ATLANTIC TIDE
Transforming Ireland's Design Economy

Report for **Atlantic TIDE Partners** and **Creative Ireland**

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN MID-WEST
REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN WEST
REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN NORTH-WEST

Clár Éire Ildánach Creative Ireland Programme
SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGIGH
WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
INSTITUTE DESIGNERS IRELAND
Innovate Limerick
LUDGATE | HUB
CREW
AN CHROÍ DIGITAL HUB
FUTURECAST
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FOREWORD

Sligo County Council / Sligo Local Enterprise Office

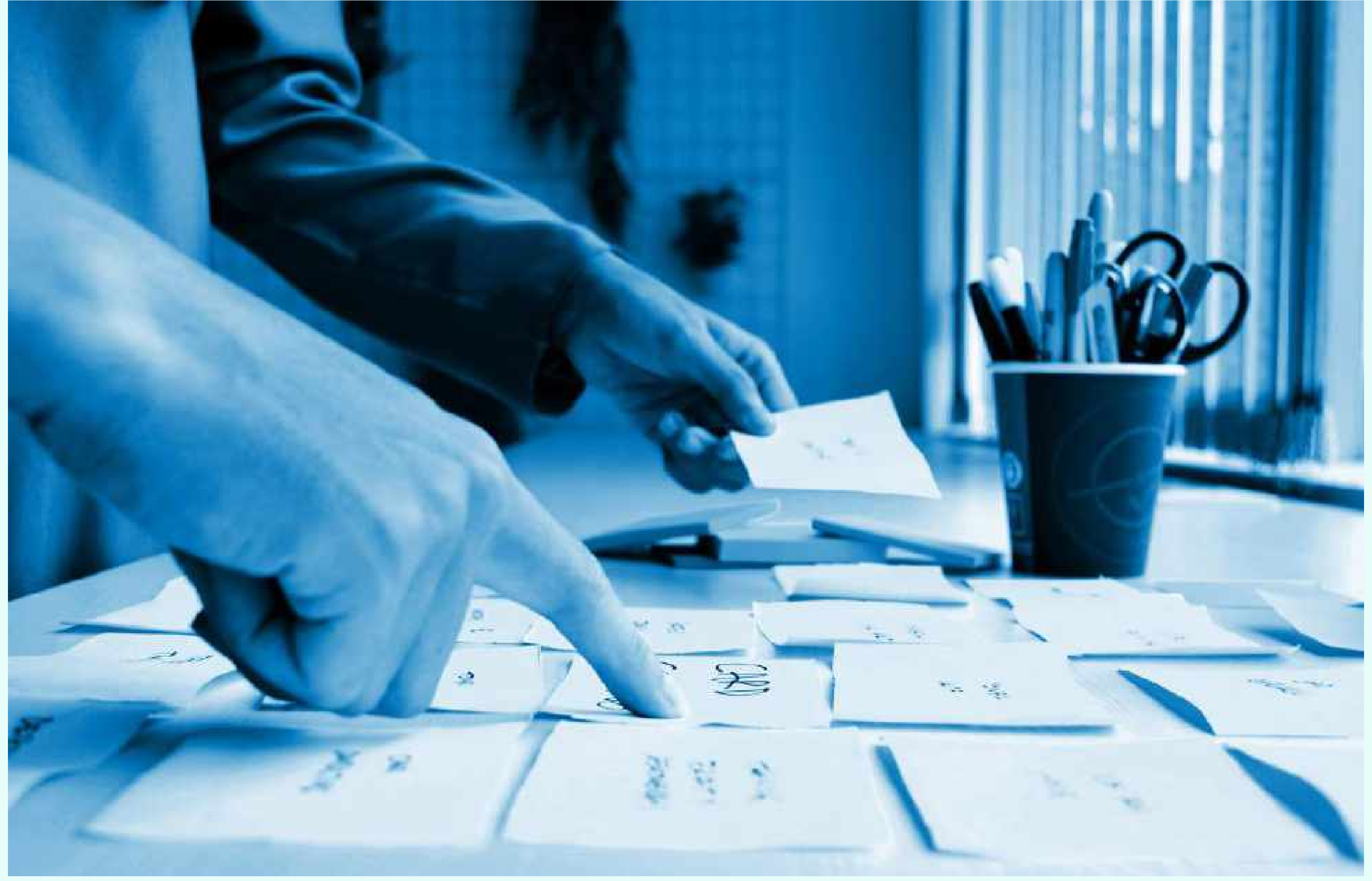
Sligo County Council and Sligo Local Enterprise Office have been privileged and pleased to have had the opportunity of acting as lead in this Creative Communities Economic Action Fund opportunity. We started out in March 2022 in early conversations with Jessica Fuller around pitching a collaborative funding application to Creative Ireland with the objective of the development of the creative economy at local and regional level through initiatives and models which could harness and demonstrate the value of culture and creativity in local economic development. The proposal to roll out a pilot engagement and communication programme for the design industry emerged, with the WDC, Údarás, the IDI, the Regional Enterprise offices and Connected hubs as key partners and which also served to address the objectives of the three Regional Enterprise Plans 2024 to advance the creative economy.

In December 2022 the project is concluding with the final reviewing of the Atlantic TIDE Partner Findings and Recommended Actions having developed the detailed Report on the Programme's three strands, workshops, findings, and analysis. The conclusions are strong and in agreement that design is intrinsic to industry and adds value to economic development. We are grateful to Jessica, Charlotte Barker and John Lynch for their unstinting contributions in progressing this project.

Liam Kiely, Sligo Local Enterprise Office

Margaret McConnell, Sligo County Council (Community & Economic Development section)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Project 2040 aims to provide a comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure. It articulates a vision that includes a creative and innovative society.

Design, as a process and as a profession, is recognised across the world as an essential activity in the evolution of enterprise and public service. Global reports indicate significant growth e.g. The Design Industry, 2021 (Forrester) ***'the size of the global design industry was estimated to be $162 billion…'*** with multiple software categories used in design anticipated to grow more than 20% in that year (Forrester, Design Industry 2021).

In Ireland, the Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI) is the lead entity that drives the development of the commercial design industry. The IDI is also the authorised agent in Ireland for the Design Skillnet.

Through the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), there is a defined system, development framework and resource model in place for enterprise in Ireland, within which the creative industries and creative enterprise is situated. The recently published Enterprise White Paper (December 2022) in addressing the mechanisms for ***'supporting enterprises to enter new markets and respond to new growth sectors and encouraging innovative start-ups'*** reference ***'fostering good design as an integral part of bringing new products and services to market'*** (Enterprise White Paper, DETE 2022). The DETE Regional Enterprise Plans for Mid-West, North West and West include the creative economy as a priority. National and regional enterprise development entities such as Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices are working on the ground to activate the policy visions. Enterprise development is being delivered in the context of the smart specialisation strategy which focuses on key pillars including net zero, digitalisation, clustering and innovation – to be achieved through collaborative initiatives.

Creative Ireland Programme are currently preparing a Roadmap for the Digital Creative Industries as part of the Programme for Government. The Design Industry is a central tenet of the framework.

Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) policy and strategy identifies the creative and cultural economy as integral to rural development. The Western Development Commission (WDC) has identified the design industry as a regional strength with growth opportunity as part of its creative enterprise plan to 2026. It seeks to harness mechanisms such as Connected Hubs and CREW CLG in partnership with other senior stakeholders participating in this project to deliver the opportunity.

The impetus for this project arose from questions raised in recent research by individual sectoral and development entities about how to consolidate and grow the design industry.

Sligo County Council through the Sligo Creative Ireland office and the Sligo Local Enterprise Office have led out on this pan regional, multi-agency project.

The partners set out to address how the key actors responsible for enabling the sustainable development of industry and enterprise might collaborate to address the identified challenges to grow the design industry in the Atlantic region. These challenges relate to design industry networks and engagement in the region, commercial design enterprise capacity and sustainable growth, cross industry engagement and the consolidate of the design industry as a competitive strength for the region.

From the outset it was anticipated that the project would provide a regional, long term model for engagement, communication and networking within the design industry segments and cross industry sectors. It was anticipated that this would be achieved by building initial stakeholder relationships during the project and by maintaining and building a working relationship to address design and cross industry development and growth.

A three strand programme process engaging the design industry, enterprise enablers and four other industry verticals was undertaken over a six month period in 2022. The process included desk and action research. The Connected Hubs Network was harnessed to accelerate engagement and provide a future platform that has regional and national reach and access for the roll out of a model of engagement. The process involved desk and action research and drew on a range of literature, quantitative and qualitative research processes.

THERE WAS STRONG ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE PROGRAMME STRANDS

Strand 1 Quantitative survey – Design Industry: 64 SME participants

Strand 1 Workshops: 34 design industry SME participants

Strand 2: 24 enterprise enabler representatives participated from education (FE, Incubators, Universities); enterprise support entities for indigenous and FDI

Strand 3: 4 connected hubs and 28 companies participated from x4 industry verticals (FMCG, Future Mobility, Construction, MedTech/Pharma)

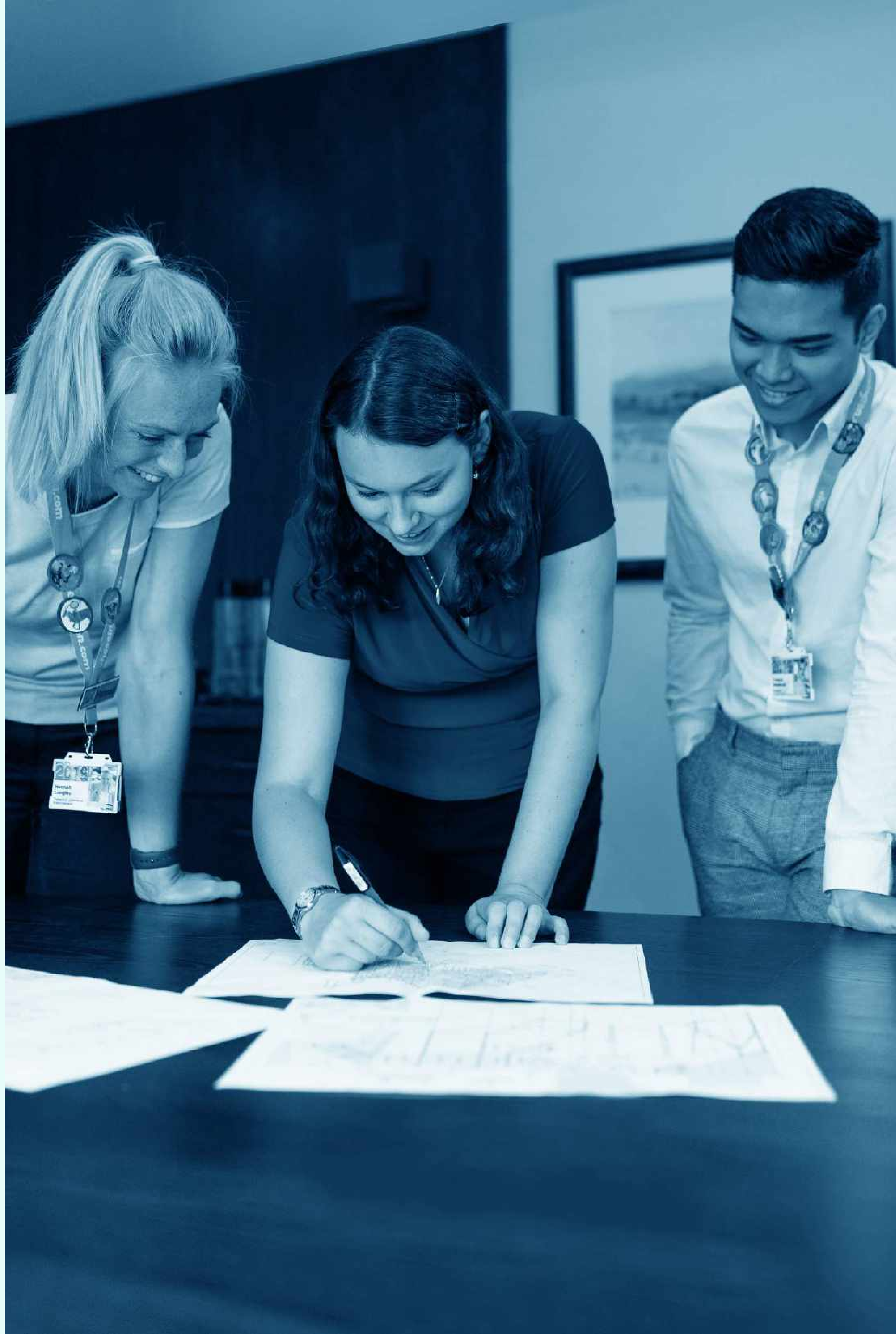
SUMMARY FINDINGS

- Across the three strands, the participants demonstrated an informed understanding of the value of design.
- It is understood by all participants across the three strands that design provides a range of intangible values which can enhance the competitiveness of businesses, that it adds value as an innovation approach to new product/service development, a way of working which is very successful at the creation of intangible values like engagement, brand, reputation, "stickiness", meaning, and strategy.
- It is understood that it best adds value when introduced early in a process, with the iterative approach seen as key to allowing design reduce risk.
- There remains a challenge in understanding the existing design industry verticals and the industry ecosystem. This applies to participants from strand 1 (design industry) as well as other strands. There are further engagement actions to be undertaken to facilitate awareness and understanding of the current range of design disciplines which exist, the design process, as well as the language and terminology of design.
- Significant data was yielded from the process, and it is agreed that further analysis of the material is required. It is agreed that a design enterprise "pulse" survey be undertaken on a regular basis from 2023 onwards. This may link with the CREW CLG data and market intelligence unit project (2022/2023).
- There is entrepreneurial mindset among the participating design enterprises that are based in and/or trading to the Atlantic Region.
- In total 64 self-sustaining enterprises from 16 counties participated in the quantitative survey. Of this cohort, 34 enterprises participated in the qualitative research actions.
- Participating enterprises are all in the SME category from a diverse set of design verticals.

- The participating entities either have a business address in the Atlantic region or indicated trading to entities in the Atlantic region. The top three participating counties, in order, were Galway, Cork and Limerick. Over 50% of respondent enterprises have been trading for more than 5 years, and just over than 25% are trading for between 1 and 4 years. This suggests a high level of enterprise maturity in the sector, and further investigation may provide insight as to the true levels of maturity in the >5 years bracket. 15 % of the companies reported between 7 and 80 employees, 22% with between 2 and 5 employees and 64% of the respondents have just 1 employee. Just above 50% of responding businesses were members of IDI, with a further 19% wishing to learn more about membership. The majority of respondents – 94% – declared definite, or potential growth ambitions with the remaining 6% stating that they did not wish to grow their business. There was awareness of the growth opportunity in the four selected strand 3 industry verticals – FMCG, Construction, Mobility, MedTech/Pharma. There is an ambition among almost two thirds of respondents to capitalise on that opportunity. The key identified challenge is enterprise capacity building and scaling. While perceived to be the case, this is not specific to the design industry. There are identifiable hubs in regional pockets.
- The enterprise enabler ecosystem is being harnessed by the design industry to some degree; however, there is an opportunity to explore additional enterprise development initiatives that specifically target design enterprises. This may be rolled out collaboratively with the existing partners in the Atlantic region.
- The design industry business model reflects that of other industries – it draws on a skilled employee base and a freelance/contractor structure. This is affirmed by strand 1 and strand 3 participants.
- There is clear opportunity to develop business relationships across the four other industry verticals – construction, future mobility, FMCG, MedTech/Pharma – and to co-ordinate and facilitate more focused and targeted business networking.
- The design industry business model facilitates remote working. There is a key role for the Connected Hubs Network and Grow Remote to work with the IDI to loop the enterprises into the existing hubs network and community. This may also be addressed through entrepreneurship development services.
- The participants across the three strands identified the need for orchestrated networking opportunities for the purpose of knowledge sharing, business development, showcasing, CPD and talent reach.
- ***There is a clear commitment by the enterprise enablers, WDC, REPS, LEOS, CH, CREW to continue to work together with the design industry through the IDI and with other industry verticals to enable design industry entrepreneurial ambitions. There is an opportunity to 'professionalise' the design industry in the Atlantic region and to situate it as a competitive advantage on the global stage.***

AGREED ACTIONS

- There is collective agreement that the current project partners will continue to work together to capitalise on identified opportunities by addressing challenges identified to achieve sustainable development and to build on the strengths as identified in the Atlantic TIDE 2022.
- A s-m-l term "strategic business activation" plan is to be researched, devised and activated by the partners from 2023 onwards.
- The short term plan is to be devised based on findings from phase 1. The partners will re-group in January 2023 to draft and source funding for a rollout of phase 2 in 2023-2024.
- The vision is to position the Design Industry across the Atlantic Region as a competitive advantage on the global stage to drive sustainable livelihoods and prosperity in all communities in the Atlantic Region.



2. THE DESIGN INDUSTRY

2.1 Overview

Project 2040 aims to provide a comprehensive social, economic and cultural infrastructure. It articulates a vision that includes a creative and innovative society.

Through the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), there is a defined system, development framework and resource model in place for enterprise in Ireland, within which the creative industries and creative enterprise is situated. The recently published Enterprise White Paper (December 2022) in addressing the mechanisms for ***'supporting enterprises to enter new markets and respond to new growth sectors and encouraging innovative start-ups'*** reference ***'fostering good design as an integral part of bringing new products and services to market'*** (Enterprise White Paper, DETE 2022). The DETE Regional Enterprise Plans for Mid-West, North West and West include the creative economy as a priority. National and regional enterprise development entities such as Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices are working on the ground to activate the policy visions. Enterprise development is being delivered in the context of the smart specialisation strategy which focuses on key pillars including net zero, digitalisation, clustering, and innovation – to be achieved through collaborative initiatives.

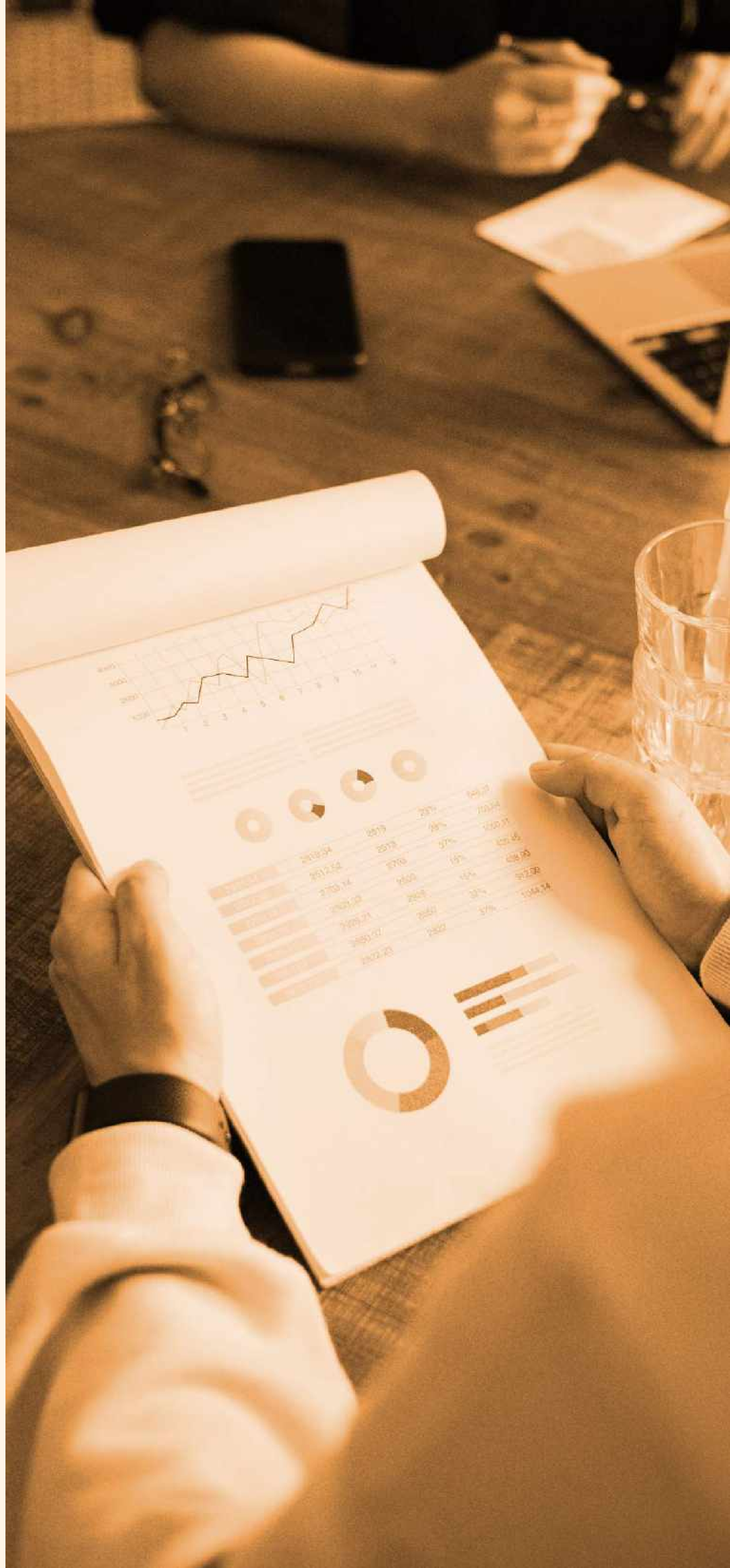
Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) policy and strategy identifies the creative and cultural economy as integral to rural development. Policy and strategy actions for the creative economy are amplified in multiple policies and strategies at national, regional, and local level. There is presently no national creative industry strategy to drive market opportunity and sustainable creative enterprise prosperity. Creative Ireland (CI), situated within the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM), is a cross-government entity and is the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in Culture 2025/ Éire Ildánach, the draft cultural policy published in 2016. The Regional Enterprise Plans (DETE) in the Atlantic Region and the WDC Strategy (DRCD) are integral to the strategic sustainable development of creative enterprise in the Atlantic Region. This is recognised in the forthcoming framework, which has a specific emphasis on digital and design. The creative economy is identified as an intrinsic part of the whole economy and ambitions are interlinked across other growth industries in these regions.

Design, both as a process and as a profession, is increasingly recognised across the world as an essential activity in the evolution of enterprise and public service. Design tools and methodology are now applied in all areas of innovation and change. The design industry is an intrinsic element of the product and service supply chain in entertainment, tourism, pharma, med tech, fin tech, education, health, non-profit cultural and arts, retail, manufacturing, construction, energy, public sector among others. Often invisible, there is significant cross sector and cross industry interoperability.

Global reports indicate significant growth e.g. The Design Industry, 2021 (Forrester) ***'the size of the global design industry was estimated to be $162 billion…'*** with multiple software categories used in design anticipated to grow more than 20% in that year (Forrester, Design Industry 2021).

A Grant Thornton report 2021 (commissioned by the Design and Crafts Council) on the economic value of the design and craft sector reported a turnover of 53bn euro – representing 6.7% of Ireland's total business turnover. This positions the combined craft and design sectors as the 8th largest in Ireland by number of enterprises and 10th largest by number of employees, and commercial design would be a significant proportion of this. Designers in the commercial design sector are highly productive, with turnover per employee of €200,000 and GVA of €72,000 – comparable to the construction sector.

Designer roles include Graphic, Digital production, Content, UI & UX, Services, Strategy, Business, Experimental, Industrial, Data visualisation, Built environment, Motion, Systems among others. Sectors where design is integral to business output include Graphic and visual communications, Product design, Construction, Architecture, Advertising, Marketing, Tech, UI/UX, Business Management, Web Design, Fast moving consumer goods, Transport, Fashion, Textiles, Medical, Education, Utilities and Telco.



2.2 Project Context

The impetus for this project arose from questions raised in recent research by individual sectoral and development entities about how to consolidate and grow the design industry. These are outlined in summary below. A predominant question is how do we enable the consolidation and growth of sustainable design enterprises in the Atlantic Region.

Creative Ireland in 2022 launched the new Creative Communities Economic Action Fund. The fund provides local authorities with the resources to develop innovative projects which seek to leverage the potential of the creative industries in supporting local and regional economic development. The introduction of the CI EAF presented an opportunity for key entities to collaborate and explore how to address the identified challenges and opportunities to consolidate the design industry in the region.

The Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI) commenced new strategic activations in 2020 for the Design Industry in Ireland. This included looking at enterprise data, talent, enterprise development and growth, exploring white label provisions, researching market reach and access. The IDI is the authorised agent in Ireland for the Design Skillnet. ***Design Skillnet*** produced the Design Practice in Ireland Report 2021. Design Skillnet reported 37,500 designers identified as working in Ireland (2021 DSN) with an estimated need for up to 70,000 designers by 2025. However, it also identified **engagement** and **communication** among the key challenges for the design industry advancement in Ireland. The report notes that ***'the sector is inherently fragmented, which poses a communication challenge and has resulted in low engagement of designers with professional design bodies'.*** It states that ***'design has a proven ability to create impact and generate value in business. The sector has been poor at communicating this – internally and externally. The design profession needs to communicate the value of design within a business context'.***

The report recommended the following actions:

1) Create targeted engagement strategies for each of the identified industry segments.

2) IDI to work with Design Skillnet, supported by Skillnet Ireland, to develop a targeted plan that communicates the full business value of design in a two-pronged approach **a)** educate the profession and **b)** educate the clients.

Sligo County Council – Creative Ireland and Local Enterprise Office

The development of the economy and community is underpinned by a multiplicity of statutory agencies with diverse agendas and priorities, geographic reach and varied resources. The goal of the enterprise enablers in education, skills development and enterprise development agencies is to enable the activation and sustainable growth and scaling of enterprises. This is achieved through mechanisms such as industry research, development, innovation intervention – local, national, global, skills development, mentoring, coaching, infrastructure development/capital investment, networking opportunities, market engagement/activation (national and/or global), business investment loans/grants/equity, FDI, RDI. Some of the entities also devise and drive regional and national policy and strategy which directly impacts on industry advancement including the design industry.

