



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council



Shaping Leitrim 2026–2036

Economic Development & Skills Strategy

2026– 2036

www.leitrim.ie



FOREWORD

Shaping Leitrim, a place-based response to economic and skills development

We are delighted to introduce Shaping Leitrim 2026–2036, County Leitrim's first Place-Based and Place-Driven Economic Development and Skills Strategy. Developed through the leadership of the Leitrim Economic Forum, and with the strategic support and partnership of Leitrim County Council and Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB), this strategy reflects a shared commitment to the county's future and provides a roadmap for strengthening our economy, developing our workforce and creating sustainable opportunities over the coming decade.

The Leitrim Economic Forum brings together the key organisations and leaders shaping economic and skills development across the county and wider region. It includes representatives from enterprise and business, major employers, education and training providers, development agencies, local government and community stakeholders. Through this collaborative approach, the strategy reflects a shared understanding of both the opportunities and challenges facing Leitrim and a collective commitment to delivering meaningful change.

Leitrim is a county with strong foundations and growing confidence. We have experienced significant population growth in recent years, welcomed new residents and businesses, and strengthened our reputation as a place that offers an exceptional quality of life, a strong sense of community, and the opportunity to live and work in a vibrant rural county. Our economy is supported by resilient indigenous enterprise, entrepreneurs and multi-national companies trading globally.

We also recognise the challenges that must be addressed if we are to realise our full potential. Housing availability, transport connectivity, workforce development and retention, skills shortages and demographic change all influence our future competitiveness. This strategy responds by focusing on practical, achievable actions that support enterprise growth, strengthen the talent pipeline, encourages innovation, and stimulates greater collaboration across the county and region.

Above all, this strategy is about people. It is about creating opportunities for our young people, supporting businesses to grow, attracting talent, and ensuring that the benefits of economic success are shared across Leitrim's towns, villages and rural communities.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy. We look forward to working with our partners through the Leitrim Economic Forum to deliver this shared vision for a more connected, skilled, resilient and prosperous Leitrim.



Cllr. Mary Bohan

Cathaoirleach, Leitrim County Council



Joseph Gilhooly

Chief Executive, Leitrim County Council



Tom Grady

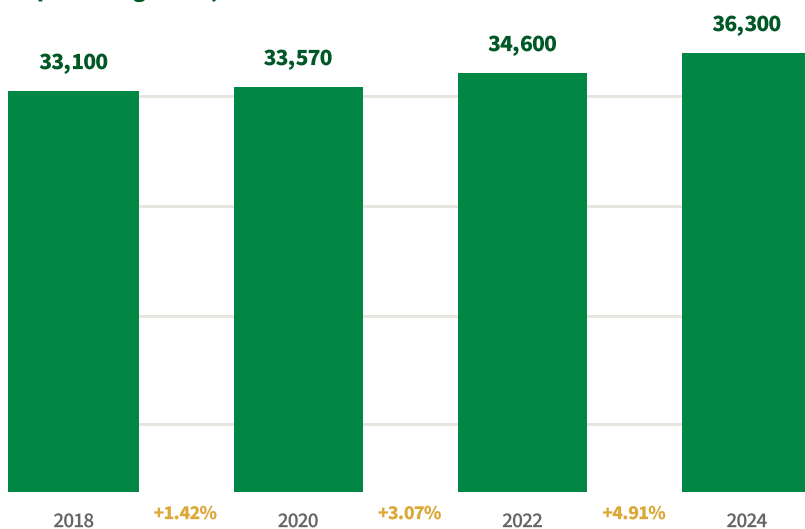
Chief Executive Mayo Sligo Leitrim
Education and Training Board

