

Impact Evaluation of the Innovation Voucher Programme

What our client wanted

Frontline was commissioned by Enterprise Ireland to evaluate the Innovation Vouchers Programme over the period 2007-2012. The Voucher scheme provides SMEs with up to €5,000 to work with an education/research provider on technical and non-technical innovation projects. The programme is part of a raft of initiatives aimed at creating a knowledge intensive and export driven economy for Ireland. The evaluation was commissioned to:

- ensure that the objectives of the Innovation Voucher Programme are being met
- answer whether the programme is proving to be effective and identify potential gaps and overlaps
- demonstrate whether Innovation Vouchers represent value for money
- learn how programme delivery and performance monitoring could be improved

What Frontline did

We designed a logic model that outlined the chain of benefits amongst the companies and third level institutes, and how realising those benefits has led to economic impact for Ireland. The work included in-depth face to face research with operational and strategic stakeholders, by spending the day at 17 of the participating HEIs. We also conducted an e-survey of over 300 beneficiary companies. We used the findings to estimate the economic value add of the Innovation Voucher scheme, expressed as a return on investment for every € spent.

What difference we made

The evaluation highlighted that Innovation Vouchers are straightforward and cost effective to manage for Enterprise Ireland; accessible and utilised by a broad range of small businesses; beneficial to companies in many ways, including increasing competitiveness; and beneficial to knowledge providers in building new client partnerships, developing market relevant knowledge for academic staff and raising teaching levels. We set the intervention in the context of other innovation supports in Ireland, and made a number of recommendations to improve the programme. These were positively received.

What our client said

“In performing a comprehensive impact evaluation of Enterprise Ireland’s Innovation Voucher programme Frontline Consultants met or exceeded our extensive requirements in all areas. Over the past five years Frontline have consistently provided cost effective evaluations that provide added value and important insights over and above those detailed in our tender invitations. These evaluations have positively contributed to Enterprise Ireland’s strategic evolution in a variety of key science, technology and innovation domains. [Kevin Flynn, Research & Innovation Policy , Enterprise Ireland](#)