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Technological University Dublin Covid-19 Enterprise Response Forum Report: Building Resilient Supply Chains

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Response
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Technological University Dublin Covid-19 Enterprise Response Forum Report

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FOREWORD

The *TU Dublin Strategic Plan to 2030* identifies our role as engaging in pressing issues and working to create a better world. Currently, there is no more pressing issue than the COVID-19 pandemic, which during 2020 has had a crushing impact on our economic and social wellbeing. In pursuit of delivering impact, we purposefully seek to be close to the pulse of a thriving society, and actively reach out to connect people and join ideas on the understanding that the complex problems of today are solved together.

Through the *TU Dublin COVID-19 Enterprise Response Forum*, we brought together enterprise leaders and key experts in a series of ideation workshops to identify and develop proposals to support enterprise resilience for the duration of the pandemic, and also to prepare enterprise for a potentially changed post-pandemic landscape.

It is often said that that economic downturns and periods of uncertainty can present unique opportunities for innovation and defining the next normal. We can, and indeed we must, use the experience and knowledge gained during this pandemic to guard against continued invasion of this virus on our economic wellbeing. We must work to make our enterprise base and our people more resilient for potential future pandemics, and also for the challenges facing us in relation to climate change and a world where resources will become scarcer.

I am pleased to recommend this report and the proposals set out in it.

Professor David FitzPatrick
President, Technological University Dublin

No one has been unaffected by the Covid-19 pandemic and we know the short-term economic consequences have been significant. As we transition from responding to the crisis to preparing for a 'new normal' there are many challenges, and opportunities, for Irish enterprises, Government, policy makers and enterprise support agencies to navigate.

The objective of the *TU Dublin COVID-19 Enterprise Response Forum* is to facilitate the development of ideas and propose initiatives that have potential to further enhance enterprise resilience to the impacts for the remainder of the COVID-19 crisis and the post-pandemic period. This was achieved through twelve ideation workshops involving TU Dublin faculty and experts from across industry.

I would like to thank everyone who was involved in the ideation workshops, particularly those enterprise leaders and experts who took the time to share their insights and collaborate with each other to develop recommendations that offer significant potential for supporting Irish enterprise resilience at this challenging time. I also commend the enthusiastic participation of TU Dublin faculty in organising and reporting on these workshops. Our faculty remain available to engage in the dissemination of the excellent ideas proposed in the ideation panel workshop reports that are set out in this document.

Dr Katrina Lawlor
Dean, College of Business
Technological University Dublin

INTRODUCTION

Objectives of Ideation Forum

The TU Dublin COVID-19 Enterprise Response Forum sought to be an ideation platform for: (i) *identifying and developing ideas and practical proposals that cumulatively will enhance enterprise resilience to the economic impacts of COVID-19,* and (ii) *preparing enterprise for the post-pandemic era.*

Scope of Ideation

The focus of ideation was on practical initiatives to support Irish enterprise and their management. Much of the focus was on identifying appropriate developmental support initiatives that addressed key challenges and issues identified and confirmed by the panels.

Many of the recommendations developed have potential to be incorporated or expanded upon in those supports provided by agencies including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Skillnets, as well as local agencies such as the Local Enterprise Offices. The proposals are relevant for the duration of the pandemic, as well as preparing for the post-pandemic period.

The purpose of the Forum was not to develop integrated or sectoral strategies for enterprise recovery. Much of this policy and strategy development work is ongoing by Government and agencies, as well as industry representative organisations. Instead the objective of the ideation exercises was to generate multiple ideas and initiatives that have a cumulative impact.

Workshops also sought to identify development requirements to support enterprise in the post-pandemic phase. In some instances, this included capturing key learning and gains achieved by enterprises as they responded to the crisis.

Taking account of the significant impact of the pandemic on SMEs and their importance in the Irish economy generally, the panels had a particular focus on the enterprise resilience and post-pandemic requirements SMES.

Further, the ideation panel workshops purposely did not consider recommendations that involved significant direct fiscal supports or pandemic wage subsidies as the Government has already made provisions for such supports. Recommendations relating to fiscal supports have also been included in extensive policy recommendations from industry representative groups, and there has been extensive economic analysis from organisations including the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Central Bank of Ireland.

Ideation Panel Participants

Panel composition for each ideation workshop was constructed around the specific expert requirements to address and validate relevant panel challenges. The workshops were facilitated by TU Dublin faculty with expertise in the panel subjects. Ideation panel participants are listed below.

Exporting & International Selling Ideation Panel

Bernie Cullinan, Pragma Advisory
Ciara Crossan, Wedding Dates
Graham Hawkins, SalesTribe
Pat Lucey, Aspira
Louise O'Connor, Beta Digital
Tony O'Dowd, Xcelerator Ltd
Johnny Parkes, Customer Minds
Rohit Thakral, Target Integration Ltd

Supporting Start Ups Ideation Panel

Peter Byrne, South Dublin Chamber
Professor Dylan Jones-Evans, University of South Wales
John O'Dea, TechIreland
Diane Hurley, New Frontiers
Neal O'Gorman, Founder Ireland
Gary O'Meara, National Association of Enterprise Centres
Cliodhna O'Byrne, South Dublin County
Adrian Geissel, Surpassport.com

Enterprise Digitisation Ideation Panel

Sarah Kenny, Kenny's Book Store
Brody Sweeney, Camile Thai
Colin Lewis, Openjaw Technologies
Paul Smith, Digital Marketing Consultant
Laura Nolan, iZest
Conor Barron, An Post
Eoin McKenna, Tribe Digital
Sorcha Mulligan, The SME Chain
Emer Taheny, Kooba

Making Remote Working Work Ideation Panel

Renate Kohlman, Grow Remote
Michelle Duffy-Rudden, Shopify
Johnny Cosgrove, Meeting Room
Debbie Jeske, Academic and Consultant
Sonia Neary, Wellola
Catherine Fitzgibbon, Core
Ben Wainright, Abodoo
Rowena Hennigan, Remote Working Consultant

Building Supply Chain Resilience Ideation Panel

Debbie Gorman, Unilever Ireland
Neil Murphy, Mars Ireland
Prof Edward Sweeney, Aston University
Michael O'Callaghan, IPICS
Des Finn, DHL Supply Chain
Bassey Duke, Pruune Consulting Ltd
Aidan Magner, 3SIXTY Management Consultants
Mark Crowe, BWG Foods

Boosting Innovation Performance Ideation Panel

Dr Keith O'Neill, Abbott Medicines
Liam Cronin, RDI Hub
Aideen Cardiff, Microsoft
Ingrid Devin, Dell Corporation
Dan Maher, Nua Venture and Health Innovation Hub Ireland
Lucy Fallon Byrne, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Building Management Development Ideation Panel

Shona McManus, Osborne Recruitment
George Boyle, George Boyle Designs and Fumbally Exchange
Sinead McEvoy, McEvoy Medical Services
Aidan O'Neill, DOCOsoft
Oisin Byrne, iReach
Padraig Staunton, Snack Farm and The White Hag Brewery

Retail Ideation Panel

Breege O'Donoghue, Primark/Penneys
Edel Clancy, Musgrave Group
Marion O'Gorman, The Kilkenny Group
Rebecca Harrison, Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy
Dan Ryan, The Beauty Buddy
David Ryan, Walmart Labs
Eoin McFeely, PWc
Mark O'Rourke, Fashion HSE
Malachy Hanberry, EuroSpar
Rory O'Connor, Scurri
Matthew Hopkinson, CRE Data Insight

Financial Services Ideation Panel

Joan Kehoe, JP Morgan
Caitriona Allis, ACCA Ireland
Mark Hamilton, BDO
Paul Gorman, Elkstone Partners
Niall Dineen, Appian Asset Management
Noel Friel, CFA Institute Ireland

Sports & Leisure Ideation Panel

Mary O'Connor, Federation of Irish Sport
Marion Browne, Fingal County Council

Conn McCluskey, Ireland Active
Sinead McNulty, The Camogie Association
Guy Thompson, FBD Hotels
David O'Connor, Shelbourne FC
David Conway, Limerick Twenty Thirty DAC
Cormac McDonnell, Sport Ireland
Shane Califf, Sport Ireland

Sustaining Charities Ideation Panel

Barry Andrews, Member of European
Parliament
Deirdre Garvey, The Wheel
Diarmaid O'Corrbuí, Carmichael
Sam McGuinness, Dublin Simon Community
Amy Woods, Volunteers Ireland
Dermot McGilloway, St Vincent de Paul Society
Ruairi McGinley, National Council for the Blind
in Ireland

Innovation in Construction Ideation Panel

Andy Frew, Northern Irish Housing Executive
Dr Kristina Mjörnell, Lund University
Peter Rickaby, University College London
Dr Maria Lopez Zambrano, NUI Galway
Michael Swainson, Building Research
Establishment

We acknowledge that in some cases ideation panel participants may not have been aware of some specific agency initiatives, and we also note that new supports have been introduced in the period following the workshops. In summary, in preparing the final report we have included the ideas as developed in the ideation workshops.

Final Reporting of Forum

It is important to note that this report is not intended as an evaluation of existing supports offered by the Government and its agencies. Further, the proposals in this report are the findings of twelve ideation workshops, and they have not been prioritised.

We also acknowledge that numerous initiatives proposed in this report have already been initiated in some form or other by various national and regional enterprise agencies in response to the pandemic impact. Their inclusion in the report is not intended as an evaluation of these supports.

CONTEXT – A HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

Introduction

In terms of business and economic impact, the COVID-19 pandemic is without precedent in modern times. Necessary measures implemented by the Irish Government to preserve public health have seen a health crisis and an economic crisis become interlocked. Managing the health crisis, the Government has implemented two major lockdowns, along with ongoing public health restrictions that have impacted the operations of enterprises across the country. Several vaccines are currently being rolled out, however it is already clear that this phase will take a significant period of time, during which further lockdowns cannot be ruled out.

Economic Impact

The initial lockdown to manage the COVID-19 health crisis delivered the most severe rise in unemployment levels in the history of the state (according to the CSO, more than 900,000 people dependent on welfare support in July, 2020 compared to a 13-year low in January 2020), as well as potentially permanent changes in the way people work.

The Government response to the financial impact of the pandemic has been swift and maintained. The Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme supported enterprises to keep workers on their payroll. This has been followed by further debt-based supports, non-payroll grant supports, a Pandemic Stabilisation and Recovery Fund, and tax

warehousing supports. These supports have been critical to alleviating the effect of the pandemic on enterprise finances.

Uneven Impact

The impact of the pandemic, while sudden, has not been uniform across different sectors. Many enterprises have been able to adapt to online business and remote working. However, those sectors that involve face-to-face interaction with customers, such as the arts, hospitality, retail, tourism, and leisure, has been particularly negatively impacted and are face an uncertain recovery.

There has also been a number of sectors where the effects have been relatively muted, such as some service, information technology and manufacturing sectors.

The SME sector makes up the vast majority of enterprises operating in Ireland and prior to the pandemic employs over one million people[1] and given the industrial structure of the sectors most impacted by COVID-19, the SME sector is weathering an unprecedented shock. For period March to June 2020, SMEs experienced a revenue shortfall of between €6 billion and €10 billion, with the shortfall to increasing to between €8 billion and €15 billion before the end of 2020[2]. A McKinsey study on the impact of the pandemic in **Europe** found that at least two of three jobs at risk are in an SME, and more than 30% of all jobs at risk are found within microenterprises consisting of nine employees or fewer.

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[1] *Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2019, Central Statistics Office.*
[2] *Martinez-Cillero, M., Lawless, M. and O'Toole, C., COVID-19 pandemic and SME revenues in Ireland:*

What's the gap?, ESRI Special Article, Economic and Social Research Institute, 2020.

Workforce Disruption

Enterprises have experienced unprecedented workforce disruption, and many enterprises are still seeking to determine how they will work in the short- and long-term.

As noted by the National Competitive Council[3], the scale of remote working over the last six months would have been "inconceivable prior to the outbreak of COVID-19". It is generally accepted that remote working will be a more significant element of future workplace planning, but most enterprises are still considering their options in this regard. For many enterprises further evidence is required regarding the productivity of remote work and the models required to manage and deliver productivity through this mode of working. Given that remote work brings an elevated risk of burnout, there will be a need for greater emphasis on employee wellbeing. Increased remote working also has implications for commercial office space and foodservice enterprises.

Market Impact

Pandemic operational requirements have required enterprises to re-evaluate how they connect with customers. This includes looking at how employees deliver customer experiences, including through digital means that can be used to support business continuity. Changes in consumer behaviours have been accelerated with consumer online purchasing in 2020 at a multiple of previous years. In addition, there is emerging evidence that consumers are becoming more mindful

of how they spend their money and are adopting new habits to save.

A survey of consumers by McKinsey[4] identified five fundamental shifts to consumer behaviour during the pandemic, some of which they expect will have a lasting impact:

o   A shift to value and essentials with up to 50% of consumers that they will decrease spend on most discretionary categories;
o   A flight to digital and omnichannel with a 25% net intent to spend online even post pandemic;
o   A shock to loyalty with 61% if European consumers having changed stores, brands, or the way they shop;
o   The expansion of the 'homebody economy' with 63% of European consumers reporting that they have not yet resume normal out of home activities; and
o   A new holiday outlook with 93% of households planning to maintain or reduce holiday spending.

