



Qualitative and Quantitative Effects of the Irish SME Support Program

‘Plato’

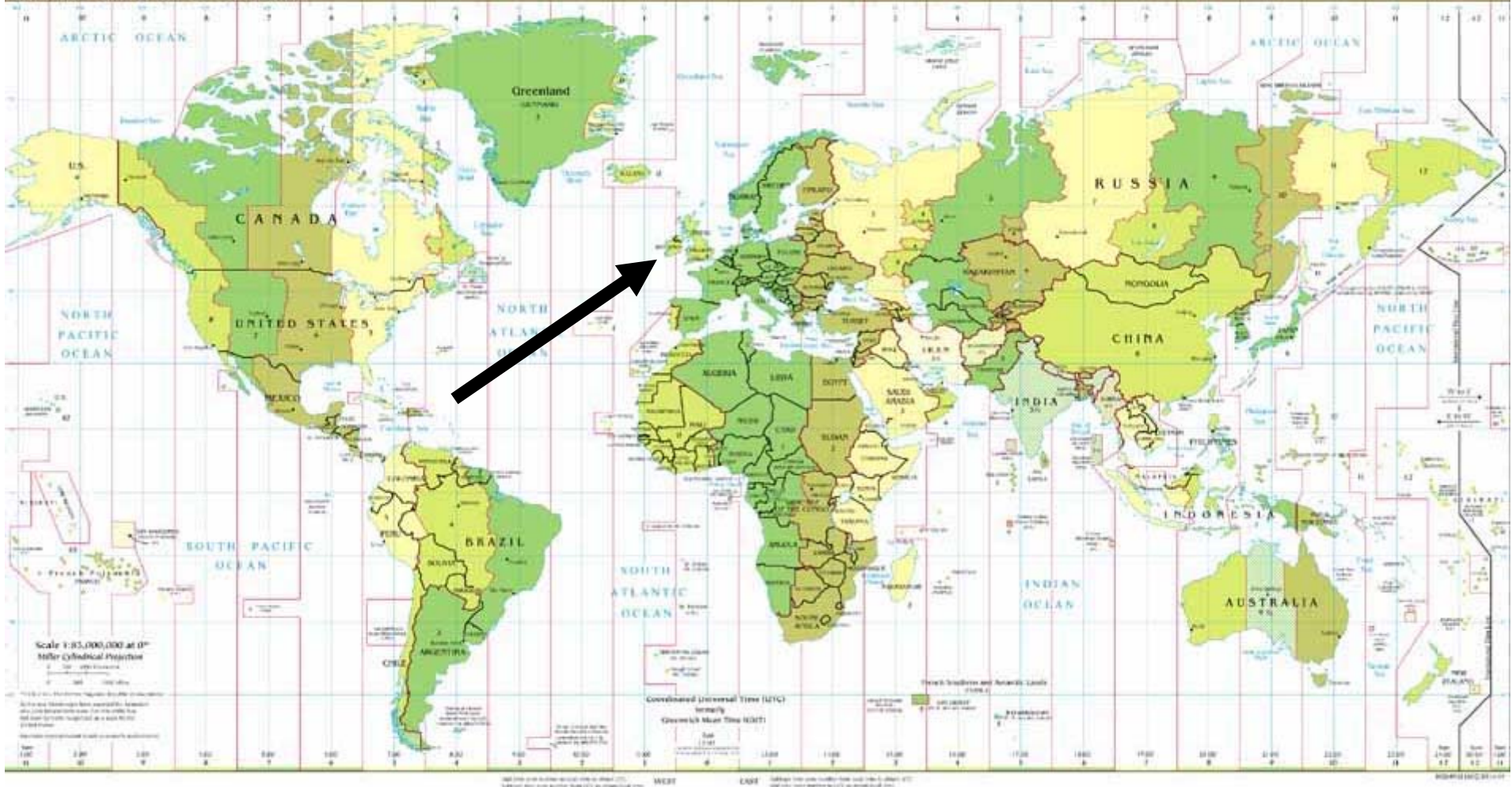
Joe English, Louth County Enterprise Board



