Equipping digital innovators for the eHealth Sector

Against the backdrop of a global pandemic, which has exponentially accelerated the adoption of technology, a project led by the University of Plymouth is looking to further support businesses aspiring to break into the eHealth sector.

The eHealth Productivity and Innovation in Cornwall (EPIC2) project, wants to hear from businesses interested in developing technology to improve patient care and experience. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership has identified eHealth as an opportunity for business growth and job creation across the region. With an ageing population, CIoS is a rural area with a single NHS Trust, one clinical commissioning group and one local authority.

This presents a unique opportunity to businesses interested in developing technology to improve patient care and experience.

The Government's long-term plan to shift the NHS model to place greater emphasis on preventative care and a closer integration of services in the community centres around technology use. Many businesses across the region could be developing their offer and commercialising their ideas.

Funded by the European Regional Development Fund until 2023, EPIC is looking to work with Cornish businesses interested in developing innovative technologies for use within the health and care sector.

Many businesses have existing technology that can pivot for a new market. Developing a completely new concept could also deliver extensive business growth.

Businesses considering growing or diversifying their offer can consider some of the following areas:

- Addressing the difficulty of providing care in remote locations
- Ways to make technology more accessible to all
- Innovations which address loneliness and isolation
- Integrating with existing systems

Led by the University of Plymouth's Centre for Health Technology, EPIC shapes provision into a bespoke package for individual businesses with academic support at the heart of the offer. Many businesses approaching EPIC already have a fully developed concept in mind and EPIC offers them the opportunity to add academic rigour making sure that their product or service is fit for market and that it improves patient care and experience.

The EPICentre in Truro, to be launched in Spring 2021 (subject to any local or national restrictions in place), will enable access to business facilities and an opportunity for SMEs to showcase their technology or conduct usability testing and co-design workshops.

The academic support offered includes but is not limited to evidencing proof of concept, assisting with understanding of how to evaluate, guidance on how to undertake usability testing and support to encourage end user collaboration and co-design.

EPIC will also assist with recruiting student interns for your business and will fund 50% of the intern's wages. The value of an extra pair of hands to assist with a range of areas within your business cannot be underestimated.

Working in partnership with Kernow Health CIC, EPIC offers 5 hours of funding for businesses to access the digital and health testbed, where solutions are tested in real world healthcare environments, enabling the gathering of practical evidence of efficacy and real-world feedback. It is a unique opportunity to break down the barriers of engaging with the NHS.

Along with funding support offered through the Challenge Fund, EPIC will also assist with identifying and applying for funding opportunities elsewhere.

Dr Arunangsu Chatterjee, Associate Professor of Digital Health & Education and Head of Digital Education from the University of Plymouth said: "EPIC aims to facilitate a sustainable eHealth sector that not only creates new jobs, new products and supports the local economy but will strengthen the existing health and care network in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. By developing a vast eHealth network linking valuable stakeholders including end user groups and commissioners as well as connecting to other eHealth ecosystems globally via SWITCH, we offer a variety of ways to move businesses forward with their health and care innovations."

If you are an SME interested in developing technology for the eHealth sector, email epic@plymouth.ac.uk to register your interest.

European Union European Regional Development Fund

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GROWTH PROGRAMME

EPIC