




BeyondScale

Workshop User Story

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-  Type of Activity - **Outbound Workshop**



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How to read the document

This document represents the series of workshop user stories within the BeyondScale project. These stories are based on the combination of the HEInnovate dimensions and the Value Proposition Canvas, and they depict the experiences of the partner higher education institutions. To understand the concept of the workshop, we provide a **glossary** below:

- **The Aim:** BeyondScale is one of the Forward-looking projects to create a pan-European community of practice, that will share, and document emerging good practices based on the outcomes of the individual and collaborative activities of the participants. Within the BeyondScale project, the HEInnovate tool is deployed beyond its self-assessment capacity.
- **Inbound & Outbound activities:** The HEInnovate dimensions are used to drive entrepreneurial and innovative change across a range of inbound and outbound education and engagement activities in higher education institutions (HEIs) with relevant stakeholders. From the BeyondScale perspective, the inbound activity serves to support HEI's institutional development process and organizational capacity; therefore, it targets internal stakeholders (administrative staff, academics, researchers, students). As for the outbound activity, it aims at strengthening HEI's wider regional and societal engagement, thus it targets external stakeholders (students, employers, social enterprises, business, NGOs).
- **The Value Proposition Workshop:** In order to have a structured workshop format, the Value Proposition Design approach was adopted and the BeyondScale team came up with the new format which incorporates the specific HEInnovate dimensions and the Value Proposition canvas. The Value proposition canvas is a tool that helps to understand the inbound and outbound stakeholders, and to target their needs better, which leads to optimized value creation.
- **Buddy System:** One of the main assets of the BeyondScale project is the Buddy System, in which partners engage in a peer-learning, exchanging experiences, and discussing plans. Our partner higher education institutions have been organized as a buddy team throughout the project based on similar challenges, interests, and the HEInnovate dimensions.

Outbound Workshop @DCU, our story

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Key Words

Knowledge Exchange, Collaboration, Third Sector, NGOs, Charities, Social Enterprises, Community Organisations, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation, Social Impact.

The Activity

For our planned outbound activity at Dublin City University, we chose the HEInnovate dimension, Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration. The DCU BeyondScale team wanted to investigate what knowledge exchange and collaboration currently looks like between DCU and the third sector and explore ways to enhance collaboration between them. The third sector accounts for not-for-profit organisations such as social enterprises, charities, NGOs and community organisations.

The main objectives we set for our outbound workshop were as follows:

- To gain an insight into what the landscape of knowledge exchange and collaboration currently looks like between DCU and the third sector.
- To identify and understand the main challenges that exist in the third sector and to investigate how DCU could help to overcome these challenges.
- To improve knowledge exchange and collaboration between DCU and the third sector by developing an action plan based on the findings of the workshop.

The Workshop

In the workshop, we explored the HEInnovate Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration questionnaire with the participants, and then investigated how knowledge exchange and collaboration could be enhanced between DCU and the third sector using the value proposition canvas. A total of 12 individuals from the third sector participated in the workshop. These stakeholders included:

- A DCU graduate who recently set up their own social enterprise that aims to support businesses and organisations to become more LGBTQ+ friendly and accepting.
- A social entrepreneur and CEO of a social enterprise focused on environmental sustainability and food growing.

- An individual working with an NGO that provides services and support for people seeking protection and people recognised as refugees in Ireland.
- Four representatives from two national organisations that provide support to charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises across Ireland.

Individuals from Irish language organisations in the sector also participated in the workshop. These included:

- A manager of a rural community cooperative which aims to promote economic, social and cultural development in the local community.
- A representative from a social and cultural organisation that supports the Irish language community and promotes the Irish language in Ireland and worldwide.
- A representative from a national organisation that supports the development of Irish-medium and Gaeltacht education across Ireland.
- Two representatives from a regional state agency that promotes linguistic, cultural, social and economic development of Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) regions.

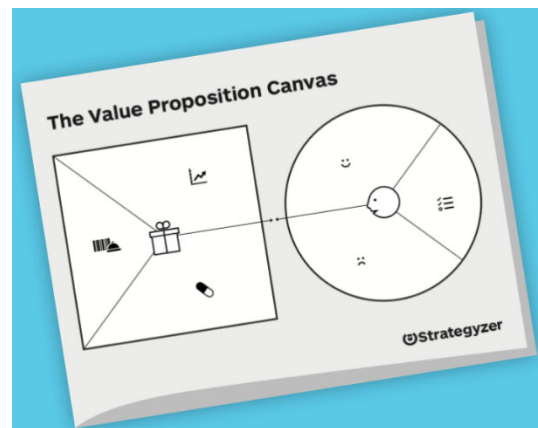
Ten members of DCU staff from five different disciplines (Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge, Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies, Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, Office of Student Life, Former DCU Ryan Academy) also attended. This included five facilitators and five participants. In addition, three BeyondScale partners were in attendance. We carried out the workshop online using Zoom.