Today's Presentation

- About Ireland & Business in Ireland
- PLATO
 - What it is and how it works
- Results of 15 years of PLATO
 - Value, Qualitative, Quantitative

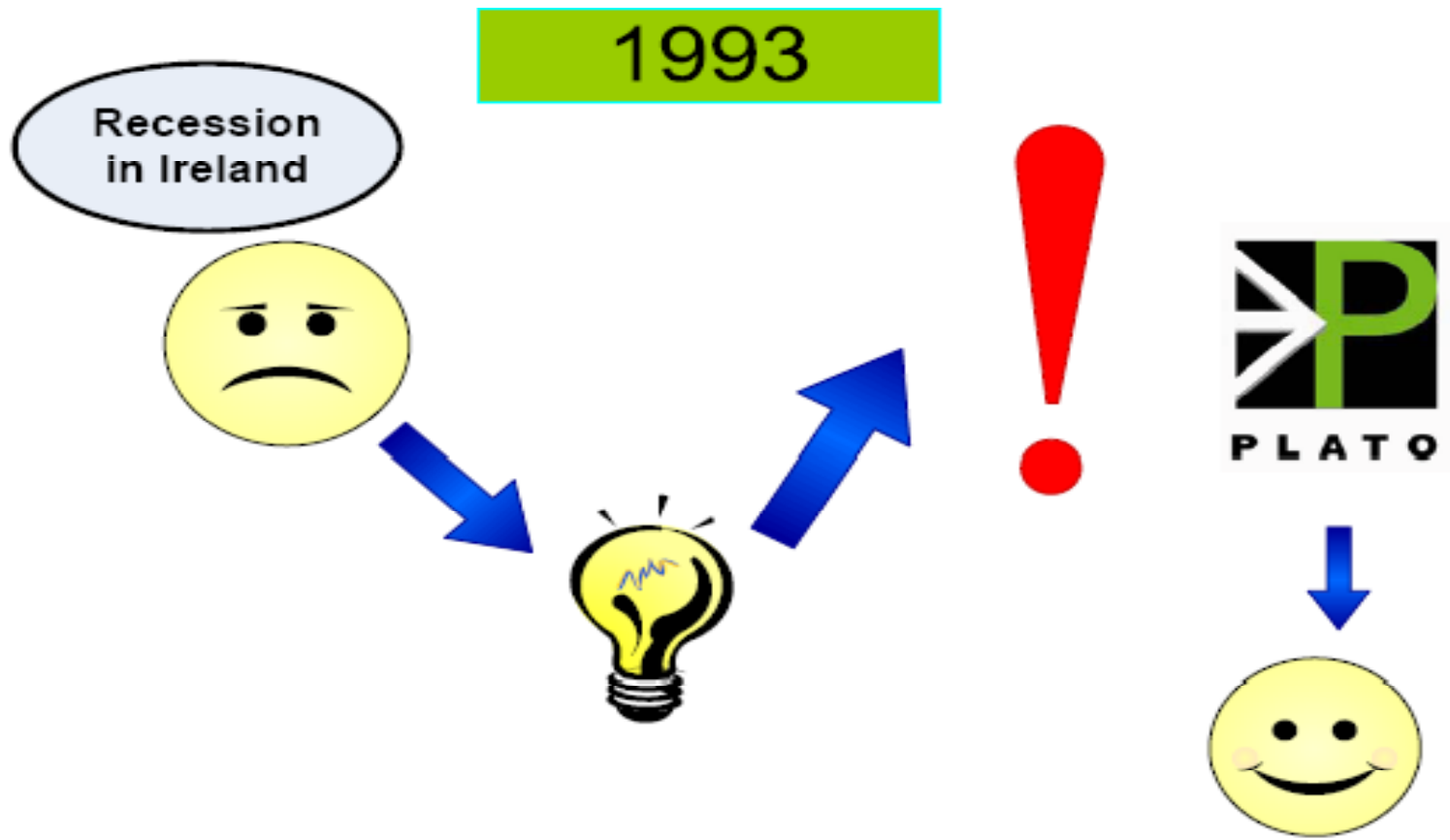
STANDARD TIME ZONES OF THE WORLD



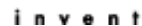


Ireland in Context

- 4 Million Population
- Until 1960, poor, rural & farming
- Industrial development by foreign investment
 - Business Friendly Government Policies
