

Parliamentary Resolution

on a strategic regional plan for the period 2018-2024

In accordance with Act no. 69/2015 on Regional Planning and Initiatives, Parliament resolves to enjoin the government to work towards the implementation of the following policy and action plan in regional affairs and that this implementation be taken into account in the preparation of the budget for each year.

I. FUTURE VISION AND MATTERS FOR ACTION

This plan is drawn up in accordance with the following precepts:

That Iceland be in the forefront of modern infrastructure, advanced services, value creation, equal quality of life, and robust local authorities capable of undertaking local projects and providing residents with good and cost-effective services with the aim of sustainable development as its guiding principle. That Iceland and its regions be connected with the outside world by the latest technology in balance with the environment.

That in all parts of the country there shall be flourishing settlements and dynamic centres of population which may contribute to the improved living standards of citizens, with access to basic services and employment opportunities as equal as possible irrespective of economic means and place of residence. That basic services be provided to residents in their immediate community in so far as is possible. That the Reykjavík metropolitan area should be a centre of public administration and central services to which all people in the country have easy access.

That regional affairs be integrated with other functions wherever appropriate. In all public-authority policymaking and planning, impacts on the development of individual regional areas and habitation should be examined and assessed.

That the principal concerns of the regional plan shall be to address depopulation in individual regions, lack of economic and industrial diversity, and technological changes and development and adaptation with respect to individual industries; to define essential countermeasures and adaptations to meet the impact of climate change; to ensure smooth communications and access to services; and to respond to hardening international competition for people and companies. Special emphasis shall be placed on regions that stand at an economic disadvantage in this regard.

II. OBJECTIVES, EMPHASES AND METRICS

The aims of the government are to:

- a. equalise access to services,
- b. equalise employment opportunities,
- c. promote the sustainable development of regions throughout the country.

The following priorities shall lead to direct and designated measures and to integration with measures in other public plans so that the objectives set out above may be achieved.

A. Access to services

- a. Connectivity through fibre-optic cable or high-speed networks should be available to all homes and places of work by the year 2020.

- b. Measures should be taken to ensure the maintenance of retail in areas of sparse population, distant from major service hubs. Ways of using internet services as a means of shopping shall also be examined.
 - c. Access to basic services should be made more equal and the cost of travel to the Reykjavík area for recreational purposes reduced.
 - d. The nationwide public transport network should be defined and rules framed on fare subsidies.
 - e. The use of varied sustainable modes of transport should be encouraged, e.g. walking and cycling.
 - f. Domestic energy costs should be standardised, work upgraded on the installation of heat pumps, and consideration given to the exploitation of organic waste for energy generation.
 - g. Further work should be done on the development of distributed learning at secondary-school level.
 - h. The infrastructure of educational networks and lifelong learning centres should be further developed with the aim of improving the centres' technological facilities, facilities for distance learning, and access to educational counselling, and of improving the centres' capacity to meet the service needs of students.
 - i. Allowance shall be made for the varying circumstances of individual parties involved in secondary education in rural areas, including as regards infrastructure of the centres and the need for distributed services.
 - j. Children and young people should have access to culture and the arts regardless of means and place of residence, for instance through increased provision of high-quality and diverse artistic events.
 - k. Local authorities and their regional associations shall be encouraged to look into the possibilities of supporting the management of museums, collections, centres, and exhibitions through amalgamation or joint operation.
 - l. Health and welfare plans shall be treated in parliament as public programmes. The basic services offered by the health and welfare services shall be defined, as well as how the rights of citizens to these may be guaranteed irrespective of place of residence. Health plans shall provide clear details of proposed working procedures and collaboration between healthcare institutions.
 - m. A policy shall be formulated on public services with the aim that the people of Iceland may enjoy the same access to basic services, irrespective of place of residence.
 - n. Secure transportation of patients shall be ensured throughout the country.
- Metrics to be used in evaluating progress towards the objective:
- i. Percentage of homes/companies in rural areas with access to fibre-optic connection.
 - ii. Percentage of people within 30 kilometres of a healthcare centre, elementary school, and general shop.

B. Employment opportunities

- a. Funds shall be ensured for the implementation of proposals in a transport plan, particularly as regards local roads, double-width bridges, and secure communications, on the basis of employment and services catchment areas and their expansion.
- b. The electricity transmission and distribution system shall meet the needs of industry and the public in all parts of the country as regards transmission capacity and security of delivery. The benefits of small generating plants shall be examined.
- c. Means shall be sought to encourage the use of environmentally friendly energy in place of mineral fuels.

- d. Funds shall be ensured for the development and maintenance of tourist sites through fee collection and a revised division of tax receipts, with an increased share going to local authorities.
- e. Results shall be ensured at local level in the allocation of regional quotas.
- f. It shall be made easier for farmers to adapt to generational changes in agriculture and to respond to demands for improvements to livestock facilities through loans with manageable terms.
- g. Better access shall be provided to funding for innovation.
- h. Differences in facilities at international airports shall be equalised.
- i. Public bodies shall be enjoined to define jobs and advertise them without location.
- j. The benefits of locating new operations on behalf of the state outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area shall be assessed.
- k. Support shall be given to increased finished processing of produce in the local area.
- l. Efforts shall continue to promote creative industries as a growth industry in Iceland.
- m. The state and local authorities shall work towards increasing the possibilities of people in the arts of residing in all parts of the country and shall create conditions for economic activity in the field of the arts throughout the country.
- n. Policymaking and definition of the roles of cultural centres and comparable institutions on a national level shall be carried out in ways similar to those in neighbouring countries.
- o. Attention shall be given to the imbalance between the needs of industry and the supply of graduates, or the so-called skills gap.
- p. Forestry will be strengthened as an industry with an emphasis on regional forestry plans and the development of the exploitation of forestry products.

Metrics to be used in evaluating progress towards the objective:

- i. Participation in employment and average working incomes in industry-sector zones.
- ii. Number of jobs at ministries and institutions designated as ‘no location’.

