

Contents



Introduction

Fundamentals of Citywise

Vision and mission

Theory of change

Approach to scaling

Context

Issue analysis

Progress to date

Stakeholder input

Strategic decisions

Goals and Objectives

Phases of implementation

Successful implementation

Managing implementation

Growing participation

Financial projections

Organisational structure

Board profiles and governance

Introduction



Citywise Education has provided educational support to young people in West Tallaght for almost thirty years. We understand the ever-changing needs of young people from this community and we will continue to excel in our response to those needs.

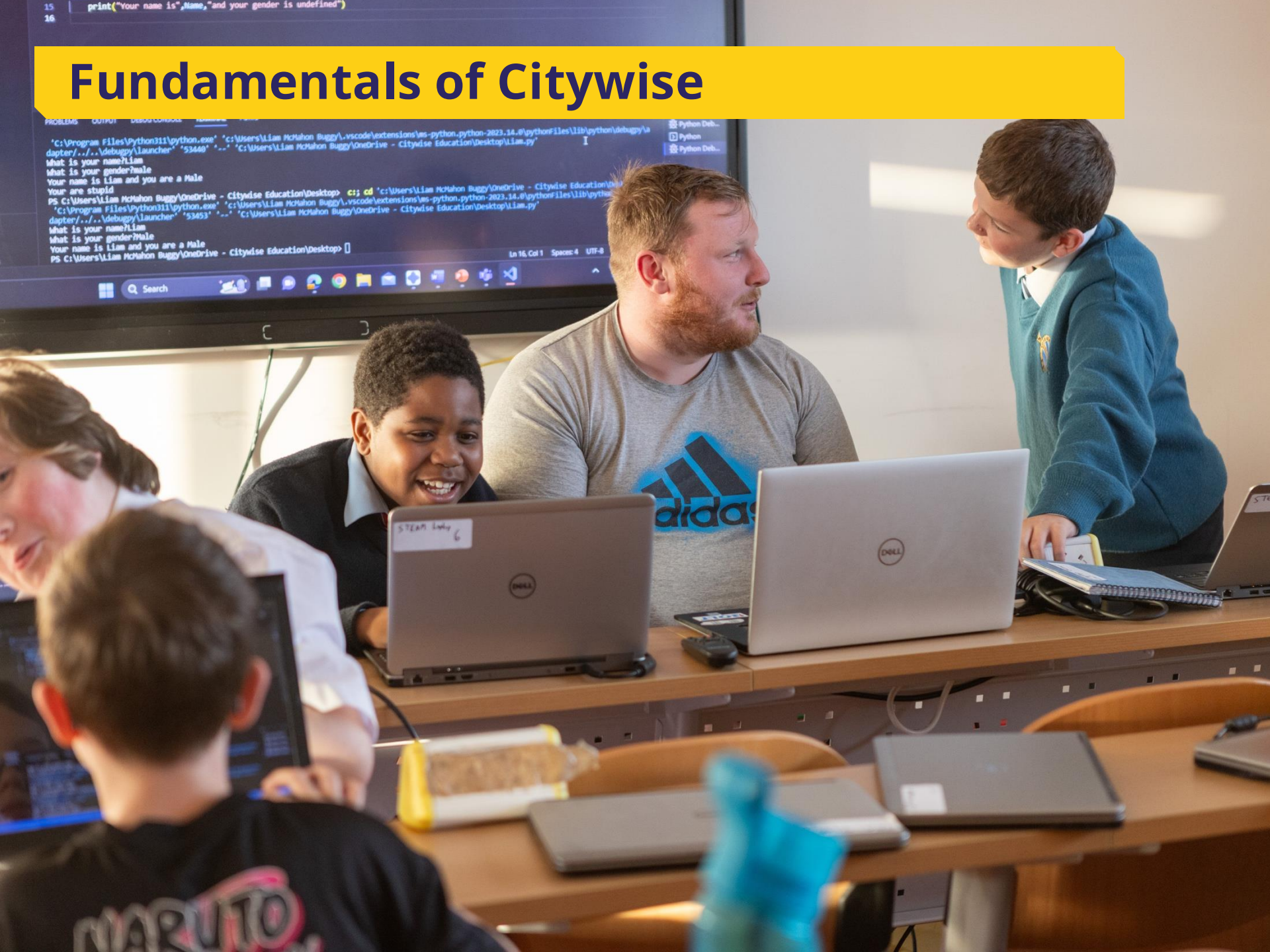
This 3-year plan is underpinned with the capital development of a new live learning place in our centre. With the opening of our first of a kind whole life net-zero carbon Climate, Science and Language Centre in the years to come, we will complete the initial vision of a community-led, wrap-around educational support service for young people growing up in underserved communities.

The new facility will allow for a 60% increase in the numbers currently served by Citywise, allowing us to widen and deepen our impact in the community, increase numbers going to and remaining in third level education, whilst meeting other local needs. Throughout the lifecycle of this plan, we endeavour to further our relationships with existing and new partners to ensure we are holistically supporting the community to the best of our ability.

