Review of Local Community Development Committees

July 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Rural and Community Development (the Department) commenced a review of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in October 2017. The review sought to assess strategic and operational development of LCDCs in the three years since they were established and to identify opportunities to strengthen and support them in the coming years.

The review was overseen by a steering group established by the Department for that purpose. It was underpinned by comprehensive consultation and supported by an analysis of data gathered during the review process. The methodology included online surveys, one-to-one interviews and workshops, and was supported by a review of documentation and good-practice approaches.

It highlighted a range of challenges for LCDCs and findings are presented under four themes –

- Governance and Structure;
- Strategic Effectiveness;
- Participation and Engagement; and
- Administrative Support and Development.

The review showed reasonable progress to date with good practice approaches emerging across many LCDCs, though it also emphasised the need for stronger and more consistent communication in this regard.

Review respondents and workshop participants suggested good progress had been made since 2014, referencing in particular progress establishing new systems, processes and ways of working[1]. Moreover, respondents felt the collaborative nature of the initiatives progressed at a local level had improved in the three years since the committees have been established; they were keen for this to be built upon in the future with support from local and central government.

The more significant issues included, but were not limited to –

- a lack of clarity around the LCDC role and the role of the members, as well as a general lack of awareness of the work of the committees;
- the need for a comprehensive training and support programme for LCDC members and local authority support staff; and

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[1] Respondents to review surveys and participants in workshops and the contributors to the review generally will be referred throughout as 'respondents', except where the distinction is required to contrast views or findings from the different engagement processes.

- the need for stronger, more consistent and more formal communication between the Department and LCDCs, as well as between LCDCs across administrative boundaries.

At a strategic level, respondents suggested Government Departments should have greater regard to the intended role for LCDCs, and that responsibility for this lies at national level (most likely with the Department of Rural and Community Development). In addition, a far greater emphasis is needed on the role of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) in the day-to-day work of the LCDC, with more support required from the Department around LECP implementation and monitoring.

The review did not examine programme delivery or management by LCDCs as this is a matter primarily for programme funders. That said, LCDCs seem to be growing into these roles, though feedback suggests the work required to manage national programmes (in particular the LEADER programme) limits time available for more strategic considerations and planning by the LCDC.

In the area of participation and engagement with LCDCs, respondents suggested more guidance and direction was required to improve engagement, particularly with more marginalised communities. Many felt this should be secured by improving engagement with Public Participation Networks (PPNs), linking this to the need for greater communication within and between LCDCs, as well as between LCDCs and communities. There was strong feedback from coordinators of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) that greater engagement was needed between CYPSCs and LCDCs, especially given the importance and influence of the latter from the coordinators' perspective.

The review identified good progress *vis-à-vis* local coordination and collaboration. Good examples of inter-agency working, improved collaboration and integrated services were identified; however, it is probably fair to say that such approaches are not yet established as the norm. They show the LCDCs' capacity to drive and facilitate improved coordination and collaboration. The challenge in the medium term is to embed these good practices as the norm and the minimum performance standard for all LCDCs and local authorities.

While a broad range of issues and challenges were highlighted, two or three messages emerged consistently. These issues cut across the four thematic areas; accordingly, the recommendations are aligned with the broader issues raised rather than the original themes set out in the Terms of Reference.

To this end, the report recommends the Department takes a stronger role at national level, leading on cross-Government coordination of local development and community development and securing greater national and local buy-in to the nascent structures. This is supported by recommendations grouped under the following three objectives –

- effective communication of the LCDC role to relevant local and national stakeholders,
- comprehensive training and support for LCDC Chief Officers, LCDC members and local authority support staff, and
- streamlined supports for LCDCs to sustain effective programme delivery and impact monitoring.

The recommendations will be implemented in 2019 as a key action in the Government's *Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland*. It is recommended the next review be carried out in 2021.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The *Local Government Act 2001* mandates local government to provide "a forum for the democratic representation of the local community [and]…civic leadership for that community". The Act empowers local authorities through prescribed functions to represent the interests of the community in such manner as it thinks appropriate. This includes *inter alia* –

- establishing and communicating the views of the community, and
- facilitating and promoting involvement in local government, including involving young people in democracy and local government.

The Government's policy document on local government reform, *Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government,* and the *Local Government Reform Act 2014,* strengthen this role considerably and establish local authorities as leaders of economic, social and community development in their areas. To this end, they provide for new Local Community Development Committees within local authorities, as well as six-year Local Economic and Community Plans, to bring about a more strategic joined-up approach to local development and community development in their respective areas.

The governance arrangements have developed significantly since LCDCs were established in 2014. LECPs have been adopted in all 31 areas, while LCDCs have assumed oversight and management responsibility for key national development programmes, including the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and the LEADER Programme. They have managed investment of some €148m through SICAP since 2015, while LCDC-led LEADER Local Action Groups have approved more than 1,930 LEADER projects to the value of almost €71 million to date[2].

LCDCs also deliver large elements of the Healthy Ireland Fund, with almost €6 million invested in health and well-being actions under the fund since 2017. At the same time, they have established and implemented new governance arrangements and working methods, while embedding themselves in a long established local government system.

Their success in this regard reflects considerable commitment by local authorities as well as by LCDC members (many of whom participate and support the committees in a voluntary capacity). As a result, all local authority areas now have representative, accountable and transparent governance and decision-making structures.

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[2] Figures accurate as of end-February 2019

The new arrangements, including LCDCs, are only in place since mid-2014. This is a relatively short timeframe and they will take time to establish themselves, particularly as they come to terms with significant new roles in relation to SICAP and LEADER in most areas. A lot of work has been done at national and local level to ensure LCDCs can deliver effectively and meaningfully. While a reasonably strong foundation has been established, there is still much to be done to secure their long-term effectiveness and sustainability, and to establish them as catalysts for greater local coordination and collaboration.

Given their nascent development, and recognising the challenges they face to secure their long-term sustainability, it was considered opportune to carry out a high level review of progress to date. Accordingly, a review was commenced in October 2017 to inform ongoing development by –

- reflecting on progress and good practice to date;
- identifying opportunities for strengthening and enhancing LCDCs; and
- making recommendations to build on existing strengths and good practice.

This report sets out the key findings, conclusions and recommendations to address these findings as appropriate.

1.1   BACKGROUND

There are 31 local authorities in Ireland operating within geographical areas aligned with county and city boundaries, with 26 County Councils, three City Councils and two City and County Councils. Each local authority has statutory responsibility to deliver services and support economic development and enterprise at a local level.

Proposals for a more joined-up and integrated approach to planning, oversight and management of local development and community development were originally set out in *Putting People First* in October 2012. *Putting People First* outlined the vision for local government as –

> the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level – leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably.

The *Local Government Reform Act 2014* gave legal effect to *Putting People First* and provided for LCDCs in all local authority areas, as well as new six-year LECPs, with the economic elements developed and implemented by local authorities, and the community elements by LCDCs.

The community function of local authorities has expanded significantly on foot of the local government reform and development process. To ensure local authorities have sufficient resources to successfully deliver on the new functions and secure the long term success of the LCDCs, the Department provides €2 million annually to support approx. 60 or so posts in local authority community directorates. This funding began in 2017 and will remain in place until at least August 2020.

1.1.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

LCDCs are a key piece of the local authorities' strengthened role in local development and community development as envisaged in *Putting People First*. *Putting People First* establishes their policy remit as a socio-economic committee "in each city/county council for planning and oversight of all local and community development programmes".

This role is given a legislative basis in the *Local Government Reform Act 2014* which establishes them as local authority committees responsible for "developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development". To this end, LCDCs draw on the expertise and experience of public and private actors in the relevant local authority area to provide more joined-up and integrated services for communities, primarily through the community elements of the LECP.

LCDCs bring together local authority members and officials, State agencies and people working with local development, community development, and economic, cultural and environmental organisations. They draw on the expertise and experience of the members to plan, oversee and deliver services for individuals and communities, particularly those most in need of those services. They comprise between 15 and 21 members depending on council size and local circumstances, with the balance of membership weighted in favour of the private sector – a minimum 51% of members must be drawn from private sector interests (see *Figure 1* below).

Their statutory functions include –

- primary responsibility for co-ordinating, planning and overseeing local development and community development funding, whether spent by local authorities or on behalf of the State by other local development bodies;

- bringing a more joined-up approach to local development and community development programmes and interventions, pursuing an integrated approach to local community-based services across providers and delivery structures;

- driving meaningful community engagement in scoping, planning, delivering and evaluating local development and community development programmes;

- pursuing a more cost efficient administration of local development and community development programmes and delivery structures, matching resources to priorities to achieve better value-for-money;

- focusing on learning and feedback, enhancing the links between service delivery and policy development; and

- pursuing opportunities for additional funding for the area, whether from Exchequer, EU, private or other sources.

There are 33 LCDCs throughout the country – four in Dublin, four in Cork City and County, two in Galway City and County, and one in each of the 23 remaining counties.
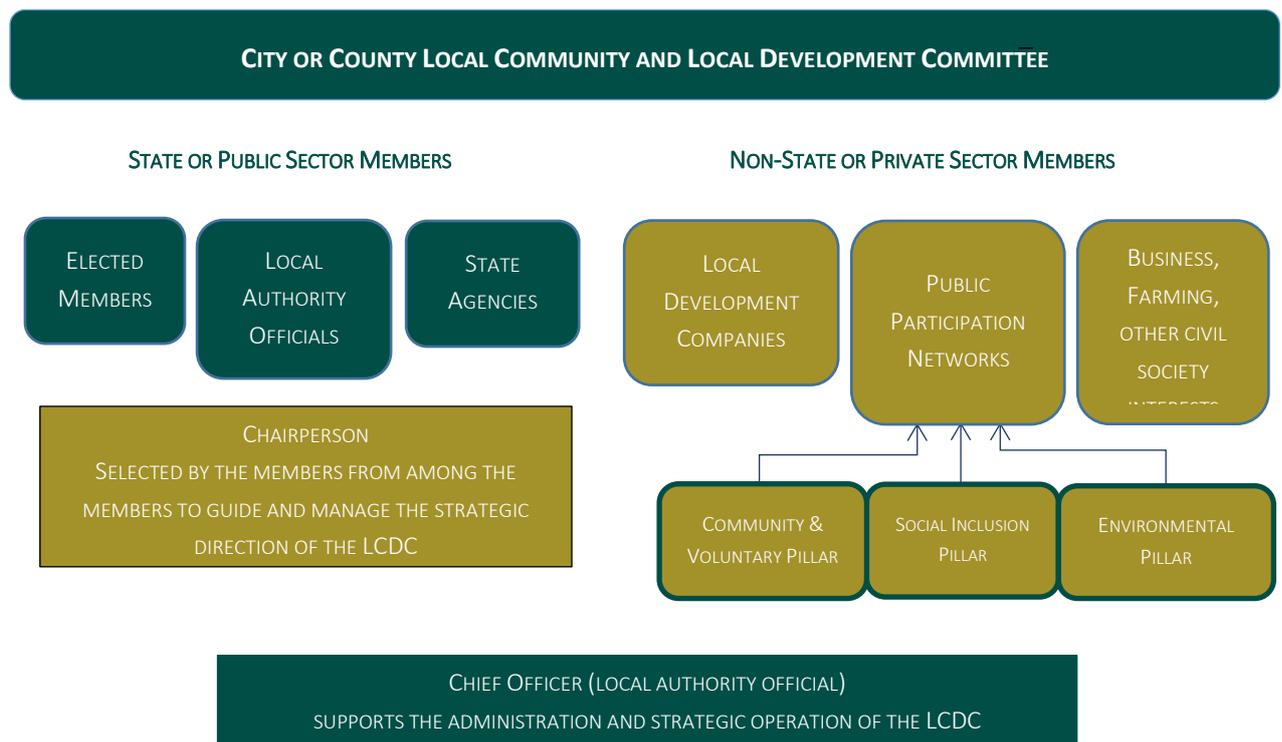
FIGURE 1 – LCDC MEMBERSHIP

1.1.3 LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN

Putting People First outlined the need for local economic plans, which ultimately emerged as the integrated *Local Economic and Community Plans*. The purpose of each six-year LECP is to identify the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic, local and community development of the respective local authority area.

