed by the Partners on an ongoing basis.

3.5. Where a Partner becomes a Sleeping Partner, all rights and obligations of the Partnership will stay with the remaining Partnership Partners. The remaining liabilities of that Partner, however, from previous but completed Assignments under the Partnership in which that Partner participated, will be kept with that Sleeping Partner.

4. *Partnership management*

4.1. The **Partnership Board** will oversee the performance of the Partnership. It will consist of representatives from each of the Partnership

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Partners and will be chaired by [insert name] as Partnership Leader [if a Partnership Leader is chosen] **or** on an annual rotating basis. In principle, the Partnership Board will meet at least once a year, but more often if requested by any of the Partners. Such meetings will usually be held in [insert location, e.g. Tullamore]. However, other office locations or online meetings will be taken into consideration. In addition, the Partnership Board will have regular online meetings where appropriate and deemed necessary. Its responsibilities will be to:

a. Supervise the overall performance of the Partnership, including quality control;

b. Decide on general 'principles' according to which Assignments are allocated and divided among Partners and how Assignments are to be carried out;

c. Decide on the division of the workload (Assignments) among the Partners preferably before or shortly after an Assignment;

d. Mobilise teams of experts, with the Partnership Partners, in response to Assignments;

e. Provide a forum for troubleshooting and advance planning;

f. Contribute to the preparation and elaboration of tools and guidelines for reporting;

g. Identify issues that have not been successfully addressed by the Partnership Management Unit; and

h. Respond to the Partnership Management Unit's information and data requests.

4.2. Between its official meetings, the Partnership Board will conduct its business electronically and by conference call. The Partnership Leader will be responsible for progressing such business.

4.3. The Partnership Board will consist of the following persons:

- *[Organisation name: representative]*
- *[Organisation name: representative]*
- *[Organisation name: representative]*
- *[Organisation name: representative]*
- *[Organisation name: representative]*

4.4. Decision making at the Partnership Board will be taken through a process of consensus. Where a decision cannot be reached then this will be arrived at by vote. Each Partner represented on the Partnership Board will have one vote to cast. Where votes are tied, the Chair has the casting vote. Where more than one individual attends the Partnership Board from each Partnership Partner, the vote will be limited to one vote per Partnership Partner.

4.5. The **Partnership Management Unit (PMU)** will oversee the operational aspects of the Partnership. See Table 2 for the composition of the PMU.

TABLE 2: COMPOSITION OF THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT UNIT [SUGGESTED EXAMPLES]

Name	Contact details	Function in the Partnership Management Unit
A.N. Other	One of the Partnership organisations	0.2 FTE arranging partnership meetings and providing secretariat services
A.N. Other	One of the Partnership organisations	0.1 FTE searching for funding opportunities

5. *The PMU will be responsible for the following tasks:*

a. Informing Partnership Partners of upcoming funding or project opportunities;

b. Timely and accurate dissemination of Assignments to Partnership Partners after they have been issued by the Contracting Authority;

c. Proposing Assignment leaders and writing teams for responses to Assignments (including Partnership Partners, and where relevant the involvement of sub-contractors) on the basis of the fields of expertise and experience covered by each Partner and the interest expressed in response to the Assignment;

d. Addressing comments and objections by Partnership Partners on the above proposals, and taking the necessary steps to finalise Assignment decisions, including the mobilisation of the Partnership Board where appropriate;

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e. Informing the Contracting Authority of the Partnership's intention to bid, and agree on a submission date; if needed make the necessary efforts to negotiate with the Contracting Authority on a later date of submission; informing Assignment leaders of the formal submission date and the 'internal' submission date (normally 24 hours beforehand) so final checks can be completed.

f. Providing Assignment leaders with the proposed composition of the team (Partnership Partners and sub-contractors to be involved);

g. Processing any requests for clarification from Assignment leaders to the Contracting Authority, and informing the Assignment leaders of the answers obtained;

h. Ensuring that specific contracts are duly signed by the Partnership Partners, informing Assignment leaders of the contract date and provide a copy of the specific Assignment contract;

i. Monitoring and documentation of the relative distribution of contractual leads and working days among the Partnership to ensure transparent management

j. Monitoring (but not being responsible for) Assignment progress and performance, through contact with Assignment leaders;