C. Sustainable development of rural communities throughout the country

- a. A capital-city policy shall be drawn up defining the role of Reykjavík in the development of the country’s rural regions and its status on a national level and with respect to cities outside Iceland.
- b. The project ‘Brothættar byggðir’ (Fragile Communities) shall be extended.
- c. Proposals shall be made for a change to the Public Rental Dwellings Act to make it possible for the state and local authorities to grant foundation subsidies to individuals to build residential housing in areas with a large imbalance between building costs and sales value.
- d. Consideration shall be given to the merits of using the educational loans system and other systems as incentives for people to settle in rural communities.
- e. Services to immigrants shall be stepped up and their conditions for adjustment improved in the face of a large foreseeable increase in their numbers over the next years.
- f. Support shall be given for innovation and technological development in welfare services throughout the country.
- g. Media activities outside the metropolitan area shall be strengthened.
- h. Universities shall prioritise the supply of a varied range of programmes through distance learning. Universities shall increase still further their collaboration on joint degrees so that students are offered greater opportunity to put together their courses in the way they choose.
- i. More detailed analysis shall be carried out of comparable research on the conditions, attitudes and circumstances of children and young people for all parts of the country.

- j. Provision shall be made to ensure that special preference is given in the allocation of sports travel subsidies to sports clubs which have the greatest distances to travel.
- k. Sports activities shall be built up such that all people have equal opportunities to take part in recognised events.
- l. The methodology used in initiatives shall be further developed and based on the active consultation and co-operation of local authorities and collaboration between them and the state through Stýrihóp Stjórnarráðsins um byggðamál (Cabinet Office Steering Group on Regional Issues) and regional associations of local authorities.
- m. Local authorities in all regions covered by initiatives shall be encouraged to collaborate on drawing up a local plan to establish a joint policy on issues that affect common interests within the region. The local authorities shall also be encouraged to designate a main nucleus in each region and its catchment area for employment and services. Policymaking for or within regions shall include discussion of climate change, its possible impacts, adaptation and countermeasures, e.g. in regional planning, which shall *inter alia* look into ways of reducing the emission of greenhouse gasses associated with industries and changes in land usage in the region, e.g. through the recovery of wetland or other ecosystems and soil and vegetation stabilisation, or through measures aimed at raising awareness among residents and visitors.
- n. Information shall be produced on urban area trends in Iceland, comparable to information on urban areas outside Iceland, as a basis for policymaking for the Reykjavík metropolitan area and other parts of the country.
- o. Academic research in the area of rural affairs shall be resourced as a basis for all policymaking.
- p. Iceland shall be an active participant in international collaboration in the area of regional affairs, e.g. through NORA (Nordic Atlantic Co-operation), Nordregio, the EU Northern Periphery Programme, and ESPON.
- q. Production of foodstuffs shall be maintained as widely as possible throughout the country.

Metrics to be used in evaluating progress towards the objective:

- i. Dependency ratio,
- ii. Demographic weaknesses.

III. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER POLICIES AND PLANS

Parliament concludes that close consultation between government ministries, state institutions, local authorities, industry, and urban society is important for the implementation of regional policy. In the light of this, conformity shall be ensured with other public planning and policymaking. Among measures to be considered in this connection are the following:

- a. Regular discussion shall take place at government level on the status and implementation of the regional plan and on opportunities for integration.
- b. Stýrihópur Stjórnarráðsins um byggðamál (Cabinet Office Steering Group on Regional Issues) shall be provided additional resources.
- c. The professional involvement of Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute) in the implementation and follow-up of the regional plan shall be ensured.
- d. A services map shall be drawn up to show the accessibility of residents to public services and an instrument panel prepared to shed light on the position and current status of regional affairs.
- e. There shall be active consultation with Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities) and regional associations of local authorities.
- f. Regular reporting to parliament shall be ensured.

- g. There shall be a systematic exchange of information, research, training, and international comparison.

In the workings of the Public Sector Finances Act there shall be special discussion of regional perspectives in connection with the formulation and presentation of the financial plan and budget for each year.

IV. ACTION PLAN

Parliament resolves that work shall be carried out in accordance with the following action plan to ensure progress towards the objectives set out in the regional plan:

A. Access to services

A.1 Optical wireless connectivity throughout Iceland

Project goal: That all legal domiciles and companies occupied throughout the year or business operations in rural areas shall have access to fibre optic connectivity.

Regional subsidies shall be provided to specific sparsely populated local authorities in order to facilitate the installation of optical cable systems. Priority shall be given to districts with poor financial resources, very scattered settlement, negative rural development and a low ratio of high-speed network connection. By the end of the project in 2020, wired internet connectivity of at least 100 Mb/sec should be available to 99.9% of legal domiciles/companies occupied throughout the year/business operations in rural areas.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneytið (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Local authorities.

Examples of collaborating parties: Fjarskiptasjóður (Telecommunications Fund)

Period: 2018-2020.

Proposed funding: ISK 300 million from the regional plan.

A.2 Services map

Project goal: To provide a reliable overview of Icelanders' access to services

A services map shall be produced displaying in pictorial form Icelanders' degree of access to public and private services. At the end of the project a database and pictorial representation shall be available for use in further policymaking and the formulation of action plans in rural affairs.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneytið (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Government ministries, Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), regional associations of local authorities, and individual local authorities.

Period: 2018-2019.

Proposed funding: ISK 20 million from the regional plan.

A.3 Increased resourcing of research and scientific activity

Project goal: To increase research efforts, scientific work, and innovation in rural areas

Resources shall be directed to enhancing the infrastructure and capabilities of science and learning centres and research centres that rest on a unique localised position of community, industry and/or nature. Professional links between them and with universities, research institutions, and companies shall be encouraged. Facilities and human resources shall be exploited better through further collaboration and student and academic access to the

country's cultural and natural resources greatly increased. The success of the project will be measured in the number of collaborative agreements, number of students at masters and doctoral level using working facilities, and the centres' environment and participation in research projects.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Examples of collaborating parties: Universities, research institutions, science and learning centres and research centres, Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland), and libraries.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture)

A.4 Interdisciplinary regional teams

Project goal: To strengthen and increase service integration in the area of social, health and educational affairs.

