



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Connect G Project - Partner Request

Date: 12th June 2012

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Belfast City Council (BCC) has been approached by Canan, the lead partner in an application for INTERREG IVA funding under collaboration for a project called Connect G. This project has been shortlisted to stage 2 and as part of the further work to do is seeking additional partners for the project.
1.2	The purpose of Connect G is to improve the effectiveness of public agency service support of Gaelic-language (Irish and Scottish) enterprise through greater collaboration and joint action.
1.3	The overall aim of the project will be to seek to improve the effectiveness of public agencies in their support of Gaelic enterprise, through greater collaboration and shared provision. This approach will be tested and trialled through a number of pilot projects during the life of the project, the results of which will inform the development of a shared strategy and agreed plan as to how these agencies will collaborate in the future to best support the growth of Gaelic enterprise post-project
1.4	The focus of this project will be public agency support pertaining to enterprises which : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="373 1682 1385 1749">- Develop or have the potential to develop Irish or Scottish Gaelic language or cultural products or services.<li data-bbox="373 1749 1385 1816">- Use or have the potential to use Irish or Scottish Gaelic for marketing or branding. Use the Gaelic language in their operations
1.5	The project will be delivered in the Border Counties of Ireland, Northern Ireland (including Belfast) and Western Scotland (Skye, Lochalsh, Lochaber, Argyll & Bute, Arran & Cumbrae and the Western Isles).

1.6	<p>The project will seek to pilot and evaluate the effectiveness of different types of service interventions and collaborations in support of Gaelic enterprises. The result of these evaluations will inform the shared strategy and action plan for future collaboration at the end of the project. The main focus for support addresses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raising ambition - skilling to meet ambition - achieving ambition
1.7	<p>Project actions will be through two pilot approaches followed by evaluation and the development of an agreed future strategy and plan. The two pilot approaches will be:</p> <p><u>Pilot Approach 1 – Sectoral approach</u> Connect G will pilot activity in support of three key sectors of Gaelic enterprise which are important to the area, are very different in nature and which the agencies consider have potential for growth. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media – interactive and broadcast - cultural tourism - social enterprise <p>The support of each of the sectors will be overseen by a specific working group comprising of key agencies responsible for development of that sector within the INTERREG area, thereby ensuring that the project and its activities genuinely address the sector's needs.</p> <p><u>Pilot 2 A Generic approach</u> It is recognised that many of the incubation centres within the INTERREG area provide opportunities to cluster but are underutilised, possibly due to the lack of full wrap-around support services to genuinely turn an office infrastructure into a business growth unit. This project will therefore seek to provide some of these wrap around services, online and through face-to-face activities and focussed on Gaelic enterprises. It will also promote existing serviced space including that owned by some partners, which would be appropriate to Gaelic enterprise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online support services – web portal - The Gallery – A foot on the ladder - Inspire videos – encouraging innovation and raising ambition - Learning resources - Mentoring – supporting high level growth in Gaelic business
1.8	<p><u>Delivery plan</u> The project will be delivered through a management system of steering group, working groups and project staff. Steering Group - will comprise of the following organisations, all of whom are Connect G partners:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Cànan, Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta, <i>Carntogher Community Association</i>, Magherafelt District Council, Belfast City Council and the <i>Cultúrlann, Belfast</i>.</p> <p>These organisations will provide a governance role to the project, ensuring that agreed plans are being met and providing advice and guidance to the staff. The Steering Group will meet each quarter, with four face-to-face meetings (with a video conference participation option) and six using video conference.</p>

	<p>Representatives from the relevant Government Departments from each jurisdiction will be invited to attend steering group meetings. All three departments have supported the development of this project and have offered their support in the future. The Departments are Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Northern Ireland, Gaelic and Scots Unit, Scotland, and Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland.</p> <p><u>Sectoral Working Groups</u> Each of the sectoral pilots will be supported by a Sectoral Working Group, comprising of public agency experts with responsibility for delivery within the INTERREG area. These meetings will be held using Skype, teleconference, video conference or e-mail – as suits the group.</p> <p><u>Staffing</u> The project will be jointly staffed by four individuals, with each having responsibility for all three jurisdictions: Project Director based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Isle of Skye - Responsible for project direction, implementation, staffing, liaison with steering group, governance and strategic communications Marketing and Communications Manager based at Culturllaan - Responsible for marketing and communications for project including promotion, website content development, marketing training with businesses and marketing related projects Training and Skills Manager based in Udaras na Gaeltachta - Responsible for management of course activity, mentoring, development of training resources for website Administrator/Finance Officer based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Isle of Skye - Responsible for processing all financial claims; first point of contact for the project by phone and e-mail; events listings; and bookings for conferences and training.</p> <p>Project value is £1.175 million and will run from late 2012 to March 2015.</p>
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2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>BCC and the other organisations on the steering group are required to provide a governance role to the project, ensuring agreed plans are being met and providing advice and guidance to the staff.</p> <p>The partnership is seeking one representative from each organisation that is on the steering group. The time requirement would vary from face-to-face meetings according to their location and the video-conference meetings.</p> <p>It is envisaged that the first face-to-face will be in Skye in February 2013. This would probably require 2 or 3 days including travel time. The second face-to-face will be in Belfast and will coincide with the project launch April 2013. The third face-to-face will be in Gweedore requiring at least 1 day including travel time. The location of the fourth face-to-face hasn't been decided yet but maximum time requirement would be 2 or 3 working days. Video conference meetings would be maximum 3 hours. All travel costs will be paid by the project and there's a budget of £60 per person per video conference to pay for video conferencing costs.</p>

2.2	Demands are high on BCC departments to deliver on plans and funded projects and the involvement in this project would require the allocation of an Officer from the Economic Development Unit to commit time to the work of the Steering Group and also the involvement of an Elected Member to sit on the Steering Group. This will involve Officer time, cost of which is not covered by the project funding and therefore would be in addition to their normal duties. Travel costs for the Officer attending steering group meeting are also not covered.
2.3	Capacity to deliver what is required in terms of providing a governance role, agreeing plans and providing advice and guidance to the staff must be considered.
2.4	This project may provide an expectation that there will be money available beyond the project for continued activity, however, this project is a pilot project and the impact for businesses may be limited.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	There is no financial cost for involvement as a partner in this project; however, there would be officer time required which is not covered by the project funding and also travel and subsistence costs for an officer to accompany the Elected Member who sits on the steering committee to a number of meetings in Northern Ireland, ROI and Scotland.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to recommend one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belfast City Council be a full partner in the Connect G Project - Belfast City Council be a partner in the Connect G Project in an observatory basis only, or - Belfast City Council does not participate in this project.

6	Decision Tracking
	Following approval by Committee the European Unit will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice Canan of the decision of Committee and take action as recommended by Committee decision