LECP actions can be implemented directly by local authorities, but in many cases they may be delivered in partnership with other economic and community stakeholders or directly by those stakeholders themselves. As the framework for economic, local and community development, the LECP is also a key mechanism at local level for coordinating and implementing actions deriving from central government policy frameworks, for example the *Action Plan for Jobs* or the *Action Plan for Rural Development*.

1.1.4 LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES AND LEADER LOCAL ACTION GROUPS

The range of LCDC activity is already quite varied and they continue to develop expertise and capacity in governance, local economic and community planning, and programme oversight and implementation. Their role in LEADER is key, marrying strategic and operational functions and securing an appropriate level of influence to drive meaningful and effective integration.

1.1.4.1 LOCAL ACTION GROUPS
A Local Action Group or LAG, in the context of the LEADER programme, is a partnership of public and private interests from a defined geographical area. Each LAG develops a LEADER Local Development Strategy for its area, and selects and approves projects for funding in line with that strategy. The Local Development Strategy underpins LEADER delivery and is developed in line with the relevant LECP.

1.1.4.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ROLE IN LEADER
Twenty-five LCDCs implement LEADER as LAGs. The LCDC forms the core membership of the LAG; however, local authorities have adapted the LCDC structure to meet membership, representation and decision-making requirements for the LEADER programme. Accordingly, in these areas, the LEADER LAG is broader than the LCDC, though LAG decision-making processes should complement and be consistent with LECP objectives and goals.

1.1.5 DEVELOPING ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

The role and functions of LCDCs continue to expand as their expertise, experience and reach develops. Government will continue to build on this role and strengthen their strategic and operational capacity in the longer-term. To this end, *Our Public Service 2020,* sets out a firm commitment to LCDCs and LECPs as primary mechanisms for delivering more integrated services at local level. It provides, under *Action 9: Strengthen Whole of Government Collaboration*, that Government will –

> continue to support the new Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) structures as the primary vehicle for collaboration between all national public service providers at local level. For example, LCDCs and the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) provide a governance, planning and evidence based framework for the co-ordination and management of local funding including EU supported community-led local development funding from 2020-2027.

1.2 SUMMARY TERMS OF REFERENCE

The full Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review are set out at *Appendix 1*. The ToR are summarised below and provide a context for the review findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.2.1 SCOPE

The review considered LCDCs under four themes –

- Governance and Structure;
- Strategic Effectiveness;
- Participation and Engagement; and
- Administrative Support and Development

1.2.2 METHODOLOGY

The review was primarily engagement-led. It involved a large element of direct engagement with LCDC members and other relevant stakeholders, including local authority officials, community interests, Government Departments and State agencies, and the City and County Management Association. The research approach included questionnaires, online surveys and one-to-one interviews, as well as workshops and focus groups with key stakeholders.

Where appropriate, and to establish as full a picture as possible, this work was complemented by a review of relevant documentation, including LCDC agendas, minutes and annual reports. It also included consideration of good practice examples that demonstrated the strategic capacity of LCDCs and their potential to deliver on the role envisioned for them by government.

Submissions and inputs were also accepted from stakeholders as the review progressed.

1.2.3   REVIEW STEERING GROUP

A steering group was established to oversee the review and to advise generally on scope, planning, implementation and expected outcomes. To this end, the steering group monitored progress generally and –

- advised on the relevant areas to be covered, the expected outcomes, and agreed the terms of reference;
- advised on, and agreed, the review plan, milestones and timeframe;
- advised on, and agreed, mechanisms for consultation and engagement with stakeholders;
- advised on the format, information sources, collection, collation and presentation;
- reviewed and advised on findings, conclusions and recommendations; and
- agreed the final report for the Minister's consideration.

1.2.4   MEMBERSHIP

The steering group comprised nine members and was led by an external Chair. Members included representatives from –

- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (one member and Chair);
- Department of Rural and Community Development (two members);
- local authorities (three members);
- regional assemblies (Northern and Western Regional Assembly) (one member);
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Head of Internal Audit) (consulting member); and
- community representative (one member).

The membership is set out in *Appendix 2*.

1.2.5   STEERING GROUP WORK

The steering group met on eight occasions in the Department's Ballina offices, with secretariat support provided by the Department. The primary responsibilities of the steering group were to consider the research findings; to reflect on emerging themes from the Department's research; and to advise the Department on the structure of the report, highlighting priority issues and findings and helping shape the recommendations.

The steering group also advised on the focus and structure of review consultation arrangements and assisted with the workshops with LCDC Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Chief Officers and other local authority officials at end-January and early-February 2018.

1.3   REVIEW PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The review was carried out between October 2017 and November 2018. The steering group was convened at the start of the review, agreed the ToR and guided all aspects of the review thereafter.

Consultation and research commenced in October 2017 and continued to March 2018. In addition to stakeholder consultation, documentation review and review of good practice example, the review also draws on learning from other complementary processes, including the work of the *Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development*.

1.3.1   CONSULTATION AND SURVEY OF STAKEHOLDERS

A comprehensive online survey was developed – informed by the LCDC functions as set out in *section 128 of the Local Government Reform Act* – and circulated to a range of stakeholders working with LCDCs around the country (details set out in *Appendix 3*).

The survey was a key piece of the consultation and was designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information on various aspects of LCDC operations under the four themes.

1.3.1.1   ONLINE SURVEY OVERVIEW

The online survey generated 210 responses from stakeholders (see *Figure 2* overleaf). The majority of respondents self-identified as LCDC members, although there was a large minority of respondents from other stakeholder groups.

SUBMISSIONS

Chart showing 210 Submissions across categories: AILG, C&V PILLAR, CYPC'S, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, IDG, ILDN, LCDC MEMBER, LOCAL AUTHOTRITY, NCPD, OTHER. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 120. LCDC MEMBER has the highest value at approximately 115.
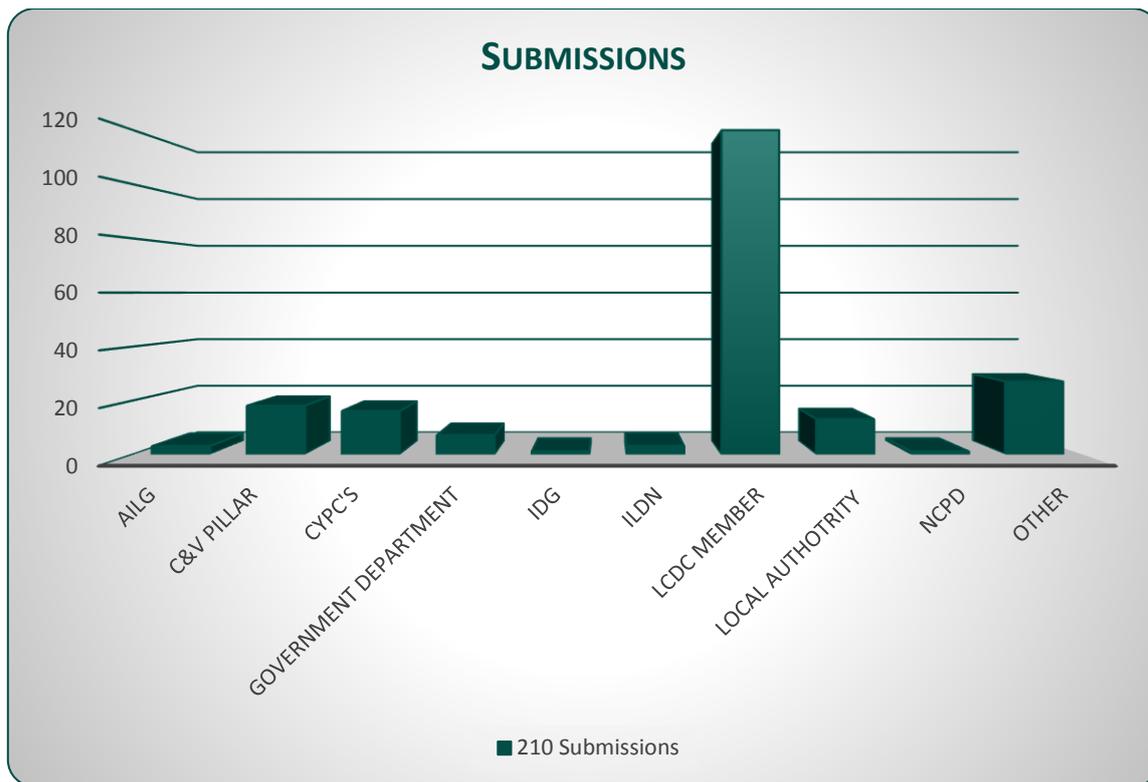
FIGURE 2: SURVEY RESPONSES

A separate consultation was carried out with HSE representatives on LCDCs. This engagement sought to obtain a separate State agency perspective. The HSE provided the ideal forum in this regard as the State agency that engages most with LCDCS – it is represented on almost all LCDCs and has established an LCDC representatives' network that meets every quarter to monitor and guide its participation. LCDCs also have a lead role implementing the Healthy Ireland Fund.

1.3.2   REVIEW WORKSHOPS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The online survey (and HSE consultation) was complemented by workshops and focus group sessions with local authority officials and LCDC members.

While the surveys allowed qualitative data to be collected and respondents to elaborate on their views, workshops with LCDC members and local authority officials informed a deeper understanding of how LCDCs were working locally. Two workshops were hosted by the Department in January and February 2018 and were attended by LCDC Chairs and Vice-Chairs, as well as Chief Officers and local authority Directors of Service. They focused on the four thematic areas agreed in the ToR and were shaped by the feedback received from the online survey. They were well attended, with 58 attendees

and at least one representative from each LCDC, allowing as full a national picture to emerge as possible.

A separate focus group was also hosted by the Department in June 2018 with those LCDCs not implementing LEADER. While not originally planned as a separate engagement, a focus group with these LCDCs was deemed appropriate given the emerging view of LEADER as a significant draw on members' time.

1.3.3   ATTENDANCE AT LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Department also attended a small number of LCDC meetings to get a first-hand impression of LCDC operations.

SECTION 2: REVIEW FINDINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings suggest both challenges and opportunities for LCDCs as they grow and develop in the short and medium-term. This section summarises the key issues and findings.

While many findings relate to broad strategic and operational matters across LCDCs generally, some findings were local area specific. Many issues cut across the four themes identified in the ToR. Accordingly, it was considered best to group recommendations under high level objectives that align more readily with the issues highlighted by the review. That said, the findings are presented generally on a thematic basis, while recognising significant overlap across the themes.

The findings and recommendations should be considered in the broader emerging policy context for local development and community development at a local and national level. Moreover, the review complements the work of the *Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development* – implementing the review recommendations is an action in the draft *Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland* which is being co-produced by the Department and members of the *Cross-Sectoral Group*.

Finally, a continuing cycle of review and development is presumed for the medium and long term. The review recommends a three-year review cycle.

2.2 THEME 1 – GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

Under this theme, the review focused on LCDC decision making capacity, structure, reporting, accountability, membership and collaboration at a local level. The workshops facilitated more comprehensive consideration of engagement and participation arrangements (e.g. sub-groups and task groups) to support LCDC work, considering the extent to which LCDC members understand their roles and functions.