Enterprise Operations Impact

COVID-19 introduced supply and demand challenges that few enterprise supply chain models could manage. Responding to changes in consumer behaviour, supply chains, and revised routes to market has severely challenged the operational resilience of enterprises. This has put significant pressure to accelerate digital transformation plans. COVID-19 has pushed companies to operate in different ways and their information technology capabilities have been tested as never before. This acceleration has heightened risks relating to business continuity, decision-making, and security.

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[3]*Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge, National Competiveness Council, September 2020*
[4] *https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/a-*

global-view-of-how-consumer-behavior-is-changing-amid-covid-19

While many enterprises developed short-term survival plans during the initial lockdown, they must now look to their medium-term and long-term strategies, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic and take stock of the longer term business environment impacts. These will include significant and permanent increases in direct-to-consumer business models that arise from accelerated digital enterprise and market platform transformations. However, it is also premature to write-off pre-pandemic business models as there is much uncertainty with regards to how consumers will emerge post-pandemic.

The role of effective management has always been linked to productivity, however it has taken on greater importance during the pandemic. All enterprises have had to plan and implement COVID-19 protocols. Managers have been required to adapt organisation structures and business operating procedures to remote working and new ways of reaching customers. The capacity of managers to reconfigure business models and lead and manage performance in remote and virtual working arrangements, has been critical to enterprise resilience.

Many enterprises are also taking stock of how technological resilience has supported them during the pandemic to date, particularly during the lockdown. Many organisations have found that their innovation and technology development processes have been robust, and are now looking to these processes to accelerate automation, digital transformation, and new ways of working. For many organisations, leveraging this learning offers significant potential for their future strategies.

Moving Beyond the Pandemic

As we move out of this pandemic crisis, enterprises and their management are acutely aware of the need to understand the longer term impact of COVID-19 on their customers and their business models. They are also more aware of the need to be ready for future shocks, having appropriate digital platforms, innovation processes, management competencies, and supply chain arrangements in place. For many enterprises, this planning is taking place in the context of Brexit planning.

FORUM METHODOLOGY

Ideation Panel Process

The COVID-19 Enterprise Response Forum was conducted through a series of ideation workshops facilitated by TU Dublin.

The facilitation team for each panel developed the panel problem statements. The inputs for identifying and defining the problem statements included reviews of COVID-19 policy documents from Government agencies and industry federations, consultations with enterprise informants. The problems statements were issued to the panel participants in advance of the workshops, and validated at the beginning of each workshop.

Panel composition for each ideation workshop was planned around the specific expert requirements to address each panel's problem statement. The workshops were facilitated by TU Dublin faculty with expertise in the panel subjects.

Each ideation workshop was designed as a group brainstorming process, where panel members were invited to contribute their own ideas and contribute to the development of ideas proposed by fellow panellists. After validating the problem statements, the workshops were facilitated to extract ideas that responded to the sectoral and cross-sectoral challenges and issues identified. All workshops were conducted as online events, and were recorded for the purpose of accurate capture of the panel discussions and outcomes.

Ideation Panels

Two types of ideation panels were held – *Enterprise Thematic Panels* and *Sectoral Panels*

The *Enterprise Thematic Panels* represent key enterprise areas that have either been identified as critical for business continuity (e.g. supply chains, start-up support), will be important for enterprise solutions responses to COVID-19 impacts (e.g. remote working, innovation, management competency development), or are likely to be impacted significantly by COVID-19 (e.g. exporting activity).

Enterprise thematic ideation panels were conducted for the following enterprise areas:

o   Exporting and International Selling
o   Supporting Start-ups
o   Enterprise Digitisation
o   Making Remote Working Work
o   Building Supply Chain Resilience
o   Boosting Innovation Performance
o   Building Management Capability

The sectoral panels were conducted in sectors that were identified as being economically important with high employment areas. There was also a focus was on those sectors whose operations and possibly business models have been most significantly impacted by COVID-19. In this context, ideation workshops were conducted for the following sectors:

o   Retail
o   Financial Services
o   Sports and Leisure
o   Innovation in Construction
o   Sustaining Charities

TU DUBLIN COVID-19 ENTERPRISE RESPONSE FORUM SUMMARY PROPOSALS

The rollout of multiple vaccines has given cause for optimism among our citizens and our enterprise base. However, public health authorities have cautioned that restrictions will remain through much of 2021, including potential for further lockdowns.

This section reports on key themes from across the ideation panels and provides a summary of the proposals from each ideation panel to enhance enterprise resilience to COVID-19, and also prepare enterprise for the post-pandemic enterprise environment.

Key Themes

(i)   The Digital Imperative

Across several ideation panels, accelerating digital transformation of all areas of business was highlighted as a priority. It was identified as a critical enabler of enterprise competitive advantage, and indeed their survival in potentially new business and market environments. This is particularly so for SMEs, which the panel participants identified as being slower in leveraging digital solutions to reduce costs, enter and serve new markets, engage in online commerce, drive innovation, and deliver supply chain management enhancements.

The *Exporting and International Selling*, *Boosting Innovation Performance*, and *Building Supply Chain Resilience* ideation panels each recommended proposals for accelerating the digitisation of enterprise processes to enhance linkages with customers

and partners. A number of the ideation panels recommended expansion of existing initiatives and supports to accelerate digital transformation.

Taking account of the accelerated and potentially permanent adoption of digitial practices of omniretailing and the movement of consumers to new ways of buying products, the *Retail* panel recommended fast tracking of digital transformation initiatives, with practical and tailored supports.

To put in place effective digitisation plans, it was observed in several of the ideation panels that it essential that enterprise leaders and managers must first be able to understand the opportunities that digitisation offers. To help with this, the *Enterprise Digitisation* panel proposed establishment of an information, education, and content portal.

Similarly, the *Exporting and International Selling* panel proposed a Digital Health Check to assist SMEs pursue tailored digital tailored supports most relevant to their business.

The *Supporting Start-Up* panel identified digital entrepreneurship as a significant opportunity for enterprise development for Ireland, particularly with the potential to leverage off the advanced digital MNCs located in Ireland, but also observed that these businesses and their entrepreneurs require a different set of capabilities.

While, digital enterprise offers a critical avenue for value and job creation, concerns were identified in supporting start-ups and enterprises seeking to scale. It was noted that Ireland has fallen in the StartupBlink global survey of start-up ecosystems global rankings of start-up ecosytems, with Dublin falling 10 places out of the top 50 in the ranking of best cities globally for startups. The report

observed that "Ireland's potential has yet to be realised in full, and talented Irish founders still choose to relocate and establish their start-ups in more prominent ecosystems.

(ii)   Future of Work is Here

The *Making Remote Working Work*, *Financial Services*, and *Boosting Innovation Performance* ideation panels each identified remote working as having potential to offer economic, social, and environmental gains for Ireland. Many employers – public and private – have put in place policies and systems to support remote work that will likely see increased levels of remote working post-pandemic in order to access a broader pool of talent, promote employee retention, and improve business operation cost effectiveness.

The ideation panels encouraged pursuit of opportunities offered by remote working, including a national strategy that seeks to position Ireland as a global leader in remote working. Such a strategy should address infrastructure, including broadband rollout, development of remote working hubs at key regional locations, mandating remote working spaces in new housing schemes, and supporting enterprises put in place appropriate procedures and arrangements to manage remote working. Human resource development supports should seek to enable workers at different levels to operate effectively in remote working mode, both in terms of organising and implementing their work, and working in teams remotely. Managers should be enabled to lead teams, manage performance remotely, support collaborative activities, and plan and design work processes in remote and distributed team arrangements.

(iii) Planning for Structural Changes

Several of the ideation panels reported that COVID-19 had accelerated existing trends in their sectors that have potential to challenge existing business models. The *Retail* panel identified that the sector needs guidance on the likely shape and structure of the future retail environment, and that there is a need for a Future of Retail Foresight Exercise.

Emerging from several panels, including the *Supporting Start-Ups*, *Making Remote Working Work*, and *Boosting Innovation Performance* panels, was the requirement for a new national enterprise policy to be developed for the post-pandemic and Brexit context. COVID-19 has accelerated a number of trends including digitisation, remote working, and online business. There is a need to consider and prepare enterprise for the likely fundamental longer term impacts of the trends accelerated by COVID-19. With most workers expressing a desire for more remote working in the future and commitments to CO_2 emissions reduction targets, any national enterprise policy must also incorporate regional planning requirements and environmental sustainability targets. In this context, any new national enterprise policy would have to prepared on a broader canvass than previously.

(iv) Supporting Organisational Agility and Resilience – the Human Element

The ability of enterprise leaders and managers to support organisational resilience and agility was referenced in most of the ideation panels. Examples include:

o   The *Building Management Capability* panel observed that successfully dealing with the impact of the pandemic crisis on the enterprise requires a clear sense of

purpose, agile leadership, and a capacity to engage effectively with teams.

o The *Making Remote Working Work* panel noted that workers must repurpose their skills in order to manage the transition to remote working, and that there needs to be development of virtual leadership capabilities, including building team culture, supporting employees and managing performance.

o The *Building Supply Chain Resilience* panel proposed HEI-industry collaboration to address targeted skills gaps.

o The *Boosting Innovation Performance* panel identified that managers and enterprise leaders need a broader understanding of innovation strategy and processes, and their role in building an innovation culture in their organisations,

o The *Enterprise Digitisation* panel noted a requirement to build skillsets beyond simply going online, but also in areas such as fulfilment and database marketing.

o The *Retail* panel identified common management capabilities relating to strategising the enterprise retail model, contingency planning, and digital transformation delivery.

o The *Sustaining Charities* panel recommended the development of a competency framework for the sector to shape continuous professional development.

Importantly, the people development requirements for each of the panels extends beyond managing during COVID-19. Each of the areas of development activity identified are also essential for post-pandemic activities, particularly in those areas where transformative change is projected.

(v) *Supporting Collaborative Learning through Industry Roundtables*

Industry roundtables typically consist of peers convening to share challenges, learn from

each other, and ideally innovate together. Several ideation panels noted an opportunity for such activities and networks to serve as collaborative learning venues.

The *Building Supply Chain Resilience* panel proposed establishment of an Enterprise Supply Chain Creativity and Learning Platform to support collaborative learning initiatives – formal and informal – across industries on best practices, including nurturing collaborative organisational behaviours. Supporting this the same panel proposed a National Supply Chain Forum which would also serve as an advisory group on supply chain matters for Government and its agencies.

The *Boosting Innovation Performance* panel similarly highlighted the potential for industry roundtables where managers can bring issues and learn from each other.

Summary of Ideation Panel Proposals

A summary of each of the ideation panel proposals is presented below. These are detailed later in the report.

EXPORTING & INTERNATIONAL SELLING IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) *Reverse mentoring initiative to* match leaders with newly skilled students/graduates.

(ii) *Breakdown to Breakthrough Report* to connect high-barrier sectors and territories with emergent market opportunities.

(iii) Develop *Virtual Sales Playbook* including suite of support materials providing guidance and case studies on how customer-facing staff can be empowered to sell through technology.

(iv) Develop *Virtual Community for Exporting SMEs as* an informal network where the exporting business community can connect and share experiences, resources and supports which relate to the changes in the business landscape brought about by Covid-19.

(v)   Develop *SME Digital HealthCheck* platform to enable SMEs pursue tailored supports relevant to their business.

(vi) *Communications training* to upskill in online communication required for exporting activities.

(vii) *Education and training for SMEs for* upskilling and reskilling of salesforce to address digital deficiencies.

SUPPORTING START-UPS IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Develop an *Inclusive Entrepreneurship Strategy* to identify, encourage, and support the 'missing entrepreneurial groups' in society.

(ii) Target *Digital Entrepreneurship Potential* through programme of activities in schools and universities, and collaborative actions involving MNCs and start-ups.

(iii) Establish a *Community Enterprise Hub Network and Portal* through connected and coordinated Enterprise Centres.

(iv) Establish *Pre-Acceleration Programmes* using bootstrapping principles to attract a pipeline of nascent entrepreneurs.

(v)   Establish *Start Up Graduate Internships* to support nascent entrepreneurs in HEIs.

ENTERPRISE DIGITISATION IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Develop *E-Commerce and Fulfilment Platform* as cross-agency platform for SMEs to transact and fulfil orders.

(ii) Establish *Information, Education and Content Portal Website* to quickly diffuse relevant information and content to SMEs to access critical resources to support digitisation planning.

(iii) Promote *'Buy Local, Buy Small'* integrated marketing campaigns.

(iv) Build *Skillsets Beyond Website Management* including fulfilment, data analytics, and database marketing.

(v)   Streamline *Grants Application Process for Digital Vouchers and/or Grants*.

MAKING REMOTE WORKING WORK IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Build a *Sustainable Remote-Working Infrastructure* based on an interdepartmental strategy that addresses infrastructure, housing, incentives, and guidance.

(ii) *Establish Learning and Development Interventions for Managers and Employees* to repurpose their skills for transition to remote working.

(iii) Review *Pre-Employment Education for Workers of the Future*, including reviewing how state educational providers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepare our future generation of workers for future work requirements, including remote working.

(iv) Promote Ireland as a *Vibrant Destination for Remote Working.*

BUILDING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) Establish an *Enterprise Supply Chain Learning Platform* to support collaborative learning initiatives.

(ii) Establish a *National Supply Chain Forum* to support national enterprise policy planning.

(iii) *HEI-Industry collaboration* to address targeted skills gaps.

(iv) Accelerate *Enterprise Digital Transformation* with supports for expansion of supply-chain digital enhancement actions.

(v) Maintain *Guidelines for Meeting the Brexit Challenge*.

