



TOWARDS AN ENHANCED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ECONOMY

BUSINESS FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

Exploration Forum
Limerick October 15, 2019

'CONVERSATIONS FOR POSSIBILITIES'



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*Note:

Social Impact Ireland was formerly branded as Irish Social Business Campus.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social Enterprise (SE) is increasingly popular as a way of doing business while achieving social and economic impact. All around Ireland small social enterprises are being set up by individuals who believe in the potential of doing good in their communities while also developing in an entrepreneurial way. One of their main challenges is often finding a balance between their social impact and surviving financially.

Due to the absence of a formal legal SE-specific framework in Ireland social enterprises operate in a landscape in which it is challenging to define what social entrepreneurship is. When considering the broader economic landscape in Ireland, main-stream commercial enterprises and supportive elements such as support providers and policy developers are equally operating in this blurred landscape of social enterprise definition and identity.

Irish Social Business Campus (ISBC) were honoured to host a facilitated forum, one of 'Conversations for Possibilities'. This event hosted participants from socially motivated enterprises, mainstream commercial enterprises and supportive elements such as support providers and policy developers. An emphasis was placed on the opportunity for engagement, connectivity, collaboration and shared understanding; to explore and move towards a reconciliation around the understanding of language, expectations, roles and contributions within and between all sectors present for positive societal impact.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A common thread across all invited speaker's presentations was the opportunities they see for social enterprises and large companies (both public and private) to collaborate to accelerate growth with impact which are manifold but still unproven. Pioneering efforts are still developing and there is much more to learn about how to make them work – for the social enterprise, for the large company, and for broader societal impact. Speakers provided a combination of information, inspiration and illustration on potential for a more connected social enterprise and commercial firm partnership business model beyond corporate social responsibility. Delegates attending the forum partook in two breakout workshop sessions – an exploratory workshop “Conversations to a Purpose”, followed by a solution session “Disrupting the Reality – Moving towards action”. The intent within the workshop sessions was to build an overview of perceived needs and to accommodate mutual understandings; enabling greater engagement amongst all three sectors. We adapted and applied a conversational methodology within a transformative paradigm framework to the activities of the day and the gathering of data. This qualitative approach facilitated effective communication for participants to gain insights into each other's sectors; to recognise the commonalities and the challenges to achieving mutual benefits and deeper engagement and to begin to address some of the issues and challenges outlined as a result of this engagement.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings:

Key Needs Identified:

Need One: To outline clear and tangible benefits to the mainstream commercial enterprises that arise from their engagement with social economy enterprises.

Need Two: To have a mutually understood working methodology between socially motivated enterprises and the mainstream commercial sector.

Need Three: For socially motivated enterprises to be able to articulate both the value and impact of what they contribute.

Need Four: Socially motivated enterprises need “Direct Supports” to address critical gaps in their current capabilities which limit their ability to engage at a professional business level.

Need Five: Socially motivated enterprises need “Competency Developments” that allow them the opportunity to build necessary experience in utilising capacities required to build mutually sustainable working relationships with the mainstream commercial sector.

Need Six: Better alignment among Government and Institutional policies so that these create positive synergies rather than conflicting or confusing requirements.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall Actionable Insights:

1. Social economy enterprises **need assistance in upskilling** in order to be able to ‘articulate impact’ in a meaningful way both to themselves and those they engage with.
2. Assistance is needed in social economy enterprises to **enhance critical competencies** to enable more successful engagement with the mainstream commercial sector.
3. Social economy enterprises would benefit from **some critical supports** to assist them in overcoming physical barriers to their development, e.g. premises, IT, etc.
4. **A substantive peer to peer network** that allows social economy enterprises to share learnings and explore collaboration among themselves would assist greatly with upskilling and scaling
5. **More supportive policy alignment** in a few critical areas would greatly ease the difficulty of early stage social enterprises.
6. **Raise awareness of possible collaboration models** between mainstream commercial businesses and social economy enterprises.
7. **Develop an approach to assist in upskilling motivated social economy enterprises to aspire to progress into deeper levels of engagement.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where actions are in the field of work at the core of ISBC, we commit to proactively driving forward those actions. Over time we will explore further with cross sections of the attendance eager to engage further on the potential actions and assist where possible in furthering cross-sectoral collaboration and positive impact for the good of communities and society in Ireland. Our central aim in commencing this work is not simply to ‘report’ but rather to facilitate the bringing to action of items deemed critical by those who gave of their time, experience and insights into the creating of this report and the related work. The dissemination of this forum report is the initial action to meet this commitment.

In addition, we intend to:

- Publish specific ISBC-commissioned research relating to the challenges socially motivated business experience in developing their enterprises further
- Provide a qualitative study representative of the felt experience of people running such enterprises; listening to the “Working Voices of those that do”
- Provide an accessible review of critical research that has and is being conducted beyond Ireland with a consideration of the lessons it may offer for us.
- For the actions highlighted within the report, we indicated we would take a role in assisting initiation of such actions.

INTRODUCTION

The publication of the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland, 2019-2022 heralded in a new era for social enterprise in Ireland. For the first time the Irish Government reflected in policy their awareness of the ability and effort of those in the social enterprise sector to combat the social challenges faced by communities across the country. This policy commits itself to providing a full range of appropriate supports to individuals and organisations to build businesses for social impact; tackling social issues and contributing to a fairer and more inclusive society, using a robust socio-economic model (Department of Rural & Community Affairs, 2019).

