

Atlantic Social Lab

Networking events template

Partner Name: Enterprise North West

Networking event (meeting, visit, workshop, conference,)	Social Innovation Conference
Date of event	3 rd and 4 th of October 2019
Time of event	0900-1700 each day
Venue of event	The Thinc Lab, Belfast
Event coordinator/contact person	Claire Ferris (Work West)
Target (numbers and composition) (ONG, social entrepreneurs and local associations, Local and regional public authorities, political leaders, stakeholders and decision makers)	<p>In attendance over the 2 days were 30 social change actors and organisations from across NI. The mix of attendees included local community and voluntary groups, social enterprises, social entrepreneurs, local councils, universities, central government departments, local stakeholders and other decision makers from across the spectrum of NI social change organisations and facilitators.</p> <p>As part of the Atlantic Social Lab, Enterprise North West organized and facilitated a group of social change actors and influencers to attend the conference and to partake in the overall session as well as the workshop sessions during the days. This group represented the only attendees from the North West of NI.</p>

<p>Overall objective</p>	<p>This conference aimed to consider and debate action for social change. As such, those attending as part of the Atlantic Social Lab project networked and partook in the workshop sessions in reflecting on emerging thinking and practice that is driving local economic development across NI and present recommendations on what needs to be done to drive social change in NI. The event and plenary sessions also celebrated the role of community development activists and how, as social change agents, they facilitate the empowerment of citizens to shape the spaces they live in.</p>
<p>Brief description of the activities</p>	<p>The conference was curated by one of the leading social development organisations in Belfast, Work West Enterprise Agency.</p> <p>One of the main aims of the conference was to explore and investigate the dynamics of creative problem solving and design thinking and examine potential new applications in social innovation. In addition, it explored and discussed the risks and limitations of these methodologies.</p> <p>It also considered, are social innovations based on autonomy, relatedness and purpose a reaction to marketization and state failures and/or a (historical) manifestation of (growing) demand for self-actualisation, self-determination emancipation and “doing good”</p> <p>Keynote speaker over the 2 days was Laura Switalski from the International Centre for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo State University, USA.</p>

<p>Added value for your pilot projects</p>	<p>The attendance and involvement of the local stakeholders from the North West of NI has significant value in the implementation and development of the pilot actions. Across the district, the pilot actions will support skills development and piloting of new approaches around developing social innovation in local communities. This will support the Inclusive Strategic Plan of the local council to deliver upon the local community plans in partnership with local communities and to explore new approaches.</p>
<p>Added value for Atlantic Social Lab</p>	<p>The attendance and involvement of local stakeholders (social enterprises, social entrepreneurs, community and voluntary groups, universities and local council) from the North West of NI has significant value for social change within the North West as these attendees were able to network and share their ideas and discuss potential projects at a strategic level with some of NI's most creative and influential social change influencers. It also provided attendees with insights into other projects from across NI that have affected social change at a local and regional level through increased community engagement, empowerment and participation. These attendees will now be able to follow up on these contacts and transfer this learning into their own projects at a local level.</p>
<p>Results / Main conclusions</p>	<p>The main conclusions and results from the attendance at the SI conference of the ASL stakeholders were that they were all provided with a unique convergence of knowledge sharing, creative networking and learning into a single package of like-minded people and organisations. It also forced attendees to grow and challenge themselves around the area of social innovation and creative problem solving at a local community level.</p>

Through being in a room of like-minded people - other people who are willing to take time away from the office to learn something new & other people who want to "better" themselves, attendees were able to discover that they you're not alone in wanting to improve their communities and society through the enhance of knowledge & skills and thus they were able to bring something back to their own organisation or communities.

As the conference had a broad mix of attendees, the ASL attendees were able to have the opportunity to mix and mingle, form new relationships, and strengthen existing ones with a broad range of social change stakeholders from NI. Over the 2 days they were able to make connections with potential partners of new projects.

Some Photos

See attached.

