Policy and regional context

Limerick and the wider Mid-West region used to be known for fragmentation of agencies and not reaching its potential as a result, with high unemployment and social deprivation. Following task force reports to government sounding the alarm bells, change did happen…

- Amalgamation of Limerick City and County to create urban area plus hinterland of over 120,000 people
- Abolition of regional entity Shannon Development; functions absorbed by mainstream agencies (Shannon Airport, Enterprise Ireland, Failte Ireland)
- Limerick 2030 Plan and Limerick Charter- Commitment to Cohesion and Convergence (signatories: City/County Authorities, HEIs, Chamber of Commerce, Shannon Airport)

Signing the Limerick Charter, June 2013

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Policy and regional context (2)

Limerick 2030 Strategy, some of the stated ambitions….
- Renaissance of the waterfront
- Knowledge-based investment and innovation
- Three HEIs to have a joint presence in city-centre

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Policy and regional context (3)

Some positive results from the changed approach:
- Limerick designated as first national City of Culture, 2014
- Limerick City and County Council Winner of Chambers Ireland Local Authority of the Year on 13 November
- Redevelopment of Limerick city centre commencing
- Clear focus on successful industry clusters (ICT, Engineering)
- Major jobs announcements by IDA-supported companies (e.g. Regeneron, Northern Trust, Optelvision, SAP Technologies)
- Increase in labour force in Limerick by 1% since 2006, and unemployment in Mid-West decreased to 13.2% (nationally: 11.8%) in Q2 2014 since a peak of 17.1% in 2010
- Live register in Limerick declined from 21,160 in 2011 to 16,310 in 2014.
- Resurgence of Shannon Airport (passenger traffic and wider aviation industries, with positive impact on tourism)

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Regional HE landscape

"Shannon Consortium" set up in 2006, comprising University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology (and previously IT Tralee). Footprint expanded to Tipperary in 2011 when LIT incorporated the smaller college there.

- €20m competitive funding for collaborative projects, mainly Strategic Innovation Fund but also Springboard and some EU funds (EGF)
- Next major HE centres at considerable distance (Cork, Galway) – the "Atlantic Corridor"
- Shannon Consortium referred to as "Mid-West Cluster" of three <u>autonomous</u> HEIs in HE Landscape policy documents. No more mergers for us, thank you.

Shannon Consortium Teaching Excellence Award

One of the SIF projects that has stood the test of time…

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Key Characteristics of Shannon Consortium

- Geographic proximity – 3 institutions based in medium-sized city, though primary catchment area includes adjoining counties (71% of intake defined as "regional")
- All ISCED discipline areas covered, including some provision that has a wider national or niche status
- Total budgets €¼ bn-, 21000+ students (3000+ postgrads, 500+ international), 2300- staff
- The regional cluster is our major collaboration under the national HE policy, and other collaborations are non-conflicting. It could not possibly work otherwise.

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Shannon Consortium Vision

MOU, 2014:

"Based upon a shared vision derived from our strategic plans, national policy and regional/national skills needs, LIT, MIC and UL aim to develop a <u>deeper</u>, formalised alliance which will span across a <u>defined</u> range of core areas. These areas will contribute towards enhanced and sustainable opportunities for current and future learners across the three organisations and will benefit industry and the wider community."

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Shannon Consortium MOU signing

Shannon Consortium Objectives

Areas for collaboration identified in MOU, 2014:

1. <u>Taught programmes</u> *
2. E-learning
3. Teacher education
4. <u>Transfer/progression pathways</u> *
5. Research programmes
6. *Enterprise and the community §*
7. Shared services and facilities
8. *Promotion of the region §*

* = HEA priorities

§ = regional priorities

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Governance arrangements

- Independent Chair: Tim O'Connor (retired senior diplomat and former Secretary General to the President with major international track record; also vice-chair of Limerick City of Culture Board).
- Steering Committee: the three Presidents
- Implementation Board: the three VPs Academic plus two other senior management representatives from each institution, meeting regularly.
- Working groups as appropriate, e.g. three Deans of Graduate Studies developing Limerick Federated Graduate School plan and progressing pilots.
- Minutes are shared across all groups.