5.6. In case of serious performance issues, which exceed the capacities of the Assignment leader, the PMU will take appropriate action to diagnose the problems and propose solutions to them. This may include the mobilisation of ad hoc expertise – the scope and costs of this will be agreed between the Assignment leader, PMU, with the Partnership Leader having the final say [if a Partnership Leader is chosen]. Costs related to the deployment of such ad hoc expertise will be charged to the Assignment leader, deducted from Assignment invoices. Any ad hoc expertise other than that provided by the PMU itself will also be charged to the Assignment leader. Where Partnership Partners are underperforming, any additional costs incurred will be paid by the Assignment leader, which will be reimbursed by the underperforming Partnership Partner. Underperforming Partnership Partners can be identified by either the Assignment leader or the Contracting Authority. Once identified and the Partnership Leader has been informed, the Assignment leader and the Partnership Leader will discuss suitable actions to be taken and who should bear any additional costs.

5.7. Members of the Partnership Board or the PMU may be replaced by equally qualified candidates in cases deemed necessary. Appropriate replacement is the duty of the respective Partner. Individual members of the PMU may be replaced on the initiative of the Partnership Board following a majority decision and based on firm grounds.

5.8. The tasks of the **Assignment Leader** are as follows:

a. The Partnership Partner who will be assigned the Lead Partner for an individual Assignment will, as a general rule, provide the Team Leader, and would, as a main rule, be leading the proposal writing as well as, once the proposal is accepted, the execution of the Assignment.

b. Leading the Assignment will involve taking full responsibility for the implementation of the Assignment.

5.9. **Project Teams** will be established for each and every Assignment. The identification, and selection of these project teams is described below:

a. Once a decision has been taken to bid for an Assignment, each Partnership Partner will consider and put forward appropriate staff members to take part in the Assignment, taking account of the topic at hand, the role foreseen for that Partner and the quality level and level of seniority that the Assignment demands;

b. The Assignment Leader will, as a general rule, provide the Team Leader for the Assignment;

c. One or more (Senior) Experts will form a team together with the Team Leader; these (Senior) Experts may come from the leading Partnership Partner, or from other Partnership Partners on the basis of merit and as required.

d. Individual experts can be added to the Project Team on the basis of specific requirements (technical or geographic).

6. *Assignment selection and preparation procedure*

6.1. Each Call for Proposals or funding opportunity that the Partnership may be interested in will have its own timescales and rules for responding. However, it is helpful to have a structured approach to responding. Table 3 below sets out a possible approach.

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TABLE 3: RESPONDING TO AN ASSIGNMENT OPPORTUNITY

Step	Action	Timing
1	Partnership member and/or PMU becomes aware of the Assignment and forwards the details to the PMU and all other Partners.	Immediately (Day 1)
2	Using a simple table ("Expression of Interest Form") supplied by the PMU, Partners will indicate their interest and capacity to either lead (if appropriate) or participate in the Assignment. They will propose: which staff member(s) will be involved, relevant project references, and state the approx. number of days they can spend responding to the Assignment tender/Call for Proposals before the deadline.	Day 2
3	The PMU will assess: a) interest from Partnership Partners in the Assignment including availability and willingness to take responsibility for writing, b) whether any Partner has any conflict of interest. Based on the previous steps the PMU will summarise the positions, and judge whether the Partnership is able to carry out the proposed work in the time requested. Depending on the responses from the Partners, the PMU may also share the opportunity with external stakeholders.	Day 2
4.	The PMU will notify the Contracting Authority of its intention to bid.	Day 3
5.	The PMU will carry out discussions with individual Partners if necessary, to determine which Partner should take the role of Assignment Leader in the preparation of the Assignment. This decision will be based on the person/ Partner with the strongest skills, track record, knowledge and experience in relation to the topic covered by the Assignment, taking into account availability for tender preparation.	Day 3
6.	On the basis of discussions with Partnership Partners, the PMU or Assignment Leader on the particular Assignment will employ the use of an 'Assignment Team Form' to allocate roles in the performance of the Assignment. The 'Assignment Team Form' will be circulated amongst the Partners.	Day 4
7.	The tender writing team is assembled by the Assignment Leader. The Assignment Leader will also complete and circulate a 'Proposal Outline Form' to allocate roles/ tasks in the preparation of the tender and deadlines.	Day 4/5
8.	Complete draft proposal is prepared, led by the Assignment Leader, and sent to all Partners for final comments	Within 3 working days of submission deadline
10.	Assignment Leader completes final checking, formatting, compiling of annexes, etc and completes the submission.	Within 1 working day of submission deadline