2.2.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – SNAPSHOT

There were mixed views on the appropriateness of LCDC membership (see *Figure 3* below) with an equal split across respondents – 49% rated appropriateness between 1 and 5 (somewhere between totally inappropriate and reasonably appropriate) with 51% rating it between 6 and 10 (between

reasonably appropriate or entirely appropriate). Of those scoring towards the higher end of the scale, 39% considered the existing membership to be very appropriate, while towards the other end, 14% considered it very inappropriate. The majority of respondents fell somewhere in the middle. The results may reflect views influenced by specific local experience.

USING THE SCALE 1 (INAPPROPRIATE) TO 10 (VERY APPROPRIATE), IS THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE SPLIT IN LCDC MEMBERSHIP APPROPRIATE?
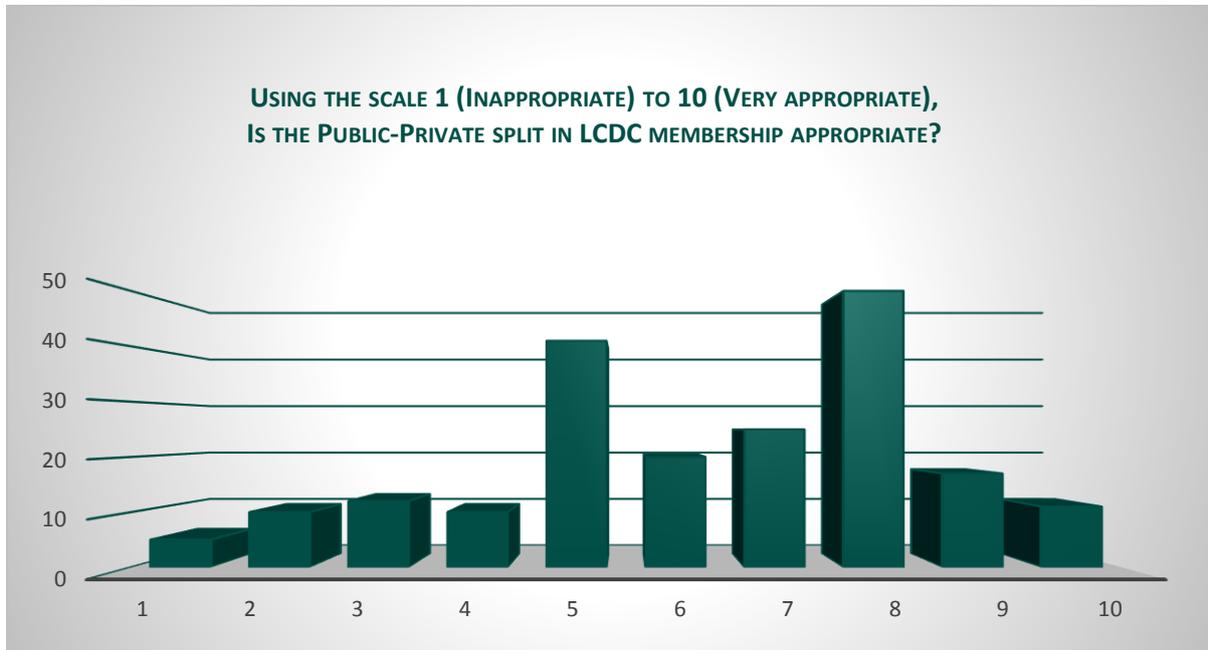
FIGURE 3: APPROPRIATENESS OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE SPLIT

While the majority of respondents were grouped towards the middle of the scale (scoring between 5 and 8), there were clearly differing views between non-State and State (including LCDC members) respondents. Non-State respondents considered the public-private split to be less appropriate than public sector respondents, rating the appropriateness of the public-private spilt at the lower end of the scale (1 to 5) (see *Figure 4*).

USING THE SCALE 1 (INAPPROPRIATE) TO 10 (VERY APPROPRIATE), IS THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE SPLIT IN LCDC MEMBERSHIP APPROPRIATE?
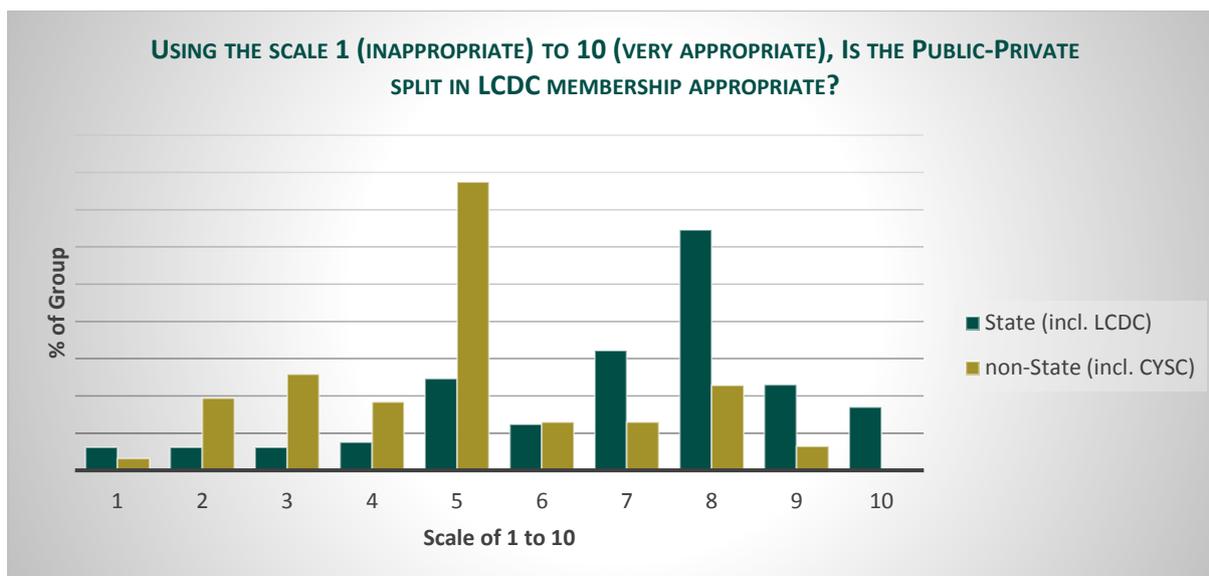
FIGURE 4: PUBLIC-PRIVATE SPLIT – STATE V. NON-STATE RESPONSES

While the narrative responses don't speak directly to the balance of membership on the LCDC, 64% of non-State respondents felt that those interests not represented on the LCDC did not have adequate opportunity to engage with LCDCs – respondents suggested the current size and structure limits participation with relevant public and private sectoral interests.

This is also reflected in responses under other themes which, for example, suggested –

- engagement with non-LCDC members could be improved;
- community input was not valued and it was difficult to bring community issues to the LCDC; and
- engagement by State representatives was not good enough.

This points to the need from the non-State perspective for greater community participation and increased private or community interest representation on LCDCs.

State and LCDC member respondents tended towards the higher end of the scale. Respondents were more satisfied with the current split, but no specific reasoning was provided. Some of the feedback from the workshops with Chief Officers and Chairs suggested changes in membership as a possible way to address perceived balance issues. However, the absence of strong feedback recommending increased membership suggests the majority currently favour the status quo.

The research shows LCDCs are using sub-group or sub-committee structures to support decision-making – the use of such structures is recommended in the LCDC guidelines. This area warrants more

detailed examination in the future, especially if the size and balance of membership is to be reconsidered in the future.

2.2.2 REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

2.2.2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION

Overall feedback suggests clarity is required, not just on the general role and purpose of the LCDC, but also on the role and functions of the different members. Respondents indicated that some of the challenges faced by LCDCs resulted from the lack of clarity around the role of LCDC members, as well as confusion at local level as to the purpose of the LCDC generally. Reference was also made to the importance of the role of the LCDC Chair and the need to consider the types of support provided to the Chair in their leadership role.

Respondents maintained communities were unaware of the work of LCDCs. A key task for LCDCs should be to raise awareness in communities of their role and how communities might engage with them. It was also suggested that a comprehensive induction training programme should be developed for LCDC members which focuses *inter alia* on the importance of members attending and participating meaningfully at all LCDC meetings.

2.2.2.2 MANAGING MEETINGS, PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Given the broad nature of LCDC membership, rotation of membership is challenging for LCDCs, often leading to loss of knowledge and expertise. This points to a challenge for the LCDCs' strategic and operational effectiveness.

Conflict of interest and quorums emerged repeatedly as issues. Respondents indicated that members often have to absent themselves from discussions and decisions and, as a result, some LCDCs had difficulties establishing the necessary quorum at meetings. Some LCDCs have developed ways to manage these issues, including establishing sub-committees to manage particular programmes and written procedures to allow members to exercise their decision-making functions when they are unable to attend meetings. That said, there is a case for stronger guidance (*vis-à-vis* managing perceived conflict of interest and quorum matters) to ensure effective decision-making.

While the review did not specifically examine programme management, it is evident LCDCs are progressing in this area. LCDC-led LEADER local action groups are performing very favourably and are performing equally as well on SICAP, with greater co-operation and engagement at LCDC level delivering stronger SICAP plans.

That said, respondents to the survey and feedback from workshop participants suggest that LCDCs spend a disproportionate amount of time on programme management, with insufficient time allowed to consider broader, more strategic issues. Some questioned the need for LCDCs to be involved in programme implementation to the extent they are, suggesting LCDCs should have a more strategic oversight role and delegate programme implementation issues elsewhere.

On the other hand, some respondents argued LCDC involvement in programme management was critical and this role should continue to be supported and developed. Programme planning, oversight and management are key elements of the LCDC role, and they are specifically provided for in the *Local Government Reform Act* for the purposes of implementing the community elements of the LECP. The Act provides for an appropriate mix of strategic and operational responsibilities, adding weight to the LCDC role and ensuring the right level of influence to drive joined-up and integrated approaches locally.

Other LCDCs appear to strike a better balance between strategic and operational priorities. Some use sub-committees and separate meetings to achieve an optimum balance between LCDC strategic functions and programme management. For example, most LCDCs have established SICAP sub-committees to manage and monitor day-to-day activity. Others use sub-committees and other structures, and even separate meetings, to ensure LEADER responsibilities don't overshadow other LCDC functions. These arrangements are working well in these areas. The focus group with non-LEADER LCDCs also identified time management challenges, though they weren't as significant as for those delivering LEADER.

2.2.2.3 STATE AGENCY PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The review suggests the role of State agency representatives needs to be reinforced and that there could be greater commitment from State agencies in certain areas. However, this is not a consistent view across LCDCs, with some respondents indicating that State agency representatives play a critical and active role in their LCDCs. Respondents suggested such issues could be addressed through an awareness raising programme that promotes a broader understanding of the role of the LCDC and its members.

That said, the commitment and contribution of the HSE to LCDC work is particularly noteworthy. The HSE is represented on almost all LCDCs and has established an LCDC representatives' network that meets every quarter to monitor and guide its participation.

Contributions from CYPSC members and coordinators were mixed and, as with findings across other areas of the review, they seem to reflect differing levels and quality of engagement between the

committees from area to area. There was positive feedback in relation to the LECP, particularly regarding development of the plan and subsequent monitoring arrangements. In this regard, respondents commented positively on the level of information sharing and reporting on deliverables. The Healthy Ireland Fund was referenced as a positive, influencing LCDC and CYPSC collaboration, improving engagement and yielding an efficient use of resources.

That said, an almost equal number noted a lack of meaningful engagement. Respondents emphasised the importance of formal links between CYPSCs and LCDCs; one respondent in particular stressed "due weight" needed to be given to the CYPSC and LCDC guidance. The survey also suggested LCDC sub-groups or task groups had not yet evolved sufficiently to facilitate the extent and quality of engagement desired between CYPSCs and LCDCs.