BOOSTING INNOVATION PERFORMANCE IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) Building innovation culture in enterprises by promoting promote discussion of how to deliver successful innovation. outcomes with *roundtable actions with peer-to-peer sharing*.

(ii) Develop a new *National Enterprise Policy* to support post-pandemic enterprise horizon.

(iii) Explore potential of *Regional Hubs* to support collaborative and remote working arrangements.

(iv) Build on innovation success in public organisations during pandemic through *reviewing COVID-19 learning, structured innovation strategies, secondment activities, flexible ideation activities, and innovation programme investment.*

BUILDING MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) Promote the establishment of *mentoring and knowledge sharing networks* to

support capacity-building and competency development.

(ii) *Support core management skills development* in areas including staff motivation, performance management, stress management and wellbeing, and provide greater guidance to small businesses regarding the challenges of managing people and sustaining organisational culture in a remote-working environment.

(iii) Establish *crisis communications development supports* for enterprise leaders for internal and external communications with all stakeholders.

(iv) Create interventions to allow the development of *enterprise leaders personality and self-understanding* as they relate to setting enterprise strategic direction, interpersonal relationships and meeting operational demands.

RETAIL IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) *Conduct a Retail Foresight Study* to explore the future retail environment, future retail models, and likely constraints.

(ii) Align supports to *individual retailer enterprise development plans.*

(iii) Develop *Retailer Digital Transformation Programme* including retail and financial model; digital Infrastructure; staff development; customer relationships; customer experience; supply chain and supplier relationships, and procurement.

(iv) Build *management and organisational capability* including management development programmes to support retail owners and managers to plan and implement change programmes.

(v)   Disseminate *safe retailing operational protocols* to be supplemented with individual sector-specific response instructions and contingency plans.

(vi)   Continuation of *financial and stimulus supports.*

FINANCIAL SERVICES IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Explore potential *opportunities from disruption to location models* including potential for remote working to increase pool of talent available to sector.

(ii)   *Prioritise supports for SMEs.*

(iii)   *Support financial services enterprises to reassess their businesses* including product lines, regional focus and client groups.

(iv)   *Maintain Ireland's regulatory advantage* by reducing the regulatory burden on the financial services sector, and allow firms to respond to the changed investment environment.

SPORTS AND LEISURE IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   *Stimulus supports for health and fitness sector including access to activities incentives, VAT reductions, and* extension of the wage subsidy beyond March 2021.

(ii)   Provide advisory and consultancy supports, including grants, for sports and leisure enterprises to assess *technology supported market channels*, and train and upskill staff on new technologies.

(iii)   Continuation of supports to develop COVID-19 mitigation plans and strategies is recommended.

SUSTAINING CHARITIES IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Establish a *Taskforce for the Community and Voluntary Sector* to support policy development and design of interventions to support the sector.

(ii)   Develop a *Community and Voluntary Sector Competency and Skills Strategy and Framework* to address skills shortages and create upskilling opportunities.

INNOVATION IN CONSTRUCTION IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   *Focus on overcrowded tenancies* as locations at risk of contamination.

(ii)   Adopt a *'ventilation and fabric first' strategy.*

(iii)   Exploit the value of *off-site manufacturing.*

(iv)   *Greater emphasis on linking building issues to wider socio-economic and cultural factors*, including social, cultural, health, economic and wider environmental issues.

(v)   Support better, safer renovation works with *easier access to guidance.*

(vi)   *Support better, safer renovation works through more research.*

(vii)   *Increase quality and extent of assessment*

(viii)   Increased use of *ventilation systems* that respond to variable and higher occupancies, and also ventilate at higher levels, to the benefit of occupants and builders.

(ix)   Install *district heating fuelled by renewable energy sources* as a community-scale, low-carbon, energy-efficiency measure that can be introduced on scale.

TU DUBLIN COVID-19 ENTERPRISE RESPONSE FORUM REPORTS

The following sections set out the summary report of observations and proposals from each of the forum panels.

Forum panel participants are listed, however observations and proposals relate to the panel and are not attributed to individual panel members.

Each report also includes contact details for the TU Dublin faculty panel rapporteur, who is available to provide further context and details for the panel proposals.

ENTERPRISE THEMATIC
IDEATION PANELS

EXPORTING AND INTERNATIONAL SELLING

Irish exporters came into 2020 from a position of strength recording exports of more than €25bn in 2019. During COVID-19, Irish exporters have largely succeeded in retaining export customers, however customer contracts are down. Key challenges explored in this panel included digital platforms and people development.

Facilitators	Justine Emoe, International Selling Programme Dr Kieran Sheahan, School of Marketing
Rapporteur	Dr Etain Kidney, School of Marketing

Exporting & International Selling Ideation Panel	
Bernie Cullinan	Pragma Advisory
Ciara Crossan	Wedding Dates
Graham Hawkins	SalesTribe
Pat Lucey	Aspira
Louise O'Conor	Beta Digital
Tony O'Dowd	Xcelerator Ltd
Johnny Parkes	Customer Minds
Rohit Thakral	Target Integration Ltd

EXPORTING AND INTERNATIONAL SELLING IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Digital 'Liabilities' and The 'Dark Arts': The panel raised a number of serious digital enablement issues including: broadband access, cost of training/software, and lack of understanding of business media as a sales tool. SMEs are not sufficiently aware of the tools and supports available to help them work effectively in the online environment. The new skills needed for remote selling approaches and professional online communication are urgently required.

Strategic Review and Leadership Mindset: Participants stressed the need to review organisational purpose and strategy. The business leaders indicated that there is acceptance of the new normal but little strategic response to build resilience in the long term. A major barrier cited was lack of a change mindset toward digitisation of practice in the organisation. Leaders without the change mindset may be caught in crisis management rather than strategic planning.

People Development: Training requirements for the sales team were stressed, with upskilling and reskilling requirements across the communication, technology and platforms. The panel cited looking to the existing sales team for recruitment as there are barriers to new employees, ranging from financial issues to the difficulty of virtual on-boarding. In addition, the panel felt frustrated by the lack of meaningful networking opportunities beyond the webinar circuit.

Breakdown and Breakthrough: There is an opportunity for Irish business to benefit from the breaking-down of barriers to export due to the reduced reliance on overseas travel and cultural access to markets.

(i) *Reverse mentoring initiative to* **match leaders with newly skilled students/graduates.**

Acknowledging the call for leadership to have a mindset change and fresh perspective on the virtual workplace, this initiative would match leaders with newly skilled students/graduates. Reverse mentoring can offer a fresh perspective from graduates or students who have worked in collaborative and social online business media throughout their education and early career. This idea relates to the juxtaposition of the need for new digital skills and the need for early stage exposure to experience. Reverse mentoring schemes could be organisation, university or professional body-run, with cross-disciplinary and global opportunities to offer a reinvigorated view of the profession.

This scheme is intended to empower younger workers and unemployed graduates to share their expertise and ideas with senior leaders and employees. The idea is proposed as a solution to the need to break through the digital divide and into the new virtual world of export and selling.

(ii) *Breakdown to Breakthrough Report* **to connect high-barrier sectors and territories with emergent market opportunities.**

Physically and culturally, the landscape in which business is conducted has changed. There are reduced barriers to export in certain markets and higher barriers in others. This panel highlighted that markets where relationships typically required face-to-face meetings are now open to virtual selling, which would previously have been prohibitive for companies.

The panel calls for a report on the opportunities to connect with previously high-barrier sectors and territories with emergent market opportunities. The purpose of this report is to support business in reappraising their criteria for selecting and prioritising export markets and segments.

In addition to export, the report may provide insights on the renewed demand for Irish SMEs' products/services in the domestic market.

(iii) **Develop** *Virtual Sales Playbook* **including suite of support materials providing guidance and case studies on how customer-facing staff can be empowered to sell through technology.**

This proposal responds to a pressing need of businesses whose progress in digital sales enablement is at an early stage. Many SMEs acknowledge limited understanding of the 'dark art of digital selling'. The panel observed that, due to the move to remote selling among their competitors and remote buying among their prospects and customers, these businesses find themselves under sudden and enormous pressure to adapt and embrace the power of technology without delay.

A Virtual Sales Playbook targeted at this cohort would provide a suite of support materials providing guidance and case studies on how customer-facing staff can be empowered to sell through technology. The playbook should contain elements relating to hard and soft skills for virtual selling, such as technological insights on hardware and software platforms as well as online communications and presentation skills guidelines. The content should be accessible to non-IT specialists and aim to support more relevant and effective engagements with prospects and customers.

(iv) Develop *Virtual Community for Exporting SMEs as* an informal network for exporting business community to connect and share experiences, resources and supports.

The panel identified an appetite among business leaders for an informal network where the exporting business community can connect and share experiences, resources and supports which relate to the changes in the business landscape brought about by Covid-19. While there appears to be adequate availability of thought leadership webinars on various subjects (which are valued by the community), these online events do not provide the informal support and discussion opportunities that traditional face-to-face networking events previously allowed for. This has reduced the opportunities to network with existing contacts and almost eliminated opportunities to meet new contacts.

A network, enabling peer-led support, which could be stratified by sectoral specialism or subject area, would respond to this need while protecting the considerable value generated by the network effect of Irish exporting businesses.

(v) Develop *SME Digital HealthCheck* platform to enable SMEs pursue tailored supports relevant to their business.

There are technologies available to audit the efficacy of digital sales and marketing resources through data analysis. It is recommended that an audit facility be provided for SMEs, where website and company details could be entered and assessed. This platform could return a digital 'HealthCheck' that would provide information enabling SMEs to pursue the tailored supports most relevant to their business. The supports could be drawn from both free available services and government-led initiatives for grants, etc.

This would support business performance improvement at an individual and national level and enable the benchmarking of Irish businesses against international competitors.

(vi) *Communications training* to upskill in online communication required for exporting activities.

The early-stage transition from face-to-face communications to video conferencing for business meetings has been fraught with challenges for many exporters. An ability to communicate and build relationships effectively is critical during sales engagements with prospects and customers. Many of the failings in communication have been brought about by poor use of hardware coupled with over-reliance on sales materials and messaging intended for in-person meetings. As businesses come to accept that remote sales engagements may be here to stay, a formalised approach to upskilling in the area of online communication and presenting is needed by many exporting businesses.

To support this agenda, online communications programmes are needed to support experienced businesspeople in redesigning their sales materials and nuancing their delivery style for remote engagements. Areas for improvement cited by panellists include lighting and audio technology, body language, voice control and appropriate behaviour for business calls. The panel cited the cost of training in these competencies as a barrier. It is proposed that there be free online programmes for SME employees.

(vii) *Education and training for SMEs for upskilling and reskilling of salesforce to address digital deficiencies.*

The panel confirmed the debilitating impact of a lack of technology skills and infrastructure to support selling and exporting activities. There is an acute need for

companies and employees to be able to use and interact with technology. This panel recommends upskilling and reskilling of the salesforce to bridge the gap for those struggling with the digital divide. There is a need for digital to be an equaliser rather than an inhibitor to export. Investment in free education and training for enterprise is a broad recommendation that layers the multifaceted discussion on this panel.

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SUPPORTING START-UPS

This panel addressed actions that can be taken to promote a substantial increase in start-up activity that is also inclusive of all members of society. Specific areas considered included (i) Inclusive Entrepreneurship (potential to contribute to recovery); (ii) Digital Entrepreneurship (potential to contribute to recovery); (iii) Spaces (Incubation, Co-Working, Office); and (iv) Supports.

Facilitators	Professor Thomas Cooney, School of Marketing Dr Paul Maguire, Hothouse
Rapporteur	Dr Anthony Buckley, School of Marketing

Start Up Ideation Panel	
Peter Byrne	South Dublin Chamber
Professor Dylan Jones-Evans	University of South Wales
John O'Dea	TechIreland
Diane Hurley	New Frontiers
Neal O'Gorman	Founder Ireland
Gary O'Meara	National Association of Enterprise Centres
Cliodhna O'Byrne	MSouth Dublin County
Adrian Geissel	Surpassport.com

SUPPORTING START-UPS IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Start Ups as Solution to Unemployment: Evidence suggests that some sections of the population will suffer disproportionately higher rates of unemployment (e.g. women, immigrants, youth, people with disabilities). The panel observed that part of the solution, will be to encourage people to explore starting their own business. However, it was noted that Dublin has recently dropped out of the top 50 in a ranking of best cities globally for start-ups (see Start-up Blink 2020 report).

Inclusive Entrepreneurship: The panel observed that there is a need to encourage greater start-up rates, but to do so requires widening the top of the funnel, and also a need at national level to develop a coordinated Inclusive Entrepreneurship strategy to identify, encourage and support the 'missing entrepreneurial groups' in society.

Digital Entrepreneurship: Digital entrepreneurship is viewed by many countries as a critical pillar for economic growth, job creation and innovation. It is argued that a nation's or a city's digital entrepreneurial capacity depends on digital entrepreneurial behaviour, culture and strategies, as well as a supportive innovation ecosystem in which governments, industry, business, educational institutions and NGOs work together.

Potential for Community-Based Hubs and Cooperation: There is already substantial public and private investment in enterprise support centres throughout the country and the Greater Dublin Area. These 'community-based' centres are becoming increasingly important hubs for entrepreneurs, business people and students as access points to the entrepreneurial eco-system in their local area. The panel believes that the trend towards

such hubs will accelerate further as an outcome of Covid-19.