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Stakeholder involvement

- CEO of Limerick Authorities attended recent Steering Group meeting.
- Retired CEO of VEC (now ETB) chairs board of NISE.
- Steering Committee to attend future meetings of Limerick Council and Limerick Economic Forum.
- Have expressed intention to lend support to Limerick bid for European City of Culture status (2020) – bid must be prepared by mid 2015.

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Achievements to date as per MOU

1. <u>Taught programmes</u>: comprehensive mapping exercise completed; plans for joint BA UL-MIC under development (already module-sharing in Geography). Academic calendars being synchronised.
2. <u>E-learning</u>: stalled following unsuccessful bid to T&L forum; current platforms non-compatible.
3. <u>Teacher Education</u>: agreed plan for National Institute for Studies in Education (NISE), encompassing all primary and secondary ITE (at MIC and UL). LIT Art and Design Teacher Ed programme under UL validation with some module sharing, implemented from 2014/15.
4. <u>Transfer/progression pathways</u>: "Threshold Concepts" project with second level schools to support transition; mapping entry routes and enrolments from ETBs/PLCs into our institutions.

Achievements to date as per MOU (2)

5. <u>Research programmes</u>: Federated Limerick Graduate School being set up with level 10 validation through UL; alignment of policies and joint provision of generic doctoral training. MIC PhDs already under UL model; first LIT pilot students now registered. QQI case-by-case validation being phased out.

6. <u>Enterprise and the community</u>: LIT delivering enterprise development programmes across multiple sites, also at UL. All 3 HEIs significantly contributing to Limerick regeneration agenda.

7. <u>Shared services and facilities</u>: track record of joint procurement yielding substantial savings.

8. <u>Promotion of the region</u>: joint Open Days; English Language training of international students (MIC-LIT); hosting the 2014 ITLG (Silicon Valley-Limerick) conference (LIT-UL); "Limerick for IT" platform with industry partners (LIT-UL).

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Case Study: Limerick for IT

A partnership to make Limerick the first choice location for internationally traded services located in the city centre:

- build a pipeline of job-ready graduate talent in IT areas of global/national shortage, in partnership with industry.

  - Provide accommodation suitable for such businesses at attractive rates.