CREW Digital CLG (CREW) launched in 2021 and has a focus on the empowerment of Digital Creatives in the West of Ireland to create, develop and scale globally. CREW lead on the Creative Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development incubator programme (accredited through the ATU). CREW is also constructing Ireland's first dedicated and Creative Industries Innovation Hub and will open Summer 2023. It has satellite incubation hubs in Roscommon and Letterfrack also scheduled for opening 2023.

Western Development Commission (WDC)

In 2021, the WDC identified the need for targeted intervention to strengthen and grow the design industry in the Atlantic Region. Rudimentary data collected by the WDC 2021 indicates over 550 individual micro/SME and large scale are identified as design industry enterprises in nine counties across the Atlantic region. The WDC Creative Industries Plan 2026 notes the Design Industry as a priority for sectoral intervention. To stabilise and grow the following was identified as necessary – reliable and relevant enterprise data, engagement, cross-sectoral networking, business capacity activation, cross sectoral market place engagement and enterprise opportunity take up. A schedule of actions was agreed by the WDC board in Q1 2022 as follows: 2022 – Stakeholder engagement + project development and activation. 2023-2025 Design industry strategy + business activation plan linked to CreaTech agenda to be rolled out across Atlantic Region. The intended impact of the Creative Economy Plan is to create sustainable jobs and to consolidate the industry across the Atlantic Region and is situated within the framework the DETE Regional Enterprise Plans, DRCD Our Rural Futures and the forthcoming DTCAGSM Creative Industries Framework. Mechanisms to achieve these ambitions in the Atlantic include CREW Digital and the Connected Hubs Services.

ConnectedHubs.ie operated by The National Hub Network of +400 hubs, a Government of Ireland initiative that provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working. The National Hub Network has the support of Government, remote working advocacy groups and industry representatives. The Hub Network is particularly important and relevant to the engagement, communication and network agenda in the context of a rural enterprise environment and activation for SMEs.

The Regional Enterprise Managers for Mid-West, North West and West observed the process in the context of the existing objectives and actions for the Regional Enterprise Plans 2021-2024 and in the context of the overarching framework of the national smart specialisation strategy which focuses on core pillars including net zero, clustering, digitalisation and innovation.

2.3 Project Aim

We asked, how might the actors collaborate to address the identified challenges for the design industry in the region.

From the outset it was anticipated that the project would provide a regional, long term model for engagement, communication and networking within the design industry segments and cross industry sectors.

It was anticipated that this would be achieved by building initial stakeholder relationships during the project and to maintain and build a working relationship to address design and cross industry development and growth.

The process involved devising and rollout of programme strands that model up “internal” design industry communication and engagement programmes and the “external” cross industry client communication and engagement. By harnessing the Connected Hubs, the aim was to accelerate engagement, and provide a future platform that has regional and national reach and access for the roll out of a model of engagement.

2.4 Intended / Anticipated Project Impacts

The anticipated impacts of the project aim ultimately to strengthen the contribution of the design industry to local economic development and beyond. Our vision for intended specific impacts included influencing policy, strategy and resource at national, regional and sectoral level. These are:

- Enable the development of self-sustaining enterprise and the consolidation/growth of the design industry in the regions and ROI.
- Address key recommendations in the Design Skillnet Report 2021 and activate the response for long term design industry growth by the IDI.
- Activate regional and national design industry and cross industry networks.
- Establish formal cross industry engagement, networking; information sharing re. the specific industry segments and relevance and value to altered industry environments.
- Inform design industry enterprise development strategy for all partners and stakeholders beyond this initiative.
- Augment the existing design industry network and connection to IDI.
- Connect the design industry in their own local hubs.
- Establish model for future sustained engagement and rollout of ongoing cross sectoral communication, networking, enterprises activation; activation of other recommendations in the Design Skillnet report; address government agenda re. design on an ongoing basis.
- Baseline design industry data capture and collation – allow for evidence based creative enterprise strategies at local, regional and national level and within sectors.
- Demonstrate impact of direct engagement with the sector to address identified industry challenges.

2.4 Intended / Anticipated Project Impacts (cont.)

- Identify future activation opportunities for design industry and cross industry innovation; supports for start-ups in design industry; augment network for the CREW/ATU creative enterprise incubation programme.
- Hubs – anchor hubs showcase + engagement opportunity + networking; All hubs – engagement + network + Reach.
- Facilitate identification of thematics for RDI with tertiary level and industry partners.
- Identification of design industry business activation needs.
- Provide an activation mechanism for other recommendations in the Design Skillnet report.
- Raise awareness re. IDI, local and regional creative enterprise infrastructure and hubs support structures.
- Establish formal cross industry engagement, networking; information sharing re. the specific industry segments and relevance and value to altered industry environments.
- Activate engagement between IDI and key cohorts in MedTech; AR/VR; Mobility; Construction in the W/AEC/South West.
- Augment sustainable enterprise opportunities in the West and nationally.
- Strengthen collaboration between IDI and CH for harnessing the platform in long term for pan industry networking and collaboration.

2.5 Project Development and Activation Process

The project involved desk and action research. The partners devised the following process, secured funding from Creative Ireland and direct and match funding from the partners. Atlantic TIDE was activated in May 2022 on a pilot basis for six months as follows:

1) Appointment of a Design Industry Project Lead through the IDI to: **a)** design and implement a pilot engagement programme with prioritised design industry segments and professional design bodies and **b)** to design and implement a communications programme in order to activate cross industry networking and opportunity.

2) The programme comprising 3 Strands to be rolled out on Connected Hubs (CH) as the platform of engagement and communication in order to maximise reach, and access as well as harness the CH data collection and GIS systems for research purposes during the project.

3) A detailed project and programme schedule has been developed. In summary:

Strand 1: "Internal" industry engagement + Communications (June – Nov)
Design and action research with IDI members based in or trading in the Atlantic region.

Strand 2: Internal engagement + Communications (June – Nov) – Educating the profession
Design and action research focusing on developing the narrative and comms around the design industries. The key stakeholders were enterprise enablers with representatives from the design industry.

Strand 3: External engagement + Communications (November) – Educate the clients
Cross sector networking and comms sessions x4. Carrying the learnings from the workshops into other industries. Focus for pilot is on X4 Industry segments: AR/VR; Construction; MedTech and Mobility. Open curated networking session in situ at anchor hubs: Ludgate, Cork; FutureCast, Leitrim, Future Mobility Campus, Limerick and Sligo (online).

3. ATLANTIC TIDE PROGRAMME STRANDS PROCESS AND OUTPUTS REPORT SUMMARY

ATLANTIC TIDE
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3.1 Introduction

The programme strands were devised by the partners as the mechanism to deliver the proposed outputs and achieve impact. The IDI appointed Context Studio Ltd. to manage and deliver the programme strands. Comprising desk and action research and programme report, the work was undertaken between June and December 2022. The full programme strand report authored by Context Studio Ltd is included in the appendix.

3. ATLANTIC TIDE PROGRAMME STRANDS PROCESS AND OUTPUTS REPORT SUMMARY

3.2 Strand 1 — Pan Design Industry Network and Data Gathering Sessions

3.2.1 Overview

The first strand of the programme set out to engage self-sustaining design enterprise entities to participate in networking sessions with participants filtered based on design industry priority verticals.

The objectives of Strand 1 were:

- establish network across multiple design industry segments.
- raised awareness of the policy/strategy/resource framework in place for the design industry.
- raised awareness about new industry trends/evolving market opportunities for existing design entities in all segments as well as new enterprises.
- harness WDC communications to drive design industry engagement.

Intended outputs in this programme were:

- Augmentation of the existing network and connection to IDI.
- Loop the design industry in through their own local hubs.
- Quantitative and qualitative data from the sector.
- Enhance awareness re. IDI, local and regional creative enterprise infrastructure and hubs supports structures.

To ensure appropriate focus on the verticals required, a screening survey was first issued to the community, by which respondents could express interest in attending one of the workshop sessions, but also provide important quantitative data to the initiative relating to the profile of these businesses. The recruitment aim was to harness IDI membership and network and well as the Connected Hubs. The screener survey enabled the team to filter for businesses with growth ambition, and focussed around our priority design verticals: product/industrial design; communications design (graphic, branding, website design etc.), structures and spaces (architecture, interior design, exhibition design), digital design (web, interaction, animation, tv, social media), strategic design (service design, ethnography, futures, insights), immersive design (VR/AR etc.), product design (industrial design, consumer product design, fashion).

3.2.2 Quantitative Study — Methodology and Summary Findings

Methodology

The first strand of the work held the intention to reach out across hubs to all design entities and to host networking sessions based on design industry priorities. The aim was to harness IDI membership and the design community aligned to the Connected Hubs, for these engagement sessions. A plan was developed to host three workshops, allowing broad representation from design businesses. A screener survey was created to collect relevant quantitative enterprise data and to ensure that the participants would represent businesses appropriate to our design verticals, who harbour ambitions for growth with relevant industrial segments. The quantitative data has revealed new information about the design industry ecosystem in the Atlantic region and the individual enterprise set up and business activity. Specifically it has raised further questions and it is agreed by the partners that further in-depth analysis of the data. It is also agreed that a phase two quantitative study be developed to yield similar date from the wider design industry in the region.

Summary Findings

- In total 64 businesses responded to the survey, from 16 counties. The participating entities either have a business address in the Atlantic region or indicated trading to entities in the Atlantic region. The top three participating counties, in order, were Galway, Cork and Limerick.
- Just above 50% of responding businesses were members of IDI, with a further 19% wishing to learn more about membership.
- Over 50% of respondent enterprises have been trading for more than 5 years, and just over than 25% are trading for between 1 and 4 years. This suggests a high level of enterprise maturity in the sector, and further investigation may provide insight as to the true levels of maturity in the >5 years bracket.
- 15 % of the companies reported between 7 and 80 employees, 22% with between 2 and 5 employees and 64% of the respondents have just 1 employee.

- Significantly over 30% claim to have 1 or more contract employees. Based on this data and through discussion with the industry verticals, the design industry relies on a contract business model.
- Respondents included a diverse set of design verticals, with greater representation among companies providing Communication Design including branding, graphic design, packaging design, illustration, wayfinding and advertising. Digital Design was the next most represented vertical, including website design, interaction design, animation, tv production and social media.
- Many of our responding enterprises are actively exporting their design services, with Northern Ireland and Great Britain being the primary export markets, closely followed by the EU. In some cases, business list GB, EU and USA as their largest markets.
- The majority of respondents – 94% – declared definite, or potential growth ambitions with the remaining 6% stating that they did not wish to grow their business. There was awareness of the growth opportunity in the four selected strand 3 industry verticals – FMCG, Construction, Mobility, MedTech/Pharma. There is an ambition among almost two thirds of respondents to capitalise on that opportunity.
- This ambition is a strength for the region. However, there are clear barriers to growth identified by 70% (45) of the respondents in the free text responses in the survey. While funding and talent acquisition sit at the top, lack of confidence and isolation is identified combined within top three challenges. There is a challenge for the participating design enterprises with regards to sales capacity in their business. This question was a free text option; however, there were clear patterns in the responses received. The majority of respondents shared that they had a low sales capacity, most taking responsibility themselves as a solo entrepreneur, and others sharing a low number of hours per month dedicated to sales.
- The respondents stated that they have engaged with a variety of support services to develop their business. The free text option outlined that these range from enterprise development, with 65% engaging with LEO supports, to specific skills service providers with 41% stating engagement in Skillnet services. Other responses included EI, IDA, ÚnG, DigiClare.ie (Clare County Council), Illustrators Ireland, NDRC, Back for Business Programme, Donegal Women in Business, Intertrade Ireland Brexit Support voucher, Enterprise Ireland RTCF, Céim Programme (New Frontiers), Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, and Donegal Creative Coast Partnership. Almost 20% have stated that they have not engaged with enterprise enabler services.

3.2.3 Qualitative Study — Methodology and Summary Findings

Methodology

Following the screener process, invites were issued to survey respondents to participate in three facilitated workshops. These were held online, Friday 15th July, Tuesday 9th August, and Wednesday 21st of September. The workshops were recorded in audio-visual format and throughout the workshops, a facilitator captured feedback in order to easily visualise emerging themes and enhance discussion.

A total of 34 design businesses attended a workshop during the series. Workshops were 2 hours long, and included moderated breakout groups discussing the various challenges of starting and growing a design business in Ireland under the categories below. Participants were also invited to share their future vision for their vision. The breakout groups were followed with a playback session which offered further opportunity for consensus assessment, but also networking.

The workshops focused on the following themes:

1) Operational challenges (premises, equipment, accounting, legal, etc.).

2) Talent & people challenges (staffing, HR).

3) Market challenges (finding and connecting with potential customers to help grow the business, explaining what you do).

4) Sales challenges (closing deals, winning work, procurement processes, supporting clients in buying your work).

5) Incidental contributions not directly linked to the four areas above.

Qualitative Study – Findings

A rapidly changing sector

The application of design has been rapidly changing over the past 30 years. With the advent of new technologies came new practices like interaction design and web design. As products became more complex and connected, we saw the emergence of service design and user experience design. The development of "design thinking" has brought design practices into the worlds of policy and strategy. Even inside design communities, these titles cause some confusion.

Design is Misunderstood

It was indicated throughout the workshops that the rapid evolution of design has "left behind" many in Irish society, from potential customers in the wider business community to those who work to support the sector through enterprise supports. It is perceived by the strand 1 participants that design is misunderstood by the public, by policy, and by industries outside of the design sector. This [perceived] lack of understanding is reflected in the interactions design businesses have with clients, and with enterprise supports available in Ireland.

The Value of Designers' Process is Under-Appreciated in the Market

When working with a new client or customer, design businesses shared that the clients' goals or budgets were often out of line with the design tasks demanded. Clients would either not have the appropriate budget for the work they were expecting, or they would expect immediate final deliverables without allowing appropriate time for the process required to achieve those outcomes. However, an emerging generation is more aware of the value of design. Design businesses report a generation gap in the understanding and appreciation of the value of design.

Design Industry Business Model – Networks, Hubs & Clusters

Design businesses shared that the nature of their work means that flexibility is key, and that this flexibility is derived of networks of talent, and of potential customers, but also communities of practice sharing information on how to run a business and supports to be found.

Business/Enterprise Supports Aren't Suitable for Designers

Design professionals share the challenges of all entrepreneurs in needing to learn how to run a business. Our workshop participants reported difficulty in finding information on available supports to help start and grow their business. When working with for example, Local Enterprise Office or Enterprise Ireland, participating businesses found that the advice and support they were offered wasn't necessarily relevant to the design industry nor did it show an understanding of the nature of their work.

Learning to be a Business is Challenging

Starting a business involves a lot of learning, and the learning curve can be extremely steep. For design professionals this often means learning things that were never part of their education or practice. This might include accounting, insurance, HR, marketing, procurement, sales and more.

The challenge of learning how to run a business, while also being a designer, is exacerbated by an apparent lack of relevant supports available to design businesses. Our participants report difficulty in finding advisors with knowledge of the business of design.

Setting up a Design Business is Not Cheap!

For many new design businesses, the requirement of specialised equipment and software, as well as space for production and collaboration can add increased cost which can make it harder to get a business off the ground.

Hard to Find Clients, Harder to Find the Right Kind of Clients

Small design businesses find it hard to get their name out and find new clients, meaning that repeat work and referrals are heavily relied upon to stay in business. Small, more local businesses can be easier to connect with but often they lack necessary budget or priority for design. While larger businesses might have the budgets, it can be much more difficult to get “a foot in the door” with these companies, especially outside Dublin.

Referrals Drive Growth, and Growth Drives Referrals

For many design businesses, work comes in through referrals. These referrals can come from existing or previous clients, or other businesses that have turned down a job. For many it is their most reliable source of work and so making good industry connections and having a strong network is very important.

Public Procurement Challenges

Businesses that have taken on public sector work recall the overall experience as being frustrating. Understanding procurement procedures and tenders can be a struggle for new businesses that might not have prior experience. Sometimes the procurement process itself contradicts good principles of design, as solution proposals are often required in the procurement stage before any actual work can be done.

Sourcing Talent is Key to Survival

Finding the right freelancers and building strong, long-term relationships with them is very important to design businesses. However, it can be challenging to know who is out there, and after building a relationship with a specific freelancer it can be hard to fill that void if they move on to other work.

Atlantic TIDE
Transforming Ireland's Design Economy

Networks, Clusters & Community add Resilience to Design Enterprises
Design Businesses report reliance on strong networks in order to find freelancers, clients and potential collaborators. Outside of Dublin, businesses report a lack of these connections, or effective networks that provide the potential necessary for business growth.

Existing "Formal" Networks Could Be More Effective
When it comes to formal creative networks, businesses that are members of these groups claim that they are relatively inactive, and often very Dublin-centric when it comes to events. Because of this, they aren't relied upon as being useful sources of work and businesses find that better connections can be made elsewhere.

Design in Ireland is Dublin-Centred
Design businesses outside of Dublin report that the industry seems a lot more scattered in the regions than in the capital, and that it is much easier to get work and be known when operating within Dublin due to better networking opportunities and connections to be made.

ATLANTIC TIDE
Transforming Ireland's Design Economy

3.2.4 Strand 1 Takeaways

- Entrepreneurial mindset within the design industry
- Participating enterprises are all in the SME category
- A significant proportion are trading nationally and globally and have growth ambitions.
- The key identified challenge is enterprise capacity building and scaling. Within this, issues include business skills, business planning, business management, team development and management, client engagement, services and product development, managing IP, marketing, market access and reach, business pricing, customer reach (private and public), business pitching, sales, company consolidation and scaling. It is perhaps perceived that these challenges are exclusive to the design and creative industries which is not the case. The findings reflect challenges of start-up and SMEs most recently captured in Barriers to Entrepreneurship (NW REP 2021) and are not specific to the design industry. Some of these challenges may be addressed through the existing enterprise enabler services in collaboration with the IDI and Connected Hubs.
- The enterprise enabler ecosystem is being harnessed by the design industry to some degree; however, there is a level of frustration within the design industry at the perceived lack of understanding of the intrinsic value of design to all industry by the enterprise enablers including education system and enterprise development services. An exploration of this issue identified a knowledge gap about the existing enabler ecosystem and services. There is a communications and engagement action needed to ensure enterprises are accessing the appropriate and relevant existing provisions, and also to further develop targeted enterprise activation and business growth services specific to the design industry and the functioning ecosystem. There is an opportunity to further explore IDI engagement with e.g. CREW CLG, the LEOs and Enterprise Ireland.

- The design industry business model reflects that of other industries – it draws on a skilled employee base and contractor structure.
- Participants in Strand 1 indicate existing engagement with the Strand 3 industry verticals. However, there is clear opportunity to develop business relationships across these verticals and to co-ordinate and facilitate more focused and targeted business networking.
- The industry business model facilitates remote working. This is an asset; however, lack of relevant networks and a sense of isolation were noted as significant issues by the participating entrepreneurs. There was strong interest expressed in ongoing and follow up networking, knowledge sharing and business development exploration. There is a key role for the Connected Hubs Network and Grow Remote to work with the IDI to loop the enterprises into the existing hubs network and community. This may also be addressed through entrepreneurship development services.

3. ATLANTIC TIDE PROGRAMME STRANDS PROCESS AND OUTPUTS REPORT SUMMARY

3.3 Strand 2 — Educate the Profession: Engaging Enterprise Supports

3.3.1 Overview

This strand set out to engage Enterprise Support agencies and other important ecosystem stakeholders in an online workshop setting to focus on design industry positioning, narrative development for the sector and its various verticals and to explore pathways and possibilities to exploit existing and new markets. Findings from Strand 1 were shared with participants in this strand, to aid with development of awareness as to the design industry perspective, but also to inspire collaborative thinking in line with the needs of the sector and future possibilities. This strand also included preparation of an engagement plan for 4 industry segments in advance of strand 3.

Following the extensive engagement with design enterprises during strand 1, and the identification of key findings from within the sector, strand 2 shifts the focus to enterprise support, strategy and policy agencies, with the following objectives:

- Connect and share knowledge with the entities that are responsible for shaping industry and enterprise policy, strategy and investment.
- Frame and position the design industry in the context of these agencies' rationale of investible enterprise.
- Find common ground to facilitate access to existing enterprise development resources and identify other design industry appropriate mechanisms to drive growth and jobs in the industry.
- Raise awareness of the policy, strategy, and resource frameworks in place for the design industry.

Intended Outputs

- Qualitative data on the understanding and engagement of enterprise supports across the design verticals identified, and opportunities therein.
- Framework/model for an "Educate the Profession" initiative for rollout across all industry segments over the next 3 years.
- Feedback from the enterprise supports agencies and bodies regarding ongoing engagement with the design sector.

3.3.2 Methodology

Strand 2 of the project adopted a “one shot” approach, inviting +80 representatives from the relevant enabler agencies in the Atlantic region to participate in a facilitated online workshop. There was strong participation with +50% of those invited registered and a final 30% in attendance on the day. This is indicative of the interest in the design industry in the context of enterprise development and growth in the region. Additionally, and building upon strand 1 engagement, 4 design businesses were invited to attend. These businesses were selected on the basis of their contribution to strand 1, their situation on the Atlantic Economic Corridor, and their willingness to engage further with the project to drive the objectives of the project.

The workshop was held online, using Zoom, on Friday October 7th 2022, over a two hour session. IDI CEO Charlotte Barker delivered a keynote address, providing a context to the workshop and framing the design industry in Ireland for the enterprise enabler cohort. John Lynch, Design Lead, provided the findings of Strand 1.

The presentations were followed by Breakout sessions that focussed on ***'How might we enable sustainable enterprise and job growth in the industry in the Atlantic region – now and in the future?'*** This overarching theme was broken down into a series of questions, visualised for participants on a virtual whiteboard, on which, during the sessions, notes were live scribed by our facilitators. The entire workshop was recorded for later review and notetaking. The following questions were presented to the participants for discussion:

What's our understanding of design?

- What outcomes can it create?
- What skills does it involve?
- What does good look like?

How does design add value in other industries?

- How can design help the bottom line?
- How does design create intangible value?
- What should industry consider when working with design?

What are the existing ways we support self-sustaining enterprises to grow, and to provide jobs?

- What could we do differently?

3.3.3 Qualitative Study — Summary Findings

Informed understanding of the value of design
Participants from the various education and support agencies showed an informed understanding of the value of design. There was also awareness of how design has evolved over the years to become a business-critical, user-centred problem-solving approach for some. It was understood that design provides a range of intangible values which can enhance the competitiveness of businesses.

Also noted was the collaborative nature of design – working across disciplines and silos, but additionally that design is often seen as complicated, or difficult to work with. This could be interpreted to indicate a gap of understanding between design and other industrial sectors, and the need for better ways to integrate design in other sectors.

Understanding of how design adds value in other industries?
Design is understood to add value as an innovation approach to new product / service development, a way of working which is very successful at the creation of intangible values like engagement, brand, reputation, "stickiness", meaning, and strategy.

It is understood that it best adds value when introduced early in a process, with the iterative approach seen as key to allowing design reduce risk. It was also noted that it is fundamental for design to be interdisciplinary and collaborative. This points to the strategic importance of design for other industries, but it was additionally noted that as an approach, design can help with staff engagement, empowering teams and (perhaps) aiding retention.

Healthy Networks

Healthy networks encourage peer-to-peer learning and support between design businesses. When design-relevant support and information can be hard to find from LEO etc., the best information comes from those that have been through it already, and so these connections and the sharing of knowledge is extremely valuable.

Creating Ecosystems

Additionally, the development of communities and ecosystems made up of local enterprises is an idea about which design professionals are particularly enthusiastic. The establishment of local hubs to encourage collaboration between design disciplines and other industries is an example of how this might be encouraged.

New Talent Pathways to Design

It's important to shift away from the perception that you need to be an artist to work in design. Design is a spectrum, and creative minds from other backgrounds should know that design is a viable career option and not just for "artists". The demand for designers is there, and new pathways into design need to be explored for talent coming from other fields, industries or education levels. In the context of supporting the actions under the Design Skillnet report, this finding points to a potential opportunity to market design training beyond those who already consider themselves designers.

Perception & Enablers

The perception of the design industry from those external to it is often out of line with that of design professionals. Echoing what was heard in Strand 1, we heard further how significant a barrier this has become for design businesses, specifically when it comes to engaging with enterprise services. While we heard from some enterprise support representatives during the workshop who acknowledged their own limited understanding of the design industry, there were some whose understanding was very strong and they were passionate and constructive about wanting to improve this situation.

For the perception of design as a sector to change, the support of these external enablers who understand design is needed. Specific issues lie around the awareness of the range of design disciplines which exist, the design process, as well as the language and terminology of design.

Business Skills

Opportunities to learn and develop business and entrepreneurial skills are vital to design practitioners becoming self-sustaining businesses. Creative people have lots of good ideas, but without the knowledge to convert their talent into a reliable income source they will be unable to grow. Designers need access to relevant supports, information, and seek advisors and mentors with an understanding of design that can help them build their business.

3.3.4 Strand 2 Takeaways

- There is an informed understanding of the value of design.
- The enterprise enablers understand that design provides a range of intangible values which can enhance the competitiveness of businesses.
- Design is understood to add value as an innovation approach to new product / service development, a way of working which is very successful at the creation of intangible values like engagement, brand, reputation, “stickiness”, meaning, and strategy.
- It is understood that it best adds value when introduced early in a process, with the iterative approach seen as key to allowing design reduce risk.
- There is a challenge for some enterprise enabler entities (in education and enterprise development services) in understanding the existing design industry verticals and the industry ecosystem. There is further engagement actions to be undertaken to facilitate awareness and understanding of the current range of design disciplines which exist, the design process, as well as the language and terminology of design.
- The discussion and response by the participants in Strand 2 following the presentation by the IDI and the S1 data demonstrate that there is a knowledge gap to be addressed with the participating enterprise enablers about the status of the design industry in the Atlantic Region. There was limited if any awareness of the entrepreneurial ambitions of the industry and the enterprise growth opportunity for the design and other industries. The enterprise development entities observed that many of the challenges identified in Strand 1 are not specific to the design industry and are issues that face Start Ups and SMEs in general.
- There is an acknowledgement that the enabler cohorts need to review mechanisms to reach out and into the industry and enable direct engagement with design businesses to help them achieve their enterprise ambitions. It is understood by the enablers that this is an imperative for the economic and community ambitions. These may be explored further in the context of the REPS, the LEOs, the CH, CREW CLG and the RDIE with the IDI.
- There is a clear commitment by the Strand 2 participants to address the enterprise development challenges identified in Strand 1 and to work together to enable design industry entrepreneurial ambitions.