LEITRIM AT A GLANCE

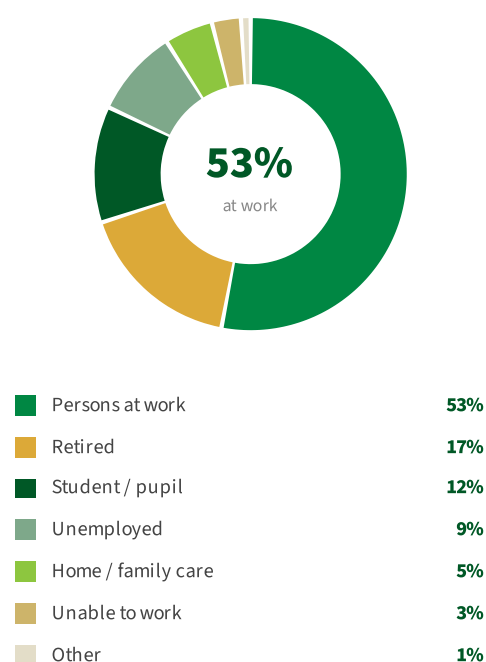
A County growing at pace

County Leitrim's population grew from 33,100 in 2018 to 36,300 in 2024 — a 9.7% increase, the fourth-highest growth rate in the State. Growth has accelerated over the period, driven by inward migration rather than births. That momentum is not guaranteed: the Border Region is projected to grow well below the national average to 2036.

Population growth, 2018–2024



Status of population aged 15+



€24,960

average disposable income — 17% below the national average of €30,139



€137

average weekly private rent, versus €273 nationally (2022)