SUPPORTING START-UPS IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) **Develop an *Inclusive Entrepreneurship Strategy* to identify, encourage, and support the 'missing entrepreneurial groups' in society.**

Successful entrepreneurs and people with entrepreneurial mindsets can come from any part of society. The panel recommends that the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices develop a coordinated inclusive Entrepreneurship Strategy to identify, encourage and support the 'missing entrepreneurial groups' in society. This applies to women, immigrants, youth, people with disabilities, and marginalised communities. Role models and successful entrepreneurs from these entrepreneurial cohorts need to be championed as part of the strategy. The panel also recommends reviewing visa requirements for overseas students so that they can remain in Ireland after graduation and start (and own) their own businesses and receive support from the state support system.

(ii) **Target *Digital Entrepreneurship Potential* through programme of activities in schools and universities, and collaborative actions involving MNCs and start-ups.**

Digital entrepreneurship is where digital artefacts and platforms are the new venture ideas and market offerings, while digital technologies in general, are external enablers of new venture creation. As such digital entrepreneurship requires different skillsets to traditional entrepreneurship. The panel

observed that there is an abundance of large digital multinationals located on multiple sites throughout the Greater Dublin area and that they have significant potential to be conduits for fostering digital entrepreneurship. This can be achieved by engaging with secondary and tertiary education, to support budding digital entrepreneurs and born again digital entrepreneurs to be schooled in disciplined digital entrepreneurial processes.

(iii) **Establish a *Community Enterprise Hub Network and Portal* through connected and coordinated Enterprise Centres.**

The panel recommends that a national network of connected and coordinated Enterprise Centres (growth poles) is fostered. These centres will increasingly serve as local community access points for entrepreneurs and nascent entrepreneurs/ start-ups. The value of these hubs can be greatly enhanced by leveraging the power of hyper-connectivity, smart coordination and enthusiastic collaboration. To be successful, this requires proactive collaboration across the entrepreneurial eco-system in the Greater Dublin area, between public and private-sector actors in each of the counties in Dublin.

The panel recommends that a Community Enterprise Hub Network and portal be developed through a collaboration of relevant enterprise eco-system actors, including Enterprise Ireland, Dublin Chambers, Dublin Region Innovation Consortium and Local Enterprise Offices. It can serve as a single access point for all of the above enterprise-related service providers to speak with one voice to the entrepreneur/ nascent entrepreneur community in the Greater Dublin area and provide up-to-date information on all services (e.g. upcoming entrepreneurship clinics, learning programmes, job opportunities, meets,

hackathons, new state supports, growth marketing tips/hacks, etc.).

(iv) Establish *Pre-Acceleration Programmes* using bootstrapping principles to attract a pipeline of nascent entrepreneurs.

The panel proposes that 'pre-acceleration programmes' be created to attract a pipeline of nascent entrepreneurs. This would support budding entrepreneurs through ideation and idea-validation processes, enabling them to use best-practice tools and techniques for researching and validating their ideas. If their ideas survived, they could move on to incubator/accelerator programmes such as New Frontiers to turn their ideas into reality.

The panel recommends that these programmes be underpinned by 'bootstrapping' principles, thus making them widely accessible to everyone, regardless of background or education level. The panel proposed that these programmes be delivered through the Greater Dublin area Community Enterprise Hub Network (proposed in the previous recommendation). Hub Advice clinics from currently active entrepreneurs could be incorporated as part of the programme. In addition, the network could serve as a first point of contact for all those with entrepreneurial intentions. The network could also advise on navigating the state support system. Service standards could be ensured across the network by developing a common service-level agreement across participant organisations. The panel believes that the above is an example of joined-up thinking and of how the private and public sectors can collaborate within the entrepreneurial eco-system to create value for entrepreneurs and ultimately the entrepreneurial society.

(v) Establish *Start Up Graduate Internships* to support nascent entrepreneurs in HEIs.

The panel noted that on-boarding human capital is a particular difficulty for start-ups to acquire, particularly if they are in 'bootstrapping' mode. Graduate internships can greatly assist in helping a business gain traction in the marketplace – particularly if the graduates bring well-developed digital knowledge, skills and abilities. The panel therefore recommends the placement of graduates with start-ups requiring help in their attempts to gain traction in the marketplace. These placements should be more heavily subsidised than traditional placements, but the start-up should still be required to make a contribution for the graduate services.

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ENTERPRISE DIGITISATION

End-to-end digital processes are key elements to safeguard productivity during disastrous events such as COVID-19, supporting first-response actions such as implementing business continuity plans and stabilisation of business operations. This panel considered the challenges for enterprise, particularly SMEs, accelerating digital transformation during the pandemic and preparing for post-pandemic requirements.

Facilitators	Dr Tara Rooney, School of Marketing
	Dr Roisin Vize, School of Marketing
Rapporteur	Alex Gibson, School of Marketing

Enterprise Digitisation Ideation Panel	
Sarah Kenny	Kenny's Book Store
Brody Sweeney	Camile Thai
Colin Lewis	Openjaw Technologies
Paul Smith	Digital Marketing Consultant
Laura Nolan	iZest
Conor Barron	An Post
Eoin McKenna	Tribe Digital
Sorcha Mulligan	The SME Chain
Emer Taheny	Kooba

ENTERPRISE DIGITISATION IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Defining Digitisation: The panel considered the concept of digitisation to be very broad. This leads to difficulties in both defining the nature of the problem and proposing initiatives that have broad applicability when it comes to the SME sector.

Acceleration of SME Digitisation Challenge: The panel recognised that companies in the SME sector are at varying stages in their digital transformation journey. While digitisation will profoundly affect business in all its dimensions, the Covid-19 crisis has effectively plunged the SME sector into rapid adoption of digital initiatives. But the sector is operating in an imperfect market when it comes to digitisation. Government intervention is needed to build capability and competitiveness. And, to build digitisation capability, education and skills training remains a key issue for SMEs.

Digitisation as a Marketing Function: The panel noted the need for an integrated marketing approach to facilitate a broader scope for business practice adaptation and/or adoption of digital. Digitisation as a marketing function must be seen in the context of a broad approach to marketing activity. There is an opportunity to leverage a perceived increase in customer sentiment and goodwill towards Irish SMEs.

ENTERPRISE DIGITISATION IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Develop *E-Commerce and Fulfilment Platform* as cross-agency platform for SMEs to transact and fulfil orders.

The panel recommends the development of a broad cross-agency platform for SMEs to transact and fulfil orders. This would be analogous to platforms in the food delivery sector (aggregators such as Just Eat are one example). The panel considers the inclusion of a strong fulfilment dimension to be critical. Allowing people to shop local and have local delivery is contingent on an integrated consideration of physical and digital.

The panel recommends a suite of freely available open-source web-building, management and reporting tools, including technology infrastructure, to create clarity on how specific regulatory frameworks are applied in practice (supply chains, IFRC accounting standards, GDPR compliance and ISO standards). Examples currently in development include LB Chain (Lithuania) and Bank of Boston's Supervisory Node.

(ii)   Establish *Information, Education and Content Portal Website* to quickly diffuse relevant information and content to SMEs to access critical resources to support digitisation planning.

The panel recommends the establishment of a portal website to quickly diffuse relevant information and content so that SMEs can access critical resources to support their digitisation planning. This portal should serve as a Community of Access and Practice platform for SMEs, micro-businesses and self-employed, with access free of charge to digital services from both private and public sources. It is proposed that high-quality and curated content be concentrated in this single-source platform, which could also host forum and discussion boards where SMEs have access to the best advice from peers and agencies. This portal would usefully include a standard template website. In addition, higher-education institutions (HEIs) should be invited to build online education with free MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that embed qualifications.

(iii)   Promote *'Buy Local, Buy Small'* integrated marketing campaigns

The panel projected that, after Covid-19, there will be a consumer shift in favour of SMEs in local versus international buying preference, and considered that this post-Covid-19 period is an opportunity to leverage the digital economy and to support local retailers and businesses. There is a need to *add value* via digital, which can accelerate the reach of businesses in ways unattainable prior to Covid-19. It should be made easy for consumers to identify and shop local in practice; there is a need to put small businesses in a position to take advantage of this. Shopping locally using an An Post current account is one example of a scheme that could work. It is recommended that a loyalty reward scheme for consumers purchasing Irish products online from small businesses be set up to incentivise buying Irish at a local level.

(iv)   Build *Skillsets Beyond Website Management* including fulfilment, data analytics, and database marketing.

Competencies beyond going online, such as fulfilment and database marketing beyond the setting-up of the basic online platform, are critical. One panellist cited an SME that was unable to move forward their digital position because they were worried about how to handle customer returns. The gap in information that contributes to a fear of going online needs to be addressed. Concurrently,

there is a clear skills-gap in data analysis. The panel considered that there is considerable untapped potential for data to be leveraged by companies to add value for consumers. Deep data-analytics (including artificial intelligence) skillsets are urgently needed, with personalisation of communication being central. These skillsets need to be complemented by an emphasis on creative thinking. There is an opportunity to dovetail with the proposed Information, Education and Content Portal, which could be developed as a repository for skill-nurturing resources. The panel also noted that, to build sustainable competencies, entrepreneurship education and digital skills could be linked in secondary-level education curricula.

(v) **Streamline** *application process for Digital Vouchers and/or related grants.*

Panellists noted that businesses need financial supports or digital vouchers to enable them to accelerate their digitisation programmes. The current processes were considered overly time-consuming, cumbersome and bureaucratic relative to the financial supports available.

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MAKING REMOTE WORKING WORK

This panel sought to generate discussion and ideas regarding the effective facilitation of remote working in order to reap the benefits while minimising the challenges. In essence, it sought to understand how we should lay the foundations for the future of remote working.

Facilitators	Dr Colin Hughes, Graduate Business School
	Maebh Coleman, School of Management
Rapporteur	Marian Jennings, School of Accounting & Finance

Remote Working Ideation Panel	
Renate Kohlman	Grow Remote
Michelle Duffy-Rudden	Shopify
Johnny Cosgrove	Meeting Room
Debbie Jeske	Academic and Consultant
Sonia Neary	Wellola
Catherine Fitzgibbon	Core
Ben Wainright	Abodoo
Rowena Hennigan	Remote Working Consultant

MAKING REMOTE WORKING WORK IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Benefits from Remote Working: The panel noted that remote working offers far-reaching benefits for Ireland – economically, societally and environmentally.

Enterprise and public-sector organisations can benefit from effective remote-work arrangements by gaining access to a broader pool of talent, promoting employee retention, and improving business operation cost-effectiveness. The adoption of flexible working solutions offered by remote working has the potential to remove barriers to employment.

An effective remote-working eco-system would help to reduce the pressure on Dublin and develop the wider region and country. Greater levels of remote working could lead to a stabilisation of house prices and rents in Dublin as citizens would be able to live further from the city, as well as reduced pressure on residential property prices and availability. And, with fewer daily commuters to Dublin, there could be less pressure on key services such as public transport and a reduction in carbon emissions (which will be costly in the future).

Potential of Ireland as a Location of Best Practice for Remote Working: The panel noted that Ireland could become a global leader in remote working and that a structured supporting infrastructure for remote-working arrangements could attract foreign direct investment.

Developing a Workforce to Work Remotely: The panel considered the human resource development challenges for enterprise and

public organisation employees as they make the transition to remote working, as well as for enterprise leaders as they seek to build enterprise cultures that manage performance and support employees. Further, employers face uncertainty in relation to legal obligations and policies and frameworks for remote working. Clarity on these matters is required. Longer-term, the education system must address those transversal competencies for the future-of-work environment, which include remote-working arrangements.

MAKING REMOTE WORKING WORK IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

The panel generated a range of ideas and proposals for Government and enterprises.

Recommendations for Government

(i) Build a *Sustainable Remote-Working Infrastructure* **based on an interdepartmental strategy that addresses infrastructure, housing, incentives, and guidance.**

Government support and long-term planning is needed if Ireland is to realise its potential in becoming a leader in remote working. An interdepartmental strategy should be developed, which includes:

o **Infrastructure**: The rollout of high-speed broadband is essential, along with further development of remote working hubs in regional locations. Such hubs could be located in retail outlets under partnership arrangements. This might also help to further develop the retail sector in the regions.

o **Housing**: New apartment developments could be designed to

include a dedicated space for remote working for residents and new houses could include a small office as a matter of course.

o **Incentives**: For employees transitioning to a future which involves some element of permanent remote working, government could offer tax breaks to help fund home offices either in the home or in the garden. Incentives could also be offered to organisations to encourage greater levels of remote working. Any incentives for employees or organisations must be easily accessible.

o **Guidance**: To support employers put in place appropriate procedures and arrangements to manage remote working, the panel proposed the establishment of a remote-working one-stop-shop. Taking the form of an online platform, this single source would provide all of the information required by organisations seeking to roll out effective remote working in their organisation, including:

- Clear guidelines on employment law, including health and safety obligations.
- Templates for remote employment contracts and remote-working policies.
- Information on incentives for organisations and employees.
- Advice and information on training and education for employees and people managers.

(ii) *Establish Learning and Development Interventions for Managers and Employees* **to repurpose their skills for transition to remote working.**

The panel observed that many employees will need to repurpose their skills in order to manage the transition to remote working. This will require an engaging educational model along with career coaching to ensure that they are 'remote-ready'. Education and training initiatives for employees should focus on areas such as communication (with clarity, empathy and transparency), collaboration and trust.

For virtual leaders, learning and development initiatives should focus on 'virtual leadership development', encompassing the aforementioned skills but also focusing on building team culture, supporting employees and managing performance.

Provision of funding initiatives for employees and virtual leaders through the National Training Fund is recommended.