3. ATLANTIC TIDE PROGRAMME STRANDS PROCESS AND OUTPUTS REPORT SUMMARY

3.4 Strand 3 — Educate the Clients — Cross-sector Engagement Sessions

3.4.1 Overview

Strand 3 set out to deliver networking sessions to cross-sectoral and enterprise agency clients, and to offer that same opportunity to relevant Skillnet groups, industry advocacy agencies and RDI entities. Strand 3 of the project delivered four workshops, (3 in-person, 1 online) and utilised the distributed network of Connected Hubs to engage stakeholders from each of our selected industry verticals. The programme was executed over a period of two weeks as follows:

Date	Vertical	Venue	Attendance
28.11.22	Medical Technologies (including Pharmaceuticals)	The Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen, Co. Cork	9
01.12.22	Construction	FutureCast, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim	7
05.12.22	Mobility	Future Mobility Campus, Shannon, Co. Clare	8
06.12.22	Fast Moving Consumer Goods	Online (originally Sligo)	4

Objectives

Building upon the learnings of Strand 1 and Strand 2, this strand allowed connection through to the selected industry verticals, highlighting the opportunity presented by the design sector, but also gathering a body of qualitative data on how each industry vertical perceives the value of design. A significant driver of engagement in this strand was WDC comms and the network of connected hubs. The focus of activities within these sessions was adjusted, following the outcome of strands 1 and 2. It was surmised that much remained to be learned as to the industrial perspective on the value of design, and the experience of working with design. As such, these sessions included a component of networking, and of sharing the learnings from Strand 1 and 2, but an emphasis on data gathering was added, with facilitated "focus group" engagement to allow for qualitative research.

Intended Outputs

— Cross industry network established for further development.

— Framework for future engagement mechanisms between design industry segments and other industries engagement based on direct engagement.

— Activation of market opportunities and CPD.

— Qualitative data on the perceived value of design, and engagement with design, from perspective of each industry vertical.

3.4.2 Methodology

It was the intention for Strand 3 to arrange meet and greet networking and knowledge sharing sessions in situ at the hubs. However, during strands 1 and 2, much new information surfaced as to, respectively, the lived experience of design entrepreneurs, and the understanding among enterprise support agencies of the sector. A significant gap in our data was identified – that of the prevailing experience of the industrial "customers" of design, within our selected industry verticals.

Questions arising included, how do they utilise design currently? And why? What values does design add, and might it add in the future? Are there key design practices which industry needs? What are the challenges of working with design? With all these questions, and more, there is the additional question of whether the answers differ depending upon the particular vertical being considered.

It was agreed to adjust the approach. Industry specific networking sessions which arranged with participants representing the other industry verticals, hub teams and project partner representatives. The adjusted approach allowed significant time in each session for research – enabling the Atlantic TIDE project to begin to answer the questions here mentioned and summarised in the report below.

Each workshop was held in situ for a three hour session. IDI CEO Charlotte Barker delivered a keynote address, providing a context to the workshop and framing the design industry in Ireland for the enterprise enabler cohort. John Lynch, Design Lead, provided the findings of Strand 1. The presentations were followed by a facilitated roundtable that focused on the following questions:

What is design?

- What skills does it involve?
- What does good look like?

In what ways does / might design add value in your sector?

- How does it help the bottom line?
- How does design add intangible value to your business processes?
- Can you share stories of ways in which design has impacted your business or sector?

What is it like working with design?

- What kinds of design are important to you and why?
- How might you find and select designers to work with?
- Do you have a preference for in-house or external designers? Why?
- Are there challenges associated with working with design?

3. ATLANTIC TIDE PROGRAMME STRANDS PROCESS AND OUTPUTS REPORT SUMMARY

3.4 Strand 3 — Educate the Clients — Cross-sector Engagement Sessions

3.4.3 Qualitative Study — Summary Findings

Findings are detailed here, first as a "deep-dive" into each workshop, showing the perspectives shared by our separate verticals, and then finally as a selection of emergent themes and observations made by the team, across all four events.

WORKSHOP 1 – MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES (INCLUDING PHARMACEUTICAL)

Participants in this workshop included MNE Pharmaceutical Company Representative (x2),MNE MedTech R&D Representative, Medical Technology Company Representative, Connected Hubs Representative (x 3), Medical Technology Start-up (x 2).

Below is a précis of the views expressed by the participants.

Question 1 – What is Design?

Problem Solving, Innovation & Empowerment

Participants expressed the view that design is a methodology for problem solving, which allows lateral thinking, and thereby innovation. This was connected to the empowerment of teams and individuals in the MedTech and Pharmaceutical Sectors.

Customer Focused

A key characteristic of the shared understanding of design within the sector appeared to be that design is "customer focused" or "user focused". The idea was shared that design, as complimentary to engineering, could ensure that products are developed with the users and customers (patients, hospitals etc.) in mind.

Culture and Willingness to Change

It was expressed that in order to make the most of design, an organisation must behave in an open minded manner and that this is connected to culture and alignment within an organisation.

A Strategic Tool

There was an understanding that design, or design thinking, could be used as a strategic tool, and that this connects to the need for leadership buy-in in Medtech / Pharma Companies. This strategic application of design pushes back somewhat on the "Problem Solving" statements above – suggesting that perhaps a strict "problem statement" limits the potential impact of a design approach.

Question 2 – In what ways does/might design add value to your sector?

Embracing Failure & Learning from It

There was a strong signal from participants that a characteristic value of design is as a mechanism by which enterprises can learn to embrace experimentation and understand failure differently – maximizing learnings to improve product and service offerings and operational efficacy. This was not without caveat – some added that the willingness to fail is often stifled by organisational culture and precedent. This reflects points made earlier under “culture and willingness to change” (1.3).

Talent Attraction & Retention

Connected to culture, empowerment, and willingness to innovate – there was consensus among the representatives from larger organisations that design offers value in the area of talent attraction and retention. While the words “design” or “design thinking” might not feature on job descriptions or HR recruitment messaging, it’s “creativity” and “innovation” as part of the “ways of working” which are attractive to potential employees.

In-house, versus external, and the challenges of working with consultancies

We heard that there are specific challenges when it comes to working with design as a lot of design services are accessed through consultancies. It is difficult to get enterprise supports for work which might involve consultancies, and an example was cited where a consultancy ended a project because hours had been fully utilised within the budget.

With that acknowledged, there was some consensus on the need for both in-house and external design talent, each with its own purpose.

Networking to Find Design Talent

There was evidence of a difficulty in finding the right talent, and a preponderance to the use of ad-hoc, or formal networks. IRDG was mentioned as an organisation that is helping with this challenge, with a specific focus on design thinking practitioners.

WORKSHOP 2 – CONSTRUCTION

The workshop participants included construction Industry Advocates (x2), Design Contractor, Construction Contractor (x2 -medium scale), Property Developer (medium scale), Construction Technologist.

Question 1 – What is Design?

Problem Solving through Creativity & Open Mindedness

Design was understood to be a collection of practices which bring lateral thinking, creativity, curiosity and imagination to the process of solving problems. It was understood that design processes are often based on research, and on communication between multiple parties.

Mapping, Vision, and Strategy

There was awareness too, that design is about collaboration and mapping the future state of projects. The alignment across multiple different contributors and disciplines that is required in order to produce a construction project was seen as something that design assists with.

Question 2 – Ways that design does/might add value to your sector?

Cost Reduction

There was an emphasis on the role of design in ensuring that expensive late changes in construction project are less necessary – design being the tool to ensure that the end product is fit for purpose, and for the uses for which it is intended.

Improving the Lives of End Users

Design was seen as essential to the lifetime experience of the construction project – and its value to the end users. In practice, not all designers adhere to this principle, but it was seen as a fundamental role for designers – understanding and advocating for the user.

Aesthetics, History and Perception

The awareness that design brings of context, history, and the perception of a construction project was seen as valuable and powerful in offsetting a culture of “box ticking” and providing a legacy in the built environment to be proud of.

Application of New Technologies

The construction sector is seeing the emergence of several disruptive new technologies, e.g. the advent of 3D Printed construction, and the widespread adoption of Building Information Modelling over the lifetime of a construction project, and of the building that results. This is seen as a "convergence" moment for the sector, which will require design skills in order to capitalise on potential. This is a two way street – where design can integrate new technologies, but also where new technologies can empower and drive new design possibilities.

Forthcoming & Current Sectoral Changes

The construction sector is under huge pressure to deliver large volumes of housing over the coming years, and not to repeat the mistakes of the past, made in a climate of such scaled delivery. Design is seen as a tool to work with accounting for the constraints of rapid delivery, the possibilities of new technologies, and the requirements of end users who will live in these buildings for generations to come.

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

Involvement of Building Contractors is Important

Design, as has been noted, is seen as a way to eliminate costs incurred due to issues arising with the final product of a construction project, and during the process of its construction. Candid stories were exchanged of costly problems which occurred because design had not consulted with the construction contractors who would deliver the finished product.

Design, Architecture, and the development process

There are several challenges built in to the traditional development process, and architecture, as a design discipline, is part of this. Compounding the challenge of getting design involved from the outset is the traditional architect's approach, the need for speed, and the pressure to get built, and the cost of design – including the perception that design can delay projects from getting started. The converse is the tendency for design (other than architecture) to only be called upon "last minute" and when mistakes are already made.

Referrals and Networks

The participants advised that designers for the construction industry are sourced through existing networks, contacts of contacts. What was also interesting, is that in construction, this dynamic is very similar – a sector made up of mostly SMEs, working with one another and getting work through word of mouth.

WORKSHOP 3 – MOBILITY

The workshop was attended by an Agile Coach Mobility Technology Lead, Mobility Technology Company Engineer (x 2), Connected Hub Representative, Brand Consultant, Aviation Organisation Representative, CEO of Mobility Technology Company, Enterprise Development Representative.

Question 1 – What is Design?

'Creativity' vs Design

We heard that the word "creative" is a bit of a double-edged sword, specifically placing design as something that requires some kind of "intrinsic" skillset or mindset, but also separating design from problem solving, and a means by which to achieve business goals. Despite the ambiguity these words create, participants reverted to the use of "creativity" as a description of the skills a designer must have.

Outcomes which work – for Organisations & Customers

Our participants noted good design as that which meets not just customers' goals, but also the goals of the organisation, and internal metrics. Measuring the impact of design was described as something that is lacking.

Subtractive Design – knowing what's needed, and what's not needed for a particular solution

One among our workshop respondents noted the following which was mentioned in other workshops too, and so is noted here: ***'Good design is about ability to differentiate between what's needed and not needed for a particular solution, when I was working with simulation software we got the full instructions and when fully implemented we didn't know what the solution could be… design can help identify what kind of solution we are trying to achieve before we go about building it.'*** – Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

Question 2 – In what way does / might design add value to your sector?

Achieving Objectives & Justifying Budgets

Design must be connected to organisational and business objectives and must justify its own budget. This was made clear by a few among our participants, and vitally was a common concern across different kinds of organisation from start-up to government funded entities.

Dealing with Change – New Contexts and Technologies

Design is associated with change, culture, and transformation. We heard that design has a role when new technologies disrupt a sector, that currently there is a shift in ways of working and organisational design is important, and that design must also educate – and instil a knowledge in industry which assists application of design, and collaboration with designers.

Strategic & Cultural Value

We heard that design adds value to the higher order operations of an organisation, and that designers can mediate between different parts of an organisation in the creation of strong strategy. This must be coupled with a culture of design – one which includes a drive for efficiency and improvement and not accepting things as "just the way they are".

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

'Personality' and finding the right designer

In a finding that hasn't come up before – workshop participants spoke of the need to find the "right" designer, by personality, in order to ensure the success of a design initiative. This was contrasted with other professions, but also connected to recruitment policy and company culture.

In-house versus external

We heard that there is a need for both in-house and external design skills, and that each has an important value add – from fresh thinking, to longer term development. We also understood that some organisations, when outsourcing, need to overcome the challenges of procurement processes in order to source good design, and allow scope for design to happen.

WORKSHOP 4 – FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS

This workshop was attended by a Founder/CEO – Beauty Products Company (x2), Brand Manager – Beauty Products Company, CEO & Founder, Brewing Business.

Question 1 – What is Design?

Consistency within Context

Our FMCG enterprise representatives spoke of the need for a design to "fit" within the context of their business, understanding not just their brand, but also their processes and the stories around their products. This awareness of the context of the business helps designers to help businesses by providing work that is consistent with the context, and in a shorter amount of time.

Commercial Purpose

There was alignment around the fact that design needs to begin from a commercial purpose, that costs must be linked to value added, and that design mustn't harm commercial value. There was some risk noted that design, when not commercially driven, can be taken less seriously than other professional services.

Question 2 – What way does / might design add value to your sector?

'Brand' as an intangible, driving outcomes

There were references to some of the value of design being intangible, but that those intangibles drive outcomes throughout the business. This can be difficult to quantify, and the respondents were not specific as to those outcomes.

Design as an holistic approach – enhancing customer (user) experience

We heard that modern product experiences extend through digital channels, into retail settings, and on through the product life cycle itself. The application of design, through a range of design skills, is required to enhance a product in this era, but some core principles help to tie these experiences together.

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

The cost of design can be challenging

We heard of mechanisms developed by FMCG companies to reduce the risk of longer design processes costing more than is affordable. This included a "hybrid" approach, mixing in-house and outsourced designers, and also care in returning to the same outsourced providers to utilise their familiarity with the brand.

Design needs to better understand the business

It is seen as important that design providers understand the business of an FMCG goods company, from their administrative processes, project management and planning, through to the seasonality of their work, and the kinds of tasks that might come up in a given year. This allows design to pre-empt the needs of the company, instead of being a "reactive" mechanism within the business. An opportunity was highlighted in helping businesses understand design too.

3. ATLANTIC TIDE PROGRAMME STRANDS PROCESS AND OUTPUTS REPORT SUMMARY

3.4 Strand 3 — Educate the Clients — Cross-sector Engagement Sessions

3.4.4 Strand 3 Takeaways

3.4.4 Strand 3 Takeaways

- There is an informed understanding of the value of design.
- It is understood in all four verticals that design can add value in these diverse industrial sectors, in some cases on a strategic and innovation level, in others more closely related to operations.
- The entities engagement S3 from across the different industry verticals understand that design provides a range of intangible values which can enhance the competitiveness of businesses. It is recognised that it best adds value when introduced early in a process.
- Each industry has its own nuanced understanding of design and that perceptions of design in each vertical vary. Based on the input from the S3 participants in this project only, e.g. for medical technology and pharmaceuticals the perception was predominantly one of design as a mechanism for innovation or strategic initiatives and linked to product development. For construction, the dominant experience of design came from architecture, and, as such, design disconnected from the operational reality of the construction of buildings and infrastructure. When speaking to the Mobility sector the clear connection was made with engineering, and design as a mechanism for problem solving.

  The session with FMCG companies mostly considered branding and merchandising. There is further action and desk research required to explore industry interactions and engagement with the design industry verticals in order to ascertain how to progress enterprise opportunity.
- From the 4 verticals workshops, broadly design practices being harnessed in each industry could be oriented on a spectrum from design as a strategy and design as operations.
- Entities involved in S3 design draw on a skilled employee base and contractors for design services. It was almost universally acknowledged that outsourcing of some design by a business is a good vehicle by which to bring in fresh thinking and to benefit from the experience that designers might have accrued from working in different adjacent contexts. This is tempered by the time it takes for external designers to familiarise with a new organisation, the context within that organisation, and the scope of a given brief.

- The discussion and response by the participants in Strand 3 following the presentation by the IDI and the S1 and S2 data demonstrate that there is a knowledge gap to be addressed with the participating enterprise enablers about the status of the design industry in the Atlantic Region.

- In all four verticals, design industry services are obtained predominantly on a referral basis. It was noted that sourcing Design Services is ad-hoc. The identification of appropriate, relevant professional and available design service providers is a challenge. There is an opportunity to develop business relationships in these industry verticals with the design industry, in order to facilitate more focused and targeted business networking and enterprise engagement in the region.

- The industry business model in all four verticals facilitates remote working.

- It is understood that it is best practice to bring design in early in a process; however, it was expressed that involving design from the beginning can be perceived as costly. That cost might enable efficiencies or cost reduction further along in the process, through early identification of potential issues or opportunity, but it can be difficult to relate those efficiencies back to design, as justification for the up-front investment. There is a need for further engagement and research to trace the value and supply chain and to provide best practice examples to demonstrate the value of upfront investment to an enterprise, industry and a region.

- There is a need to share knowledge about new design disciplines and their relevance, import and applicability to the four industry verticals. This may be explored through the IDI, skillnets, hubs and the orchestrator entities.

- Contrary to initial partner assumptions, recruitment for this strand (3) was not as easy as strands 1 and 2 with significant effort required on the part of the Connected Hubs managers and enterprise enablers in order to identify and invite individuals from appropriate companies and industry advocate organisations. Further work is to be done on reach and access to “other” industry entities. The incentive to engage in an ongoing process is to be considered carefully.

4. PROJECT TAKEAWAYS

The partners asked, how might the actors collaborate to address the identified challenges for the design industry in the region. The partners set out to deliver the impacts outlined below:

- Enable the development of self-sustaining enterprise and the consolidation/growth of the design industry in the regions and ROI.
- Address key recommendations in the Design Skillnet Report 2021 and activate the response for long term design industry growth by the IDI.
- Activate regional and national design industry and cross industry networks.
- Establish formal cross industry engagement, networking; information sharing re. the specific industry segments and relevance and value to altered industry environments.
- Inform design industry enterprise development strategy for all partners and stakeholders beyond this initiative.
- Augment the existing design industry network and connection to IDI.
- Connect the design industry in their own local hubs.
- Establish model for future sustained engagement and rollout of ongoing cross sectoral communication, networking, enterprises activation; activation of other recommendations in the Design Skillnet report; address government agenda re. design on an ongoing basis.
- Baseline design industry data capture and collation – allow for evidence based creative enterprise strategies at local, regional and national level and within sectors.
- Demonstrate impact of direct engagement with the sector to address identified industry challenges.

- Identify future activation opportunities for design industry and cross industry innovation; supports for start-ups in design industry; augment network for the CREW/ATU creative enterprise incubation programme.
- Hubs – anchor hubs showcase + engagement opportunity + networking; All hubs – engagement + network + Reach.
- Facilitate identification of thematics for RDI with tertiary level and industry partners.
- Identification of design industry business activation needs.
- Provide an activation mechanism for other recommendations in the Design Skillnet report.
- Raise awareness re. IDI, local and regional creative enterprise infrastructure and hubs support structures.
- Establish formal cross industry engagement, networking; information sharing re. the specific industry segments and relevance and value to altered industry environments.
- Activate engagement between IDI and key cohorts in MedTech; AR/VR; Mobility; Construction in the W/AEC/South West.
- Augment sustainable enterprise opportunities in the West and nationally.
- Strengthen collaboration between IDI and CH for harnessing the platform in long term for pan industry networking and collaboration.

The partners met (online) to review programme strands report and consider the findings and agree next actions. The meeting notes were collated by the operations lead (WDC) as a SWOT and Actions format and circulated. A SWOT analysis of the project process in context of the impacts is detailed below. The next step actions are outlined in the next section.

Strengths

- Agreement by all partners and participants that design is intrinsic to every industry and adds value.
- The AT model is acknowledged as appropriate/ suitable with regards to engagement, relationship building, networking, communications, industry opportunity.
- The Connected Hubs network is identified as an important engagement and communications mechanism to for reach, access, networking, project and training development opportunities within the design industry and cross industry.
- The AT project yielded learnings for all partners about the multitudinous sectors within the design industry and how industry harnesses multiple sectors to drive the bottom line in enterprise.
- The quantitative survey outputs indicate a strong cohort of established, professional design enterprises working in the Atlantic Region, trading globally and with an ambition to grow and scale.
- The project partners have established a working relationship collectively and as separate entities with the IDI. This provides a significant range of options to address the challenges identified in the s-m-l term.
- Through the partner entities, there is a community of enterprise enablers in the Atlantic Region that see the value of the design industry and support a proposal to build on the work of AT2022 with a view to a medium to long-term strategic plan to consolidate and grow enterprise opportunities within the design industry and across other key industries.

Weaknesses/Challenges

- There is a disconnect between the design industry, enterprise enablers and business communities in other industries in the Atlantic Region.
- The design industry, as represented in this project, perceives that the intrinsic value of design to every industry is not widely understood.
- The design industry needs the support of existing and alternative enterprise frameworks and supports to deliver on enterprise, sectoral and regional S3 ambitions.
- There is a knowledge gap within the design industry about the existing enterprise support frameworks. This may be addressed by the IDI in partnership with the enterprise enablers.
- The design industry ecosystem is invisible; the business model is structured around SMEs with freelancer/consultancy. Further exploration is required with regards to how this may be supported in context of existing government enterprise frameworks.
- The primary designer services/products differ with each industry vertical (Med/Pharma; Construction; Future Mobility; FMCG). All rely presently on a referral system to reach appropriate design industry service and product providers.
- Significant frustration identified by all parties with regards to the national procurement system.
- Agreed that there remains a significant challenge with regards to visibility of existing enterprise supports.

Opportunities

- Across each strand, the following was identified as a priority – Networking and ongoing orchestrated, structured engagement for knowledge sharing, skills development, customer reach and access, a strategic development plan.
- Existing national, regional, local Rural, LG, CI and DETE policy and strategy frameworks are appropriate for the development and activation of a medium-long term design and cross industry strategy for design enterprise consolidation in the Atlantic Region (and nationally).
- Both in-person and online sessions were considered effective, with good connections made between participants, facilitators and partners. The online sessions (S1 and S2) yielded higher participation numbers. It is acknowledged that online engagement is considered effective, efficient (time and resource) and productive, particularly for enterprises in rural areas. The CH mechanism remains a critical component of a successful network into the future.
- Identifiable “hubs” of thematic strength in terms of service/product into the four vertical industries in Strand 3. There are tentative indicators of the potential for a design industry cluster – hub and spoke model which may be explored further.
- Emergence of a tentative vision for the design industry in the Atlantic Region as part of driving innovation, excellence, sustainable jobs, livelihoods and prosperity.
- Harnessing the quadruple helix model, the partners have identified multiple possible funding opportunities to support s-m-l activations.
- The AT project has positioned the IDI in the DETE REP strategic framework. NW REP has identified actions to roll out within RSO 1 (Barriers to Entrepreneurship and enabling enterprise) as well as alignment with RSO 4 (Circular Economy), RSO 5 (Shared Island) and RSO 6 (Skills).

Opportunities (cont.)

- The participating education entities will engage in future exploration with regards to attracting talent to existing programmes and to devise new industry relevant programmes, new pathways for talent to train/ upskill. This includes exploring pre-tertiary level opportunities.

- The existing partners will continue to collaborate on a next phase of Atlantic TIDE at a macro level within the framework of the DETE Enterprise White Paper and the Smart Specialisation Strategy (in key pillars including NetZero, Digitalisation, Clusters, Innovation); the Regional Enterprise Plans, the DRCD Rural Futures and WDC AIR, Connected Hubs and the Creative Enterprise plan, and IDI strategy as well as the DFHE Impact 2030 Strategy, DE Strategy and the CI Éire Ildánach Policy and CI CIF to 2027.

- The WDC is well positioned to facilitate orchestration of partners and stakeholders , as appropriate, of the next phase of AT in the context of the recent investment in a full time role of a programme manager for creative enterprise development in the Atlantic Region.

- The partners believe that there is an opportunity to position the Atlantic Region as a best practice example of the quadruple helix model at work to deliver on the national design industry /IDI ambition and to deliver sustainable prosperity for design enterprises and enterprises in the four other industry verticals in the project.

Threats

- Existing fragmentation across the Atlantic Region with regards to strategic action for design and cross industry business ambition.
- Lack of a current joined up vision, mission and plan for the design industry as part of the creative economy and industry in the region.
- There is a need to present and show best practice examples in the Atlantic region to underpin any development plan.
- Some design industry sectors/segments require professionalisation / business offering standardisation.
- Immediate and ongoing engagement required with all participants to maintain momentum, to harness the enthusiasm generated from the project, to continue to build up the new relationships, to build cohesion and collective vision.
- Appropriate, dedicated personnel are required “on the ground” to drive engagement from within the design industry advocacy entity (the IDI) and likely also in the context of the Atlantic Region RDIE agenda.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 Partner Actions Agreed 2023+

- There is collective agreement that the current project partners will continue to work together to address the gaps/challenges and opportunities, to offset threats to sustainable development and to build on the strengths as identified in the Atlantic TIDE 2022.
- A s-m-l term "strategic business activation" plan is to be researched, devised and activated by the partners from 2023 onwards.
- The vision is to position the Design Industry across the Atlantic Region as a competitive advantage on the global stage to drive sustainable livelihoods and prosperity in all communities in the Atlantic Region.
- The short term plan to be devised based on findings from phase 1. The partners will re-group in January 2023 to draft and source funding for a rollout of phase 2 in 2023-2024 and to address the following actions:

• Further analysis of the programme strands data.

• Reach out to all the identified design entities in the Atlantic Region with view to integrating into the IDI network and activating a phased engagement programme across the Connected Hubs.

• Research/exploration into specific S3 verticals design services and product needs (future facing).

• Research about the existing services/products available from design enterprises in the Atlantic Region and those trading into the Atlantic Region.

• Research about the skills needs and gaps in these enterprises.

• Development of an enterprise supports "handbook" for the IDI and possibly talks/intro sessions to enterprise supports by our partner agencies and development of a "wrap-around" service specific to the design industry.

• Research about best practice models globally with a view to enterprise capacity building, design industry infrastructure/facilities/professional standards. To include sharing the recently introduced public sector design principles with AT stakeholders.