Irish Social Business Campus (ISBC) were honoured to host a facilitated forum; one of 'Conversations for Possibilities', in Limerick on 15th October 2019. This invite only event hosted participants from socially motivated enterprises, mainstream commercial enterprises and supportive elements such as support providers and policy developers. ISBC supports any business or endeavour where the social impact matters at least as much as the financial goals of the organisation (ISBC 2020, It's all about collaboration, viewed September 2020, <isbc.ie/about/>). We take a unique approach in offering support both to the individual and the organisation. Many organisations might not view themselves as being a social enterprise and not every individual identified as a social entrepreneur (Caffrey 2020), so we work outside 'labels'; we are diverse and well placed to support those working within communities to bring true social impact through their ideas and endeavours.

ISBC itself stems from 'connectivity', thus one of our primary motivations is to enhance connectivity between our programmes' participants and social enterprise colleagues, established social enterprises and others. We take a cohesive approach across many sectors in order to strengthen a growing community of viable, robust and socially impactful businesses and individuals in Ireland.

This belief in the value of connectivity inspired this inaugural ISBC Forum 2019 – 'Conversations for Possibilities'; in the certainty that the learnings and insights from the day would enable the ISBC to further proactively encourage and facilitate connectivity. In addition, ISBC made the commitment that where actionable insights were in the field of work at the core of ISBC, we would endeavour to drive forward those actions.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE ISBC FORUM

Provide

an opportunity for a wide range of participants (socially motivated, mainstream commercial and supportive enterprises) to discuss and share perspectives on potential connections between socially motivated enterprises and the more commercial orientated business sector

Explore

possibilities for collaboration, mutual understanding and possible mutual pathways forward

Build

on our work to date in fostering and growing a community of viable, robust and socially impactful businesses and individuals

Understand

language, expectations, roles and contributions of the different participants in their own sectors and endeavour to reconcile interpretations; creating real and meaningful connectivity between the sectors

Promote

and further foster the exploitation of mutually complimentary assets



PROPOSED DELIVERABLES OF THE ISBC FORUM

It was intended that the ISBC Forum would yield four deliverables;

- A short report to be published to inform all attendees of the findings and conclusions of the forum
- A qualitative study profiling social enterprise and their stakeholder networks and engagement
- A piece of work representative of the felt experiences of people running such enterprises; “Working Voices of those that do”
- Facilitate the bringing to action of items deemed critical by those who have given their time, experience and insights into the creating of this report and related work

FORUM PARTICIPANTS

In keeping with the intent of the ISBC forum participants were invited from the following sectors:

Socially motivated enterprises 50%

Mainstream commercial enterprises 25%

Supportive elements 25%

Comprising of a wide range of backgrounds and interests, including;

Academia & Research
Care Provision
Community Support
Entrepreneurial Support
Consultancy
Education
Financial Services
Environmental
Government
Health
Recycling and Circular Economy
IT
Pharma
Legal
Advocacy
Inclusion & Diversity
State Agency
Consumer & Food



PROGRAMME FOR THE ISBC FORUM

The programme for the Forum was designed to provide a range of opportunities for participants to engage and contribute actively. It included a short opening plenary session, breakout workshop sessions to facilitate people from all sectors to engage and explore the topics in hand, talks from four invited guest speakers and a final plenary session to consolidate the key messages and findings from the day.

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

The purpose of the opening plenary session was for ISBC CEO Eamon Ryan to welcome participants, outline the purpose and format of the ISBC forum and set the scene for the day.

Eamon opened with the emphasis on connectivity and shared understanding. He outlined that the day was to be an opportunity for conversations for possibilities between people who rarely have opportunity to engage with each other. The belief behind the forum was that real sustainable interactions can grow and prosper when each side has an appreciation of the other's perceptions, realities, beliefs and values. In order to sustain that relationship all parties see the mutual value to them within the relationship.

A key barrier to this is a disjointed understanding or interpretation of an alternate view. The forum event was designed to give all present an opportunity to 'walk in another person's shoes'; thus, allowing for mutual learning, appreciation and possibly collaboration.

In order to illustrate this, ISBC were delighted to have been given permission to show a video created by prospermeath.ie – www.prospermeath.ie – a piece powerfully illustrating the importance of looking through the other person's eyes for the day. The Prospermeath.ie video provided a simple snapshot in the day of a neurotypical adult and one with Downs Syndrome and how everyone deserves to be treated the same.



#ISBCForum

Our Methodology

Broadly influenced and inspired by Kovach (2010) and Mertens (2007, 2010) we adapted and applied a conversational methodology within a transformative paradigm framework to the flow of the day and the gathering of data. This facilitated effective communication for participants to gain insights into each other's sectors; to recognise the commonalities and the challenges to achieving mutually beneficial and deeper engagement and to begin to address some of the issues and challenges outlined as a result of this engagement. The overall data gathered was shared and analysed during the forum amongst and by the participants and the ISBC team did further work with the information and data post-forum.

Two structured breakout workshop sessions were held during the morning and the afternoon. The objectives and structure of each is outlined later.

Four invited guest speakers delivered presentations on approaches developed beyond Ireland as well as a research perspective on the state of development in Ireland currently.