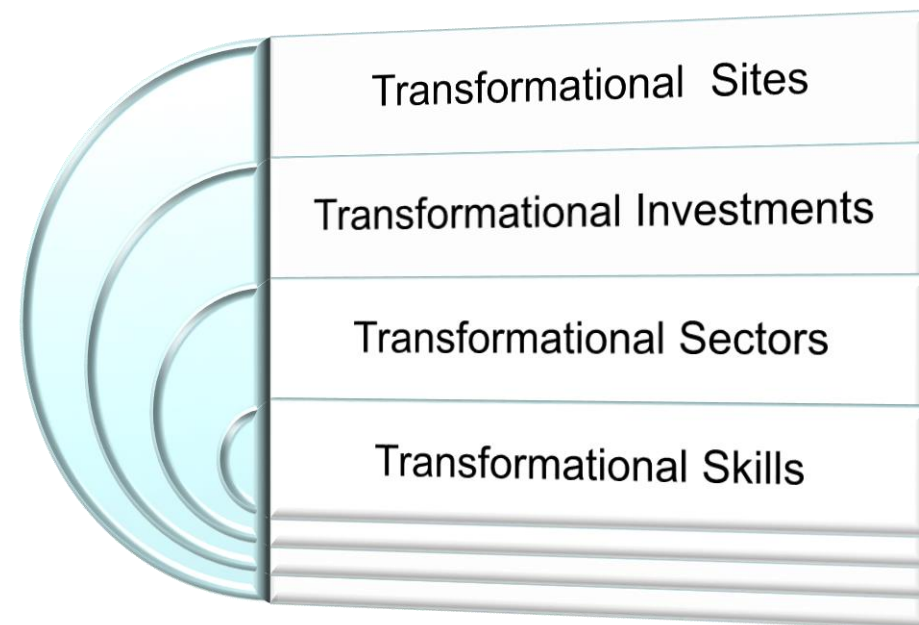 - Support such start-up businesses with local knowledge through our network.
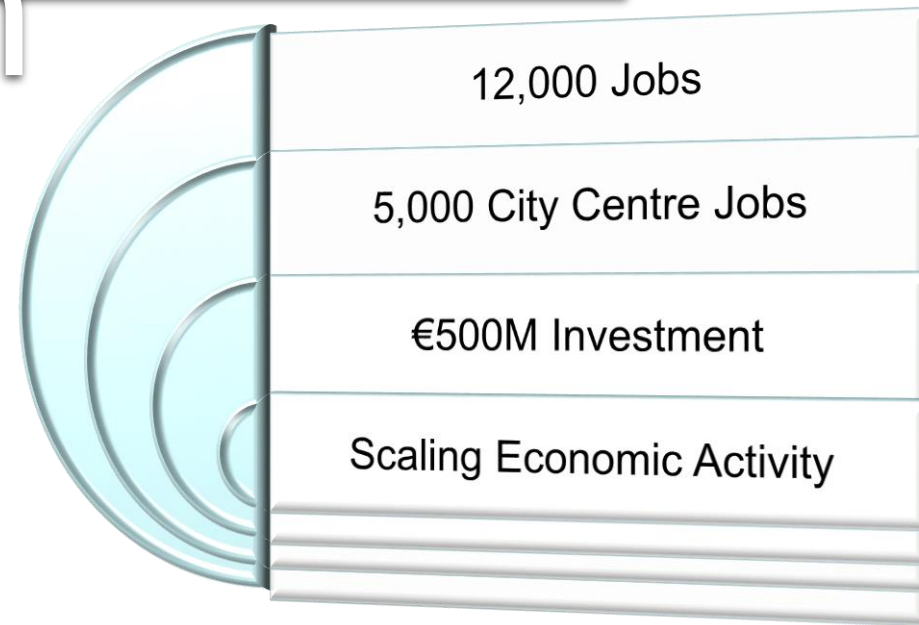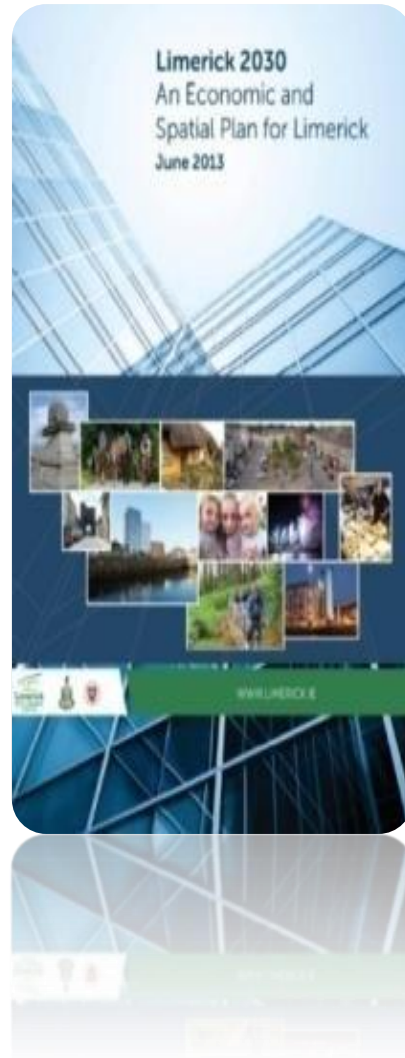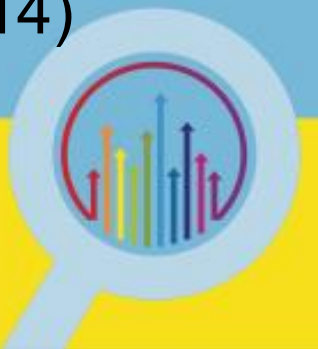
Limerick for IT - Core Team

Name	Organisation
Mary-Liz Trant	HEA
Peter Brown	HEA
Bob Savage	EMC
Pat Daly	Limerick City & Co. Council
Mary Shire	UL
Ann Ledwith	UL
Reiner Dojen	UL
John Nelson	UL
Michael Hennessy	UL
Alison Power	Dept of Social Protection (Limerick)
Audrey Sheehy	Dept of Social Protection (Limerick)
Keith Moynes	Dept of Education

Name	Organisation
Brian Keating	IDA
Conor Agnew	IDA
Richard O'Sullivan	IDA
Janice O'Connell	LIT
Pascal Meehan	LIT
Maria Hinfelaar	LIT
Fergal Barry	LIT
Pat Casey	Kerry
John Gleeson	GM
Barry O'Sullivan	Johnson & Johnson
Tom Murphy	Johnson & Johnson

Limerick 2030 Plan

Limerick 2030
An Economic and
Spatial Plan for Limerick
June 2013

- 12,000 Jobs
- 5,000 City Centre Jobs
- €500M Investment
- Scaling Economic Activity

- Transformational Sites
- Transformational Investments
- Transformational Sectors
- Transformational Skills

How are success & impact being measured? Maybe like this...