(iii) **Review** *Pre-Employment Education for Workers of the Future*, **including reviewing how state educational providers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepare our future generation of workers for future work requirements.**

The panel proposes that there be a review of how state educational providers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepare our future generation of workers for future work requirements, including remote working.

The panel noted that the workers of the future will need to be equipped not only with digital skills but also with a range of transferable skills, including communication, collaboration and team working. To build these skills, the education system needs to

prepare students to be able to work virtually in teams and not just independently. When working virtually, students need to engage in peer learning as well as independent learning. Initiatives such as virtual projects and inter-school competitions, including with schools in other countries, could help to build these vital skills. Primary and secondary schools could also explore a buddying system in partnership with industry (including, but not only, for transition-year students). Any initiatives targeted at schoolchildren need to take account of the impact of screen time on children's development and mental health.

Third-level providers also need to develop and offer digital skills and remote-working modules to better prepare graduates for the future workplace.

(iv) *Promote Ireland as a Vibrant Destination for Remote Working*

Given the likely acceleration of future-of-work trends such as remote working as an outcome of Covid-19, the panel noted that there is potential for government and agencies, including IDA Ireland, to promote the Greater Dublin area and Ireland to leading employers, particularly multinationals, as a vibrant location for remote working. This promotion would be supported by implementation of the recommendations listed above.

Recommendations for Enterprises

(i) *Reinvest for Success*

To establish effective remote-working arrangements, organisations should consider reinvesting money saved on premises into their people. This could include spending on learning and development, but also on initiatives to build a strong organisational

culture, which can be harder when people are working remotely, and to ensure that employees are supported, do not feel isolated and do not feel disadvantaged regarding career development. A strong communications platform can play a key role in helping organisations to connect with employees, bringing remote staff together for engagement activities.

(ii)　Recruitment

Remote working provides an opportunity for organisations to draw from a wider talent pool. To progress efforts to increase diversity and inclusivity in workplaces, organisations could consider actively reaching out to minority groups when recruiting. Virtual internships could be a useful mechanism to introduce such groups to the realities of working in an organisation, along with engaging second and third-level students.

(iii)　Security

Organisations need to consider security systems to protect against cyberattacks. At present many organisations are unprepared and vulnerable.

(iv)　Trust

Trust is a key foundation for successful remote working. Organisations need to trust their employees and leaders to achieve their objectives and fulfil their obligations when working remotely. However, trust works both ways; employees need to be able to trust their organisation to support them both personally and professionally.

Further Information

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BUILDING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

> *This panel sought to identify collaboration platforms, supports, and human capital requirements that will build supply chain resilience required to sustain supply chains resilience to shocks such as COVID-19.*

Facilitators	Dr Waleed Abo Hamad, School of Management
	Dr Abubakar Ali, School of Management
Rapporteur	Dr John Crowe, School of Management

Building Supply Chain Resilience Ideation Panel	
Debbie Gorman	Unilever Ireland
Neil Murphy	Mars Ireland
Prof Edward Sweeney	Aston University
Michael O'Callaghan	IPICS
Des Finn	DHL Supply Chain
Bassey Duke	Pruune Consulting Ltd
Aidan Magner	3SIXTY Management Consultants
Mark Crowe	BWG Foods

BUILDING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Supply-Chain Disruptions: SCM is a critical and essential service in the Greater Dublin region's response to the Covid 19 pandemic. The impact of the lockdown includes delayed delivery times, decreased air and sea freight capacities, and a sudden change in consumer behaviour leading to panic-buying and a surge in retail demand. The panel noted that, due to mitigations already in place in preparation for Brexit, many supply chains can manage sudden changes in demand and supply, but that Irish supply chains are still vulnerable to demand fluctuations.

Human Resource Challenges: A number of human resource factors could affect Irish supply chains. In particular, a key vulnerability is a scarcity of skilled supply-chain professionals in Ireland, with skill shortages in demand planning and forecasting. Some sectors are less prepared than others for remote working, which affects collaborative activities that are essential to develop SCM solutions for Covid-19 challenges. The sector also has a high proportion of essential workers, including truck drivers, warehouse operatives and production operatives, and there are important health and safety challenges and costs for maintaining safe working conditions.

Covid-19 and Brexit – a Perfect Storm? The mix of shocks arising from Covid-19 and Brexit presents an unprecedented risk to the functioning of our supply chains. Irish supply chains are fragile, with the island having a capacity to hold only three weeks' stock at any given time. There will be a requirement to put in place alternative market routes, hold inventory in multiple locations, and build more flexibility into our production and supply-chain operations.

BUILDING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) Establish an *Enterprise Supply Chain Learning Platform* to support collaborative learning initiatives.

The panel noted the opportunity for collaborative learning initiatives across industries on best practices and knowledge transfer. The panel agreed that, although individual enterprises and supply chains responded effectively to the Covid-19 disruption, it would be beneficial to promote a collaborative mindset and collaborative organisational behaviours in supply chains and participating enterprises.

The panel noted the progress in building collaborative arrangements in Irish supply chains, but that further development of collaboration cultures and mindsets in Irish supply chains should be an objective of any education, training and advisory supports. Such a learning platform would emphasise the sharing of risks, including mapping and sharing upstream risks with customers, increasing understanding of demand risks through cross-functional collaboration, external collaboration, and open channels of communication across the supply chain.

The panel recommended that a SCM Creativity and Learning Platform should be established to:

- o   Facilitate creative learning processes.
- o   Build sensing and anticipation capabilities.
- o   Share lessons learned and best practices.
- o   Facilitate more efficient and more effective problem-solving.

(ii) Establish a *National Supply Chain Forum* to support national enterprise policy planning.

Observing that the Government and its agencies had access to forums and consultative groups in different areas, the panel recommended the establishment of a National Supply Chain Forum to advise on supply-chain priorities. The remit of the forum should extend beyond transport issues which are already addressed in existing forums. The proposed platforms broader consideration of supply chain issues is recommended to include supply chain digitisation requirements, skills priorities, and regulatory issues. Export supply chains their competitiveness are recommended as they focus areas of this platform.

(iii) *HEI-Industry collaboration* to address targeted skills gaps.

The panel recommended targeted initiatives to address specific SCM skills in industry. The focus should be on education, training and upskilling initiatives that have extensive and sustainable collaboration arrangements between industry and higher-education institutions (HEIs) and other education and training organisations. The skills focus of these initiatives should emphasise:

- o   Demand planning and management.
- o   Supply-chain mapping, design and redesign.
- o   Supply-chain agility and sustainability.
- o   Risk assessment, risk management and contingency planning.
- o   Knowledge management.

(iv) Accelerate *Enterprise Digital Transformation* with supports for expansion of supply-chain digital enhancement actions.

The panel observed a wide variance in the rollout of digitisation across supply chains. It

recommended an expansion of supply-chain enhancement schemes, including training and funding, with a particular emphasis on accelerating enterprise digital transformation. Inconsistent broadband connectivity was also cited as a problem outside the Greater Dublin area, as is the integration of organisation information systems. Areas in the digital transformation agenda that require acceleration include:

- o Improved connectivity between customers, suppliers and stakeholders.
- o Remote working and flexible working arrangements.
- o Enabling companies to plan reconfiguration and digitisation of their supply chains.
- o Enabling supply-chain transparency and integration.
- o Sharing of information.

(v) *Establish guidelines for meeting the Brexit challenge*

The panel advised that it is essential that clear guidelines relating to Brexit be made available to enterprise, including advice on how enterprises can plan for implementation of trading requirements. Brexit-readiness preparation has been disrupted by the pandemic. All key stakeholders, including ports, consumer organisations, supply chains and transport organisations and federations, should be involved in preparing and disseminating these guidelines.

Further Information

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BOOSTING INNOVATION PERFORMANCE PANEL REPORT

Treating the Covid-19 pandemic as a living lab the Innovation Panel sought to (i) uncover examples of innovations during COVID-19 that have potential for scale; (ii) explore what needs to be done to ensure that innovation processes can successfully operate in the new working arrangements; (iii) examine how public organisations, society, and enterprise can collaborate in developing innovative responses to address specific Covid-19 challenges .

Facilitators	Dr Claire McBride, School of Management
	Dr Donal O'Brien, School of Retail & Services Management
Rapporteur	Paul O'Reilly, School of Management

Innovation Ideation Panel	
Dr Keith O'Neill	Abbott Medicines
Liam Cronin	RDI Hub
Aideen Cardiff	Microsoft
Ingrid Devin	Dell Corporation
Dan Maher	Nua Venture and Health Innovation Hub Ireland
Lucy Fallon Byrne	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

BOOSTING INNOVATION PERFORMANCE IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Innovation Gains during COVID-19: The panel observed that there had been a significant increase in the level of innovation in public and private organisations, particularly during the initial lockdown when organisations sought innovative responses to maintain operations, adapt business models, and continue delivery of key services. It was observed that many organisations have become better at looking at things differently. The increased rate of innovation was noted to have benefited by organisations incorporating greater risk tolerance into their activities. Moving forward, it was noted that the key challenge will be to maintain the level of innovation activity and particularly the speed of innovation.

The panel identified a number of factors that have supported innovation during COVID-19.

Access to global experts has become easier, widening the potential for collaboration and knowledge sharing. For example, there has been acceptance that working virtually has been the norm for many, and that this has increased eases of access key experts, while also reducing the cost of access. It has also made it easier to bring together different people for collaborative engagements.

The importance and priority put on digitisation of business processes has seen transformational developments in some enterprises, and high levels of innovation in revamped business models.

Aligning Innovation Clock Speed, Incentives and Risk Tolerance: The panel noted that the COVID-19 crisis has fuelled dramatic innovation gains, and that attention needs to be given to how we retain these gains post-pandemic. Prior to COVID-19 the panel

observed that there were three bottlenecks for successful innovation: (i) different innovation clock speed of different actors; (ii) different incentives for different actors; and (iii) varying risk appetites. Each of these bottlenecks are normally issues for collaboration. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis saw clock speed align because all parties had to respond at the same time and with the same degree of urgency. Incentives aligned because of the pressure to keep business open, and risk appetites were modulated in response to critical challenges. The panel noted that maintaining these levels of innovation agility will depend on how clock speed and incentives are aligned with risk tolerance.

Relationship between Digitisation and Innovation: The panel observed that the capacity of enterprises, particularly SMEs, to engage in innovation is greatly enhanced by digitisation of their business processes, but there is a wide variance in capacities across enterprises. Digitisation is also a supporting lynchpin for remote working, online business operations, and closer supply chain collaboration. It was noted that for many organisations, their information technology function, has been the key enabler for innovation delivery, particularly in relation to facilitating remote work and online business. The learning in this respect has potential to support post-pandemic innovation planning.

Interestingly, it was observed that there tends to be higher levels of digitisation in those organisations that already have innovation strategies and innovation supporting cultures.

Innovation Challenges: While recognising the innovation gains from COVID-19, the panel also identified a number of challenges and confirmed that many enterprises have made some sub-optimal decisions. Normal wrap around human resources supports have been

challenged and digital performance management supports are still in the early stages of development and roll-out.

In particular, they discerned that there is strong link between enterprise leadership and innovation culture. However, it was observed that the language of innovation is overly focused on technology, often with significant levels of jargon. This increases the complexity for enterprise leaders to engage.

The panel observed that there remains significant potential on organisations – private and public - to mobilise more staff in innovation activities, however it remains that many do not consider they have license to bring forward their business improvement initiatives. Many of the barriers were noted to relate to local manager and local support.

Planning the Dublin Enterprise and Innovation Ecosystem: The panel observed that there is a requirement for more cohesive planning for the Dublin region. It was observed that other regions benefit from more coherent and agile planning on the specific development requirements for those regions and their cities. Similarly, they observed that major cities in other countries also benefit from targeted enterprise and innovation eco-system planning.

At a regional level there is potential for enhanced policy development relating to enterprise development and innovation.

BOOSTING INNOVATION PERFORMANCE

IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   **Building innovation culture in enterprises by promoting promote discussion of how to deliver successful innovation outcomes with *roundtable actions with peer-to-peer sharing*.**

The panel noted that organisational culture is a lynchpin in the overall innovation management framework. The underpinning culture of innovation must be such that there is trust in people to operate and collaborate in ways that support innovation.

In terms of building innovation culture the panel identified that there is a need to promote discussion of how to deliver successful innovation outcomes. Enterprise leaders need to be comfortable with the language of innovation.

There is a need for a broader understanding of innovation – relating to product, service, and business model delivery, and there is potential for this to be achieved simplified guidance.

Story telling was identified by the panel as a useful way to promote the benefits of innovation management models and activities. It was suggested that these could usefully be set up on a functional basis (e.g. supply chain innovation) with roundtable formats involving storytelling and peer-to-peer sharing. The forums should be used to provide access to relevant global experts, and might also provide for MNCs to share expertise with SMEs, and vice-versa. They can also be used to share stories and practices of how remote and hybrid models of collaboration can work.

The panel proposed building on existing knowledge sharing forums that have been

seen to work effectively, and establishing new forums or roundtable programmes where required. The Industry Research and Development Group and the Public Sector Innovation Network were identified as good practice forums which could usefully be expanded.

(ii)   **Develop a new *National Enterprise Policy* to support post-pandemic enterprise horizon.**

The panel expressed the need for a new national enterprise policy for the post pandemic enterprise horizon. In addition to the business impact of Brexit, the panel observed that COVID-19 has also accelerated trends in digitisation, remote working, and online business and that there is potential for fundamental longer term impacts.

Such a national policy should also incorporate regional planning requirements and environmental sustainability targets. It should take account of the potential of remote working to impact on business operations and on regional employment where the national workforce can be more distributed outside the main cities. In this context, it should consider how regional hubs might drive innovation.