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6.2. Assignments sent to individual Partnership members should be forwarded to the PMU within one working day of receipt. The PMU in turn will circulate it to all Partnership members within one working day. On the basis of a turn-around time of 21 working days (it may be more or less depending in the contracting authority), the following assignment selection procedures apply. Following the notification by the PMU, each Partner may propose its services or the services of its sub-contractors within one working day by email.

6.3. The PMU provides a summary of initial responses received and judges whether the Partnership is able to carry out the proposed work in the time requested within 3 working days following the day of receipt of the initial Assignment by the Contracting Authority. Within 3 days following the receipt of the initial Assignment by the Contracting Authority, the PMU will inform the Contracting Authority of the Partnership's intention to submit a tender in the time requested.

6.4. Depending on the availability, and the expressions of interest from Partnership Partners, the PMU will also propose the Assignment Leader, and inform Partnership Partners thereof. In case of competing bids from partners, the Partnership Board will provide arbitration and will select the highest quality CVs and additional information submitted by means of evaluations of the proposed candidates. The selection will be made according to the expertise in relation to the Assignment (quality), the experience of the proposed Team Leader and the suggested team. The selection will be done by means of an evaluation grid. The Assignment leader is to be proposed and agreed within 4 days from the receipt of the initial Assignment from the Contracting Authority.

6.5. In case of a conflict of interest by one of the staff members of the Partnership Partners, the Partnership will take measures to resolve it. Each Partner has the duty to check whether such a conflict of interest exists as a result of its past and ongoing activities. In order to save time, an inventory of such conflicts will be made prior to the first meeting of the Partnership Board. In any case, the PMU should be informed about such a conflict of interest within one day of receipt of the Assignment.

6.6. Subject to the specific requirements of the Assignment, the Partnership Board shall endeavour to ensure that over a [*1, 3, 5 year period, to be decided*], the work load is distributed fairly between the Partnership

Partners, in line with the technical competencies provided, the capacity or availability and the performance of each Partner to date.

6.7. In principle, the Partner providing the Assignment's Team Leader is considered the Assignment Leader which has the overall responsibility for the successful accomplishment of the Assignment. The responsibility continues until approval of the Assignment's final report by the Contracting Authority is received. This Partner will be held fully responsible should the Contracting Authority reject the quality of the outputs due to underperformance.

6.8. The Assignment Leader will take full account of the competencies within the Partnership, as they have been communicated through Expressions of Interest and made available by the PMU. Assignment Leaders will allocate the budget between Partners at the proposal stage, and may revise this at inception stage. In the case that reimbursable budgets apply, these will take into account the (travel) needs of all Partners (as well as any sub-contractors involved and as selected during the proposal process). Any overrun on reimbursable costs will need to be borne by the relevant Partnership Partner(s) that have been assigned such costs. The Assignment Leader will thereto provide an allocation of the reimbursable budget in due time. Definitions of reimbursable budgets will align with the terms and conditions of the Assignment.

7. *Liability*

7.1. *Towards each other*: Each Partner undertakes to use all reasonable endeavours:

a. to perform on time the tasks and work packages assigned solely to it and to make available rights and information on time to other Partnership Partners under the terms and conditions defined in the proposal.

b. In respect of the tasks and work packages assigned jointly to it and to any other Partnership Partners, to perform such tasks and work packages on time and jointly with such other Partner or Partnership Partners;

c. to participate actively with such other Partnership Partners in the performance of, or to perform itself as the case may be, such organisational tasks as are assigned to it jointly or solely;

d. to promptly notify a member of the PMU of any delay in performance in accordance with Article 5 and 6 above;

e. In supplying any information or materials to any of the other Partnership Partners, to ensure the accuracy thereof and (in the event of any error therein) promptly on being notified to correct the same.

f. Any Partner supplying information to another Partner shall be under no further obligation or liability in respect of the same and no warranty, condition or representation of any kind is made, given or to be implied in any case as to the sufficiency, accuracy or fitness for purpose of such information or materials. The Partner supplying information to another Partner shall not be liable for any infringement of intellectual property rights of third parties, which may have occurred by the use of such information and materials. The Partner receiving information from another Partner shall alone be responsible for the use of the information provided.