Our work is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG4) and two of Ireland's targets under SDG4 are advanced by our work: ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; and substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Together with our programmes and supports, our relationships with communities and stakeholders, and a talented and committed staff and volunteers, we possess the foundations for our approach to education to be replicated in other marginalised communities. This document sets out our strategy for 2026 to 2028.

Fundamentals of Citywise



```
15 print("Your name is",Name,"and your gender is undefined")  
16
```

```
PROBLEMS OUTPUT DEBUG CONSOLE TERMINAL FILE EXPLORER  
C:\Program Files\Python311\python.exe C:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\.vscode\extensions\ms-python.python-2023.14.0\pythonFiles\lib\python\debugger\... \debugger\launcher "53440" ... C:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\OneDrive - Citywise Education\Desktop\Liam.py  
What is your name?Liam  
What is your gender?male  
Your name is Liam and you are a Male  
You are stupid  
PS C:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\OneDrive - Citywise Education\Desktop> cd 'c:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\OneDrive - Citywise Education\Desktop' && cd 'c:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\.vscode\extensions\ms-python.python-2023.14.0\pythonFiles\lib\python\debugger\... \debugger\launcher "53453" ... C:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\OneDrive - Citywise Education\Desktop\Liam.py  
What is your name?Liam  
What is your gender?Male  
Your name is Liam and you are a Male  
PS C:\Users\Liam McMahon Buggy\OneDrive - Citywise Education\Desktop>
```

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Vision and mission



Vision

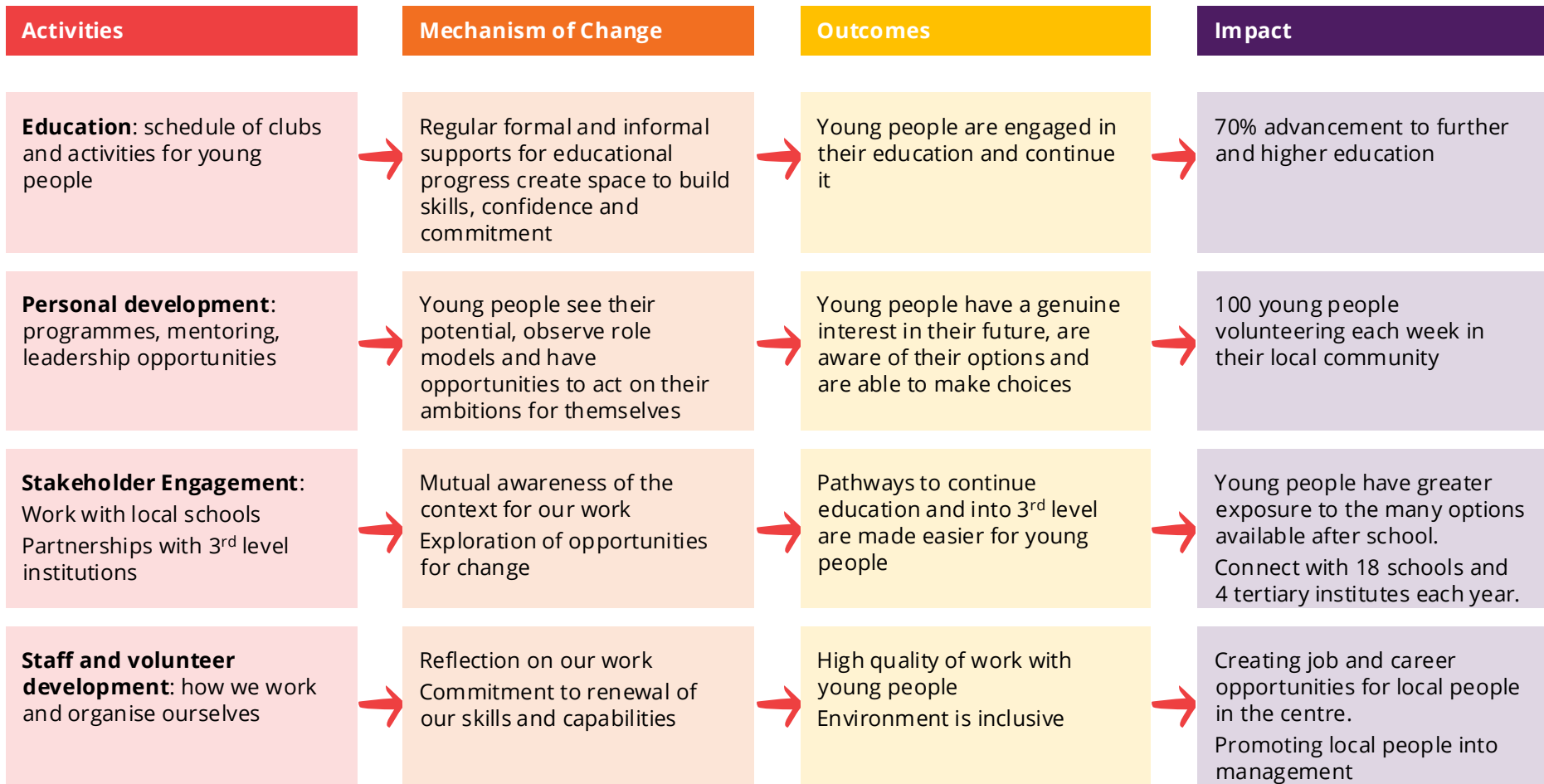
Improving communities through youth education.

