

Best Practice: Creative Dublin Alliance - Creating the Leadership Consensus

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CITY: DUBLIN

POLICY AREA: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BEST PRACTICE

The City of Dublin established the **Creative Dublin Alliance (CDA)**, an economic development network led by the Dublin City Manager, with members drawn from the most senior level in local government, commerce, industry, education, state agencies and the not-for-profit sector. The role of the Alliance is to identify challenges and issues of citywide economic significance that could most effectively be dealt with through the synergies created in the Alliance.

ISSUE

There was a need for stakeholders across the Dublin region to establish a leadership forum able to respond to economic challenges and opportunities facing the Dublin City Region.

The CDA is premised on the idea that cities compete on a global terrain for talent and investment. The Alliance aims to help identify, discuss, recommend, distribute and implement solutions in response to the economic challenges that Dublin faces in becoming a more competitive city internationally.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

CDA objectives:

- Create a clear vision that unifies around the strengths and future potential of Dublin and its outlying areas (City Region).
- Shape and influence national and city policies.
- Build a Dublin City Region that is supportive of its people by encouraging innovation and enterprise.
- Continue to grow an internationally renowned higher education and research sector.
- Communicate and engage people in the variety of entrepreneurial initiatives that are occurring in the region.
- Encourage an open, merit based, tolerant and inclusive society that promotes well-being.
- Develop a high quality information, communications and transport network.
- Deliver projects in support of the Alliance's objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2008, the CDA was formally established by the Dublin City Manager in response to:

- An increase in international awareness of the role that competitive cities play in driving their national economies. This was evident in reports such as the 2006 "Competitive Cities in the Global Economy" published by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).
- The desire to represent the interests of the Dublin Region in the national and international context.
- The level of consensus between key players in Dublin such as the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and Dublin City Council.
- The increasing pressure on Dublin to become more competitive in the development of sustainable transportation and workforce development infrastructures.



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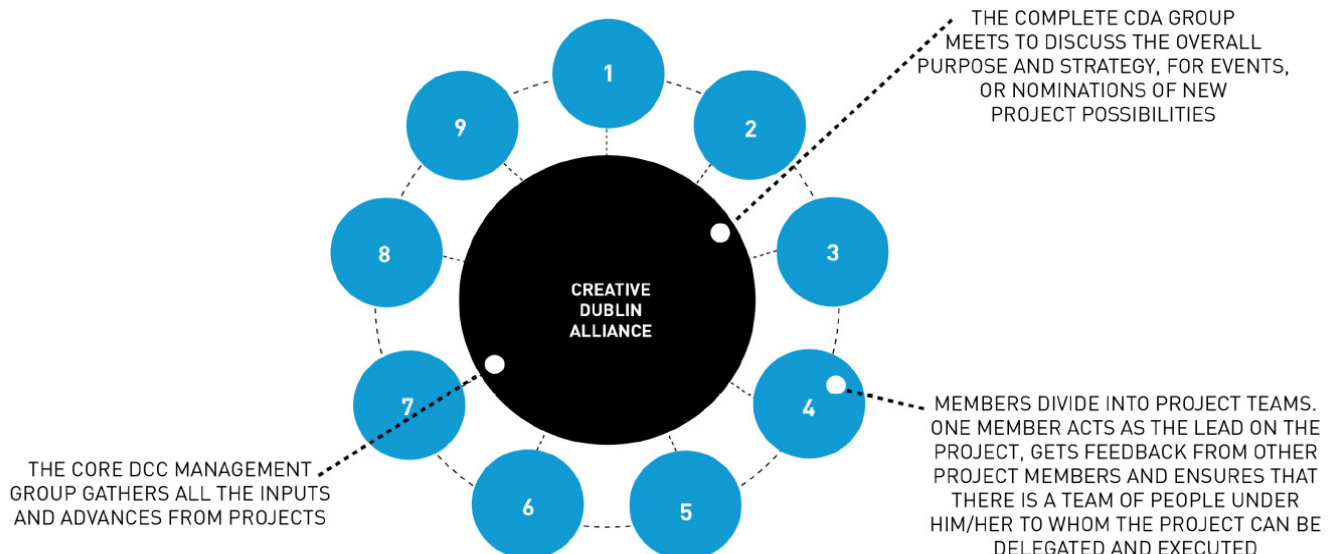
- The need for greater policy alignment within the city and for improved coordination of resources in response to increasingly difficult economic circumstances.