A trial project shall be set up aimed at establishing interdisciplinary regional teams responsible for co-ordination, consultancy, quality issues, etc. in the area of social, health and educational affairs. This could take the form of centres that become part of an integrated services chain of national and local authorities in the particular fields. Here it would be possible, for example, to build up knowledge for supply to local authority staff and specialised in-house and online counselling for parents aimed, for example, at swifter application of early-stage preventative interventions. It may also be possible to work on projects aimed at supporting consumers in self-help in rural areas where access to specialists is difficult. This could be done through the development of new technological solutions that enable them to have contact with social services staff in the area of child protection and services for the disabled and elderly, as well as immigrants. The aim will be to establish at least two regional teams on these principles.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government), velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare), and mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Various.

Examples of collaborating parties: Institutions in the area of social, health and educational affairs, local authorities, regional associations of local authorities, and Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities).

Period: 2019-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 60 million from the regional plan.

A.5 Distance health services

Project goal: To improve health services by exploiting the latest technology and telecommunications in service provision.

Through the role-out of distance health services the government shall seek to equalise public access to general and specialist health services, e.g. doctors, nurses, midwives, psychologists and speech therapists. Alongside this, electronic dissemination of health services shall be utilised to increase access to specialist knowledge and thereby mutual professional consultation, collaboration and co-operation and in this way facilitate teamwork within the health services. The success of the project will be measured, for example, in the number of persons using specialist services over the internet.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Þróunarmiðstöð heilsugæslunnar (Healthcare Development Centre).

Examples of collaborating parties: Healthcare institutions throughout the country, regional associations of local authorities, and individual local authorities.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 140 million from the regional plan.

A.6 Regional medical treatment

Project goal: To increase the number of healthcare doctors outside urban centres by introducing a two-year study course preparing healthcare doctors for work in rural areas

Work shall be done on the further mapping, analysis and development of a course of study preparing healthcare doctors for work in rural areas. A course convenor and study committee shall be appointed. The aim will be for the course to be available not later than in 2020.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Þróunarmiðstöð heilsugæslunnar (Healthcare Development Centre).

Examples of collaborating parties: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture); healthcare institutions outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area; working group of the Association of Icelandic General Practitioners on defining objectives; assessment and qualifications committee on occupational studies to qualify for a general medical licence and on specialist medical studies; and the University of Akureyri.

Period: 2019-2020.

Proposed funding: ISK 2.5 million from the regional plan.

A.7 Maternity and prenatal services

Project goal: To ensure access to pregnancy and maternity services.

Accessibility of general pregnancy and maternity healthcare services shall be defined for each part of the country, with safety services ensured. Rules shall be established on travel subsidies for parents awaiting childbirth far from their home area.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Landspítali (National and University Hospital of Iceland).

Examples of collaborating parties: Akureyri Hospital and other healthcare institutions outside urban centres.

Period: 2018-2019.

Proposed funding: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

A.8 Equalisation of transport costs for retail and shops

Project goal: To provide greater support for shops and retail in rural areas and smaller urban centres.

A working group shall be appointed to draw up proposals for reimbursement of costs to shops and retail outlets in the transportation of stock. The proposals shall be based on allowing shops that are at least 150 km by road from the Reykjavík metropolitan area, 75 km by road from Akureyri and 40 km by road from centres with populations of over 1,000, plus the islands of Grímsey and Hrísey, to apply for reimbursement of a part of the transportation costs of retail goods. The working group shall submit its proposals not later than 1 December 2018.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Local authorities and regional consultancy services

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

A.9 Shops and retail in areas of sparse population

Project goal: To support retail and shopping in areas of sparse population.

Specialist advice shall be made available to persons operating shops and retail outlets in designated places in areas of sparse population to improve their business operations and provide them with further support, e.g. through interaction with other services, changes to store layout, and improved access. Models shall be sought in the so-called Merkur Project in Norway under which shops in many places also offer other services such as postal services, coffee bars, sale of lottery tickets, tourist services, information centres, etc. A further model may be provided by the operations of Blábankinn (Blue Bank) at Þingeyri.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Local authorities and regional consultancy services

Period: 2019-2021.

Proposed funding: ISK 55 million from the regional plan.

A.10 Public transport throughout the country

Project goal: To support the on-going development of public transport throughout the country.

Support shall be given to routes which have an important role to play as regards rural settlements. Consideration shall be given to the utilisation of environmentally friendly energy sources. The success of the project will be measured in the number of people using public transport, etc.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Regional associations of local authorities and Vegagerðin (Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration).

Examples of collaborating parties: Local authorities and tourism services companies.

Period: 2019-2022.

Proposed funding: ISK 107.5 million from the regional plan.

A.11 Public transport by air

Project goal: To make domestic flight a realistic option for residents of rural areas

Internal flights shall be designated as part of the public transport system. A working group shall formulate rules making internal flights a realistic option for residents with legal domicile in specified areas. Subsidies shall be granted to individuals but not to companies or institutions, for instance along the lines of the Air Discount Scheme in Scotland. The aim shall be for the work of the working committee to be completed by the end of 2018 and subsidy payments to commence in 2019.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Examples of collaborating parties: Vegagerðin (Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration), regional associations of local authorities, professional associations and trades unions, and flight operators.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

A.12 Services to motorists in areas of sparse population

Project goal: To increase availability of organised motoring services in areas of sparse population.

Work shall be done on drawing up proposals for support for organised services for motorists in areas of sparse population which particularly meet the needs of the disabled and others less able to use public transport. The present format of central support for school journeys by car from sparsely populated areas shall be taken into consideration.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Jöfnunarsjóður sveitarfélaga (Local Authority Equalisation Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare), Öryrkjabandalag Íslands (Organisation of the Disabled in Iceland), and local authorities

Period: 2019-2021.

