

strategic plan 2014 - 2017



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welcome to Pobal's strategic plan 2014– 2017

This document outlines Pobal's work and the context that informed our Strategic Plan. Most importantly, it shares with you our Vision, Mission, strategic aims and objectives, and demonstrates the alignment between our Strategic Plan and our business planning process.

Pobal's work

Pobal was established in 1992 as Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) and was set up as an intermediary company working on behalf of Government to support local social and economic development in Ireland. Over time, our work has evolved in parallel with developments in Government policy and the changing needs of the groups and communities we serve. In 2005, the company name changed to Pobal.

We are a unique intermediary organisation straddling Government departments and local beneficiaries. We have a recognised expertise in programme development and management, project assessment, financial management and accountability, compliance, audit and in supporting beneficiary groups to manage and implement projects at local level. Our activities assist Government to support individuals, groups and communities by providing supports at various stages in the life-cycle when it is most critically needed and can have greatest impact. We manage a range of national and cross border programmes that address peace-building, migration, social exclusion, equality and urban and rural development.

Our intermediary position enables us to disseminate and share our findings from programme implementation, monitoring and analysis at the local level, back into regional and national structures to strengthen practice and influence evidence-informed policymaking.

Summary of Pobal's Strategic Plan 2014 - 2017

Over the course of this Strategic Plan Pobal will adapt to prevailing circumstances, retaining and building on what is most distinctive, valuable and relevant about Pobal, namely:

- Our work to support local communities to realise positive outcomes from the implementation of programmes and services;
- Our resourcing of Government and our partners through sharing data and analysis on the performance of our programmes;
- Our track record and expertise in financial governance and accountability and the standards we pursue through to project delivery at community level;

- Our capacity to plan and deliver complex and cost effective programmes on a national and transnational basis;
- Our accumulated knowledge and networks across varied policy, thematic and sectoral areas and issues;
- Our internal infrastructure of: systems; procedures; business processes; ICT competencies; and the skills and knowledge of our staff and Board;
- Our commitment to our various stakeholders to continuously review, adapt and enhance our Service Offer and our beneficiary experience;
- Our ability to contribute evidence-informed learning to assist the implementation of good practice and policy-making.

the policy context informing our strategic plan

The work of Pobal is informed by a number of key Government documents as part of the Programme for Government and by the Europe 2020 strategy. The primary ones include:

- **Government for National Recovery 2011-2016** sets out a series of objectives for Ireland's future, containing commitments to make reforms that span all areas of Government activity including social welfare, work and training, health, equality and education. The direction outlined has shaped Government policy and has been a key determinant in shaping Pobal's strategic priorities.
- **Annual Action Plan for Jobs** is designed to help achieve the ambition that Ireland be the best small country in the world in which to do business by 2016. It outlines the need to create a vibrant environment where new enterprises can flourish to create a sustainable and growing economy that provides jobs and opportunities.
- **Pathways to Work** is an action plan to fight long-term unemployment and it highlights that tackling unemployment remains a Government priority. It works alongside the annual Action Plans for Jobs. Both documents inform Pobal's approach to employment and upskilling measures within its programmes, and to strengthening supports in finding and staying in employment.
- **Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020** is the first overarching national policy framework for children and young people aged from birth to 24 years and will be implemented by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in collaboration with all Government departments and key State agencies. The vision of the Framework is to work towards achieving five outcomes identified as most important for children and young people in Ireland.
- **The Comprehensive Review of Expenditure** is a detailed plan identifying where potential savings can be made across Government departments as part of the drive to cut public sector expenditure and improve efficiency. Pobal's Strategic Plan takes cognisance of the need to provide value for money while improving efficiencies and the quality of service delivery.
- **Putting People First** sets out to achieve an ambitious overhaul of regional and local government. A key element which impacts Pobal's work is the alignment process which aims to integrate local development and local government.
- **Europe 2020** is a 10-year strategy proposed by the European Commission in 2010 for the advancement of the economy of the European Union. It aims at "smart, sustainable, inclusive growth" with greater coordination of national and European policy. It identifies five headline targets under which the European Union should boost growth and employment. Those most relevant to our Strategic Plan are raising the employment rate; reducing the share of early school leavers; increasing the share of the population with tertiary education and; reducing the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines.

the general context informing our strategic plan

The external environment in which Pobal works has continued to change since the implementation of our 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. These changes present both challenges and opportunities for the successful implementation of our 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. In parallel, our internal environment also continues to change as we work to enhance the quality of our service, our performance and our relationships with our various stakeholders. Over the lifetime of this Strategic Plan, a central challenge for the Board and staff of Pobal will be to successfully manage the inter-relationship between change and stability within both operating environments.