The audience mix on the day was structured to be 50% social motivated enterprises, 25% mainstream commercial enterprises and 25% supportive elements, consisting of support providers and policy developers



WORKSHOP ONE

Conversations to a Purpose

Structured conversations that help to emphasise the importance for each of us to try to perceive the perspective of people with alternate contexts. We did this on the day through a series of 12 listening sessions. During these sessions people were asked to interview a person, with a different background to their own, on that person's needs. The outcome from these sessions resulted in the creation of what we called a "Wall of Needs". This 'Wall of Needs' then represented a cross-section of the needs required by all.

Workshop one was intended to elicit from active participants tangible specific challenges they encounter in their direct experience. Using this as a base, the specific challenges were combined across a spectrum of different participants to identify shared common challenges that are the origins of the specific problems of each participant.

As the socially motivated enterprise sector is quite diverse, we sought inputs representative of:

Community based endeavours.
National focused enterprises.
More commercially focused social economy enterprises.

WORKSHOP ONE

To optimise the knowledge, each “contributor” was interviewed by participants (typically 3 people) not of their cohort, with the interviewers tasked with identifying the need.

We then combined the individual categories – e.g. we took the three individual community group outputs to create a more generic community-based enterprise one. A similar pattern was applied to the others.

In parallel we applied the same formula to the mainstream corporate entities, with their interviewers tasked with helping them formulate their perceptions of the barriers they faced. Similar to the socially motivated enterprise sector they were grouped into local enterprise, national indigenous and multinational.

The outcomes of these discussion were eventually escalated to one shared “Wall of Needs”; representing the combined views of all participants, as created by the participants.

This wall of 24 needs clearly does not encompass all needs but given the attendance on that day would be indicative of general needs. The “wall of needs” is illustrative of the key findings from workshop one.

WORKSHOP TWO

Solution Sessions’ - ‘Disrupting the Reality - Moving towards Action’

These sessions sought to identify potential ways to address the needs identified above. This was carried out in a series of 10 group sessions where each group choose a need from the wall and set about collectively developing solutions to meet that need.

Individual groups could choose additional needs to work on if they so wished. The groups comprised of people from the three sectors outlined earlier. The cross-grouping was valuable as each participant gained an insight into how people from different backgrounds and perspectives work well together; showing that they had a lot more in common and were more similar than they would have perhaps expected.

In planning the workshop, funding issues, while clearly a critical issue, were set aside for the day. Our purpose was to explore how to build engagement. In this context funding becomes an enabler rather than a driver

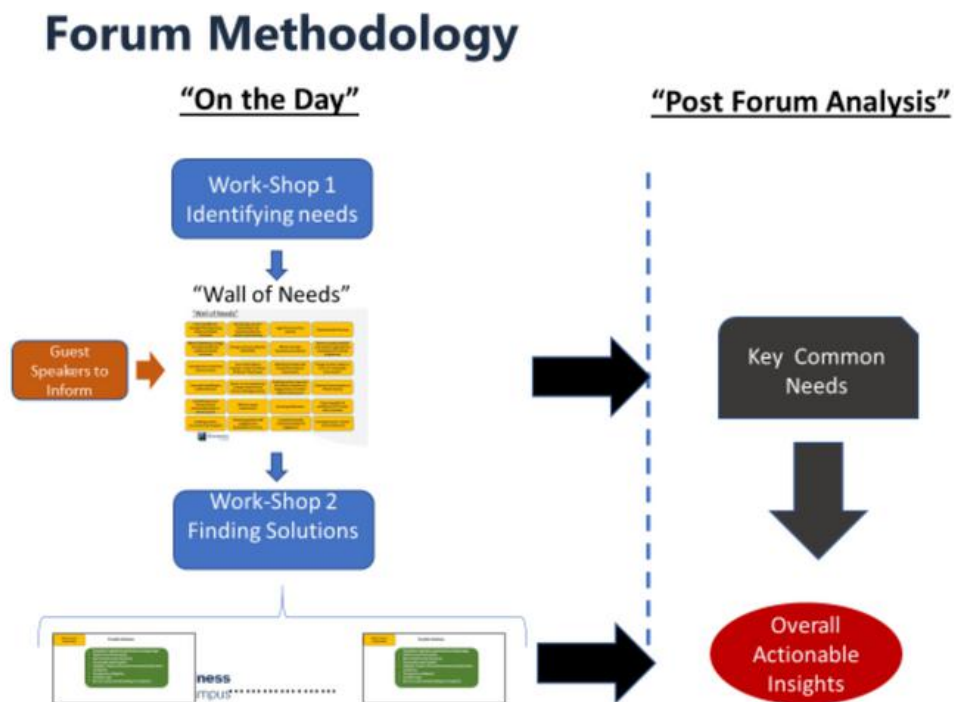
ISBC DATA ANALYSIS

Grounded in inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, Guest et al., 2011), the team at ISBC analysed the gathered data and set about identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Guest et al., 2011). Themes emerged.

The 24 individual needs that emerged on “The Wall of Needs” were distilled down into 6 core needs.

Numerous possible solutions and suggestions emerged from workshop two. The data was analysed, integrated, merged and scoped for possible solutions.

Actionable outcomes emerged from the process.





GUEST SPEAKERS

Through talks delivered by four invited speakers, people were exposed to approaches developed beyond Ireland as well as a research perspective on the state of development in Ireland currently.