Proposed funding: Jöfnunarsjóður sveitarfélaga (Local Authority Equalisation Fund).

A.13 ‘Services on site’ for immigrants

Project goal: To facilitate access of immigrants to public services.

Education and training shall be prepared that improve the skills of state and local authority staff in providing specialist assistance and support in the affairs of immigrants. Particular consideration shall be given to recent immigrants in the matter of supply of information on services and Icelandic teaching in their local area. The task of providing specialist assistance and support to local authorities shall be assigned to Fjölmennigarsetur (Multicultural and Information Centre) through a financial contribution. A trial run in knowledge accounting shall be conducted at local authorities with more than 1,000 inhabitants in which the education and skills of each will be mapped and analysed with regard to future work within the local authority area. The first stage shall be a trial project with five local authorities.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Fjölmennigarsetur (Multicultural and Information Centre) and lifelong learning centres.

Examples of collaborating parties: Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), local authorities, and Vinnumálastofnun (Directorate of Labour).

Period: 2018-2021.

Proposed funding: ISK 20 million from the regional plan.

A.14 Equalisation of energy costs

Project goal: To promote greater equality of energy costs in rural and urban areas, both as regards electricity distribution and domestic heating.

Efforts shall be made to equalise the gap in energy costs, e.g. in the matter of house heating cost, which is considerably higher in places where there are no possibilities of heating supply from geothermal sources.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority).

Examples of collaborating parties: Byggingastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: On-going.

Proposed funding: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

A.15 Development of infrastructure for renewable energy on land and in harbours

Project goal: To reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and increase the proportion of environmentally friendly energy generation.

Work shall continue on the development of infrastructure for environmentally friendly motor vehicles, e.g. charging stations, and the infrastructure built up for the electrification of harbours, including access to electrical connections at harbours. The success of the project will be measured in the degree of infrastructure expansion and increased use of environmentally friendly energy sources.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Orkusjóður (Energy Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority), Orkusetur (Energy Agency), Íslensk nýorka (Icelandic New Energy Ltd), Græna Orkan (EcoEnergy Iceland), Hafnasamband Íslands (Icelandic Harbour Association), Samorka (federation of energy and utility companies), Hafíð (seafood company), and Landsnet (national electrical grid).

Period: 2019-2021 (previous period was 2016-2018).

Proposed funding: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

A.16 Utilisation of information technology for university courses

Project goal: To improve access to university-level courses.

Increased priority shall be given to offering a varied range of university courses through distance learning, e.g. by increased collaboration between universities on joint degrees. An infrastructure of educational bodies shall be built up with the aim of improving their technological facilities, amenities for students, study consultation, etc. The success of the project will be measured *inter alia* by the number of students studying at university level through blended learning (combined residential and distance learning), range of university courses offered through distance learning, and improved levels of education.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Universities and educational bodies.

Examples of collaborating parties: Þekkingarsetur (Science and Learning Centers), háskólafélög (regional learned societies), þekkingarnet (regional academic centres), lifelong learning centres, fræðslunet (regional continuing education networks), secondary schools, and regional associations of local authorities.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

A.17 Regional offset of transportation costs

Project goal: To review Act no. 160/2011 on the Regional Transportation Aid Scheme.

Possibilities of changes to subsidies to manufacturing companies shall be examined, e.g. through flexibility to increase the ratio of subsidies on account of road conditions, reduction in minimum route distance, and adding new industries. The aim is for a change in the law to be approved by parliament by the end of 2018.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Examples of collaborating parties: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: 2018.

Proposed funding: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

A 18 Definition of public services and equalisation of access

Project goal: To ensure that residents of Iceland, irrespective of place of residence, have equal access to basic public services through improved conditions and technological solutions.

The rights of people to basic public services shall be defined, e.g. health services, policing, education, transport, and telecommunications. Once the definition is to hand, proposals shall be drawn up on technological implementation and equalisation of costs in accessing individual elements of the services provided through the state. These proposals shall be incorporated in a long-term plan not later than 2021.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Government ministries, Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), regional associations of local authorities, and local authorities.

Period: 2019-2021.

Proposed funding: ISK 3 million from the regional plan.

A.19 Access to mental health services

Project goal: To provide support for the velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare) policy and action plan on mental health issues.

Mental health teams shall be set up in those parts of the country where they do not already operate and priority given to psychological services for children and young people. Special consideration shall be given to the provision of relevant mental health services to students at secondary-school level. Careful consideration shall also be given to the mental health and well-being of the elderly, including bearing in mind indications of increasing isolation and loneliness among this group. Mental health services to other groups shall also be built up, e.g. to prisoners, people with learning difficulties, and people with alcohol and drugs problems. The aim is for mental health teams to have started work in all parts of the country by the end of 2019.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Heilsugæsla höfuðborgarsvæðisins (association of healthcare centres in the Reykjavík metropolitan area) and healthcare institutions throughout the country.

Examples of collaborating parties: Healthcare institutions, Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), local authorities, Öryrkjabandalag Íslands (Organisation of the Disabled in Iceland), and consumers' associations.

Period: 2018-2020.

Proposed funding: ISK 5 million from the regional plan.

A.20 Access to specialist medical services

Project goal: To ensure that all Icelanders enjoy equal access to health services, irrespective of place of residence.

The aim shall be for services of specialist doctors at healthcare institutions outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area to be supplied increasingly by specialists working at healthcare institutions under contract with specialised hospitals.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Healthcare institutions together with specialised hospitals.

Examples of collaborating parties: Sjúkratryggingar Íslands (Icelandic Health Insurance), associations of medical specialists.

Period: 2018-2020.

Proposed funding: ISK 5 million from the regional plan.

