

Enterprise Ireland

Evaluation of the Campus Incubation Programme



What our client wanted

Over a 10- year period, Enterprise Ireland (EI) has invested €50m in the Campus Incubation Programme, the development of 22 incubation centres on third level campuses across Ireland. This has included capital build projects and assistance with management costs at institutes of technology. In line with best practice Enterprise Ireland wanted to establish the impact that this has had on incubation client companies, host institutions, and Enterprise Ireland objectives (particularly regional development).

What Frontline did

Frontline reviewed the set up and operation of the programme to date. We undertook a programme of stakeholder consultation involving face-to-face interviews with over 100 incubation client companies, 20 incubation centre managers, senior personnel at host institutions and senior representatives from EI and the Higher Education Authority. Consultation included an e-survey to maximise participation among incubation client companies. The evaluation sought to understand best practice across Ireland, what works, what does not work and the benefits of different delivery models. A review of international incubation practice was also undertaken, to identify emerging trends which could be practically implemented in an Irish context. Our work involved a full value for money analysis by reviewing the costs (EI inputs) and benefits (R&D, exports, turnover, and employment) of the programme to date, as well as an appraisal of future benefits.

What difference we made

Our evaluation identified how the programme impacted on incubation client company growth and survival, institution's commercialisation rates and strategies to support company creation as well as contribution to promoting entrepreneurship and balanced regional development. It also delivered a full economic evaluation, assessing the additionality of the intervention and cost benefit ratios for key outputs and outcomes. Based on our findings we developed recommendations to inform future delivery of the Campus Incubation Programme.

What our client said

"From the outset, Frontline ensured that they fully understood our requirements as well as the environment in which the programme operates. Building on this foundation, they undertook an extremely robust analysis – both qualitative and quantitative – of the programme's impact which they complemented with their own insights on good practice. Frontline liaised proactively with us throughout the process to ensure completion in a professional and timely manner. The resultant report now constitutes a key reference document for this programme."

Nicki O'Connor, Programme Manager – Campus Incubation



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