

# HUMAN TALENT: A CITY'S GREATEST ASSET.

## Dublin Summary Key Points:

- There is a shortage of talent in Dublin in key sectors, for example in the information and communications sector (ICT) over 55% of positions are filled with talent from abroad. This is a common challenge facing cities across the world.
- In order to succeed Dublin needs to be able to attract and retain key talent against the backdrop of intense global competition. To put it simply we need to be creating the right job opportunities; however these jobs will not be created if we do not have a strong talent base in place.
- We need comprehensive and long-term strategies for employment and integration of students and skilled workers. Without these strategies Dublin will lose out investment and jobs to other competing international destinations. There is a lack of collaboration between city and universities in developing strategic policies and programs for the long-term retention of such talent which results in the loss of tremendous opportunities.
- Skilled and educated immigrants provide many benefits for stakeholders in any city. Immigrants and international workers start successful companies, generate jobs for the local population, and provide skills to companies that cannot find appropriately skilled employees locally.
- Some key Dublin based initiatives that are addressing the talent challenge in Dublin include: The Creative Dublin Alliance which is working to define a dynamic and innovative Dublin Brand that captures the region's unique qualities, is well managed and communicated, and enhances Dublin's attractiveness as a global center for international investment, trade, tourism, and talent. The Digital Skills academy programme is upskilling /reskilling the unemployed in areas of current and future skills. Dublin City Council has various units e.g. Office of economy and international relations, which aim to encourage investment in Dublin and to attract and retain high-skill migrants and international students.

This research was developed as part of the World Class Cities Partnership which is an international collaboration across world class cities including Dublin, Boston, Vancouver, Barcelona, Haifa, Lisbon, Guadalajara, Lyon and Hamburg. The Dublin Regional Authority, Dublin City Council and University College Dublin represent the Dublin Region in the World Class Cities Partnership (WCCP) programme.

See the extensive coverage in the Boston Press for the Talent Magnets report:

- Boston.com: How can Greater Boston keep its best and brightest? Put them to work
- The Daily Free Press: College Students leave Boston after School, Study Says
- The Boston Globe: The Real Reasons Young People Leave Massachusetts
- BostInno: The Real Reason Students Leave Boston Isn't Housing, Weather, Bars or the T
- The Metro: Leaders in Boston and Cambridge want to keep talent from leaving the cities

The World Class Cities Partnership (WCCP) led by Boston's NorthEastern University is a unique international network that brings together municipal governments from around the world, together with their local universities, to create better outcomes for their communities. Cities are growing in influence and importance around the world, and very different cities have many challenges and opportunities in common. WCCP's vision is to link up city-university partnerships in different countries, identifying and sharing policies and programs that work best and building bridges and relationships to better position each city in the global arena. <http://www.northeastern.edu/wccp/>



# World Class Cities Partnerships (WCCP)

## HUMAN TALENT: A CITY'S GREATEST ASSET. Dublin Summary

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The ability of a city or region to develop, attract and retain a strong and growing talent pool will determine, in large part, that city's ability to build and retain businesses and the jobs that they create. It is clear that availability of jobs and overall labour market conditions are the biggest attraction factors for young, college-educated individuals and skilled workers. Additionally, young people locate and settle down based upon personal and professional networks, housing affordability, and quality of life factors, such as culture, climate, and recreational amenities.

The current recession and public austerity measures have reduced employment opportunities especially for new entrants to the labour market in Dublin. In response cities now find themselves not only in the business of encouraging the creation of jobs but also creating vibrant urban centres that attract new people, ideas, interaction, and collaboration. The Economist's 2012 report on Global City Competitiveness cited quality of educational systems and an entrepreneurial mindset as the primary indicators of the ability of cities to develop and attract the world's top talent. A city's best chance of creating and retaining a highly skilled and talented workforce is to establish early, comprehensive and long-term strategies for employment and integration of students and skilled workers. Universities and centres of further education and training act as natural magnets for attracting young people who will eventually enter the knowledge economy workforce. However, the pull of this magnet is temporary and cities risk losing their greatest asset – their skilled and educated workforce – and losing businesses, which locate based on a skilled talent pool.

**What keeps talent in the Dublin area over the long term?** Put simply, college graduates and young workers stay or leave the area based on job availability, housing, and quality of life. However, policy makers tend to think of these factors as having equal importance over a continuous time period, failing to recognize three distinct stages identified in this study each with particular challenges: – Stage One: current college students and trainees; Stage Two: recent college graduates and skilled workers; and Stage Three: young families.

- **In Stage One**, the challenge is to retain young graduates and skilled workers through employment and helping them build strong professional networks from internships, training and cooperative experiences.
- **In Stage Two**, the challenge is to retain this group five to seven years post-graduation. Retention is enhanced by a city's ability to provide the amenities for the after-work needs of the young population.
- **Finally, in Stage Three**, as individuals settle down and form families, affordable housing requirements and access to urban facilities become dominant.

It is obvious that a job is the highest priority for new college graduates and trainees but accessing the workforce is very difficult for them in a period of recession. Internships and cooperative education experiences during college provide students and trainees with work experience, connect with the local job market, create awareness of local companies, help build professional networks, and increase the chances of getting a job and staying in Ireland. Related policies can work against talent retention efforts. For example, encouraging students to live on-campus, while most universities limit on campus housing to the school year, involves students leaving for summer work and internships. As a result, students build their professional networks elsewhere and are likely to leave the area after graduation. Policy makers, unintentionally focusing on what they think may be priorities for young graduates – ignore the real priority, which is finding a job and building a professional network, followed by access to city amenities and engaging non-work activities.

