



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Technical Trade Mission 2013
Date:	5 March 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been playing a key role in supporting the development of the Creative, Digital and Technology sectors in Belfast, since 2004, through the work of the Economic Development Unit and more recently through the Council's Super Connected Cities project and the IBM Smarter Cities Initiative.
1.2	Members will also be aware that, at the meeting of the Development Committee, 21 February 2012, a draft Memorandum of Understanding to advance the relationship with the Irish Technology Leadership Group on a permanent basis, was approved.
1.3	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.
1.4	Members have had initial conversations with INI representatives of some local companies and with Queens University, the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland Science Park and Digital Circle on the possibility of the Council leading a Belfast specific trade mission to the United States. The focus of the mission would be on the digital / technology sector to further support the development of the initiatives outlined above and to help raise the profile of Belfast as an investment location. It is clear from these discussions that an opportunity exists to support Belfast based technology companies in the international marketplace, through participation on a trade mission to the west coast of America in particular.

2	Key Issues
2.1	It is now recommended to Members that Belfast City Council take the lead in scoping out and implementing a trade mission to Silicon Valley and the west coast of America in October 2013 and to gain the support of Invest Northern Ireland and Northern Irish Connections in the delivery of the project.

2.2	It is proposed that a total of 20 Belfast based digital and technology companies participate on the mission and will be selected through an open and competitive application process.
2.3	It is proposed that financial support for company participation will be through existing Invest Northern Ireland channels or will be paid directly by the participating company.
2.4	Belfast City Council will help in generating contacts and business leads through our existing networks and those provided through the partner organisations. A showcase and a series of one to one meetings will be organised, in turn providing a unique platform from which local companies can target key businesses and potential clients based in the United States, with the aim of securing new business.
2.5	It is proposed Belfast City Council's contribution to the trade mission will be up to a maximum of £20,000. It is envisaged these costs will contribute to travel, accommodation, Showcase and meeting facilitation.
2.6	The proposed trade mission will also provide Belfast City Council the opportunity to 'sell' the City and a series of civic visits and meetings will be organised to explore future collaborative opportunities. To date, visits to Berkeley, San Francisco and Portland, Oregon have been suggested.
2.7.	In order to progress initial discussions and to explore the potential of this project further, it is recommended that Members approve the development of the trade mission to the west coast of America and agree in principle to supporting the mission on the provision of a more detailed plan and itinerary.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	To approve a total of Total £20,000 to the mission.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	No specific equality and good relations considerations.

5	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the proposal to develop and implement a trade mission to the west coast of America in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland and Northern Irish Connections, in October 2013. - To approve a total budget of £14,750 to support the trade mission

6	Decision Tracking
	Progress report to be presented to Committee in August 2013.

7	Key to Abbreviations
ITLG	- Irish Technology Leadership Group