GUEST SPEAKER ONE

**Dr Briga Hynes, Head,
Department Management
and Marketing, Senior
Lecturer in
Entrepreneurship, Kemmy
Business School**

The first guest speaker of the day was Dr Briga Hynes of Kemmy Business School. Dr Hynes noted that increasingly, businesses are becoming more attuned to looking at their business activities from a social context and suggested that with this Business and Social enterprises are subscribing to the same “social” focus which is society and environmentally determined.

Despite this common focus, many challenges exist to effective collaboration and these resonate around three themes of:

PERCEPTUAL

From the larger firm perspective there is often a lack of clarity and ambiguity as to what constitutes a social enterprise beyond a charity or how they undertake business transactions. From the social entrepreneur viewpoint there are self-identity issues about their ability or competencies in dealing with larger organisations and their expectations of what larger firms would expect from them in a business relationship.

PHYSICAL

Barriers also exist for corporates attempting *Reaching in* to social endeavours and also for social enterprises in *Reaching out* to corporates; lack of understanding of larger firms where/how to source social enterprises with potential to engage beyond a basic CSR function and lack of knowledge and confidence by social entrepreneurs to reach out and contact larger firms as a prelude to commencing a business relationship.

PERFORMANCE

need to identify common means of describing and establishing KPIs that are mutually achievable and beneficial – what does each party get from the relationship (Caffrey, 2020).



Dr Hynes spoke at length about the changes that are currently taking place between commercial enterprises and social enterprises and the potential for going beyond engagement as currently exists under Corporate Social Responsibility 'CSR' programmes. Many current activities under CSR while beneficial to society are not practical means of developing sustainable mutually beneficial and valued relationships.

In order to bridge these divides and generate more mutually beneficial collaborations she indicated the need to identify common ground – mutual needs and opportunities which will leverage synergies to benefit both the large corporation and the social enterprise. She concluded that it is by joining forces the best of business and social as one is achieved and thus delivering real and suitable social impact.

In keeping with the trust of Dr Hynes presentation the first workshop of the day got underway.



WORKSHOP SESSION ONE: UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER'S NEEDS

'Conversations to a Purpose'

Structured conversations that help to emphasise the importance for each of us to try to perceive the perspective of people with alternate contexts. We did this on the day through a series of 12 listening sessions. During these sessions people were asked to interview a person, with a different background to their own, on that person's needs. The outcome from these sessions resulted in the creation of what we called a "Wall of Needs". This 'Wall of Needs' then represented a cross-section of the needs required by all sectors.

Overview

The intent within these workshop sessions was to build an overview of perceived needs to enable greater engagement amongst all three sectors. This picture was built up from the direct experiences of people operating on the ground. For many of the participants, this was the first time they had an opportunity to contribute in such a manner; discussing commonly held motivations, strengths and challenges.

FINDINGS FROM SESSION ONE: KEY NEEDS IDENTIFIED

Need One

To outline clear and tangible benefits to the mainstream commercial enterprises that arise from their engagement with social economy enterprises.

Need Two

To have a mutually understood working methodology between socially motivated enterprises and the mainstream commercial sector.

Need Three

For socially motivated enterprises to be able to articulate both the value and impact of what they contribute:

Value in terms of a sustainable business relationships, and,

Impact in terms of societal benefits that accrue from their efforts.

Need Four

Socially motivated enterprises need “Direct Supports” to address critical gaps in their current capabilities which limit their ability to engage at a professional business level.

Need Five

Socially motivated enterprises need “Competency Developments” that allow them the opportunity to build necessary experience in utilising capabilities required to build mutually sustainable working relationships with the mainstream commercial sector.

Need Six

Better alignment is required among Government and Institutional policies so that these create positive synergies rather than conflicting or confusing requirements.

WALL OF NEEDS



FURTHER SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS ON EACH OF THESE NEEDS EMERGED IN THE WORKSHOP PROCESS.

Need One

To outline clear and tangible benefits to the corporate sector that arise from their engagement with social economy enterprises.

- Sustained relationships need to be driven from a focus on impact. This concept of impact must be mutually understood by all.
- Mainstream corporate participation needs to be based on real business needs of the corporate sector, with value being the centre of that relationship. This forms a deeper level of engagement and longer more sustained relationships between all involved.
- Currently, there is very limited awareness of possible collaboration models by both mainstream commercial sector and socially motivated enterprises; this needs to change.

Need Two

To have a mutually understood working methodology between socially motivated enterprises and the mainstream corporate sector.

- A working group among proactive potential mainstream commercial partners would be of benefit to that sector in exploring innovative avenues of engagement.
- Familiarity with real life examples beyond Ireland would assist people in understanding and visualising the potential.
- A brokering mechanism that facilitates instructions between both parties would be of assistance.

Need Three

For socially motivated enterprises to be able to articulate both the value and the impact of what they contribute.

- Socially motivated enterprises need to be able to “articulate their impact” in a meaningful way.
- They also need to be able to measure their impact in both a quantitative and qualitative way.
- There is a need to be able to demonstrate the business value of their contribution to those corporate bodies they engage with.

Need Four

Socially motivated enterprises need “Direct Supports” to address critical gaps in their current capabilities which limit their ability to engage at a professional business level.

- Training & Upskilling are required by socially motivated enterprises to operate to the standard of a professional business. A distinction emerged between acquiring a skill via training and having a competency in that area.
- Online retail capability skills are required by many socially motivated enterprises along with the ability to manage a mixed online/”bricks & mortar” business.
- Access to “Premises” aligned to the needs of a professional business are a significant challenge for many social economy enterprises.

