



Community Employment Ireland

A program that provides employment primarily for the long term unemployed and the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and participate in professional training (1).

Summary

Community Employment (CE) is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed (or otherwise disadvantaged) to get back to work by offering placements in jobs based within local communities (2). Participants receive wages that are equivalent to their social welfare entitlement. CE is a transitional, part-time work programme of 19.5 hours per week, typically over a twelve-month period. It combines real work in community organizations with personalized professional development (3).

Rationale

The program was created in response to long-term unemployment that was undermining the employability of many individuals and damaging the capacity of communities to function as cohesive social structures (4). The program is intended to supplement labor demand, as the private sector is not adequately meeting employment needs for Irish communities. Participants on CE can take up other part-time work during their placement and are encouraged to seek permanent part-time and full-time jobs elsewhere, based on the experience and new skills they are gaining (5).

Defining Principles

CE acts as a resource for communities to identify their own needs and provides a vital service to communities both in remote rural areas and areas of urban disadvantage. CE prioritizes the employment of long-term unemployed jobseekers, who now constitute over 80% of participants. “In line with the OECD Survey, Ireland 2013, 77% of participants have completed Leaving Cert level education or below; this group is identified as requiring substantial training to meet the demands of job creating sectors. Half of CE participants have Junior Certificate (FETAC Level 3) or below,” (6). CE serves as a necessary training program for these jobseekers. When a person’s CE placement ends, the person is encouraged to seek a job elsewhere using the skills, experience and training gained while participating on the CE scheme.

Dates of Operation

1994 - Present

Number of Program Participants

21,505 in June 2019 (8).



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Criteria for Participation

21 years of age, receiving one of the public benefits mentioned here: “In general, you must also be getting one of the following payments for at least 12 months: - Jobseeker's Benefit - Jobseeker's Allowance - Jobseeker's Transitional Payment - One-Parent Family Payment - Deserted Wife's Benefit - Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Contributory) Pension - Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-contributory) Pension - Farm Assist” (9)

Pay and Benefits

“Participant wage rates are determined by the underlying social welfare entitlement. The minimum weekly payment (based on 19.5 hours worked) is €259.50 per week.” The underlying social welfare payments remain the same for those receiving over €232 per week, and are supplemented by an additional €27.50 per week. If the Social Welfare Payment a person receives before starting a CE scheme is less than or equal to €232 per week, they will receive a payment of €259.50 per week (10).

Financing

CE had €366.6 million total expenditure in 2023 (11). The program is supported by the Department of Social Protection. Expenditure towards training on the CE programme is funded through the National Training Fund (NTF) administered by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (12).

Notable Features

“Work opportunities are within communities and in the main provide valuable community services in areas of disadvantage,” (13). “Since its inception CE has played a vital role in the delivery of services to local communities as already outlined and has augmented statutory provision in many key areas e.g. childcare, health and social care, Drug Rehabilitation services, local amenities,” (14). There is a strong social inclusion element running through schemes on CE, CE also has the objective of providing work experience and training to vulnerable groups e.g. lone parents, people with a disability, and older job-seekers (15).



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Challenges

Given the current number of schemes and levels of participants in CE, the Department of Social Protection recommended reducing the program to return to more 'normal' levels for a recovering economy (16). The Department recommends monitoring and assessment of the scheme's performance on a regular basis and can lead to a withdrawal of funding for the scheme if deemed ineffective (17). There is a large dependency on CE for service provision, and there is limited capacity of the program to respond quickly to the ever changing needs of the labor market (18). Because the program is so community focused, it is not seen as improving private sector labor markets (19).

Program Website

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/412714-community-employment-programme/#>



For more information visit www.jobguarantee.org



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Citations

- (1) Department of Social Protection, “An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme” , 15.
- (2) “Community Employment Programme,” August 12, 2019, <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/412714-community-employment-programme/#what-the-community-employment-programme-is>.
- (3) “Community Employment Project,” INOU, May 14, 2018, <https://www.inou.ie/ce/>
- (4) Department of Social Protection, “An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme,” 5.
- (5) “Community Employment Project.”
- (6) Department of Social Protection, “An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme,” 6.
- (7) Department of Social Protection, 5.
- (8) Republic Of Ireland Inter-Departmental Group. 2020. “Report of the Inter-Departmental Group to Explore The Most Appropriate Organisation Arrangements, Including Which Department Should Host The Social Inclusion schemes”. Final Report. <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/212009/b38ad9e9-31e5-4758-9430-51586c52b1d2.pdf#page=null>
- (9) “Community Employment Programme.”
- (10) “Community Employment Programme.”
- (11) Department of Public Expenditure, “Budget 2024 Expenditure Report” , 223, <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/273322/fd803803-1a3d-48d5-aae2-a549de6a9927.pdf#page=null>.
- (12) “Community Employment Programme.”
- (13) Department of Social Protection, “An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme,” 15.
- (14) Department of Social Protection, 52.
- (15) Department of Social Protection, 56.
- (16) Department of Social Protection, 6.
- (17) Department of Social Protection, 52.
- (18) Department of Social Protection, 53.
- (19) Department of Social Protection, 53.



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