Feedback provided by CYPSC coordinators (through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs) reiterated the importance of inter-agency or cross-structural engagement at local level. Recognising the importance of the LCDC locally, CYPSC coordinators highlighted –

- a need for improved engagement between CYPSCs and LCDCs, and
- the potential for working together to consider and address cross-cutting issues and impacts.

Contributions also emphasised how important effective national inter-agency and cross-government relationships are to successful inter-agency working at local level.

2.2.3   STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – SNAPSHOT

Achieving an appropriate gender balance across LCDCs remains challenging. This is monitored on an *ad hoc* basis by the Department; there are considerable disparities from one LCDC to another. The review has shown that almost 65% of reported LCDC membership is male, while in one LCDC 94% of members are male.

When asked if there was equality proofing in their LCDC (*see Figure 5 below*), 58% responded no or don't know. This issue is not unique to LCDCs, but it is indicative of a greater ongoing societal challenge to secure gender-balanced participation in decision-making. An average of 35% female membership points strongly to the need for greater efforts, nationally and locally, in this regard.

IS YOUR LCDC EQUALITY PROOFED?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Yes 42%
No 14%
Don't know 44%
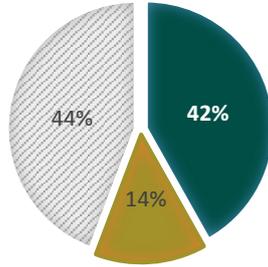
FIGURE 5: EQUALITY PROOFING

CASE STUDY: "KNOW ME" – MONAGHAN LCDC
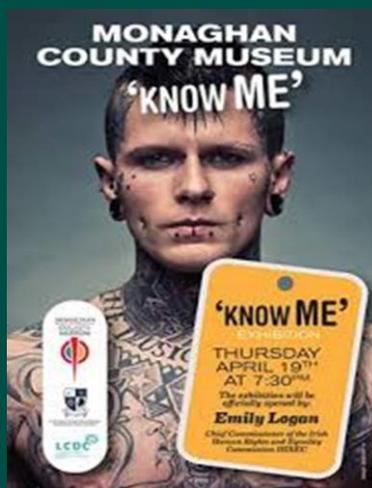
During public consultation for Monaghan's *Local Economic and Community Plan 2015 – 2021*, issues of inequality, exclusion and discrimination were raised frequently. The *Equality Sub-group of Monaghan LCDC* working in partnership with the Monaghan County Museum and Monaghan Social Inclusion Officer identified the need for greater awareness of social exclusion and discrimination and sought to address this by challenging stereotypes often linked to people in our communities.

To this end, they designed and developed a new publication and exhibition to challenge discrimination in society. The project '*know ME*' traces the real life stories of people living in Ireland and discrimination they have experienced because of stereotyping. It explores the challenges of discrimination and social exclusion in society through the voices of those who experience it. The exhibition and publication presents ten fictional characters based on real life experiences of discrimination and social exclusion in Ireland. It shows how we can often make a judgement about someone solely on how they look and the stereotypes associated with them.

The publication and the exhibition are available from Monaghan County Council as a resource and could be used as a useful tool for anyone looking to raise awareness of equality in their schools, colleges or workplaces.

2.3 THEME 2 – STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS

The surveys focused on coordination of LCDC work and the role of the LECP in this context, suggesting that a strategic approach would result in better decision making, more coordinated planning, better use of resources and successful delivery of LECP targets. The workshops considered time spent on decision-making and monitoring progress towards LECP targets.

2.3.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – SNAPSHOT

Survey responses suggested most respondents were aware of their LECP targets, felt their LCDC was reasonably good at achieving their objectives, and respondents have a high level of confidence in their knowledge of LECP targets and their ability to contribute to achieving them (see *Figure 6*). Again, while the responses were largely positive in this regard, the State and LCDC members tended to rate performance higher than other respondents.
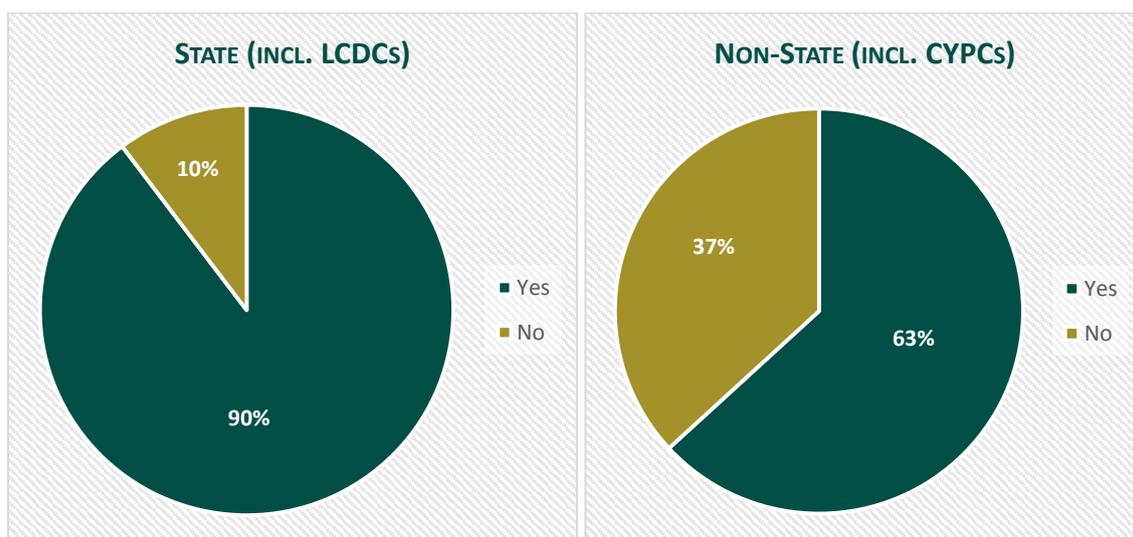
FIGURE 6: ARE YOU AWARE OF YOUR LECP TARGETS?

When asked to rate LCDC progress on achieving the LECP aims and objectives, the broad range of responses reflected the many and varied processes and systems across LCDCs (see *Figure 7* overleaf). In general, respondents rated performance favourably in this regard. However, many respondents thought more comprehensive training for LCDC members on developing and implementing the LECP, and on the role of the LECP in the ongoing work of the LCDC and the local authority generally, was required. This also suggests a lack of clarity and understanding of the role and purpose of LCDCs, as well as individual members' roles (outlined earlier under *Theme 1*).

USING A SCALE 1 (POOR) TO 10 (EXCELLENT), HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE LCDC'S PERFORMANCE IN ACHIEVING LECP OBJECTIVES?
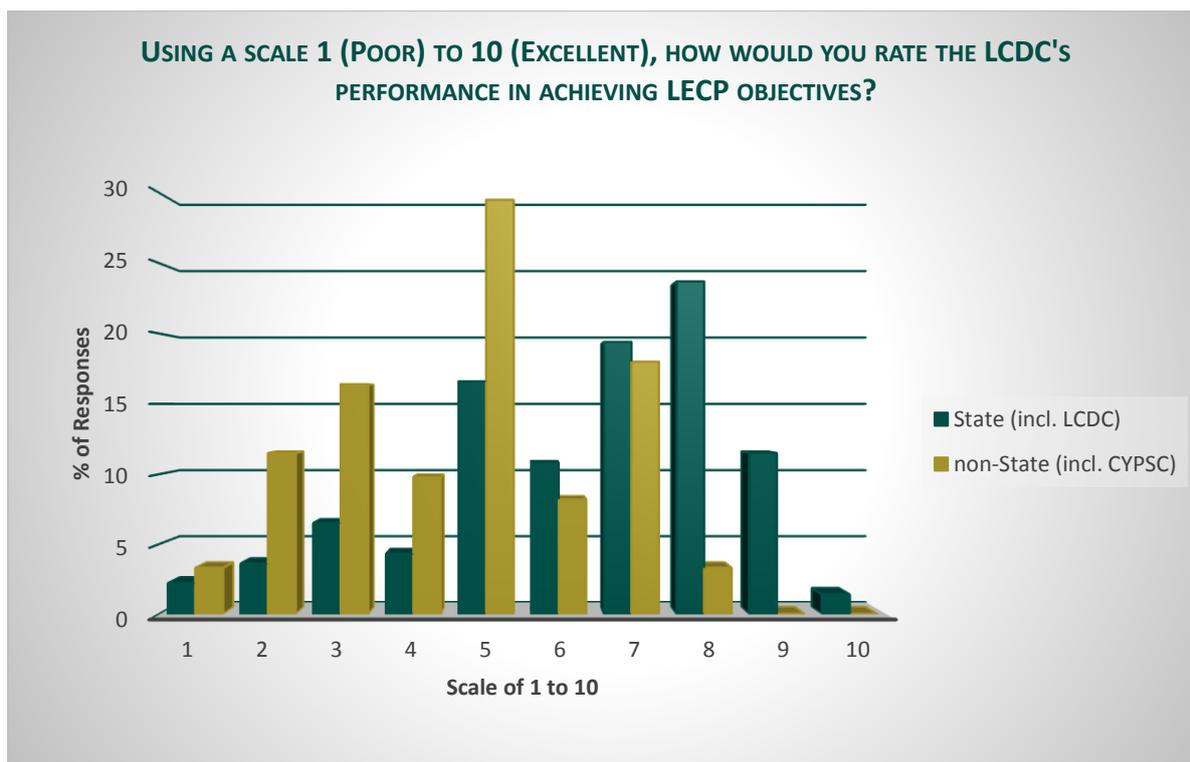
FIGURE 7: PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

Despite a good level of awareness of LECP targets across the board, and a general perception that LCDCs were performing well in reaching these targets, ratings dropped considerably when members were asked if they felt they could actively contribute to the LCDC reaching its LECP targets. The State and LCDC members' rating was still relatively high (72% positive); however, the non-State respondents rated significantly lower (only 51% positive).

2.3.2 REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

2.3.2.1 ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Respondents were asked if they considered the support provided to local authority helped the LCDC and members to deliver LECP objectives, with an almost equal split between positive and negative responses. Respondents frequently suggested LCDCs spend considerable time on programme administration and management, and that insufficient time is allowed for more strategic matters, including monitoring LECP performance.

While respondents acknowledged the quality of support provided to the LCDC by the local authority, they also suggested additional administrative support was required. Moreover, while 'public members' considered they had adequate support (see *Figure 8* overleaf), 'private members' felt they

didn't have the same opportunity to access support citing, for example, training provided during normal working hours when many private sector representatives were unable to attend. Here again, respondents highlighted the need for greater guidance on LECP implementation and evaluation and the role of LCDCs generally.

Although some workshop participants questioned the relevance of the LECP others recognised its significance and suggested a more coordinated approach to implementation. In particular, respondents advocated for greater coordination and collaboration with State agencies to help achieve LECP aims and objectives; use of centralised monitoring systems (CRM systems); and separate meetings with a specific LECP focus.