- As part of a communications exercise, source best practice examples and showcase to other industry, enterprise enablers and funding entities (tbc if to do through the CREW data project Q1 2023). “Show don’t tell” principle.
- Bring all the participants from phase 1 and additional entities from design industry and the four verticals together to explore the proposed vision.
- Development of a medium-long term plan to consolidate and grow the design industry in the Atlantic Region based on reliable current data.
- Identify an appropriate fund to secure required personnel on the ground to drive the business plan once completed.

5.2 Conclusion

There is collective agreement by the partners that the project objectives, outcomes and impacts have been achieved.

There is a significant opportunity, with sustained, targeted and appropriate resources, to consolidate and grow the design industry in the Atlantic region, to enable sustainable enterprise in identified hubs and to position the design industry in the Atlantic region as a competitive advantage on the global stage. The partners will continue to collaborate to address this vision.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Acknowledgements

Project Partners
Sligo Local Authority Creative Ireland Office and the Sligo Local Authority Local Enterprise Office, the Institute of Designers in Ireland, Western Development Commission, Connected Hubs Network, An Chroí Sligo, Future Cast Leitrim, Innovate Limerick, Ludgate Hub Cork, Future Mobility Campus, Clare, Regional Enterprise MidWest, Regional Enterprise NorthWest, Regional Enterprise West, CREW CLG.

Programme Strands Process and Report
The partners would like to extend a sincere thank you to Context Studio Limited for work on the programme strands process and report.

Strand Participants
The partners would like to extend a sincere thank you to the 128 participants from industry for their time, expertise and input.

Funders
The partners would like to thank Creative Ireland for the direct funding for the Atlantic TIDE project 2022.

The partners would like to thank the partners for the indirect resources for the Atlantic TIDE project 2022.

APPENDIX 2

Literature Review (selection)

AIRe 2021 — Dr Brendan O'Brien (WDC)

Barriers to Entrepreneurship 2021 (NWREP)

CCI Value Chains European Commission 2017

Creative Ireland Eire Ildánach — DTCAGSM

Creative Sector Supports in the West of Ireland: Entrepreneur Perspectives on Future Needs — Creative Momentum 2018

Design Skillnet Design Practice in Ireland Report 2021

Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland Workforce — EGSKN 2018

DETE Enterprise White Paper 2022

Economic Impact and Assessment of the Design and Crafts Sector of Ireland — DCCI 2021

EI Strategy 2021-2024

Local Authority EDC Plans: Atlantic Region (existing-under review) National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025 — GOI

Our Rural Futures — DRCD

Project 2040: Building Ireland's Future — GOI

WDC 2021 REPS MW/NW/W 2018-2020

SME + Entrepreneurship Growth Plan SME Task Force 2021

Solas Profile of the West Region 2021,

RSES NWRA and SWRA, Atlantic Region: Creative Economy Plan 2026 — WDC

WDC Strategy 2019-2024

APPENDIX 3

Atlantic TIDE – Programme Strands Process and Outcomes Report

(v1.0, 7th December 2022)

Compiled by Context Studio for the Institute of Designers in Ireland

www.contextstudio.ie

ATLANTIC TIDE

Transforming Ireland's Design Economy

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN MID-WEST

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN WEST

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN NORTH-WEST

Clár Éire Ildánach Creative Ireland Programme · SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL · WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION · INSTITUTE DESIGNERS IRELAND · Innovate Limerick · LUDGATE | HUB · CREW · AN CHROÍ DIGITAL HUB · FUTURECAST · connectedhubs

ATLANTIC TIDE
Transforming Ireland's Design Economy

CONTENTS

STRAND 1

PAN DESIGN INDUSTRY NETWORK & DATA GATHERING SESSIONS

Strand Description

The first strand of the programme set out to engage self-sustaining design enterprise entities to participate in networking sessions with participants filtered based on design industry priority verticals.

To ensure appropriate focus on the verticals required, a screening survey was first issued to the community, by which respondents could express interest in attending one of the workshop sessions, but also provide important quantitative data to the initiative relating to the profile of these businesses.

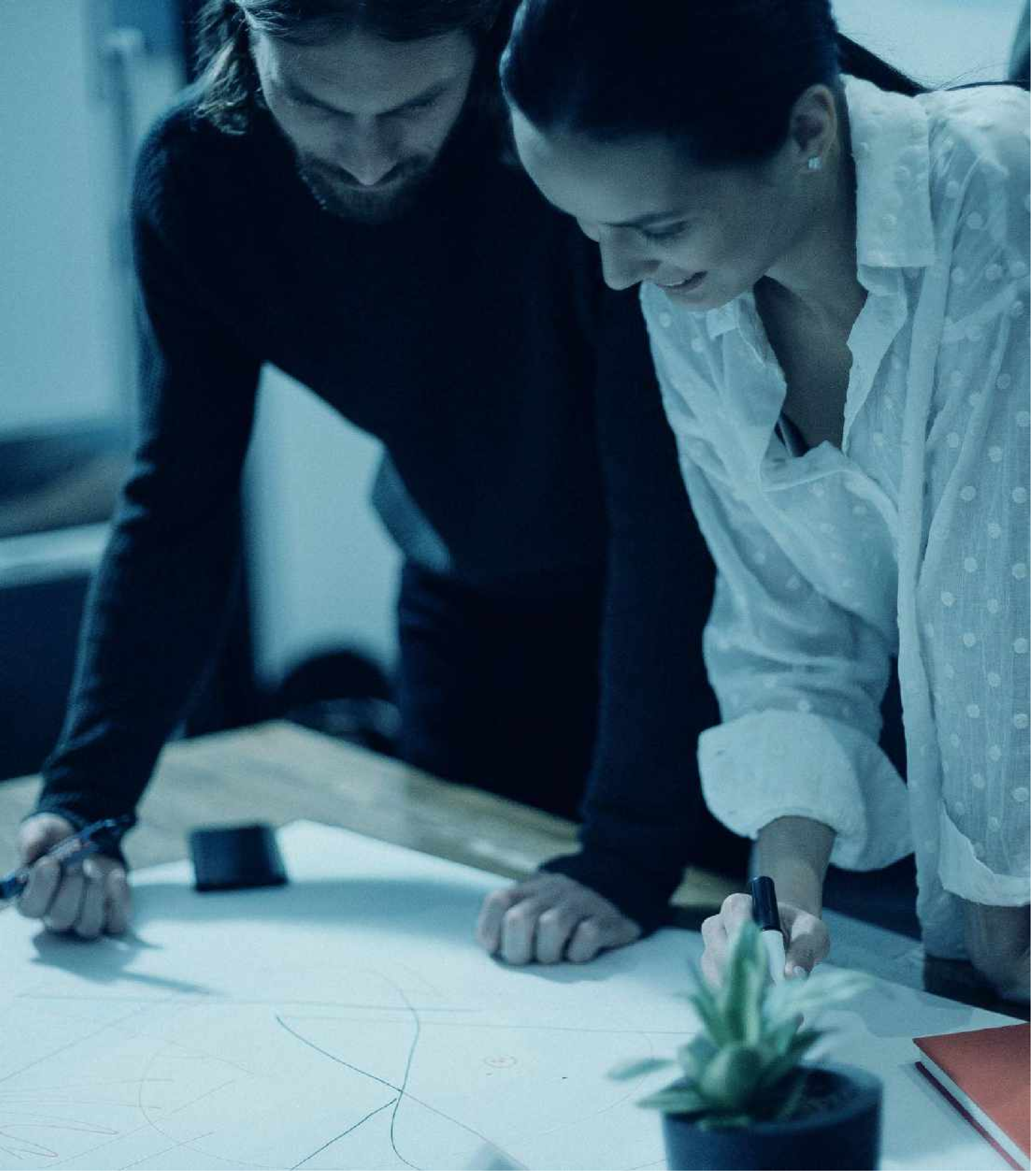
The recruitment aim was to harness IDI membership and network and well as the Connected Hubs.

The screener survey enabled us to filter for businesses with growth ambition, and focussed around our priority design verticals: product/industrial design; communications design (graphic, branding, website design etc.), structures and spaces (architecture, interior design, exhibition design), digital design (web, interaction, animation, tv, social media), strategic design (service design, ethnography, futures, insights), immersive design (VR/AR etc.), product design (industrial design, consumer product design, fashion).

Anticipated outputs in this workstream included new connections created across the sector following the engagement, but also a dataset by which to drive engagement during strands 2 and 3 of the project. This data would include quantitative data (screener survey) as well as extensive qualitative data sourced through the online workshop sessions.

Objectives of this Strand

Network established across multiple design industry segments; Raised awareness of the policy/strategy/resource framework in place for the design industry; Raised awareness about new industry trends/evolving market opportunities for existing design entities in all segments as well as new enterprises. Also harness WDC comms to drive design industry engagement.



Intended Outputs

- Augmentation of the existing network and connection to IDI
- Loop the design industry in through their own local hubs
- Quantitative and qualitative data from the sector
- Enhance awareness re. IDI, local and regional creative enterprise infrastructure and hubs supports structures.

Intended Impacts

- Strengthening of networks through collaboration
- Better data re. design industry base across the country
- Establish connection for future ongoing engagement and rollout of ongoing networking as well as activation of other recommendations from Design Skillnet report
- Address government agenda re. design on ongoing basis
- Strengthen local design industry base in Galway and counties in the regions in the REP and nationally from 2023+
- Data for all partners re. development of design industry development needs and jobs growth
- Connect Skillnet with Connected Hubs for access to platform in long term.

ATLANTIC TIDE
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STRAND 1

FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE DATA — THE SCREENER SURVEY

Research Methodology

The first strand of the work held the intention to reach out across hubs to all design entities and to host networking sessions based on design industry priorities. The aim was to harness IDI membership and others for these engagement sessions.

A plan was developed to host three workshops, allowing broad representation from design businesses. A screener survey was created to ensure that our participants would represent businesses appropriate to our design verticals, who harbour ambitions for growth with relevant industrial segments.

The survey also provided valuable data as to the size, maturity, and ambitions of enterprises, and their prior engagement with enterprise supports and networks.

Questions Posed During the Survey

1) Which county is your business based?

2) How long has your business been trading?

3) How many employees does your business have?

4) Where are your customers based?

5) Which design services do you offer?

6) Does your business work with any of the following industries? (FMCG, Construction, Mobility, MedTech)

7) Does your business have ambitions to grow?

8) Does your business have ambitions to work with any of the following industries? (FMCG, Construction, Mobility, MedTech)

9) Describe your sales capacity.

10) What are your barriers to growth?

11) Which of the following support services have you engaged with to date? (LEO, EI, IDA, ÚnG, IBEC, Skillnet)

12) Any other supports?

13) Are you a member of IDI?

In total 64 businesses responded to the survey, from 16 counties, with 93.8% declaring definite, or potential growth ambitions.

STRAND 1

SURVEY FINDINGS

While our sample of 64 businesses is small, it is representative of the diversity of these micro, small, and medium enterprises which exist along the Atlantic Economic Corridor. It could also be understood to represent a strong baseline study, considering it is not known how many relevant enterprises currently exist.

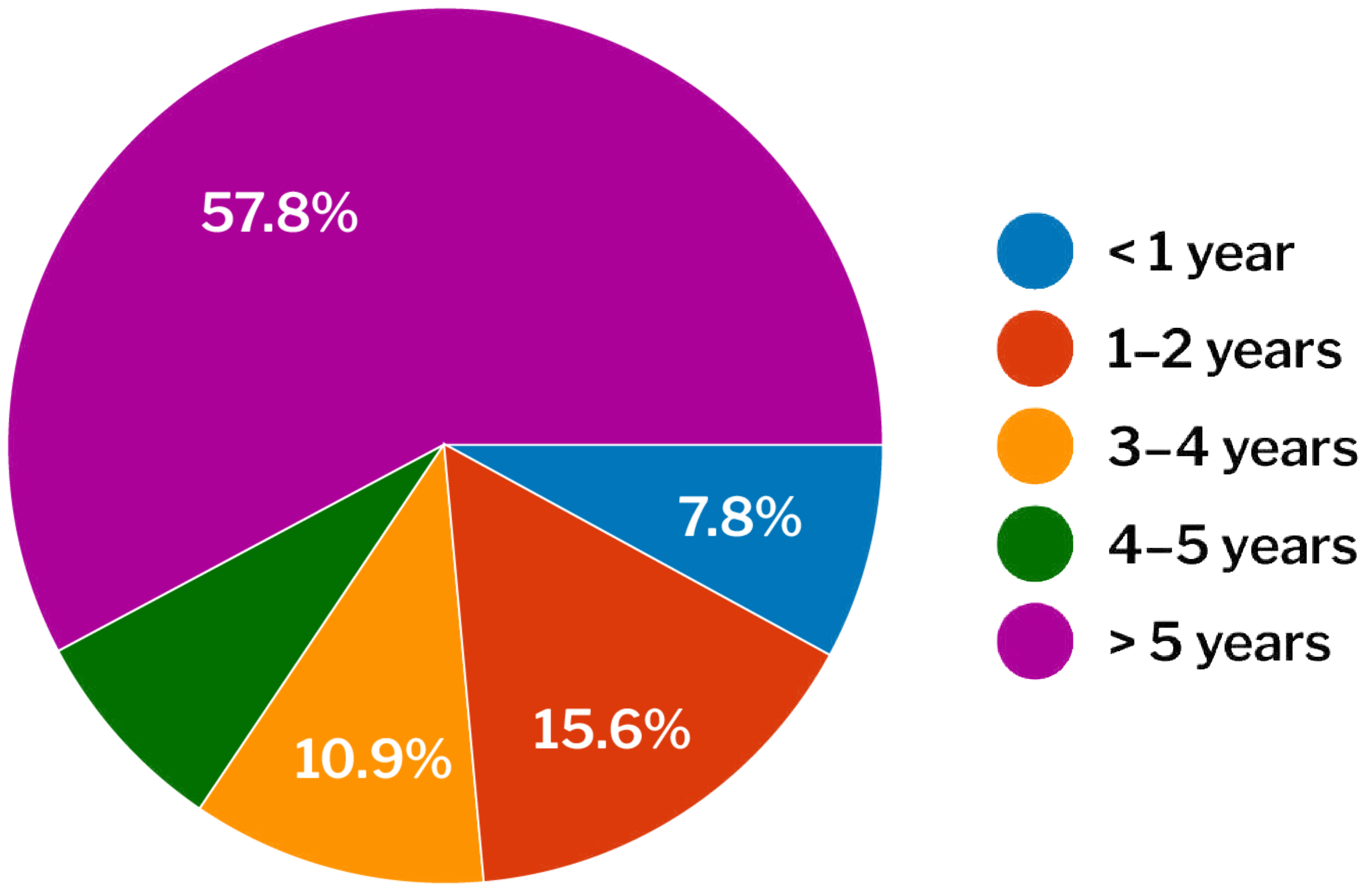
Geography

Business representatives from 16 counties completed the survey with the top counties represented being:

County	# of Enterprises	% of Total Responses
Galway	10	15.6%
Cork	10	15.6%
Limerick	6	9.4%
Dublin	6	9.4%
Sligo	5	7.8%
Mayo	4	6.3%
Donegal	4	6.3%

Trading Time

How long have you been trading?
64 responses

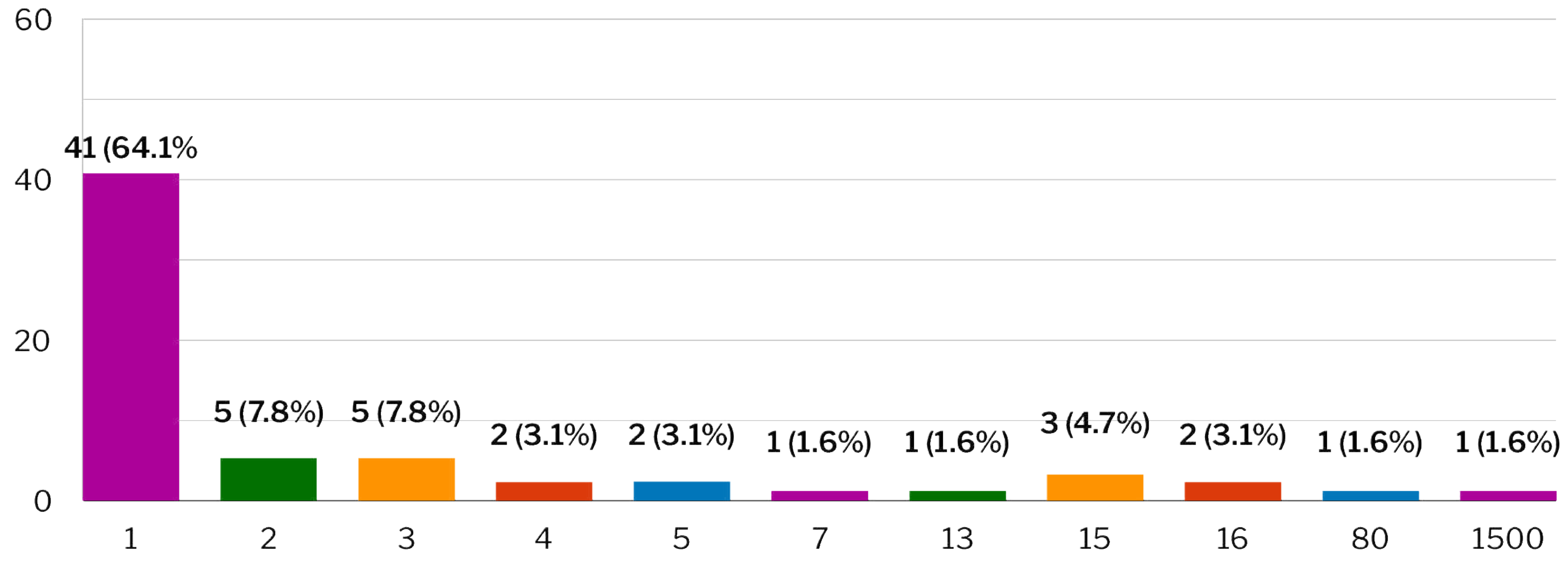


More than half of our respondent enterprises had been trading for more than 5 years, with several others (more than 25%) having been trading for between 1 and 4 years. This suggests a high level of enterprise maturity in the sector, and further investigation may provide insight as to the true levels of maturity in the >5 years bracket.

Number of Employees

The vast majority of responding business were micro-enterprises, with **41 of our respondents having just 1 employee**. There were **14 businesses with between 2 and 5 employees** while **7 companies reported between 7 and 80 employees**.

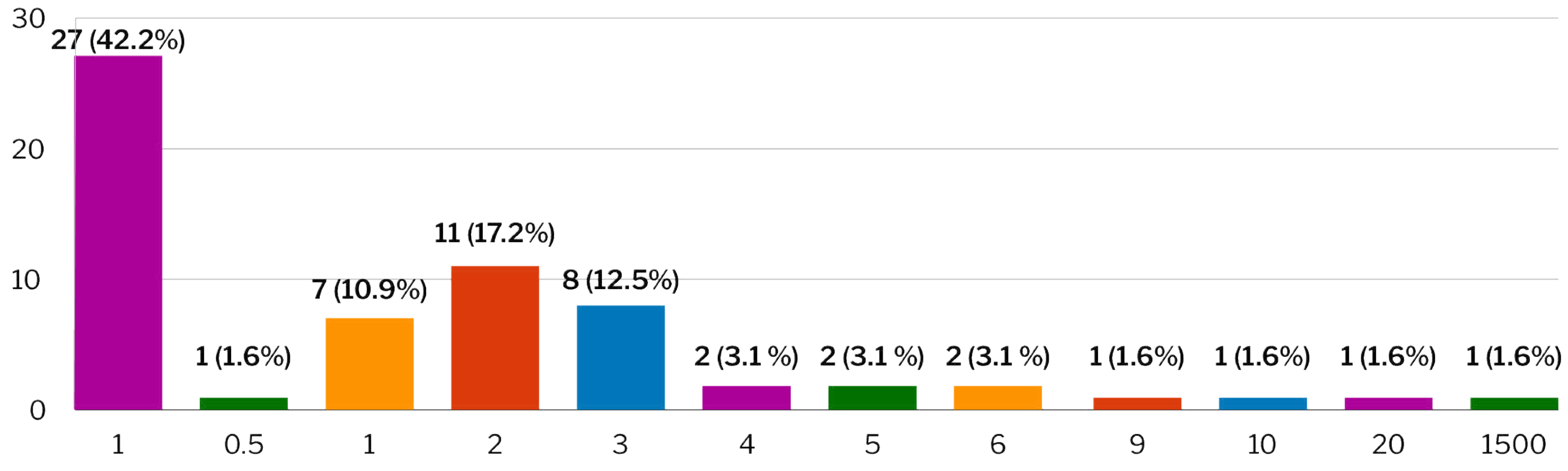
How many employees does your business have?
64 responses



Number of Contract Employees

Important too, is the number of responding enterprises who employ contract employees, with more than 30% claiming to have 1 or more contract employees.

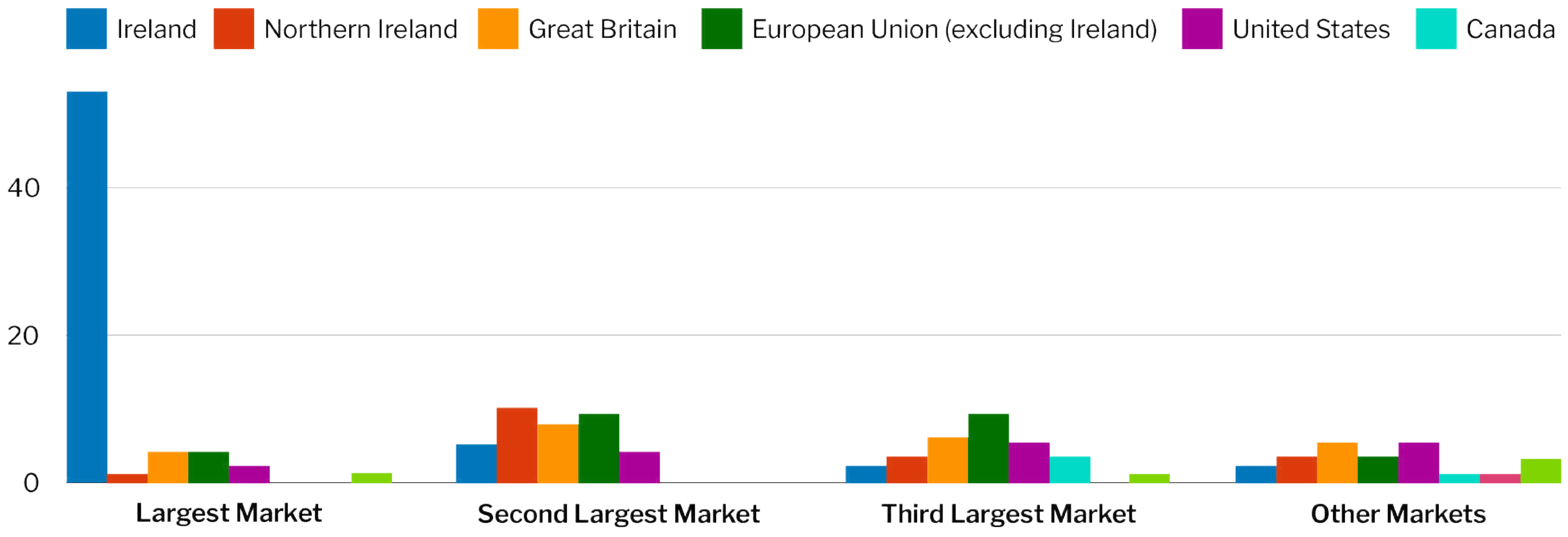
How many contract employees does your business have?
64 responses



Export Markets

Many of our responding enterprises are actively exporting their design services, with Northern Ireland and Great Britain being the primary export markets, closely followed by the EU. In some cases, business list GB, EU and USA as their largest markets.

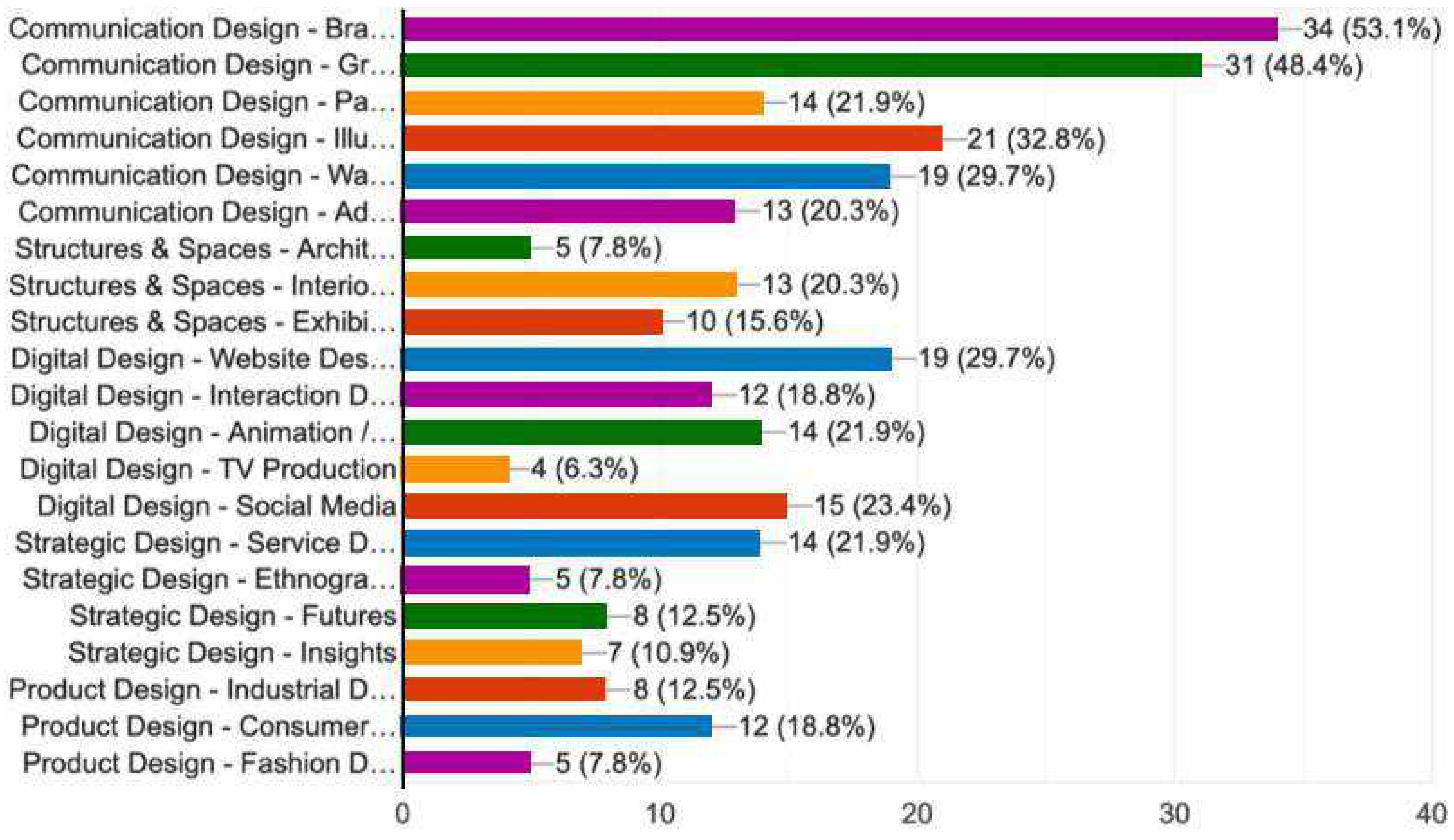
Where are your customers based?
64 responses



Design Verticals

Respondents included a diverse set of design verticals, with greater representation among companies providing **Communication Design** including **branding, graphic design, packaging design, illustration, wayfinding and advertising**. **Digital Design** was the next most represented vertical, including website design, interaction design, animation, TV production and social media.

