

CASE STUDY - BALLYHOURA RURAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Introduction

The Ballyhoura Employment Service is about activating long term unemployed and underemployed to enter employment.

There are approximately 8,200 people unemployed in the area. Young people, lower skilled workers and craft persons face long term unemployment and many in the older age groups fear that they may never work again.

Ballyhoura Development tackles long term unemployment in four ways based on feedback from clients, research into unemployment and local opportunities.

1. Develop the capacity of long term unemployed clients in target estates and dispersed rural areas through advice, appropriate training opportunities and one to one support.
2. Create local training progression routes.
3. Create local employment progression routes for long term unemployed and underemployed clients through developing employment activation opportunities with local employers and communities.
4. Develop and implement strategies to build on community resources, training and upskilling programmes and social economy employment opportunities.

The focus on the unemployed client, the employment opportunities in their community and development of employment in the wider economy ensures a multi faceted approach to supporting long term unemployed clients to progress to employment.

The complex nature of the needs of many long term unemployed clients means that for many it takes between two and four years to progress to employment. Clients need pre-training and interpersonal skill development before they are ready to participate in targeted group work, one-to-one support and community development approaches.

Activities

An example of how the Rural Employment Service works in practice will highlight how Ballyhoura Development Enterprise and Employment officers identify needs, devise appropriate responses, link long term unemployed clients to potential employers, collaborate with partner agencies to broker the necessary training supports and support clients through the transition to achieve progression.

As part of the continued support to established self employed clients under the BTWEA, Ballyhoura Development operates a number of branded promotion events at key local agriculture shows. The coordinated collective approach enables:

1. New start up businesses to promote their services cost effectively.
2. Continuation of client relationships beyond the initial support period.
3. Opportunity for the Ballyhoura Enterprise Officers to reconnect with employers, discuss business opportunities, raise awareness of employment support schemes and hear of future employment opportunities.

At the Charleville show in June 2011 an employer indicated that he had recently received new product sales contracts. A follow up meeting to see how Ballyhoura Development could support his company indicated that there would be initially up to 15 full time sales people recruited to start from November. The recruitment process had started informally but had not identified any suitable candidates locally. Further consultation with the employer highlighted that the employer was open to recruiting long term unemployed individuals should they have the right personality traits and be open to up skilling.

Lessons Learned

Ballyhoura Development:

- Supported the employer to refine his recruitment needs.
- Planned and managed a pr campaign to raise awareness.
- Undertook an audit of client skills sets available.
- Talked with clients to see if there were sufficient numbers interested in reskilling.
- Discussed and agreed with the employer FETAC modules to suit the positions available.
- Brokered a FETAC Level 5 Sales Representative Course from FAS contract training.
- Met with individual clients on a one to one basis to tailor CV's to suit sales opportunities and prepare them for the course.
- Sourced suitable venues. The village where the jobs are located has no training venue, highlighting the barriers to rural reskilling and employment.

Conclusions

A total of 26 interested candidates were identified for the course. A FETAC L 5 Sales Representative Course was delivered in Kilmallock, with 14 participants. Ballyhoura Development continue to work with potential clients for the sales jobs, clients undergoing the training, the clients who did not receive a place on the course and the company to ensure progression for the course to employment. Ballyhoura Development is confident that the clients on the course will progress to employment in the local area.