 - Low Business Taxation
 - Huge Investment in Education



 PLATO IRELAND



+
207,000
SMEs

Use
Multinational's
skills to help
the SMEs
develop their
businesses



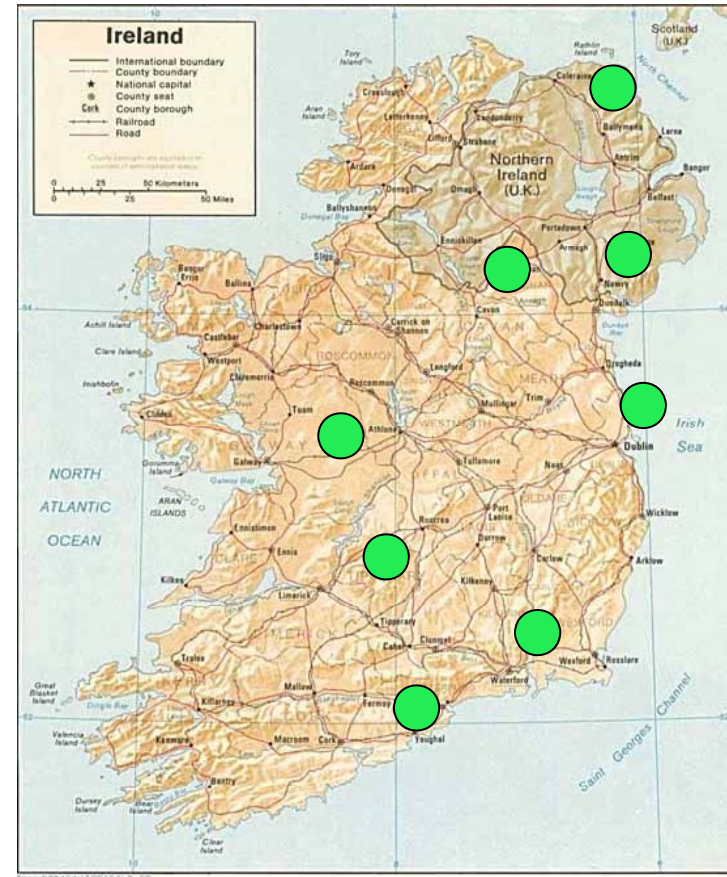
What is PLATO all about?

Plato is based on a number of key principles:

- An owner/manager focus
- Low cost, relevant and accessible expertise
- Locally based and business led
- Corporate Social Responsibility in action
- Sustained involvement
- Group learning approach