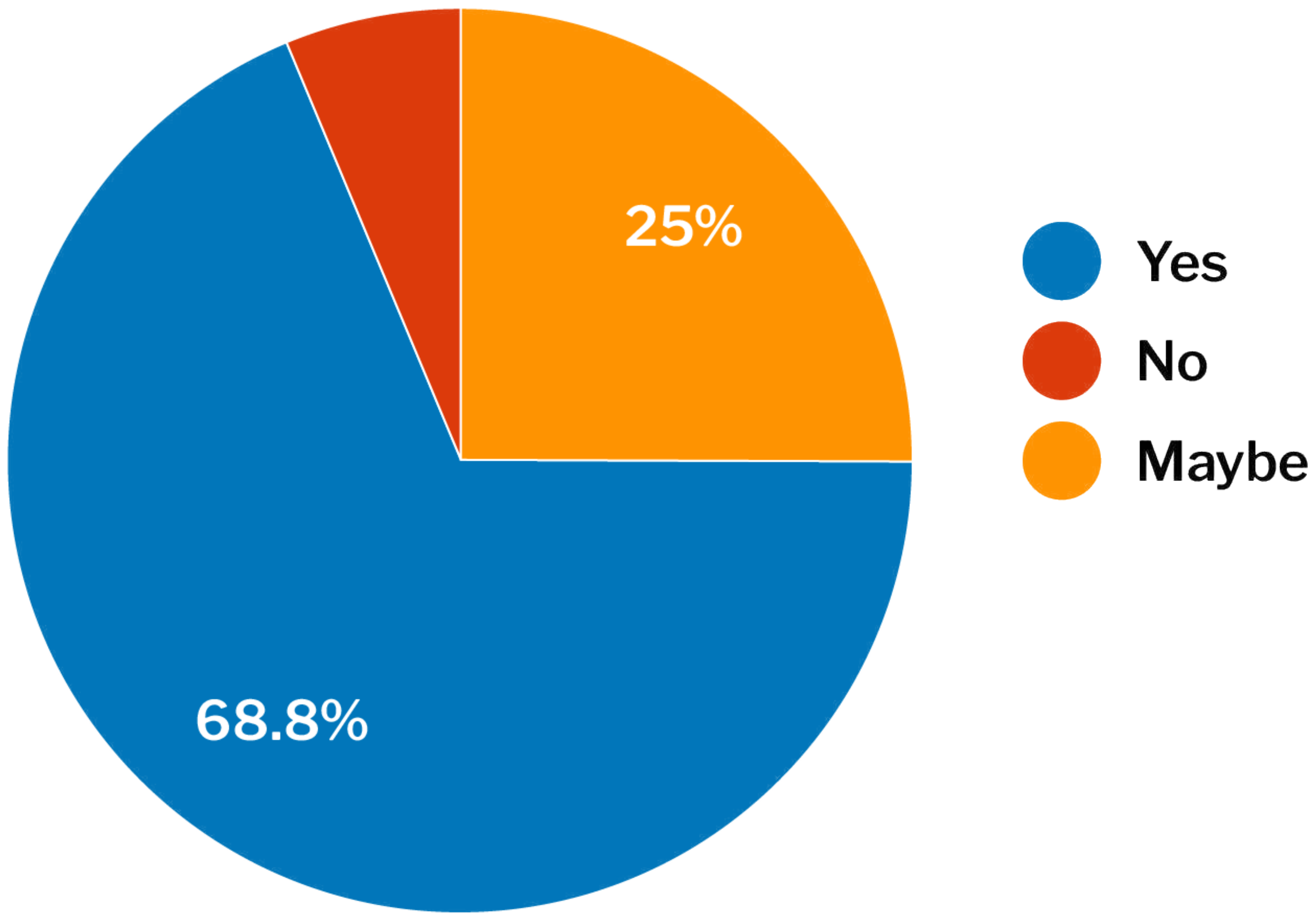
Which design services do you offer?
64 responses



Growth Ambitions

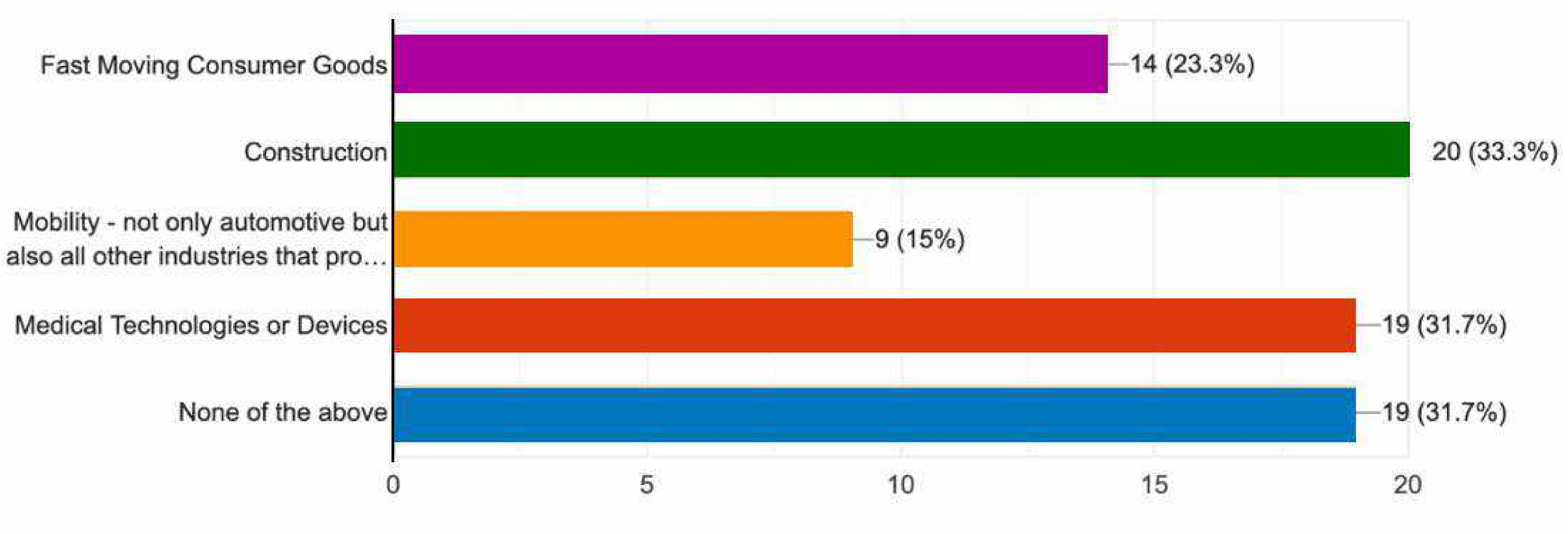
A very large proportion of businesses harbour growth ambitions, indicating that there is a **definite ambition to grow in 68.8% of cases**. Only **4 of 64 respondents** did not want to grow their business.

Does your business have ambitions to grow?
64 responses



About growth ambitions

Does your business have ambitions to work with any of the following industries?
60 responses



There was awareness of the growth opportunity that our industry verticals represent, and ambition among respondents to capitalise upon that opportunity. However, a significant proportion of respondents (almost one third) saw no opportunity to work with these verticals. This perhaps points towards work to be done in connecting design enterprise with these important sectors and highlighting the opportunities which might emerge.

Describe Your Sales Capacity

This was a "free text" response option, but there were clear patterns in the responses received. A vast majority of respondents shared that they had a low sales capacity, most taking responsibility themselves as a solo entrepreneur, and others sharing a low number of hours per month dedicated to sales.

Solo Entrepreneur with responsibility for sales	15 respondents
<5 hours per month	11 respondents
Between 5 and 16 hours per month	4 respondents
Using a partner, or dedicated staff members	10 respondents
Work mainly comes in through tenders / referrals, no sales specific effort	4 respondents
Difficult to quantify	3 respondents

Barriers to growth

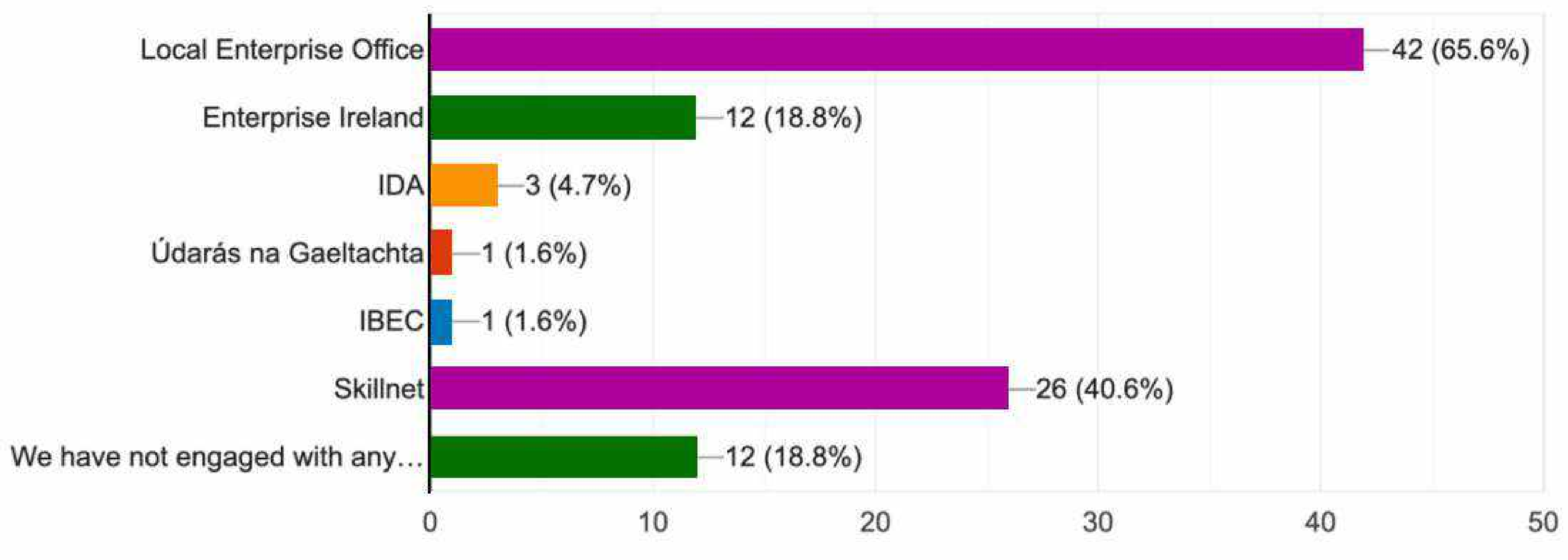
An optional question, with a free text response field, a total of 45 responses showed a significant diversity of challenges for businesses.

Funding & High costs	8 respondents
Accessing Talent / Recruiting	6 respondents
Lack of confidence & isolation	6 respondents
Access to overseas & other markets	5 respondents
Tendering process	4 respondents
Space & Facilities	3 respondents
Not ready to grow / low desire to grow further	4 respondents
Time	2 respondents
Compound challenges including some if not all of the above	3 respondents
Associated challenges of being a single-person business	3 respondents
No barriers to growth	1 respondent

This field gives some insight into the complexity of challenges faced by our respondents. While **funding and talent acquisition** sit near the top, **lack of confidence and isolation** are tied in that position. From 45 responses we found 10 different issues listed – there is much to be done in **understanding and addressing** these complex challenges for the sector.

Support Services

Which of the following have you engaged with to date?
64 responses



Other Supports?

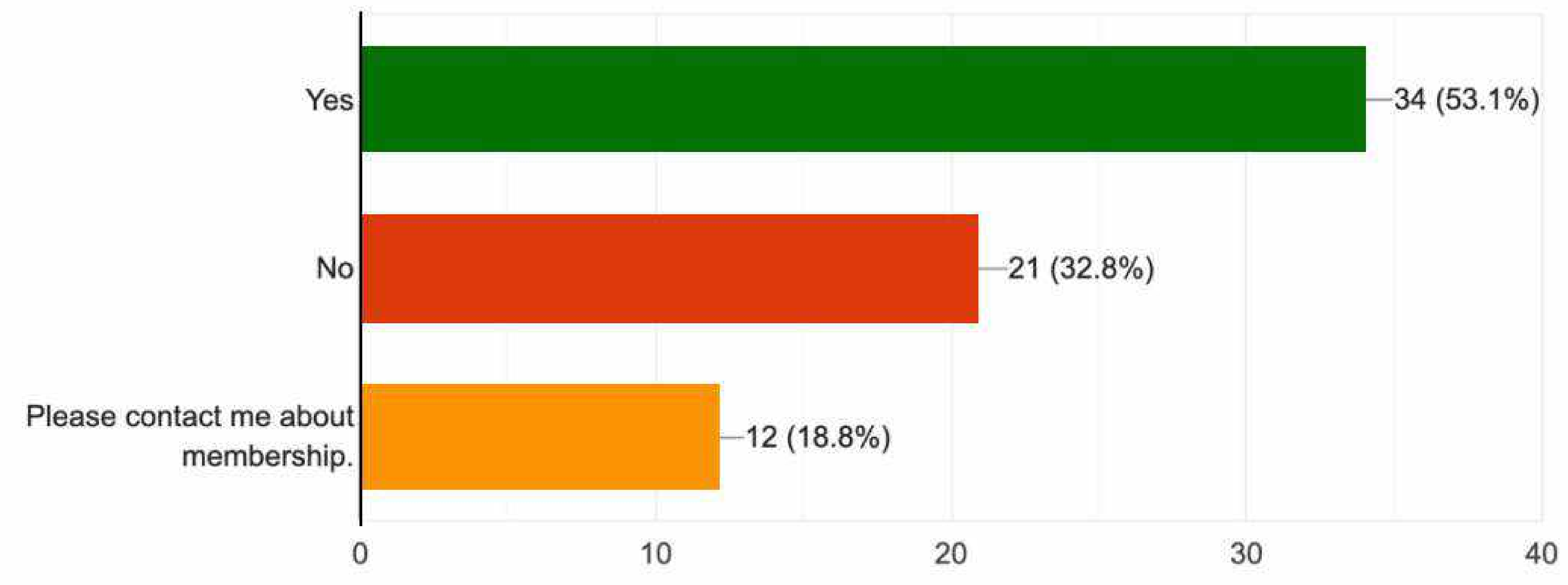
Again, a free text response field, and an optional response. Responses to this question perhaps highlighted confusion around the distinction between support agencies, and the identification in particular of the Trading Online Voucher scheme as a standalone initiative, as opposed to one under the purview of Local Enterprise Offices.

Top categories of response:	
No other supports utilised	18 respondents
Trading Online Voucher	6 respondents
Design & Crafts Council of Ireland	4 respondents
Design Skillnet	4 respondents
Other LEO services	3 respondents

Other responses included DigiClare.ie (Clare County Council), Illustrators Ireland, NDRC, Back for Business Programme, Donegal Women in Business, Intertrade Ireland Brexit Support voucher, Enterprise Ireland RTCF, Céim Programme (New Frontiers), Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, and Donegal Creative Coast Partnership.

IDI Membership

Are you a member of the Institute of Designers in Ireland?
64 responses



Just above 50% of responding businesses were members of IDI, with a further 19% wishing to learn more about membership. This indicates that the strategy of outreach via IDI channels was successful, but also points to an opportunity for the IDI to grow its membership along the Atlantic Economic Corridor, and boost representation for the sector as a result.

Process Findings

Despite the time of year extending across the summer, response rates for the survey were reasonable. It should be accounted for that this survey was not “just” a survey, but part of the process of signup for the workshops which happened over the same period. As such, response rates might have been **reduced** as to respond was also to indicate willingness to attend one of the online workshops.

While the sample is small, just 64 responses from a potential pool of several hundred businesses, some trends are clear.

Future actions might include the issuance of a regular (annual or twice yearly) “pulse” survey for creative enterprises in the selected verticals, helping create more exhaustive data on the sentiment within the sector and along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

STRAND 1

FINDINGS: QUALITATIVE DATA — THE WORKSHOPS

Following the screener process, invites were issued for three facilitated workshops, which were held online, Friday 15th July, Tuesday 9th August, and Wednesday 21st of September. A total of **34 design businesses** attended a workshop during the series. Workshops were 2 hours long, and included breakout groups discussing the various challenges of starting and growing a design business in Ireland.

Workshop Methodology

During the workshops, participants were grouped into three breakout groups each with their own facilitator. Each workshop had four main sections which were worked through in these breakout groups, with each exercise kept under strict timing.

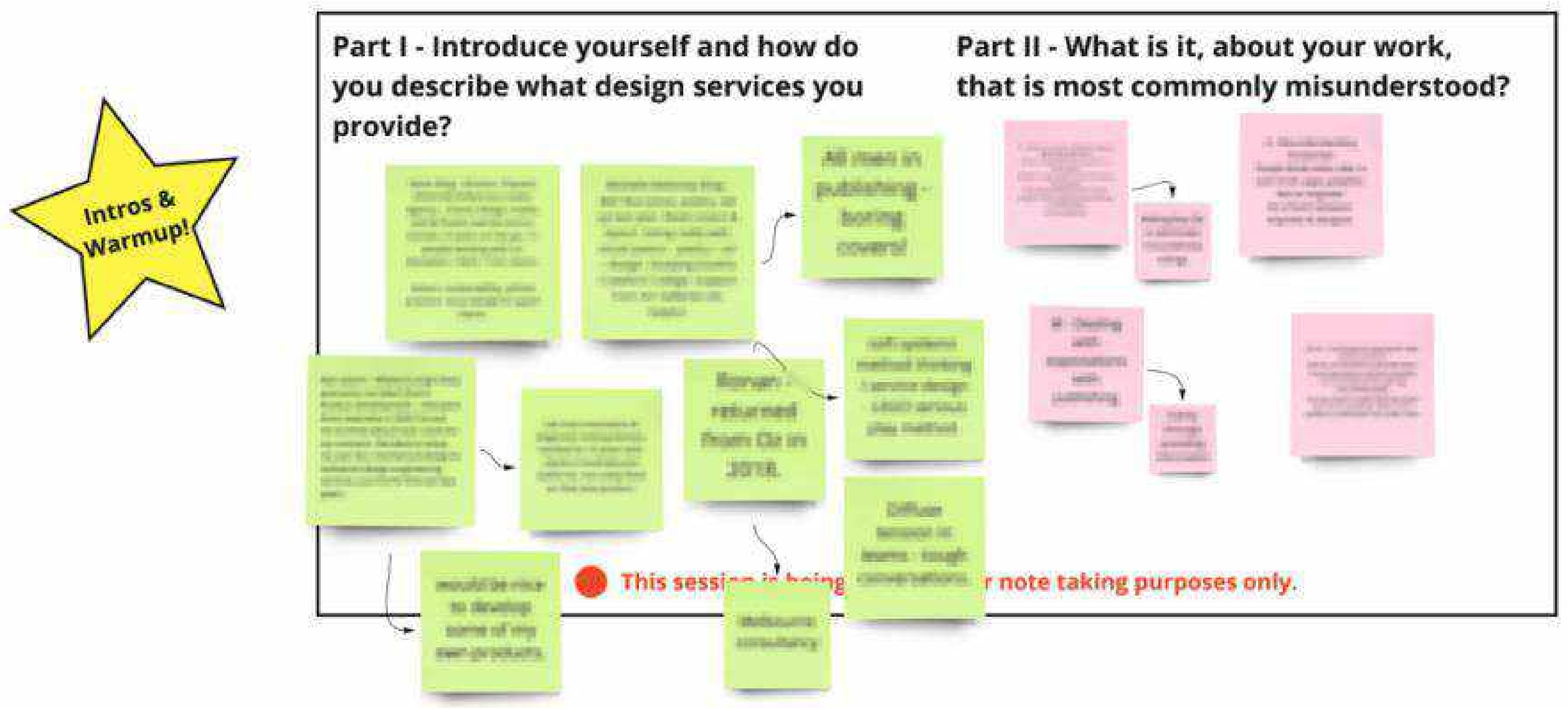


Figure 1: Example of virtual whiteboard, workshop section one. Content is obscured for data protection.

During the introductory section, participants were invited to introduce themselves and provide some details as to their professional background, and following this, asked to discuss some common misunderstandings or misconceptions about their work.

The second section involved discussion of challenges faced when starting a design business, specifically the first three years. The categories of discussion included:

1) Operational challenges (premises, equipment, accounting, legal, etc.)

2) Talent & people challenges (staffing, HR)

3) Market challenges (finding and connecting with potential customers to help grow the business, explaining what you do)

4) Sales challenges (closing deals, winning work, procurement processes, supporting clients in buying your work.

A separate section was provided for incidental contributions not directly linked to the areas above. Participants were guided through each section by their facilitator in order to make sure each topic was given attention.

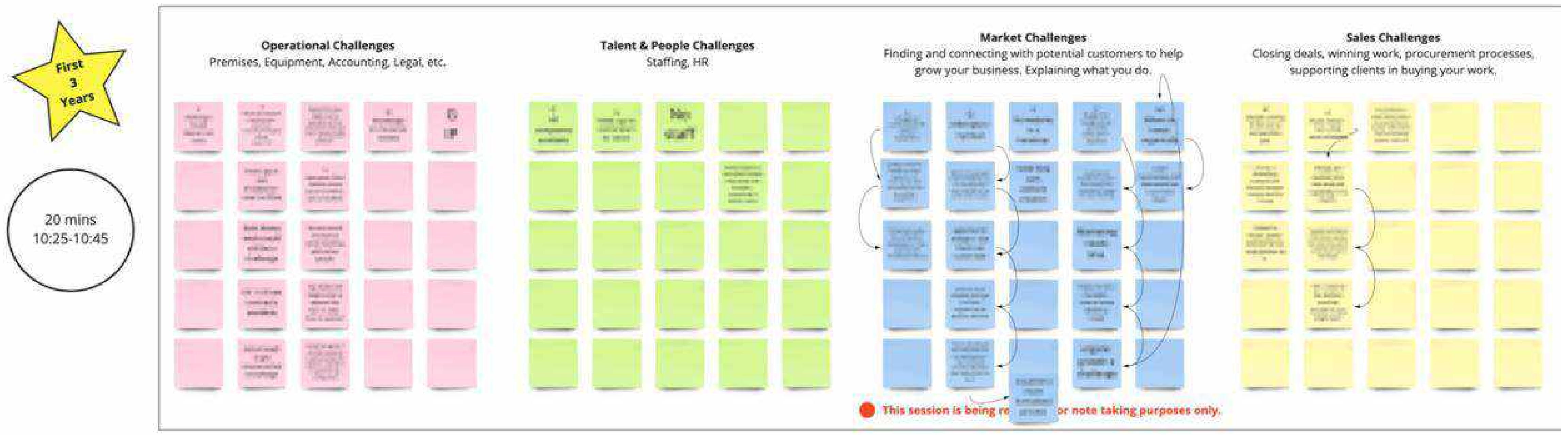


Figure 2: Example of virtual whiteboard, workshop section two.
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During the third section participants discussed the same topics but in the context of growing the business beyond three years. This section included additional discussion around challenges faced with exporting (finding overseas customers, delivering work overseas, complexities of exporting, considerations around travel & transport).

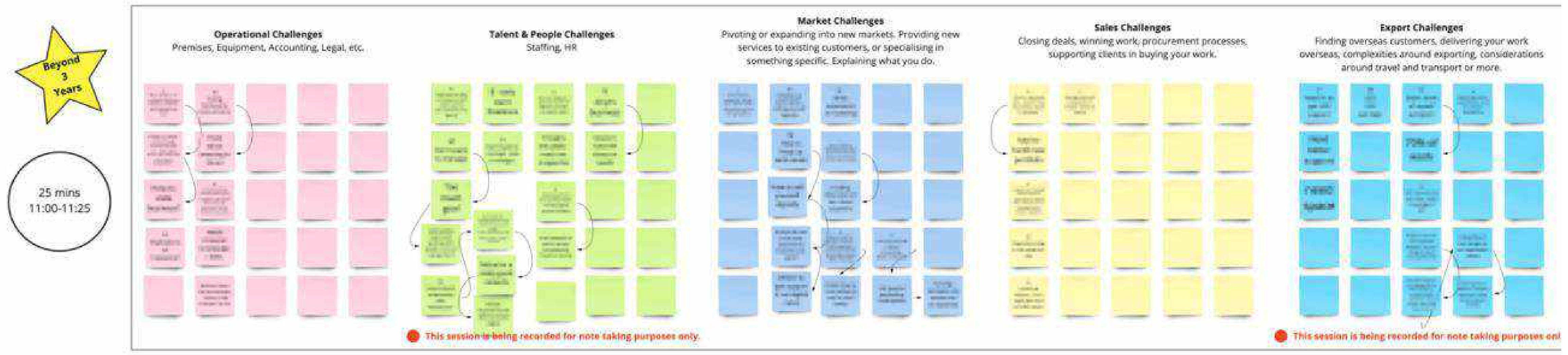

Figure 3: Example of virtual whiteboard, workshop section three.
Content is obscured for data protection.