In terms of regional planning, the panel observed that there is a requirement for more cohesive planning for the Dublin region.

The panel also observed that our national capacity for enterprise policy development may have been adversely impacted by dissolution of Forfás and transfer of its functions into the then Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Enterprise Ireland, the Industrial Development Authority and the Health and Safety Authority. Given the requirement to incorporate a wide ranging agenda that include enterprise

planning, start-up supports, human resource development requirements, environmental sustainability targets, and regional planning, the remit of the enterprise policy agenda extends across multiple Government departments. The panel recommends consideration of the potential for a new Forfás-type agency for this activity.

(iii) Explore potential of *Regional Hubs* to support collaborative and remote working arrangements.

The panel concluded that trends in remote working have been accelerated by COVID-19 business operation requirements.

Where staff will continue to work remotely or in virtual teams, the panel observed that there is a requirement for them to be provided with higher quality remote working technology and to be supported by upgraded digital systems. On the basis that remote working offers potential benefits for organisations, such as the ability to recruit expertise and talent that is not directly available locally, supports for SMEs should be provided.

The panel also recommended that regional hubs, particularly in rural areas, are a key part of the supporting infrastructure for this new way of working. Such hubs should provide the necessary high speed broadband, but also provide remote workers and entrepreneurs with an opportunity to interact and potentially learn from and collaborate with others. There is potential for these physical hubs to be have public and private ownership.

(iv) Build on innovation success in public organisations during pandemic through *reviewing COVID-19 learning, structured innovation strategies, secondment activities, flexible ideation activities, and innovation programme investment.*

Reflecting on the significant acceleration of innovation in Government departments, agencies, and other public organisations created by the urgency of the pandemic, the panel observed that there is a risk of this capacity to be reduced post-pandemic. Moving forward there is a need to capture the key learnings of the pandemic in relation to ideation responding to the crisis, and to put processes in place that assure the gains in relation to innovation culture, innovation leadership, and decision making are maintained.

The panel made several recommendations that are focused on building on the progress made, particularly relating to the improved clock speed of innovation. For Government departments, local authorities, agencies and other public organisations, the recommendations include:

- o All Government departments, local authorities, agencies and other public organisations must develop innovation strategies that take account of the significant acceleration of innovation activity in their respective organisations, and that an innovation pillar must be incorporated into their overall organisation strategies. A review of learning from activities during COVID-19 restrictions should be part of this strategy development.
- o Increase secondment between private and public organisations. Such secondments have potential to reduce barriers between public and private organisations, accelerate change, transfer expert knowledge, and share learning on innovation activities and processes.
- o Develop flexible collaborative activities that allow for inclusion of a wider range of participants in ideation activities. Extend the use of collaborative spaces

for ideation activities and explore the potential for crowdsourcing platforms to support collaborative ideation between public and private sectors.

o   Explore potential for greater involvement of SMEs and start-ups in collaborative innovation processes. The US SBIR programme was identified as a useful model for engaging Irish SMEs and start-ups.

o   Explore potential for sharing of best practice private sector innovation practices through the Public Sector Innovation Network using masterclasses and other learning events.

o   Increase funding allocation to Public Service Innovation Fund.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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BUILDING MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY

Covid-19 has clearly accelerated many enterprises' imperative to change, as enterprise leaders and management are going through extraordinary times. The sudden change to remote work, acceleration of digital transformation efforts, and challenged business models have tested the adaptability and agility of enterprises. The Management Development panel explored the development requirements for leaders and managers during and post-pandemic.

Facilitators	Dr Serge Basini, School of Marketing Dr Ciara Nolan, School of Marketing
Rapporteur	Dr Deirdre McQuillan, College of Business

Building Management Development Ideation Panel	
Shona McManus	Osborne Recruitment
George Boyle	George Boyle Designs and Fumbally Exchange
Sinead McEvoy	McEvoy Medical Services
Aidan O'Neill	DOCOsoft
Oisin Byrne	iReach
Padraig Staunton	Snack Farm and The White Hag Brewery

BUILDING MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Importance of Soft Skills and Competencies: The panel reported that soft skills and competencies have come to the fore during the Covid-19 crisis, especially internal and external communication competencies.

Response to Date: Successfully dealing with the pandemic crisis requires a clear sense of direction, an ability to deal with crisis, and a capacity to engage with teams, reinforcing a need to prepare owners and managers for agile leadership. The panel reflected that the speed of pivot by enterprises has been encouraging, with entrepreneurs born out of and energised by the struggle and risks faced.

Technology as an Enabler: Technology is an important enabler, offering potential to bring firms closer to their customers and eliminate the middle man.

BUILDING MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   **Promote the establishment of *mentoring and knowledge sharing networks* to support capacity-building and competency development.**

The panel agreed that entrepreneurial individuals learn, reinforce and build confidence directly from each other. However, large-scale, national efforts focus on using technology in support of remote learning and distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic rather than the psychosocial dimensions of crisis management. This 'new normal' redefines the 'what' and 'where' of work, and underlines the essential need for enhanced supportive business relationships in the negotiation of uncertainty.

Mentoring/coaching/sharing forums may, in a very cost-effective manner, have a direct impact on capacity-building and competency development, as well as providing psychosocial support. The current circumstances are an especially appropriate time for a sharp focus on social relationships and community sharing as a legitimate response.

The panel proposed a cross-industry stress-sharing forum, described here as a Learning through Sharing Network. Such a forum could have immense value, building confidence and a realisation that the small business leader is not alone. It could be developed through associations and networks, including for example Dublin Chamber, the Regional Skills Forum, and Local Enterprise Offices, to formally develop overall learning and appreciation of a shared narrative.

(ii) *Support core management skills development* **in areas including staff motivation, performance management, stress management, wellbeing, and sustaining organisational culture in a remote-working environment.**

A wide range of competencies, encompassing all aspects of business operations, need ongoing development in order to sustain small businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic. The panel cited as of particular importance human resource management (HRM) skills in areas such as staff motivation, performance management, stress management and wellbeing. One panel member highlighted the need to be the 'Chief Empathy Officer' and lead the way for staff. Related to this is a need to provide greater guidance to small businesses regarding the challenges of managing people and sustaining organisational culture in a remote-working environment.

The ability to effectively manage finances is also critical. Key measures to ensure business continuity include stabilising cashflow, managing stakeholders to determine payment flexibility, and additional research to ensure cost-effective materials are procured. Enhancing competencies in sales, marketing and PR also need further attention. In particular, this extends to the need to embrace technology and exploit online opportunities for selling and building relationships. Finally, there is a critical need to be ready for new opportunities and repurpose products. Firms may need assistance in expanding the business, in diversity and in offering new types of products and services. The panel noted that, to ensure business survival, SME leaders need to keep challenging themselves to be creative, along with the need for reinvention and realising untapped potential.

The panel recommended that a series of online skills development seminars for effective responses to Covid-19 challenges be developed across the range of operational areas outlined above. These seminars could be complemented with disciplinary fora and discussion boards to allow participants to share insights and experiences. The websites of industry associations such as ISME and SFA may be suitable for hosting these. Alternatively, Dublin Chambers or Local Enterprise Offices could provide the hosting platform for coordination and dissemination of advice.

(iii) **Establish** *crisis communications development supports* **for enterprise leaders for internal and external communications with all stakeholders.**

The panel emphasised the primacy of effective and empathetic internal and external communications with all stakeholders, including employees, suppliers

and customers. Being able to demonstrate solidarity with others, showing kindness, being honest and adopting a collaborative mindset were considered critical. Hence, small firms may benefit from greater understanding of stakeholder mapping techniques in order to leverage a trust advantage from key internal and external relationships. Concomitantly, the importance of collaboration and coming together in various guises is critical. A key suggestion from the panel included developing a close-knit group regular meetings during the peak of a crisis event.

Enhancing their public profile was highlighted as a vital means of enabling small businesses to navigate the challenges being experienced in the Covid-19 environment. Such action was deemed to play a central role in building connections and a sense of community with others. In addition, by engaging in a public forum, small businesses may be better equipped to react to environmental developments and develop appropriate responses.

The panel recommended that a 'Communication in Crisis' programme be developed to address the issues raised above. This could take multiple forms, such as information/guidance pamphlets or seminars delivered by professional bodies.

(iv)   Create interventions to allow the development of *enterprise leaders personality and self-understanding* as they relate to setting enterprise strategic direction, interpersonal relationships and meeting operational demands.

The panel entrepreneurs reflected on how they as enterprise leaders attempted to build resilience through the turmoil. They described various themes such as personal organisation and effectiveness, decision-making, building social relationships, and stress-coping – highlighting the entrepreneur's personality characteristics as having a primary role in resilience and crisis management.

The panel proposed creating a series of interventions to share through enterprise associations, local enterprise offices, and small firms more generally, allowing the development of the entrepreneur's personality self-understanding. These interventions would be framed around the key organisational personality domains of (i) Strategic Thinking (setting strategic direction); (ii) Interpersonal Relationships (team working, building/sustaining relationships and creating alignment), and (iii) Operational Demands (delivering results, planning and organising).

Using validated personality assessment tools, enterprise leaders can develop insights into their personality characteristics and associated behaviours. The feedback process on personality assessment can be an opportunity for individuals to discuss their profiles with a formally appointed Leadership Development Advisor, to address the individual's professional and personal development on themes such as leadership, decision-making and interpersonal relations. In conjunction with the Learning Through Sharing Network, this guided 'journey' is one of self-reflection and honest self-examination to enhance reflective practice and build confidence.

Further Information

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SECTORAL IDEATION PANELS

RETAIL

Retailers have to cope and adapt to massive disruption within the sector, affecting all aspects of the retail operation from supply chain through retail operations to the consumption behaviour of customers. Topics addressed in the ideation workshop included: (i) ensuring safe shopping for customers and staff; (ii) implications of the online and digitalisation of retail; (iii) implications of the economic and financial constraints of consumers; and (iv) implications of a changed retail model for the finances of retail businesses.

Facilitators	Amanda Rathcliffe, School of Retail & Services Management Damien O'Reilly, School of Retail & Services Management
Rapporteur	John Jameson, School of Retail & Services Management

Retail Ideation Panel	
Breege O'Donoghue	Primark/Penneys
Edel Clancy	Musgrave Group
Marion O'Gorman	The Kilkenny Group
Rebecca Harrison	Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy
Dan Ryan	The Beauty Buddy
David Ryan	Walmart Labs
Eoin McFeely	PWc
Mark O'Rourke	Fashion HSE
Malachy Hanberry	EuroSpar
Rory O'Connor	Scurri
Matthew Hopkinson	CRE Data Insight

RETAIL IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

A Perfect Storm: The impact of Covid-19 on the retail sector has been akin to a perfect storm. The sector will suffer the effects for a long time, with potential to be a watershed event leading to permanent disruption. The impact on the sector is not yet measurable, but the collapse in footfall has been dramatic, and seasonality and perishability of particular types of retail stock has increased the financial impact on these sectors (e.g. fashion).

Structural Changes Impact on the Viability of the Retail Model: With the change in work and consumption practices throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the panel concluded that the viability of the retail model will depend on the interaction of economic and social interdependencies that are yet to be determined. In particular, it was observed that several pre-pandemic trends that were already affecting in-store footfall, such as online shopping and online payments replacing cash, had accelerated. The panel also noted that the practice of 'working from home' is having a fundamental effect on the retail environment of towns and cities, as a large percentage of normal daily expenditure by workers is absent and may not return if working from home becomes a more permanent option.

The panel identified a number of key questions that will arise from declining in-store retail footfall from changed customer shopping patterns. These include:

- o   How will retailers service their debt?
- o   How are rents and local authority rates affected?
- o   What retail stores and retail models will not be viable in the future?
- o   What impact might this have on town centres?

The panel also advised that retail should not be treated as a homogeneous sector, and that the impact and challenges have been specific to different sub-sectors. Tourist oriented retail has been hit very hard. Grocery, pharmacy, and hardware retailing is managing lower footfall and difficult consumer service conditions.

The Digital Imperative: Covid-19 has acted as a catalyst, accelerating the adoption and implementation of digital practices by both retailers and consumers. Many parts of the retail sector were initially slow to fully embrace and fully exploit technology, but Covid-19 has shown the importance of technology and has accelerated its adoption in online ecommerce, data analytics, and supply-chain enhancement.

Covid-19 has accelerated the use of online purchases, leading to substantial change in customer purchasing patterns – which is likely to persist as an important part of their shopping behaviour. The challenges for traditional retail businesses will be how to on-board their customer base and provide a 'retail experience' in an online environment. For retailers, an important priority is to enhance digital and ecommerce capabilities, including developing the infrastructure and staff capability to support business in an omni-retail environment.

Data Deficit: The disruption to retail consumption patterns during the pandemic has created a data deficit. Retailers and their supply chains are coping with greater uncertainty in relation to customer behaviour. There is even more uncertainty with regard to degree of permanency of these customer behaviour changes. The panel noted that a crucial retail imperative will be increased knowledge of customer insights through data.

Redesigning a Safer Customer Experience: The panel noted that consumers demand and require a safe shopping experience – with an emphasis on both *safe* and *experience*. For this to happen, retailers have to take the inconvenience and the fear out of shopping so that customers will return for the experience. This may require changes to the retail customer experience model, with retailers having to reconfigure their stores and service, and introduce initiatives such as online purchase and delivery.