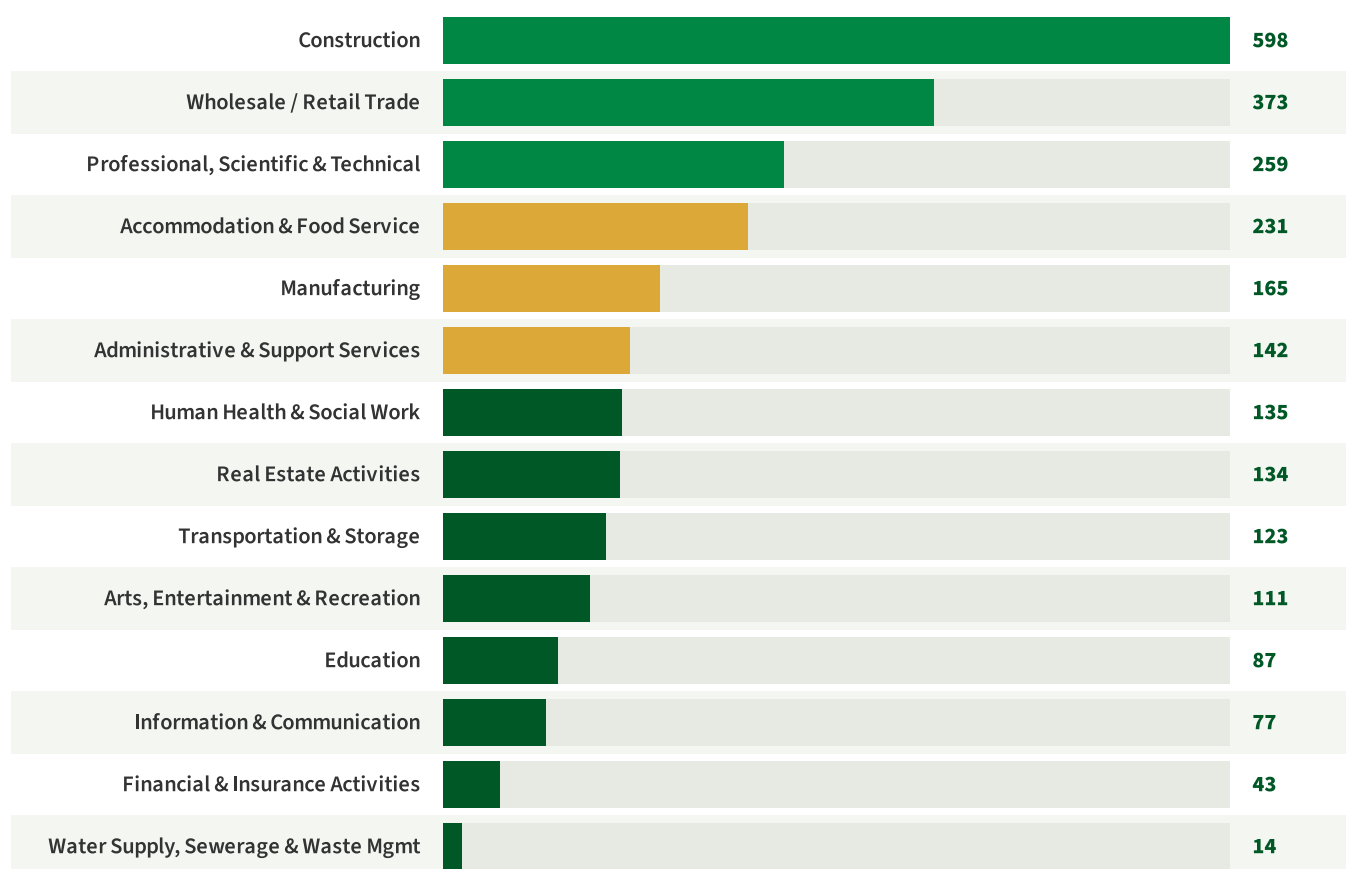
35.4%

third-level attainment, versus 39.3% nationally

ENTERPRISE & SECTOR STRUCTURE

A construction-led micro-enterprise economy

95% of Leitrim's businesses employ fewer than ten people. Construction accounts for the largest number of active enterprises in the county, followed by wholesale/retail trade and professional, scientific and technical activities.



Active enterprises by sector, Leitrim

PRIORITY SECTORS BY EMPLOYMENT

4.1%

of all employment is medical devices manufacturing — a 2024/25 cluster expansion confirms live investor confidence

13.9%

professional & business services, anchored by Avant Money and Payac in Carrick on Shannon

8.9%

agri-food & innovation, led by the Drumshanbo cluster and the new Leitrim Food Zone

WHAT THE CONSULTATION FOUND

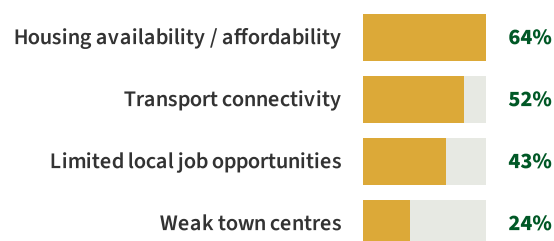
Insights from those leading delivery

Gathered through an online survey, one-to-one interviews with enterprise, education and State stakeholders, and thematic workshops held across local government, private-sector employers, education and training providers, representative bodies and State agencies.

Strongest assets identified



Biggest barriers identified



“The dominant narrative to be challenged was the sense that young people must leave Leitrim to succeed” — cited by 58% of respondents.

Looking ahead, hospitality and tourism topped the list of future skills priorities, followed by business and entrepreneurship, and digital, green/retrofit and construction skills.



STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

“Isolation is the central problem”

STRENGTHS

Medical devices manufacturing accounts for 4.1% of all employment in the county — a share disproportionate to Leitrim's size — and a 2024/25 cluster expansion shows investor confidence is current, not a legacy of the past. Financial and professional services carry similar depth: Avant Money and Payac, both based in Carrick on Shannon, demonstrate that knowledge-economy enterprise can be built and retained in a rural county. Quality of life itself was rated Leitrim's strongest asset by 84% of stakeholders, with an average satisfaction score of 4.0 out of 5 — the highest of any dimension measured.



4.0/5

quality of life satisfaction — highest-rated dimension



85.4%

of workforce has no practical alternative to the car

CHALLENGES

Housing is the most acute constraint: the lowest-rated dimension in the entire consultation, at 2.3 out of 5, and the single most-cited barrier to growth. Transport compounds it — the Northwest is the only region in Ireland without motorway access, and 85.4% of Leitrim's workforce has no practical alternative to the car. The county has no third-level institution of its own, and third-level attainment sits four points below the national average as a result. Leitrim was also the only county in the Northern and Western Region to record an employment decline in 2024.



