



News Release

CAB/065/07

24 July 2007

Innovation Exchange to be delivered by consortium

Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector, today announced that a consortium including The Innovation Unit, ACEVO and Headshift has won the £1.2 million contract to deliver the new Innovation Exchange pilot – a programme to support the third sector's capacity to innovate.

The Innovation Exchange forms part of the Government's 'Partnership in Public Services Action Plan', which aims to remove barriers to greater third sector involvement in public services. The Exchange will offer innovators online resources including information, contact with other innovators and contact with appropriate sources of investment. Beyond this the programme will offer tailored support to the most promising innovators including training and guidance. This will help innovators to see their bright ideas become reality improving services for those that use them.

Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector said:

'I'm very pleased that we have found a partner to deliver the Innovation Exchange that combines both the know-how and creativity to make it a real asset for the sector.

'The Innovation Exchange will open up a range of exciting opportunities for people in the Third Sector who have great ideas for making services better. As well as an accessible online presence the Innovation exchange will offer peer-to-peer learning and help innovators find appropriate support.'

Mike Gibbons: Chief Executive of The Innovation Unit said:

'The diverse talents of the 3rd sector are widely recognised. This project is an opportunity to bring them together and create more space for innovation.'

Valerie Hannon, Director of Strategy at The Innovation Unit, who led the winning consortium's bid, said:

'We are delighted to be working with our partners on this ground-breaking project for the 3rd sector. Together we're confident we can create the structures needed to break through the operational barriers that currently inhibit innovation.'

Livio Hughes, co-founder of Headshift, commented:

'We are excited by this opportunity to apply our specialist social computing and Web 2.0 expertise to support the fostering and sharing of innovation in the Third Sector.'

Stephen Bubb: Chief Executive of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (acevo) said:

'Innovation and developing pioneering practice is very important to third sector chief executives and I am delighted for acevo to be part of this project. We know that there is a huge volume of innovation within the sector, we are thrilled to have the opportunity to share, encourage and develop the innovators.'

He went on to say 'Gathering an evidence base for the innovative work of the third sector must be our priority if we are to bring about real change in public services and real learning in how to develop innovation in the sector.'

Work is starting immediately on the web dimension of the project and the programme is expected to be officially launched in October.

Notes to Editors

1. The Innovation Unit is one of the country's leading organisations for innovation in education. It acts as a catalyst for change drawing on talent from both the public and private sectors to improve education and other related services. One of The Unit's central roles is to combine the expertise of teachers and school leaders with the ideas and ambition of policy-makers The Unit runs a range of projects. Currently the largest of these is the "Next Practice" education programme in which the Unit supports schools and local authorities as they take forward their own cutting-edge ideas to improve education. www.innovation-unit.co.uk
2. Headshift is a professional social software consulting and development company, which has rapidly emerged as the UK market leader in this specialist sector. It works with a range of knowledge-based organisations in both the corporate and government sectors to create online communication projects that exploit the power of social networking. Headshift has been building award-winning online communities, knowledge-sharing applications and websites for 11 years. www.headshift.com
3. acevo stands for The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary organisations. acevo is the professional body representing charity and not-for-profit sector chief executives in the UK. It has over 2000 members and is committed to improving third sector leadership skills worldwide. www.acevo.org.uk
4. The not-for-profit sector now employs the full-time equivalent of 1.5m staff, with a collective annual turnover of £46bn.
5. The Partnerships in Public Services action plan brings together the opportunities for the third sector to play an enhanced role in public services. Actions include, a national programme to train 2,000 of those who commission public services on how to involve the third sector in services and £30 million funding for community groups to work with Local Authorities to take over management or ownership of local assets. Further information is available from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/public_service_delivery/
6. The job of director for the Innovation Exchange will be advertised shortly. For more details see The Innovation Unit website www.innovation-unit.co.uk

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