Importance of Organisational Agility: The pandemic experience to date has affirmed the need for retailers to be agile and have the managerial, organisational and technology capabilities to cope with the changed retail environment. Many retailers responded quickly to Covid-19, and with varying degrees of innovation to new operating requirements. The panel noted that retailers have shown agility in responding to a range of operational challenges, including changing retail layouts and implementing safety protocols. The panel observed that further organisational agility will be required to leverage digital platforms and adapt business models towards omnichannel retailing.

RETAIL IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   **Conduct a Retail Foresight Study to explore the future retail environment and future retail models.**

The retail sector represents a significant vulnerability for both its participant organisations and the country as a whole. The viability of the sector, as a substantial employer and tax generator, is critically important. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the vulnerability of the sector and the lack of insight into its future. Changes in society,

technology, cost structures, supply chains and customer behaviour are creating a dynamic and unpredictable business environment. The panel agreed that retail models are challenged, and may change substantially as a consequence of trends accelerated during the pandemic. Retailers – particularly independent retailers and SME retail operations – will need guidance on the shape and structure of the future retail environment.

The panel recommended that a sectoral research study be carried out, with joint government and retail industry support, to address the fundamental questions of the 'Future of Retail'. This study should identify and explore the future retail environment, future retail models, and likely constraints.

The panel observed that, at its core, retail still involves the 'appetite for experience'. Any Future of Retail study should position the retail customer experience as a fundamental driver of future trends. It raises key questions for retailers in relation to how best to deliver the retail experience in the changed context. What is the 'retail experience' which consumers are now looking for? How can retailers deliver a customer experience in line with customer expectations? The study should address how 'customer experience' and 'customer service' are redefined in view of digitalisation, in-store communication with customers, and relationships versus transaction paradigms.

The Future of Retail study should include retailer, consumer and supplier perspectives, and also address the impact of town-level retail structures. The outcomes of this study should inform policymakers on the impact of these changes from both enterprise and regional planning perspectives.

(ii) Align supports to *individual retailer enterprise development plans*

All retail enterprises have been affected negatively, but the impact has been variable depending on the specific subsector, location and business size. Many retail enterprises will have to restructure their formats, and many may not reopen. While general supports should be available to the retail sector, the provision of supports should consider each retailer as a separate business entity, with specific supports based on that retailer's individual development plan.

(iii) Develop *Retailer Digital Transformation Programme.*

The panel identified as a priority that the digital transformation of the retail sector be fast-tracked, with a focus on: (i) the retail and financial model; (ii) retail Infrastructure; (iii) staff capability; (iv) customer relationships; (v) customer experience; (vi) supply chain and supplier relationships, and (vii) procurement. Retailers require financial and practical 'how to' advice on reconfiguring their businesses for post Covid-19 retailing. For this, the panel recommended the establishment of a development programme to support retailers – particularly SME and independent retailers – through this transformation. A particular focus of this programme should be the on-boarding of the existing customer base.

The panel recommended strengthening current retail digitalisation initiatives, through increased grant aid and co-ordination of local educational and ICT consultancy support, to develop omni-retail businesses capable of operating locally, nationally and internationally. These initiatives should be capable of improving ICT capability at local retail store level (including marketing, communications, supply chain and retail operations).

(iv) Build *management and organisational capability* including management development programmes to support retail owners and managers to plan and implement change programmes.

The panel observed a direct alignment between management and organisational ability to deal with the impacts and consequences of the pandemic. As well as introducing new challenges relating to in-store operations and customer experience, Covid-19 has accelerated existing industry trends, particularly those relating to omni-channel retailing. While this had different consequences for different retailers, the panel identified common management capabilities relating to strategising the enterprise retail model, contingency planning, and digitisation of the customer interaction and retail supply chains. Management development programmes to support retail owners and managers to strategise and plan change programmes to maintain a viable customer experience in the new context were recommended.

Specifically, the panel recommended that staff capability relating to digital operations should be prioritised in industry network training supports, including Skillnet-supported actions, and appropriately addressed through HEI education programmes, including continuing professional development initiatives and the retail apprenticeship training programme.

(v) Disseminate *safe retailing operational protocols* to be supplemented with individual sector-specific response instructions and contingency plans.

There was no 'blueprint' for retail operation and reopening following the original lockdown. Retailers had to innovate and develop their own guidelines to provide practical steps and reassurance to build customer trust and confidence. Given the potential for future lockdowns, the panel recommended the development of a generic industry-response 'blueprint' document which can be supplemented with individual sector-specific response instructions and contingency plans. To complement this, the panel proposed the development of communication campaigns to advise the general public, customers and staff on their required responsibilities and practices.

(vi) Continuation of *financial and stimulus supports.*

The panel noted that the government support schemes to date had been required, and were welcomed by the sector, but longer term co-ordinated financial and stimulus support would be needed. The panel recommended that financial supports to date, including the pandemic unemployment payment, be maintained. Consideration should also be given to reviewing rental models, with potential for introducing rent sharing or a revenue-based rent model. It is also recommended that the Government continue to engage with banks and landlords to work with retailers to restructure financial arrangements. Consideration of rates arrangements should take account of the social and cultural dimension of retailers in small towns and rural areas in particular.

The panel also recommended consideration of initiatives to pump-prime local economies and encourage local spending. It recommended that the Town Centre initiative and Town Team programme should be refocused to create *local spending initiatives* such as 'Champion Green' and time-limited town voucher schemes. Planning should also begin on supporting a successful return to in-store retailing post-pandemic, with preparation of 'dial up the welcome' initiatives.

It was observed that there may be learning opportunities from those countries that have a history in managing public health issues, and that there may also be learning opportunities from other sectors which can be applied to the retail sector.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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FINANCIAL SERVICES

The workshop addressed the following key questions: (i) the opportunities and threats resulting from the pandemic crisis; (ii) initiatives that should be undertaken to respond to pandemic; and (iii) recommended policy changes to protect financial services sector. Particular attention was given to the requirements of financial services SMEs.	
Facilitators	Sean O'Reilly, School of Accounting & Finance
	Dr Irene Neville, School of Accounting & Finance
	Dr Louise Gorman, School of Retail & Services Management
Rapporteur	Dr James Hanly, School of Accounting & Finance

Financial Services Ideation Panel	
Joan Kehoe	JP Morgan
Caitriona Allis	ACCA Ireland
Mark Hamilton	BDO
Paul Gorman	Elkstone Partners
Niall Dineen	Appian Asset Management
Noel Friel	CFA Institute Ireland

FINANCIAL SERVICES IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

*Double-Edged Sword – Opportunities and Threats***:** The panel noted how the Government's Covid-19 response led to dramatic and almost instantaneous changes in how the financial services sector operated. In terms of opportunities, this resulted in a new awareness in financial businesses of how people can operate effectively in a remote working model. This in turn provides an opportunity for firms to take out costs associated with expensive office space and real-estate presence.

The identified threats in this space relate to the need for new legal and regulatory support systems and in particular cyber security. Without these elements being quickly addressed, there may be medium to longer-term problems with remote working – particularly with regard to electronic signatures and overall cyber security.

*Workforce Challenges***:** The panel made a number of observations around staff and workplace issues: in the first instance, operational issues around ensuring staff have access to adequate technology to work from home. Another issue raised is the varying suitability of home accommodation for remote working.

There are challenges for on-boarding new staff and career development as well as the ability to foster organisational culture and soft-skills development in a purely remote-working scenario. The need for a more balanced or hybrid model was put forward as a key goal whereby both office working and remote have a part to play.

*Ensuring Operational Continuance***:** During the initial lockdown, the panel noted, the

priority was around ensuring operational continuance:

- o   There was a push to ensure relevancy with clients, to meet their needs, perhaps over-communicating with clients and staff to ensure they were aware of what was happening.
- o   Firms reached out to staff looking for feedback on the balance of work between office and home. Issues raised included mental health and managing uncertainty.
- o   Moving to virtual communication was a challenge because of the older age profile of clients at a time of high stress.

FINANCIAL SERVICES IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Explore potential *opportunities from disruption to location models* including potential for remote working to increase pool of talent available to sector.

The panel observed that thus far the Irish financial services sector has stood up well in being able to service clients and continuing to function. However, there is also a sense that overall strategy and in particular location models will be examined closely in the next period. An opportunity in this regard is that previously a lot of financial services function and jobs have remained core in London and the USA, whereas now these areas may increasingly be available to other locations, including Ireland. Remote working has also increased the pool of skilled workers available to businesses; this may address skills shortfalls in certain locations such as Dublin. These developments should be incorporated into the foreign direct investment strategy for the sector.

There is a threat from uncertainty as to how Ireland as a base for financial services will be perceived in this new working environment.

The traditional advantages of Ireland (time zone, English-speaking, labour force) may be at risk now that it may be more possible for people to operate from anywhere.

In an Irish context, Dublin as a location will maintain its position, but there is still an opportunity to reduce reliance on Dublin via remote working, thus reducing pressure on the city's transport and housing infrastructure, and in turn making Dublin and Ireland more attractive as a financial services location.

(ii)   Prioritise Supports for SMEs

While government support for multinationals and big business was noted, the challenge for smaller players in the financial services sector is to generate cashflow and survive the crisis – in this, there is little support or help from government. The panel recommended that the needs of SMEs and small businesses be a policy priority.

(iii)   *Support financial services enterprises to reassess their businesses* including product lines, regional focus and client groups.

After the initial response to keep the show on the road, the panel noted that, for many, particularly small and medium-sized, financial services enterprises, the next phase would require wholesale reassessment of their businesses, product lines, regional focus and client groups. This reinforces the regulatory system (flexible and perceived as business-friendly) in Ireland as an advantage. It is key that this regulatory advantage be maintained in whatever environment emerges from the crisis.

(iv) *Maintain Ireland's regulatory advantage* by reducing the regulatory burden on the financial services sector, and allow firms to respond to the changed investment environment.

The panel noted that international opportunities for the financial services sector depend on regulatory clarity, central bank oversight, and tax policy, and that our current regulatory advantage must be maintained in whatever environment emerges from the crisis. In this context, there needs to be quick movement and flexibility on the part of government in relation to reducing the regulatory burden on the financial services sector. In some cases, this simply requires maintaining the status quo on taxation and regulation, not creating additional uncertainty and reducing administrative burden.

Panel members also identified a need for targeted changes to allow firms to respond to the changed investment environment. Specifics mentioned include: amending pensions legislation to enable transition to higher-yielding assets, adapting the regulatory framework to accommodate cloud technology, and associated cyber security issues.

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SPORTS AND LEISURE

The sports and leisure sector has had to cope with massive disruption to business operations through closure of activities. Topics addressed in the ideation workshop included stimulus supports, impact on business models including enabling factors for business continuity, and post-pandemic recovery policy supports.

Facilitators:	Dr. Pat O'Connor, School of Humanities (Blanchardstown)
	John Barrie, School of Business (Blanchardstown)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Assumpta Harvey, School of Business (Blanchardstown)

Sport & Leisure Ideation Panel	
Mary O'Connor	Federation of Irish Sport
Marion Browne	Fingal County Council
Conn McCluskey	Ireland Active
Sinead McNulty	The Camogie Association
Guy Thompson	FBD Hotels (Castleknock Hotel & Country Club)
David O'Connor	Shelbourne FC
David Conway	Limerick Twenty Thirty DAC
Cormac McDonnell	Sport Ireland
Shane Califf	Sport Ireland

SPORTS AND LEISURE IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Impact of COVID-19 on the Business of Sports and Leisure: Public health concerns have been to the forefront for all sport and leisure organisations, with public health mitigation measures resulting in income lost due to closure of premises; loss of match day income; loss of event income; loss of subscriptions and memberships, loss of income due to reduced capacity; and loss of income for coaches and personal trainers.

Need to Revise Business Models: Traditional business models have been challenged and organisations ability to re-imagine or pivot their model is critical. While some organisations have been able to pivot to an online delivery, others depend on human interaction and networking. Those organisations that rely on face-to-face income streams have been inhibited from pivoting their business model.

Post Lockdown – A Slow Recovery: Capacity restrictions and lockdowns have created challenges for engagement and participation and have led to closure of premises including stadium and gyms. Outside of lockdown, participation continues to be low for swimming pools, gyms and personal trainers, and the panel observes that consumer and participant confidence has been low. Uncertainties in this regard increases the challenge of business continuity planning and will delay investment in the sector. Specific concerns identified by the panel include:

- o The availability of grants and the continuation of the resilience fund and the wage subsidy from March 2021.
- o The impact of rates being increased.
- o Continued uncertainty regarding ongoing business closure relating to prevailing public health restrictions for sport and leisure activities.

- o Longer term impact from reduced participation and engagement due to necessary social distancing measures.

Related to the business and sporting impacts, the panel noted issues relating to the mental health impact of these matters and COVID-19 generally on employers, employees and volunteers within the sector.

Enablers Moving Forward: The panel identified enablers that assisted organisations to pivot to a different model or to prepare for a different environment and positive impacts due to the situation. Positive outcomes observed since the pandemic impacted include:

- o The importance of sports and exercise activities for wellbeing has been clearly recognised by Government.
- o There have been high levels of innovation with many organisations successfully embracing technology to create new delivery methods and new routes to market.
- o The sector has demonstrated leadership and resilience to pivot organisations.
- o Networking and collaboration across organisations has facilitated sharing of knowledge and resources, underpinning the enabling role of networks and associations.