Mission

Improving communities by working with young people to develop the whole person through academic support and personal development.

Theory of change

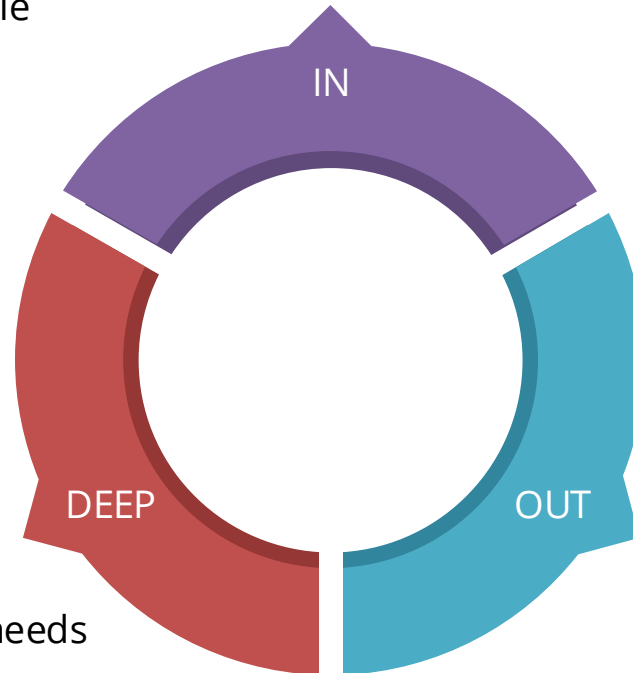
Our Theory of Change Sets out how we believe our activities lead to outcomes which in turn, lead to long-term impact on our community.



Approach to scaling

Over the life of this strategy, we have set goals and objectives that will scale on each of three dimensions: in, out and deep. In each area there are several catalysts and drivers of the scale.

- Additional capacity of Climate, Science and Language Centre
- Growing participation reach by over 1,000 young people



- Research plan to improve alignment with needs
- Adding selected new programmes in line with needs and interests

- Scaling in-person programmes with partner organisations
- Systems change goal for person-centred learning approach

Context



Issue analysis

The issues we are addressing can be understood through 5 inter-related lenses:

Communities underserved

- ❑ 7% of people in the immediate area we serve hold third-level degrees compared to 56 nationally (CSO, 2023).
- ❑ The Pobal deprivation index (2022) categorises local areas of Jobstown, Brookfield and Killinarden as "extremely disadvantaged" - the lowest rank on the scale.
- ❑ Unemployment in our local community is 30% (CSO, 2022), creating a cycle of poverty.
- ❑ Wrap-around community education supports are needed elsewhere, apart from Tallaght.

Need for a learning culture

- ❑ In underserved areas where educational attainment and progression is lower than average, it can seem as though education is undervalued.
- ❑ Placing an emphasis on education and the idea of pursuing higher and further education is often outside the lived experience of young people.
- ❑ Therefore, there is a need to not only provide support to young people but to also change perceptions and create a college going and/or a career orientated culture.

Lack of career advice and support

- ❑ There is a lack of availability of career supports for young people in underserved communities. A lack of information, confidence and resources as well as a lack of prior student awareness of course content is leading to a high drop-out rate at third level and to poorly-made career choices.
- ❑ There is a significantly high drop-out rate from third-level colleges, especially for students from underserved backgrounds.
- ❑ The demand for Science/STEM jobs is not being matched by training in schools.
- ❑ Recent studies produced by the ESRI, entitled 'Career decision-making among young people in Ireland' reported that "students in more disadvantaged settings were more reliant on class tutors or subject teachers for advice. However, their reliance on teachers did not boost their intention to go on to higher education, suggesting that such advice was not sufficient to make up for the lack of insider knowledge of the education system among their family members."
- ❑ Research (Trinity Access, 2020) demonstrates that students participating in civic engagement in their communities are likely to have higher college aspirations.

Community integration

- ❑ There is a need for better integration of migrant and minority groups including traveller and Roma communities. 15.5% of the population are citizens of other countries.
- ❑ Underserved communities have a higher than average proportion of Black, Black Irish, Asian and Asian Irish population.
- ❑ Improved integration of immigrant communities is a major ongoing concern for all European cities.
- ❑ The local HANA Report on Tallaght (2025) recommends the strengthening of supports for positive adolescent development and community integration and engagement initiatives.

Civic engagement

- ❑ There is a need for increased civic and community engagement of young people, especially those from underserved area.
- ❑ The UN report on Youth Civic Engagement notes the importance of supporting young people to engage in wider society. This research shows that the result of such programmes is engaged citizenship, positive youth development, an increased sense of belonging, increased care and resilience and a wider understanding of the root causes of structural inequality.
- ❑ A local needs assessment, conducted by Trinity College (2024) found that only 9.7% of respondents volunteer in their community.