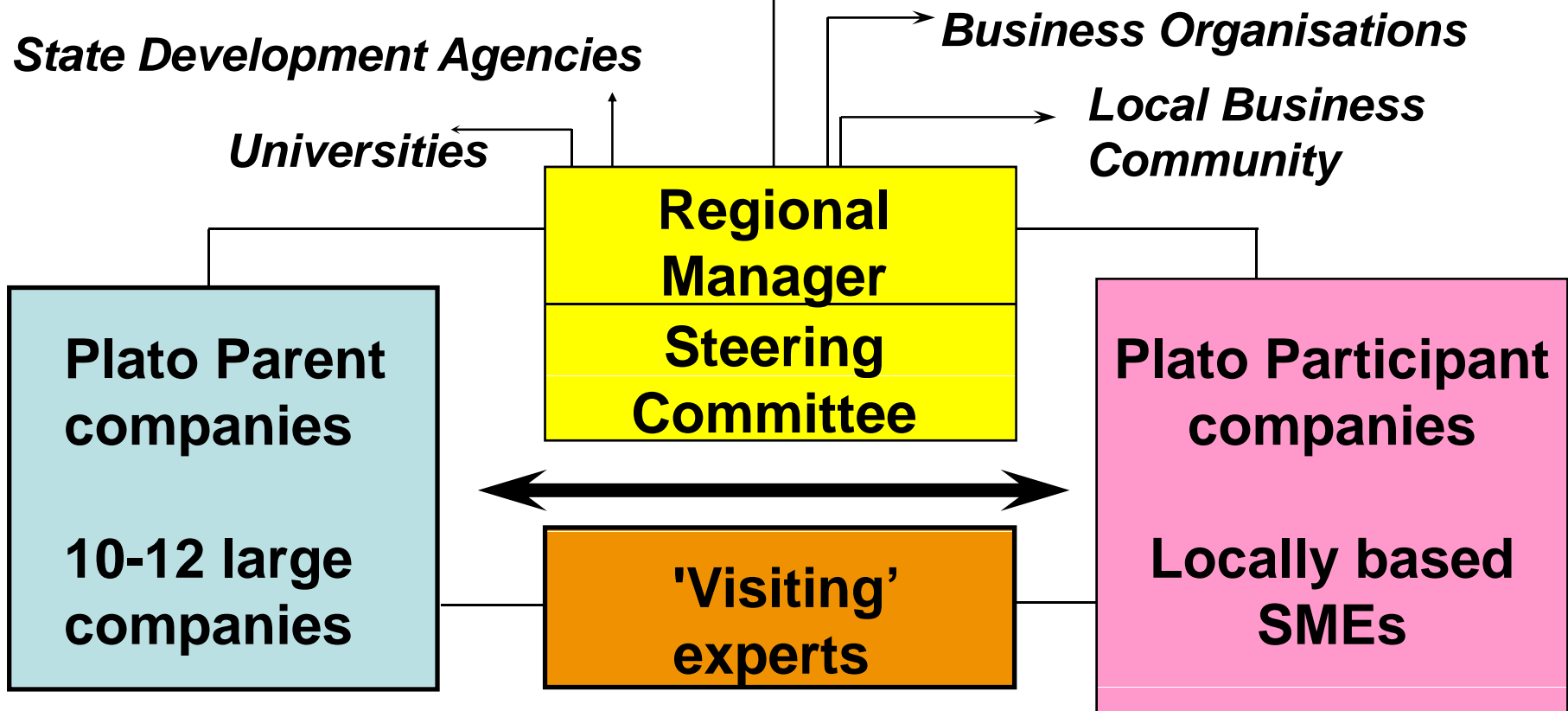


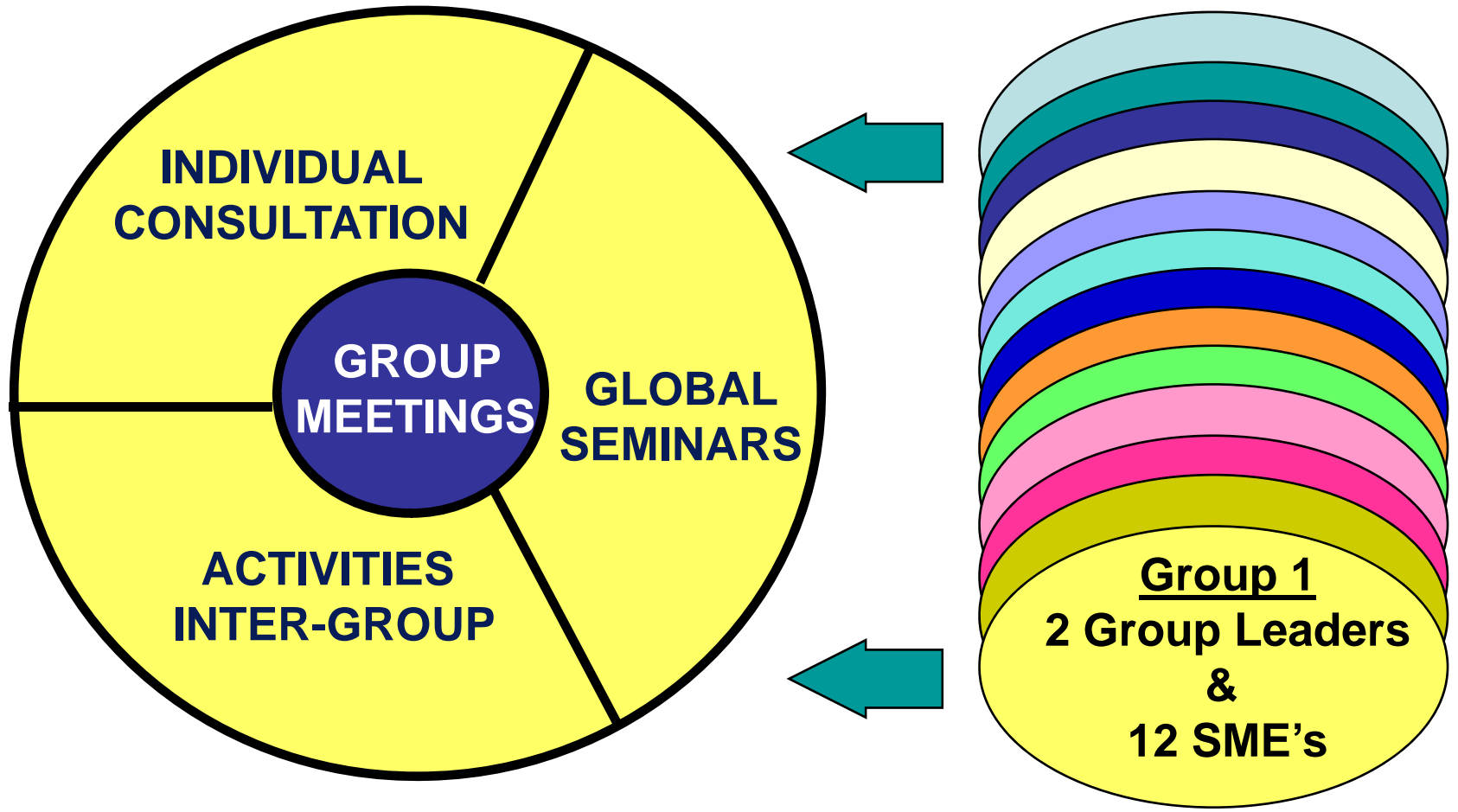
PLATO: A Network of Networks





Local Development Organisations





