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Application form "AEBR-Cross Border Award" 2015
Deadline: 25.09.2015

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The Future of Cross-Border Co-operation in Europe

1. General information

1.1 Applicant border / cross-border region:

Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland

1.2 Title of the cross-border measure* [project(s), programme(s) / strategy(ies)]:

North West Regional Science Park (NWRSP)

1.3 Period:

1st October 2011 – 30th June 2015

1.4 Lead Partner: Contact:

North West Region Cross Border Group
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Ms. Carol Margey (0044) 2871370808

1.5 Partners:

Contact:

Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP), Belfast, NI

Mr Norman Apsley – (0044) 2890737800

Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Co Donegal

Mr Paul Hannigan – (--353) 7491 860000

1.6. Financing of the cross-border measure (e.g. INTERREG):

Remark: It should be explicated how the financing of the strategy(ies) / concept(s) / project idea(s) has been or is realised.

All preparatory works, the financing of strategies, concepts and project ideas were financed through the partnership's own resources. The development of the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy which informed the concept and the development of the project idea was undertaken at the partners own costs and instigation. Feasibility Studies and an Outline Business Case were also developed through the partners own resources, which also covered the planning and regulatory costs. This was presented at Government Departmental level to the respective member states Governments. Financial support was sought for the further development of the project through monetary contributions from the accountable departments.

The project partners applied for funding to the INTERREG IVA Cross Border Programme for Territorial Cooperation 2007 – 2013 in order to realise the project. The project was awarded **€14.5 million** through the **COLLABORATION** measure: Priority 2: Cooperation for a Sustainable Cross Border Region Theme 1: Public Sector Collaboration

75% of the total cost of the project was funded through the European Regional Development Fund and INTERREG IVA with 25% being co-financed by the UK and Irish Governments.

1.7 Links to other projects, measures and/or programmes (only if applicable):

The project is connected to a suite of other projects, measures and programmes, including development of a new project which will focus on the further development of the regions advanced manufacturing and engineering capacities under the INTERREG V programme. This has been considered in the project pipeline and the project partners have financed through their own resources the development of a Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy, Concept and Outline Business Case. Future projects will be located and centred on the successful NWRSP facility. Other programmes currently linked to include:

- NISP Halo
- NISP Connect
- CoLab – Enterprise Ireland Funded Projects
- Departmental Funding & Programmes for Enterprise in Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland

2. Contents

2.1 Objectives of the cross-border measure:

To establish a two member state cross border initiative which will act as an exemplar of best practice, align with the objectives of Europe 2020 for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and inform *The Future of Cross-Border Co-operation in Europe.*

To develop the first Cross Border Science Park between the member states of the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

To develop the North West Cross Border Region into a centre of excellence for knowledge based research, innovation and enterprise.

To tackle the effects of the border within the region as a barrier to growth, by growing and supporting the knowledge economy and the growth of clusters, a need identified through Cross Border Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy undertaken by the partners.

To move the region from unemployment and migration to a net contributor within the European Union.

To develop and retain the talent inherent within the region and to mitigate against the loss of the best educated to economic migration.

To continue to collaborate, building on the success of the North West Regional Science Park, in order to widen the influence of the project and strengthen the network of Science Parks and Centres of Regional Excellence across Europe and beyond.

To enable the pipeline for SMEs and regional business to connect with the wider European market and other supports such as Horizon 2020.

The North West Regional Science Park(NWRSP) is a unique collaborative cross-border project that has developed the only cross border third generation science park between the member states of the Republic of Ireland and the UK. This collaborative project is located in the North West Cross Border Region of Ireland & Northern Ireland and utilises the triple helix model of academia, working in partnership with the private and public sectors to develop an ecosystem for business to inculcate research, innovation and entrepreneurship as regional drivers for development.

The project truly demonstrates to the fullest degree the benefits of investing in Cross Border Collaboration and in developing a model of best practice with regard to Regional Smart Specialisation that will build the region as an exemplar. This model of cooperation will be widely utilised and disseminated to inform and cement *The Future of Cross-Border Co-operation in Europe.*

NWRSP Overview

The North West Regional Science Park has seen the further seamless reach of the internationally acclaimed Science Park ecosystem from Belfast to the North West Cross Border Region. It is the first cross border Science Park delivered through collaboration between the member states of the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The project is currently progressing the necessary connectivity between science and business through supplying a model of key intermediaries in the innovation chain. This has been undertaken in order to fully implement a Smart Regional Specialisation Strategy fully aligned with and designed for the economic realities within the cross border region. The NWRSP is enabling regional business across the border region to access global markets. It is facilitating and encouraging foreign direct investment into the cross border region and developing the region as a location for talent.