The first meeting was held in May 2008. Present at this meeting was the City Manager and designated Regional Manager of the Dublin Local Authorities, associated with the local government in Ireland, along with the Chief Executive Officer of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), and the presidents of the four Dublin universities, including University College Dublin (UCD), Dublin City University (DCU), Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

Over time, the Alliance has expanded. The membership now includes the Lord Mayor of Dublin and the Chair of the Dublin Regional Authority, along with the Industrial Development Agency of Ireland (IDA) Enterprise Ireland, and Design Twenty-first Century, a not-for-profit organization. This Alliance now has the constituent elements required to collectively enhance the innovative capacity of the city.

Thus far, the Alliance has identified its vision, structure, and priority projects as well as an agreed upon work program. As of May 2011, it is chaired by the City Manager. The main roles of the Alliance are to strengthen leadership for the City Region, improve national and international promotion of Dublin, enhance the overall competitiveness of the City Region, and support the attraction and retention of people to the City.

The Alliance's organization and distribution of work is illustrated below:



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COST

There is no specific fund for this initiative – the secretariat is managed through Dublin City Council. Meeting costs are shared by each member of the Alliance given that meetings rotate among member institutions or organizations.

Regarding projects, costs are absorbed by the appropriate participating organization. Management and administrative support is provided by the Economic Development Unit of Dublin City Council.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

In developing the CDA, Dublin City Council has developed a collaborative city leadership model that:

- Connects key stakeholders in the smart economy with mutually beneficial working alliances.
- Develops a focus on the competitiveness of the city region and as a driver of the national economy.
- Creates a regional mechanism to ensure a coordinated approach across the four Dublin local authorities - Dublin City Council, South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, and Fingal County Council.

A number of strategic projects have been identified by the CDA and are currently being delivered. These include:

- **Innovation Dublin Festival¹** – In 2009, the Innovation Dublin festival was launched to promote innovation and creativity in the city. Conceived by the CDA and coordinated by Dublin City Council, the project received hundreds of ideas and submissions from Dubliners across all walks of life. The result exceeded all expectations: 40,000 visitors attended over 465 events, creating hundreds of new interactions and connections across the city. In response to this initial success, it was decided to make the festival an annual event. The key events in 2010 included an international conference on innovation and sustainable development called 'Globe Forum'² and the final of IBM's SmartCamp³ which aimed to identify the IBM Global Entrepreneur of the Year.

In 2011, Innovation Dublin will move into its third year. The initiative has gone from strength to strength, and has become a platform for seminars, workshops, discussions, exhibitions, performances, showcases and competitions - on all kinds of topics related to innovation and creativity. The overriding aim of the festival is to provide Dubliners - whether they are entrepreneurs, students, researchers, artists or large corporations – with an opportunity to discuss, promote and celebrate innovation in the city.

- **City Identity Project⁴** – The Alliance is working to develop its city identity in a manner that enhances the international recognition of Dublin as a magnet for investment and talent.
- **Development of an Economic Action Plan⁵** for the Dublin city region. The Economic Action Plan sets out the key priorities as well as a set of coordinated actions for the development of Dublin as an internationally competitive city region. Its aim is to: "position the Dublin City Region, the engine of Ireland's economy, as a significant hub in the European knowledge economy through a network of thriving sectoral and spatial clusters providing a magnet for creative talent and investment."