2.3/5

housing satisfaction — lowest-rated dimension

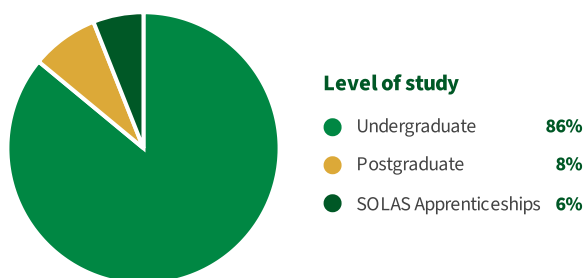
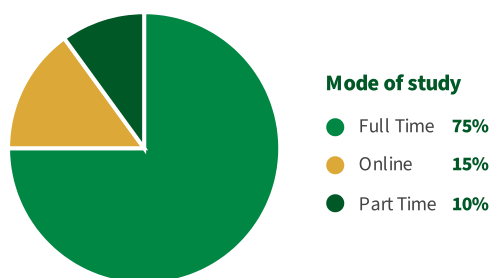
THE SKILLS GAP

Trends in Further Education and Training

MSLETB's further education provision in 2025 was weighted heavily toward general and community-based learning — Community Education and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) together made up almost two-thirds of all learner engagements — while accredited routes into trades and technical roles remained small: apprenticeships accounted for just 1.1% of activity.

PROGRAMME CATEGORY	COURSES	LEARNERS	SHARE
Community Education	165	874	40.5%
ESOL — English for Speakers of Other Languages	77	513	23.8%
BTEI — Back to Education Initiative	67	329	15.3%
Adult Literacy Groups	46	172	8.0%
PLC — Post Leaving Certificate Groups	10	112	5.2%
Local Training Initiatives	4	67	3.1%
Youthreach	4	29	1.3%
Community Training Centres	2	26	1.2%
New Generation Apprenticeships	2	23	1.1%
ITABE — Initial Training for Adult Basic Education	4	12	0.6%
TOTAL	381	2,157	100.0%

ATU Sligo's programme portfolio is well matched to where Leitrim's economy is exposed — 710 Leitrim learners were enrolled there as of March 2026, overwhelmingly full-time undergraduates.



STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Four realistic short-term wins

Rather than long-range ambitions, these are opportunities the county can move on now.



Carrick Business Campus

The Carrick on Shannon labour catchment already holds 6,600 resident workers, 62.2% of them third-level qualified — yet over 70% currently commute out to work elsewhere. Utilising assets such as the Carrick Business Campus to attract or retain workers within the county would reduce the numbers having to leave the county for work.



Remote Working

28% of the Leitrim workforce already works remotely, against a national rate of 35.9%. Closing that gap would add roughly 1,300 additional remote workers to the county's resident workforce.



Green Economy

A national shortfall of approximately 30,000 retrofit workers is projected by 2030, presenting an opportunity for Leitrim based tradespeople to help meet this demand while building on the Decarbonising Zone initiative already established in Carrick on Shannon.



Higher Education Presence

ATU has expressed interest in establishing a physical presence in the county. Even a modest footprint — a classroom, a named base — would carry signalling value disproportionate to its cost.



6,600

resident workers in the Carrick on Shannon labour catchment

28%

of the Leitrim workforce already works remotely

30,000

national shortfall of retrofit workers projected by 2030

ACTION FRAMEWORK

Eight Pillars. Thirty Actions. Ten Years.

The strategy translates its evidence into eight pillars of action — five addressing economic development, three addressing skills and talent — with the thirty actions carrying named leads, delivery phases and measurable targets.