(Gothic conference LIT/MIC, October '14)

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How are success & impact being measured? No seriously...

Metrics in our Compacts with HEA dictate the agenda because of direct impact on our funding.

The jury is out on how the academic community (students/staff) and how key stakeholders will experience (and contribute to) our impact as Shannon Consortium "new style".

The message that the three institutions are stepping up their collaboration has been very well received by stakeholders, particularly industry.

How are key challenges being addressed?

First, let's define them…

Key challenge no. 1: raising the bar from ad hoc projects and chasing peripheral pots of funding (e.g. SIF) to deeper collaboration that will transform our core business – education and research!

Key challenge no. 2: satisfying the HEA priorities while also meeting local and regional expectations (these agendas are not the same)!

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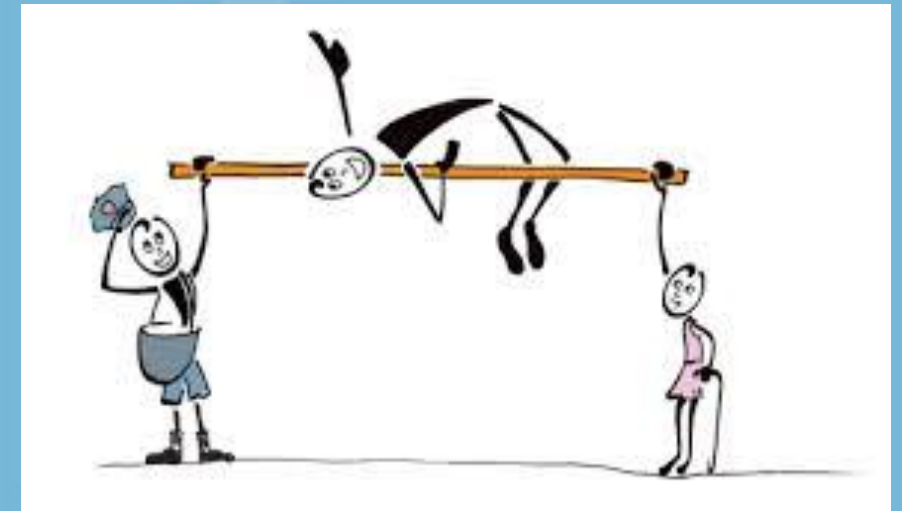
What is working?

- Formal governance and management structures, with a highly competent chair
- Developing trust and confidence in the alliance – able to pick up the phone to each other any time
- Evidence of some progress on all 8 MOU objectives
- Credibility with policymakers; good track record
- Institutional agendas and each institution's strategic position in HE landscape suited by the alliance
- Understanding that 1 to 1 relationships exist as well as threesomes.

"Being able to achieve together what each institution would not be able to achieve on its own" – thinking strategically collectively regarding the region and city, which stakeholders expect will have real added value in addition to our individual contributions

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What is not (yet) working?

- Policymakers seem reluctant to accept our brand name and identity, calling us "Mid-West Cluster" instead of "Shannon Consortium".
- Stop-start mode of some national policies, e.g. Regional Clusters call for funding deferred by 2 months 2 days before original deadline.
- Significant obstacles to "joint academic planning" (and programme delivery) that we have not yet surfaced: organisational cultures, parity of esteem, staff contracts.
- Data and methodology for our regional impact not yet developed - can we already assume Type I + II multiplier effects for every € * 8? (B Lucey et al., 2014).
- How to align HEA priorities with local expectations?

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Next steps

Maintain the momentum and deserve the credit… from our students, staff, region and funders.

Victorious Irish women's rugby team with UL and LIT players

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Next steps (2)

Then pause for breath…

Thank you

Granny visiting Limerick, September 2014

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