Preparing the workshop

During the preparation phase of the workshop, we invited individuals who work for and/or with the Third Sector (i.e. social enterprises, NGOs, charities) to the workshop via email. We also invited a number of DCU staff who have shown an interest in social innovation and social entrepreneurship. All of the individuals invited were already part of our network to some degree, so this made it easy for us to reach out to them. We invited each individual from the sector to an online one-on-one Zoom call prior to the workshop to explain in further detail the purpose and aims of our workshop. Individuals could also ask us questions during these initial Zoom calls if they needed clarification on anything. Every individual from the third sector who we invited showed an interest in the workshop and agreed to participate.

As part of the preparation phase for the workshop, we created a workshop information pack for all workshop participants, which included the workshop timetable and information about all of the attendees. This included the name and description of the organisations that the individuals work for, information about each individual's role in their organisation and photographs of each individual. We also created posters of the event and of each participant (in English and in Irish) and shared them on our Twitter page, @BeyondScale_DCU, to publicise the event.

We were already rather familiar with the concept of value proposition. However, in order to really familiarise ourselves with the value proposition canvas, we used the [Strategyzer](#) website. This website is very useful and includes a short three-minute video that gives a very clear description of how to use the canvas. We found it so useful that we decided to use it during the workshop to introduce the canvas to the workshop participants.



Our buddies who we collaborated with when preparing and carrying out the workshop were our partners from the University of Innsbruck (UIBK). We decided to buddy up together as they had similar interests to us in DCU. They also wanted to organise a workshop on the same topic to investigate knowledge exchange and collaboration between their university and third sector organisations in Austria. Having buddies to collaborate with was helpful for the preparation process of the workshop, as we were able to provide each other with helpful advice and support. In addition, we were able to work together to develop relevant additional questions that we included in the questionnaire.

Rather than conducting a pre-workshop questionnaire, we sent the workshop participants the questionnaire before the workshop and asked them to have a look at the questions in preparation for the workshop. During the workshop, we went through each of the main statements in the questionnaire one by one with the workshop participants and asked them to submit their answers in the chat box on Zoom. We collected the participants' answers from the chat box during the workshop and inputted them into an Excel spreadsheet.

Conducting the workshop

The workshop took place on the 30th March, 2021 from 10am - 12pm (IST, UTC +01:00). The workshop structure was split into two main parts. The first part was dedicated to answering and discussing the HEInnovate questionnaire. The second part involved the value proposition canvas exercise where we gathered participants' thoughts and ideas, based on conversations from the first part of the workshop.

The official workshop structure was as follows:

10:00 - 10:05:	<i>Beginning - Wait for all participants to arrive</i>
10:05 - 10:20:	<i>Introduction to BeyondScale and HEInnovate tool by Dr Ruaidhrí Neavyn</i>
10:20 - 11:00:	<i>Discussion of HEInnovate questions (7 mins per question, 5 mins at end for questions and overall reflections)</i>
11:00 - 11:05:	<i>Break</i>
11:05 - 11:10:	<i>Explanation of the Value Proposition Canvas</i>
11:10 - 11:30:	<i>Breakout rooms to discuss canvas in smaller groups (mix of external and internal guests) using Google Docs</i>
11:30 - 11:50:	<i>Discussion of Value Proposition Canvas in one big group</i>
11:50 - 12:00:	<i>Check-out: Final questions and reflections</i>

As previously mentioned, we used the Zoom chat box to gather (both internal and external) participants' answers from the questionnaire in the first part of the workshop. For each of the five main statements in the questionnaire, every participant gave a 3 or a 4. However, not every participant gave answers to every question during the session. The full results of the questionnaire were as follows:

1. *The HEI is committed to collaboration and knowledge exchange with industry, the public sector and society:*
 - Five participants voted for option 3, seven participants voted for option 4.
2. *The HEI demonstrates active involvement in partnerships and relationships with a wide range of stakeholders:*
 - Three participants voted for option 3, Six participants voted for option 4.

3. *The HEI has strong links with incubators, science parks and other external initiatives:*
 - Seven participants voted for option 3, three participants voted for option 4.
4. *The HEI provides opportunities for staff and students to take part in innovative activities with business/the external environment:*
 - Eight participants voted for option 3, two participants voted for option 4.
5. *The HEI integrates research, education and industry (wider community) activities to exploit new knowledge:*
 - Four participants voted for option 3, seven participants voted for option 4.

For the second part of the workshop, the value proposition canvas exercise, we divided the participants into four smaller groups in breakout rooms. We also assigned at least one facilitator to each group to act as scribe. We decided to make breakout rooms as we felt that there were too many participants to carry out the exercise in one large group, and we wanted to give everyone a fair chance to contribute to the discussion. For the breakout room exercise, we used a Google Doc to collect workshop participants' opinions on the various elements of the canvas in relation to knowledge exchange and collaboration between DCU and the third sector. We made separate tables for each group in the Google Doc that each scribe used to capture what was said in each breakout room. After the workshop, we used the [Miro](#) platform to map out the data collected on the value proposition canvas. We decided not to use Miro during the workshop as we thought it may have been more difficult to capture everything that was said, compared to using Google Docs.

