



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Memorandum of Understanding with Irish Technology Leadership Group
<b>Date:</b>	21 February 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that the Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG) is a group of Irish and Irish American senior executives based in Silicon Valley, California 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 Ireland.
1.2	Over the years there has tended to be an annual visit to Belfast and/or Dublin by (ITLG) Members and Council has been involved to some degree in each of their visits. Most recently they visited Belfast over the MTV Awards weekend in November 2011 to explore opportunities for investment and trade development. Council played a leading role on this occasion in developing a mutually productive itinerary and along with Invest NI organised a tailor made programme for the 6 ITLG representatives. This comprised targeted meetings with local indigenous companies mainly in digital media and design as well as showcasing the new development opportunities in Belfast centred on technology.
1.3	Elected Members met with ITLG during this programme and discussed how to maximise the benefits of a relationship between Belfast as a city and the ITLG on an ongoing basis. The desire for formalising or embedding the relationship grew out of a genuine and deep seated interest from ITLG in investment opportunities in Belfast and from Members identifying the need to draw upon the expertise, talents and goodwill of ITLG. The stated end goal of such a relationship is to secure positive economic impact for Belfast businesses and citizens.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p><u>Memorandum of Understanding</u>  Following extensive follow up with ITLG since November 2011 there is now the opportunity for Council to engage in a partnership arrangement with ITLG in Silicon Valley. ITLG have confirmed that they are eager to sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Belfast City Council which will commit both parties to work together on a number of joint initiatives going forward building on the strong foundations laid on their last visit. Contact has been ongoing with the ITLG Director Cian Hughes based in Dublin and with their CEO John Hartnett based in US as well as some other Members of the delegation which visited Belfast. This has led to a draft Memorandum of Understanding being developed as attached as Appendix 1.</p>
2.2	<p>The MOU outlines the key areas of cooperation which could be pursued going forward. Ideally these would comprise both an inward and outward mission each year where companies from both locations would look at opportunities for collaboration in product development, sales and marketing and research and design. Using the expertise of ITLG is also important since the members are leading edge technologists in their field with an interest in Belfast. They have the potential to open doors into international markets for our indigenous companies starting with even the smallest enterprises. It may be appropriate to consider an outward mission later this year focusing on creative companies with potential for hi-tech growth. A formal signing of the MOU and launch in US could also take place during this programme.</p>
2.3	<p>During their time in Belfast, ITLG made it known that they were extremely impressed with the potential of the individuals, working alone or in start up companies, and how they demonstrated real creativity along with commercial acumen. Whilst still in Belfast, ITLG decided to offer an internship for 2 people from Belfast to be based in companies in Silicon Valley for a one year programme. They chose to announce this decision in Argyle Business Centre as part of their itinerary where they met local entrepreneurs from the community. Follow up work has been therefore ongoing on establishing how this would operate in practice.</p>
2.4	<p>To date outline criteria for the internship have been drafted pending further discussion with University of Ulster who already have the template for such a programme in place. Refinement of the criteria and the process for selection is underway. It is likely that candidates will be at postgraduate or Phd level. ITLG will offer a salary for the posts but are seeking additional financial support from Council or other parties to cover ancillary costs to make the internships attractive and affordable. ITLG suggest that costs to be covered include travel and a contribution towards subsistence. The full financial implications to Council will be brought back for consideration when known.</p>
2.5	<p><u>Innovation Summit</u>  An invitation has been received to attend the ITLG Innovation Summit in San Jose, California on 12 and 13 March. The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual ITLG Innovation Summit is a two-day gathering of top executives, entrepreneurs, and venture capital investors operating in Ireland and Silicon Valley. Through a programme of keynote presentations, panel debates and top company CEO showcases, attendees get an inside look at the cutting-edge technology, business and political trends shaping the technology sector. The awards also incorporate the</p>

2.6	<p>Silicon Valley Top 50 awards, presenting an opportunity to meet the top 50 most influential Irish Americans in Silicon Valley. There is also an opportunity to organise individual meetings with key individuals and organisations as part of the visit. Up to 9 trade inward missions are intending to be part of the Summit including Invest NI, University of Ulster. Dublin City Council are also taking out a trade mission and hosting a number of events with San Jose which is their Sister City in USA.</p> <p>Invest NI are attending this Summit along with a trade mission comprising 10 companies mainly from Belfast. They would be content for Council to support the mission if desired although obviously there is limited time available now for Council to undertake any additional activity as part of the Summit. Members will wish to consider whether Council should be represented at the Summit in March and/or whether it may be more appropriate to undertake a dedicated external trade mission later in 2012 with a focus specifically on Belfast.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Costs of attending the ITLG Summit are approx £1600 per person. Costs attached to the MOU will depend on individual initiatives but top line of £40,000 is likely to be required for the actions outlined in the attached MOU draft.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. approve the draft MOU to advance the relationship with ITLG on a permanent basis.</li> <li>2. allocate a standing budget of £40,000 to this MOU which would cover the costs of one outward and one inward trade mission along with a contribution to the internship programme and a communications campaign.</li> <li>3. consider whether it wishes to participate in the Innovation Summit on 12/13 March 2012.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Update reports on implementation of the MOU to be brought back to Committee in due course. Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
ITLG - Irish Technology Leadership Group MOU – Memorandum of Understanding	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - Draft Memorandum of Understanding	