



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Feedback on ITLG visit – November 2011

Date: 13 December 2011

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that, at the 14 September 2011 meeting of the Development Committee, a proposal to host a delegation from the ITLG (Irish Technology Leadership Group) was approved. Financial support of up to £1000 towards the hosting costs was endorsed.
1.2	Six representatives from ITLG took part in a two day visit to Belfast on 4 and 5 November 2011. The 4 November programme was organised by Belfast City Council in conjunction with Invest NI and ITLG worked with University of Ulster on the 5 November event.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG) is a group of Irish and Irish American senior executives based in Silicon Valley who are active in the global technology industry. They work to promote industry linkages between USA and Ireland through a range of collaborative initiatives including trade visits, award ceremonies and events in both USA and Northern Ireland/Ireland.
2.2	Six members of ITLG visited Belfast for a series of business meetings on 4 and 5 November. The representatives included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jon Bukosky, Advisor, Digital & Emerging Media, Untitled Entertainment- Robert Nashak, European VP, Digital Entertainment, BBC- Sean O'Donoghue, Chief Information Officer, Dreamworks- Eric Sargeson, International Wholesale, AT&T- John Hartnett, Chairman, ITLG- Cian Hughes, Head of Operations, ITLG

2.3	As part of the 4 November programme the delegation met a range of organisations and individuals involved in the promotion and development of the technology industry in the city. The programme involved a breakfast briefing with Invest NI and NI Screen; a visit to Paint Hall studios; a presentation in Argyle Business Centre; a pitch from four local businesses in An Culturlann; a meeting with New York Stock Exchange; a meeting with the First and Deputy First Ministers and a dinner involving representatives from the Development Committee and other invitees at Belfast Castle.
2.4	<p>The delegation offered some reflections on what they had seen and heard in the course of their visit. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to invest in marketing and “selling the story” –they felt that there was so much going on that was positive but that the message was not getting through. - Need to promote the positives – many of the presentations were pre-fixed by the historical context of the troubles – investors are interested in the “now” and the future – and how that can present a valuable proposition for their business. - Need to encourage companies to think global from the outset – the technology market is a global one – ambitious companies need to think on that basis. - Importance of creating a focus to allow companies like this to collaborate – building on a “Digital Hub” model and expanding the good practice at Northern Ireland Science Park. - Need to actively promote the acquisition of local companies by multi-nationals as a key element of an overall foreign direct investment (FDI) strategy – building on the example of New York Stock Exchange and their expanded presence in the city. - Support for internationalisation projects e.g. South by South West (SXSU) – as a means of raising the profile of the city and creating a positive image.
2.5	They underlined once more their offer to maintain contact with the organisations and individuals that they had made in Belfast and suggested that some consideration be given to the development of strategic international relations with key locations e.g. San Jose. Members are asked to endorse further investigation of an international partnership with relevant locations as part of a review of International Relations.
2.6	They also confirmed that they would be keen to formalise this engagement through a Memorandum of Understanding – outlining the key areas of focus and identifying a number of tangible activities to be pursued. Members are asked to endorse further investigation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
2.7	As part of their visit, the ITLG Chairman announced a new internship programme for budding digital media developers, gaming coders and digital animators. The initiative will support successful candidates in securing an internship with a host company in Silicon Valley or Hollywood for a minimum of six months.
2.8	The potential start date for this programme is early 2012 and work is now underway to agree the criteria for the scheme. Details and proposals for funding will be brought back to the Committee for endorsement in January 2012.

3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	Any new internship programme will be subject to all relevant equality and good relations considerations.

4	Recommendations
4.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the update from the ITLG visit programme - Note the proposal for an ongoing programme of work with ITLG, including an internship scheme – provisionally scheduled to start in early 2012 - Agree that a formal MOU with ITLG or with a specific location be further investigated.

5	Decision Tracking
A report on actions to be brought back to January 2012 Development Committee.	
Timeframe: January 2012	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

6	Key to Abbreviations
ITLG – Irish Technology Leadership Group	
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding	