Action Community Enterprise (ACE)

Strategic Business Plan Jan 2014 – Dec 2016

1. **Introduction**

   This strategic business plan was developed by the board and staff of Action Community & Enterprise (ACE) (Appendix A). SDC Partnership provided additional independent facilitation support during the process. A number of key stakeholders were consulted whilst drafting the business plan.

   Action Community & Enterprise (ACE) provides information, advice and business space for small to medium sized businesses, while also facilitating training relevant to business development and self-employment. ACE operates in the catchment area of Clondalkin, Palmerstown, Lucan and Newcastle in South Dublin County. ACE has 23 enterprise units and 22 offices in Bawnogue and 6 enterprise units in Neilstown. Both enterprise centres were developed by South Dublin County Council and ACE has leased them at peppercorn rent.

   Since 1995, Action Community Enterprise has assisted over 3,600 clients to start their own business, gain employment and/or progress in terms of education and training.

   Following a number of significant recent changes, the board of ACE decided that it was an opportune time to re-examine its core vision, values, mission and strategic objectives.

   This strategic planning process has enabled the ACE board and staff to develop a clearer vision for the company. It has also enhanced the determination of the ACE board and staff to achieve this shared vision through the strategic objectives outlined.

2. **Vision, mission values and objectives.**

   Vision
   The vision of ACE is to be Dublin's premier small business development centre.

   Mission
   Our mission is to provide a range of supports for new, emerging and established small businesses. We will do this by providing excellent business information, targeted business training and flexible, high quality business space. We will also promote and encourage an entrepreneurial culture in the community we serve.

   Values
   The values that we are committed to are respect; integrity; accountability, transparency; creativity and excellence.

3.   Strategic Objectives

Objective 1:   Organisational Development
Develop the capacity of the ACE staff and board to deliver on its core objectives.

Actions
1. Create, implement and manage a holistic Quality Assurance System - online and offline - to establish and maintain high standards of excellence across all activities. All activity must monitored, measured and evaluated and all new activities must be supported by clear evidence.
2. Develop a Staff Development Programme, including training, clarification of roles and responsibilities with regard to delivery of the strategic plan.
3. Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for the organisation, considering all options including re-branding
4. Update and implement ACE governance policies including board governance, financial management, Risk Management; Health & Safety, Fire Safety; Staff Development & Training etc.
5. Enhance and develop mutually beneficial relationships with a wide variety of organisations and institutions e.g. SDCEB including the new LEO; SDCP; Tallaght IT; DCU and other enterprise space providers e.g. Park West and Oakfield Trust.

Objective 2:   Enterprise Culture and Information
Facilitate the growth of an enterprise culture in the local community.

Actions:
1. Provide structured business advisory support and advocacy for employment in the local area, including strengthening such schemes as the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance.
2. Develop a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, which will provide the framework to leverage ACE resources to enhance the community based services in our catchment area e.g. Limetree Community Childcare and Coder Dojo, Deansrath
3. Assess the capacity and need to provide targeted financial support for specific community organisation/social enterprise(s) on an annual basis.
4. Promote an enterprise culture in the local community e.g. collaborate with local schools, facilitate a farmers market, participate in local events etc.
5. Undertake a project to engage the 'alumni' of ACE to contribute to the improvement of the centre e.g. referrals from previous occupants, cross selling with previous trainees

Objective 3: Training

Deliver high quality, evidence based, training contributing to business development and local employment.

Actions:
1. Conduct a regular needs analysis of the business and employment needs of the local community, including researching local employer requirements and their training needs.
2. Develop an organisational training strategy, including a cost-benefit analysis for the provision of training; identify training and income generating opportunities; creating a panel of training experts. Become a centre of training excellence.
3. Establish, monitor, manage and maintain all training delivery, including rigorous evaluation procedures to measure the quality of training.
4. Submit training tenders to a range of organisations including: DSP; LETB; SDCC LEO; SDCP and other agencies.
5. Plan to meet statutory building facility requirements with regard to training room provision. Identify other areas and premises in which training could be provided and/or training partners.

Objective 4: Business Space
Provide high quality flexible business space for new and developing businesses.

Actions:
1. Deploy continuous research of best in class enterprise centres to benchmark against and identify sectors that ACE could specialise in e.g. hospitality, ICT, Craft
2. Identify, develop and implement a 'programme of works' schedule to upgrade and maintain the facilities of both centres to the highest possible standards
3. Promote the concept of new business start-up and offer an initial incubation space from which to take the first business step through a hotdesking facility
4. Provision of excellent business units and office space, with appropriate marketing material, ensuring that there is an appropriate mix of businesses e.g. service and manufacturing.
5. Ensure our community building is exclusively available for appropriate community organisations to utilise as a premises