



Building on our Vision

FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006-2009

Summary

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

ENVIRONMENT

Assessment of critical issues, challenges and opportunities for FÁS

VISION

To excel in providing labour market services

MISSION

To promote a more competitive and inclusive knowledge-based economy, in collaboration with our stakeholders, by enhancing the skills and capabilities of individuals and enterprises

CORE VALUES



HIGH PRIORITY GOALS

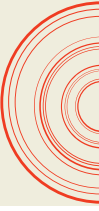
EXTERNAL FOCUS

- Goal 1: Entry to the Labour Market
- Goal 2: Workforce Development
- Goal 3: Labour Market Policy
- Goal 4: National Human Resource and Skills Development Strategy
- Goal 5: Customer Service Excellence
- Goal 6: Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity

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- Goal 7: Organisational Excellence
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PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT INDICATORS



SUMMARY

Introduction

This is the second FÁS Strategy Statement. The first covered the period 2002-2005. The second Strategy Statement identifies new challenges and opportunities for FÁS in the period 2006-2009. A comprehensive internal and external consultation process, led by the Board of FÁS, was undertaken. The consultation process, together with a review of key research and policy reports, helped identify the strategic context and formulate and prioritise new strategic objectives.

The Economy

The continued strength of the Irish economy is an important feature of the strategic context. The size of the economy, as measured by Gross National product (GNP), has doubled in the last decade and living standards have increased by approximately 50%. Growth of 5% to 6% is forecast in the short term, with a steady level until the end of the decade. The unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the EU (4.2%) and is forecast to remain below 5% to the end of the decade. There are approximately 2.02 million people in the labour force and numbers are projected to grow by just

under 2% per annum to 2010. More than 30,000 migrant workers will be needed each year to sustain projected employment growth.

Productivity

Growth in the economy and in employment is dependent on Ireland sustaining competitiveness which, in turn, is dependent on improving the productivity of those at work. More and higher quality training increases productivity. Although aggregate productivity is high, it is very uneven across and within sectors. For example, manufacturing has the highest productivity, but the level falls sharply if multinationals are excluded. The majority of new jobs are in low productivity sectors and are therefore, vulnerable. Many are linked to housing activity in the Construction sector. Overall annual productivity gains fall from 3.5% to 1.1% when the modern industry sectors are excluded. The lowest productivity is found in the Services sector, which now accounts for over two thirds of the workforce and where employment growth is strongest.

The Need to Up-skill the Workforce

Ireland is no longer a low-cost location. It needs to achieve higher levels of value-added, based on productivity improvements across the economy, if it is to transform itself into a leading knowledge-based economy. Some progress has been made, with increased third level enrolments and investment in research and development (R+D). However, as the majority of the workforce will be in jobs not requiring a third level qualification, it is equally important that the knowledge, skills and competence of these workers is continuously upgraded. The Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG) has highlighted the importance of up-skilling low-skilled, low-paid and older workers, especially those in vulnerable industries. The ESG recommends that FÁS takes a leading role in achieving this objective, through the 'One Step Up Initiative', facilitated by the National Framework of Qualifications.

FÁS Training Strategy Report

FÁS has developed a Training Strategy Report¹ to review existing FÁS training activity and take account of the work of the Enterprise Strategy Group. The report makes proposals on the nature and mix of FÁS Training Programmes and Services required for the future.

Policy Influences

The Lisbon Strategy is about making Europe the most competitive economy in the world by transforming it into a knowledge-based economy by 2010. The objectives of the Lisbon Strategy are: full employment; improved competitiveness; up-skilling/lifelong learning for all; stronger social inclusion and cohesion.

In Ireland these objectives are at the core of the Employment and Human Resources Operational Programme (EHRD OP), the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP). While there is an acknowledgement by Government and the other social partners of the need to continually up-skill and re-skill those at work, progress to date has been slow, as it has been in many EU states. Policy initiatives need to make lifelong learning a reality by facilitating and supporting individuals and enterprises to access relevant training and education.