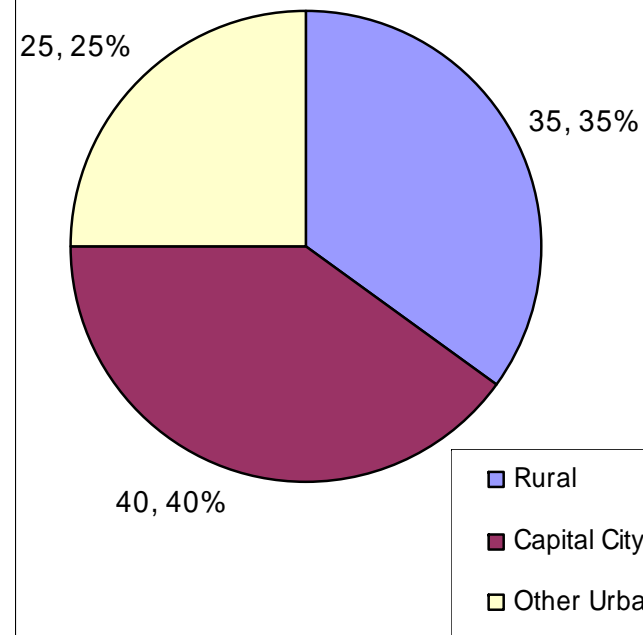


What are the results?:

- 15 Years of PLATO in Ireland
 - Who is involved in PLATO?
 - What are the benefits?



