



WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

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Concept note for a National Innovation Hub for Job Creation in Humanitarian Action Products and Services

WHY - Rationale for an Irish Humanitarian Innovation Hub

The notion of a national innovation hub for humanitarian action is an idea whose time has come.

For close to two years, Ireland has been engaged in a national conversation on a new humanitarian agenda for the 21st Century and how it can influence the current global examination of humanitarian action towards renewal, adaptation and evolution. Consistently at the national and international level, humanitarian innovation is raised as part of a larger conversation about change and improvement, required at a time when the gap between humanitarian needs and our ability to address them grows ever wider.

The idea of an innovation hub follows the convergence of a number of strands of contemporary thoughts, even consensus:

- There is a general acknowledgement of private-public collaboration as an engine of innovation, especially required in an area of public service. In the humanitarian sphere, the private sector has been emphatic that it is "already engaged and taking concrete action in emergency preparedness and response And wants to partner with humanitarian actors on shared value projects". (Ref. Final Report of the WHS Global Consultation.).
- In the Irish humanitarian consultation process, business senior executives advised that to build an innovative culture, there must be a solid platform or facilities (and not just good ideas) and that these platforms etc. are to bring people together from cross-sectoral problem solving with emphasis on collaboration, networking and even co-option (combination of cooperation and competition). A number of the executives indicated readiness to support such a new humanitarian platform. Enterprise Ireland has already successfully supported the standing-up of a number of "Technology Centres" which are innovation hubs that are models for these platforms or facilities in many areas of research (but hitherto not yet in humanitarian action.).
- At the World Humanitarian Summit, a community of donors, agencies, business, research institutes and innovators will pledge commitment to establishing and supporting a "Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation". It will invite the participation of national and sub-national humanitarian innovation-dedicated entities. At the Irish Humanitarian Summit, one of the Suggested Undertaking which emanated from it was the establishment of "an Irish Innovation Forum for Humanitarian Action, mobilizing the private sector, academia ... and government and non-governmental actors to work together on a regular basis". A national humanitarian innovation hub with a cross-sectoral board will address the Irish Suggested Undertaking and facilitate Ireland's potential declaration of support to the Global Alliance.



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Hypothesis: that the development of an Irish Humanitarian Action INNOVATION HUB could bring together a group of like-minded individuals to give direction to: existing companies; new companies; entrepreneurs with relevant and appropriate ideas etc.

WHAT – Goal of Establishing an Irish Humanitarian Innovation Hub (IHIH)

The goal is to build an **Irish Humanitarian Innovation Hub** to drive innovation and new product development in the field of humanitarian action.

More specifically this innovation hub will:

- Establish a hub with expertise across a wide range of relevant enterprise and technological spheres to support innovation and product development in key areas related to humanitarian action;
- Seek out new ideas and products from existing companies and potential new actors for the mutual benefit of the supplier and disaster affected people globally;
- Provide relevant and appropriate support to companies and individuals wishing to develop new products and provide them information on best to grow these innovations and new products

HOW – The outcomes and main activities to enable the establishment of and Irish Humanitarian Innovation Hub

Taking each of the above listed specific objectives in turn, the envisaged Irish Humanitarian Innovation Hub will be governed by a mix of representatives from the main humanitarian action stakeholder groupings, with emphasis on the private sector. It is crucial that industry has a majority vote and clearly directs the research. The proposed representatives to include:

- *Private sector:* Finance sector - Western Union (Financial), DHL (logistics), Deloitte (Management Consulting) and PTI Advisors (Social Investment); Future Analytics (Urban Planning).
- *Public Sector:* Enterprise Ireland; Department of Foreign Affairs Emergency Section
- *Academia:* UCD; Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
- *Non-governmental organisations:* Concern Worldwide; GOAL; Trocaire; and Plan Ireland.

The IHIH will be managed by a Project Manager supported by an administrator. This small team will be charged with developing a strategic plan for the IHIH and its subsequent implementation, following its ratification by the agreed governance body. Fundamental to this process, this small team will be engaging with these executives both individually and collectively to build a critical mass of humanitarian innovation product development intellectual capacity and establish a recognition of the potential for humanitarian enterprise development in Ireland.

