

# IdeaSquare strategy

*Summary of results: 1-day workshop 3.7.2019, Jiva Hill  
Documentation and workshop facilitation: Muller & Utriainen  
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## Purpose of the workshop

As part of preparing for the next ISAB meeting, the goal of the day was to create a fertile ground for common understanding leading towards the development of an active strategy. Community members from IdeaSquare (IS) and the immediate collaborators at CERN were invited to participate in this framing. The focus was on identifying the current status of affairs as well as looking critically at the resources at hand, building towards dreaming big on later occasions. In particular, the following questions were used as a basis to structure the discussions and obtain bottom-up feedback:

- What are the main lessons learned from IS activities so far? What has worked, what has not? What makes us unique?
- What and where should be our top priorities in 2020?
- How should we work as team(s)?
- What is our message to the intended target groups? How to measure our impact? What kind of data can/should we collect and how to use it?

## Participants



Thierry Lagrange, IPT  
Jani Kalasniemi, IPT-DI  
Markus Nordberg, IPT-DI  
Santeri Palomaki, IPT-DI  
Tuuli Utriainen, IPT-DI

Anais Rassat, IPT-KT  
Ranveig Strom, IPT-KT  
Silje Maurset, IPT-KT  
Romain Muller, IPT-EU  
Pablo Tello, IPT-EU

Laetitia Veyrat, IPT-EU-MS  
Oday Darwich, EP-URD  
Pietari Kauttu, EP-UC3  
Claudia Marcelloni, IR-ECO

## Structure of the document

The day was designed to take the participants through some of the key aspects that form the building blocks for minimum viable strategy statement. Oscillating between personal reflections, team based breakout sessions and diverging/converging phases, five expressions of the strategy were framed by the end of the day. This document firstly introduces these strategic objectives and then goes into recommendations drafted based on the results of the day. Finally, a summary of the other results is offered.

The sessions building towards strategy creation include:

- Relationship to IdeaSquare
- Lesson learnt
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Stakeholder mapping
- Resource ideation
- Key questions with dedicated champions

These will be addressed on page 4.

## Strategic objectives

In teams, participants were asked to consider the most important strategic objectives that IS needs to pursue at its stage of development. The objectives were presented, reformulated and then voted on based on immediate importance. The resulting five strategic objectives are as follows:

- 1) **Focus and narrow IS offering** to become more visible and truly unique
- 2) **Define IS uniqueness** to increase the positive impact we have on IS stakeholders
- 3) **Create a good team leadership and collaborative project work** to generate a good quality outcome
- 4) **Identify resources, activities and impacts** to attract interest and funding and justify our existence
- 5) **Collect data, promote flagships initiatives and create testimonials** to increase visibility of impact to all stakeholders

The first two strategic objectives were voted by the participants as most important to tackle.

## Recommendations for follow up

The proceedings of the day showed a very dedicated team of close collaborators of IS who in their reflections demonstrated the internalisation of a key tension (in the positive acceptance of

the term): how to keep the vivid potential of the flexibility demonstrated by IS since its inception whilst streamlining its portfolio of activities to reach systematic impact and recognition.

The proposed recommendation is to bring the discussions one level higher and establish a clear and shared picture amongst the IS collaborators team of the characteristics of the next maturity stage IS needs to position itself in to evolve (in terms of people, products and processes). The following proposed sequence of steps is designed to drive the team towards this maturity level, one step at a time. Each step has its own dedicated purpose.