Progress to Date

Over the course of our last strategic plan, we made significant strides. Some of this context is important to understand our plans going forward:

Community Alignment

- ❑ Citywise is well aligned to the community with 60% of our staff and 50% of our volunteers having been past participants of our programmes.
- ❑ We have commissioned external research/evaluations into our work bi-annually.
- ❑ We have developed a strong Youth Steering Committee to guide our work.

Climate, Science and Language

- ❑ Citywise has obtained planning permission for a two-phase capital development to expand our work in west-Tallaght.
- ❑ We have detailed plans and have already begun to expand our offerings to include additional language and science supports alongside a new BioTechies programme to open career opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry.

Leadership in the Sector

- ❑ Citywise has taken an active role in the education and youth sectors and staff members are represented on a number of committees and influence policy making.
- ❑ To date, this has included presenting evidence to the joint Oireachtas Education Committee, Shared Island Youth Forum, Child Poverty Summit, and the Young Ireland Advisory Council.

Replicating our Work

- ❑ In 2024 we laid the groundwork for future expansion by piloting our models of replication in three different communities; Crumlin, Ballymun and Clondalkin.
- ❑ Our plans for future growth are based on learnings from this process

Stakeholder input (1 of 2)



A number of elements of the context for this strategy remain broadly consistent: the issues we are seeking to address, the other providers and stakeholders and the value we create.

The strategy is informed by and built on internal and external evaluations of our work to date, needs analyses in local communities, and government policy, alongside input from board members, staff, volunteers, young people and parents. A recent organisational evaluation of Citywise Education commissioned by the Childhood Development Initiative (2024) has contributed significant insights for our next steps.

The key findings were in three areas: reasons for participation, perception and impact, and future needs and expectations. For their main reasons for participation, students cited:

- Educational support (i.e. homework and study)
- Developing their social skills and making friends
- The staff and playing games

For the main reasons why their children participate, parents cited:

- To make new friends and socialise
- For support with their schoolwork
- Others included (Away from screens, develop a positive attitude towards their education)

Stakeholder input (2 of 2)



Members perception of Citywise and the impact of their participation:

- Overwhelming majority of answers (83%) given by students were that Citywise helped either loads, often or sometimes with their schoolwork
- Increased social skills and an embedded sense of community and 'family'
- Increased their educational aspirations

Parents' perception of Citywise and the impact of their child's participation:

- Their child is performing better at school
- Their child has developed in confidence and is more sociable
- They have a better relationship with their child

Future needs and expectations of all stakeholders:

- Majority of all Citywise stakeholders called for the need of a bigger building
- Parents asked for more engagement with Citywise staff regarding their child's development
- A common theme amongst staff and students was the expansion of new Citywise programmes (i.e. LCA programmes and Transition Year initiatives)
- Volunteers called for increased engagement with other community partners for further collaborations on projects and programmes
- A common theme amongst leadership participants was the need for new facilities in Citywise like a sensory room and larger indoor eating facilities for socialising together

Key findings to note from stakeholder input:

- The longitudinal aspect of a young person's development in Citywise (holistic/person centred approach) underpins our model
- Stakeholders understand our vision and there is a collective ambition to expand our work

Strategic Decisions



Strategic Goals

1

Increase organisation's alignment with the needs of the community



2

Launch Climate, Science and Language Centre and programmes



3

Ensure the quality of services we provide



4

Show leadership in the sector



5

Replicate our work



6

Increase our financial sustainability



Strategic Goals

1

Increase organisation's alignment with the needs of the community



Objectives

- Deliver programmes which fill existing identified gaps in our service provision, targeting cohorts including; Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) students, third level students and harder to reach young people
- Continue to develop our programmes and activities in line with the growing and emerging needs of the community

Key Actions and Milestones

- Review and redesign our third level offerings in the context of Climate, Science and Language development
- Develop and launch new programmes (learning from our piloted Tricks of the Trade programme), to reach LCA students and also harder to reach young people
- Review all programmes, activities and community needs annually
- Maintain strong leadership programmes to ensure local involvement in organisation and activities

Strategic Goals



2

Launch Climate, Science and Language Centre and Programmes

Objectives

- Scale deep to support young people to access careers across the hard sciences, pharmaceuticals, green technologies, and others.
- Support local schools in the face of new curricula and policies e.g. Language Connects (primary) and Leaving Cert Reform (secondary)
- Climate, Science and Language Centre capital project managed to opening
- Year 1 to 2 of operations resourced and qualified staff in place

Key Actions and Milestones

- Design and deliver new language supports,
- Embed hard sciences in our STEAM offerings
- Create a new out-of-school STEAM programme for second level students with an emphasis on climate science
- Phase one of CSL project complete (out-door sports facilities opened)
- Phase two of CSL project complete (CSL building)
- Centre opened and fully operational

Strategic Goals

3

Ensure the quality of services we provide



Objectives

- Continue to strengthen the evidence base for our work while continuously improving services and delivery
- Progressively increase the conversion (young people becoming members from out-of-school programmes) and retention rates (young people returning year on year)
- Continue to improve our organisation's governance structures to ensure we are resilient and adaptable into the future

Key Actions and Milestones

- Create and implement a three-year research and evaluation plan
- Continue to develop our internal evaluation tools and infrastructure
- Annual analysis and action plan for improving conversion and retention of members
- Complete a governance audit of our organisation