The NWRSP project has provided 70,000 sq ft of innovation centre space, across two locations straddling both sides of the border, creating an environment that supports business start up activity and encourages and facilitates business growth within the knowledge sector.

The iconic physical space serves to house the innovation eco system and a wrap around model of supports which are enabling the region to grow its knowledge economy and invest in growing sectors and enterprises. The project is exceeding targets in:

- Developing high quality technology and knowledge based businesses in the Cross Border Region
- Boosting the commercialization and research capability of the North West Cross Border Region
- Expanding knowledge based indigenous businesses and
- Attracting higher value added inward investment and jobs to a highly peripheral region within Europe.

Specific Project Objectives

The objectives of the Project have been delivered as confirmed through member state and independent evaluation:

- Establishment of a model of collaboration which has realised a self-sustaining, not for profit entity which works to increase enterprise, research and development within the North West Cross Border Region thereby feeding into and informing best practice for **The Future of Cross-Border Co-operation in Europe**
- Provided a key component of enhanced wealth and job generating capacity in the North West
- Established a physical bi-located commercial and research centre across the border
- Extended the reach of the internationally acclaimed Science Park into and across the Cross Border Region
- Consolidated the North West Business Technology Zone
- Supported the establishment of new technology-based businesses (both indigenous and FDI) through providing a wrap around service of supports and programmes
- Acted as a catalyst for change and wealth creation
- Continues to enable the pipeline for SMEs and regional business to connect with the wider European market and other supports such as Horizon 2020
- Enabled the commercial development of universities and higher education research by connecting research and development with business
- Extended the reach of the research centres and businesses to Europe and beyond
- Capitalised on the EU investment in Project Kelvin (High Speed Broadband) to provide appropriate business infrastructure and enable new and growing high tech businesses
- Supported the Cross Border Region's regional metropolis of Derry/Londonderry in becoming one of the most digitally enabled cities in the UK and Ireland by 2013
- Increased the number of young people engaging with technology and enterprise through the intensive roll out of dedicated and tailored programmes across the region
- Established clusters and networks which are facilitating cross-border co-operation between firms and raising competitiveness

2.2 Organisational structure and activities to implement the objectives (e.g. joint secretariat, contract, etc.):

Organisational structure of the North West Regional Science Park

The project involved the support and guidance of a wide range of agencies across the two member states. These were consulted with and remained an essential element contributing to the success of the final project.

The project delivery team was a tripartite partnership across the member states of the UK and Republic of Ireland. The partnership was enabled and led by the North West Region Cross Border Group, a cross border European regional development agency. The UK partner is the Northern Ireland Science Park and the Republic of Ireland Partner is Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

The initial project strategies, concept, feasibility and outline business case, planning and regulatory costs were financed through the partnerships own resources. A Project Development Working Group was established and worked collaboratively to develop an application for funding to the INTERREG IVA programme. This team also targeted appropriate Government Departments from the member states to secure support and financial contributions which would enable the project.

Once awarded the requisite ERDF funding of €14.5million, official collaborative cross border organisational structures were established through Partnership Agreements to see the project through implementation. This involved a high level strategic NWRSP Board which comprised of CEOs and Chairmen of NISP, NWRCBG, LYIT, SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body/Funders) and representatives from Member State Agencies.

Sitting below this and reporting to the Board, a Project Steering Group comprised of NWRCBG Project Development Officers, NISP Directors of Development & Capital Build, LYIT Development, Contract and Facilities Management along with finance officers, procurement officers and administrative staff oversaw the practical implementation of the project and ensured that targets were met and conditions adhered to.

Throughout the process the project was supported by a dedicated cross border joint secretariat established through the NWRCBG and hosted by the Local Authorities of the North West Cross Border Region. This secretariat reported to the funders, elected members, Member State Departments and acted as the oversight management committee for all communications, financial and project management activities.

An exit strategy was developed with management functions post project set out and a Development Working Group has been established between the partners to further regional collaboration centred on the successful NWRSP project and to develop new initiatives into the future.

Project Partner Background Information

Lead Partner:

North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG) is a European cross border development agency representing a partnership of local authorities. Established in 1976, the mission of the Group is to strengthen and develop the regional economy through cross border partnership and collaboration and through this to enhance the socio-economic position of the Region. The NWRCBG has many years of experience in securing and managing European funding and in acting as a catalyst and facilitator for collaborative regional development.

22 Elected Members/Politicians from 5 different cross border Local Authority Areas make up membership of the Board. The Group are supported by a Secretariat of 6 staff and a dedicated CEO Advisory Group. The organisation has delivered over €40 million in EU INTERREG funding through successive INTERREG programmes and works continually to improve the North West Region's economic and socio-economic performance through funding and facilitating strategic collaborative actions.