SPORTS AND LEISURE IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i) ***Stimulus supports including access to activities incentives, VAT reductions, and extension of the wage subsidy.***

The panel proposed a range of stimulus supports for the health and fitness sector, including:

- o Access to memberships for gyms and swimming clubs

- o Access to lessons for swimming or in the gym
- o Reduction of VAT rates for the sector
- o Extension of the wage subsidy beyond March 2021.

(ii) **Provide advisory and consultancy supports, including grants, for sports and leisure enterprises to assess** *technology supported market channels*, **and train and upskill staff on new technologies.**

Observing the positive impact for those organisations that embraced technology to create new delivery methods and new routes to market, the panel identified a number of necessary supports for sports and leisure sector to, where feasible, develop and put in place hybrid business models. To facilitate this there is a need to provide advisory and consultancy supports, including grants, for sports and leisure enterprises to assess technology supported market channels, and train and upskill staff on new technologies.

(iii) **Continuation of supports to develop COVID-19 mitigation plans and strategies is recommended.**

In terms of the overall Government policy response for the remainder of the pandemic and in the post-pandemic period, continuation of supports to develop COVID-19 mitigation plans and strategies is recommended. Part of this requires maintaining clear lines to the sporting governing bodies to allow for targeted engagement between the governing bodies and sports and leisure enterprises on COVID-19 matters. Continued investment at club level is required, particularly given the negative impact of COVID-19 on club finances, coupled with increased investment in the National Sports Policy to aid the sector recovery.

Further Information

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SUSTAINING CHARITIES

This panel focuses on the Community and Voluntary Sector and includes the perspectives of some charities, policymakers, national organisations and support organisations.

Facilitators	Dr Patrick Kenny, School of Marketing Dr Edmund O'Callaghan, School of Retail & Services Management
Rapporteur	Dr Sharon Feeney, College of Business

Sustaining Charities Ideation Panel	
Barry Andrews	Member of European Parliament
Deirdre Garvey	The Wheel
Diarmaid O'Corrbuí	Carmichael
Sam McGuinness	Dublin Simon Community
Amy Woods	Volunteers Ireland
Dermot McGilloway	St Vincent de Paul Society
Ruairi McGinley	National Council for the Blind in Ireland

SUSTAINING CHARITIES IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

***Positioning of Community and Voluntary Sector under Department of Social Protection*:** The new Programme for Government positions the Community and Voluntary Sector under the auspices of the Department of Social Protection. The panel expressed concerns that this might dissipate the visibility of the sector and its importance to Irish society and the economy.

***Increased Competition for Donations and Volunteers*:** The charities space is very competitive, with many organisations registered and more registering every year. This makes it increasingly difficult for long-established charities to continue to compete for donations and volunteers. With lots of charitable organisations operating in Ireland, competing for scarce resources, and in some cases there is a possibility of duplicating support to users. It's highly likely that the sector will move towards consolidation in order to survive.

***Fundraising Challenges*:** Fundraising activities have been seriously curtailed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Funding sources such as shops have been affected by lockdowns and operating restrictions, and fundraising programmes such as annual fundraising events have been affected by public health social distancing requirements. Government funding instruments are not adequate. For example, staff costs may be paid but not pensions, and costs relating to governance and oversight are not adequately supported. Funding models for charities may need to be revised to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

***Impact of Covid-19 on Staff and Volunteers*:** Many volunteers in Ireland tend to be older, with younger people less willing or available to commit to voluntary organisations and less

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willing to give prolonged commitment. Staff and volunteers face increasing health and safety risks. Wellbeing and morale is an issue.

Beyond the pandemic, the need for upskilling in this sector is a critical issue. Recruitment and retaining staff is also a critical issue, and there is a requirement to develop senior leadership capacity.

SUSTAINING CHARITIES IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(i)   Establish a *Taskforce for the Community and Voluntary Sector* to support policy development and design of interventions to support the sector, including developing a sustainable sector performance and funding framework.

The panel recommended the establishment of a Formal Taskforce that would enable policy development and solutions for the sector to be influenced and driven by the sector. It was observed that government- and community-led initiatives can be shaped by limited understanding. At a national level, this can lead to poor outcomes, with scarce resources. The Taskforce would be charged with presenting a range of initiatives and proposals that would generate sustained improvement in the ideation, development, understanding and implementation of new policy and initiatives to improve the sector.

The terms of reference for the Taskforce should include an activity pertaining to the range and number of charities and charitable organisations operating in the sector, with a view to initiating a planned consolidation of service provision.

The Taskforce should also be charged with developing a sustainable sector performance

and funding framework, which has a transparent system of clear identification of actual costing of services and a service allocation accounting system to help calculate the actual costs of service provision (i.e. move away from public funding allocated on the basis of numbers using a service, towards an allocation that considers the actual costs of service delivery – including a top-slicing proportion of funding for transparency, governance, staffing costs, recruitment and training costs, etc.).

(ii)   Develop a *Community and Voluntary Sector Competency and Skills Strategy and Framework* to address skills shortages and create upskilling opportunities.

Some skills shortages in this services-oriented sector require attention. Many senior roles will be filled only through succession planning, but there are limited opportunities to develop the skills of workers.

One possibility is to leverage relationships between community and voluntary organisations and universities and education providers to create a competency-based training programme for employees (first) and volunteers (at a later stage). With 180,000 people currently employed by this sector, there is great opportunity for flexible, agile, online and accredited training activities to support specific skills and competencies. This would assist the sector in attracting high-impact and ambitious workers, as well as providing an incentive for retaining staff. It might also help improve the morale and wellbeing of those employed in the sector.

The panel proposed developing a Community and Voluntary Sector Competency and Skills Strategy and Framework to address skills shortages and create upskilling opportunities.

The framework should also support career transition/development throughout the sector, to ensure ongoing capacity-building.

A possible added benefit of this approach would be that it might encourage younger people to volunteer, and consider being employed in the sector so as to avail of accredited learning opportunities. Other skills such as digital skills, language and inter-cultural awareness and appreciation would broaden the relevance and reach of many organisations.

Further Information

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INNOVATION IN CONSTRUCTION (Deep Renovation of Dwellings)

> *Key areas addressed in this workshop were: (i) exploring measures, which are compliant with COVID19 H&S guidance, to ensure safer work conditions within buildings under renovation while also contributing to better quality, safer renovated dwellings thereafter; (ii) whether off-site manufacturing provide, in the context of COVID 19 protocols, a safer way to deep renovate that reduce risks of usual energy-efficiency renovation; (iii) how to ensure that low embodied-carbon sustainable approaches are integrated into national energy-efficiency campaigns; and (iv) the Programme for Government calls for resilience and innovative solutions to how we renovate dwellings.*

Facilitators	Joseph Little, Dublin School of Architecture
	Patrick Daly, Dublin School of Architecture
Rapporteurs	Orna Hanly, Head of School, Dublin School of Architecture
	Conor McGowan, Dublin School of Architecture

Innovation in Construction Ideation Panel	
Andy Frew	Northern Irish Housing Executive
Dr Kristina Mjörnell	Lund University
Peter Rickaby	University College London
Dr Maria Lopez Zambrano	NUI Galway
Michael Swainson	Building Research Establishment, UK

INNOVATION IN CONSTRUCTION IDEATION PANEL OBSERVATIONS

Programme for Government Home Renovation Targets: The new *Programme for Government* undertakes to renovate at least 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2 by 2030. The Government wishes to do this in an unprecedentedly innovative, integrated way that creates a 'stronger, fairer and more sustainable economy', revitalising town centres, strengthening communities and emboldening Irish SME businesses working in the sector. Smart finance is expected to enable this revolution and disruptive and digital technologies are expected to provide many of the technical solutions.

Energy-Efficient Renovation during Covid-19: Energy-efficiency renovation work is cheapest and most attractive if it can be done without residents vacating the property. This means that builders and occupants may be present at the same time. Covid-19 makes this particularly challenging, due to the need to socially distance and the ability for the virus to spread in enclosed spaces. Therefore, increasing the speed of the renovation works, reducing contact during the works, and optimising indoor air quality as early as possible emerge as key responses to the virus.

Importance of Indoor Air Quality: Together, the specification and functionality of the ventilation system, surface and air temperatures, the building fabric and occupant actions contribute to indoor air quality. The use of remote monitoring to support maintenance and signal poor indoor air quality is very attractive as the technology is mature and the market appears ready to embrace it.

INNOVATION IN CONSTRUCTION IDEATION PANEL PROPOSALS

(I) *Focus on overcrowded tenancies as locations at risk of contamination*

The panel confirmed that there is an emerging and strong correlation (studied in several countries) between overcrowding of dwellings and heightened Covid-19 infection rates. As overcrowding and/or multi-generational living can be prevalent among tenants in poorer, ethnic communities, the panel suggested that preparatory surveys and energy efficiency renovations in dwellings of that group be prioritised. Such projects need to be addressed sensitively.

(ii) *Adopt a 'ventilation and fabric first' strategy*

The panel recommended that renovation programmes focus on upgrading ventilation systems first, so that occupants and construction workers (installing the remainder of the renovation works) benefit from better indoor air quality. This will provide continuous, intense air-change ventilation for contractors on site who may need to work in close proximity with co-workers. The panel observed that most building services, such as boilers, heat pumps and solar panels, can have a service life of approx. 20 years or less, while building fabric can have a service life of approx. 50 years. The difference in longevity and the fact that decarbonisation of electricity cannot happen without reduced energy demand should drive a 'fabric first' focus in the works promoted and undertaken.

(iii) *Exploit the value of off-site manufacturing*

The panel observed that digital scanning of streets followed by off-site manufacturing of insulated cladding panels can provide the

ideal solution of high-quality, accuracy and minimal time on site. It suits medium-rise districts with significant uniformity of housing types. However, Dublin is low-rise with a wide variety of building types. In this context the panel recommended:

- o   Identifying the housing types with greatest uniformity and numbers in the Dublin region that best suit renovation using large cladding components, manufactured off-site.

- o   Developing mid-size cladding products or components which can manufactured off-site and can be used together. This approach can increase the number of renovations that can benefit from off-site manufacturing.

- o   Developing procurement strategies and documentation for energy-efficiency renovation contracts using off-site manufacturing which can drive uptake in this area.

(iv) *Integrate social and environmental focus in the renovation works*

The panel recommended greater emphasis on linking building issues to wider socio-economic and cultural factors, including social, cultural, health, economic and wider environmental issues. This includes educating people on what a sustainable lifestyle and home look like, and their many benefits.

It was recommended that a 3–4-year roadmap be published so that owners and occupiers know in advance the government plans for their area, dwelling type and tenancy, and can trust that funding will be available, as this will enable people to 'buy into' the process and plan ahead. Such a roadmap should include social contracts to reflect the need for change in behaviour and attitudes linked to demand control

ventilation, and identify low-carbon strategies and technologies.

The panel also recommended the funding of research into Irish waste streams that can be used to manufacture (or remanufacture) energy-efficiency technologies.

(v) Support better, safer renovation works with easier access to guidance

The panel recommended a reduction in VAT on design fees spent on renovation works to encourage better-quality assessment and guidance on renovation works to be undertaken. It was observed that repeated studies show that early careful assessment has the greatest impact for least resource use. It was proposed to publish standard (high-quality, risk assessed) renovation details for local authority and grant-funded work, which can then be adopted by the private sector.

It was also suggested that an app/portal be developed to provide ready and free access for builders and designers to national standards, quality assurance documents and standardised construction details and specifications. The current situation where such information is behind a 'paywall' limits access to and use of this guidance.

(vi) Support better, safer renovation works through more research

The panel recommended adopting the 'renovation passport' approach promoted by the Buildings Performance Institute Europe. This approach encourages adoption of a sensible series of measures that over many years results in super-low energy renovation.

Related to this, the panel proposed revising and expanding *S.R. 54:2014 Code of practice for the energy efficient retrofit of dwellings* to

include a focus on process management of energy-efficiency renovation, such as found in the UK's *PAS 2035*, and introducing a focus on hygrothermal limits to insulation strategies.

The panel noted that large-scale indoor air-quality monitoring is a win/win for occupants and society at large, especially in the context of Covid-19, and that there will be heightened risks during the winter months when windows will be opened less, resulting in poorer indoor air quality.

The panel noted that, worldwide, 80% of building failure is caused by moisture, and therefore there should be consideration of adopting the Swedish *ByggaF* method, wherein moisture safety experts guide every stage of a project to ensure that the moisture risks are low.

(vii) Increase quality and extent of assessment

The panel observed that quality of assessment is reflected in the quality of outcome, and therefore quick, 'tick box' surveys are not adequate to ensure that appropriate, low-risk works are identified. The panel proposed 'seeding' the energy-efficiency renovation market by carrying out a large number of assessments. It was noted that gathering large volumes of high-quality data through such surveys could be of great value in terms of policy and planning at local and national level, and would also allow homeowners to plan ahead.

(viii) Use technology and monitoring to reduce risk

Most domestic ventilation systems are installed to meet minimum ventilation standards based on assumed occupancy. The panel recommended increased use of ventilation systems that can respond to

variable and higher occupancies, and also ventilate at higher levels, to the benefit of occupants and builders. This includes installation of sensors before or during energy-efficiency renovation works to predict rather than react to health issues – this is particularly valuable for those predisposed to respiratory or similar illnesses.

It was observed that smart controllers, sensors and vents can be combined to ensure a permanently monitored, adaptive and optimally controlled environment, with data potentially transmitted via the mobile data network.

(ix) Consider renewable energy sources

The panel recommended consideration of installing district heating fueled by renewable energy sources as a community-scale, low-carbon, energy-efficiency measure that can be introduced on scale, alongside building fabric-based measures for dwellings within the community.

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