A number of important contextual changes and developments have informed this Strategic Plan.

Greater emphasis on value for money

Ireland has emerged from the Troika bailout package and indicators suggest we are on the road to recovery¹. There is now an increased emphasis on realising value for money, demonstrating outcomes, ensuring public monies are spent transparently and administration costs are as low as possible. In this regard, external service delivery is an important part of the Government's public service reform agenda. This aims to achieve cost savings and allow Departments to focus on core activities and innovation in service delivery. Against this backdrop of recovery, many voluntary and community groups are struggling to remain financially viable. They require continued support from Government and Pobal in terms of capacity-building, resourcing and governance.

Long-term unemployment and increased emphasis on skills

Unemployment is now starting to recede, however, long-term unemployment remains a critical issue as over 50% of all people unemployed, are long-term unemployed². Extended lengths of unemployment can have a detrimental effect on the quality of an individual's life across a range of indicators. It can also negatively impact their chances of finding employment. Acquiring skills and upskilling play a critical role in equipping individuals to return to work and for long-term labour market success, which, in turn, provides a gateway out of poverty.

Poverty and urban-rural divide

Irish society has experienced an increase in poverty and social exclusion in recent years. Both rural and urban communities have been adversely impacted by the recession, but in different ways. Key urban centres such as Dublin, Cork and Galway are seeing resurgence in employment in certain districts with stubborn pockets of deprivation remaining in others. Many smaller urban hubs and rural areas continue to be badly affected as a result of the 'talent flight' of educated youth, the closure of services and high unemployment and underemployment. All of this contributes to the experience of 'rural isolation' and social exclusion.

Investment in the early years' sector

Ireland's early years' education and childcare sector has traditionally been underdeveloped. However, in recent years the sector has benefitted from a significant investment of resources with a shift in emphasis from infrastructure to quality service provision, including workforce development. In the last decade in particular, Government working collaboratively with other partners, has embedded the need for evidence-informed approaches to produce successful outcomes for children, young people and families.

¹ ESRI: Quarterly Economic Commentary, Spring, 2014

² Quarterly National Household Survey, Quarter 1, 2014

the general context

informing our

strategic plan

continued

Joined-up data sharing to improve customer experience

An area of increasing attention across Government and the public sector is the need to standardise, rationalise and consolidate ICT back-office systems. Data collection and data sharing is seen as a key principle in the drive to improve service delivery and customer experience. Pobal has and will continue to work to enhance our data gathering, analysis and dissemination mechanisms and to provide strategic data to our various stakeholders, in particular our funders. It is our ambition that this will contribute to joined-up planning and decision-making about resource allocation. This in turn will help to achieve the greatest impact from Government investment and contribute to positive social outcomes for disadvantaged communities.

Wide ranging structural reforms

A significant number of structural reforms are underway in Ireland in a range of areas, including the establishment of Intreo, SOLAS, Education and Training Boards and TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency. Of particular relevance to our forthcoming work is the strengthened alignment between local government and local development.