Project Promoter:

Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP)

Science Parks, in offering commercial and research driven centres for knowledge-based industries are internationally recognised and accepted as a key component in Smart Regional Specialisation.

The UK member state partner is **Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP)**. Located in Belfast Northern Ireland, the organisation is a member of the UK Science Park Association for over 5 years, which in turn is part of the IASP (International Association of Science Parks).

NISP is an award winning innovation broker and is recognised as one of the top 5 science parks in the UK. In 2013 it hosted the UKSPA AGM. Since 2000, NISP has developed to encompass a 25 acre site offering a growing array of bespoke science park buildings for high technology industry. Within this is embedded an innovation ecosystem, linking wantpreneurs, business angels, risk capital and a volunteer workforce of successful business professionals and entrepreneurs. This has been modelled on the work of Mary Walshok and the highly successful CONNECT programmes that she co-founded in USC-SD. Mary is a regular visitor and mentor to the staff in NISP CONNECT.

The Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP) Trust was named as the "Most Innovative Project" at the UK Science Park Association (UKSPA) awards. NISP was also shortlisted for "Most Successful Innovation Environment" and "Most Successful Company on a Science Park" for PathXL at the high profile ceremony which took place at the UKSPA 30th Anniversary Summit Gala Dinner in 2014.

Through the NISP Halo-Business Angels programme, the NWRSP project will continue to benefit from ties with EBAN (European Business Angel Network) and will have close ties with Business Angel Groups Internationally. Also through the NISP CONNECT initiative, close ties with San Diego and its 'CONNECT' initiative will be maintained.

Project Promoter

Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)

The Republic of Ireland Partner LYIT, is a University level higher education institution located in Co Donegal in the Republic of Ireland. The college has an ambitious and progressive ethos, and has expanded its course curriculum to offer over 100 programmes across the Schools of Business, Engineering, Science and Tourism. LYIT has a wide and varied lifelong learning programme running contemporary education and training programmes across a range of disciplines.

LYIT has been to the forefront in the development of Innovation Centres in Ireland's Higher Education campuses with their first centre opening over 25 years ago. In 2000 a new Business Development Centre was opened while in 2010 the CoLab innovation space building was opened. This centre which supports a wide range of graduates and enterprises is also home to the WiSAR Technology Gateway centre, the only such centre north of the Galway/Dublin axis. The NWRSP will extend the offer of the facility and embed the first Science Park in the Republic of Ireland in the North West Region.

2.3 How far has the measure been implemented?

The project completed on the 30th June 2015 and is exceeding all targets and expectations; this has been confirmed through external independent and state agency evaluation. The project partners are actively involved in developing new measures and initiatives, building on the success of the NWRSP.

The partners will continue to collaborate to grow value added sectors within the region in line with the vision of Europe 2020 and the strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in order to ensure the region is at the forefront of *The Future of Cross-Border Co-operation in Europe*.

Brief Overview of Performance to Date

The development of the physical bi located innovation centre is complete with the UK element now at full capacity after one year of opening, exceeding the target which was set to be at 70% capacity after 5 years. The Republic of Ireland element completed in May 2015 and is now at 70% capacity, exceeding the target which was set to be at 65% capacity after 5 years. Collaboration activity has seen the project need identified, conceptualised and planned by the partnership through their own resources and realised through INTERREG funding.

A shared corporate identity has been developed and established across and regardless of the border. Cross border tenants have been secured for both sites with interplay of supports and facilities which enhance and simplify working across two jurisdictions. Cross border clusters are and continue to be developed. These are supported through a tailored suite of programmes, designed for the unique needs of the cross border region and its emerging and growing enterprises; these are offered freely and unconditionally by the region's most experienced to the region's most promising.

A unique cross border environment has been established, which changes perceptions of the border as negative and a block to development, to a strength in line with Europe 2020s strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This environment informs and creates a greater awareness of open access and IP provision of voice, video and telepresence. It facilitates greater interaction between research institutions and educational partners regardless of jurisdictional location and continues to facilitate academic and educational partners in commercialization of the Technology Pipeline. It continues to aid the creation of new micro-based business starts in the knowledge sector.

The impact of University research institutions and the increased achievement of the commercial objective across the border has been supported and continues to develop. Graduates are linked and supported in a seamless transition from Enterprise Programmes and assisted to establish new cross border business start ups through a wrap around tailored system of supports.

Region wide tailored workshops have been and continue to be delivered to highlight innovations, best practise and encourage collaboration aimed at encouraging even stronger research collaboration cross border. Formal operational links with centres of knowledge have been established region wide, to Europe and beyond.

The model and knowledge of NWRSP has been shared within the region and beyond as an exemplar of cross border working and model of best practice and with regard to effective cross border Governance. The partnership continues to move forward to implement the research and innovation eco system, to align with Europe 2020 strategy and to develop the North West Cross Border Region as a centre for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In this the region and partnership will continue to grow the outputs of the project for *The Future of Cross-Border Co-operation in Europe*.

