



Company Name

Venture Out Wilderness

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Venture Out Wilderness is based in Galway and is a registered charity and social enterprise, not-for-profit, limited company.

They prescribe and deliver outdoor, nature based therapeutic programmes to people experiencing a range of diverse challenges in their lives. Through tailored personal development focused programmes, experienced Venture Out guides create opportunities for their participants to learn, grow, explore and enjoy the outdoors for their physical, social, emotional and mental well-being.

The Venture Out Vision

A socially-just, sustainable society, more integrated with nature and the outdoor environment.

The Venture Out Mission is to promote transformative outdoor learning experiences that enhance personal and interpersonal development, creating a deeper understanding of our interdependence on nature.



WHAT WAS **THE TRIGGER** FOR YOUR BUSINESS OR ENTREPRENEURIAL IDEA?



We saw a need to combine outdoor, nature based programmes to people within marginalised and disadvantaged communities, in the promotion of their health and well-being. We are a group of qualified social workers who wanted to provide experiential learning and personal development through the outdoors. Our users could be a forest school group with early years, a teenage urban adventure club, or an extended wilderness based personal development expedition. Whatever the need is for that specific group or individual, we knew we needed to develop a bespoke programme to suit their requirements. We knew we needed to develop something that was needs led and needs driven. We like to think of ourselves as occupying the space between social care and the outdoors!

HOW DOES THE BUSINESS HELP TO ADDRESS REGIONAL **CLIMATE CHANGE OR SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES?**



The first action that comes to mind is the Leave No Trace Principles. We make sure we eliminate plastic and reduce, reuse and recycle where possible when in the outdoors. Leave No Trace is also incorporated into our education brief. We have a dedicated team of Leave No Trace trainers who deliver Leave No Trace education through our programs. For example, in our 8-week personal development programme, a portion of that time will be focused teaching young people about environmental protection and conservation, how long it takes food and rubbish to break down in the environment etc.





The experience has completely changed my perspective on where I thought my life was heading. It has given me a new perspective on things and a confidence that I didn't know I had.

Participant in recovery, 40yrs, completed our 7 - day wilderness expedition programme

HOW IS YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE **INNOVATIVE**? WHAT GAP IN THE MARKETPLACE DOES IT FILL?



We are innovative service because we predominantly work with youth work and family support focused organisations to deliver programmes to the people most in need at little or no costs to the participant. By adopting this inter-organisational & collaborative approach to our work, we find we are able to engage the people most in need of these types of programmes, quite often those living in disadvantage.

Myself and Nick met for the first time in 2015 on a Masters Course in NUIG, we quickly identified that we had the same vision and grá (Irish word for love) for the outdoors. We conceived the Venture Out social enterprise by coming together with the shared understanding that Ireland has not met the same heights as other countries with regards the potential of the Outdoor Developmental Work. It is very much embedded in our neighbouring countries and utilised to great effect, changing individuals and whole communities. We believed we could replicate the same through our roles within the social care fields, we identified that outdoor programmes were, broadly speaking, under valued throughout the mainstream social service organisation and passionately believed that something needed to change. Venture Out became the platform to do this.



WHERE DID YOU SOURCE THE MAIN **SUPPORT AND RESOURCES** (E.g., Grants And Other Support)?

We have been lucky to receive funding, mentoring, resources and support primarily from;

- [Leader](#)
- [Pobal](#)
- [Department of Youth Affairs](#)
- [Department of Justice](#)
- Also we receive sources from one off private funding initiatives

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Knowing Yourself is the Beginning of All Wisdom

“I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees”

Henry David Thoreau



WHAT **ADVICE** DO YOU WISH YOU COULD HAVE ACCESSED WHEN YOU STARTED?



I would say to make sure to get connected to the right people and networks. When you are a non-profit like us, governance is imperative, so we had to make sure we had a strong board in place, Get the right people with the right skills and experience in place. Get familiar with any funding and supports available. Without funding we simply couldn't survive. A lot of funding applications take time and have strict deadlines so give yourself enough time to research and fill out the applications on time to ensure they are successful.

I would say to also get familiar with online and offline marketing, pitching to your target market and developing marketing campaigns and the brand from the beginning. We are still learning and it has helped us immensely. Videos have been very useful in communicating our experiences, our website and social media ensure we get in front of our audiences.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN **OBSTACLES OR BARRIERS** YOU ENCOUNTERED?



One of our biggest obstacles is ensure we have enough funding. It is so important and key to our mission that our programmes are accessible for our clients and are affordable.

We are not core funded. Our programmes are complex they vary in price depending on the intervention we deliver, who we deliver it with and where they are delivered. Each programme is designed specifically for the individual or group involved, so it is often difficult for us to give a generic price. It is therefore only possible to agree costs once we speak with each organisation directly to explore their needs and the options available. Where costs can be saved, we work closely with each organisation to ensure this happens. This could involve the pooling of resources, being creative around administrative and transportation costs, or it could involve submitting joint applications to fully or part finance the project costs involved. Either way, we tell the organisations and people we work with don't be afraid, we are open to exploring all options with everyone!



HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS IT BEEN?

Having identified this gap, Nick and I knew ultimately that our company would be successful by designing and delivering outdoor developmental programmes in a more inclusive, affordable and sustainable manner that could positively affect the lives of individuals and communities living in disadvantage. From this starting point, we knew we had to develop Venture Out Wilderness as a Charity, with an ambition to grow an organisation that gives the outdoors a voice among the myriad of mental health and well-being, and personal development focused interventions that exist within social care professions. By establishing in such a manner, Venture Out provide interventions to the people and communities most in need, at little or no cost to the participants involved. We have been very successful and have done all we intended to do particularly following our objectives and social enterprise impacts; promoting the health and well-being across Ireland, among children, young people, families and whole communities. This is achieved through a multitude of things; the provision of training programs, education, advocacy, and the design, development and delivery of a range of outdoor developmental programs. We have managed to fine tune quality activities and programs that have been a success for all our users. We have recently updated by designing and delivering a range of outdoor based personal development programmes and interventions for our clients.



WAS SUCCESS A RESULT OF INDIVIDUAL WORK OR COLLABORATION (OR BOTH)?

The success of Venture Out has been due to a number of collaborations. The first is by the meeting and friendship of the two Program Managers Nick Lenane and myself Barry Dillon. Our team consists of professional and experienced social care practitioners with qualifications in outdoor adventure activities. We learned as a unit extensive delivering personal development focused nature-based programs to young people and families from a wide range of backgrounds. We are now well qualified to support participants through their therapeutic adventure journeys.

The establishment of our board was so important for Venture Out. Established in 2016 as a company limited by guarantee (CLG) we had to be under the governance and guidance of a board of trustees. Governance is so important in the field we work in. To adhere to The Governance Code and we engage fully with Revenue, the Companies Registration Office and the Charities Regulatory Authority on a regular basis. We currently have 3 Directors on our board, they have helped the company secure and manage as a charitable status. Our Board is vital to our success ensuring organisational accountability, overseeing management decisions, coordinating board meetings, leadership, setting strategy and delegating implementation of board decisions, recruitment, compliance with legislation (Employment, Health & Safety, Companies Act and Charities Act etc.), governance, ensuring conflicts of interest do not exist, acting in the best interest of the organisation, ensuring proper accounts and audits are undertaken, monitoring and reviewing risk, and ensuring practices are in line with policies. We work with a lot of supportive groups in the field we work in. Ideally, all participants are referred into our service by a key worker within the social care field, i.e., social workers, key support youth and family support workers, case workers, probation officers, counsellors and other professional support workers from within the social care field. However, we do take individual / direct referrals.