7.2. Each Partnership Partner shall indemnify each of the other Partnership Partners in respect of its negligent acts and omissions of itself and of its employees, agents and sub-contractors provided always that such indemnity shall not extend to claims for indirect or consequential loss or direct loss of profit or loss of revenue. Each Partner's liability is limited to its share of the budget for each specific Assignment.

7.3. Claims of the Contracting Authority: if the Contracting Authority claims any reimbursement, indemnity or payment of damages from one or more Partnership Partners involved in any particular Assignment:

• Each Partner whose default has caused or contributed to the claim being made shall indemnify each of the other Partnership Partners involved in the Assignment in question against all such claims; and

• In the event that it is not possible to attribute default to any particular Partner involved in the Assignment in question, the amount claimed by the Contracting Authority shall be apportioned equally between all Partners involved in the Assignment.

7.4. Towards Third parties: each Partner involved in an Assignment shall be solely liable for any loss incurred by, or damage or injury to, third parties resulting from the negligent implementation by such Partner of its share of that Assignment.

7.5. Associated Contracts and Sub-contracts: each Partner shall be fully responsible for the

performance of any part of its share of an Assignment in respect of which it enters into an associated contract or a sub-contract.

7.6. Defaults and Remedies: In the event of a breach by a Partner ("the Defaulting Partner") of its obligations under this Agreement, which is irremediable or which is not remedied within thirty (30) days of written notice from the other Partners requiring that it has to be remedied, delivered by recorded delivery or registered post, the other Partners may jointly agree to designate this Defaulting Partner as Sleeping Partner, by not less than one month's prior written notice. This does not apply to the Partnership Leader.

7.7. Partnership Partners are to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to prevent bribery. As a minimum, it is expected that Assignment Leaders will:

• Ensure employees are fully briefed on the background and reputation for integrity of agents, representatives and sub-contractors before hiring them;

• Receive confirmation from sub-contractors, agents and representatives that they are adequately aware of their responsibilities under the policy;

• Check the identity of agents, representatives and sub-contractors before entering into commercial relationships with them;

• Brief agents, representatives and sub-contractors on anti-bribery policy and secure a formal commitment in writing to abide by it;

• Ensure that fees and commissions agreed are appropriate and justifiable remuneration for legitimate Services rendered.

8. Confidentiality

8.1. Each Partner will provide for each sub-contractor, individual expert or staff member engaged in an actual contract a written undertaking that they will treat as confidential any information which is linked, directly or indirectly, to the execution of their activities under this Agreement and that they will not divulge to third parties or use for their own benefit or that of any third parties any document or information not available publicly, even after completion of those activities.

8.2. All Partnership Partners will keep confidential all information of a confidential nature belonging to

other Partnership Partners, who may come into its possession by virtue of the Partnership.

9. *Settlement of disputes*

9.1. The Partnership Partners agree that every attempt will be made to reach an amicable settlement on any dispute arising between any of the Partnership Partners. In case this is unsuccessful, the dispute will be solved by the Partnership Board drawing on their legal departments as necessary.

10. *Communication*

10.1. Except as otherwise expressly provided within the Agreement, no notice or other communication from one party to the other shall have any validity under the Agreement unless made in writing (including by email to the email addresses listed in Table 1: Partnership partner contact details) by or on behalf of the party concerned.

11. *Severability*

11.1. If any provision of this Agreement is declared void, voidable, illegal or otherwise unenforceable by any competent authority or court, or any indication to that effect is received from any competent authority or court, the Parties will co-operate to amend the offending provision in such manner as to achieve its intention, or sever it from this Agreement (if capable of severance). The remainder of this Agreement will remain valid and in full force.

