



It's all about Talent.

Collaborating for Engineering Talent: - Increasing the quantity and quality of engineers, technicians and apprentices in Ireland's Mid-West region.

The Mid-West region of Ireland has long been a center of excellence for engineering and manufacturing companies across a range of sectors.

Today, when a new or expanding operation considers an investment, they will weigh up the merits of the Mid-West region and it is the availability of talented people that will be the dealmaker.

The key contributor to the success of established companies in the region has been the availability of engineering graduates from the regional education and training institutions including the Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), University of Limerick (UL), and the Limerick Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). Additionally, a strong collaboration between industry and academia has facilitated the development of new courses to meet the future skills demand.

The recent significant success in delivering jobs to the region means that never before has there been such a wide range of new and exciting careers available in engineering. These careers are in different disciplines and at many different levels and specialisms such as apprenticeships, technician roles, engineering, as well as research and development.

The question then arises as to how to make the job growth sustainable. To address this need, an industry led initiative, Limerick for Engineering, was formed in February 2015.

Limerick for Engineering is a consortium of more than 30 manufacturing and service companies, both foreign direct investors and indigenous investors, who have come together with the education and training providers in the Mid-West region of Ireland for a single purpose – to increase the quality and quantity of engineering talent, at every level, in the region. Among its membership are some of the best manufacturing facilities in the Mid-West region including Analog Devices, Cook Medical, Regeneron, Stryker, Roadbridge, Intel, Molex, General Electric, SL Controls, Johnson and Johnson Vision Care, Dell, Modular Automation and Zimmer. Membership also extends to the Irish Development Authority (IDA), Enterprise Ireland (EI), Regional Skills Forum, Action Plan for Jobs and Engineers Ireland.

Limerick for Engineering aims to address



Paschal Meehan

Paschal is the Dean of Work Based Learning and Vice President International Engagement at the Limerick Institute of Technology. He has 35 years of experience in higher education as a lecturer, researcher and at an executive level in academic management. Particular areas of expertise are in automation and robotic technology. He has also specialized in conducting training and education needs analyses for industry and in developing implementation plans to address gaps. He currently chairs the Limerick for Engineering group and is very active in industry engagement.

both current and future skill shortages. The professional body for engineers and engineering in Ireland, Engineers Ireland, has signaled an acute shortage of engineers in the future and an “urgent need to promote careers in engineering amongst students entering third-level courses as demand outstrips supply.” There are 23,200 employed within the engineering sector in the region with an expected growth rate of 4,700 engineering jobs nationally through to 2020. The engineering profession has the second highest occupation growth rate according to the latest labor market bulletin.

Limerick for Engineering is committed to sustaining growth for the engineering and manufacturing industry and to share expertise and resources to ensure that graduate skills are relevant to career opportunities locally.

The aim is to promote the huge diversity of engineering careers and the various paths to getting a career whether it be as an apprentice, technician or engineer.

The mechanics of Limerick for Engineering are as follows. A plenary meeting takes place five times a year. Attendance averages 40 people and includes representatives from all the members and invited guests depending on the agenda. Those attending the meeting are senior executives and decision makers in their organization – they do not have to leave the room to consult before making a commitment. More importantly, they are all champions who have personally bought in to the ambitions of Limerick for Engineering.

The plenary meeting will set the strategy and agree the activities for the group. The real work gets done in the three working groups who report in to the plenary meeting: the Showcase group, the Promotions and Identity group, and the Talent group.

The annual Showcase event is the focal point for Limerick for Engineering and second level students, their parents, guidance counselors, and engineering and technology teachers attend this event. The Showcase demonstrates what engineering is, how it has evolved, the different types of engineering, the different types of jobs engineers do, the rewards and opportunities and how to start to build a career.

The Showcase working group organizes the 30 participating companies to ensure there are interactive stands manned by enthusiastic young female and male engineers. The young engineers provide information about their own chosen fields and demonstrate what it is they do and the interesting technology they work with.

Those attending the Showcase also have the opportunity to meet current students, recent graduates, academics and senior professional engineers from the region. The Showcase is about careers but the education and training providers will be present to explain the pathways available for a career in engineering. The 2018 Showcase was to be held on March 1st at Shannon Airport, preceded by the ITLG Young Innovators event. Unfortunately due to the bad weather – both events were cancelled. Future dates for these events will be confirmed shortly. The



Signing the industry-education STEM alliance Paschal Meehan LFE and LIT, Emer Brophy Regional Skills Forum and LCETB, John Gleeson Limerick for IT and General Motors, George O’Callaghan CEO LCETB, Barry O’Sullivan Action Plan for Jobs and Johnson and Johnson

Promotions and Identity group has a remit to drive engagement at second level both with students and parents by having a Limerick For Engineering presence in the schools in the region as well as attending high profile career events. The group also develops and implements the Showcase marketing communications plan.

The Promotions and Identity group led a joint initiative in December 2017 to create a new partnership, the first industry-education STEM alliance in Ireland, with 19 post-primary schools under the patronage of the Limerick and Clare Education Training Board and Limerick for Engineering, thus demonstrating the strength of innovation and collaboration in the Mid-West.

Limerick for Engineering collaborates to provide career paths for people already employed in engineering fields. The Talent Group identifies and facilitates the

“We see ongoing expansion of both Irish and foreign owned companies in the Mid-West, these firms will provide tremendous career opportunities for qualified people going forward”

Barry O’Sullivan, Johnson & Johnson Vision, and Mid-West Chair, American Chamber of Commerce.

development and implementation of new apprenticeship disciplines, short-term specialist modules and supplementary diplomas and degrees. It is in this space that some of the most practical and rewarding benefits have accrued.

The growth and success of Limerick for Engineering has been phenomenal. This is an exemplar organization and is recognized as such by government agencies nationally. Can it be repeated in another region? The building blocks of Limerick for Engineering are in every region – the companies, the education providers, the state agencies and more. What you may not have is the secret ingredient – the glue that holds everything together. That secret ingredient is the people involved– their enthusiasm, commitment, energy and their willingness to share and work together in a collegiate way. You have that and you have a winner.