Need Five

Socially motivated enterprises need “Competency Developments” that allow them the opportunity to build necessary experience in utilising capabilities required to build mutually sustainable working relationships with the mainstream commercial sector.

- Effective Marketing strategy & implementation is a significant competency gap for many socially motivated enterprises.
- Enhancing Effective Strategic Planning is a significant competency gap among socially motivated enterprises.
- Learning how to build new revenue streams is a significant competency gap among socially motivated enterprises.
- Stronger and more effective retail skills is a significant competency gap among many socially motivated enterprises.
- Enhancing the ability & confidence of socially motivated enterprises to work with mainstream commercial enterprises is a critical gap.

Need Six

Better alignment is required among Government and Institutional policies so that these create positive synergies rather than conflicting or confusing requirements.

- There is a lack of legal structures fit for purpose in the social economy enterprise space.
- Effective, sensible and proportionate governance procedures would enhance compliance.
- Better matching to working needs of social economy enterprises among Employment Schemes would be a major advantage in both business benefit and schemes impact.
- Revise current programmes to better match the more diverse challenging society we now find ourselves.
- Implement workable policies that enable positive procurement participation.
- Change in policy makers to focus on “sustainable environment”.



GUEST SPEAKER TWO

Lucy Findlay MBE, Managing Director, Social Enterprise Mark CIC

Lucy Findlay MBE, of Social Enterprise Mark UK, plays a leading role in the Social Enterprise space in the UK and Internationally. Lucy is the person who brought about the Social Enterprise Mark which sets the benchmark through its social enterprise definition and accreditation of genuine social enterprises.

Lucy explained that our communities could provide so much good through social enterprises. The Social Enterprise Mark is designed to provide standards for socially motivated enterprises to aspire to, with social endeavours being viewed in terms of three P's;

1. Purpose

Deliver a social environment aside from CSR

2. Profit

Any surplus benefits social / environmental (at least 50% to be re-invested)

3. Power

Where does it lie? Is it with stakeholders or shareholders?

Lucy talked about the need to promote businesses with a conscience and the absolute necessity to grow and scale these operations to be able to deliver to a larger audience, saying that strategy would most definitely need to be adapted to best suit and benefit the location of the social enterprise as 'what works in Limerick may not work in Cork'.

Lucy spoke about the importance of networking and that undoubtedly this would allow you, the social entrepreneur, to be most effective in getting your message out there and understanding your influence. She added that subtle selling was key and understanding the need of the people you are engaging with is critical for success.



GUEST SPEAKER THREE

Karel VanderPoorten, Social Economy, Cluster Policy and Entrepreneurship, European Commission

Karel spoke first about the levels of engagement that were possible between the commercial and social sectors.

In earlier work by the EU Commission, this had been broadly structured into four level of ever deepening engagement.

1. Philanthropic partnerships where a partner merely provides financial support to a Social Economy Enterprise e.g. Charitable contributions often provided as part of a CSR initiative
2. Transactional partnerships where both partners exchange something that contributes to separate objectives e.g. supply chain participation where there is in effect a basic business relationship
3. Integrative partnerships where partners have joined objectives, e.g. where a social enterprise may provide a recycling service so as to achieve with the commercial business a joint goal around circular economy.
4. Transformative partnerships where both partners align their missions to maximise mutual benefits and social impact e.g. a strategic partnership with aligned goals based on shared values.

While there are relatively few examples yet of Integrative and transformative relationships, the potential for all parties is significant should these arise. ‘Clustering’ is viewed as one potential way for such deeper relationships to be nurtured.

Clusters in Social Economy and Social Enterprise differ somewhat from clusters in the commercial space. Conventional commercial clusters have three main stakeholders:

- 1. Business**
- 2. Research & Innovation**
- 3. Government**

In exploratory work undertaken by the commission they found that a fourth stakeholder exists, Civil Society, often in the form of a community grouping.

He also added that many of the social enterprise clusters exist because ‘it is in their DNA’- they want to scale as much as possible and maximise their social impact. The understanding of clustering in a social economy context is at a very early stage with little research available on the area, which has led to their current work, to try to map examples across Europe, to be published shortly. However, the potential for clustering as a model for scaling of social impacts shows great promise.



GUEST SPEAKER FOUR

Paul Ellingstad, Managing Partner, PTI Advisors

Paul spoke of the burning platform that should be driving us all. In spite of our differences, we actually have much in common and share the same challenges. The sustainable development goals represent a shared burning platform for us all.

While many may see these as intractable, Paul illustrated with several examples how actions by individuals can achieve great impact whether this by rural power generation in Africa, youth driven climate action, engaging corporates in meaningful efforts to create employment opportunities for those with disabilities etc.

At the core of these is to think differently, challenge the status quo and work collectively together. By doing these some of the key challenges we all share can be tackled. This is the challenge we all face, not to be bound by stereotypes, but to reach out and explore different and collaborative ways of working that link our collective skills, not pigeonhole them into disconnected compartments.

COLLECTIVE OVERVIEW FROM GUEST SPEAKERS



A common thread across all the speaker's presentations was that the opportunities for social enterprises and large companies (public and private) to collaborate to accelerate growth with impact are manifold but still unproven. Pioneering efforts are still developing and there is much more to learn about how to make them work—for the social enterprise, for the large company, and for broader societal impact.