STATE (INCL. LCDC)

28%

72%

■ Yes
■ No

NON-STATE (INCL. CYPSC)

49%   51%

■ Yes
■ No
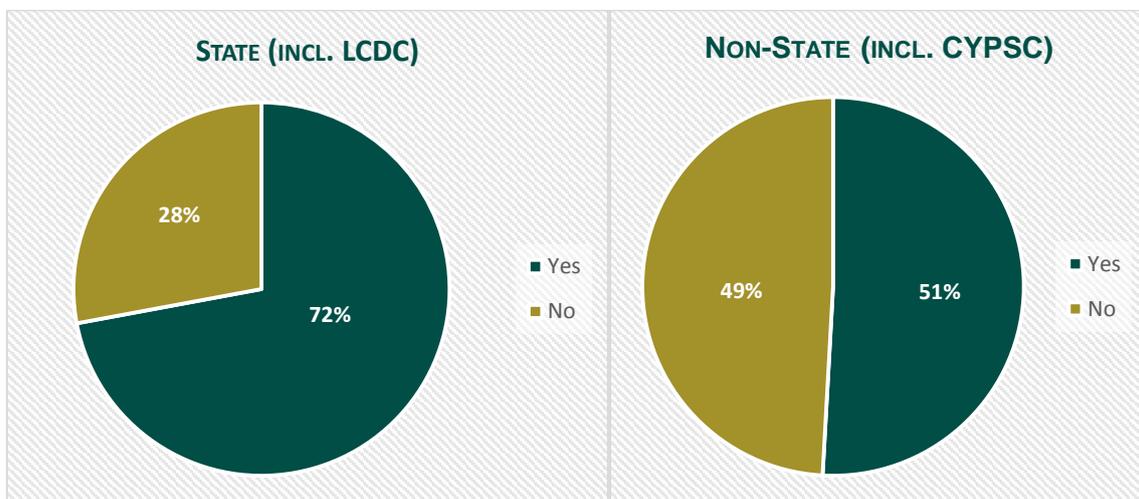
FIGURE 8: CAN YOU ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE LCDC MEETING ITS LECP TARGETS?

2.3.2.2 SUPPORTING STRATEGIC CAPACITY

Respondents felt the capacity of LCDCs to foster a more strategic approach to their work could be better supported. For example, greater responsibility could be taken at national level to ensure Government Departments have due regard to the intended role for LCDCs when developing, rolling-out and implementing policy and programmes. The need for greater support from the Department was highlighted by respondents, particularly in respect of LECP implementation and monitoring, suggesting LCDCs and local authorities were still grappling with performance measurement.

Deadlines for LCDCs *vis-à-vis* national funding programmes present significant challenges; these need to be reconsidered so LCDCs can ensure appropriate consideration of the strategic nature of project proposals under these programmes. It was suggested frequently that receiving a full schedule of likely funding streams well in advance would help with planning and ensuring funded projects are

contributing fully to achieving LECP aims and objectives. However, many also highlighted the constructive use of funding even when the deadlines are challenging, using collaboration with *Healthy Ireland* as a good example.

Many respondents felt more support should be provided by the Department to help LCDCs fulfil the strategic role envisaged for them in *Putting People First*. There were suggestions including –

- the need for greater financial support;
- improved coordination across Government Departments and more recognition of the LCDC mandate; regular reviews to ensure LCDCs are working effectively; and
- increased communication between the Department and LCDCs.

The need to evaluate the effectiveness of the LCDC and the LECP was also a concern for respondents. There is a lack of consistency in arrangements to support monitoring and evaluation of LECPs. Many respondents believe there is insufficient support from the Department, with some citing the need for ministerial guidelines on LECP implementation and evaluation.

Many LCDCs play a strong role in their areas beyond that developed through programme management; they play a role more closely aligned with that envisaged in *Putting People First* and the *Local Government Reform Act*. However, this is not consistent across all LCDCs and largely reflects local contexts. The review suggests this can be attributed to the local authority and how it conducts its work at a local level. Some focus group participants indicated that the LCDC role is significantly influenced by the value placed on the LCDC by the relevant local authority, and this in turn can impact on LCDC strategic capacity and effectiveness.

2.4   THEME 3 – PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The surveys focused on the ability of sectors to participate and engage with the LCDC and its work. Questions focused on community participation, formal arrangements for working with the LCDC and availability of information. The workshops built on this looking, for example, at issues such as the time or space provided at LCDC meetings to discuss community issues and the resource burden on LCDCs delivering national programmes.

2.4.1   STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – SNAPSHOT

The review suggests a general sense that the public-private membership split is appropriate, with 61% of respondents believing that the mix of representation is appropriate or very appropriate. When asked if interests not represented on the LCDC had an opportunity to access the committee, opinion

was divided equally across respondents. When asked to rate their LCDC on broad participation, rating from 1 (no participation) to 10 (very high participation), responses varied considerably (see *Figure 9* overleaf). That said, the majority (65%) rated participation at 6 or higher, indicating general satisfaction.

ON A SCALE OF **1** (NO PARTICIPATION) AND **10** (VERY HIGH PARTICIPATION), PLEASE RATE YOUR **LCDC** IN RELATION TO PARTICIPATION OF ALL SECTORS AND CONCERNED PARTIES, IS EVERYONE REPRESENTED?
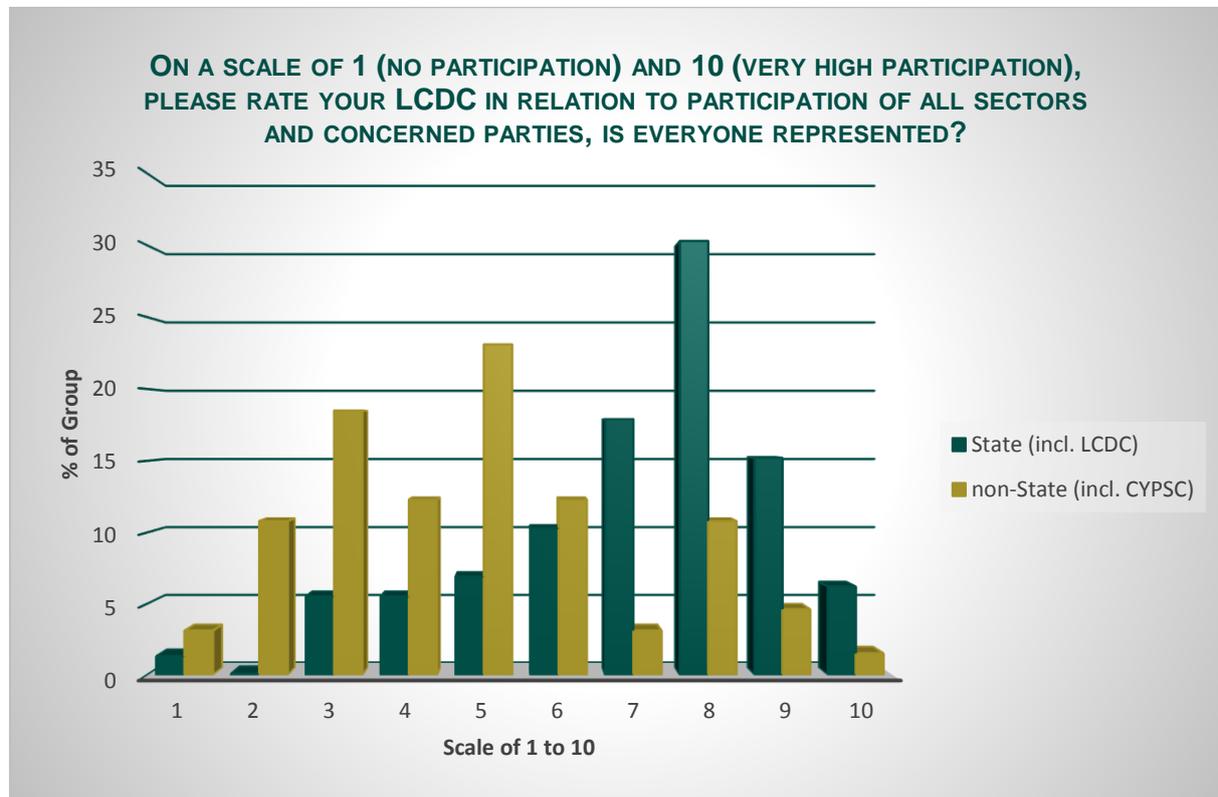
FIGURE 9: SECTOR PARTICIPATION

2.4.2 REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

2.4.2.1 *GAPS IN MEMBERSHIP*

Some LCDC members felt there were gaps in LCDC membership, particularly from the community and voluntary sector. While the current structures include community and voluntary interests, there is concern these groups may be poorly resourced and lack the experience and confidence to engage fully with the LCDC, resulting in a lack of real representation in local decision-making processes. In addition, as many representatives from this sector are voluntary and represent marginalised or groups generally under-represented, the time commitment required to ensure effective engagement and participation was also identified as a factor limiting participation. It was acknowledged that such groups may be represented indirectly; however, responses may speak to the desire for additional representation for these groups.

2.4.2.2 INCONSISTENT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE APPROACHES

While the legislation and guidance underpinning LCDCs detail the structural, operational and governance requirements, there is a wide range of processes and systems in place to support LCDC work at local level. This can range, for example, from locally developed processes around sub-groups or written procedures to support decision-making, to associate membership to secure greater inclusivity and participation in LCDC work. These arrangements are driven largely by local contexts and not consistently applied across LCDCs. Respondents suggested a process where LCDCs learn about what works in other areas, and how it can be developed to their own local circumstances, would be useful.

2.4.2.3 SUPPORTING LCDC MEMBERS

Many respondents felt additional support for community and voluntary members would improve engagement with LCDCs. It would ensure organisations representing community and social inclusion interests, for example, could participate fully at LCDC meetings, confidently represent their views and contribute meaningfully to LCDC decision-making. Moreover, respondents suggested tailored supports should be provided for PPN members to facilitate attendance and participation at LCDC meetings and training opportunities; in this regard, respondents referenced meeting times and costs incurred for largely voluntary representatives.

2.4.2.4 COMMUNICATION

Communication both within and across LCDCs was identified as an important element of LCDC work. Dissemination of information important to decision-making, as well as allowing sufficient time to consider this information, was raised as an important issue. The need for a central resource emerged strongly during the review, both to facilitate communication internally and between LCDCs. It was suggested that a central online communication tool, available to LCDC members between meetings, and containing relevant information for effective decision-making, would support LCDC work in all areas and make decision-making more efficient. There was some sense among respondents that a shared space was available through the Local Government Management Agency, and a more comprehensive and consistent use of that space may be sufficient.

The review highlighted that national and regional networks are in place where LCDCs can meet and learn from each other – these include, for example, the three regional LCDC Chief Officer Fora, an LCDC Chairs' Network managed by the Department, and the HSE representatives' network. Respondents felt that these should be developed further and strengthened.

The *Healthy City* concept was initiated in 1986 when the World Health Organisation's regional office for Europe founded the *Healthy Cities* movement. Its aim is to improve and promote population health through health policy, inter-sectoral collaboration and community participation. Since then, it has continued to develop and has been adopted as a tool to structure inter-sectoral collaboration and 'healthy public' policy amongst key partners in cities across the world.

Cork is a designated WHO Healthy City since January 2012. This designation requires the local authority to commit to health and develop a process and structure to support this. *Healthy Cities* is based on a recognition that population health is not merely a product of health sector activities, but is also largely determined by policies and actions beyond the health sector. *Cork Healthy City Initiative* is led by an interagency working group and, while it predates the LCDC, there are strong links and relationships between the LCDC and the *Cork Healthy City Initiative.* This was recently evidenced in the highly effective actions developed through the first round of *Healthy Ireland* funding, including Green Spaces for Health; Outdoor Gym; Cork Transport and Mobility Initiative; Cork Cancer Action Initiatives; Get Autism Activity Initiative; Community Rowing Initiative; and Cork Food Policy Initiative.

GREEN SPACES FOR HEALTH

The natural environment is a primary determinant of health and in many ways the foundation of modern public health. Work is progressing in the South Parish area of Cork City to develop a *Green Spaces for Health initiative* with the aid of *Healthy Ireland* funding through the Cork City LCDC. This will include –

- supporting a *Volunteer Gardening and Green Spaces Group* in partnership with the Lantern Project to maintain the gardens in Nano Nagle Place;
- developing an *Adopt a Box Scheme* in the area and trialling a rain harvesting system to support this if necessary; and
- developing a greenway and heritage walking trail leaflet through the South Parish.