In the final section, discussion was centred around the future, specifically what people hope for in the future of their design business.

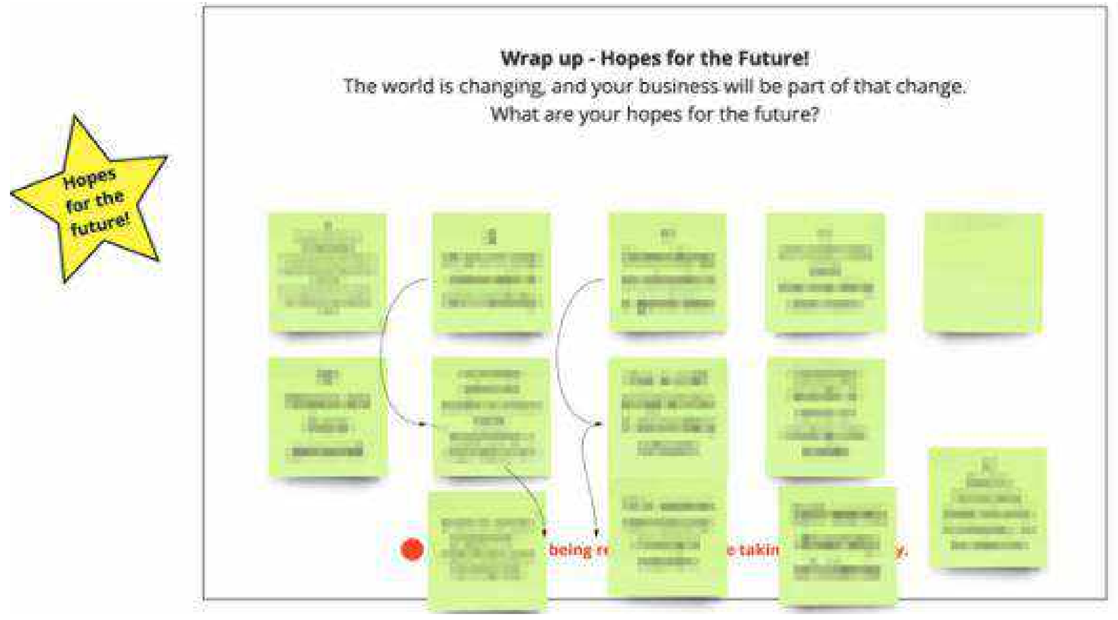

Figure 4: Example of virtual whiteboard, workshop section four.
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Playback Sessions – Sharing Experiences

Following each exercise, the whole group was reconvened for a playback session, in which each facilitator briefly shared the contributions from their participants to the rest of the group and questions could be asked or additional input shared.

This offered further opportunity for consensus assessment, but also networking. Notably, a few connections were made with the intent to follow up after the workshop.

Throughout the workshop, each exercise was captured on the boards by the facilitator in order to easily visualise emerging themes and enhance discussion.

Workshop Findings

1. Key Finding: Design is Misunderstood

It was indicated throughout the workshops that the rapid evolution of design has “left behind” many in Irish society, from potential customers in the wider business community to those who work to support the sector through enterprise supports. This rapid change is connected to the rapid evolution of technology, but also to the emergence of “design thinking” for use in business practices.

While our workshops succeeded in gathering rich qualitative data on this phenomenon, as per the intended outputs and impacts, the workshops also strengthened awareness of IDI and Design Skillnet, and mechanisms by which designers might better represent their businesses.

Bringing the qualitative data to enterprise support stakeholders during strand 2 should support government agenda regarding design and help those stakeholders better support the local design industry development in Galway and along the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

[all quotations below, unless otherwise indicated, sourced from design enterprise representatives within our workshops]

1.1 A rapidly changing sector

The application of design has been rapidly changing over the past 30 years. With the advent of new technologies came new practices like interaction design and web design. As products became more complex and connected, we saw the emergence of service design and user experience design. The development of “design thinking” has brought design practices into the worlds of policy and strategy. Even inside design communities, these titles cause some confusion.

Perhaps as a result of this rapid evolution, design is misunderstood by the public, by policy, and by industries outside of the design sector. There is the misconception that design is concerned only with aesthetics, and a lack of awareness as to the range of design practices and the value that they create. This lack of understanding is reflected in the interactions design businesses have with clients, and with enterprise supports available in Ireland.

‘There is a complete lack of understanding of what I’m doing or why I would do it. Locally, anyone I would talk to that wants to talk about branding wants to go straight to visuals, to just create something. If you want to do any kind of research or process before that they don’t see the point, they don’t see what it’s for’

‘I think the Irish state is certainly lacking in understanding and promotion that design is a critical part of any business’

‘People don’t understand the value I bring to a project as a designer’

1.2 The Value of Designers' Process is Under-Appreciated in the Market

When working with a new client or customer, design businesses shared that the clients' goals or budgets were often out of line with the design tasks demanded. Clients would either not have the appropriate budget for the work they were expecting, or they would expect immediate final deliverables without allowing appropriate time for the process required to achieve those outcomes.

'Customers want to go straight to visuals – they don't see strategy as useful.'

'You quote for a job, and the client says 'no', and then you find out later they've gone on 'fiver.com' and gotten somebody to make them a logo for 100 quid – and they think they have a brand'

'There is a challenge in getting your client to understand the process and the value of that process – going through iterations and prototypes'

'I don't work with small businesses anymore because they don't understand the need for design and don't have the budget to do it properly'

'The issue is that clients often have a pre-set budget for design work. This is usually far lower than it should be which results in me only being able to do a surface-level job.'

1.3 Business/Enterprise Supports Aren't Suitable for Designers

Design professionals share the challenges of all entrepreneurs in needing to learn how to run a business. Our workshop participants reported difficulty in finding information on available supports to help start and grow their business. When working with LEO/EI businesses found that the advice and support they were offered wasn't necessarily relevant to the design industry nor did it show an understanding of the nature of their work.

'The design industry is left behind in Ireland.'

'I don't think they [LEO] understand creative services businesses'

'The big thing for me starting out was knowing who to go to for funding or support – I wasted my time with Enterprise Ireland because they couldn't do anything'

'They just told me to do more courses'

'I found they [LEO/EI/Support Services] weren't good for getting information on specific disciplines, they seem better for product-based companies or just bigger businesses. They don't really know what I do.'

'If you look at the LEO Trading Online Voucher, for example, in some ways that has devalued what we do. Everyone is expecting everything for less than three grand'

1.4 Setting up a Design Business is Not Cheap!

For many new design businesses, the requirement of specialised equipment and software, as well as space for production and collaboration can add increased cost which can make it harder to get a business off the ground.

'I don't think LEO understand the setup costs that are required – we had to figure it out ourselves'

'I was in a catch 22 trying to get money for equipment from supports – they wanted me to show what I can do but I can't do that until I have the equipment'

1.5 An Emerging Generations is More Aware of the Value of Design

Design businesses report a generation gap in the understanding and appreciation of the value of design. It was noted that family businesses where a new generation has taken over seem to value design a lot more than before. This is the generation who have grown up seeing the positive impact that good design can have on businesses.

'The daughters and sons of established businesses are the ones that get it'

'I'm having much better dealings with the new generation than their parents that hired me in the first place'

'Often times the older they are, they think design isn't really necessary'

1.6 Public Sector Clients Don't Get It!

Businesses that have taken on public sector work recall the overall experience as being frustrating. Understanding procurement procedures and tenders can be a struggle for new businesses that might not have prior experience.

Sometimes the procurement process itself contradicts good principles of design, as solution proposals are often required in the procurement stage before any actual work can be done.

In addition, the misunderstanding of design already noted above seems to be prevalent in the public sector when it comes to pricing, and allowing scope for design process.

'I feel like they [procuring authorities] don't know what they're buying'

'The process ends up being a race to the bottom, and the problem is then that you might win.'

'Usually, you can put a substantial investment into tendering, you've got to almost tool up for that. But you then find that someone who hasn't really done the due diligence has given a crazy price, committed to something they've probably never delivered before and won the project.'

'I just glance at eTenders but I haven't ever really gone for anything'

2. Key Finding: Clusters are Key

Design businesses shared that the nature of their work means flexibility is key, and that this flexibility it derived of networks of talent, and of potential customers, but also communities of practice sharing information on how to run a business and supports to be found.

The workshops, while surfacing qualitative data on the important of clusters of design businesses in line with objectives, also fostered development of these networks. Many designers exchanged contact details and made commitments to follow up during the workshops, and while concrete data is not available as to how many connections were made, it can be said with confidence that the workshops helped create connections across the regions.

The assistance of the Connected Hubs and IDI in recruiting design businesses further advance the goal to establish connection for future ongoing engagement.

[all quotations below, unless otherwise indicated, sourced from design enterprise representatives within our workshops]

2.1 Networks, Clusters & Community add Resilience to Design Enterprises

Design Businesses report reliance on strong networks in order to find freelancers, clients and potential collaborators. Outside of Dublin, businesses report a lack of these connections, or effective networks that provide the potential necessary for business growth.

'It's about personal connections and networking – giving it that personal touch'

'In the beginning it's getting to know people that's important because then the ball starts to roll'

'We had to get out there and talk to as many people as we can, clients weren't naturally coming to us.'

2.2 Referrals Drive Growth, and Growth Drives Referrals

For many design businesses, work comes in through referrals. These referrals can come from existing or previous clients, or other businesses that have turned down a job. For many it is their most reliable source of work and so making good industry connections and having a strong network is very important.

'The referrals process is cyclical, the more I work the more work I get'

'I get a lot of work direct from other designers who couldn't take a job'

'Pretty much all my business comes from word of mouth'

2.3 Existing "Formal" Networks Could Be More Effective

When it comes to formal creative networks, businesses that are members of these groups claim that they are relatively inactive, and often very Dublin-centric when it comes to events. Because of this, they aren't relied upon as being useful sources of work and businesses find that better connections can be made elsewhere.

'Many of the forums will only have five people on the call.'

'I've tried a lot of creative networks out there but they're just not very active'

'There are lots of networks but they're not active, they don't really add value, just cost.'

2.4 Hard to Find Clients, Harder to Find the Right Kind of Clients

Small design businesses find it hard to get their name out and find new clients, meaning that repeat work and referrals are heavily relied upon to stay in business. Small, more local businesses can be easier to connect with but often they lack necessary budget or priority for design. While larger businesses might have the budgets it can be much more difficult to get "a foot in the door" with these companies, especially outside Dublin.

'I'm having a big problem in identifying where to focus my attention to get clients'

'Right now my biggest struggle is in finding clients because I don't really have an existing network'

'Once you get a client, you try and keep them and work with them long term'

2.5 Sourcing Talent is Key to Survival

Finding the right freelancers and building strong, long-term relationships with them is very important to design businesses. However, it can be challenging to know who is out there, and after building a relationship with a specific freelancer it can be hard to fill that void if they move on to other work.

'I do work with freelancers but I find it really hard to find the right people'

'It's about trying to find a person that you connect with, that can do what you need them to do, and are timely. At the moment I have a team of freelancers, but very often what can happen is people that start off as freelancers end up going into a full time job – so you could be working with them really well and then suddenly they're gone so you have to start over again.'

'I'm conscious that there are people not very far away, that are probably really good people that have come out of different agencies or companies in Dublin or beyond, but there's no network or way of bringing them together or looking these people up and knowing that they're there'

2.6 Design in Ireland is Dublin-Centred

Design businesses outside of Dublin report that the industry seems a lot more scattered in the regions than in the capital, and that it is much easier to get work and be known when operating within Dublin due to better networking opportunities and connections to be made.

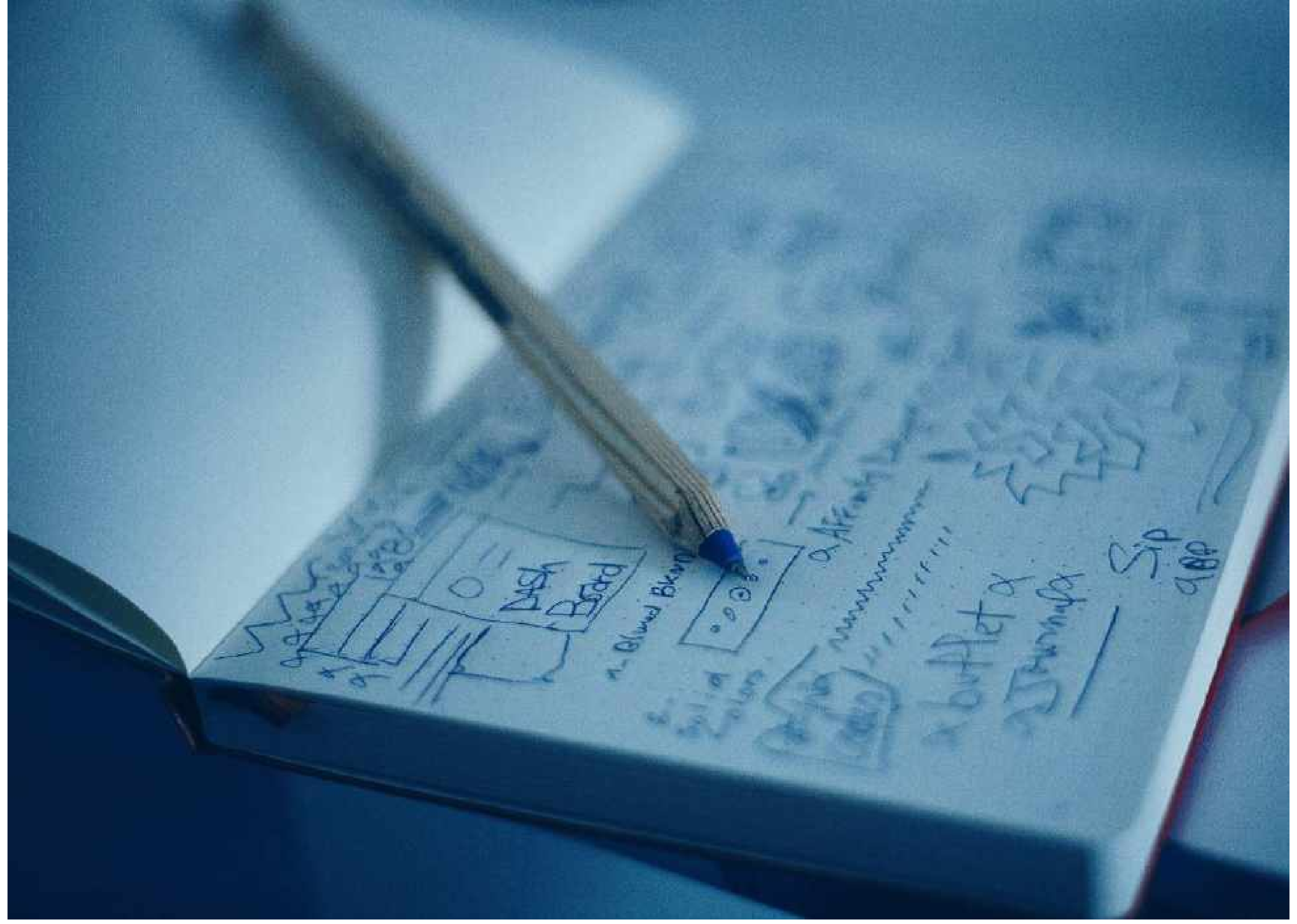
'I almost find it easier to find and work with people based in London than finding people in Irish localities. Everything is very Dublin centric here.'

'I lived in Dublin for years and I always found everything to be very Dublin centric. I didn't feel like there was a huge amount happening outside of Dublin. Ever since I moved back home I feel very disconnected from the design community.'

3. Key Insight: Learning to be a Business is Challenging

Starting a business involves a lot of learning, and the learning curve can be extremely steep. For design professionals this often means learning things that were never part of their education or practice. This might include accounting, insurance, HR, marketing, procurement, sales and more.

The challenge of learning how to run a business, while also being a designer, is exacerbated by an apparent lack of relevant supports available to design businesses. Our participants report difficulty in finding advisors with knowledge of the business of design.



[all quotations below, unless otherwise indicated, sourced from design enterprise representatives within our workshops]

'I found it pretty hard working on all the aspects of running the business while still trying to do actual work'

'There is no one place to go to understand how to be a sole trader, VAT, accounting...'

'For example, there's something called 'Professional Service Surcharge' it's effectively an extra 6.5% tax on companies, and nobody, not Revenue, not my LEO office, not my accountant, can tell me for sure if I shouldn't be paying it. Some design businesses do, others don't! Depends on who you ask.'

'I spent my first three years training myself to be an accountant... I think in pictures and trying to translate that into accounting was a headache'

STRAND 1

SWOT ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Strengths

- The application of design has been rapidly changing over the past 30 years. With the advent of **new technologies** came new practices like interaction design and web design. As products became more complex and connected, we saw the emergence of service design and user experience design.
  The **development of "design thinking" has brought design practices into the worlds of policy and strategy**.

Weaknesses

- Even inside design communities, the multiple titles for design practices cause some **confusion**, as does their rapid change and evolution.
- Perhaps as a result of this rapid evolution, design businesses face challenges which they believe are cause by a **misunderstanding of design by the public, by policy, and by industries outside of the design sector**. There is the misconception that **design is concerned only with aesthetics**, and a **lack of awareness as to the range of design practices** and the value that they create.
- This **lack of understanding is reflected in the interactions** design businesses have with clients, and with enterprise supports available in Ireland.
- Our workshop participants reported **difficulty in finding information** on available supports to help start and grow their business.
- The advice and support offered to design businesses **wasn't always relevant to the design industry** nor did it show an understanding of the nature of their work.
- Businesses that have taken on **public sector work recall the overall experience as being frustrating. Procurement procedures and tenders** can be a struggle for new businesses that might not have prior experience.
- Sometimes the **procurement process itself contradicts good principles of design**, as solution proposals are often required in the procurement stage before any actual work can be done.

Opportunities

- Design businesses report a **generation gap in the understanding and appreciation of the value of design**. It was noted that family businesses where a new generation has taken over seem to value design a lot more than before. **This is the generation who have grown up seeing the positive impact that good design can have** on businesses.
- Design Businesses report **reliance on strong networks** in order to find freelancers, clients and potential collaborators.
- For many design businesses, **work comes in through referrals**. These referrals can come from existing or previous clients, or other businesses that have turned down a job. For many it is their **most reliable source of work** and so making good industry connections and having a strong network is very important.
- When it comes to **formal creative networks**, businesses that are members of these groups claim that they are relatively inactive, and often very Dublin-centric when it comes to events. Because of this, they aren't relied upon as being useful sources of work and businesses find that better connections can be made elsewhere.
- **Finding the right freelancers** and building strong, long-term relationships with them is very important to design businesses.

Threats

- Design businesses shared that the **clients' goals or budgets were often out of line with the design tasks demanded**.
- For many new design businesses, the **requirement of specialised equipment and software**, as well as space for production and collaboration can **add increased cost** which can make it harder to get a business off the ground.
- Small, more local businesses can be easier to connect with but often they **lack necessary budget** or priority for design. While larger businesses might have the budgets it can be much **more difficult to get "a foot in the door" with these companies**, especially outside Dublin.
- Design businesses outside of Dublin report that the industry seems **a lot more scattered in the regions than in the capital**, and that it is much easier to get work and be known when operating within Dublin due to better networking opportunities and connections to be made.

Process Findings

The process of screening survey, followed by online workshops, worked well for the community and for the research effort, enabling a sharp focus on the design verticals but also high accessibility of the initiative through online access.

The fully facilitated workshops, including facilitators dedicated to each breakout room, helped ensure that rich input was solicited from everyone who took part, while plenary sharing of conversations relating to our research questions allowed the community attending to understand the multiple perspectives being put forwards.

Substantial numbers of attendees and survey respondents were drawn from the IDI membership, suggesting that there is an opportunity to grow that network, but also to better understand who among the Connected Hubs network of enterprises can be considered as design enterprises within our verticals.

ATLANTIC TIDE

STRAND 2

EDUCATE THE PROFESSION: ENGAGING ENTERPRISE SUPPORTS

Strand Description

This strand set out to engage Enterprise Support agencies and other important ecosystem stakeholders in an online workshop setting to focus on design industry positioning, narrative development for the sector and its various verticals and to explore pathways and possibilities to exploit existing and new markets.

Findings from Strand 1 were shared with participants in this strand, to aid with development of awareness as to the design industry perspective, but also to inspire collaborative thinking in line with the needs of the sector and future possibilities.

This strand also included preparation of an engagement plan for 4 industry segments in advance of strand 3.

Objectives of this Strand

Following the extensive engagement with design enterprises during strand 1, and the identification of key findings from within the sector, strand 2 shifts the focus to enterprise support, strategy and policy agencies, with the following objectives:

- Connecting and sharing knowledge with the entities that are responsible for shaping industry and enterprise policy, strategy and investment.
- Framing and positioning the design industry in the context of these agencies' rationale of investible enterprise.
- Finding common ground to facilitate access to existing enterprise development resources and identify other design industry appropriate mechanisms to drive growth and jobs in the industry.

A goal of this strand was to raise awareness of the policy, strategy, and resource frameworks in place for the design industry. It was also intended that feedback be solicited from the enterprise supports agencies and bodies regarding ongoing engagement with the design sector.

Intended Outputs

- Qualitative data on the understanding and engagement of enterprise supports across the design verticals identified, and opportunities therein.
- Framework/model for an "Education the Profession" initiative for rollout across all industry segments over the next 3 years.

Intended Impacts

- Establish and strengthen industry connections and identify ecosystem engagement model for future ongoing engagement and rollout of ongoing networking as well as activation of other recommendations in the Design Skillnet report.
- Likely impact is increase in start-up entities in design sphere in next 3 years as well as engagement regarding innovation hub use.

Methodology

Engagement Approach

Strand 2 of the project adopted a used a "one shot" approach, inviting a large number of representatives from the relevant agencies to participate a fully facilitated online workshop.

The event included the extension of an opportunity for representatives from agencies to hear from IDI CEO Charlotte Barker a perspective on the potential the design sector offers in terms of job creation, growth and impact on other sectors.

The Atlantic TIDE project team also shared the insights generated in strand 1 of the project, helping agencies further develop their understanding of the situation that design entrepreneurs find themselves in.

Dissemination and Registration

The strand 2 workshop event was promoted through the Atlantic TIDE project partners network, both through distribution list and personal networks. The dissemination was targeted, in order to reach the agencies and bodies who fit the strand 2 objectives.

Additionally, and building upon strand 1 engagement, 4 design businesses were invited to attend. These businesses were selected on the basis of their contribution to strand 1, their situation on the Atlantic Economic Corridor, and their willingness to engage further with the project to drive the objectives of the project.

Finally, and adding to the design expertise, and indeed enterprise support expertise in the room, IDI invited Lorraine Egan, IDI Fellow, with extensive experience of the design sector and from her time working in Enterprise Ireland.

The event secured 36 registrations, excluding facilitators, invited guests, and admin team.

Organisations who registered interest in attending included:

Entity / Agency	# of Registrations
Ardán	1
Atlantic Technological University	3
Creative Coast Donegal	1
Creative Ireland	3
CREW	2
Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment	1
Design Enterprise	4
Future Cast	1
Ibec	2
IDA Ireland	1
Innovate Limerick	1
Limerick School of Art & Design – Technological University of the Shannon	3
Local Enterprise Office	5
University of Limerick	2
Sligo Co Co	2
University of Galway	1
Western Development Commission	3

Workshop Format & Execution

The workshop was held online, using Zoom, on Friday October 7th 2022, over a two hour session. The agenda followed included:

11:00 Welcome and Intro
Jessica Fuller, North West REP Programme Manager

11:05 Keynote Address – Framing the Design Industry in Ireland 2022
Charlotte Barker, CEO Institute of Designers in Ireland

11:15 Industry Insights – Atlantic Tide Strand 1 Research
John Lynch, Atlantic TIDE Design Lead

11:30 How might we enable sustainable enterprise and job growth in the industry in the Atlantic region – now and in the future? Breakout sessions moderated by enterprise enabler leads
Enterprise Enabler Leads (Moderators) and
Atlantic TIDE Facilitators (Live Scribing)

12:30 Feedback and Q+A
John Lynch, Atlantic TIDE Design Lead

12:55 Plenary review + future focus
Jessica Fuller, North West REP Programme Manager

13:00 Event Ends

Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions focussed on the theme ***'How might we enable sustainable enterprise and job growth in the industry in the Atlantic region – now and in the future?'*** were broken down into a series of questions, visualised for participants on a virtual whiteboard, on which, during the sessions, notes were live scribed by our facilitators. The entire workshop was recorded for later review and notetaking.

Breakout 1: What's our understanding of design? (15 mins)

- What outcomes can it create?
- What skills does it involve?
- What does good look like?

Breakout 2: How does design add value in other industries? (15 mins)

- How can design help the bottom line?
- How does design create intangible value?
- What should industry consider when working with design?

Breakout 3: What are the existing ways we support self-sustaining enterprises to grow, and to provide jobs? (15 mins)

- And what could we do differently?