To this end, the speakers provided a combination of information, inspiration and illustrations demonstrating the opportunities for a more connected social enterprise and commercial firm partnership business model beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR) and organized as possible.

Some interesting learnings emerged

- Though social enterprises and corporations are different in many ways, they also have a lot in common, and there is a growing potential for both to share common goals merging the gap between purpose and profit.
- Despite, or perhaps because of their differences, social enterprises and larger enterprises have a unique opportunity to accelerate business growth with positive social impact.

- For both sets of entities, a mindset of equality and inclusion among partners is important and there is a need to balance perceived tensions between purpose, profit and power within the collaboration.
- The importance of networking was promoted for social entrepreneurs to enable them to be more effective in getting themselves known and demonstrating impact. The example of the Social Enterprise Mark was used as means of benchmarking performance and providing a mark of quality for social enterprises.
- Within the broader EU perspective whilst relatively few examples exist of integrative and transformative partnerships, the potential for all parties is significant. Partnership and collaboration may be temporary and or may be a sustainable and scalable way of operating. The role of clustering was promoted as one potential for deeper relationships to be nurtured.
- Sustainable partnerships are built on a clear business case for collaboration, with transparent and measurable goals and a relationship of mutual respect, passion and commitment

The speakers were unified in the assertion that the essence of an impactful collaboration lies in its connections back and forth between the parties, the collapsing of perceptual boundaries, transitioning from silo-thinking and silo-acting into a collaborative and co-creative system; where all are equal and trusted partners with each leveraging their own competence and capacity for mutual wider impact (financial and nonfinancial).

Concluding, the speakers indicated that this novel event is about taking stock, having conversations to understand each other's languages, and identifying the future priorities for meaningful collaboration and partnerships. Great positivity exists for collaboration between the two types of businesses; offering enormous promise in their own rights and comparative advantages that, if harnessed through partnership, can unlock new and better impacts for these businesses themselves and for the societies in which they operate

WORKSHOP SESSION TWO: DISRUPTING THE REALITY - MOVING TOWARDS ACTION

Solution Sessions

These sessions sought to identify potential ways to address the needs identified above. This was carried out in a series of 10 group sessions where each group choose a need from the wall and set about developing solutions to meet that need. Individual groups could choose additional needs to work on if they so wished.

Findings from Session Two

Moving towards solutions.

In the afternoon sessions, mixed groups consisting of combinations of socially motivated enterprises, mainstream commercial enterprises and supportive agencies worked on seeking solutions to a “need”. The outcomes of this work across the different groups were again combined to form an overview picture.

Amalgamating the suggestions and possible solutions emergent from this session; including our need to resolve the difficulty around language and perception, awareness and knowledge of each other in our sectors, and a reluctance to engage on all sides due to these and other factors, and using the deductive analysis approach as outlined earlier, the data was organised into overall actionable insights.

Overall Actionable Insights

Potential follow on actions to enable progress on the key takeaways:

From the combination of all the inputs around the forum event potential follow-on actions were identified. These would enhance significantly the potential and actual further engagement amongst all sectors going forward:

1. Socially motivated enterprises **need assistance in upskilling** in order to be able to “articulate Impact” in a meaningful way both to themselves and those they engage with.

2. Assistance is needed in socially motivated enterprises to **enhance critical competencies** to enable more successful engagement with the mainstream commercial sector:

- Marketing to a purpose
- Impact articulation
- Strategic planning
- Transparency in governance
- Building a viable business model
- Retail capability

3. Socially motivated enterprises would benefit from **some critical supports** to assist them in overcoming physical barriers to their development:

- Business Infrastructure Setup
 - a) Physical premises
 - b) IT Systems infrastructure
 - c) Online retailing
- Key skills acquisition
- Initiation funding



4. **A substantive peer to peer network** that allows socially motivated enterprises to share learnings and explore collaborations among themselves would assist greatly with upskilling and scaling

5. **More supportive policy alignment** in critical areas would greatly ease the difficulty of early stage social enterprises

- Employment schemes more accessible and more supportive of the timelines of businesses
- Cross Government Department alignment so that policies implemented by different departments are synergic rather than in opposition.
- The development of a legal framework that recognises the uniqueness of the social economy enterprise sector.