2.4 Special framework conditions (a. geographical, political, etc. / b. only rural area (no regional metropolises))

The North West Cross Border Region is unique in that it has been disproportionately affected by the UK-Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland political situation. The city region of Derry/Londonderry has an unusual geographical location with much of its hinterland divided from it by the existence of a border. This has caused a serious impediment to regional development as the region suffered from many years of under investment in infrastructure, differing policy and investment approaches and a lack of engagement with "centre".

The region itself is highly peripheral due to its location at the outer edge of the Island of Ireland, UK and at the outer edge of Europe. It is characterised by some of the highest unemployment rates within the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The region has struggled to move from traditional industries and has been particularly deeply impacted on by the economic downturn and the shrinking of the construction sector. The political situation exacerbated the effects of peripherality and in many cases over more troubled times the development of cross border initiatives and partnerships have taken place at a regional level unsupported by bi jurisdictional Government policy.

The development of the NWRSP with its inherent public, private, academic and philanthropic partnership mix has offered a new way, supported by €14.5ml in EU INTERREG funds to allow for a true cross border collaboration. It continues to seek to turn the border to advantage in order to deliver a new approach to technology and knowledge driven regional development. This is overcoming the tradition of back to back planning and single jurisdictional policy, turning jurisdictional diversity from impediment to advantage and driving forward the development of a truly regional knowledge economy, an accepted economic multiplier which will work seamlessly across this unique cross border region.

3.0 Contribution of the measure (added value) to the development of the border/cross-border region: *(not more than half a page)*

The NW Cross Border Region has high levels of deprivation compared to other regions within the UK and Ireland. It is characterised by the highest rates of unemployment, low incomes, an over dependence on the public sector as well as low productivity activities such as agriculture, traditional industries and relatively large scale declining manufacturing activity.

The NWRSP offers a new path. The added value of the partnership and collaboration was to seek to utilise Smart Regional Specialisation Strategy to establish the needs of the region, in order to maximise the existence of clusters and increase their effectiveness and development. The resulting INTERREG IVA supported NWRSP project is and will continue to be an economic driver. It provides a focal point for balanced regional development, by addressing particular challenges in the North West and by extending cross border opportunities. Building on the award winning best-practice that exists at NISP, including European and International Science Park experience and its national and international linkages, the NWRSP is providing high quality, flexible facilities to grow high tech and knowledge intensive companies in the region.

This will secure regional sustainability and competitiveness, enabling the retention of wealth, talent and young people which traditionally were displaced out of the region due to a range of economic and socio-economic factors. Enterprise, innovation and development are now nurtured, supported by a range of business services and management supports that are specifically developed to grow business in the knowledge based sectors, enabling growth despite regional disparity.

The project had seen the development through needs assessment, concept and delivery of a strong collaborative partnership between two member state stakeholders. This partnership and its collaborative approach has enabled both jurisdictions to work around impediments to enterprise and to maximise the benefit from the investment in infrastructure and collaborative initiatives. A major thrust of the work has been to embed the strategic policies of the EU and member states, in particular the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It has served to homogenise supports and policy from member state enterprise agencies and the Universities within the region. An imperative theme of this Cross Border approach is to invest in high growth potential companies and to realise the importance and potential of the knowledge economy in the North West region. It has delivered on the need to provide a supportive environment to nurture and grow the knowledge sector which will allow the region to become a net contributor within the EU over time.

The project enabled the delivery of a Science Park structure to the North West Cross Border Region and is exploiting key attributes of strong research capability, significant catchment and young population, digital infrastructure etc. By bringing a range of supports and models to the North West, the partners have been able to roll out the successful Science Park modus operandi with tenant criteria focused on R&D and enabling networks, and an ecosystem that is supportive of tenants and with a structured programme of support, agile workspace etc.

Tenants have associate status across the border region and into Belfast. They can maximise staff availability and access to customers and investment regardless of their parent jurisdiction. Each element of NWRSP has links with key bodies (government, lobbying and professional) in their own jurisdiction and cross border. NWRSP is inherently improving cross border information sharing, leading to better marketing of useful programmes and better Interregional policy.

Achievements to date are significant, with all targets being exceeded as monitored through external and state agency evaluation. The filling speed and the rate of acceleration is testament to this basic success. The growing tenant base are largely indigenous businesses with increasing interest of inward investment clients as the reputation of the region continues to grow. Tenants are largely European and globally focused and are gaining a reputational standing and product offering that the Science Park provides and that has hitherto not been available in the area.

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* A cross-border measure is given, when partners from both sides of the border participate as regards z contents, organisation, staff and finances.

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