Workshop Attendance

The workshop was attended by a total of 24 participants (excluding project team and facilitators). While attendance records do not show organisation details, inferring from attendees provided email addresses we can report that the following agencies/entities were represented:

- **IDA**
- **Technological University Shannon**
- **University of Limerick**
- **LEO Sligo**
- **Donegal Creative Coast**
- **University of Galway**
- **Western Development Commission**
- **Sligo County Council**
- **Innovate Limerick**
- **CREW Digital**
- **Creative Ireland**
- **Atlantic Technological University**

Figure 5: Screenshot of a virtual whiteboard from one of our breakout groups.

Workshop Findings

On review of the virtual whiteboards, notes, and recordings, the following themes were identified. While the sample set was small, this was a workshop involving an expert, and highly specialised group. There is strong signal from this workshop that should be considered in future initiatives.

All quotations below should be interpreted as the informed opinion of the anonymous representative, based on their experience, and not linked to specific data, unless otherwise indicated.

1. What is our understanding of design?

Participants from the various education and support agencies showed an informed understanding of the value of design. There was also awareness of how design has evolved over the years to become a business-critical, user-centred problem-solving approach for some. It was understood that design provides a range of intangible values which can enhance the competitiveness of businesses.

Also noted was the collaborative nature of design – working across disciplines and silos, but additionally that design is often seen as complicated, or difficult to work with. This could be interpreted to indicate a gap of understanding between design and other industrial sectors, and the need for better ways to integrate design in other sectors.

'I think design raises the standards of how things are delivered, I think it puts objective thought and other perspectives into how things are done, it raises the bar in all things' — Private Consultant

'Design is a methodology to ideate intangible value.' — Design Educator

'The [designer's] ability to walk a mile in someone else's shoes works across the design spectrum, it doesn't need to be one particular discipline.' — Design Professional

'Design is about being collaborative and working with other disciplines really effectively to try and solve problems' — Design Educator

'I think we need to be honest in this scenario: design is complicated, expensive and they're not easy to work with' — Local Enterprise Offices representative

2. How does design add value in other industries?

Design is understood to add value as an innovation approach to new product / service development, a way of working which is very successful at the creation of intangible values like engagement, brand, reputation, "stickiness", meaning, and strategy.

It is understood that it best adds value when introduced early in a process, with the iterative approach seen as key to allowing design reduce risk. It was also noted that it is fundamental for design to be interdisciplinary and collaborative.

This points to the strategic importance of design for other industries, but it was additionally noted that as an approach, design can help with staff engagement, empowering teams and (perhaps) aiding retention.

'Good design increases your credibility with your customers and consumers alike, it increases business from the intangible value that design provides' — Design Professional

'Good design can provide innovative solutions and can solve problems. It has the power to persuade which can help with sales and strategy decision making as well. All of these things can affect the bottom line' — Enterprise Support

'In using design or innovation thinking, it allows you to stay strategically principled, but tactically flexible.' — Enterprise Support

'It adds broad brand strength and reputation, which is something that is very, very hard to measure and hard to achieve. And then in a wider regard, good design allows companies to remain competitive in an ever-changing world. If you have good design, I suppose it aids in transformation and working towards the kind of way the world's going in terms of digital.' — Enterprise Support

'Design enhances the brand but also gives value to the business and brings confidence as a result.' — Private Consultant

3. What are the existing and new ways we can support self-sustaining design enterprises to grow?

3.1 Healthy Networks

Healthy networks encourage peer-to-peer learning and support between design businesses. When design-relevant support and information can be hard to find from LEO etc., the best information comes from those that have been through it already, and so these connections and the sharing of knowledge is extremely valuable.

'Developing a facilitated network is especially valuable for creatives and other sectors to learn from each other. How has someone else approached a problem? How has someone else overcome these difficulties?' — Unidentifiable from Recording

'We now want to be part of a design network across Ireland, across various regions. And that's a real challenge for us as that we can all unify in that challenge and see success locally and regionally within that process.' — Design Professional

'Not all designers are going to have all the skills required. And so collaboration is absolutely key. Collaboration and networking is a skill of its own as well.' — Local Enterprise Support Representative

3.2 Creating Ecosystems

Additionally, the development of communities and ecosystems made up of local enterprises is an idea of which design professionals are particularly enthusiastic. The establishment of local hubs to encourage collaboration between design disciplines and other industries is an example of how this might be encouraged.

'It is so important for design businesses to be fully embedded with the enterprise ecosystem' — Enterprise Support Representative

'There lots of people in our community that we don't know about, and they can bring lots of perspectives... there are opportunities for them [designers] to bring their skills and enhance the community which they live in.' — Private Consultant

3.3 New Pathways to Design

It's important to shift away from the perception that you need to be an artist to work in design. Design is a spectrum, and creative minds from other backgrounds should know that design is a viable career option and not just for "artists". The demand for designers is there, and new pathways into design need to be explored for talent coming from other fields, industries or education levels.

In the context of supporting the actions under the Design Skillnet report, this finding points to a potential opportunity to market design training beyond those who already consider themselves designers.

'It's important that we really look at different pathways into design.' — Design Professional

'We need more people from different aspects with different strengths to understand that creativity isn't exclusively for artists. It's something that many people can apply into a range of different careers. We are exploring new ways to enter the design system, other ways that we might develop a new kind of educational ecosystem to bring people into third level or bring people into apprenticeship or rethinking the ways and means by which people enter the design community and can build a career from there.' — Design Professional

'The idea that there's a lack of talent, when there's huge potential to grow that pool, and how do we do that? How do we show the channels clearly to our graduates and how do we make that happen?' — Design Educator

3.4 Perception & Enablers

The perception of the design industry from those external to it is often out of line with that of design professionals. Echoing what was heard in Strand 1, we heard further how significant a barrier this has become for design businesses, specifically when it comes to engaging with enterprise services.

While we heard from some enterprise support representatives during the workshop who acknowledged their own limited understanding of the design industry, there were some whose understanding was very strong and they were passionate and constructive about wanting to improve this situation.

For the perception of design as a sector to change, the support of these external enablers who understand design is needed. Specific issues lie around the awareness of the range of design disciplines which exist, the design process, as well as the language and terminology of design.

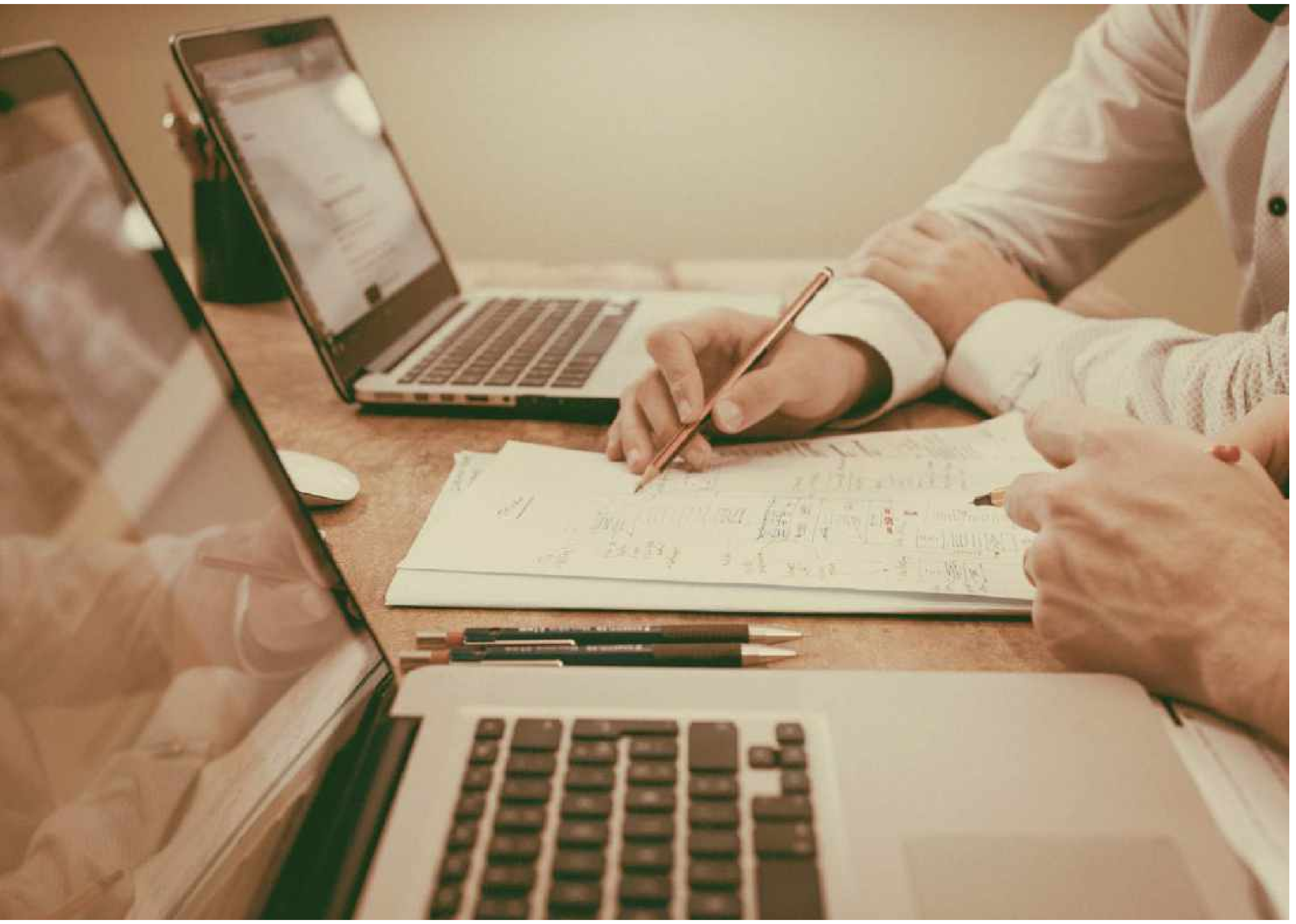
'Enablers are needed in order to reframe how the design industry is viewed.' — Academic

'There is a bit of a language barrier between the agencies and the design sector' — Design Professional

'What EI want is innovation, but that is the outcome. We need to recognise that design is the process to get to that innovation outcome.' — Design Professional

3.5 Business Skills

Opportunities to learn and develop business and entrepreneurial skills are vital to design practitioners becoming self-sustaining businesses. Creative people have lots of good ideas, but without the knowledge to convert their talent into a reliable income source they will be unable to grow. Designers need access to relevant supports, information, and seek advisors and mentors with an understanding of design that can help them build their business.



'There are so many creatives and so many people with creative ideas. But in order to make it into a sustainable business and a sustainable career, they do have to have the business skills element.' — Enterprise Support Representative

'We're assuming they're self-sustaining, so they've got a value proposition, they've got a service, they're starting to grow their business. So if we park kind of regular kind of technical business training and then look at maybe market opportunities... incubation/acceleration type programs focus on growth opportunities. Those supports are in place, but we could do more' — Enterprise Support Representative

'It's regular that we get businesses in saying, I can't go into a boardroom or I can't go into a company and sell myself. That's not my area, 'I'm a craftsperson'. So we have mentors that can sit down and prepare a pitch, a presentation that can identify potential customers for businesses [for designers]. ' — Enterprise Support Representative

ATLANTIC TIDE

STRAND 2

SWOT ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Strengths

- Participants from the various education and support agencies **showed an informed understanding of the value of design**.
- It was understood that **design provides a range of intangible values** which can enhance the competitiveness of businesses.
- Design is **understood to add value as an innovation approach to new product / service development**, a way of working which is very successful at the creation of intangible values like engagement, brand, reputation, “stickiness”, meaning, and strategy.
- **There were some whose understanding was very strong** and they were **passionate and constructive about wanting to improve this situation**.

Weaknesses

- Design is often **seen as complicated, or difficult to work with**. This could be interpreted to indicate a **gap of understanding between design and other industrial sectors**, and the need for better ways to integrate design in other sectors.
- While we heard from some enterprise support representatives during the workshop who **acknowledged their own limited understanding of the design industry**,

Opportunities

- It is understood that **it best adds value when introduced early in a process**, with the iterative approach seen as key to allowing design reduce risk.
- This points to the **strategic importance of design for other industries**, but it was additionally noted that as an approach, **design can help with staff engagement**, empowering teams and (perhaps) aiding retention.
- **Healthy networks encourage peer-to-peer learning and support between design businesses.** When design-relevant support and information can be hard to find from LEO etc., the best information comes from those that have been through it already, and so these connections and the sharing of knowledge is extremely valuable.
- Additionally, **the development of communities and ecosystems made up of local enterprises is an idea of which design professionals are particularly enthusiastic**. The establishment of local hubs to encourage collaboration between design disciplines and other industries is an example of how this might be encouraged.
- It's important to shift away from **the perception that you need to be an artist to work in design**. Design is a spectrum, and creative minds from other backgrounds should know that **design is a viable career option and not just for "artists"**. The **demand for designers is there**, and new pathways into design need to be explored for talent coming from other fields, industries or education levels.
- For the perception of design as an industry to change, **the support of these external enablers who understand design is needed**.
- **Opportunities to learn and develop business and entrepreneurial skills are vital to design practitioners becoming self-sustaining businesses.** Creative people have lots of good ideas, but without the knowledge to convert their talent into a reliable income source they will be unable to grow. **Designers need access to relevant supports, information, and seek advisors and mentors with an understanding of design that can help them build their business.**

Threats

- Design is **sometimes seen as complicated, or difficult to work with**.
- The **perception of the design industry from those external to it is often out of line with that of design professionals**.
- Specific issues lie around the **awareness of the range of design disciplines which exist, the design process, as well as the language and terminology of design**.

Process Findings

A key signal from this process was that of the interest in, and enthusiasm for engagement relating to the design sector, and the businesses therein. The conversion rate of the workshop was high, with stakeholders from across the enterprise supports interested to attend, learn more, and take part. Attendance was good too, as a proportion of those registered.

As with Strand 1, the decision to conduct an online, fully facilitated workshop, can be deemed to have been a factor in the success of this strand. Facilitators dedicated to each breakout room helped ensure that rich input was solicited from everyone who took part, while plenary sharing of conversations relating to our research questions allowed the attending guests to understand the multiple perspectives being put forwards.

The enhanced accessibility of an online workshop, negating the need for travel, could potentially have helped with the reach and attendance of the strand.

ATLANTIC TIDE
Transforming Ireland's Design Economy

STRAND 3

EDUCATE THE CLIENTS: CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

Strand Description

Strand 3 set out to deliver networking sessions to cross-sectoral and enterprise agency clients, and to offer that same opportunity to relevant Skillnet groups, industry advocacy agencies and RDI entities.

The aims for these networking sessions included the harvesting of qualitative data regarding the specific industry segments and relevance of design to those segments. This data could then inform opportunities for CPD via Skillnet, enabling these current and potential design clients to develop their understanding of the value of design and its associated services.

Four sessions were held (3 in-person, and one online) in order to accommodate four separate industry verticals:

- MedTech (including Pharmaceutical), held at Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen
- Construction, held at FutureCast, Manorhamilton
- Mobility, held at Future Mobility Campus, Shannon
- Fast Moving Consumer Goods, held online

A significant driver of engagement in this strand was WDC comms and the network of connected hubs.

The focus of activities within these sessions was adjusted, following the outcome of strands 1 and 2. It was surmised that much remained to be learned as to the industrial perspective on the value of design, and the experience of working with design. As such, these sessions included a component of networking, and of sharing the learnings from Strand 1 and 2, but an emphasis on data gathering was added, with facilitated "focus group" engagement to allow for qualitative research.

Objectives of this Strand

Building upon the learnings of Strand 1 and Strand 2, this strand allowed connection through to the selected industry verticals, highlighting the opportunity presented by the design sector, but also gathering a body of qualitative data on how each industry vertical perceives the value of design.

Intended Outputs

- Cross industry network established for further development.
- Framework for future engagement mechanisms between design industry segments and other industries engagement based on direct engagement.
- Activation of market opportunities and CPD.
- Qualitative data on the perceived value of design, and engagement with design, from perspective of each industry vertical.

Intended Impacts

- Establish connection and model for future ongoing engagement and rollout of ongoing cross sectoral networking & enterprise activation
- Activation of other recommendations in the design skillnet report
- Address government agenda regarding design
- Connect Skillnet to Connected Hubs for access to platform in long term.

Methodology

An Adjusted Approach

During strands 1 and 2, much new information surfaced as to, respectively, the lived experience of design entrepreneurs, and the understanding among enterprise support agencies of the sector. A significant gap in our data was identified – that of the prevailing experience of the industrial "customers" of design, within our selected industry verticals.

How do they utilise design currently? And why? What values does design add, and might it add in the future? Are there key design practices which industry needs? What are the challenges of working with design? With all these questions, and more, there is the additional question of whether the answers differ depending upon the particular vertical being considered.

As such, the "networking" sessions which were held during this strand allowed connections to be made between players from each sector, their advocacy bodies, and the Connected Hubs network. They also showcased the IDI as a representative body for design and a means for connecting with design enterprises to capitalise on the significant economic opportunity presented by design. Finally, they included the sharing of some of the relevant findings from strands 1 and 2 of the work.

But the adjusted approach allowed significant time in each session for research – enabling the Atlantic TIDE project to begin to answer the questions here mentioned and summarised in the report below.

Engagement Approach

Strand 3 of the project delivered four workshops, (3 in-person, 1 online) and utilised the distributed network of Connected Hubs to engage stakeholders from each of our selected industry verticals.

The programme was executed over a period of two weeks:

Date	Vertical	Venue	Attendance
28.11.22	Medical Technologies (incl. Pharmaceuticals)	The Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen, Co. Cork	9
01.12.22	Construction	FutureCast, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim	7
05.12.22	Mobility	Future Mobility Campus, Shannon, Co. Clare	8
06.12.22	Fast Moving Consumer Goods	Online (originally Sligo)	4

The agenda of each event was as follows:

Welcome and Intro
Jessica Fuller, North West REP Programme Manager

Keynote Address – Framing the Design Industry in Ireland 2022
Charlotte Barker, CEO Institute of Designers in Ireland

Atlantic TIDE Insights – Atlantic Tide Strand 1 Research
John Lynch, Design Lead Atlantic TIDE

Facilitated Round Table Discussions

- What is design?
    - What skills does it involve?
    - What does good look like?
- In what was does / might design add value in your sector?
    - How does it help the bottom line?
    - How does design add intangible value to your business processes?
    - Can you share stories of ways in which design has impacted your business or sector?
- What is it like working with design?
    - What kinds of design are important to you and why?
    - How might you find and select designers to work with?
    - Do you have preference for in-house or external designers? Why?
    - Are there challenges associated with working with design?

Workshops Format & Execution

Each session was professionally facilitated, with templates provided, and live note taking during in person and online workshops, allowing for the capture of rich data from all participants.

Following each engagement, time was spent to identify themes which emerged from the feedback, on a per-vertical basis. These themed findings, along with their supporting evidence in the form of anonymised quotations from our participants, were included in the draft capture for each workshop before being reported below. This allowed the team to identify both the differences, and the similarities in attitudes and experiences across the four industrial verticals involved.

Workshops Findings

Findings are detailed here, first as a "deep-dive" into each workshop, showing the perspectives shared by our separate verticals, and then finally as a selection of emergent themes and observations made by the team, across all four events.

All quotations below should be interpreted as the informed opinion of the anonymous representative, based on their experience, and not linked to specific data, unless otherwise indicated.

WORKSHOP 1 – MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES (INCLUDING PHARMACEUTICAL)

Attendance: Pharmaceutical Company Representative (x2), MedTech R&D Representative, Medical Technology Company Representative, Connected Hubs Representative (x 3), Medical Technology Start-up (x 2)

Question 1 – What is Design?

1.1 Problem Solving, Innovation & Empowerment

We heard from a number of our participants that design is a methodology for problem solving, which allows lateral thinking, and thereby innovation. This was connected to the empowerment of teams and individuals in the MedTech and Pharmaceutical Sectors.

'The ability to solve any given problem, but it's wider than that.' — Connected Hub Representative

'A methodology, tool set, approach to equip citizens, it's about teaching you to make decisions – it doesn't have to be a problem statement. A clear understanding of what good design is, and its impact. I would like everybody who comes into our organisation to do training on what is design and design thinking.' — Medtech R&D Representative

1.2 Customer Focused

A key characteristic of the shared understanding of design within the sector appeared to be that design is "customer focused" or "user focused". The idea was shared that design, as complimentary to engineering, could ensure that products are developed with the users and customers (patients, hospitals etc.) in mind.

'When we launch a product, if it is designed in such a way that it goes to market and meets expectations – that's a good design.' — Pharma Company Representative

'Very easy example – a product that was launched 10 years ago, wasn't great take-up, [later, design students] determined that the product was designed for the problem statement, as opposed to those who were using it' — Medical Technology Company Representative

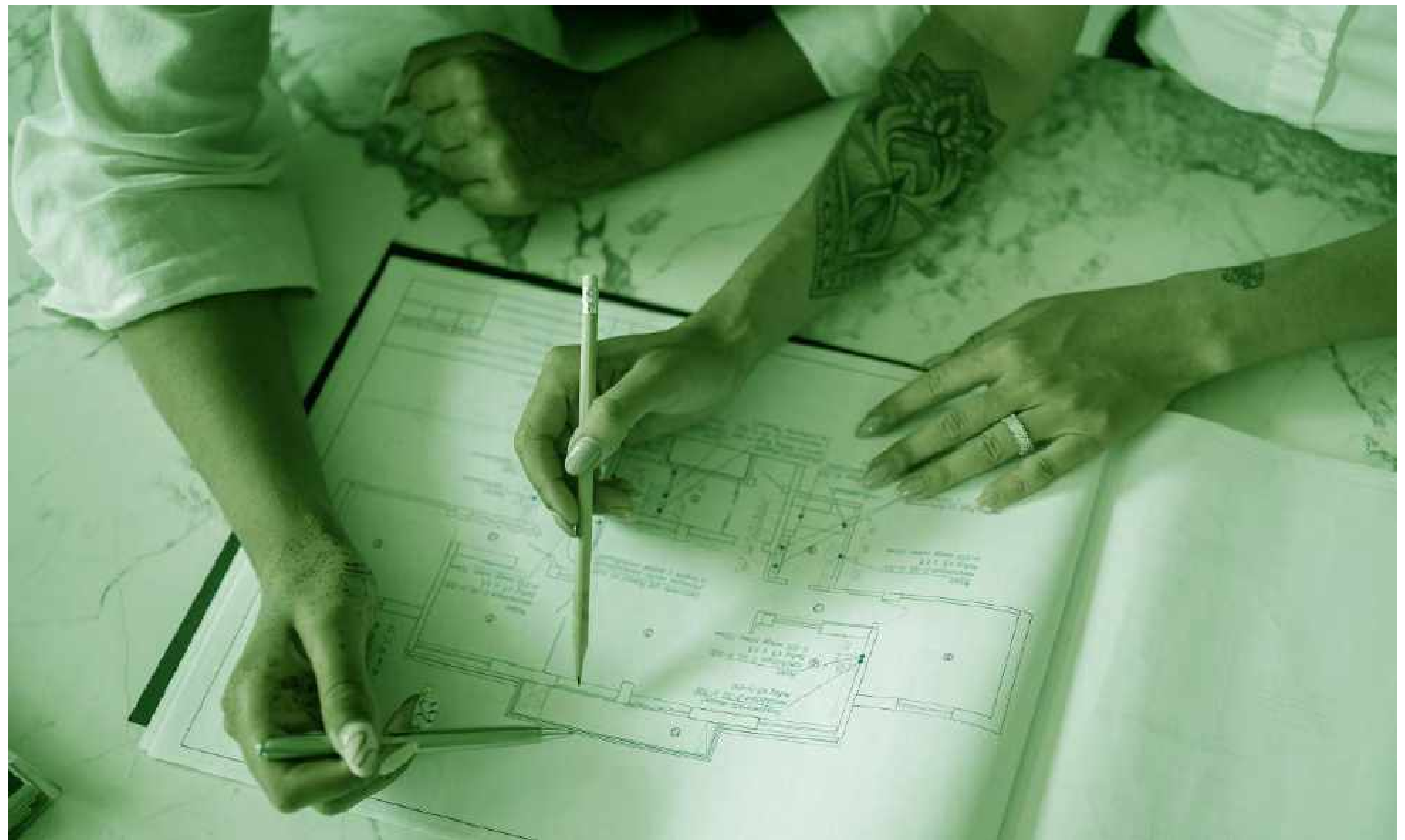
'Engineers will solve the problem that you give them, they may not ask how did you arrive at the problem, or is that the right problem?' — Medtech R&D Representative

1.3 Culture and Willingness to Change

It was expressed that in order to make the most of design an organisation must behave in an open minded manner and that this is connected to culture and alignment within an organisation.

'To begin with you need to be open minded as to what the problem is, and take a structured approach to that open mindedness' — Medical Technology Company Representative

'Design is a culture and an orientation around adjustment' — Pharma Company Representative



1.4 A Strategic Tool

There was an understanding that design, or design thinking, could be used as a strategic tool, and that this connects to the need for leadership buy-in in Medtech / Pharma Companies. This strategic application of design pushes back somewhat on the "Problem Solving" statements above – suggesting that perhaps a strict "problem statement" limits the potential impact of a design approach.

'We're trying to use design as design strategy. Our management doesn't understand it, the only way to bring it in is bringing it in by stealth.' — Medtech R&D Representative

'Design is a way of planning towards and defining a desired outcome, it's about listening' — Connected Hub Representative

'Design is something that adds value – you're walking in with some objective that needs to be met, you might not meet it but you see a path to that objective. Adding value, for example could be shutting down an approach that doesn't make sense.' — MedTech R&D Representative

'Good looks like when the outcomes are better than what they would have been without design, and that the problem solving exercise has been valuable in itself – could be providing ideas for different issues, team building etc.' — Pharma Company Representative

Question 2 – In what ways does / might design add value to your sector?

2.1 Embracing Failure & Learning from It

There was a strong signal from participants that a characteristic value of design is as a mechanism by which enterprises can learn to embrace experimentation and understand failure differently – maximizing learnings to improve product and service offerings and operational efficacy.

This was not without caveat – some added that the willingness to fail is often stifled by organisational culture and precedent. This reflects points made earlier under "culture and willingness to change" (1.3).