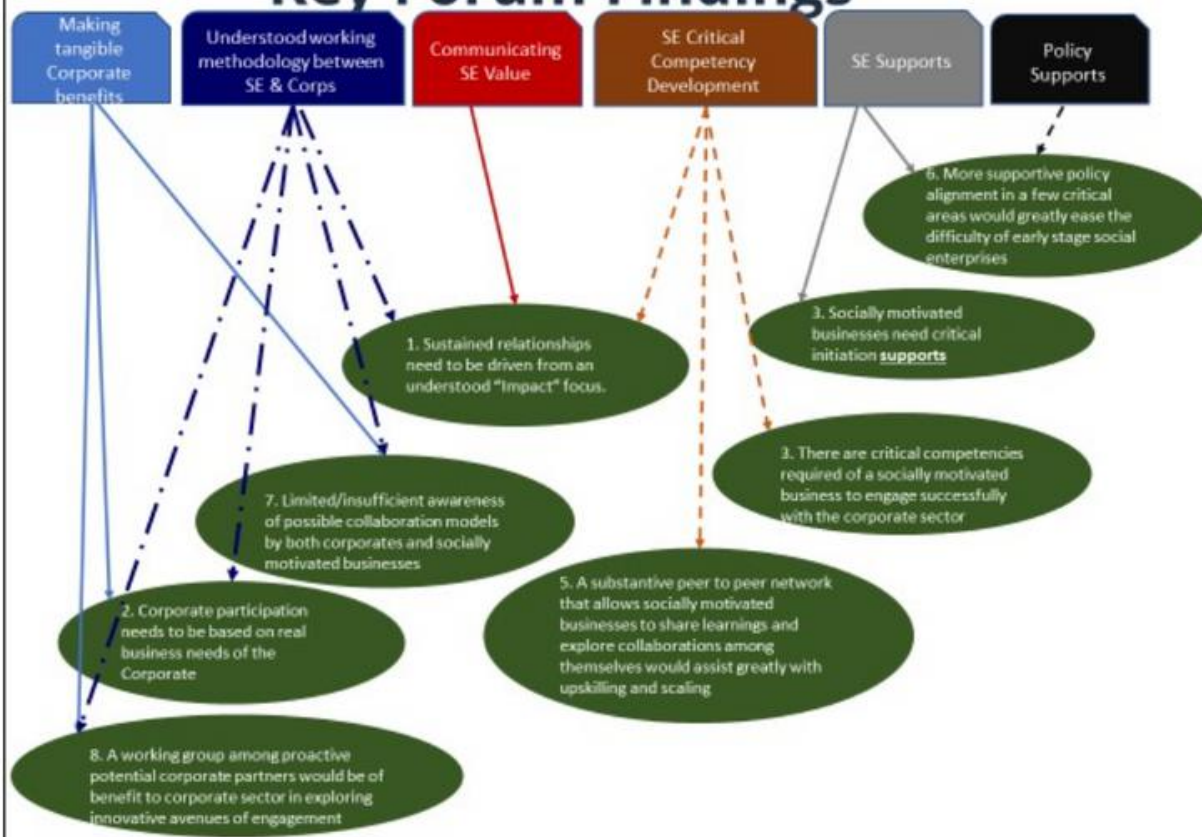
6. **Raise awareness of possible collaboration models** between mainstream commercial and socially motivated enterprises through:

- A working group among proactive potential mainstream commercial partners exploring innovative avenues of engagement which could
 - a) Develop a case-based example set of working examples both within and beyond Ireland
 - b) Development of a self-assessment methodology for identifying readiness and purpose for engaging by a mainstream commercial body
 - c) Consider how recognition of such efforts might be recognised
- Assist in defining an “engagement” model with socially motivated enterprises

7. **Develop an approach to assist in upskilling motivated social economy enterprises to aspire to progress into deeper level of engagement.** Such an approach could consist of:

- Outlining an expectation of standards required for such engagements
- Supporting the organisational development required to step successfully onward
- Have a recognition method that allows external entities to see this development
- Have a commitment by supportive commercial bodies to engage with them as their development progresses

Key Forum Findings



ISBC COMMITMENT

As indicated at the commencement of the Forum, ISBC made the commitment that where actions were in the field of work at the core of ISBC, we would proactively drive forward those actions.

The dissemination of this forum report is the initial action to meet this commitment.

In addition, we intend to:

- Publish specific ISBC-commissioned research relating to the challenges socially motivated business experience in developing their enterprises further
- Provide a qualitative study representative of the felt experience of people running such enterprises; listening to the “Working Voices of those that do”
- Provide an accessible review of critical research that has and is being conducted beyond Ireland with a consideration of the lessons it may offer for us.
- For the actions highlighted within the report, we indicated we would take a role in assisting initiation of such actions.

Over the next few months, ISBC will explore further with cross sections of the attendance willingness to engage further on the potential actions and assist where possible those willing to step forward.

Our central aim in commencing this work is not simply to ‘report’ but rather to facilitate the bringing to action of items deemed critical by those who have given of their time, experience and insights into the creating of this report and the related work.



CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

Adrienne Harrington, ISBC Chair, Chief Executive, The Ludgate Innovation Hub

Adrienne Harrington drew the event to a close reflecting on the positive energy in the day, the willingness for people to engage and the realisation that there is more in common than there are differences.

Thanking all of the people who attended and facilitated the event she above all hoped that for those who attended that they perceived of it as the beginning of many future conversations, conversations ISBC itself will continue to try to expand in size and depth through future activities.

Attendee Survey

As part of our process a post forum survey was conducted amongst the attendees.

The key findings from this were:

- There was a very strong positive rating on the event as a whole, achieving a 79% satisfaction level
- The opportunity to network was similarly rated highly at 87%
- The workshop sessions were found to be excessively confusing with an approval rating of 50%
- 100% expressed willingness to attend a follow up event
- In terms of direct relevance to their work, 54% would have seen the content as directly relevant to themselves.

A flavour of the experiences behind these numbers can be judge from a short selection of extracted comments:

“The speakers were engaging and informative.”