2.5   THEME 4 – ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The surveys focused on training, preparation and management of LCDC meetings, the role of the Department and the supports available to the LCDC. The workshops looked at training, participation and the availability of information for effective LCDC meetings.

A wide range of issues and challenges emerged under this theme and, again, many were also relevant to the other themes. The issues raised included –

- time management at and between meetings;
- meeting management;
- induction of new members;
- use of sub-committees;
- managing conflicts of interest;
- quorums;
- human and financial resources;
- the role of the Department and the Inter-Departmental Group; and
- PPNs and resources to support engagement by PPN representatives.

2.5.1   REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

Responses to the online survey suggest sufficient information is available to ensure effective participation (*see Figure 10* overleaf). However, some respondents felt there was not enough time allowed at LCDC meetings to discuss local issues. The survey results suggest the volume of paperwork to be considered before and after meetings impacts on the amount of time available for considering and making decisions. Again, this was highlighted with particular reference to LEADER and SICAP; respondents indicated that most time is taken up discussing these programmes, leaving little time to consider broader, more strategic issues.

This view was supported to some extent by a review of supporting documentation, including LCDC minutes and annual reports. LCDC minutes show the majority of meeting time given over to operational and management aspects of funding programmes. LCDC annual reports also support this view, with progress reported largely in terms of programme implementation and LCDC operational issues.[3] That said, some LCDCs ring-fence time at meetings, or even set aside full meetings, to discuss the LECP and other strategic issues.[4]

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[3] This may be influenced by Department guidance on the content of annual reports.
[4] Note: some 25% of LCDC minutes were not available on line and weren't reviewed.

As outlined earlier, respondents consider LCDC administration arrangements do not fully support participation by PPN representatives. There is a sense PPN members can feel isolated because of a lack of resources to support their full participation in decision-making and training and capacity development initiatives. Moreover, respondents indicated that the timing of LCDC meetings and training or capacity building events is not ideal for members working full-time.

That said, respondents also suggested, particularly those identifying as PPN members, that communication between PPN representatives on LCDCs and the general PPN membership (and communities) was not adequate. In some cases, for example, PPN members say they are not updated on LCDC activity nor are they consulted by their LCDC representatives on issues that should be raised or discussed at LCDC meetings.

Respondents suggested the level of resources provided, financial and human, to support LCDCs was not sufficient. It was also suggested that more consistent interaction between members, between LCDCs, and with the Department would be beneficial.
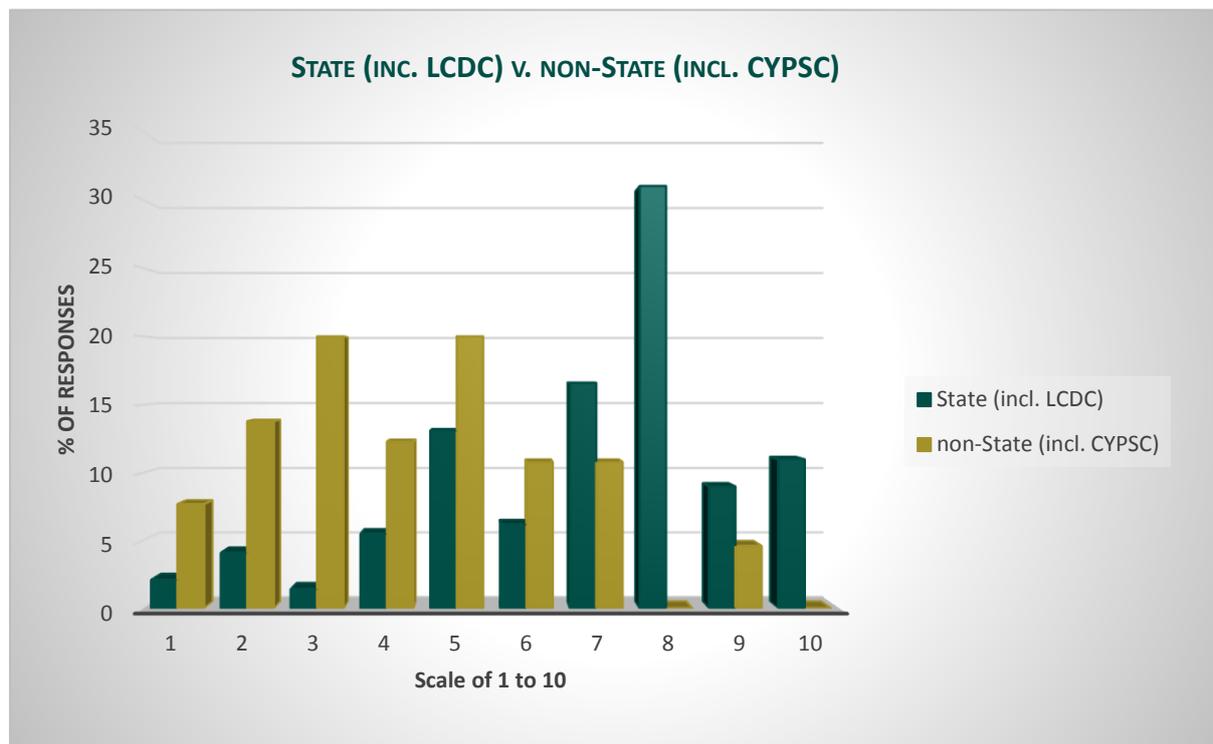
FIGURE 10: AVAILABILITY OF RELEVANT INFORMATION

2.5.1.1 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

As highlighted previously, one of the most significant findings is the lack of clarity around the LCDC's role and the roles of individual members. Respondents felt a more comprehensive training programme for LCDC members would address this and bring greater clarity for individual LCDC members, the LCDC as a whole, and local authorities.

The need to support LCDC members and for local authority management to participate fully in LCDC decision-making emerged across all of the themes. While respondents recognised the training opportunities available in most of the areas identified, many considered a more coordinated approach to developing standardised training pathways in specific areas to support cohesiveness across and between LCDCs. Areas identified as requiring greater training and support included –

- induction training for new members;
- broadening membership and inclusiveness;
- roles and responsibilities of members;
- supporting the Chairperson role and managing meetings, etc.;
- strategic understanding and approaches *vis-à-vis* LECP goals and targets, etc.;
- effective use of sub-committees;
- networking; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

SECTION 3: AMBITION FOR LCDCS – INTEGRATED PLANNING AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The proposals in *Putting People First,* for a more joined-up and coherent approach to local service planning and delivery, emerged from the considerations of an expert *Alignment Steering Group* established in 2011 for this purpose.

The steering group confirmed the need for greater coherence, supported by local government, and underpinned by a community-led or bottom-up approach. To this end, it recommended six-year local and community plans (to become LECPs incorporating the economic role of local authorities) for all city, county, and city and county council areas. The plans would –

- align the myriad local planning processes (including programme plans);
- lead to more effective planning and service delivery;
- better harness expertise and capabilities of local actors; and
- secure improved targeting of resources and delivery of bespoke solutions.

The group also recommended Socio-Economic Committees (latterly LCDCs) be established in each local authority. It considered these committees, with a mix of public and private members, the best way to drive the new plans, secure greater local collaboration, and facilitate a more strategic consideration and delivery of local services.

Finally, the steering group recommended an over-arching framework policy to underpin a whole-of-government approach to local development and community development nationally. This policy, overseen by an *Inter-Departmental Group on Local and Community Development*, would also support and champion the new LCDCs and LECPs locally.

In summary, the Alignment Steering Group recommended a single local level plan incorporating key local priorities and objectives, driven by a broad group of local socio-economic stakeholders, and underpinned by a cross-government framework to secure political and administrative buy-in nationally and locally.

3.1 DELIVERING ON THE VISION

The LCDCs' success delivering on the role and vision in *Putting People First* has been mixed, though good progress has been made. LCDCs and LECPs have brought significant change to the local landscape and will take time to properly bed-in and establish themselves.

There are already good examples of inter-agency cooperation, improved planning, and more integrated actions than otherwise would have been the case. These examples display the characteristics of high performing LCDCs and give some indication of how an effective LCDC should work. They show strong potential, an understanding of what is required to bring about meaningful collaboration and, above all, the commitment and capacity of local actors to make it happen. They show LCDCs as catalysts for improved coordination and collaboration, and for delivering a *whole that is greater than the sum of its parts* by –

- harnessing skillsets, capabilities and financial resources of their members or other local development agencies and bodies to support communities needs and priorities;

- developing and using robust local evidence bases to secure multi-agency funding arrangements and interventions to address area based disadvantage and social exclusion;

- securing stronger programme plans through their management and oversight role;

- establishing working partnerships of relevant agencies to develop cross-sectoral responses to locally identified priorities – for example, identifying the need for and providing a 'continuum of supports' to address locally identified priorities that may not happen otherwise;

- securing community participation in local decision-making and fostering community ownership – for example, facilitating community management, assessment and proposal of projects through the Public Participation Network;

- providing a robust local governance structure for deploying national initiatives requiring a strategic, collaborative and cross-sectoral approach to address local priorities; and

- facilitating and securing more sustainable approaches to service provision – for example, drawing on new or strengthened relationships to exploit local knowledge and unused or under-used local assets to support local activity and provide a catalyst for suites of services for communities.

3.2 BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE – ESTABLISHING EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES AS THE NORM

That such approaches have emerged demonstrates strongly that LCDCs and local authorities can deliver effectively on their mandate. They go beyond programme management and delivery by leveraging funding, as well as other resources and local assets, to secure a better overall quality of service for communities.

Accordingly, an approach that sees LCDCs and other local actors pursuing integrated actions developed as bespoke solutions to agreed upon local priorities should be the norm. LECPs should be plans of added value – not just a repository of actions that would have happened anyway – while LCDCs continue to develop as strategic committees of local actors driving integrated service planning and delivery, coordinating the range of local and community development resources and delivering more impactful results for communities. There is growing trust and collaboration between local government and other stakeholder sectors and this provides a solid foundation for more effective and impactful services for communities in the longer-term.

The ambition for the next three years is to embed these and other good practice approaches as the norm and as the minimum performance standard for all LCDCs and local authorities. The challenge is to provide the necessary support for both LCDCs and local authorities to deliver to this standard consistently.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

LCDCs are working country-wide to secure a more joined-up and integrated approach to local development and community development. As the early establishment and bedding-in phase concludes – and the LCDC role develops and expands – it is timely to review progress and consider those aspects that need to be strengthened to secure the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the structures.

The LCDC role has developed and expanded from an operational and strategic perspective since they began their work in 2014. The importance of this role to central Government is reflected in *Our Public Service 2020* where LCDCs are seen as "the primary vehicle[s] for collaboration between all national public service providers at local level". The Department is also fully committed to LCDCs with the statement of strategy including specific actions and objectives to support their work and develop their capacity.

While there are challenges to be addressed, respondents were generally positive about the developing role and progress of LCDCs to date and their potential to develop further. The Department acknowledges the LCDCs' progress since their creation in 2014 and is committed to implementing the recommendations of this review and supporting the role of LCDCs as envisaged in *Putting People First*, the *Local Government Reform Act 2001* and *Our Public Service 2020*.

The issues that emerged during the review ranged from day-to-day operational matters to higher level, more strategic concerns. While all these issues were important to LCDC members and other stakeholders, certain issues were raised consistently.