B. Employment opportunities

B.1 Roll-out of three-phase electrical supply

Project goal: To ensure that the electrical distribution system meet the needs of homes and companies, with special emphasis on electrical distribution and security of electrical delivery in rural areas.

Consideration shall be given to the granting of subsidies from Orkusjóður (Energy Fund) to cover a part of the fast-track fee levied by Rarik (Icelandic State Electricity) for moving giving operations special priority. Attention shall also be given to provision of direct subsidies to local authorities and synergies in the installation of fibre-optic systems.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Orkusjóður (Energy Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority), Rarik (Icelandic State Electricity), Orkubú Vestfjarða (Westfjord Power Company), and regional associations of local authorities.

Period: 2019-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 400 million from the regional plan.

B.2 Electrical transmission system and improved energy security

Project goal: To increase energy security and upgrade the electrical transmission system.

Work shall continue on removing obstacles to necessary expansion and maintenance of the electrical transmission and distribution system, improving connections between key areas, and ensuring delivery security throughout the country to meet the needs of industry and the general public.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Examples of collaborating parties: Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority), Landsnet (national electrical grid), and regional associations of local authorities.

Period: 2019-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 60 million from the regional plan.

B.3 Support for the construction of small generating plants

Project goal: To investigate and support options for increased electricity generation in rural areas through small generating plants and thereby adding to energy security at a national level.

Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority) and local authorities shall investigate the possibilities of local solutions in energy affairs by mapping potential smaller generating options in rural areas (up to 10 MW). Work shall be set in train on updating Orkustofnun's database of smaller hydroelectric generating plants and on collaboration with Veðurstofan (Meteorological Office) on flow modelling. The project shall also cover pre-design of generating options and an information campaign. The project will not be limited to hydroelectric generating plants.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority).

Examples of collaborating parties: Regional associations of local authorities

Period: 2018-2022.

Proposed funding: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

B.4 Cost-effective loans for agriculture

Project goal: To support recruitment, innovation and new investment in agriculture throughout the country.

Access shall be guaranteed to economical long-term loans that support recruitment and new investment in agriculture. The success of the project will be measured *inter alia* in the number of loans issued and the amount of loan capital provided.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Bændasamtök Íslands (Farmers Association of Iceland).

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

B.5 Innovation in the food industry

Project goal: To drive innovation and increase opportunities in food production.

The operations of R&D funds in the field of food production shall be reviewed and the possibilities of combining them investigated. A dynamic foodstuffs fund shall be set up in 2019 to support innovation and development in food manufacture.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Examples of collaborating parties: Framleiðnisjóður landbúnaðarins (Agricultural Productivity Fund), AVS-Rannsóknasjóður (AVS R&D Fund), Bændasamtök Íslands (Farmers Association of Iceland), and Samtök fyrirtækja í sjávarútvegi (Fisheries Iceland).

Period: 2018-2020.

Proposed funding: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

B.6 Tax allowance for travel to and from work by car

Project goal: To make it easier for people outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area to attend work away from the home.

Residents in Iceland who live in regional aid areas on the EFTA Surveillance Authority map and attend work over long distances shall get a part of their travel costs to and from work reimbursed through the tax system under rules to be drafted by a working group appointed to this task. The success of the project will be measured *inter alia* in the number of people benefiting from reimbursement by area.

Responsible authority: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

Party responsible for implementation: Ríkisskattstjóri (Directorate of Internal Revenue).

Examples of collaborating parties: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: 2019-2024.

Proposed funding: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

B.7 Jobs without specified location

Project goal: To ensure that 10% of all advertised jobs at ministries and their institutions shall be without specified location by the year 2024, meaning that residence has no influence on ministry staff selection.

Government ministries and institutions shall designate jobs that can be without specified location such that residence has no influence on staff selection. When such a post is advertised, attention shall be drawn to the job in question being without set location. If a staff member is appointed who lives outside daily travelling distance of the relevant ministry or institution, the employer shall attempt to find adequate working facilities closer to home. By the end of 2019 each ministry shall have designated which jobs it will be possible to perform outside the ministry. By the end of 2021 5% of jobs advertised shall operate without set location and by the end of 2024 this number shall have risen to 10%. The success of the project shall be measured in the number of jobs at individual ministries and institutions that are performed off site as compared to 1 January 2018.

Responsible authority: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

Party responsible for implementation: Government ministries and institutions.

Examples of collaborating parties: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute), local authorities, and institutions in non-metropolitan areas.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

B.8 Teleprocessing centres

Project goal: To digitise public documents and increase employment opportunities in non-metropolitan areas.

Work centres shall be established in designated areas which will undertake the task of putting government public documents into digital form. The state shall support institutions that take on such projects, e.g. through repayment of up to 80% of the costs of each FTE. Among qualifying institutions shall be Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands (National Archives of Iceland), Landsbókasafn Íslands - Háskólabókasafn (National and University Library of Iceland), district commissioners offices, utanríkisráðuneyti (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), and Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland). The success of the project will be measured in the number of teleprocessing centres, number of institutions using the service, and number of FTEs.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture), dómsmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Justice), utanríkisráðuneyti (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), other government ministries, institutions, and local authorities.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 300 million from the regional plan.

B.9 Variety of employment opportunities throughout the country

Project goal: To support variety of jobs and industry as widely as possible throughout the country.

When new working operations are set up on behalf of the public authorities, consideration shall be given to whether the work can be located outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area. The success of the project will be measured in the number of jobs and work centres created outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area.

Responsible authority: Forsætisráðuneyti (Prime Minister's Office).

Party responsible for implementation: Forsætisráðuneyti (Prime Minister's Office).

Examples of collaborating parties: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Forsætisráðuneyti (Prime Minister's Office).

B.10 Evening out differences of facilities at international airports

Project goal: To even out differences in service facilities at Iceland's international airports.

A working group shall be appointed to produce proposals on price equalisation of aircraft fuel at the country's international airports. The aim is for the group to submit its proposals by the end of 2018.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Examples of collaborating parties: Oil companies, Isavia (national airport and air navigation authority) and Flugþróunarsjóður Íslands (Icelandic Airways Development Fund).