Pobal's Board and staff are a key resource

The competency and adaptability of the Board and staff of Pobal are key to the successful implementation of our Strategic Plan. The efficiency and effectiveness of our organisational structures, culture and business processes are also important determinants of our success. Mindful of this, we will draw on the knowledge, competency and strategic acumen of our Board to give direction to our work over the lifetime of this Strategic Plan. We will complete our internal restructuring and continue to enhance our ICT infrastructure and our business systems and processes to make them more efficient, accessible and user-friendly. We will continue to invest in the learning and development needs of our staff. We will create a working environment that stimulates and motivates staff in their performance, adaptability and customer service, so that we can continuously improve our Service Offer to our significant and varied stakeholders.

vision

Pobal believes that individuals, groups and communities should be supported to reach their potential, have their views heard and valued and their rights respected. Pobal will use its experience and expertise to contribute to positive outcomes for individuals, groups and communities through the Programmes we manage on behalf of Government, EU and other partners.

mission

Pobal's Mission is to work on behalf of Government and in partnership with our various stakeholders to improve outcomes, particularly for people experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion. We will use our programme management experience to bring an integrated approach to programme design, monitoring and delivery. We will support our beneficiary groups to achieve positive outcomes for individuals, groups and communities and we will work to achieve value for money for Government.

operating principles

Pobal's programme management on behalf of Government is based on nine operating principles.

- 1) We provide additional supports to enhance social inclusion and equality for those individuals, groups and communities that are most marginalised;
- 2) We support Government to implement policy and enhance service delivery by making data and evidence-informed lessons from our programmes available as a resource;
- 3) We target supports and resources to contribute to positive social change;
- 4) We encourage and are open to hearing the views of our beneficiaries and availing of their local knowledge and expertise;
- 5) Our programme delivery and service models reflect the ethos and values of our Vision and Mission;
- 6) Our financial, legal and governance activities are robust, accountable and transparent;
- 7) Our administrative costs are kept to a minimum while maintaining quality and prioritising spending on local service delivery;
- 8) We manage new programmes / business consistent with our Mission, the changing needs of our stakeholders and our organisational capacity;
- 9) We are a learning organisation supporting, valuing and capacity-building our Board and staff as key resources in the successful delivery of our service and the sustainability of our organisation.

strategic aims

- 1) Support efficient and effective programme delivery and outcomes for individuals, groups and communities.
- 2) Enhance the capacity of our staff and our business systems to improve performance and effectiveness.
- 3) Add value to Government service development and implementation.