Member Location





Typical PLATO Member?

- Small manufacturing or service company
- Less Than 10 employees
- Urban based
- In business more than 10 years.



Let's look at some Detail:

- Value for Money
- Qualitative Benefits
- Quantitative Benefits

(Independent survey of 337 members)



Value for money: *One year/one region*

| INCOME SOURCE | €000's | % |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Government Funding | 197 | 63 |
| Participant fees | 92 | 30 |
| Other (event fees, sponsorship etc) | 22 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 289 | 100 |

| TRAINING TYPE | # Hours | % |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Direct Group meetings | 3440 | 75 |
| One – to - One | 480 | 11 |
| Networking | 650 | 14 |
| TOTAL | 4570 | 100 |

Training Cost/Hour to Government : € 43
(Compare to typical consultant rate to Government = €1,200/day)



Qualitative results:

| Participation in PLATO Rating: | 5 (%) | 4 (%) | 3 (%) | 2 (%) | 1 (%) |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Met all of my objectives | 15 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Met most of my objectives | 20 | 26 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Met some of my objectives | 4 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Met none of my objectives | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Overall satisfaction rating | 40 | 40 | 11 | 7 | 1 |
| Participation improved my business | 54 | 8 | 23 | 15 | 0 |



Qualitative results, cont:

| | YES (%) | NO (%) |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| Did PLATO develop/ change business operation? | 78 | 22 |
| Did PLATO help in ways you did not anticipate? | 53 | 47 |
| Would recommend to other companies? | 98 | 2 |



Qualitative, summary

- 80% scored delivery of objectives high.
- 78% believe PLATO helped develop their business
- 68% high satisfaction with group meetings
- 84% high satisfaction with Group Leaders
- 82% rated Plato excellent value for money
- 98% would recommend Plato to others



| Summary Findings | Evaluation of PLATO Ireland (Goodbody 1998) Sample size 428 SME's | Evaluation of PLATO region Sample size 337 SME's | Regional Evaluation Combined Average 2007/2008 |
|---|--|---|---|
| Turnover | YES - 22% Increase | YES - 5%-340% Inc | YES 55% agreed |
| Profit Improvement | n/a | YES - 3%-200% Inc | YES 60% Agreed |
| New Markets | YES 11% Agreed | YES - Value €30-50K | YES Average €40K |
| Employees | YES 18% Inc (830jobs) | YES - 59% Agreed | YES 40% Agreed |
| New Product/Service | n/a | YES - 51% Agreed | YES 65% Agreed |
| Cost Savings | n/a | YES - 55% Agreed | YES 82% Agreed |
| New systems/process | YES 25% Agreed | YES - 56% Agreed | YES 75% Agreed |
| Productivity | YES | YES - 56% Agreed | YES 84% Agreed |
| Improved Mgt Skills | YES 82% Agreed | YES - 78% Agreed | YES 95% Agreed |
| Relating specifically to Cross-Border Trade: | | | |
| Cross-Border Trade | n/a | n/a | YES 20% -> 50% Value €150K |
| Overall Satisfaction with PLATO Programme | YES 89% | YES 80% | YES 86% |



Quantitative, summary

- 73% said PLATO improved performance of their business.
- 35% indicated improvement in turnover
- 23% indicated improvement in profits
- 24% indicated an increase in employment
- 5% introduced new products or processes
- 19% instituted cost savings
- 24% introduced new systems to their businesses
- 15% improved business productivity



Summary

- PLATO brings benefits to both large and small companies
- PLATO must continually evolve
- PLATO is good value for money
- PLATO is CSR in action