12. *Third party rights*

12.1. Unless expressly provided in this Agreement, no term of this Agreement is enforceable by any person who is not a Party to it.

13. *Law*

13.1. This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with Irish Law and the Parties will submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Irish Courts.

Place, Month Year
Signed

....

[Insert organisation name]

....

[Insert organisation name]

....

[Insert organisation name]

....

[Insert organisation name]

....

[Insert organisation name]

Annex 5: Process of refining the Theory of Change

The slides below set out the process that was used in the second workshop to refine the Theory of Change model and ensure its relevance to the County Offaly partnership. The Theory of Change was presented to the workshop by the START team and then discussed as refined by the workshop participants.

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Theory of change – Offaly partnership

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Explanatory note

The START team has produced this Theory of Change (ToC).

- Slide #4 contains the ToC presented for discussion at the workshop in Athlone on 27 November 2023.

- Slides #5-11 contain the edits made based on the discussion that took place at the workshop. The changes are visible in red font.

- Slide #12 contains the updated ToC with the changes incorporated.

The ToC is intended as a 'living' document which can be edited by the partners as required.

The ToC is intended to be a tool to facilitate discussion between members of the partnership about what goals it should aim to achieve and how it should achieve them.

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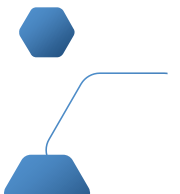
What is a Theory of Change (ToC)?

What?

"A systematic and visual way to present and share an understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan and the changes or results you hope to achieve" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook, 1998)

"Theory of Change work can help articulate how various options are expected to work and the strength of the evidence that underpins them." (Magenta book, UK government handbook on analytical methods)

Why?

Programme activities are often devised with an end goal in sight, but...

How the change is achieved is not often clearly articulated ('the black box')

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Challenge: The closure of peat-based electricity generation and peat-harvesting industries, the resulting sense of community loss and disappointment, high levels of outward commuting and emigration by young people, and a general sense of lack of opportunity.

Objective: To bring together existing actors in education, community development, local administration and EU funding to create new economic, education and training opportunities in the context of a just transition for communities in Offaly.

Inputs
- Staff resource from existing and new members of the Offaly partnership
- Inputs from EU START team
- Learnings from the experience of other regions (within and outside Ireland) that have gone through a Just Transition.

Development Activities (2023-2024)
- Based on results of START mapping, identify areas of cooperation between members
- Partners to submit at least one project proposal for EU JTF
- Continued engagement with communities in County Offaly to build awareness of, and support for, the partnership's activities

Implementation Activities (2024-onwards)
- Partners develop new programmes of training and learning closely aligned to sectors prioritised in the Offaly economic development plan
- PhD researchers are routinely conducting research projects embedded in the county
- Contribute towards net-zero 2050.

Outputs
Development stage outputs (2024-2025)
- Strengthened partnership based on experience of collaborative working on at least one project proposal for EU JTF funding
- Complete mapping of education and learning provision across partner organisations, regularly updated, and used to inform decisions on cooperation.

Implementation stage outputs (2025-35)
Economic/livelihood outputs
- New coherent programmes of training and learning mapped to NQF and closely aligned to sectors prioritised in the Offaly economic development plan are available to people in County Offaly
- PhD researchers are producing research outputs that are being used for economic and social gain

Outcomes
Economic/livelihood outcomes
- New project and programmes in place benefitting from local and EU funding in support of local strengths (such as renewable energy) and priorities (such as housing and healthcare)

Social outcomes
- Diverse and coherent range of learning and training opportunities available to communities linked to their economic and social needs

Environmental outcomes
- Improved environmental condition due to rehabilitated peatlands, more sustainably farmed agricultural land, and cleaner air due less CO2 being produced in energy generation.

Impacts
- Improved physical and mental wellbeing of people living in County Offaly.
- Local people are connected to & invested in the Offaly economy and the opportunities provided by a just transition recovery.