PHASE 1

Years 1 to 3 · 2027–2029

PHASE 2

Years 4 to 6 · 2030–2032

PHASE 3

Years 7 to 10 · 2033–2036



8

PILLARS

30

ACTIONS

10

YEARS

Enterprise Supports & Branding

1 Enterprise Supports

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Promote Leitrim Business Navigator Service	First point of contact for every Leitrim business across pre-start, start and grow.	LEO Leitrim	1–3	80% of navigated businesses routed to at least one support
Build the Regional Peer Mentoring Network	Pairs growth-stage Leitrim SMEs with experienced mentors (10xNW).	North West Rep Manager / LEO Leitrim	1–3	Ongoing — mentoring pairs matched on a rolling basis
Raise Uptake of Finance Access Supports	Awareness and eligibility guidance for Enterprise Ireland, Microfinance Ireland, SBCI, council schemes.	LEO Leitrim (with LEADER)	1–3	Ongoing — awareness and eligibility guidance provided year-round
Activate Carrick Business Campus to 75% Occupancy by 2030	Sector-focused tenant recruitment in financial services and ICT.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	55% occupancy by end Year 2
Deliver a Town Centre Business Support Programme	Vacant premises register, Rates Incentive Scheme, dereliction/above-the-shop grants.	LEO Leitrim	1–3	Ongoing — supports delivered on a rolling basis

2 Branding

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Build a Unified Leitrim Economic Identity	A positioning line, visual identity and core narrative grounded in real anchors.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1	Identity launched Q3 2027
Launch a Leitrim Enterprise Success Story Programme	Authentic, first-person profiles across sectors, sizes and geography.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	5 profiles per year
Strengthen Enterprise Linkages and Global Sourcing	Collaboration with IDA and Enterprise Ireland on international value chains.	LCC / IDA Ireland co-leading	1–2	3 engagements per year from 2028
Host a Biennial Leitrim Investment Forum	Investor meetings arranged with IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.	Economic Forum / IDA co-leading	1–3	First forum Q1 2030



Governance & Sector Focus

3 Governance

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Restructure the Economic Forum with a Private Sector Co-Chair	At least 40% private sector membership from anchor employers and SMEs.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1	Co-chair appointed Q1 2027
Increase Leitrim's Voice in Regional Structures	Active representation on NWRA, Regional Skills Forum and sector networks.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	Representation confirmed by Q2 2027
Develop and Publish a Leitrim Economic Data Dashboard	Quarterly indicators: employment, campus occupancy, hub use, business starts.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	Dashboard live Q2 2027
Encourage a Shared Referral Between Local Agencies	How businesses are passed between LEO, LDC, MSLETB, ATU.	Economic Forum	1–3	Standing item, four meetings per year
Formalise Cross-Border Economic Development Links	Building on PEACEPLUS and Shared Island partnerships.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	One joint application by Q2 2028

4 Sector Focus

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Connect Native Businesses to Regional Sector Clusters	Medical devices, engineering, precision manufacturing, ICT.	LEO Leitrim	1–3	Ongoing — businesses connected to clusters on a rolling basis
Develop the Leitrim Food Zone into a National Agri-Food Cluster	Deepen the cluster with Enterprise Ireland and the Taste Leitrim brand.	LEO Leitrim	1–3	Cluster plan published Q2 2027
Develop a Sustainable Tourism Programme	Activating the Hidden Heartlands brand with Fáilte Ireland.	LCC Economic Development Unit / Tourism	1–2	Tourism product plan agreed Q1 2028
Position Leitrim for Green Economy Investment	Grow local retrofit, renewable installer and green-build firms via the Decarbonising Zone.	LCC Economic Development Unit / Climate Action	1–3	Ongoing — investment pipeline built on a rolling basis



Talent Attraction & Skills System Misalignment

5 Talent Attraction, Retention and Activation

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Launch a Leitrim Diaspora and Talent Attraction Programme	Reaching Leitrim-connected professionals abroad and in urban Ireland.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–2	Digital presence live Q3 2027
Position Leitrim as a Leading Remote Work Destination	Ongoing campaigns aimed at portable, higher-value jobs.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	Ongoing — campaigns run year-round
Develop a Live and Work in Leitrim Programme for Young People	Connecting secondary and ATU students to local employers.	LCC Economic Development Unit	1–3	500 students engaged in Year 2
Support Graduate Retention through ATU and Employer Links	Connector role between ATU's Careers Office and local employers.	LEO Leitrim / LCC co-leading	1–3	Ongoing — referrals made on a rolling basis