strategic objectives

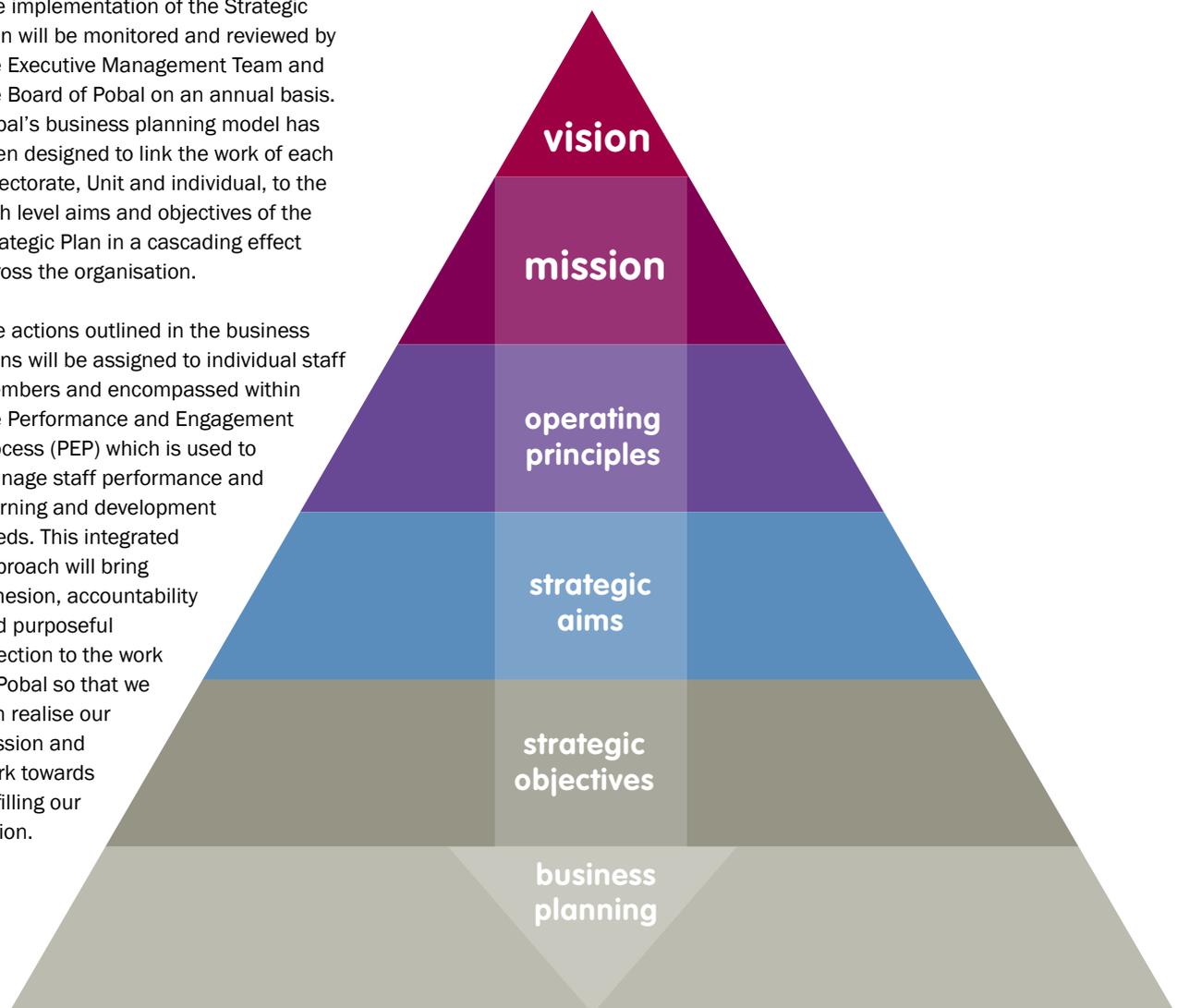
- Rigorous assessment of our programmes to identify added-value and outcomes at community level, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- High quality planning, design, implementation and monitoring to support effective programme delivery.
- Developing new and innovative approaches/models to tackle disadvantage and to enhance service delivery to our beneficiaries.
- Robust financial management and procurement to ensure transparency and accountability for all funds managed by and allocated through Pobal.
- Regular review of our management systems and procedures to reduce risk to our funders, Board, staff and communities, including making strategic choices about the management of new programmes/business.
- Enhancing and strengthening our relationship management with our beneficiaries and assisting them to be fully compliant with their contractual obligations.
- Working to include beneficiary perspectives' in the design and implementation of our programmes, including devising Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Annual Board reviews of the strategic direction of Pobal including structures, work practices and the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- Strengthening the leadership and performance of Pobal's Board and staff, particularly those in key management roles.
- Investing in the learning and development needs of staff with a focus on skills, knowledge, transferable competencies, workforce planning and building resilience.
- Continuously reviewing and updating communication channels and business systems and processes to improve user-experience and to enhance the quality of service to all Pobal's stakeholders.
- Balancing the management of new programmes with existing work requirements in a way that sustains the organisation and its fidelity to its Mission.
- Informing good practice and resource and service planning by making data analysis and research findings available to various audiences in a format that best meets their needs.
- Promoting the mainstreaming of best practice internally and within our beneficiary organisations.
- Working across Government Departments and with our partners to maintain and share the integrated view that informs Pobal's work.
- Assessing the outcomes of programmes in line with their funding criteria.
- Using our experience, where appropriate, to inform relevant policy-making.

implementation and delivery of our strategic plan

The aims and objectives of our Strategic Plan will inform and be reflected in the annual business plans produced by each Directorate. These plans will set out specific targets for each Directorate on an annual basis. The aggregation of these targets across the four Directorates will ensure that the aims and objectives are delivered annually and over the life-span of the Strategic Plan.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Executive Management Team and the Board of Pobal on an annual basis. Pobal's business planning model has been designed to link the work of each Directorate, Unit and individual, to the high level aims and objectives of the Strategic Plan in a cascading effect across the organisation.

The actions outlined in the business plans will be assigned to individual staff members and encompassed within the Performance and Engagement process (PEP) which is used to manage staff performance and learning and development needs. This integrated approach will bring cohesion, accountability and purposeful direction to the work of Pobal so that we can realise our Mission and work towards fulfilling our Vision.





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