Assumptions
- Partnerships and stakeholder engagement align and maintain support for JT objectives.
- New and continued engagement from local community.
- Partnership with TUS created and developed to underpin reskilling and upskilling of the community
- Developments in renewable energy, tourism and ecosystem services continue to provide viable income-generating opportunities.

Risks
- Partners are unable to devote sufficient staff resource to deliver on project goals
- Unable to access additional internal and external funding
- Lack of engagement from communities in County Offaly
- Duplication of effort

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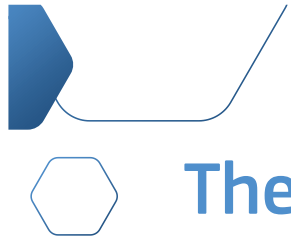
The challenge — what issue is being addressed?

What is the challenge?

Challenge (and evidence the challenge exists): ~~The closure of peat-based electricity generation and peat-harvesting industries, the resulting sense of community loss and disappointment, high levels of outward commuting and emigration by young people, and a general sense of lack of opportunity.~~
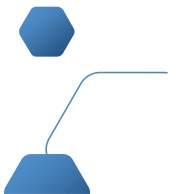To create a positive vision for Offaly based on the county's sense of place, culture and entrepreneurial history in peat-based industries and to take advantage of new economic opportunities as part of a just transition.
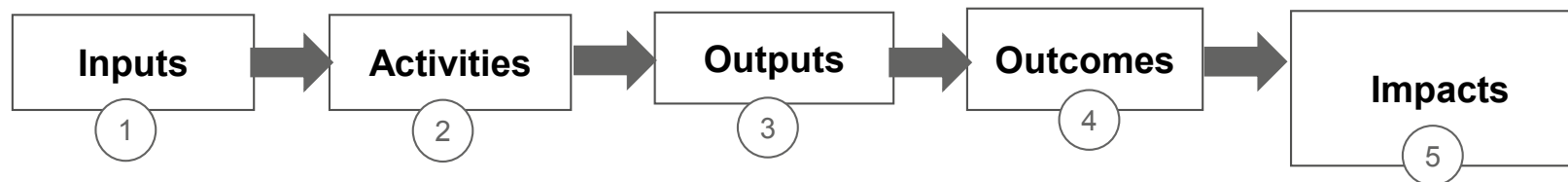
Objective: ~~To bring together existing actors in education, community development, local administration and EU funding to create new economic, education and training opportunities in the context of a just transition for communities in Offaly.~~

To bring together existing actors in education, community development, local administration and EU funding, as well as local communities affected by just transition, to co-create transformative economic, education and training opportunities that strengthen Offaly's position as an exemplar just transition region in Ireland and the EU.

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Inputs ① → **Activities** ② → **Outputs** ③ → **Outcomes** ④ → **Impacts** ⑤

Impacts
(Long-term changes)

Economic impacts
- Agile and diverse ~~economy strong in renewable energy generation~~ economy with strengths in multiple sectors.

Social impacts
- Improved physical, cultural and mental wellbeing of people living in County Offaly.
- Local people are connected to & invested in the Offaly economy and the opportunities provided by a just transition recovery.

Environmental impacts
- ~~Cleaner air~~
- ~~Improved natural environment (rehabilitated peatlands)~~
- Offaly is an exemplar just transition region within Ireland and the wider EU

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Inputs ① → **Activities** ② → **Outputs** ③ → **Outcomes** ④ → **Impacts** ⑤
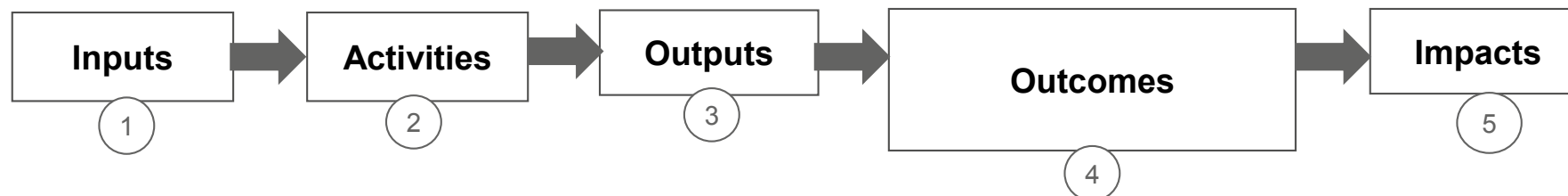
Outcomes
(Changes following this activity)