6 Skills System Misalignment

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Implement Coordinated Annual Employer Skills Surveys	LEO and MSLETB run separate surveys reflecting their different training remits.	MSLETB / LEO / LCC co-leading	1–3	120 employers surveyed by Year 2
Increase SME Participation Across Skillnet Networks	Co-led promotion campaign signposting Skillnet events and programmes.	LEO Leitrim / MSLETB co-leading	1–3	30 businesses referred per year
Promote Micro-Qualification Options, Prioritising Key Sectors	MedTech quality, digital/AI for business, retrofit and green construction.	MSLETB	1–3	First stack accredited and live Q4 2027



Sector-Specific Shortages & Capability Deficit

7 Sector-Specific Labour Shortages

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Strengthen the MedTech and Advanced Manufacturing Talent Pipeline	School awareness, workplace exposure, enterprise champion arrangements.	MSLETB / ATU / LEO co-leading	1–3	30 students engaged in Year 1
Increase Uptake of Construction and Retrofit Training	Annual Training & Employment Apprenticeship Fair; new approved apprenticeship employers.	MSLETB / ATU co-leading	1–3	Employment Fair held Q3 2027, 5 new approved employers
Strengthen the Healthcare and Social Care Workforce Pipeline	Career pathway awareness, paid work placements with HSE.	MSLETB	1–3	200 students in pathways, Year 1

8 Skills Gaps and Capability Deficit

Action	Description	Lead	Phase	Target and KPIs
Scale and Coordinate Digital and AI Upskilling for SMEs	LEO's practical, non-accredited support alongside MSLETB's accredited AI certification.	LEO Leitrim / MSLETB co-lead	1–3	Ongoing — upskilling delivered on a rolling basis
Promote Business Acumen and Leadership Development Programmes	Two streams: a LEO regional stream and an accredited MSLETB stream.	LEO Leitrim / MSLETB co-lead	1–3	Ongoing — programmes delivered on a rolling basis



DELIVERY & GOVERNANCE

A named lead for every commitment

Delivery is where comparable strategies most often stall — usually when governance lacks private-sector accountability and a clear owner for each commitment. Every action carries a named lead and a measurable target. A dedicated Economic Development Coordinator is appointed at the outset to run the process day to day. The Leitrim Economic Forum — restructured to guarantee at least 40% private-sector membership, with a private-sector co-chair appointed through an open process — is the single body that reviews progress and holds the plan to account.

Progress is reviewed quarterly and reported publicly once a year, starting with the first Annual Strategy Progress Report in February 2028. A formal midpoint review in 2031 recalibrates the strategy for Years 6 to 10.

PHASE 1 Years 1 to 3 • 2027–2029	PHASE 2 Years 4 to 6 • 2030–2032	PHASE 3 Years 7 to 10 • 2033–2036
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Not every constraint identified in this strategy sits within its power to fix. Housing supply and national transport infrastructure depend on decisions and capital that lie with national government rather than the county — so rather than being written in as actions, they are carried forward as ongoing advocacy priorities.



THE FULL STRATEGY

An evidence-based foundation for the decade ahead

Taken together, the research, consultation findings, sectoral analysis and action framework provide a solid, evidence-based foundation from which County Leitrim can meet its skills needs and support sustainable, balanced economic growth over the decade ahead.

READ

The Full Strategy

Policy context, socio-economic profile, full consultation findings, skills demand and supply analysis, sector profiles and the complete SCOT analysis.

TRACK

Delivery

The Leitrim Economic Data Dashboard, updated quarterly: employment, campus occupancy, hub utilisation, business starts and closures, skills completions and action status.



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council



msletb
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim
Education and Training Board

Led by Leitrim County Council's Economic Development Unit, in partnership with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Leitrim, the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) and a wide range of enterprise, education, community and State stakeholders.





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