

FOURTH LEVEL: DELIVERING IMPACT FROM STATE-FUNDED RESEARCH THROUGH COMMERCIALISATION

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Research and innovation is a cornerstone of Ireland's economic development policy. Significant State investment has been made over the past decade in the areas of Science, Technology and Innovation, resulting in a strong base of research expertise that is focused on new technologies in areas like ICT, healthcare, manufacturing competitiveness, energy, engineering, food, software and telecommunications.

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Getting the ideas and technologies from this research base shared with companies is an important component of a national innovation strategy. Referred to as “knowledge transfer” this includes research-company collaboration, consultancy advice to business, licensing of intellectual property and technology to business, and the creation of new companies from Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Collaboration with business, in which both sides can benefit from access to new knowledge, resources and new challenges, is prevalent within Ireland's HEIs. For example, over 1,500 new agreements were put in place between research and industry in 2013. Ireland's HEIs are also well-attuned to identifying new opportunities for commercialisation and to protecting these ideas so that they may be

licensed to companies or used as the basis of new company creation. There are now over 80 spin-out companies based on intellectual assets from HEIs that are active three years post-incorporation.

These results have been driven in large part by State policy, supported by investment to create a knowledge transfer infrastructure. Ireland now has a cohesive funding support system that enables the identification and development of early stage commercial concepts and technologies within HEIs to create commercially viable propositions. All of Ireland's HEIs now have, or have access to, dedicated teams of people with experience in commercialisation of research, intellectual property and legal agreements.

A NATIONAL APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Reflecting the importance the State places on interactions between the research base and industry and in the commercialisation of research, a central national office has been created to take a system-wide overview of the knowledge transfer system in Ireland. Launched in May 2014, the formation of Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) was a key recommendation from a Government-led task force that reviewed the state of business-research base engagement in 2012 and published the report ‘Putting Public Research to work for Ireland’. KTI is a partnership between Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Universities Association, and is accountable to the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI).

CONNECTING AND LEVERAGING

To enable the impact of publicly-funded research to be realised, KTI works with key stakeholders, such as Ireland's research funding agencies, business, investors and publicly-funded research performing organisations, to develop a visible

and predictable knowledge transfer system in Ireland. The shared goal is to maximise business innovation from State-funded research through enabling businesses and investors to access technology, ideas and expertise to drive development and growth within their companies. With the ultimate goal of delivering public economic and societal benefit.

Of course, this benefits the research base too. Engaging with the business community provides researchers with the opportunity to apply practical insights to their work, to access new knowledge and resources, and to see their research make a broader impact through commercial application. It also provides opportunities for researcher mobility and student employment.

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A UNIQUE RESOURCE

Through KTI, Ireland has created a global first. KTI is an office, a resource, a facilitator and an advisor. KTI is developing as an authority on the knowledge transfer and research commercialisation system in Ireland, producing a number of reports and analyses on Ireland’s performance. KTI also manages the State funding programme for commercialisation support in HEIs, the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI). This programme has enabled the creation of a technology transfer infrastructure for Ireland in a short timeframe and is supporting its development to meet the rapidly changing needs of funders and business.

KTI directly helps companies. It works to make the research and commercialisation system in Ireland more visible, understandable and accessible for business.

The KTI web portal (www.knowledgetransferireland.com) is a single

powerful resource that enables business and the public sector to leverage the potential of Irish research and innovation. It provides an overview of Ireland’s research landscape and drills into the research capabilities of the country’s universities, institutes of technology and other major publicly-funded research centres.

Drawing on multiple databases, the KTI portal provides:

- A database of new ideas and technologies available for licensing
- A search function to identify research specialists and research facilities that can optimise R&D opportunities and overcome challenges
- Direct links to key contacts within the Technology Transfer Offices of each HEI and research performing organisation

KTI, through its website, offers practical guidance on IP, licensing and commercialisation, including a step-by-step guide that explains the engagement process with the technology transfer offices and researchers. Useful to business and researchers alike, the series of KTI Practical Guides to contracts and sample agreements has been designed to make the process of contracting between business and the research base simple and understandable.

A TIME OF CHALLENGE AND A TIME OF OPPORTUNITY

The delivery of impact from research (and its demonstration) has become a major priority for developed nations. Contribution to the body of international peer-reviewed research publications and the development of a research workforce are well recognised and essential markers of impact. But now the contribution of research and research expertise to business innovation (both with existing and newly formed companies) and economic and societal impact is high on the agenda.

Many HEIs in Europe understand this and have placed knowledge transfer as a priority alongside teaching and research. And the more forward thinking HEIs have embedded this operationally, through their academic performance and recognition systems. The Irish higher education and funding system is rapidly evolving in this area. The challenge will be to do so in a consistent and future-proofed manner.

As KTI develops, we need and value engagement from across the innovation ecosystem. We look forward to working with all our stakeholders in 2015, as together we can make Ireland an exemplar of modern knowledge transfer. For more information and to contact us, please visit: www.knowledgetransferireland.com

KTI LAUNCH

Making it easier to commercialise ideas from State-funded research

28th May, 2014

Two hundred delegates from the business and investment community, research and government agencies attended the formal launch of KTI at the Convention Centre Dublin in May 2014. A range of speakers welcomed the initiative, including and CEO of Ibec, Danny McCoy and Kevin Sherry, Manager International Sales and Partnering at Enterprise Ireland

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton T.D. said: "As of today, Ireland is the first and only country in Europe to give companies the opportunity to search multiple databases of the research talent, knowledge and technologies available in our publicly-funded research institutions. This is a significant milestone in the Government's strategy to build collaborative links between the State research sector and industry. It will lead to increased business innovation, cost-efficiencies and ultimately job creation in Irish industry."



Richard Bruton T.D., Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation and Dr. Alison Campbell, Director, KTI

EDUCATION IN THE MEDIA

FIVE NEW SFI RESEARCH CENTRES NAMED

20 OCTOBER 2014

Five new world-class SFI research centres are to be set up with Government and industry funding of €245m over the next six years. Focus areas include medical devices, applied geosciences and connectivity.

The five new centres are:

Adapt, which is focused on global digital connectivity;

Connect Centre for Future Networks and Communications, focused on future broadband, cellular and internet-of-things networks;

Cúram Centre for Research in Medical Devices;

iCrag Centre for Research in Applied Geosciences;

Lero, The Irish Software Research Centre.

The five centres involve a collaborative partnership across higher education institutions in Ireland with participation from Cork Institute of Technology; Dublin City University; Dublin Institute of Technology; Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies; Dundalk IT; NUI Galway; Maynooth University; Royal College of Surgeons Ireland; Trinity College Dublin; Tyndall National Institute; University College Cork; University College Dublin; University of Limerick and Waterford Institute of Technology.

The five centres will be involved in over 165 industry collaborations with partners ranging from multinationals to SMEs and including Intel, Google, Microsoft, Medtronic Vascular Galway Ltd, Xilinx, and Huawei.

Funding of €155m from the Department of Jobs will be delivered through Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) Research Centres Programme, coupled with €90m in cash and in-kind contributions from industry partners. The funding will be provided between 2014 and 2020.

Full story at: <http://businessandleadership.com/leadership/item/48050-five-new-sfi-research-centr/>