Period: 2018.

Proposed funding: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

B.11 Air gateways to Iceland

Project goal: To distribute tourists and travellers more evenly around the country.

Flugþróunarsjóður (Icelandic Airways Development Fund) shall support the development of new flight routes to Iceland, with the aim of establishing regular international flights to the airports at Akureyri and Egilsstaðir. Success will be measured in increase in tourist numbers arriving by air/number of landings.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Flugþróunarsjóður (Icelandic Airways Development Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government), Isavia (national airport and air navigation authority), regional associations of local authorities, and marketing agencies.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Flugþróunarsjóður (Icelandic Airways Development Fund).

B.12 ‘The Radar’

Project goal: To boost tourism services companies in rural areas.

‘The Radar’ (‘Ratsjáin’, development project run by the Iceland Tourism Cluster) shall be utilised to develop the knowledge and skills of operators of tourism services companies through teaching and training aimed at encouraging healthier management, greater margins through improved technological capacity, and increased competence in the use of digital media. The success of the project will be measured in the number of companies participating in the project, number of workshops, and number of analyses of the innovation skills of companies.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Íslenski ferðaklasinn (Iceland Tourism Cluster) and Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands (Innovation Center Iceland).

Examples of collaborating parties: Regional marketing agencies.

Period: 2019-2022.

Proposed funding: ISK 30 million from the regional plan.

B.13 Digital lead in rural areas

Project goal: To increase the capacity of companies in rural areas to exploit digital technology for growth.

Study materials already developed on the exploitation of digital technology shall be used to launch a special campaign among companies in rural areas with the aim of increasing their ability to utilise the internet for business purposes. A workshop will be organised which will be followed up with expert guidance. The project shall be based on the requirements of smaller companies that need to improve market penetration and build up business connections. There shall be collaboration with marketing agencies, regional consultancy services and lifelong learning centres throughout the country to reach to as many parties as possible. Success will be measured in the number of companies taking part in the project, number of workshops, and number of analyses of company innovation skills.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands (Innovation Center Iceland).

Examples of collaborating parties: Íslenski ferðaklasinn (Iceland Tourism Cluster), regional consultancy services, marketing agencies, and lifelong learning centres.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 35 million from the regional plan.

B.14 Capital for innovation

Project goal: To increase industrial innovation in areas of sparse population through a special tranche of loans issued by Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute) encouraging innovation in industry and facilitating entrepreneurs to bring their projects and ideas from development stage to implementation.

Companies shall receive assistance and analysis from Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands (Innovation Center Iceland), taking in among other things consideration of innovation scales, to ensure that the total funding of a project from development stage to income-generating stage is secured and that the project is viable. The success of the project will be measured in the number of innovation projects in each year.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute) and Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands (Innovation Center Iceland).

Examples of collaborating parties: Regional consultancy services.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

B.15 Allocation of regional quotas

Project goal: To assess the results of the regional quota system.

Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute) shall be charged to carry out an assessment of local results from the allocation of regional quotas and whether changes should be made to the arrangement used to ensure that a regional quota achieves its set objectives to the best degree possible. The assessment should be finished by the end of 2019.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Fiskistofa (Directorate of Fisheries), local authorities, and regional consultancy services.

Period: 2018-2019.

Proposed funding: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

B.16 Exploitation of cultural monuments

Project goal: To exploit cultural monuments in support of regional development in areas at risk of depopulation.

The project shall seek to obtain an overall picture of the physical cultural heritage in order to identify the possibilities for exploitation and opportunities that this has to offer. Cultural monuments (archaeological remains, structures, and buildings) shall be mapped for specified areas and this data used as a basis for the design of projects. Minjastofnun (Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland) shall assist local regions in raising capital for projects that will subsequently be set in train, e.g. by identifying relevant funding sources, supporting applications, and providing professional advice. The success of the project will be measured in the number of mappings and projects.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Minjastofnun Íslands (Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland).

Examples of collaborating parties: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute), local authorities, marketing agencies, tourism services providers, and Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland).

Period: 2019-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 16.5 million from the regional plan.

B.17 Farms in state ownership

Project goal: To formulate an ownership policy for farms in state ownership.

An audit shall be carried out on the utilisation of farms in state ownership. On completion, an ownership policy shall be drawn up with the aim of making it easier for people to take up farming and have confidence in residence and the infrastructure in rural areas. The aim is for a draft parliamentary resolution on state ownership to be submitted not later than 1 November 2018.

Responsible authority: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

Party responsible for implementation: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

Examples of collaborating parties: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation), Bændasamtök Íslands (Farmers Association of Iceland), Samtök ungra bænda (Association of Young Farmers), Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), Skógræktin (Icelandic Forestry Service), Landgræðslan (Soil Conservation Service of Iceland), and Umhverfisstofnun (Environment Agency of Iceland).

Period: 2018.

Proposed funding: Fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs).

B.18 Participation in the labour market and wage gap by place of residence

Project goal: To increase the possibilities open to women to participate in the labour market in rural areas.

Work shall be initiated on a review of the position and opportunities of women and men on the labour market in rural areas. The review will consider how it may be possible to increase the possibilities open to women of work suited to their level of education. Consideration will also be given to ways of reducing the wage gap between men and women in rural areas, so helping to redress the residence gender imbalance, i.e. by cutting the gender deficit where such exists. The aim is for the results of the review to be available by the end of 2020.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Jafnréttisstofa (Centre for Gender Equality).

Examples of collaborating parties: Government action group and organisations of labour market interests on equal pay, Háskóli Íslands (University of Iceland), and Hagstofa Íslands (Statistics Iceland).

Period: 2019-2020.

Proposed funding: ISK 5 million from the regional plan.

C. Sustainable development of regions throughout the country

C.1 Ad hoc projects in special initiative areas

Project goal: To transfer increased responsibility to local residents in the allocation of funds and to forge links between local regional initiatives and the regional plan.