¹ <http://www.innovationdublin.ie/>

² <http://www.globeforum.com/dublin>

³ <http://www-05.ibm.com/ie/smarterplanet/smartcamp/>

⁴ <http://www.facebook.com/dublinis>

⁵ <http://www.dublincity.ie/Planning/EconomicDevelopment/Pages/ReviewoftheEconomicDevelopmentActionPlan.aspx>

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- **The Dublin City Indicators Project** – The Dublin City Indicators project allows for the continued monitoring and benchmarking of Dublin's performance in the national and international context. A key element is the learning of best practice policies and actions that have been implemented around the world.
- **Citizen engagement** – Engaging with citizens on futures thinking and the policy implications (The 5th province initiative) as well as a general citizen engagement initiative through the establishment of an opinion panel for the city region called 'Your Dublin Your voice'⁶
- **Designing Dublin⁷: 'Learning to Learn'** – A learning project created by *Design Twentyfirst Century*, in collaboration with the Creative Dublin Alliance and Dublin City Council. The concept is based on the 'Learning to Learn'(L2L) model, which aims to answer the need of how we can better equip people with the skills to solve complicated problems in a much more socially inclusive and sustainable way.⁸
- **DUBlinked⁹** – An initiative by the Dublin Region Local Authorities and NUI Maynooth University to facilitate data-driven innovation in an urban environment. It will do this by:
 - Releasing data held by the Dublin local authorities, including data that would not normally be considered public.
 - Providing a mechanism for other people and organizations to share data pertinent to the Dublin Region.
 - Providing a structured mechanism for engaging with local authorities to develop and trial new products and services.
 - Encouraging collaboration and innovation through a series of workshops and events.
 - Access to resources and activities will be on an equitable and transparent basis
- **The Green Way** – an initiative that involves collaboration between higher education, business and local government to build Ireland's first CleanTech Economic cluster.¹⁰ It also incorporates an initiative called the Green Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC) where Dublin is aiming to position itself as a financial services centre committed to the management of carbon and green finance.

TIMELINE

Regular meetings have been held every two months since the May 2008 launch meeting.

LEGISLATION

No legislation.

LESSONS LEARNED

The CDA is dependent on forging new and strengthening existing working relationships between stakeholders. Below is a list of important factors to support the success of projects.

- Managing interactions with multiple and diverse stakeholder groups.
- Embedding leadership into each organization.
- Careful assessment of the skills and resources of each member organization.
- The development of a meaningful shared agenda.

⁶ www.yourdublinyourvoice.ie

⁷ <http://www.design21c.com/node/2>

⁸ www.designingdublin.com

⁹ <http://dublinked.ie>

¹⁰ <http://www.thegreenway.ie>

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Lessons are continually learned as this is a relatively new initiative for the city. As such, the CDA is currently undergoing a review phase. Some lessons learned include:

- Importance of effectively communicating the CDA work to a wider audience.
- This project is a unique partnership in the Irish Context; it is challenging old institutional mindsets within partner organizations and setting the benchmark for new ways of working and collaboration in the City Region.
- While solid progress has been made the Alliance is still in 'development phase' and has some way to go before it could be described as a truly effective policy vehicle for the City Region. While there have been successes to date, it still operates on a goodwill basis from each of the partners.
- The Alliance is operating the 'triple helix' model for the City Region and is focusing on strengthening Dublin's position as a 'global' hub for innovation.

Some of the challenges include:

- Ensuring active and equal engagement of all members.
- Securing adequate resources to effectively manage and deliver on agreed projects.
- Aligning the day-to-day work of each of the members to the CDA agenda.
- Managing the institutional knowledge held by each of the partners.
- Developing a culture of trust between partners. There is a continuous need to evaluate these alliances to ensure all partners are satisfied with progress and participation.
- Demonstrating the outputs and communicating their activities to a wider audience.
- Ability to influence national policies.

TRANSFERABILITY

Certain conditions or circumstances should be taken into consideration when developing the model elsewhere:

- Membership, secretariat responsibilities and type of projects may vary according to city governance and remit of local government.
- The triple helix model demands commitment from each participating sector at the highest level.
- There must be acknowledgement that cooperation rather than competition will benefit the region and its people.
- The Alliance can commence on a very low budget with a view to developing higher budget projects, the costs of which can be shared among partners.

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Supplementary Information:

- 1 Creative Dublin Alliance overview: http://www.innovationdublin.ie/images/uploads/CDA_Intro.pdf
- 2 'University Research for Innovation' – 2010, Luc E Weber & James J. Duderstadt (2010), Chapter 3 Community Engagement as Social Innovation, Dr. Ellen Hazelkorn, p63-76

Facts and figures in this report were provided by the highlighted city agency to New York City Global Partners.