Economic/livelihood outcomes
• New projects and programmes in place (possibly benefitting from local and EU funding) in support of local strengths (such as renewable energy) and priorities (such as housing and healthcare)
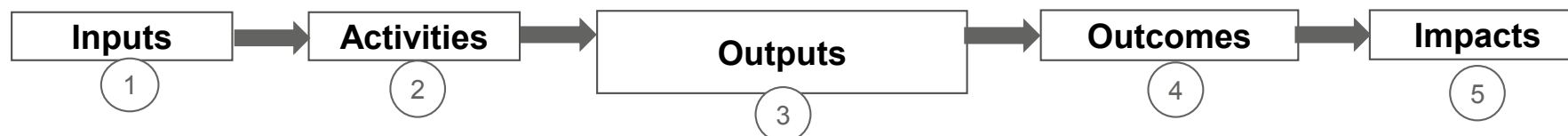
Social outcomes
• Diverse and coherent range of transformative learning and training opportunities available to communities linked to their economic and social needs

Environmental outcomes
• Improved environmental condition due to rehabilitated peatlands, more sustainably farmed agricultural land, and more deeply embedded circular economy practices. cleaner air due less CO_2 being produced in energy generation.

Outputs → Products, goods, services

Outcomes → Changes and benefits

Inputs		Activities		Outputs		Outcomes		Impacts
1		2		3		4		5

Outputs
(Products/goods/services delivered)
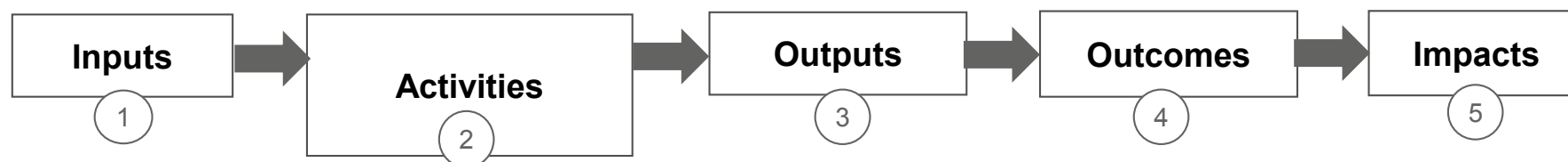
Development stage outputs (2024-2026)
- Strengthened partnership based on experience of collaborative working on at least one project proposal for EU JTF funding
- Partners and communities have together begun identifying and trialling new methods of learning to better address communities' economic and social needs.
- Complete mapping of education and learning provision across partner organisations, regularly updated, and used to inform decisions on cooperation.

Implementation stage outputs (2026-36) Economic/livelihood and social outputs
- New transformative and coherent programmes of learning ~~training and mapped to NQF~~ are available to people in County Offaly which reflect Offaly's history and culture and which also align closely to sectors prioritised in the Offaly economic development plan.
- PhD researchers (coordinated by TUS in an observatory role) are producing research outputs that are being used for economic and social gain
- Offaly stakeholders have an evidence-based and coordinated approach to explaining the Offaly just transition experience to other regions in Ireland and the EU.

Outputs → Products, goods, services
Outcomes → Changes and benefits

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Inputs		Activities		Outputs		Outcomes		Impacts
①		②		③		④		⑤

Activities
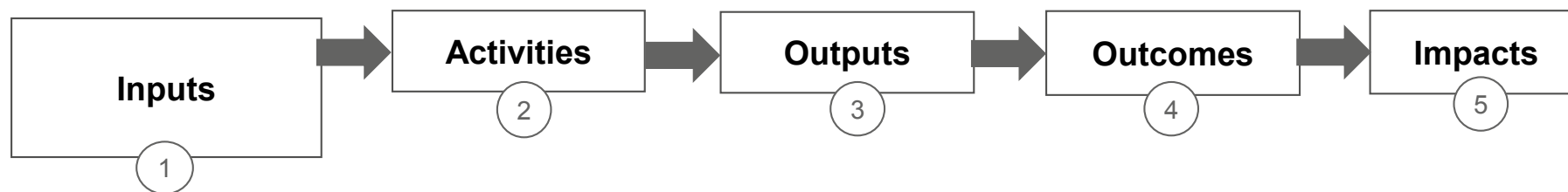(Delivery)