The IHIH will stimulate entrepreneurial thinking across a wide range of products and services for humanitarian action. This will require a range of approaches and strategies appropriate for a range of



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stakeholders including; students, individual entrepreneurs, organisations existing companies wishing to broaden their product mix, etc. The project manager will also be expected to learn from similar initiatives in other countries and develop culturally specific approaches to suit the Irish context.

Finally, the IHIH while acting as a repository for innovations and potential new products and will foster strong relations with existing supports to further develop these innovations. This will require relationship building with personnel in relevant authorities including Enterprise Ireland, NovaUCD, the Innovation Academy, Colleges and Schools in participating universities, County Enterprise Boards, Humanitarian Innovation Fund etc.

HOW MUCH

Envisaged budget is in the region of €200,000 per annum. This would fund the employment of a Programme Manager and administrator and allow for a small operations budget. Please see Annex I for details.

WHAT AND WHEN – What are the targets/ outputs of the IHIH?

The envisaged outputs are described in line with the stated specific objectives.

The **innovation hub** itself will result in the following broad outputs:

- Two fulltime jobs – Manager and Administrator;
- Partnership between key humanitarian stakeholders (private sector, public sector, HEIs and NGOs) engaging in job creation in a new unexplored area of job creation for Ireland;
- Ireland championing the engagement of the private sector on an issue of Global importance that is to the fore in world media in the run-up to the WHS;
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade finding that niche where trade can have a real meaning for the most vulnerable in global society, while not forgoing the need for mutual benefit for all concerned; and
- A national gateway established to support humanitarian innovations in an area of global importance.

The key performance targets for the Management team would have to be agreed by the Board – the envisaged source and numbers of ideas that would help set the targets are presented below:

- 200+ ideas per annum from a National competition form **HEIs, colleges and schools** from which one might target up to 10 projects for development – an envisaged success rate of 5% - which may be ambitious. It is envisaged these new ideas will be at a very raw stage and may require significant further research and development. The nature of this research and development will



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vary from highly academic research (which may lead to PhD studies) to practical product development (which many be suitable to develop prototype and subsequent scale-up).

- **NGOs and Diaspora organisations:** NGOs and diaspora are much closer to the coalface and it is envisaged that their ideas will be more focused appropriate and relevant. Ten ideas per annum out of with 3/4 could be progressed; and
- **Existing companies/ individual entrepreneurs** approximately 5 per annum out of which 2/ 3 will be progressed. The idea that an existing company could broaden its product base by adapting an existing product to suit a different market could lead to significant further job creation and also reduce dependencies on available limited markets.

A key role and function of the IHIH will be to act as a gateway and facilitator for job creation. The Manager and Administrator will build relations with those agencies and authorities charged with job creation and support/guide and direct entrepreneurs and innovators along a path to realise their ideas. This might include participation in training, applying for seed funding, carrying out feasibility studies etc. Suggested measures of the success of the IHIH will be along the following lines:

- Appropriate training and educational programmes facilitated;
- Number of research projects (Master's and PhDs progressed);
- Grants applications submitted to EI and success rate;
- Grant applications submitted to County Enterprise Boards and success rate; and
- Grant application submitted to Humanitarian Innovation Fund and success rate.

WHAT NEXT - Pre-Development Phase

It is safe to say that all concerned agree that this initiative must be industry led, however the humanitarian sector must drive the establishment of the IHIH. Already considerable efforts have been made to engage key stakeholders such as HEIs, the NGO sector and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The challenge in the pre-development phase is to engage a critical mass of significant Industry Sector colleagues and then for the fledgling Board to make a case to Enterprise Ireland for support.

The key stakeholders identified to date include: UCD (NovaUCD, UCD's CHA, Innovation Academy); GMIT; Concern Worldwide; GOAL; and DFA Emergency Unit. If the project aims to progress the notion of two thirds majority from industry, then we need to engage up to 10 industrial partners. Based on our discussions to date, the following strategy is proposed:

- Seek approval from the VP for Research, Innovation and Impact – March 2016
- Develop a more focused concept note – which includes roles and responsibilities of parties to the IHIH – to be employed to get commitment to the concept – April/May 2016
- First meeting of the Board of IHIH 1st week of May – purpose to prepare a submission to EI;
- Arrange delegation to meet EI at end of May.