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### **World first data-sharing initiative to power energy innovation**

A groundbreaking collaboration between Simply Group, Counties Power, Callaghan Innovation, and Creative HQ will unlock half-hour electricity data for the first time, to promote research and innovation.

Backing the Lightning Lab Electric Innovation Challenge and Accelerator programme, Counties Power has teamed up with Simply Group to put anonymised user data in the hands of New Zealand's innovators with the goal of creating game-changing outcomes for the energy sector.

Supported with funding from Callaghan Innovation, participants in the Lightning Lab programme will gain access to aggregated data sets on power usage, consumer demand and network assets, via building on the success of Simply Group's proven Axos Systems meter data management technology.

Lightning Lab Electric is one of the world's first electricity sector-specific programmes providing teams with mentoring, start-up methodologies, and business skills to launch commercial ideas with speed, with the ability to tap into national and international markets.

"We have a \$600 million national investment in advanced meters in New Zealand. There are huge opportunities for the captured data to be utilised to support innovation and create long term benefit for consumers by reducing network capital spend and operating costs," says Stephen Peterson, Simply Group Managing Director.

"One of the groundbreaking features of this project is making it easy for retailers to anonymise the data they collect, addressing retailer and consumer privacy and competitive concerns, while maintaining data that's relevant to network management and pricing. Counties Power's strategic forward thinking means it now has access to data which it is beginning to use. Our collaboration creates an opportunity to further develop and commercialise the benefits from its network analytics," Peterson adds.

While New Zealand leads the world in electricity regulation and market operation, with the highest country penetration of advanced meters systematically capturing critical information, current industry arrangements do not support obtaining comprehensive meter data to distribution networks, which can be beneficially utilised.

“We are keen to engage with industry stakeholders across the sector to develop solutions and business intelligence tools that can be used by network owners, retailers and their consumers. We’re also after useful analytics to help us optimise network investment and stay true to our focus on consumer value for money,” says Sheridan Broadbent, Counties Power Chief Executive.

“It’s exciting to collaborate with a pioneering solutions provider and gain access to transformational innovation through our relationship with Callaghan Innovation and Creative HQ. We’re also looking at opportunities with Simply Group to develop innovative products, services and technologies with the aim of discovering the possibilities for the future, while developing useful analytics to support best practice investment and maintenance that can be used right now,” she adds.

"The fundamental success factor for creating a real sustainable step-change in energy must be founded on an open and collaborative attitude. With Callaghan Innovation's support, Counties Power and Simply Group are taking a brave and inspired approach to opening up the data in a responsible and useful way to all innovators through Lightning Lab Electric. It's hugely encouraging when potential entrepreneurs can look to established utilities as enablers and collaborators for new ways of doing things with energy," says Nick Churchouse, Head of Customer Engagement at Creative HQ.

This public-private partnership will create a unique breakthrough opportunities by combining technologies, expertise and consumer databases, planting New Zealand’s electricity sector even further ahead of the rest of world.

“The ability for energy start-ups to use data to develop other consumer solutions is a sign of where the energy sector is heading. Energy technology is increasingly going to involve data in creating solutions for network and infrastructure investment, and consumer demand for choice,” says Chris Thompson, Callaghan Innovation Energy Sector Manager.

For more information visit: [www.innovationchallenge.co.nz](http://www.innovationchallenge.co.nz)