How Networks Can Facilitate Innovation for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

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Agenda

Reflections of current activities – 15 minutes
1. SIF phasing and structure
2. Engaging with networks
3. Aligning priorities between SMEs and energy networks
4. Commercialising innovation
5. Innovation Project delivery best practice
6. Diffusion of innovation (learnings and widespread deployment)

Group workshop discussions – 45 minutes
• Move in to table groups, focussing on one of the above areas each
• Facilitated discussions and group brainstorming – 15 minutes
• Recording actions and priorities – 10 minutes
• Replay to the wider group – 10 minutes
SIF phasing structure and opportunity

**Challenge-setting**

**Discovery Phase**
- Feasibility studies: Many projects Up to £150k each
- No. of projects

**Alpha Phase**
- Proof of concept: Fewer projects Up to £0.5m each

**Beta Phase**
- Large-scale demos: A few projects No upper £ limit
- £ per project

- 3 months → 6 months → Multi-year
Ideation and Incubation
The Innovator Journey

Learn
- Innovation Challenge webinars
- SIF Project show and tells
- The Smarter Networks Portal
- ‘Introduction to the energy networks’ webinar series

Engage
- Innovator surgeries
- Submit to the third party Call for Ideas
- Pitch to the networks

Partner
- Partnership forums

Ideation Workshops
Cyber security, Long Duration Energy Storage, Multi-Energy Systems
Introduction to energy networks webinar series
What does success mean in energy network innovation

The innovation is developed further, e.g., TRL increases

Learning is generated and shared widely

The innovation is adopted by the network company

Innovation project outcomes influence the wider policy and regulatory environment

New collaborations are created between innovators and the wider energy industry

1. Energy network innovation project success does not have a singular definition
2. Important for networks to understand SME’s objective for project and look for own business alignment
3. Project approach needs to reflect these different success objectives – e.g. focus on having regulatory skills, early discussion on procurement routes, strong dissemination strategy
4. Networks are not just facilitators but active participants to shape and drive the project

Top 5 results from survey conducted by Regen across 46 organisations for the Playbook project. The question asked was “please rate the following definitions of success for a network innovation project.”
How have projects previously achieved these successes

Planning and delivery
- Robust and agile delivery plan taking account of iterations
- Sufficient time from innovator team to deal with complexities
- Time across key network stakeholders to shape and validate project against business needs and value

Learning and knowledge
- Leverage knowledge from and build on previous relevant projects
- Robust dissemination strategy to understand stakeholder needs and communicating value
- IP arrangements for outputs discussed and in place early in the project

People and organisations
- Early and sustained engagement with “customer” for the innovation
- Choose right mix of organisations in consortium needed to deliver outcomes
- Clear leadership and cooperation between partners in the project

Markets and use
- Develop clear understanding of network need for innovation
- Early discussion on business case for deployment on relevant metrics
- Understand relevant network procurement process

Policy and regulation
- Understand regulatory incentives/drivers for innovation
- Early assessment and communication of regulatory barriers for testing/deploying innovation

Taken from desk research, survey and discussions conducted as part of the Playbook project
Working together to make network innovation a commercial success...
Diffusion of innovation

Policy & Regs

Innovation

ofgem

Procurement

IP ownership

Going national and global
Questions for discussion on your tables…

1. What is working well within the innovation process for SMEs to develop innovations with energy networks ((in relation to your tables focus area)?

2. What aspects could be improved, and what alternative approaches could be taken?
   Include how these changes might deliver benefits, but also explore what risks, problems or unintended consequences might occur.

3. Choose your top 3 priorities for action to help SMEs innovate with the networks and summarise them succinctly to be shared with the wider room in the open discussion.
   Identify the organisations required to take responsibility for taking these forwards and articulate any of the risks or further work that might be needed before implementation.

Decide a nominee from your group to relay the conversations and recommended actions to the wider group.