Strategic Goals

4

Show leadership in the sector



Objectives

- Advocate for a person-centred approach across the education system
- Be seen by relevant stakeholders as leaders in the field
- Capture and disseminate our learning, insights and impacts

Key Actions and Milestones

- Ensure Citywise representation on relevant committees and structures
- Improve our external communications through the implementation of our communications strategy,
 - Review our website and communication assets
- Document and disseminate the 'Citywise Way', through research and evaluations
- Publish and disseminate programme manuals including a formal leadership programme and certificate structure
- Work towards publishing a book of alumni testimonies

Strategic Goals

5

Replicate our work



Objectives

- Consolidate our recent growth in new communities with local partners
- Create Citywise leadership certificate structure and associated materials to reach new communities
- Design and roll out resources and materials for other organisations to use in their local context
- Create a support system for 'voluntary youth clubs' to come under the Citywise umbrella
- Explore opportunities for satellite operations with local authorities, developers and Approved Housing Bodies

Key Actions and Milestones

- Scale deep with our new local partners - offer new programmes and increase our reach in Ballymun, Crumlin and Clondalkin
- Partner with a third level institution to strengthen our leadership programmes
- Create and disseminate programme manuals and handbooks
- Detailed business plan for the creation of 'Citywise voluntary youth clubs'

Strategic Goals

6

Increase our financial sustainability



Objectives

- Increase public funding as a share of total funding for operations long-term
- Increase share of **multi-year** corporate/philanthropic funding
- Strengthen our fundraising capacity

Key Actions and Milestones

- Identify and secure public funding through increased networking, lobbying and role as leader in the sector
- Implement three-year fundraising plan
- Prioritise increased capacity in our fundraising and development team, through role restructuring, efficiencies, increased hours and/or headcount

Phases of Implementation

Most of our resources – including our time – are dedicated to our operations. We therefore plan to implement the strategy in phases. This will also assist us in focusing early attention on elements of the strategy which help facilitate later elements:



Continue to improve our understanding of the local community through both outreach and published research as catalysts for change in our approach

Focus on successful operation of the Climate, Science and Language Centre, leveraging this into sustainable funding for our increased scale of operations

Review future options for growth via additional programmes, locations and partnerships

Focus on goals

Goals 1, 3 & 4

Goals 2 & 6

Goal 5

Successful Implementation



Managing implementation

We will ensure that the strategy is implemented through a set of measures that ensure accountability, track progress and allow for problem-solving and resource re-allocation where needed.

Board

- Included in monthly report from CEO
- Annual strategy review and refresh at board day