- 1) Setting the baseline: perform a series of quick interviews amongst IdeaSquare collaborators to collect their definition of the mission of IS and run a data mining algorithm to find the commonalities to create the snapshot of the starting position before Step 2)
- 2) Continuously curating the IdeaSquare offering
  - a) Identify the key outcomes that are important for IdeaSquare's future with the team and close collaborators. These outcomes could be e.g. contributing to the uniqueness of IS, learning about innovation, engaging fundamental research into processes, enlarging visibility with media and press, generating CIJ publications, reaching a money/resources/outcomes balance...
  - b) Work towards a one liner on the desired purpose for IS.
  - c) Create a protocol to run a screening of the existing portfolio of activities against the set of desired outcomes to i) agree on which to keep, which to keep conditionally (if they agree to beef up some desired outcomes), which to discard and ii) finetune the desired outcomes.
  - d) Finalise and agree on the process (e.g. a decision tree and monthly meeting with IS staff) with the IS team for assessing existing and future IS activities on a continuous basis.
  - e) Run the agreed process on future activities as proposed to be run in IS by internal or external stakeholders.
- 3) Need gathering for IS collaborators: run a consultation amongst IS staff in charge of running current and potential future initiatives on what would need to be put in place (Must have and Nice to have) to support them in their work of delivering impacts for IS and beyond (resources, budget, project governance, mentoring, processes, admin support, trainings, etc...).
- 4) In parallel or in sequence after the step 3) completion, run a Dream Big exercise with the IS collaborators and possibly CERN management to:
  - a) Shape the vision for IS on the mid to long term in order to contextualize the short to mid term activities which will result from step 2); this might lead to an adaptation of the screening protocol.
  - b) Review the results of step 4) with the results of step 1) and identify development opportunities
- 5) Develop and execute a communication strategy together with the curated projects, in order to showcase the main impact created by IS. In addition, this will increase the visibility towards CERN and the outside world.

- 6) Repeat previous steps on a regular basis and/or when necessary.

As step 0) primary drivers with the necessary skills and resources need to be identified to be responsible for Steps 1) to 5). In order to do this work time is needed, which makes Step 2) critical for the process as elimination of activities will result in the much needed additional time to use for proper execution of the other Steps.

## **Summary of sessions results**

All the participants demonstrated a high level of commitment throughout the day and the discussions allowed to share different perceptions about IS to create the panoramic view as presented below:

- Lessons learnt
- Key Strengths and Weaknesses
- Stakeholder mapping
- Resource ideation
- Key questions with dedicated champions

### **Lessons learnt**

When being asked for the successes and failures whilst operating at IS, the participants echoed at a personal level what emerged at the system level when identifying strengths and weaknesses.

For the successes:

- The launch of a diverse set of initiatives that were made possible by the visionary mindset and team spirit of the IS team as well as the existence of the space itself
- The numerous human connections within the space
- The possibility to learn on the spot

The failures covered:

- Activities that did not find their momentum
- The somehow limited engagement of the CERN community within the IS activities,
- The limited media coverage