Development stage activities (2024-2026)
- Based on results of START mapping, identify areas of cooperation between members across a range of policy areas, not just education and training, that can deliver results quickly.
- Partners and communities together identify and trial new methods of learning to better address communities' economic and social needs.
- Partners to submit at least one project proposal for EU JTF and/or Pobal.
- Continued engagement with communities in County Offaly to build awareness of, and support for, the partnership's activities

Implementation stage activities (2026-2036)
- Develop additional coherent programmes of training and learning between different partners, closely aligned to sectors prioritised in the Offaly economic development plan
- PhD researchers from TUS (and other HEIs) are routinely conducting research projects embedded in the county
- All activities will contribute towards the national target of net-zero no later than 2050.

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Inputs		Activities		Outputs		Outcomes		Impacts
1	→	2	→	3	→	4	→	5

Inputs
(Resources)
- Staff resource from existing and new members of the Offaly partnership
- Inputs from EU START team: mapping report, report on HEIs and Just Transition, two stakeholder workshops
- Learnings from the experience of other regions (within and outside Ireland) that have gone through a Just Transition.

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Risks and Assumptions of the ToC

Assumptions	Risks
Partnership activities and outputs build upon previous efforts supporting economic and social opportunities.	Partners are unable to devote sufficient staff resource to deliver on project goals
Partnership with TUS is created and developed to underpin reskilling and upskilling of the community	Unable to access additional internal and external funding
Partners' goals remain aligned and there is continued support for the objectives.	Lack of engagement from local communities in Offaly
Developments in renewable energy, tourism and ecosystem services markets continue to provide viable income-generating opportunities for people in County Offaly.	Duplication of effort
New and continued engagement from local communities.	
Continued national government support for the partnership and its goals	
(Add new)	(Add new)
(Add new)	(Add new)

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Challenge: To create a positive vision for Offaly based on the county's sense of place, culture and entrepreneurial history in peat-based industries and to take advantage of new economic opportunities as part of a just transition.

Objective: To bring together existing actors in education, community development, local administration and EU funding, as well as local communities affected by just transition, to co-create transformative economic, education and training opportunities that strengthen Offaly's position as an exemplar just transition region in Ireland and the EU.

Inputs
- Staff resource from existing and new members of the Offaly partnership
- Inputs from EU START team
- Learnings from the experience of other regions (within and outside Ireland) that have gone through a Just Transition.

Development Activities (2023-2024)
- Based on results of START mapping, identify areas of cooperation between members across a range of policy areas, not just education and training, that can deliver results quickly.
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Environmental outcomes
- Improved environmental condition due to rehabilitated peatlands, more sustainably farmed agricultural land, and more deeply embedded circular economy practices.
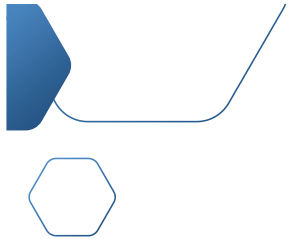
Impacts
- Agile and diverse economy with strengths in multiple sectors.
- Improved physical, cultural and mental wellbeing of people living in County Offaly.
- Offaly is an exemplar just transition region within Ireland and the wider EU.

Assumptions
- Partnerships and stakeholder engagement align and maintain support for JT objectives.
- New and continued engagement from local community.
- Partnership with TUS created and developed to underpin reskilling and upskilling of the community
- Developments in renewable energy, tourism and ecosystem services continue to provide viable income-generating opportunities.

Risks
- Partners are unable to devote sufficient staff resource to deliver on project goals
- Unable to access additional internal and external funding
- Lack of engagement from communities in County Offaly
- Duplication of effort

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Initiative for coal regions in transition

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➔ ec.europa.eu/coal-regions-in-transition

✉ secretariat@coalregions.eu

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