This report focuses primarily on the higher level or more strategic issues with recommendations to address these in the short to medium-term. At this relatively early stage of LCDC development, it is important to focus first and foremost on the more critical and strategic challenges facing LCDCs, as this will help ensure their sustainability. A more comprehensive review should be conducted post-2021 with a review every five years thereafter.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

While the views expressed by respondents were generally mixed, and might reflect the early stage of development of LCDCs, they tended to be divided along State (incl. LCDCs) and non-State (incl. CYPSCs) lines with a more positive outlook expressed generally by respondents from the State side. That said, consistent messages emerged allowing some general conclusions to be drawn.

The sustainability and the long-term success of the structures still relies heavily on central government support. While *Our Public Service 2020* shows continued Government commitment to LCDCs and the LECP framework as the primary mechanism for cross-government coordination locally, greater buy-in to the structures is required from Government Departments and State agencies. Given its policy responsibility for LCDCs, and local development and community development generally, the Department needs to take a strong role at local level to improve cross-Government buy-in at both national and local level.

Considerable progress has been made since the structures were first established in 2014. LECPs have been adopted in all local authority areas and LCDCs have taken responsibility for an increasing number of funding streams and programmes. Yet, despite this progress, LCDCs still lack identity among many stakeholders, including LCDC members, who are unclear as to the role and function of LCDCs and the roles and responsibilities of LCDC members themselves. **Improved communication, training and support from local and central government is critical in this regard, particularly *vis-à-vis* developing the experience, expertise and confidence of community representatives.**

LCDCs are achieving good levels of participation and engagement but they face some challenges. There is still pressure to increase LCDC membership beyond the current limits on the grounds current membership size and composition are barriers to participation and engagement. Consideration was given to the size of LCDCs when they were being developed, with a focus on achieving the optimum balance between a tight and effective committee on one hand and securing sufficient participation on the other. This focus remains. While there is little appetite in local authorities to expand LCDC membership as this time, there are a range of other mechanisms for securing participation and engagement beyond direct representation. **However, the prevailing view, particularly from non-State respondents, that community interests are not adequately considered or represented at LCDC level suggests these mechanisms are not as effectively or as widely used as they should be.**

As a unique construct, it was expected that LCDCs would require time to bed-in and develop effective ways of managing their business. Many are still finding their way but, while they might struggle somewhat to strike the appropriate balance between strategic and operational functions, they are

making good progress. That said, LCDCs continue to grapple with administrative issues, the most frequently cited includes meeting quorum requirements, managing conflicts of interest, managing rotation of membership, attendance, etc. **That fundamental issues continue to persist four years later suggests supports in place need to be reviewed and strengthened**

The three regional Chief Officer networks provide fora to share experience and resolve operational issues. Guidance is also available from the LCDC Support Unit in the Department and there are formal guidelines (updated in 2016) covering a range of strategic and operational issues. There were calls for additional administration support (mostly by non-State respondents), notwithstanding some €2 million provided annually to support posts in local authority community directorates. **Discussions between the Department and stakeholders over the period of the review suggest a lack of awareness of these supports at the time the review commenced.**

4.3 CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF LCDCS

The recommended actions are markedly similar to those made by the Alignment Steering Group in 2011. They recognise the continuing procedural and structural change, as well as the change of ethos and approach required of key local actors. They place a strong focus on strategic development and capacity building, and on securing political, institutional and central government buy-in.

The actions also complement actions emerging form the work of the *Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development*. For example, strengthened LCDC guidance on participation and engagement will be underpinned by actions in the forthcoming *Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector Ireland*, including –

- developing good practice in consultation, participation and inclusion by local structures including LCDCs;
- developing protocols and guidance for securing diversity of representation; and
- strengthening feedback to communities.

Capacity development and training proposals for LCDCs, their members and local authority support staff are complemented by actions in the strategy to support LCDC strategic capacity, including supporting LCDCs to engage effectively, expertly and collaboratively on local development and community development, a key element of their role. Actions will also support capacity development in areas of national policy importance such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change mitigation and Public Sector Duty.

Together, the review recommendations and the strategy actions will strengthen strategic and operational capacity of LCDCs. They will support LCDCs and local authorities to –

- more effectively deliver on their statutory roles;
- consolidate progress to date; and
- ensure the collaborative and integrated approaches being progressed by the better developed LCDCs become the standard across all LCDC areas.

By end-2021, LCDCs will be established as the primary structures at local level –

- (together with LECPs) coordinating and managing local funding, including EU supported community-led local development funding from 2020-2027;
- leading inter-agency planning and delivery of collaborative integrated actions that provide a holistic suite or continuum of supports for individuals and communities;
- (underpinned by LECPs) setting the strategic parameters for funding decisions on a greater number of local development and community development programmes (whether as decision-makers or as strategic oversight for other decision-makers);
- securing equal opportunity for interested parties to participate in local decision-making, whether through flexible management of membership, effective LCDC sub-structures or inter-agency approaches;
- facilitating and securing more sustainable approaches to service provision; and
- leading coordination and implementation of Government policy at local level including *inter alia* Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Action, Healthy Ireland, Migrant Integration, Creative Ireland, Future Jobs, and the new Action Plan for Rural Development.

As considered by the expert Alignment Steering Group, the result should be greater transparency and accountability in decision-making; decisions based on local priorities; improved local participation in planning, decision-making and delivery; combining of resources to deliver bespoke solutions to local issues; and ultimately, improved services for communities.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The long-term sustainability of LCDCs requires improved and unequivocal cross-Departmental commitment. To this end, the review has identified one priority objective and three general objectives, each with supporting recommendations. The importance of achieving these objectives will be acknowledged in the emerging *Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland*, which includes a specific action to implement the recommendations of this review.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE	Securing cross-Government commitment to Local Community Development Committees and underpinning governance arrangements.
RECOMMENDATION 1	The Department of Rural and Community Development should take a stronger role at national level, leading on cross-government engagement with local development and community development and securing greater national and local buy-in to the nascent structures. This should include, in the first instance, securing a re-statement of intent to underpin cross-government commitment to LCDCs as envisaged in *Putting People First* and provided for in the *Local Government Reform Act 2014*.
PRIORITY: High RESPONSIBLE BODY: DRCD TIMELINE: Q4 2019	
RECOMMENDATION 2	A further review should be carried in 2021 with a review every five years thereafter.
PRIORITY: Medium RESPONSIBLE BODY: DRCD TIMELINE: Q4 2021	

OBJECTIVE 1	**Effective communication of the LCDC role to relevant local and national stakeholders.**

RECOMMENDATION 3:	Develop a programme of awareness at national and local level to inform all interested parties about the LCDC and its role and function.
PRIORITY: Medium	**RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD and Local authorities **TIMELINE:** Q1 2020

RECOMMENDATION 4:	Develop a shared space or online communication tool, as well as an information sharing repository and induction packs.
PRIORITY: Medium	**RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD, LGMA and local authorities **TIMELINE:** Q4 2019

RECOMMENDATION 5:	Establish an annual LCDC networking event to include presentation of best practice from an operational and project perspective.
PRIORITY: High	**RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD **TIMELINE:** Q3 2019

OBJECTIVE 2	**Develop a comprehensive training and support programme for LCDC Chief Officers, LCDC members and local authority support staff.**

RECOMMENDATION 6:	Develop and commission training modules for LCDC members and support staff, in consultation and partnership with stakeholder sectors, on – - strategic thinking and planning, - securing meaningful and sustainable engagement with communities, - the role and functions of the LCDC, including the critical role of the LECP in these functions, and - effective interagency working.
PRIORITY: High	**RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD and local authorities **TIMELINE:** Q4 2019

RECOMMENDATION 7:	Develop and commission training for LCDC Chief Officers, support staff and Chairs on –
	- effective governance, including managing membership, rotation of members, conflicts of interest, gender balance and equality proofing, and - effective management of meetings, including mechanisms for securing greater support for, engagement with and participation in LCDC decision-making.
PRIORITY: Medium	**RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD and local authorities **TIMELINE:** Q4 2019

OBJECTIVE 3	**Streamlined support systems for LCDCs to ensure effective programme delivery and impact monitoring.**
RECOMMENDATION 8:	Consider options for a central resource to support and strengthen the developing LCDC and LECP functions in local government.
PRIORITY: High **RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD, LGMA and local authorities **TIMELINE:** Q4 2020	
RECOMMENDATION 9:	Audit support for LCDCs to determine the optimum resources required to support their work.
PRIORITY: Medium **RESPONSIBLE BODY:** LGMA and local authorities **TIMELINE:** Q1 2020	
RECOMMENDATION 10:	Issue guidelines for the implementation and monitoring of LECPs and provide appropriate training.
PRIORITY: High **RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD **TIMELINE:** Q4 2019	
RECOMMENDATION 11:	Align timelines for various funding programmes and provide a schedule of funding deadlines to assist LCDCs plan their work.
PRIORITY: High **RESPONSIBLE BODY:** DRCD **TIMELINE:** Q1 2020	

RECOMMENDATION 12:	Carry out a full review of the LCDC guidelines in the context of the findings of this review.	
PRIORITY: Medium	RESPONSIBLE BODY: DRCD	TIMELINE: Q2 2020

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference – Review of LCDCs

CONTEXT

Proposals for a more joined-up and integrated approach to planning, oversight and management of local and community development are set out in *Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government*, the Government's policy document on local government reform and development (October 2012). These proposals reflect the deliberations of an expert Alignment Steering Group established for this purpose.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 gives effect to the Alignment Steering Group's recommendations. It provides for the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in all local authority areas and the development and implementation of six-year Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) by local authorities (economic elements) and LCDCs (community elements).

LCDCs have been established in all 31 local authority areas (33 LCDCs, one in each local authority with the exception of County Cork with three LCDCs). They comprise 15 to 21 members depending on local circumstances. Members are drawn from both the public and private sectors, with the balance of membership weighted in favour of the private sector (minimum 51%).

OBJECTIVE OF THE REVIEW

LCDCs have been operational for 3 years and have been involved in programme management, the creation, adoption and early implementation of LECPs and are going through the first round of rotation of membership. In this context, a review of the structures is considered timely.

The purpose of the review is threefold; firstly, to establish an understanding of the LCDC landscape; secondly, to identify opportunities for strengthening and enhancing LCDCs; and finally to make recommendations to build on existing strengths and to support the future development of LCDCs. The overall objective is to inform the ongoing development and strengthening of the structures – this may include proposals for capacity building. Recommendations arising from the review may ultimately result in changes to the legislation governing the LCDCs.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

It is intended to carry out a broad review of the LCDC framework covering –

GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

The review will consider the LCDCs' decision-making capacity and processes, the appropriateness of the regulatory framework underpinning the structures and the extent to which these facilitate collaborative working, the support and management role of local authorities, reporting and accountability arrangements and other relevant governance issues such as transparency and risk management. The review will also look at issues related to membership, sectoral representation, participation, collaboration and local partnerships and the extent and effectiveness of the regional dimension to the structures.

STRATEGIC EFFECTIVENESS

LCDCs are charged with bringing a more strategic approach to the planning, management and delivery of the broad range of local and community development interventions and programmes. The aim is to secure greater coordination of activity across local bodies and funders and, accordingly, securing a better targeting of resources locally.   Developing, overseeing and implementing the community elements of the LECP is central to their work.

Accordingly, the review will consider the extent to which a more collaborative approach has been developed in planning and delivery arrangements. Among other things, it will look at the joint development and delivery of actions by local actors, whether these have delivered a more efficient use of resources, and if overlap and duplication of effort and funding has been reduced.

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A participative, 'bottom-up' approach is a key feature of local, community and rural development – meaningful community participation in identifying priorities and solutions, shaping local initiatives and a vision for those communities is important and, therefore, participation and involvement of communities is important. Participation by those potentially affected by decisions should be pursued and facilitated.

