

TechConnect 2015 - The report

1. Summary

Callaghan Innovation led a delegation of twelve innovative New Zealand companies to TechConnect 2015 on 14-17 June 2015 in Washington DC, the world's largest innovation event of its kind. The event attracted 3,000 visitors from the high tech manufacturing and nanotechnology innovation sector, 60% from the USA and 40% from the rest of the world. The New Zealand companies were overwhelmingly positive about their experience, and the benefits they gained in making contacts amongst potential partners and customers, building relationships, learning from the latest technology trends, showcasing their own technology and gaining support from their fellow delegates and government agencies.

Callaghan Innovation partnered with other NZ Inc agencies to make the mission a success, working closely with NZTE, Grow Wellington, MFAT and MBIE. We worked together to prepare companies before the event through one-on-one interviews, a delegation workshop and an Expert Panel in New Zealand. Callaghan Innovation invested in a stand-out New Zealand booth at the exposition of 205 exhibitors, ensuring a high profile for New Zealand and the delegation.

The mission participants from the twelve companies were:

| Representative | Position | Company |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Stuart McKenzie | CEO | ArcActive |
| Dr Richard Furneaux | CEO | Avalia Immunotherapies |
| Paul Atkins | CEO | Boutiq Science |
| Dr Gabriel James | CEO | Heliase Genomics |
| Sam Davies Talwar | CEO | Koti Technologies |
| Clive Seymour | CEO | Lifeonics |
| Nigel Slaughter | CEO | Ligar Polymers |
| Dr Hector Robert | N America Managing Director | Magritek |
| Dr Murray McCurdy | Chief Engineer | NuEnz |
| Dr Ojas Mahapatra | CEO | Photonic Innovations |
| Iain Hosie | CEO | Revolution Fibres |
| Jeremy Jones | Commercialisation Manager | Wetox |

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The major outcomes cited by delegates included:

- Meetings with potential partners, customers and other contacts, many of which are now being developed into business relationships through follow-up emails and telephone calls. Initial indications are that on average each delegate had 5-10 meaningful meetings that they are now progressing and made another 5-15 contacts that could prove to be useful in the future
- Negotiations - two companies negotiated NDAs with US companies (Heliase, Photonic Innovations)
- Obtaining information and knowledge that has enabled them to review and refine their strategy or value proposition. This included validating ideas and technologies,

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Companies were identified from various sources, including:

- Consultation with Callaghan Innovation's NTN Managers, BIAs, Incubators Manager, Manager of BDMs (RTS), Commercialisation Managers
- Search through databases for clients, major grant recipients and success stories
- Grow Wellington (who identified 13 companies and 4 research institutes; two became delegates)
- NZTE, onshore and offshore (most companies they identified were at a more mature stage of development or were not in the targeted sectors; none became delegates)
- ATEED – they were organising a Tripartite mission to Los Angeles in the week before TechConnect so we exchanged lists of companies we were working with
- Other sources: MBIE, media, university commercialisation offices, Return on Science, NZ Bio

We identified 75 companies, from which we put together an “A list” of 30 companies in a brainstorming session (project team and two NTN managers) on 4 February. We approached the 30 companies on 4 February and received Expressions Of Interest (EOI) from nine, of whom eight confirmed their commitment. The eight companies were: ArcActive; Avalia; Boutiq; Koti Technologies; MagriTek; NuEnz; Revolution Fibres; Titanox. One company, Titanox, subsequently withdrew due to their concerns about their IP position.

We then approached another 20 companies, from whom four more subsequently joined the mission - Lifeonics; Ligar LP; Photonic Innovations; Wetox. We continued asking about possible delegates and enlisted one more – Heliase – before our final cut-off date of 30 April.

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4.3 Expert Panels

The Expert Panels were held in Wellington on 18-19 May. Nine companies took advantage of this opportunity to gain feedback and advice, three of them by video conference.

Day 1: Callaghan Innovation (Cliff Fuller, Nicole Miller, Kirsten Edgar) and NZTE (David Powell, Robert Cunningham, Cheyne Gillooly (half day)): *Boutiq, Koti, Photonic Innovations, Ligar, Revolution Fibres*

Day 2: Callaghan Innovation (Cliff Fuller, Nicole Miller), NZTE (David Powell, Robert Cunningham) and an NZTE Beachhead Advisor (Michael Moynahan): *NuEnz, Heliase, ArcActive, Avalia*

Three companies chose not to take part: Lifeonics, Magritek, Wetox

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Unassigned quote: *“It was a very well placed stall though and everyone seemed to be aware of and impressed by the NZ presence at the conference - we definitely punched well above our weight in terms of exposure and presence.”*

Paul Atkins, Boutiq – *“The booth was fantastic” - “It showed the joined-up-ness about the seriousness and intent of my enterprise” and “gave the appearance of credibility, scale and connectivity;” : “There was no doubt the Kiwis were there and were doing some really cool things”*

Iain Hosie, Revolution Fibres - *“It would have been very easy to be invisible there”*

Dr Gabriel James, Heliase: *“The New Zealand constituent was known across the conference. This was hugely important in giving credibility to the group.”*

Nigel Slaughter, Ligar: *“It made a huge difference.”*

Clive Seymour, Lifeonics: *“It made us a lot more commercially in sync. It made us look like a big company which made it much easier for everyone.”*



The New Zealand booth, front and back

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Social media

We organised meetings on social media with NZTE and Grow Wellington (the Comms team was invited but did not attend, which indicated there was limited value in doing something). NZTE's marketing manager in New York also advised that they did not think a social media or wider media strategy for the US would be worthwhile. In the end, we ran out of time and did not have the expertise to take this any further. During TechConnect, a number of people issued tweets on their Twitter accounts – Cliff and Kirsten from Callaghan, Andrew from Grow Wellington and some of the delegates (notably Gabriel from Heliase and Iain from Revolution Fibres).