### **Key Strengths**

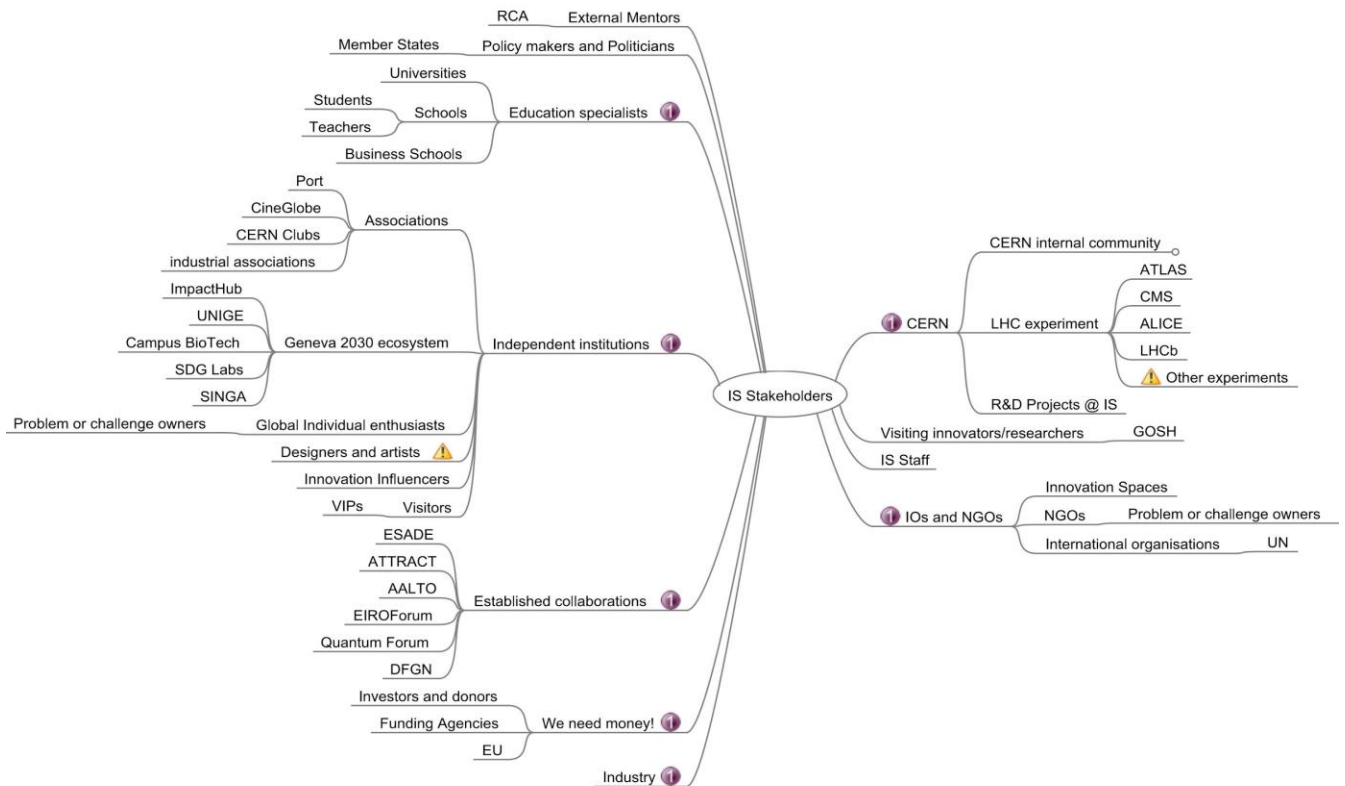
- Openness: Flexible and modular, adapts to circumstances and different objectives
- Great place for thinking differently: Technological visionary work, creative process, innovation, challenging the status quo
- Human connections: Allows people to meet from different backgrounds
- Positivity: Fun, inspiring, creating a positive image and good vibes

### **Key Weaknesses**

- Lack of direction: How can partners engage, what are the top priorities, how to empower the team, how to engage with other departments at CERN without overlapping?
- CERN connection: Integration into CERN's ecosystem and high energy physics community, IS currently not seen as a core activity
- Bureaucracy: How to allow access and engage with outside organizations and not let execution fall back because of heavy, unclear processes
- Lack of resources: Needs to improve and be sustainable, but at the same time the team is small
- Communications: Difficult to explain and visualize, many different activities and messages for collaborators

### Stakeholder mapping

The resulting mapping of stakeholders showcases the true multi-dimensional nature of the interactions that IS has been creating and 7 main categories of stakeholders (marked with a circled 1 on the diagramme) were identified. Here below are some views on how they (might) see IS.



- Investors: for public investors and donors, IS can represent a place with values worth investing in whilst for private investors the value for investing still need to be made more palatable

- IS Staff: IS is a harbour from which to depart everyday to sail the rough seas of innovation.
- Independent institutions (e.g. associations): IS is a place of inspiration to think out of the box, where multidisciplinary knowledge can converge into one direction.
- Education specialists: IS is a place to connect to CERN and exchange knowledge, culture, experience and ideas. For the future this is the place where to think big.
- Established collaborations: IS is a place to get inspired and for the future the platform to co-create future initiatives.
- Industry: at present IS is the link to deeptech from CERN. For the future, a space to learn, get inspired and create our own innovation process.
- CERN: IS is a fascinating place with a different atmosphere than in the rest of CERN, with many different activities that could make a difference for us the CERN community.
- IOs and NGOs: IS is the place to turn to when we have difficult problems. For the future it will be the place in the world to develop innovation with an impact.