The review will consider the formal arrangements that are and should be in place to facilitate on-going citizen and community engagement with the work of the LCDC and whether public participation processes provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful and accessible manner and whether an awareness of the work of LCDCs has been communicated effectively and widely.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The review will examine the extent of support required by LCDCs and assess the level of need for capacity building within the system. It will examine effectiveness of the supports available to the LCDC with a focus on the role of the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and Inter-Departmental Group on Local and Community Development with a view to establishing the supports required for the long term development of LCDCs. At a local level, the review will explore the extent of the preparatory work carried out in advance of meetings, the communications processes around meetings, the follow up on actions, the monitoring of progress, whether training needs are being handled locally.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The review will use both primary and secondary data including: –

- documentation such as the LCDC annual reports, LCDC meeting minutes and other relevant reports and documents,
- as appropriate, questionnaires, on-line surveys and one-to-one interviews with stakeholders, and,
- workshops with key stakeholders.

The review will culminate in a report outlining the key findings and conclusions and setting out recommendations for future development of the structures.

REVIEW STEERING GROUP

A Steering Group will be established to oversee the review. The Group will advise on the scope, planning, implementation and expected outcomes from of the review. To this end the, the Steering Group will monitor progress generally and will –

- advise on the relevant areas to be covered, and the expected outcomes of the review, and agree the terms of reference,
- advise on, and agree, the review plan, milestones (steering committee meetings) and timeframe,
- advise on, and agree, mechanisms for consultation and participation in the development and implementation of the review and oversee implementation of these processes,
- advise on the format, information sources, collection, collation and presentation,
- review and advise on findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from the review, and

- agree a final report for submission to the Management Board of DRCD.

MEMBERSHIP

The Steering Group will comprise eight members and will be led by an external Chair. Members will comprise –

- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (one member as Chair)
- Department of Rural Development and Community Development (two members),
- Local authorities (three members)
- North West Regional Assembly (one member) and
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Head of Internal Audit, consulting member).

Appendix 2: Membership of the Review Steering Group

The Steering Group membership comprises –

- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (one member and Chair),

- Department of Rural Development and Community Development (two members),

- local authorities (three members),

- regional assemblies (Northern and Western Regional Assembly) (one member),

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Head of Internal Audit) (consulting member), and community representative (one member).

Appendix 3: Stakeholders for Online Survey

Local Authority Chief Executives

LCDC Chief Officers

LCDC Chairs

Inter Departmental Group on Local and Community Development

Public Participation Networks

Association of Irish Local Government (representative body for local elected members)

Cross Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development

National Women's Council of Ireland

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Children and Young Peoples Services Committees

Irish Local Development Network

Community and Voluntary Pillar Organisations

Regional Assemblies

Appendix 4: General LCDC Questionnaire

Department of Rural and Community Development

An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail

LCDC Review Questionnaire

Participation and Engagement

This Survey aims to gain a better understanding of how you feel your LCDC is working. The total survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. It will examine four distinct categories, Participation and Engagement, Governance and Structure, Strategic Effectiveness, and Administration Support and Development.

This section is specifically asking about Participation and Engagement - Bottom up approach, Community participation, Formal arrangements for working with the LCDC, and Information accessibility etc.

* 1. Which of the following applies to you

	Organisation affiliation
Please select one	⇕

* 2. Please rate your LCDC with regard to 'bottom up' approach to community and local government. On a scale of 1 (Extremely low) to 10 (Extremely high)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please select one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 3. Please rate your LCDC in relation to participation of all sectors & concerned parties, is everyone represented? On a scale of 1 (No participation) to 10 (Very high participation)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please select one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 4. Is there equality proofing on your LCDC?

	No	Yes	Don't Know
Please choose, One	○	○	○

1

* 5. Do you feel that it is easy for the community to engage with your LCDC?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

* 6. Do you feel relevant information is available for you to participate in a meaningful way? On a scale of 1 (Not available) to 10 (Available)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 7. Based on your previous answers in this section, please describe Participation and Engagement within the LCDC structure?

2

Governance and Structure

This section deals with questions about Governance and Structure with in the LCDC's. Governance and Structure involves Decision making capacity, how Appropriately structured the committee is, Reporting, Accountability, Membership and Collaboration with local partnerships.

* 8. Would you say the Public/Private split in LCDC membership is appropriate? Using the scale 1 (Inappropriate) to 10 (Very appropriate)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please select one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 9. Do you feel the LCDC is able to make the correct decisions? Using the Scale 1 (Poor) to 10 (Excellent)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 10. How would you rate the LCDC's progress in achieving the objectives of its Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)? Using a Scale 1 (Poor) to 10 (Excellent)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 11. Do you feel that interested parties who are not represented on the LCDC have an opportunity to access the Committee?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

* 12. Based on the description of this section, please comment on how you feel your LCDC performs in terms of Governance and Structure?

[ ]

3

Strategic Effectiveness

This section deals with the theme of Strategic Effectiveness. A strategic approach would result in smoother decision making, coordinated planning, better use of resources and the achievement of LECP objectives.

* 13. Is your LCDC co-ordinating activity across local bodies and funders working within your area?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

* 14. Are local resources being deployed more efficiently since the formation of your LCDC?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

* 15. Are you aware of your LECP targets?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

* 16. Do you feel you actively contribute to the LCDC meeting its LECP targets?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

* 17. Is there a reduction in overlap and duplication of tasks or work carried out?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	○	○

4

* 18. When considering 'strategic effectiveness' within LCDCs, please comment on how you feel the LCDC has delivered on (a) a more efficient use of resources, (b) reduction on duplication of effort and any (c) any cost saving?

5

Administration Support and Development

When completing this section please consider your answers from the perspective of (1) Administration support and development (2) Capacity building - support available from the local authority and/or the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) to LCDC members (3) Planning supports required for 'long term' development of LCDCs, Meetings, Preparation & Communication and follow up.

* 19. Do you feel you have sufficient training to carry out your role? On a scale of 1 (There is no training) to 10 (There is too much training)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 20. Are meetings run effectively and efficiently, is there advance preparation and follow up after? On a scale of 1 (No preparatory work done) to 10 (Meetings are run very well)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 21. Do you see any connection between The Department of Rural and Community Development and your Local Community Development Committee? On a scale of 1 (There is no connection) to 10 (There is a very strong connection)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 22. Do you believe your LCDC has the appropriate support it needs to function efficiently?

	No	Yes
Please choose, No or Yes	◯	◯

6

* 23. Do you get a sense that long term goals are more achievable now, than before LCDCs?

	No	Yes
Please choose No or Yes	◯	◯

* 24. Do you feel your LCDC is easy to contribute to and that you are heard? On a scale of 1 (No communication) to 10 (Open and honest communication)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please choose one	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 25. When considering Administrative Support and Development within the LCDC please comment on how you feel this supports you in delivering your LECP objectives?

7

APPENDIX 5: HSE REPRESENTATIVES QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle a number on the scale – 1 to 10 as appropriate

1. **Is the number of members of your LCDC adequate?**

Inadequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Adequate

Please Explain

2. **Is the public/private split in LCDC membership appropriate?**

Inadequate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Adequate

Please Explain

3. **Are relevant state agencies represented adequately?**

Not Adequate   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Adequate

Please Explain

4. Is the community sector adequately represented?

Not Represented   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Fully Represented

⟵———————————————⟶

Please Explain

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                           │
│                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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5. Does the issue of conflict of interest cause disruption to LCDC meetings?

Not at All   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Yes A Lot

⟵———————————————⟶

Please Explain

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                           │
│                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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6. Is it difficult to form a Quorum for LCDC decisions?

Very Difficult   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Not Difficult

⟵———————————————⟶

Please Explain

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                           │
│                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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7. How would you rate the decision making capacity of your LCDC?

Poor   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Excellent

⟵———————————————⟶

Please Explain

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                           │
│                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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8. **To what extent do you consider your LCDC appropriately managed and supported by the local authority?**

Not Supported   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Highly Supported

Please Explain

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9. **How do you rate the LCDCs approach in relation to reporting on its progress in the achievement of its objectives?**

Poor   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Excellent

Please Explain

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10. **How do you rate the LCDCs in relation to publicising its progress?**

Poor   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Excellent

Please Explain

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11. How much has the LCDC facilitated a more joined up approach to the implementation of programmes and interventions?

Not Joined Up   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Joined Up
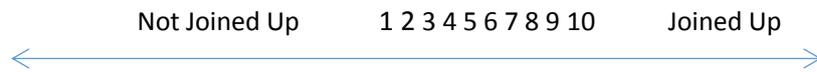
Give an Example

12. How would you describe the impact the LCDC has on local issues?

Low Impact   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Large Impact
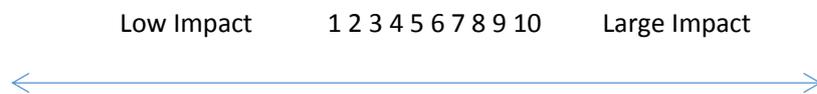
Please Explain

13. To what extent is the LCDC focused on achieving LECP objectives?

Not LECP Focused 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   LECP Focused

Please Explain

14. Rate your LCDC under the following:

    a. Level of community participation

Not so Involved   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Very Involved
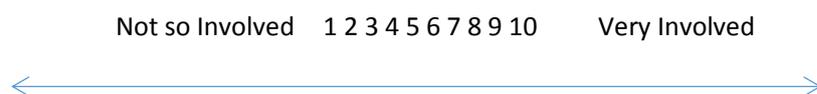
    b. Bottom up approach to community and local development

Difficult to approach   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Listens to Members

c. Quality of process of engagement with communities

Not so Proactive   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Very Proactive

Please provide some examples in support of your scores

15. Coordination at a local level is the purpose of the LCDCs. Please rate the extent of your collaboration with your fellow LCDC members?

Closed and Guarded   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Open Honest
Communication

Please give examples

16. It is important that your parent organisation understands the work of the LCDC and allows you to commit to your role on the LCDC. Please rate the extent of support your parent organisation provides you in carrying out your LCDC role?

Needs a lot of improvement   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Very Supportive

Please comment on what could be done to change/improve

17. Are you satisfied with capacity building/training opportunities made available to you to help you carry out your LCDC role?

Not Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Satisfied

Please submit your suggestions for improvements.

18. Describe the quality of LCDC meetings under the following headings?

- Administration, Communication, Preparation for meetings.

Room for Improvement   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Excellent
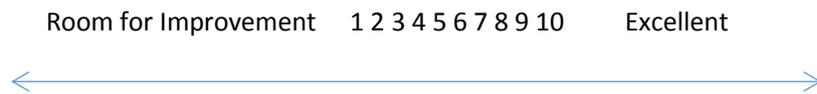
Please comment

- The extent to which actions are followed up between meetings.

Needs Improvement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Excellent Preparation

Please comment

- The extent to which progress on LECP implementation is monitored and reported

Not Discussed   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Regular updates

Please comment

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19. **LCDCs collaborate between national public service providers and the development interventions at local level. How effective is your LCDC supporting national health priorities with local actions?**

Ineffective   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Very effective

Please provide an example in support of your score

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20. **As a representative for a national agency, your work is central to the success of the LCDC. Do you see the LCDC as a critical element of your work? 1 not critical-10 critical.**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please explain

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21. **Are the HSE's objectives given appropriate priority by the LCDC?**

Please answer with an example to support your view

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22. **Does the turnover of HSE reps impact negatively on the work of the LCDC?**

Please Explain

[   ]
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23. Are you as a member of an LCDC making a positive contribution to local and community development in your area?

Not so Much   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Very Positive

Please support your view with example(s)

[   ]

Gender Questions

24. Is there reference to and evidence of equality proofing in your LECP?

Please pick one – No or Yes

Give examples

[   ]
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25. Does the community element of your LECP contain actions that specifically name women and/or men as target groups?

Please pick one – No or Yes

Give specific examples

[   ]