“I felt some of the breakout sessions were unclear”

“It was a small bit unclear what we were supposed to do once we got into the rooms. There were lots of sheets on the table in front of us, but when you're introducing yourself to people you've just met, it's hard to read anything for more than a few seconds glance”

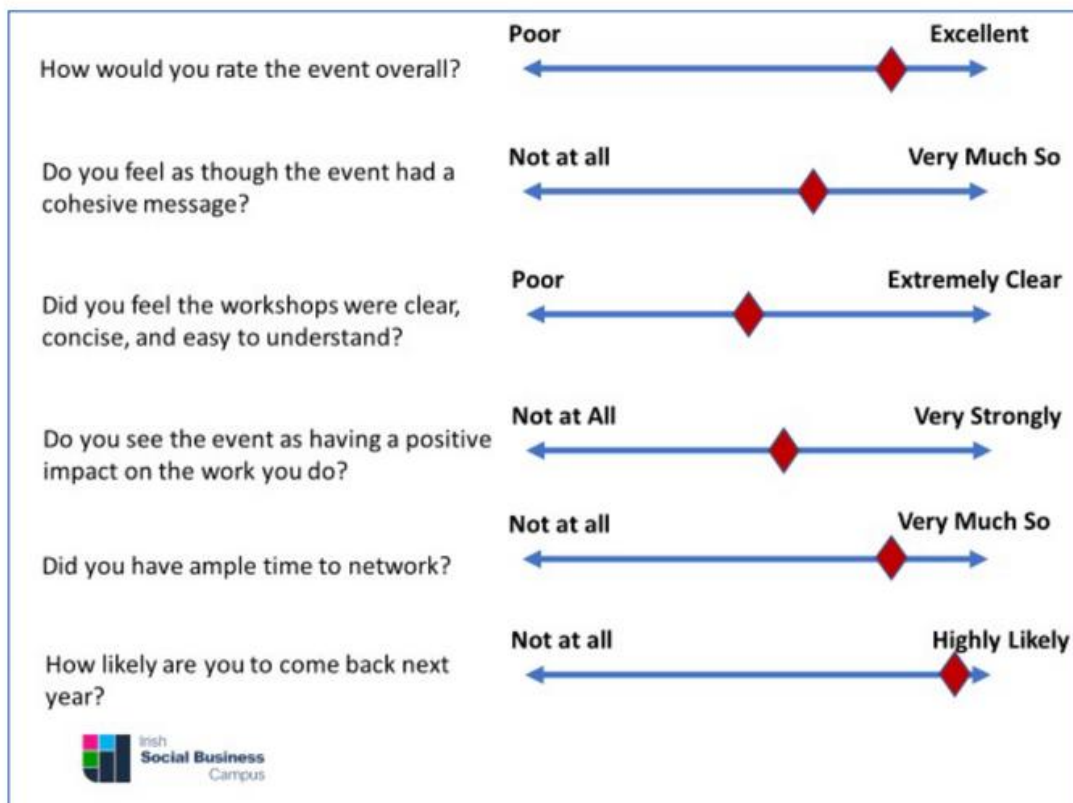


“The workshop setting is a fantastic way to get to know people that isn't small talk chit chat over coffee. Solving problems together should be the new standard for networking”

“I loved the format of the day but would hope if I encouraged others to attend, the workshops would be presented differently”

“A clearer message and less complicated workshops. Also, more from social enterprises on the day as speakers.”

“It definitely has raised an interest, but we are interested in the follow up report to learn more”



Additional comments give an insight into individual lessons taken by people on the day

“It’s easier to Engage with corporates in a setting like this”

“The importance of changing the private sector's CSR offering to one that is more helpful to the receiving organisations and is more sustainable and impactful”

“That challenges within the sector are similar, particularly where any level of Gov funding in place, and expectations of the group to deliver”

“That everyone is facing similar challenges/ challenges with the same roots”

“I learned how useful it is for people to sit down and talk about something that matters. The learning applied to everyone, not just those organisations who had the opportunity to present.”

“The collaboration that is necessary for a circular economy.”

From this review, we clearly had packed an excessive amount into the one day and future events will correct this. However, as is reflected in many of the comments, it was an event that was quite unique for many of the attendees, one that allowed meaningful networking among people who might not often encounter each other.

The shared problems and challenges coupled with a common desire to contribute in overcoming them was also a common theme.

Clearly, our intended reach in the workshops was high but hope that the results developed on the day by the attendees, and outlined within this report, reflect more the possibility of what is possible when open meaningful conversations occur.

CONCLUSION

The future is challenging but bright for social enterprise. While many challenges and hurdles do exist, the attendance of people from various backgrounds within the Irish economic sector willingly giving of their time, their expertise and input to this forum event reflected an eagerness to understand each other, to explore difficulties and possibilities, and to connect. Creating meaningful and positive social impact in local communities and often further afield is at the heart of social enterprise. Concurrently, the need to exist in a financially secure space is important. By cross-sectoral engagement and collaboration, all organisations keen to engage and learn can benefit from connection and collaboration.

This forum event drew attention to the expectations, perspectives and understandings of the SE world and the mainstream commercial sector regarding their commonalities and their differences in the social space. Key needs identified included having a mutually understood working methodology, to define clear and tangible benefits to all, articulation of value and impact for the social enterprise, along with a need for soft and hard supports and better alignment of related policy nationally.

Potential solutions included work in areas of language, barriers to collaboration and practical supports. Follow-on actions emerged around enabling progress in areas such as upskilling, enhancing critical competencies and supports, a substantive peer-to-peer network, policy alignment and awareness raising of possible collaboration models. We at ISBC look forward TO exploring further with cross sections of the attendance eager to engage further on the potential actions and assist where possible in furthering cross-sectoral collaboration and positive impact for the good of communities and society in Ireland.

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TOWARDS AN ENHANCED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ECONOMY