National Human Resource and Skills Development Strategy

FÁS believes that Ireland needs to develop a national Human Resource and Skills Development Strategy² for the labour force that is relevant to Ireland's social and economic needs and its level of development, if we are to encourage and direct the required investment in Human Resource Development (HRD) and training. This strategy needs to be driven centrally at a high level that will encompass all relevant Government departments and agencies, including FÁS and the social partners. It must ensure that stakeholders collaborate to achieve shared goals and priorities.

Social Inclusion and Labour Market Equality

In Ireland, as in all higher-skilled economies, unacceptable levels of need and exclusion still affect many people. Barriers to training and employment persist for many individuals and groups. Fear of losing welfare

¹ See www.fas.ie for details of the priorities outlined in this report

² 'Human Resource' means the development of the necessary workforce knowledge, skills and abilities through education, training and lifelong learning in a national, company and individual context. It does not encompass aspects of Human Resource Management such as employment rights, industrial relations, wage agreements etc...

entitlements is one of the main barriers to equality and work.

FÁS is committed to working with other government departments and agencies to remove these barriers and provide incentives that encourage people to work. The National Economic and Social Council (NESCC), the Equality Authority and the National Disability Authority have identified access to quality public services, such as those provided by FÁS, as a key element in strengthening labour market equality and social inclusion for these groups.

FÁS welcomes new and relevant legislation to strengthen inclusion and equality.

Workplace of the Future

FÁS is represented on a high level implementation group of the Forum on the Workplace of the Future. This Forum has developed a guiding vision for Ireland's workplaces. It has identified key attributes for maintaining competitiveness, providing high quality public services and strengthening social inclusion. FÁS itself will strive to be a successful workplace of the future and, through its range of labour market services, will provide the knowledge, skills and competencies required by enterprises and individuals to create and sustain successful workplaces of the future.

Internal Analysis

Every year FÁS assists large numbers of individuals, communities and enterprises. The following is a statistical summary of FÁS activity and resources in 2004:-

ACTIVITIES

- More than 150,000 employees received FÁS-funded workforce training programmes. These programmes provided additional skills or up-graded existing skills leading to improved business performance.
- Over 45,000 individuals availed of training courses
- Approximately 36,000 individuals participated in employment programmes, including Community Employment, Job Initiative, Workplace and Social Economy
- Many enterprises were awarded the FÁS Excellence Through People (ETP) HR standard in recognition of their human resource development practices.
- 105,525 job vacancies were notified to FÁS in 2004 through its National Contact Centre: of these 11,966 were work-permit applications
- 20,600 vacancies were promoted through the European Employment Service (EURES) web site
- 369,772 clients are on the FÁS database
- 82,933 new clients registered with FÁS in 2004
- 50,000 unemployed people were referred directly to FÁS by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, under the National Employment Action Plan, in 2004

RESOURCES

- The total, non-capital, FÁS Budget for 2005 is €908.77m
- The Direct Cost Budget is €751.77m of the total Budget
- A high percentage of the Budget is in the form of social welfare substitution allowances paid to participants on training courses and employment programmes
- 2,300 staff in locations around the country
- 22% of managers are women
- 18 Training Centres
- 70 Employment Services Offices.

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGY

Vision

To excel in providing labour market services.

This takes into account the new emphasis on providing high quality labour market services to recognised international standards³.

Mission Statement

To promote a more competitive and inclusive knowledge-based economy, in collaboration with our stakeholders, by enhancing the skills and capabilities of individuals and enterprises.

FÁS puts equal emphasis on achieving national economic and social priorities. It does so by upgrading the skills and capabilities of individuals and enterprises.

