

Seán Canney TD
**Minister of State for Community Development, Natural
Resources and Digital Development**

at the

Business in the Community Ireland
Business Impact Map launch event

on

Thursday March 28th , 10am – 12pm

Good morning, everyone,

Let me start by welcoming everyone here.

Innovations like Business in the Community's Business Impact Map are particularly close to my heart, given my responsibilities for both community development and digital development.

It's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to you today, and I'd like to thank Tomás (Sercovich) and Business in the Community for the invitation.

This Business Impact Map forms part of a growing body of information that we have on Irish volunteering and its impact. It adds a particularly welcome dimension, focussing on how Business in the Community

organisations are positively impacting on communities in Ireland

The results of these collaborations, involving volunteers, businesses, Business in the Community and the general public are really deeply impressive.

The Impact Map shows:

- ✓ over 264,000 volunteer hours were logged;
- ✓ over €5 million raised through employee fundraising;
- and
- ✓ over €25 million in cash and in-kind donations

These kind of findings are massively significant.

We need this type of data to drive our policies forward:

both information on the activities undertaken at local level

and the eventual outcomes and impact these activities produce.

I know that I'm speaking to the converted to an extent; Tony (O'Malley) and Fujitsu are well aware of how powerful information can be when applied in the right way.

It's not an exaggeration to say that Fujitsu are a major player in the field of data, and their work is at the heart of many exciting developments in data analytics.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Fujitsu for their sponsorship of this event, and also their continued engagement with Business in the Community and Irish society.

It is important that we get our message on the value of the right information out to as broad an audience as possible.

However, we are not collecting information for the sake of collecting information, so that we can write reports to gather dust on shelves.

We want the information we collect to be targeted, meaningful and to be a catalyst to action.

We collect information so that we can improve our understanding at local level so that we can do more for Irish communities.

This is why dialogue on measuring impact is so important – we must not leave this to chance, and assume that we're moving in the right direction. We need the evidence to prove this and the data being launched today is exactly the type of up-to-date, focussed data that is needed.

I'm delighted that impact measurement was chosen as the topic for the first panel discussion, and I'm certain that we'll all be richer for hearing Audrey, David and Nina's thoughts on the issue.

In addition to data on the level of volunteering, we also need to ensure that our actions are meeting the requirements of those who volunteer or work with volunteers.

You will be aware that one of my Department's key Strategic Objectives is to expand and support the role of volunteers in civil society by developing a national strategy on volunteering. My first step in this process was to issue a Call for Input on Volunteering last December to inform stakeholders about the proposed development of a national volunteering strategy and seek their views on

what constitutes volunteering and what the strategy should contain.

Officials in my Department is are currently collating the information received following this Call for Input and working towards the development of a draft volunteering strategy, later this year

I am also examining the options for strengthening the existing volunteering network by upgrading the Volunteer Information Services to full Volunteer Centres and increasing the funding available to a number of Volunteer Centres. This has been made possible through the grant of €1.2m as part of the Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan 2018.

All of this is very good news for the volunteering community

While we are, of course, interested in encouraging general participation in volunteering, more than this, we want the volunteer experience to be rewarding for both the volunteer and the organisation, and not a question of empty tokenism.

This is another area in which my Department and Business in the Community see eye to eye.

While volunteering in virtually any way brings benefits to the volunteer, I'm very supportive of Business in the Community's efforts to encourage employees to use their professional skills for volunteering.

For example, I've been told about A and L Goodbody solicitors helping people in direct provision with visas, among other wonderful projects.

Organisations like Boardmatch can facilitate projects like this, linking professionals to voluntary organisations who may require certain expertise on their governance boards.

Work like this, showcases Corporate Social Responsibility at its finest, as I'm sure both Tomás (Sercovich) and David (O'Flynn) will agree: bringing about change in the community, and making a very real, very positive difference.

Also important to draw from this example is how we benefit from building networks and partnerships, and how much we can achieve through collaborating on projects.

These networks have incredible potential, and in challenges such as meeting our Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs), the efforts of every single stakeholder in these networks matters.

A whole of Government response is required, however, action is also needed from both the private and third sectors.

The very many stakeholders involved must pitch in and work together.

Aligning the Business Impact Map with the SDGs represents a very timely intervention – an example of collaboration and information being used in the right way; but with a clear purpose in mind.

The challenges of community development, Sustainable Development and indeed, developing metrics for measuring CSR impacts in society are very significant.

These are not challenges we can tackle alone.

The value of events like this launch today showcases the opportunity to develop our capacity to face these challenges, to take some new insight away.

However, perhaps even more significantly, today provides us with tangible examples of how much we can achieve when we work together, and how many individuals and organisations are reaching out to engage and find solutions.

I'd like to conclude by thanking Business in the Community once again for the invitation to speak today.

Very sincere thanks is also owed to the organisations that contributed to the Impact Map.

As I mentioned before, this very innovative synergy of technology and community development is of particular interest to me, and I'll be following the development of the map with great interest.

I'd also like to assure you of the Government's support as you work to develop Irish communities, and my own efforts to assist.

Thank you.