The large spectrum of stakeholders is giving an indication of the maturity reached by IS in terms of creating a footprint (i.e. not more in an infant stage) and represents at the same time a challenge for creating or not a unifying identity that can engage the different categories of stakeholders. Indeed IdeaSquare represents many things to different people and so the decision to take is either to go for more consolidation in the messages or to leverage on the diversity even more. In all cases, this requires a communication strategy to be developed in a systematic manner.

This polarisation was also apparent amongst other items when identifying the key strengths and the key weaknesses as presented above.

### **Resources ideation**

In an exercise to identify other possible sources of funding for IS, the following options for diversification were considered:

- Setting up monetary collaborations with companies to:
  - support a given initiative (e.g. Quantum) with personnel located within IS and events organised at IS; these personnel could then also be involved in developing other activities of direct interest for IS; this is a way to get extra resources at no additional costs. The hosting of the personnel running the initiative at IS could also be billable to IS
  - Pay a fee to IS for student projects and students benefiting from a link with IS
- Creating partnerships with Foundations that fund student internships on a mid-term basis; these interns could then also be involved in developing other activities of direct interest for IS; this is a way to get extra resources at no additional costs
- Obtaining EU funds for activities organised at IS in the context of EU awarded grants; this is a way to support the costs of the staff involved and with the overhead to contribute to the running costs of IS

- Asking for a contribution from the visiting entrepreneurship programmes to cover the staff and running costs on a per student basis (e.g. 10% of the student funding to go to IS)
- Running Executive Education Courses at IS and asking for a fee for their organisation
- Offering to Business Schools students, interesting internships within IS at a cost
- Developing merchandising items
- Asking for a fee to use equipment located within IS (e.g. 3D printers, etc.)
- Renting the space rentals for external events on an hourly basis during less occupied slots (e.g. late evenings)
- Making IS a platform for beta testing based on prototypes displayed at IS by companies wishing to get feedback from different stakeholders
- Developing tailor made programmes for companies wishing to:
  - change the mindset of their employees by opening them up to other forms of thinking (fundamental research), other scale of thinking (HEP research), new methodologies, open innovation, etc
  - Reinvent themselves in 20-30 years

### **Champion themes**

Building on points from the Chamonix advisory board meeting, five thematic areas were framed to keep in mind during the day: *Science gateway, research, portfolio, uniqueness and branding*. Participants volunteered to champion for one of the areas and to report back on what they heard at the end of the day regarding the topic.

#### Science Gateway

What could IS do in the context of the new Science gateway? Implications for the 100ish square meter space shared with KT?

*IdeaSquare could use Science gateway as an entry point for a wider audience to gain access to it. Not everyone who visits Microcosm or the Globe find us. We could use the space showcase that we are open, interactive experimental and fun. We should show the multiple projects we run and their impact.*

#### Research

How might research on innovation support the activities at IS? How might we open up the collaboration more and reach outside IS? What is the role and future of CIJ?

*Research could help in getting visibility as a hub for innovation world wide as well as help with showcasing projects for investors from industry. In the future IdeaSquare could act as a think tank. Literature might offer hints on how to measure impact that we could use. CIJ could provide new tools to test in our projects beyond the traditional design thinking. We could host editorial seminars for PhD students or other researchers and should focus on having more articles on experimental (instead of theoretical) innovation. We could actively share the data we have via CIJ.*

#### Uniqueness

What makes IS and its activities unique? What are the differentiating factors from design thinking programs, research labs, maker spaces... Where can we make "magic"?

*IdeaSquare fosters a mindset for breakthrough thinking and inside CERN there's no similar space. We have a passionate team, that is able to engage others in a contagious way. We can make magic happen for organizations that want to push themselves in their way of thinking and doing and who believe technology can bring value for social projects.*

#### Branding

What is the “sales pitch” of IS to the intended target groups? How to measure the effects and the impact?

#### Portfolio champion

How do we select projects we engage in and who we partner with? What should we do less and what should we do more?



The facilitators would like to thank the participants for their active involvement and remain available for any clarification questions.