Core Values

- *Caring, Inclusiveness and Equality*
- *Proactive Customer Service*
- *Innovation and Flexibility*
- *Trust and Partnership*
- *Professionalism*
- *Cost-effectiveness*

These reflect a stronger emphasis on customer-centred service, higher quality Programmes and Services, innovation, flexibility and value for money.

³ To the following international standards; International Standards Organisation (ISO) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The following national standards are internationally recognised; Excellence Ireland Ltd., (Q Mark) and FÁS Excellence Through People (ETP). Also all FÁS Programmes and Services are quality assured by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) or the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). The certification awarded by these two Awards Councils is internationally recognised.

High Priority Goals

The eight High Priority Goals listed below reflect the need to sustain economic competitiveness, increase productivity levels through up-skilling the workforce and improve social inclusion and labour market equality for a range of disadvantaged individuals. These goals are complementary and of equal value. All must be achieved if FÁS is to fulfil its mission.

In the next four years FÁS will focus, therefore, on the following key strategic objectives:-

- **Goal 1: Entry to the Labour Market**
To provide a range of proactive job-related services, supports and programmes, to assist individuals enter/re-enter the active labour market.
- **Goal 2: Workforce Development**
To promote workforce development by upgrading the competencies and qualifications of the workforce and by providing and facilitating targeted Training Programmes and Services to employers and employees, including the continuous development and up-dating of the apprenticeship programme.
- **Goal 3: Labour Market Policy**
To inform and influence labour market policy so that it supports Ireland's economic and social development.
- **Goal 4: National Human Resource and Skills Development Strategy**
To advocate the need for, and contribute to the development of, a co-ordinated National Human Resource and Skills Development Strategy for Ireland and ensure FÁS plays its part in delivering the strategy.
- **Goal 5: Service Excellence**
To promote customer service excellence to our clients, as the central focus of all our Programmes and Services.
- **Goal 6: Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity**
To promote the removal of barriers and help provide supports which ensure access to Programmes, Services and Employment for individuals and groups experiencing exclusion, discrimination and labour market disadvantage.
- **Goal 7: Organisational Excellence**
To achieve excellence in our staff and work practices in order to deliver the optimum return on resources for the Government and taxpayers; strengthening the partnership ethos as a means of attaining all the high Priority Goals.
- **Goal 8: Communications and Marketing**
To improve communications and relationships with all our stakeholders and to communicate proactively with our customers so that they can make informed choices regarding our range of Programmes and Services.

Improving Internal Capability

FÁS has examined its internal resources, and the current range and scale of its labour market services. It has also assessed its capability to deliver new strategic objectives. FÁS will implement a Human Resource Strategy to ensure that it can respond to the challenges and opportunities placed before the organisation in the period 2006-2009.

The Partnership ethos will be strengthened to make our response more effective. FÁS will embrace a culture of higher quality service, promoting choice and innovation for customers while, at the same time, striving to achieve increased value for money from its resources. New structures and systems may be needed to achieve strategic objectives.

The Performance Development System (PDS) will help structures and staff develop their job-related knowledge, skills and competencies and achieve strategic objectives. Increased use of Information and Communications Technology and e-Enabling will facilitate a higher level of customer service and organisational efficiency.

Service and Programme Innovation

FÁS will introduce innovations to its Programmes and Services over the lifetime of this Strategy Statement. The most prominent include:-

- Improving sales and marketing expertise in Irish companies, in co-operation with Enterprise Ireland.
- Increasing the uptake on the Competency Development Programme for targeted employees.
- Upgrading the apprenticeship programme and developing new apprenticeship courses.
- Providing more flexible foundation and skills training.
- Implementing the recommendations of the review of the Employment Action Plan referral process in conjunction with the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- Implementing the Employment Services Strategy for proactively engaging with employers.
- Mainstreaming vulnerable individuals and groups into vocational training and employment programmes.
- Focusing on retention initiatives for employed people who acquire a disability or chronic illness.
- Using a more person-centred approach on Community-based programmes.
- Implementing the 'One-Step Up' initiative for those in employment. Particular attention will focus on low-skilled, low-paid and older workers.
- Increasing activity and budgets to up-skill targeted sectors of the workforce.