Special emphasis shall be placed on regions suffering from long-term depopulation, unemployment, and lack of industrial diversification by the creation of supplementary agreements with initiatives for the relevant regions on specific projects according to priorities set by local residents.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute) and regional associations of local authorities.

Examples of collaborating parties: Stýrihópur Stjórnarráðsins um byggðamál (Cabinet Office steering group on regional issues), government ministries, Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), local authorities and institutions.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 870 million from the regional plan.

C.2 ‘Fragile communities’

Project goal: To counteract on-going depopulation in smaller centres of settlement.

The project ‘Brothættir byggðir’ (Fragile Communities) shall be extended. The project seeks solutions to the critical problems in certain areas in past years caused by depopulation and industrial difficulties. The success of the project will be measured through population trends in the relevant regions and other metrics to be defined by Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Residents of the relevant rural areas, local authorities, regional associations of local authorities, government ministries and institutions.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 700 million from the regional plan.

C.3 Support for individuals – student loans

Project goal: To use the student loan system as an incentive for people to settle in areas of sparse population.

The project management team on the review of the Icelandic Student Loan Fund Act shall examine the merits of creating special incentives through the student loan system for people to settle in areas of low population. Through such means the aim will be to improve levels of expertise and specialised knowledge in all parts of the country, to increase numbers of people with higher education in rural areas, and to generate greater social variety.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Examples of collaborating parties: Lánasjóður Íslenskra Námsmanna (Icelandic Student Loan Fund), Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute), and Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities).

Period: 2018-2019.

Proposed funding: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

C.4 Capital-city policy

Project goal: To draw up a capital-city policy that defines the role of Reykjavík as a capital for all residents of Iceland and the rights and duties of the city as Iceland's capital and that encourages increased competitiveness of the capital area and the country as a whole.

A committee shall be appointed to produce a draft of a capital-city policy. A draft parliamentary resolution on a capital-city policy shall be forwarded for comment by the end of 2018 and a finalised proposal submitted to parliament in the spring of 2019. Agreements will subsequently be signed between the Icelandic state and the City of Reykjavík.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government) and the City of Reykjavík.

Examples of collaborating parties: Samtök sveitarfélaga á höfuðborgarsvæðinu (Association of Local Authorities in the Greater Reykjavík Area), Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute), and other stakeholders.

Period: 2018-2019.

Proposed funding: ISK 7.3 million from the regional plan.

C.5 Installation of heat pumps in cold areas

Project goal: To reduce electricity consumption in cold areas and increase energy security.

The electricity consumption of electrically powered heating utilities shall be reduced and energy security improved through support for the installation of heat pumps in cold areas. The success of the project will be measured in lower energy costs at a national level and increased energy security.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Orkusjóður (Energy Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Local authorities.

Period: 2019-2023.

Proposed funding: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

C.6 Housing

Project goal: To increase numbers of dwellings in areas where there are opportunities to counter industrial stagnation but where development is hampered by a shortage of suitable housing.

Residents of rural areas which suffer from imbalance between the building costs and sales value of property shall be enabled to respond to housing shortages by new construction, repairs, or changed use of pre-existing housing. Special rural-regions projects run by Íbúðalánasjóður (Housing Financing Fund) shall be used in collaboration with individual local authorities to look into the use of subsidies or reductions in interest rates for the building of residential dwellings in economically disadvantaged regions. Market failure in different regions will be identified, e.g. in order to obtain the greatest advantage from housing support in the form of extra initial capital contributions.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Íbúðalánasjóður (Housing Financing Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), local authorities, and Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: 2018-2022.

Proposed funding: Íbúðalánasjóður (Housing Financing Fund).

C.7 Local authority housing plans

Project goal: To ensure that realistic and targeted housing plans are in force with all local authorities.

Support shall be given for a formal collaborative forum of local authorities on the creation of housing plans, e.g. through regional associations, at which shared needs analysis may be carried out in connection with national planning policy, regional planning, and those parts of the general plan that relate to supply and demand of suitable residential accommodation, especially to let, etc. The success of the project should appear in the number of local authorities having approved housing plans, whether independently or on a common platform.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Íbúðalánasjóður (Housing Financing Fund).

Examples of collaborating parties: Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), regional associations of local authorities, and individual local authorities.

Period: 2019-2021.

Proposed funding: ISK 20 million from the regional plan.

C.8 Support for media in rural areas

Project goal: To promote and develop local media.

In its consideration of possible ways of strengthening the media, the government shall pay particular attention to the position of local media outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area, these having a major part to play in ensuring public access to information on cultural and community issues and thereby supporting the democratic process and cultural activities.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Examples of collaborating parties: Fjölmiðlanefnd (Media Commission) and Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 25 million from the regional plan.

C.9 Nature conservation and the development of rural regions

Project goal: That conservation of nature should contribute to the development of rural regions.

Work shall be done on identifying and analysing the opportunities and benefits in rural areas from services based on the exploitation of areas of nature conservation, e.g. in ecotourism and nature tourism services. Consideration shall be given to whether significant benefits may accrue from placing areas and their management under protection, e.g. by the establishment of national parks or geoparks. The success of the project will be measured in the number of companies involved in nature tourism services within sections of the country.

Responsible authority: Umhverfis- og auðlindaráðuneyti (Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources).

Party responsible for implementation: Regional associations of local authorities.

Examples of collaborating parties: Marketing agencies, universities, regional consultancy services, Umhverfisstofnun (Environment Agency of Iceland), Skógræktin (Icelandic Forestry Service), and Landgræðslan (Soil Conservation Service of Iceland).

Period: 2018-2022.

Proposed funding: ISK 57 million from the regional plan.

C.10 Expertise in infrastructure in nature conservation areas

Project goal: To build up the professional expertise of people working on the development of infrastructure in nature.