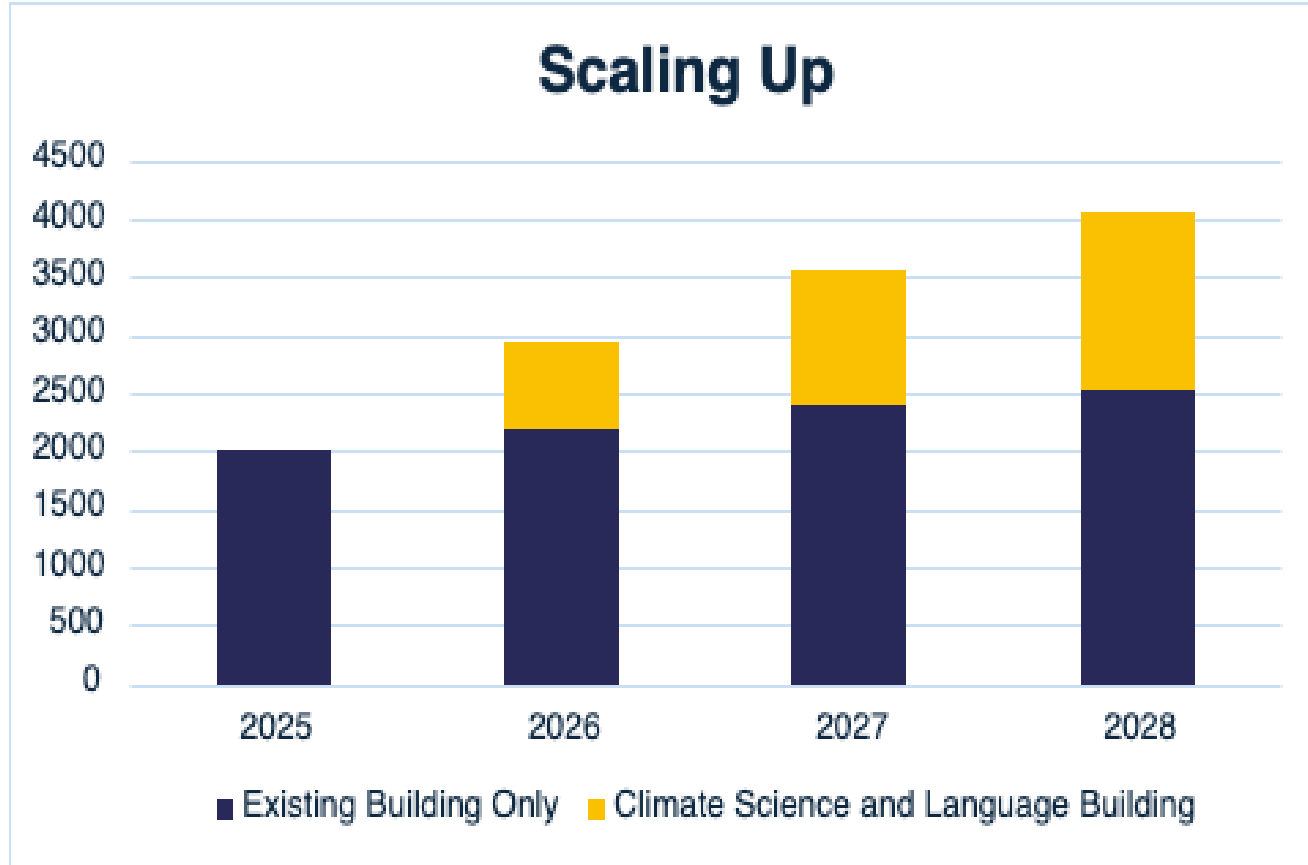
Management Committee

- Monthly implementation progress report
- Quarterly dedicated implementation progress reviews

These measures combine day-to-day from Management Committee and the oversight and challenge of the Board. Collectively, this provides a strong basis for successful implementation.

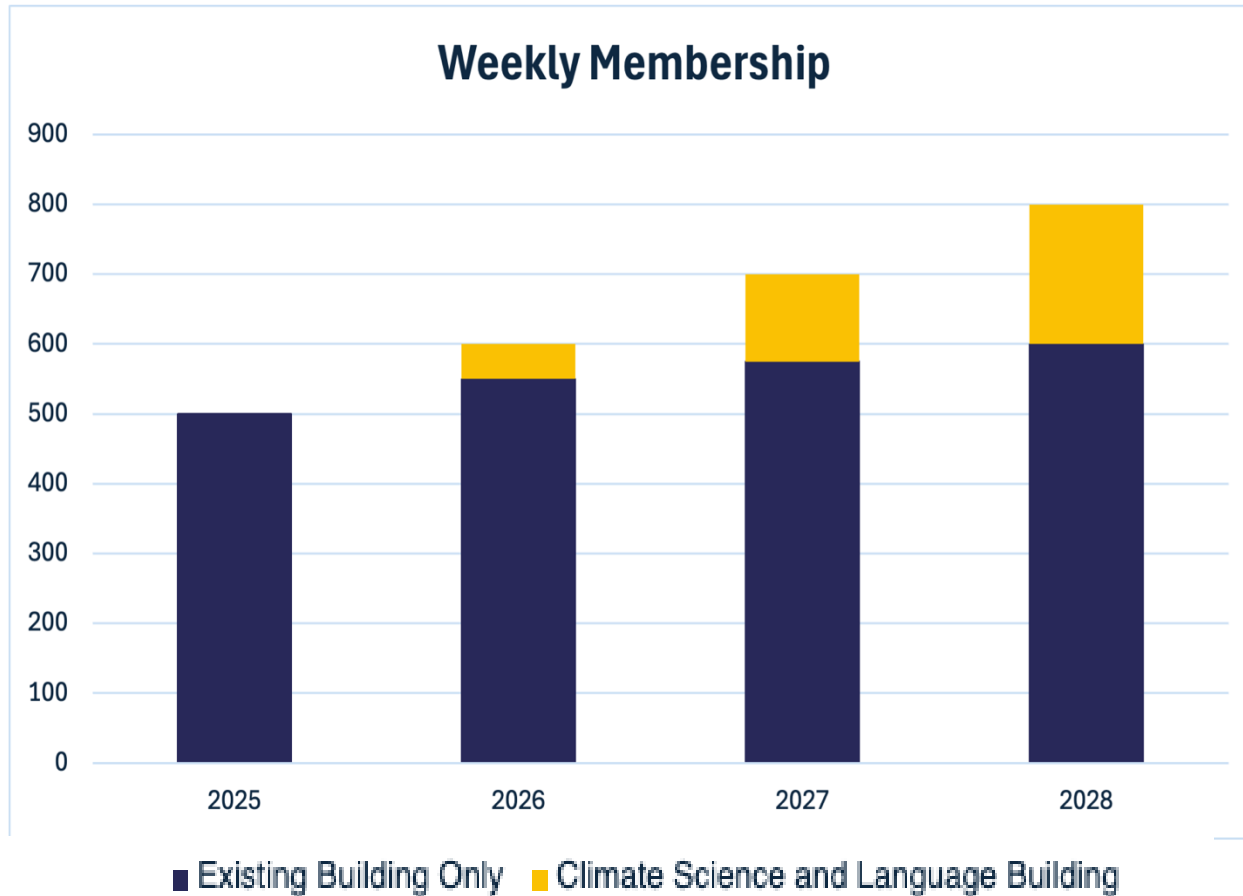
Growing participation

Our ambition is to scale our impact by increasing our reach, the addition of new programmes and new communities. Typically, a young person will be involved in a once-off activity before becoming a member of Citywise programmes long-term. For that reason, this strategy will seek to increase both our weekly membership and annual reach (membership plus once-off activities). Our ambition is to grow our reach (number of young people taking part in CW activities) by more than 2,000 young people per year over the strategy. The Climate, Science and Language Centre will see a significant step change in terms of our reach.