Young people who are engaged in employment also need to have also addressed the second and third stages of retention. In the second stage of retention, immediately after graduating from a post-secondary institution or training, the quality of life and amenities offered by a city are the greatest factors in retention. At the later third stage, couples and families prioritise housing options, schools, and general affordability. At this point, efforts to create more affordable housing is critical. However, ignoring the challenge associated with stages two and three result in an already reduced talent pool. **Cities that address each of these three stages of talent retention challenges are best suited for keeping a strong talent pool.**

A city's image or brand can serve as an attractor of talent from around the world, and the universities within a city serve as a magnet for temporarily attracting young talent. However, the lack of collaboration between city and universities in developing strategic policies and programs for the long-term retention of such talent results in the loss of tremendous opportunities. Technology allows the private sector to locate jobs wherever a concentration of needed skills can be found, thus creating global competition among cities to attract and retain the best workforce possible. On a fundamental level, successful cities utilise relationships for talent attraction and retention. Whether connecting with the diaspora, creating job opportunities for college students through internships, or building roots to the city through housing opportunities, cities benefit from building strong relationships between new-economy workers and their city surroundings. Cities with strategies that recognize talent as a 'flow' – both inward and outward – maximise employment despite the effects of economic conditions. Skilled and educated immigrants provide many benefits for stakeholders in any city. Immigrants and international workers start successful companies, generate jobs for the local population, and provide skills to companies that cannot find appropriately skilled employees locally. Not only do immigrants come to work in key growing sectors such as the knowledge economy, they can comprise an increasingly large slice of local college and university enrollments. Universities can therefore provide a key partner for building a valuable talent pool for the attraction of companies and the jobs they create.

Cities around the world face talent shortages in a wide range of occupational clusters often because populations are aging rapidly and educational standards and skills development are insufficient. National and global needs for educated talent create skills shortages in all of the cities studied as part of this research collaboration with the WCCP. Employers are having difficulty in finding suitably qualified and experienced people in the areas of information and communication technology, engineering, science, finance, health care, and sales. The need for skills in the STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is particularly acute. Technology-oriented economies in Dublin and Boston, for example, lack enough employees to fill available positions. The skills mismatch problem is evident in Ireland where the property bubble based economy of the early 2000s relied heavily on the construction trades, and many Irish trained and gained skills related to the building industry. When the construction bubble burst, many workers found themselves with skills unrelated to other sectors including the growing high-tech sector. The information and communications technology (ICT) sector, which continues to grow and attract companies such as Facebook, Google, and IBM, sources approximately 55% of its high skill positions through inward migration, although with increasing difficulty as these skills are also in high demand globally. (*Expert group on future skill needs. Addressing-High-Level-ICT-Skills-Recruitment-Needs, 2012*)

With high global demand, these companies are finding attracting workers more difficult, thus weakening Dublin's talent pool and attractiveness to such companies. While companies continue to fill managerial, professional, administrative, sales and marketing positions without difficulty, they have difficulty attracting computer software engineers, network specialists, security experts, and sales and marketing personnel with a technical background. There is a particularly strong demand in Dublin for those with work experience, third level qualifications and/or foreign language skills. ICT firms have indicated the need to plan five years ahead to create an adequate supply of high-level ICT workers.

The development and attraction of a talented population is extremely important for the economy of Dublin. Dublin, as the capital of a small open island economy has an international outlook and has maximised its international links and reputation. **Overall initiatives that benefit the residents of Dublin, such as the promotion of culture and quality of life, will also serve to increase the city's ability to both retain and attract talent.**

In conclusion the contrast remains between the old domestic economy which had been driven by a property bubble resulting in an over supply of many skills in the construction sector, while the new high-tech economic activities have specific skills demands which they have difficulty in filling. Such positions often require a high level of education, retraining and relevant work experience. Universities in particular are being urged to collaborate with other public and private sector interests, to combine their research with firms' innovation, and to match the skills taught with the skills demanded. This will involve a long term commitment and resourcing to identify skills needed, develop skills talent pools and sustain and retain the talent base which provides for the future economic and employment potential of Dublin.

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#### **Some Dublin Based Initiatives Include:**

1. **Creative Dublin Alliance and Developing the 'Dublin Brand'**. The Creative Dublin Alliance which is a leadership alliance across University, City and Private sectors has embarked upon a project to define a dynamic and innovative Dublin Brand that captures the region's unique qualities, is well managed and communicated, and enhances Dublin's attractiveness as a global center for international investment, trade, tourism, and talent. The recent publication, 'A Roadmap for Branding Dublin', outlines proposals for building on Dublin's strengths and managing its international reputation in proactive, engaging and creative ways.
2. Dublin City Council has various units which aim to encourage investment in Dublin and to attract and retain high-skill migrants and international students. For example the **Office of International Relations**, where various stakeholders bring synergy in developing an internationalization agenda for the city activities include twinning programmes with Beijing and San Jose, the **Economic Development Unit**, which coordinates a regional economic action plan for Dublin, and the **Office of Integration**, which supports integration and inclusion across the city and runs events such as the Chinese New Year Festival.
3. **Springboard** is a national multi-annual fund which provides free part-time higher education courses, to assist the unemployed and previously self-employed to upskill or reskill in areas of current and future skills need. The first phase of Springboard was launched in May 2011 by the Minister for Education and Skills and offered 5,875 free, part-time places in higher education in areas of identified skills need in Ireland. In 2012, a second Springboard call allocated a further €24.4m for an additional 6,000 part-time higher education places. For example **The Digital Skills Academy, based at the Digital Hub in Dublin**, allows participants to learn from industry professionals, culminating in structured project-based work placements. Under the expert mentoring of industry professionals, programme teaching staff and industry partners, teams work collaboratively to develop applications and services in fields such as Apps for Mobiles and tablets, eCommerce Services and Social Media Marketing.