The quality of infrastructure development shall be improved, measures taken to reduce the risk of unnecessary disturbance, and funds employed better by increasing professionalism in the area of design of infrastructure in nature such that it blends in with the landscape as well as possible and contributes to the positive experience of visitors. Use shall be made of projects that relate the policies of the national plan on infrastructure development to the protection of nature and cultural-historical monuments 2018-2029.

Responsible authority: Umhverfis- og auðlindaráðuneyti (Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources).

Party responsible for implementation: Regional associations of local authorities.

Examples of collaborating parties: Umhverfisstofnun (Environment Agency of Iceland), Landgræðsla ríkisins (Soil Conservation Service of Iceland), Skógræktin (Icelandic Forestry Service), Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland), national parks, and universities.

Period: 2018-2020.

Proposed funding: ISK 15 million from the regional plan.

C.11 More women in local government

Project goal: To increase the number of women in local government.

Women shall be encouraged to have greater participation in the management of their immediate communities. Systematic efforts shall be made aimed at improving the gender ratio in local government. An information and advertising campaign will be launched in good time before the local government elections in 2022. The success of the project will be measured in the number of women on local government bodies.

Responsible authority: Velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare).

Party responsible for implementation: Jafnréttisstofa (Centre for Gender Equality)

Examples of collaborating parties: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government), local authority gender equality committees, Kvenréttindafélag Íslands (Icelandic Women's Rights Association), Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities), and local authorities.

Period: 2018-2022.

Proposed funding: ISK 11 million from the regional plan.

C.12 Promotion and adoption of tourist destination plans

Project goal: To direct the creation and development of tourist destinations.

An initiative shall be launched to promote and adopt tourist destination plans as a comprehensive process looking into planning and co-ordination in the development and management of all aspects that may affect tourists' experiences of the relevant areas/destinations, including the needs of visitors, local residents, companies, and the environment. The sections of the country will produce a joint policy declaration with the aim of directing the build-up and development of a region over a particular period, defining the roles of interested parties and specifying direct actions for which each relevant party is responsible and what provisions/resources they propose to use in this work. The preparation of the plans shall be completed by the spring of 2018 and the plans will be well publicised in their parts of the country and made accessible to stakeholders. Focussed work shall then be

carried out in collaboration with local authorities to ensure that the plans conform to general planning strategies and the national strategy for infrastructure development.

Responsible authority: Atvinnuvega- og nýsköpunarráðuneyti (Ministry of Industries and Innovation).

Party responsible for implementation: Regional marketing agencies.

Examples of collaborating parties: Ferðamálastofa (Icelandic Tourist Board), local authorities, stakeholders in the relevant areas, Skipulagsstofnun (National Planning Agency), and Umhverfisstofnun (Environment Agency of Iceland).

Period: 2018.

Proposed funding: ISK 30 million from the regional plan.

C.13 Public information in the area of regional affairs

Project goal: To ensure that policymaking in the area of regional affairs and its implementation is based on reliable data.

Collaboration shall be strengthened between public institutions, particularly Hagstofa Íslands (Statistics Iceland) and universities, on creating a statistical database in the area of rural affairs, in which information on matters such as population trends, workforce participation, income, education, and the performance of different industries will be made available and correlated with international databases. Information on rural development and the development of urban areas shall be comparable with similar information from elsewhere in Scandinavia.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Examples of collaborating parties: Universities, institutions, and Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Icelandic Association of Local Authorities).

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 140 million from the regional plan.

C.14 Collaboration between museums and collections – chartered museums

Project goal: To strengthen museum activities in all parts of the country.

Regional associations of local authorities will be charged to carry out a feasibility study on increased collaboration between and amalgamation of museums and collections in their area in collaboration and consultation with a central museum and recognised museum as defined in Article 13 of the Museums Act, no. 141/2011, and Safnaráð (Museum Council of Iceland). The success of the project will be measured in the number of museums that commence collaboration or amalgamate.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: Regional associations of local authorities.

Examples of collaborating parties: Safnaráð (Museum Council of Iceland), Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland), Listasafn Íslands (National Gallery of Iceland), and Náttúruminjasafn Íslands (Icelandic Museum of Natural History).

Period: 2018-2022.

Proposed funding: ISK 22.5 million from the regional plan.

C.15 Art for All

Project goal: To ensure that children in all years at elementary school shall be able to benefit from the ‘List fyrir alla’ (Art for All) art projects.

‘Art for All’ is intended to select and provide a medium for arts events throughout the country and thus compensate for differences in accessibility of children at elementary school age to varied and high-quality arts events irrespective of place of residence and economic means. The main emphasis shall be placed on culture for children and culture with children. The success of the project will be measured in the number of schools taking part in the project and the number of years of schoolchildren who have the opportunity to take part.

Responsible authority: Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture).

Party responsible for implementation: List fyrir alla (Art for All).

Examples of collaborating parties: Local authorities, cultural representatives, and elementary schools.

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: ISK 32.5 million from the regional plan.

C.16 Growth areas

Project goal: To make national and local authorities better able to respond to expansion in growth areas.

Consultative teams from ministries, relevant local authorities, Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute), and, as appropriate, others shall be set up for regions that are designated as growth areas outside the Reykjavík metropolitan area, e.g. Suðurnes (southwest Iceland), the southwestern fjords of the Westfjord peninsula, Árnessýsla (southern lowlands). The teams’ task shall be to identify and draw attention to the challenges facing these regions and to bring together key players in matters of policymaking and measures for the region in both short and long term.

Responsible authority: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Party responsible for implementation: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Examples of collaborating parties: Forsætisráðuneyti (Prime Minister’s Office), fjármála- og efnahagsráðuneyti (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs), velferðarráðuneyti (Ministry of Welfare), mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture), local authorities, and Byggðastofnun (Icelandic Regional Development Institute).

Period: 2018-2024.

Proposed funding: Samgöngu- og sveitarstjórnarráðuneyti (Ministry of Transport and Local Government).

Approved by Parliament, 11 June 2018