Growing participation

Increased growth in our reach will lead to a greater number of members (young people enrolled and attending Citywise programmes on a weekly basis). The Climate, Science and Language Centre will create significant additional capacity to accommodate new scaled programmes and new activities.



Growing participation

		2026	2027	2028
Fast Track Academy	Second Level	195	245	300
	Third Level	15	25	35
	Bridge2College	250	250	250
	TY Career Programme	20	30	40
	Subtotal	460	520	585
STEAM	STEAM Afterschool	140	180	250
	STEAM Out-of-School	320	500	550
	Subtotal	460	680	800
A&L Programmes	Out-of-school	1000	1100	1200
	Afterschool	250	300	350
	In-school	300	400	500
	Leadership	80	100	120
	Seasonal Camps	400	460	500
	Subtotal	2030	2360	2670
	Total	2950	3560	4055

We track participants rather than individual members. This is because a key driver of impact is a member accessing multiple different opportunities to participate.

Over this strategy, STEAM participation will grow faster than other programmes as the new centre creates additional capacity.

Financial projections



The costs of scaling in, out and deep are primarily in increased staff numbers; our model of working with young people means the time and energy of committed staff is the primary resource employed.

Income	2023 Act	2024 Act	2025 (M/R)	2026	2027	2028
Public Funding	€127,054	€174,652	€226,500	€237,825	€250,000	€270,000
Trusts \ Corp Funding & Local	€576,638	€508,183	€557,417	€585,288	€615,000	€620,000
Personal donations	€10,266	€9,832	€6,705	€7,040	€10,500	€15,000
Earned Income	€122,782	€132,058	€116,500	€122,325	€130,000	€135,000
Grand Total Income	€836,740	€824,725	€907,122	€952,478	€1,005,500	€1,040,000
% Growth			10%	5%	5.6%	3.4%
Operating Costs						
All Staff Costs	€448,654	€444,028	€519,958	€570,000	€610,000	€640,000
All other costs	€319,802	€335,883	€332,890	€344,379	€345,225	€348,000
Total Operating Costs	€768,456	€779,911	€852,848	€914,379	€955,225	€988,000
Surplus	€68,284	€44,814	€54,274	€38,099	€50,275	€52,000
% Surplus	8.2%	5.4%	6%	4%	5%	5%

Key features:

Sustainable annual growth in income and operating costs of 3-5% consistent with historical rates

Increasing share of funding from public sources as we align with national policy objectives

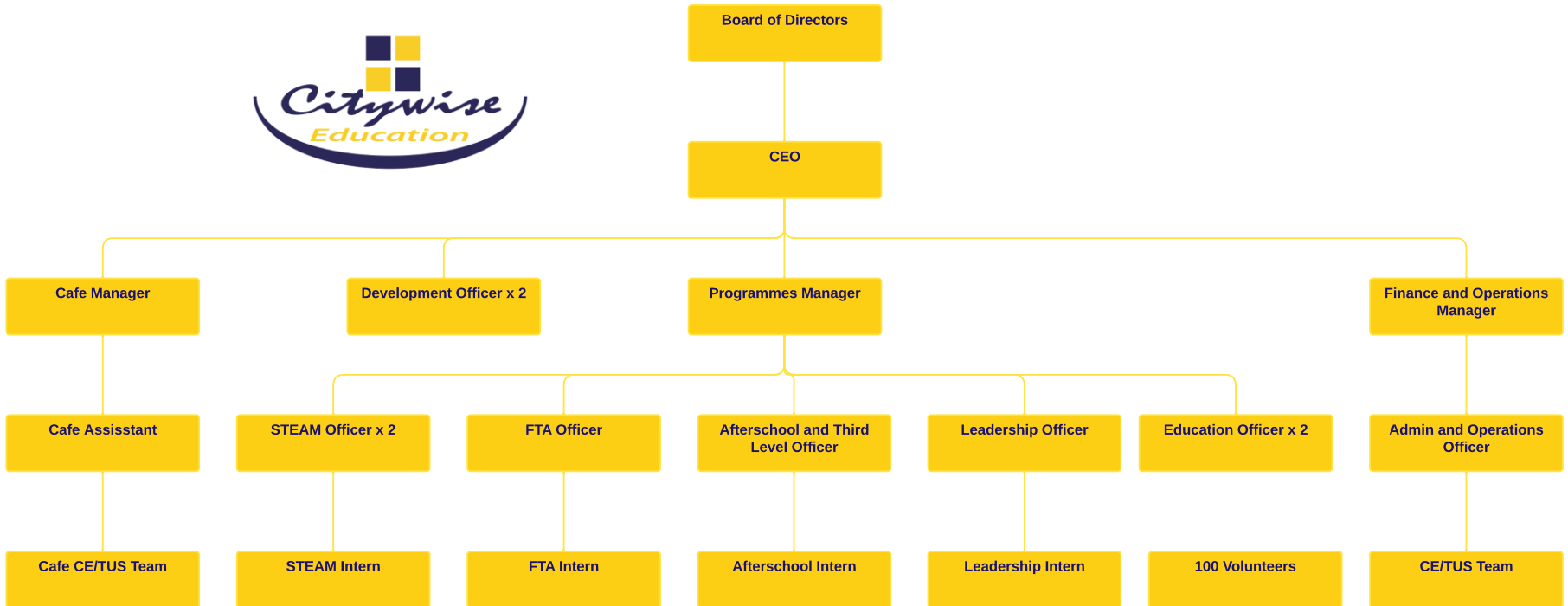
Scaling costs are driven by increased staff numbers as we reach more young people