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5.8 Corporate meetings

The 40 corporate partners of TechConnect took part in an online match-making process. Exhibitors and other Showcase participants could invite up to ten corporates for individual 15 minute meetings. Corporates would then consider the nominations and decide which ones to accept.

Revolution Fibres (8) – Armstrong, Chevron, Columbia, Dell Corning, Nike, SABIC, +2
Ligar (7) – Harris & Harris, Mosaic, Nike, Pepsi, Praxair, SABIC, St Gobain
Boutiq (5) – Columbia, Michelin, Momentive, SABIC, Samsung
Koti (5) - Bemis, LG, Michelman, Momentive, Sherwin-Williams,
Magritek (4) – Arkema, Michelin, Pepsi, Waterloo
NuEnz (4) – Armstrong, Columbia, Owens Corning, SABIC
ArcActive (3) – n/a
Lifeonics (3) – Autodesk, LG, St Gobain
Photonic (3) – Mosaic, Panasonic, Samsung
Wetox (2) – SABIC, Sherwin-Williams
Avalia – n/a
Heliase (0) – had not signed up (joined the delegation late)

Three corporates confirmed meetings with Callaghan Innovation – Armstrong, Corning and United Technologies Corporation (UTC).

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Heliase Genomics – Dr Gabriel James, CEO (Auckland)

Dr James achieved his objectives and would like to go back to TechConnect next year with Callaghan BIA Greg Moss-Smith.

- Meetings and contacts: He had 10 important meetings, 10-20 other meaningful discussions, and met 10-20 other contacts – about 40-50 companies in all
- Engaged with corporates, notably:
 - o Novozymes – negotiating an NDA (not signed yet) on bio-prospecting NZ genomic library (Greg Moss-Smith is helping them with the Term Sheet)
 - o BASF – sent a proposal; Open Commercialisation Forum
 - o Shell – Gamechanger proposal, jointly with Revolution Fibres and Ligar (Andrew Clews is also helping them)
 - o Google X – bio information platform
- Identified new business opportunities for his other employers:
 - o Auckland University: Los Alamos – negotiating a bilateral research agreement with this National Laboratory on mining genomic data
 - o NZ Inc: TechConnect – negotiating to stage TechConnect Asia Pacific in Auckland; they will be visiting NZ in August (NZ Inc stages the China Business Summit each year, this year in Auckland on 7 October)
- Customer validation

Highlights

- *“The ability to connect with key personnel in the open innovation groups of large corporations”* – notably Novozymes, TechConnect and Los Alamos
- Potential joint development project with Novozymes for bio-prospecting in New Zealand
- Meeting New Zealand companies and finding synergies, *“using technological diversity to solve problems”* – eg joint development proposal with Ligar and Revolution Fibres for Shell’s GameChanger
- New Zealand Embassy reception (TechConnect’s senior management was very impressed)
- New Zealand booth and its location – *“The New Zealand constituent was known across the conference. Hugely important in giving credibility to the group.”*

Dr James’ main concern was the length of time he had to prepare for TechConnect. As he joined the project late, the runway was fairly short and he missed out on a few things, such as technology profiling, corporate invitations and the preparation workshop. He would want a longer runway and more “organisation time,” though he was very glad he went this year.

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- Had some valuable meetings
 - o Met with 8 corporates: engaged strongly with three: Armstrong, Columbia, Nike; also useful talking with Chevron, Dell Corning, SABIC
 - o Met with DuPont, who is very interested in the business model
 - o Working with Heliase and Ligar to submit proposal to Shell Gamechanger
 - o Received another 10-20 enquiries
 - o Two invitations to submit articles/papers to publications
- Raised their profile by exposure through the NZ booth, two speaking slots and winning an Innovation Award
- Learnt about current industry trends
- Used the opportunity of being in the US to visit key contacts in New York (Matt Conlen at Crosstex/Revox – face masks for China) and Mexico (Arancia – diversifying from food into nanotech)

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7. Government feedback

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- Recruited new companies into NZTE's customer management network and graduated companies from Foundation to Focus 700 (Lifeonics, potentially Avalia, Heliase, Revolution Fibres)
- Organised speakers for the preparation workshop and expert panel, with David drawing on his experience with "Path to Market" and contacts through NZTE

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Highlights:

- Panel discussion on the role of the arts and design in technology innovation (STE(A)M)
- Workshop on the Industrial Application of Advanced Materials
- Heliase getting to NDA stage with Novozymes

[Dr Kimberlee Jordan \(Christchurch\)](#)

Dr Jordan thought everything worked well and achieved her objectives at TechConnect.

- Got closer to companies and formed better relationships, notably with Revolution Fibres, Ligar, Magritek, Heliase
- Learnt from experienced people, eg Richard Furneaux (Avalia)
- Generate new ideas, eg conversations after the Technology Commercialisation workshop

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