The main outcomes of our outbound workshop at DCU were that there is a lot of potential for collaboration between DCU and the third sector as well as between organisations within the third sector. In addition, lots of commonalities were identified by participants in terms of end goals and needs of the sector. There is a demand for additional knowledge and skills within the third sector. More specifically, there is a need to integrate knowledge on technology, engineering, finance and insurance into the sector.



Reflections: Lessons learned and recommendations

Overall, the HEInnovate Value Proposition workshop allowed us to gain a better understanding about what specific support individuals in the third sector would actually like to receive from higher education institutions. Prior to the workshop, we assumed that the barriers and pains existing in the third sector, in relation to knowledge exchange and collaboration, would have been rather general (i.e. we thought that the participants might have shared general concerns that there isn't enough knowledge exchange and collaboration happening between the university and the sector). However, having employed the workshop format to understand the sector's needs and requirements better, we discovered that individuals and organisations within the sector had very specific pains (e.g. a lack of specific skills and knowledge in relation to areas such as finance, insurance, technology, communication etc.). Having gained a better understanding of the sector's needs, we were able to make a clearer action plan from the data we gathered during the workshop.

Overall, we were happy with how the workshop went. Below are the main positive takeaways from the experience:

- The **workshop information pack** that we created during the preparation stage of the workshop was useful for the workshop participants. All attendees could have a look at the workshop programme prior to the workshop, and could familiarise themselves with the other attendees who were coming to the workshop. This saved lots of time at the start of

the workshop, as participants did not have to introduce themselves to each other one by one.

- **Publicising the event** on Twitter was also a success during the preparation stage.
- The **individual meetings** that we arranged with each organisation from the third sector prior to the workshop worked very well. These meetings allowed us to explain the BeyondScale project and our workshop in more detail and allowed participants to ask us any questions that they had before attending the workshop.
- The **structure of the workshop** itself was an overall success. The two main parts of the workshop (i.e. the HEInnovate questionnaire section and the value proposition canvas section) connected nicely together. As part of the discussion during the first half of the workshop, participants were already generating ideas relevant to the value proposition, which led us naturally on to the second half of the workshop.
- The **breakout rooms** in the second part of the workshop worked really well as more people could share their opinions in smaller groups and more data were able to be collected. The conversations in the 4 breakout rooms were very rich and interesting. To ensure that both sides of the canvas could be discussed, breakout rooms consisted of participants from the third sector as well as at least one participant from DCU and one facilitator. **Having a facilitator in each breakout room** ensured that the process went smoothly as it enabled participants to ask questions in the breakout rooms if they were unclear about anything in relation to the value proposition canvas.

One prominent thing that we noticed as a result of running our workshop is the **lack of appropriateness of the HEInnovate tool for third sector organisations**. More specifically, within the Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration dimension, many of the standard statements that are provided are not relevant to the third sector or do not take the sector into consideration. As individuals working in smaller third sector organisations tend to have a limited amount of time available (compared to larger private organisations), we decided not to require them to answer a survey beforehand, and instead got them to provide answers during the workshop. We only got the participants to answer the standard statements from the questionnaire, as we had a limited amount of time during the workshop. As a result, many of them remained silent as the statements were being discussed during the first part of the workshop as the statements were not relevant to them. One participant from the third sector even decided to leave the workshop during the first part as she felt the subject area was out of her depth.

We would therefore recommend providing the workshop participants with adapted versions of the HEInnovate statements to fit their context and getting them to answer them. The statement, *“The HEI has strong links with incubators, science parks and other external initiatives”*, was not that relevant to third sector organisations and the only participants who really contributed to the discussion around this statement were university staff working in engineering/technical areas. A statement such as *“The HEI has strong links with not-for-profits, social enterprises, community groups, urban living labs, etc.”* would have been more appropriate for our workshop participants. We strongly believe that there ultimately should be an additional dimension embedded in the HEInnovate tool that could adequately cover topics such as engagement with the third sector, social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social impact, rather than having to adapt the current statements in the existing dimensions to fit the context of the sector.

Statements in the questionnaire are also worded in a positive way. We believe this might have discouraged participants from giving negative responses to the statements. Participants may also have been discouraged to give genuine responses, as they submitted their answers in the Zoom chatbox, rather than anonymously. We therefore recommend allowing participants to answer the questions using the anonymous poll function on Zoom. We decided to adapt our inbound workshop, which took place a few weeks afterwards, and used this function so workshop participants could submit their answers anonymously without fear of being judged.

Next Steps

After the workshop, we sorted the data that were collected from the value proposition section of the workshop in a Google Doc and arranged the key findings on a value proposition canvas using the Miro platform. After reflecting on the findings collectively as a team, along with receiving input and advice from other colleagues, we developed an action plan to implement as part of the next phase of the project.

Our **action plan** is as follows: Matchmake three third sector organisations with DCU academics to devise projects for students based on the needs of the organisations. These projects may be in the form of a module assignment or a Bachelor’s or Master’s dissertation, for example. We plan on reaching out to participants from our outbound workshop and collaborating with them to co-design projects for students to carry out. Based on the specific ideas that the participants have, we will get in contact with various DCU staff members to see how we can embed the projects in various degree programmes.



Disclaimer:

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