Cost per participant falls as we achieve increasing economies of scale

Organisation structure



We intend to grow our organisation to add the skills and capabilities we need for our new growth.



Board profiles (1 of 2)

Citywise has a board with deep experience and diverse capabilities to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

Marie Corr

Marie is a Community Development professional with a strong background in advocacy, mentoring, capacity building, leadership and policy development. Her current role is Intercultural & Diversity Coordinator responsible for delivering a quality standard project across 3 of the country's largest AHBs Circle/Clúid/Respond. From 2004 – 2014 she served as a member of South Dublin County Council was elected Mayor twice. She has spent over 20 years working and volunteering in the community sector with a particular interest and specialism in working with migrant communities and in areas of disadvantage addressing social exclusion. She first got involved with CWE as a French teacher, helping members improve their oral language skills for Leaving Cert. She is also a proud parent to 2 Citywise alumni who have benefitted hugely from their membership and engagement with CWE FTA and Leadership programmes. She is passionate about the work and continuing development of Citywise Education and it's enduring positive impact on the lives of young people and their families across the Tallaght area.

Seán Preston

Pharmaceutical Engineer with BEng Mechanical Engineering, DIT Bolton Street. Seán has been involved in Citywise since he was 8 years old. He took part in the summer camps and after school groups, progressed to junior leadership and Fast track Academy, learning he could go to college through the guidance of his FTA tutors! After college, Seán got an entry level job in a pharmaceutical company and credits the ongoing support and mentorship with his career progression. He says that through the skills he learned in the leadership programme he was able to progress to managing teams of engineers, implementing the same culture he saw in Citywise. He not sits on the board of directors to help ensure Citywise continues its great work and retains its unique culture so all our community can reach their full potential.

Paul Whinnery, Chair

Paul is a former Manager of Citywise Education Belfast. He is also the former Centre Assistant Manager of Citywise Education in Dublin. Paul currently works as the Deputy Principal at Rockbrook Park School in Dublin. Paul is very experienced working in the education field and holds various qualifications. Paul has completed a BA Joint Degree in Geography/Italian from Queens University Belfast. He also graduated from Dublin City University with a higher diploma in education. Paul achieved his Master's in Education from NUI Maynooth in 2014 with a focus on access to education in disadvantaged communities. Paul has been involved in Citywise for 25 years, initially starting off as a volunteer, then as a staff member, and now again as a volunteer. He currently serves as a board member and holds the role of Chair of Citywise Education.

Louise Donovan

Louise has held many management and leadership positions throughout her career, particularly in the logistics and pharmaceutical industries.

Louise grew up in Liverpool where she attended both primary and secondary school and completed her A Levels. Louise moved to Dublin 25 years ago, and in 2021 completed a BA (Hons) First Class Honors Degree in Management & Leadership. She has also completed a certificate in Charity Governance at Technological University Dublin. Louise has been involved with Citywise as a parent since 2010 and began volunteering in 2015. She has been a board member in Citywise since 2019, and currently also volunteers as a member of the HR Sub Committee.

Board profiles (2 of 2)

Citywise has a board with deep experience and diverse capabilities to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

Jack Cannon

Jack has been involved in Citywise as a volunteer in various roles since 2012. He holds a degree in Economics and Spanish from Trinity College Dublin. He is a chartered accountant and chartered tax advisor, completing his training with KPMG, during which time he held a number of roles.

Conor McCarthy

Conor is the principal of Tallaght Community National School since 2020. He is a qualified teacher since 2011, having completed a masters in education focusing on poverty and social inclusion. He is part of a group of principals from Tallaght, Ballymun and Darndale which have been instrumental in advocating for the DEIS+ model, increasing the resources available to schools in generationally disadvantaged communities.

Maeve Martin

Maeve currently works as a HR Manager in MSS Building Services Ltd. Maeve has completed diplomas in HR Management, and Mediation Employment Law respectively. Maeve has been involved with Citywise as a parent and regular volunteer since 2010. She has recently joined the board of Citywise.

Jonathon Doyle

Jonathan is the Business Development Manager at the Childhood Development Initiative. He studied Community and Family Development at NUI Galway and recently completed a MSC in Social Policy and Practice at Trinity College Dublin. Jonathon is a native of West Tallaght and really enjoys working with the people in the community. He has been involved in Citywise for many years, having been a young participant, volunteer, staff member and a past CEO of the organisation.

Contact information

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