Higher Quality Programmes and Services

Customers are now demanding faster response times, more and better information and have higher expectations of FÁS services. In addition, the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 requires training providers, such as FÁS, to have training programmes quality assured and approved by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) or, where appropriate, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC).

FÁS has established a national framework for managing quality and continuous improvement to meet and where possible exceed customers' expectations and requirements. The purpose of this framework is to ensure that FÁS will be a FETAC and HETAC approved training provider and be awarded the ISO 9001:2000 standard, the Excellence Ireland Ltd 'Q Mark' standard and the FÁS 'Excellence Through People' Human Resource standard. Considerable progress has been made in some areas already. By having the organisation and its Programmes and Services quality assured in this way, FÁS is demonstrating its commitment to, and confidence in, these Quality Standards to make higher quality Programmes and Services a reality for customers and stakeholders.

Implementation and Performance Measurement Indicators

Implementation is the key to the success of any Strategic Statement. Eight High Priority Goals have been developed, action needed to implement them has been identified and goal-specific Performance Measurement Indicators agreed. Business Plans at divisional and unit level will specify the action, time-lines, standards and resources required to progress these High Priority Goals. The Executive Board (EB) will review progress in achieving the strategic objectives.

Resources

Finally, the Strategy Statement must be implemented within the existing financial resources of FÁS. This must be achieved in the context of reducing overall staff numbers and managing the planned relocation of FÁS Head Office under the Government's Decentralisation Programme. Inevitably this will mean that action may need to be taken from time to time to take account of available resources and changes in Government policy or priorities, without a reduction in the quality of service to customers and stakeholders.



Vision, Mission Statement, Core Values

In FÁS, we are committed to providing essential labour market services for the many individuals, communities and enterprises that rely on us to meet their labour market and career development needs. In FÁS, we believe we can best achieve this by pursuing our Vision and Mission Statement as set out below.

Vision

To excel in providing labour market services.

Mission Statement

To promote a more competitive and inclusive knowledge-based economy in collaboration with our stakeholders, by enhancing the skills and capabilities of individuals and enterprises.

Core Values

The following shared Core Values, all of equal importance, guide the way we work in FÁS and the way we provide quality Programmes and Services to our customers and stakeholders.



Caring, Inclusiveness and Equality are demonstrated by

Having a corporate culture that nurtures mutual respect and values the contribution of each staff member and customer; ensuring that all Policies, Programmes and Services are equality-proofed. In addition providing a safe and accessible working environment for all staff and customers; supported by relevant policies and practices.

Proactive Customer Service is demonstrated by

Adopting a proactive attitude and approach to day-to-day work that anticipates customers' needs and operational problems. Responding to our customers through mutual identification of needs, and working with them to achieve agreed outcomes.
Embracing an ethos of quality and service excellence.

Innovation and Flexibility are demonstrated by

Developing creative Programmes and Services that meet and anticipate changing labour market needs. Developing and implementing new work arrangements that support innovation and flexibility in order to address unforeseen challenges that arise within the organization. Simultaneously FÁS will continue to achieve its objectives.

Trust and Partnership are demonstrated by

Being open, honest and impartial with our work colleagues, customers and stakeholders. Supporting those working closest to our customers. Supporting the partnership way of working within FÁS; including appropriate consultation with staff, unions, social partners, stakeholders and customers.

Professionalism is demonstrated by

Delivering all our Programmes and Services to the highest professional standards by having them benchmarked against national and international standards of excellence.

Cost-effectiveness is demonstrated by

Always conducting FÁS business in a prudent manner and in accordance with best practice compliance, governance and risk management. Protecting FÁS resources and seeking out value for money in the work we do by achieving the greatest efficiency and effectiveness for the minimal cost.

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