'I like to create a sandbox to fail and adjust from failure – so we constantly fail and improve from failure.' — MedTech Start-up Representative

'Failure – the Beckett quote, we see this all the time, it can be very simple things like how we present information to our stakeholders, when you get different political elements pulling things in different directions the message isn't going to resonate with everybody in the room. We redesign messaging.' — Pharma Company Representative

2.2 Talent Attraction & Retention

Connected to culture, empowerment, and willingness to innovate – there was consensus among the representatives from larger organisations that design offers value in the area of talent attraction and retention. While the words "design" or "design thinking" might not feature on job descriptions or HR recruitment messaging, it's "creativity" and "innovation" as part of the "ways of working" which are attractive to potential employees.

'Talent attraction... especially for bigger organisations, it's a really competitive landscape for talent, this is one of the intangible values or benefits [of design thinking], but in terms of how you present your organisation as a place where people want to spend their time, or join. It's really important to present yourself as innovative. My experience is they have moved beyond the foosball tables in the canteen, they want to know how the organisation works and is it a good use of their time.' — Pharma Company

'Employees by being able to put an input they are more engaged – we do that on a regular basis, e.g. having a patient coming in and talking to them about how the product has affected them.' — MedTech Company Representative

' 'Design', 'design thinking' – people won't get that. Instead we say 'we have an organisation where creativity is valued, we use innovative ways of working' – the articulation of the values of the company.' — Pharma Company Representative

'Bottom line is that you have a robust and flexible organisation. Intangible is that there is an opportunity to listen and be heard, and a shared vision across the organisation.' — MedTech Consultant

2.3 Enhanced Profitability

There was a strong signal from representatives of companies present that the key value of good design is the bottom line – satisfying customers' needs in order to enhance profitability. This was true of both larger organisations and start-ups / micros.

'Good design will pay off, if you don't do it your product won't sell.' — MedTech Start-up Representative

'It makes it a complete product design, rather than having engineers design the product – which makes it great for manufacturing, versus making it for the user and for the patient.' — MedTech Company Representative

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

3.1 Strategic Design & Organisation Design

Representatives from larger organisations stressed the importance of strategic design practices including organisation design. This was in contrast to the (smaller number) of small companies present, who expressed a lack of time for these practices, being much more focused on the design and implementation of products and services than strategic planning or organisational design.

'Organisational design is number one on this list. It can be a function of "size of company" I can't imagine that org design would be high up for micro and SMEs.' — Pharma Company Representative

'My first ever bump up against Design Thinking was in the context of organisational design – an innovative leadership person at the time who wanted to do this. A three-day workshop of storytelling what the organisation was, objectives, history, broke it down into ideas and followed a final path through to a well-designed organisation at the end of it. Right through to implementation' — Pharma Company Representative

'[Strategic design helps with] Scenario Planning – thinking about the future, unleashing people's creativity. What I tend to do is use that as the opening piece for something else, people are just fired up. Challenging assumptions and putting people in a new mindset.' — MedTech Consultant

'Smaller enterprises don't waste time on politics – it's creative destruction. It ties into stakeholder management – you deliver products – you have a destination you are trying to get to, as little white noise as you can here.' — MedTech Start-up

3.2 In-house, versus external, and the challenges of working with consultancies

We heard that there are specific challenges when it comes to working with design as a lot of design services are accessed through consultancies. It is difficult to get enterprise supports for work which might involve consultancies, and an example was cited where a consultancy ended a project because hours had been fully utilised within the budget.

With that acknowledged, there was some consensus on the need for both in-house and external design talent, each with its own purpose.

'External preferred, because in-house designers are already indoctrinated, there's more value in bringing in external thinkers.' — Pharma Company Representative

'For best value for money you need both - you need in house because they make it happen, but for that fresh view you need the outsiders. You need a depth of specialism coming in from outside but you also need the ability to keep the momentum going internally.' — MedTech Company Representative

3.3 Networking to Find Design Talent

There was evidence of a difficulty in finding the right talent, and a preponderance to the use of ad-hoc, or formal networks. IRDG was mentioned as an organisation that is helping with this challenge, with a specific focus on design thinking practitioners.

'We rely on people's networks – which isn't ideal.' — Pharma Company Representative

'We bring x number of design thinking houses to the companies we work with and then they select. We found them through [design school] for design thinking in biomedical field.' — MedTech R&D Representative

WORKSHOP 2 – CONSTRUCTION

Attendance: Construction Industry Advocate (x2), Design Contractor, Construction Contractor (x2), Property Developer, Construction Technologist

Question 1 – What is Design?

1.1 Problem Solving through Creativity & Open Mindedness

Design was understood to be a collection of practices which bring lateral thinking, creativity, curiosity and imagination to the process of solving problems. It was understood that design processes are often based on research, and on communication between multiple parties.

'[Design is] problem solving, and it involves – listening, questioning, communication, open mindedness, ability to define.' — Construction Industry Advocate

'[Design is] using research and intuitive skills to strategically solve problems that improve lives and environment.' — Design Contractor

'What skills – being totally open to all aspects of the project, good to co-ordinate all the team' — Property Developer

'Collaborative communication with relevant stakeholders, good is that the end product is fit for purpose but eliminates issues.' — Construction Contractor

1.2 Mapping, Vision, and Strategy

There was awareness too, that design is about collaboration and mapping the future state of projects. The alignment across multiple different contributors and disciplines that is required in order to produce a construction project was seen as something that design assists with.

'Thinking out of the box, mapping vision – showing others in the plan, good design is new street landscapes, new building culture, and technology bringing everything together.' — Construction Industry Advocate

'[Design can help to] bring all the elements together at the start and have a design strategy – you can help align people. BIM (building information modelling) will help you co-ordinate it all. Ask what is this building trying to achieve, and define that goal?' — Construction Industry Advocate

'Good design is all strands working together and being tied in with each other.' — Construction Technologist

'[Good design] should simplify and eliminate issues before they arise. I wouldn't be designing houses and that sort of thing, not about aesthetics, you try to design issues out before they happen' — Construction Contractor

Question 2 – In what ways does / might design add value to your sector?

2.1 Cost Reduction

There was an emphasis on the role of design in ensuring that expensive late changes in construction project are less necessary – design being the tool to ensure that the end product is fit for purpose, and for the uses for which it is intended.

'Design offers the ability to reduce overall cost by designing issues out of the outcome.' — Construction Industry Advocate (agreed by another Construction Industry Advocate, Construction Technologist, and Building Contractor)

'Design sets out a pathway for everyone to follow, and a great process e.g. BIM lining everything up so that everything is pre-ordered. The whole process is more cost effective.' — Construction Technologist

2.2 Improving the Lives of End Users

Design was seen as essential to the lifetime experience of the construction project – and its value to the end users. In practice, not all designers adhere to this principle, but it was seen as a fundamental role for designers – understanding and advocating for the user.

'Good design is user centric.' — Construction Industry Advocate

'It often doesn't matter about the end product because design has created that, it's already been designed. Architects always believe that they will design the next big building that will be remembered for many years.' — Construction Industry Advocate

'Success [in design] impacts on quality, and therefore potential for profits. I always think of the end product, which is for the end user. A better [designed] experience for the end user' — Property Developer

2.3 Aesthetics, History and Perception

The awareness that design brings of context, history, and the perception of a construction project was seen as valuable and powerful in offsetting a culture of "box ticking" and providing a legacy in the built environment to be proud of.

'Where design is invaluable is [in its understanding of] value of history, seeing the beautiful EU cities, if you have good landscapes and designs that people from other countries will come visit, e.g. Italian cities that have truly invested in design over the years – people will go visit them. Design through history has added value and what is our next 100 years?' — Construction Industry Advocate

'If you do good landscaping designs it ups the value of your property. It's about perception, if you look at the outside that's the first value, and when people go inside you keep ticking their boxes [with good design characteristics]' — Property Developer

2.4 Application of New Technologies

The construction sector is seeing the emergence of several disruptive new technologies, not least the advent of 3D Printed construction, and the widespread adoption of Building Information Modelling over the lifetime of a construction project, and of the building that results. This is seen as a “convergence” moment for the sector, which will require design skills in order to capitalise on potential. This is a two way street – where design can integrate new technologies, but also where new technologies can empower and drive new design possibilities.

‘Futures and foresights, product design and service design – BIM is going to end up as a maintenance model – especially in hospitals, and commercial buildings –it’s going to be a maintenance model.’ — Construction Contractor

‘VR walkthrough of houses, ability to position and specify, the biggest thing to consider is electrical plugs. But you can’t do that anymore if it’s going to be modular built. People will need to walk through that design.’ — Construction Industry Advocate

‘It will be changing a wee bit, 3d printing will be about 5% of houses, modular and robotic will be around 30%, 3d printing will build a round wall... but brickies will not necessarily do that for you. This is important because there are aspects of design that are now possible, which previously they weren’t.’ — Property Developer

‘If you can bring other things [technologies] to the table that can inform the design as to what’s possible that can help the designer.’ — Construction Contractor

2.5 Forthcoming & Current Sectoral Changes

The construction sector is under huge pressure to deliver large volumes of housing over the coming years, and not to repeat the mistakes of the past, made in a climate of such scaled delivery. Design is seen as a tool to work with accounting for the constraints of rapid delivery, the possibilities of new technologies, and the requirements of end users who will live in these buildings for generations to come.

‘We’ve been so focused on the last building boom in this country and a lot was learned, and there’s a cultural shift happening.’ — Construction Contractor

‘If we want to build the amount of houses that we need to build – that’s what needs to happen, is to build buildings in factories, all the issues are design out, and everything you need designed in before it even goes to production.’ — Construction Industry Advocate

‘The volume of production that’s required will introduce constraint and design compromise – that’s something that people are not necessarily going to be good for me. Good design needs to consider constraints and restrictions.’ — Construction Technologist

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

3.1 Involvement of Building Contractors is Important

Design, as has been noted, is seen as a way to eliminate costs incurred due to issues arising with the final product of a construction project, and during the process of its construction. Candid stories were exchanged of costly problems which occurred because design had not consulted with the construction contractors who would deliver the finished product.

'The people on the ground construction are never involved in the process, they should be involved in a practical way.' — Construction Contractor

'My first major build was 25-28 apartments and retail underneath. Got the architect, got the planning, knew what we wanted. [When we] went to tender, looked at the cheapest builder, we couldn't afford to build it. So we went to the builder and asked him "what can we do to build this building?" and he was keen to build it. So we sent him up to the architects, put the two of them together and came up with a plan, the development was built and we made money. It's the end user we're failing by not getting the builders and the architects together in the first place' — Property Developer

3.2 Design, Architecture, and the development process

There are several challenges built in to the traditional development process, and architecture, as a design discipline is part of this. Compounding the challenge of getting design involved form the outset is the traditional architect's approach, the need for speed, and the pressure to get built, and the cost of design – including the perception that design can delay projects from getting started. The converse is the tendency for design (other than architecture) to only be called upon "last minute" and when mistakes are already made.

'If you take the challenges, it comes to cost... the design is considered "nice to have" rather than an essential part of the food chain. If it's designed properly it costs less to implement, but it's seen as a cost rather than a value add. It's an up-front cost.' — Construction Contractor

'For at least half of the jobs, the building has been built, the furniture has been bought, and then the client realises that it's not really working as it's just a box and some piece of furniture – so they get you in to add the 'wow' factor. It says a lot about the traditional attitude of clients in Ireland' — Design Contractor

'Speed is a very big thing for designers because the things about construction is it's about speed – you can't go to a designer and they tell you 'we'll have it for you in 6-8 weeks' ' — Construction Industry Advocate

'The planners are all looking for the fastest thing to build.' — Property Developer

3.3 Networks and Referrals

We heard during strand 1 that the design sector relies on referrals, networks, and word of mouth both to find work, and to source talent. This is reflected in what the Construction sector told us too – that designers are sourced through existing networks, contacts of contacts. What was also interesting, is that in construction, this dynamic is very similar – a sector made up of mostly SMEs, working with one another and getting work through word of mouth.

'Most of my business comes through referral, and through word of mouth. It's always been the way. Trying to pool the resource of all the individual people working across the rest could be a solution to the challenge of everybody trying to work on their own and make enough money' — Design Contractor

'If I'm dealing with design it's a personal network that helps me find the right person for the right job.' — Construction Technologist

'I would use fiver.com and would recommend to others to use it, it's everything from business cards all the way up to website design.' — Construction Industry Advocate

'Finding design happens through people you know or partnerships, through architects or engineering or others. An idea might be to open up a 'members list' on the IDI website to link them in as everyone has a website, each element of the business has an element of design' — Construction Industry Advocate

'The biggest thing in construction is small SMEs – there's a lot of small companies who work as subcontractors, it's a big thing in construction.' — Construction Industry Advocate

WORKSHOP 3 – MOBILITY

Attendance: Agile Coach Mobility Technology, Mobility Technology Company Engineer (x 2), Connected Hub Representative, Brand Consultant, Aviation Organisation Representative, CEO of Mobility Technology Company, Enterprise Development Representative

Question 1 – What is Design?

1.1 "Creativity" vs Design

We heard that the word "creative" is a bit of a double-edged sword, specifically placing design as something that requires some kind of "intrinsic" skillset or mindset, but also separating design from problem solving, and a means by which to achieve business goals. Despite the ambiguity these words create, participants reverted to the use of "creativity" as a description of the skills a designer must have.

'It's like the red herring in terms of design is creativity – you need to be creative to be a designer... there's a problem, I want to solve it, there is a way to solve it. I thought problem solving was a higher skill than creativity.' — Enterprise Development Representative

'Creativity is very time consuming, you can go down a lot of wrong avenues to get to the answer. It's an engineering.' — Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

'Creativity is a label for design, and those terms get confused. Commercial confidence is what design is, if we can bridge the gap from that creativity to commercial.' — Brand Consultant

1.2 Outcomes which work – for Organisations & Customers

Our participants noted good design as that which meets not just customers' goals, but also the goals of the organisation, and internal metrics. Measuring the impact of design was described as something that is lacking.

'Projects can be dropped because they do not align with brand identity [of the organisation]. The ability to align the brand identity to the end product [is important]' — Agile Coach, Mobility Technology Company

'Ability to resonate with the end customer and see their point of view, [bad] designers can just jump to the solution straight away rather than thinking about the customer – need that skill, to see things from another perspective.' — Agile Coach, Mobility Technology Company

'Good design is – simple and functional, works for the end user and customer, communicates through design' — Connected Hub Representative

1.3 Subtractive Design – knowing what's needed, and what's not

One among our workshop respondents noted the following which was mentioned in other workshops too, and so is noted here:

'Good design is about ability to differentiate between what's needed and not needed for a particular solution, when I was working with simulation software we got the full instructions and when fully implemented we didn't know what the solution could be... design can help identify what kind of solution we are trying to achieve before we go about building it.' — Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

Question 2 – In what ways does / might design add value to your sector?

2.1 Achieving Objectives & Justifying Budgets

Design must be connected to organisational and business objectives and must justify its own budget. This was made clear by a few among our participants, and vitally was a common concern across different kinds of organisation from start-up to government funded entities.

'Achieving the objectives and measures of the business are vital. If you don't have design and a set of processes, if you have an irregular process and for example omit something – you haven't fulfilled business goals' — Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

'Our main challenge is how can we report back to those who fund you that the value of design has been worthwhile. What are your KPIs when it comes to workplaces – is it the number of seats, is it collaborations, is it privacy? What are the KPIs for designs.' — Connected Hub Representative

'Bottom line is that good design must attract more customers, and increase profits.' — Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

2.2 Dealing with Change – New Contexts and Technologies

Design is associated with change, culture, and transformation. We heard that design has a role when new technologies disrupt a sector, that currently there is a shift in ways of working and organisational design is important, and that design must also educate – and instil a knowledge in industry which assists application of design, and collaboration with designers.

'In a new technology, [design is about] how can you increase the value of the user experience. Example of two air taxis, one was popular for selfies and another not so popular – down to the orientation of the seat. The perception of a product is important [to the value].' — Connected Hub Representative

'Workplace design has completely changed with covid, people working remotely, 4 day weeks, that's a huge thing I'm working on is how to make that work for people, distributed workforce, in multiple time zones on the same teams. How to make it so that people view work differently, that's become forefront of the mind for a lot of employers – they have to start to think differently about their employees and what they value.' — Agile Coach, Mobility Technology Company

2.3 Strategic & Cultural Value

We heard that design adds value to the higher order operations of an organisation, and that designers can mediate between different parts of an organisation in the creation of strong strategy. This must be coupled with a culture of design – one which includes a drive for efficiency and improvement and not accepting things as "just the way they are".

'Strategic goals of companies, designers can be the facilitators between the doers and the strategic development. Turning goals into operations.' — Connected Hub Representative

'[Design can be] a strategic part of the business, if you have a really well-designed strategic framework – it enables the company to execute well.' — Aviation Organisation Representative

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

3.1 "Personality" and finding the right designer

In a finding that hasn't come up before – workshop participants spoke of the need to find the "right" designer, by personality, in order to ensure the success of a design initiative. This was contrasted with other professions, but also connected to recruitment policy and company culture.

'[It's difficult] finding the right designer, because design varies with the person, finding the right person for the right job requires you to have an understanding of who they are as a person. They can show you a portfolio, but you might need to give them a design challenge to show that their way of working is suitable. The design philosophy that they use is important.' — Agile Coach, Mobility Technology Company

'In our own business we have lots of freelancers because being able to change your team to fit the personality of the client is an advantage.' — Brand Consultant

'[Even in general recruitment] It's very important, the personality of the person you're working with is really important, it has a huge impact on the dynamic of the team, if they feel safe talking about things.' — Agile Coach, Mobility Technology Company

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3.2 In-house, versus external

We heard that there is a need for both in-house and external design skills, and that each has an important value add – from fresh thinking, to longer term development. We also understood that some organisations, when outsourcing, need to overcome the challenges of procurement processes in order to source good design, and allow scope for design to happen.

'External people provide fresh thinking and guidance, we have our own internal team but we would always bring in outside people because they are not biased or anything they don't bring an agenda.' — Aviation Organisation Representative

'External designers are important, for critical thinking and to avoid groupthink, but it depends on the scale of the organisation' — Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

'Both internal and external designers are needed – and it must be collaborative. Important to keep the link between the engineering and the designers' — Engineer, Mobility Technology Company

'You have to be very careful with the language of the tender to ensure that the right kind of designer can come in. Our procurement team are dialled in to produce tenders that are very carefully worded it enables a scope in terms of delivery.' — Aviation Organisation Representative

WORKSHOP 4 – FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS

Attendance: Founder / CEO – Beauty Products Company (x2), Brand Manager – Beauty Products Company, CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

Question 1 – What is Design?

1.1 Consistency within Context

Our FMCG enterprise representatives spoke of the need for a design to "fit" within the context of their business, understanding not just their brand, but also their processes and the stories around their products. This awareness of the context of the business helps designers to help businesses by providing work that is consistent with the context, and in a shorter amount of time.

'Designers need to bring a broad range of skills, but also understand how to apply the 'building blocks' which we use in our branding – this helps with consistency' — Brand Manager, Beauty Products

'Good design takes account of the story of the product, researching and understanding the market, the channels and the challenges – design just for the product is not enough' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'It's also important to have a good way of explaining design to the rest of the business, that's a challenge because it can be difficult to communicate the value of design across the business' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

1.2 Commercial Purpose

There was alignment around the fact that design needs to begin from a commercial purpose, that costs must be linked to value added, and that design mustn't harm commercial value. There was some risk noted that design, when not commercially driven, can be taken less seriously than other professional services.

'There has got to be commercial purpose in design, good design should keep commercial purpose in mind but also be as attractive or useful or engaging as possible' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'[Design helps to] make a product as engaging as possible without impacting the commercial value of that product negatively' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

Question 2 – In what ways does / might design add value to your sector?

2.1 "Brand" as an intangible, driving outcomes

There were references to some of the value of design being intangible, but that those intangibles drive outcomes throughout the business. This can be difficult to quantify, and our respondents were not specific as to those outcomes.

'The brand is a complete intangible value, made up of many intangible distinctive assets.' — Brand Manager, Beauty Products

'Design impacts many areas, from packaging to whether we can go into certain regions, we're trying to expand everything, going into new regions which brings new languages etc.' — Brand Manager, Beauty Products

2.2 Design as an holistic approach – enhancing customer experience

We heard that modern product experiences extend through digital channels, into retail settings, and on through the product life cycle itself. The application of design, through a range of design skills, is required to enhance a product in this era, but some core principles help to tie these experiences together.

'You need a cohort of designers in order to have access to a range of skills, for example, we're getting a lot more retail – so understanding the shopper is key, eye level, that's a very specific expertise' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'UX should be at the centre of everything right now – a core skill for any designer should be taking UX principles and applying them to all.' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'Content creators are expected to know how to do everything, from shooting the content, to making it look like an M&S ad, to ensuring it has the right functions for social platforms.' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

Question 3 – What's it like working with Design?

3.1 The cost of design can be challenging

We heard of mechanisms developed by FMCG companies to reduce the risk of longer design processes costing more than is affordable. This included a "hybrid" approach, mixing in-house and outsourced designers, and also care in returning to the same outsourced providers to utilise their familiarity with the brand.

'Budgets are an issue, we can sometimes get very contrasting quotes for the same jobs' — Brand Manager, Beauty Products

'Brand understanding is important – designers need to be briefed on the brand, its history, evolution, and future trajectory, it's very useful for designers but it's hard to invest that time [as a client] for someone you might not work with again' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'Having an in-house designer helps when sourcing design, sometimes we remove the concept stage [to save on costs] and bring that in-house' — Brand Manager, Beauty Products

3.2 Design needs to better understand the business

It is seen as important that design providers understand the business of an FMCG goods company, from their administrative processes, project management and planning, through to the seasonality of their work, and the kinds of tasks that might come up in a given year. This allows design to pre-empt the needs of the company, instead of being a "reactive" mechanism within the business. An opportunity was highlighted in helping businesses understand design too.

'Understanding the planning model & proactively prompting for design tasks with seasonality in mind could be very helpful, maybe designers could agree a rate and a number of hours in advance so we could get work 'hedged' and it could be built into our process' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'There's something to be done in introducing people who have appropriate expertise – for example introducing a packaging design expert to a pharma company, or sharing knowledge between small business owners on how to work with design' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

'Our process [of branding] with [project redacted] was seen as innovative because we did initial engagement about understanding the brand, and the organisation. I was astonished how many of these experienced business people hadn't been through that kind of process before' — CEO & Founder, Brewing Business

STRAND 3

SOME KEY OBSERVATIONS — ACROSS INDUSTRY VERTICALS

Each industry has its own nuanced understanding of design.

It was apparent, through the conversations in each session, that perceptions of design in each vertical vary, and that these might be traced back to the key activities in that vertical and the traditional ways in which those sectors have engaged with design processes.

For medical technology and pharmaceuticals the perception was predominantly one of design as a mechanism for innovation or strategic initiatives, and linked to product development. For construction the dominant experience of design came from architecture, and, as such, design disconnected from the operational reality of the construction of buildings and infrastructure. When speaking to the Mobility sector the clear connection was made with engineering, and design as a mechanism for problem solving. Finally, the session with FMCG companies mostly considered branding and merchandising.

Contrast between "Design as Strategy" and Design Operations
We heard varying perspectives on the role of design in an organisation, but broadly design practices could be oriented on a spectrum from design as a strategy and design as operations.

Design as strategy means design practices are involved in the understanding of organisational priorities, innovation, and product development. More operational design included the creation of brand assets, communications materials, packaging designs, product designs, and user interface designs.

External Design services seen to bring fresh thinking

It was almost universally acknowledged that outsourcing of some design by a business is a good vehicle by which to bring in fresh thinking and to benefit from the experience that designers might have accrued from working in different adjacent contexts. This is tempered by the time it takes for external designers to familiarise with a new organisation, the context within that organisation, and the scope of a given brief.

Sourcing Design Services is Ad-hoc and Poorly Supported

Most of our contributors, regardless of industrial vertical, referenced personal and professional networks, word of mouth, and referrals as the main mechanisms by which design services can be found. There were some comments regarding the difficulty in obtaining support when soliciting design services, but also challenges in "matching" the appropriate designer to the required brief.

Perception of Design as an Additional Up Front cost, Needing Justification

While most of our participants, across verticals, understood that it is bad practice to bring design in only at the end of a process, there was concern that involving design from the beginning can be perceived as costly. That cost might enable efficiencies or cost reduction further along in the process, through early identification of potential issues or opportunity, but it can be difficult to relate those efficiencies back to design, as justification for the up-front investment.

STRAND 3

SWOT ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Strengths

- There is a widely shared understanding that design can add value in these diverse industrial sectors, in some cases on a strategic and innovation level, in others more closely related to operations.

Weaknesses

- The legacy of older design practices looms in the understanding of design as shared by each sector. This legacy can bring with it positive and negative connotations or cause the understanding of newer design disciplines to be limited or inaccurate.
- The reliance on ad-hoc networks and referrals to find design services is a limiting factor across all our verticals, with the minor exception of construction. In the construction vertical this use of networks is also the case but is a characteristic of how that sector works across all services required.

Opportunities

- There is varying awareness of the value of design, the value of newer design practices, and the importance of involving design early in processes to maximise that value. This variance across business offers a potential opportunity for peer-to-peer awareness development, or for skills development, for example through Design Skillnet.
- This short series of relatively small engagements highlighted the enthusiasm of diverse sectors to learn more about design and its application. There is potential opportunity for Enterprise Supports to better bridge between their clients, and the offering of the design sector.
- There was a need expressed for better case studies about how design helps enterprise. This is an opportunity to showcase best practices, and key success stories from across the networks of IDI and enterprise support agencies.

Threats

- There were difficulties, across verticals, in justifying the cost of design, and in attaching design investment to metrics and KPIs – justification of design, and measurement of its impact are lacking, and perhaps even blocking design investment.

Process Findings

Recruitment for this strand was not as easy as strands 1 and 2. While we were looking for a smaller sample size in each vertical, effort was required on the part of the Connected Hubs managers in order to identify and invite individuals from appropriate companies and industry advocate organisations.

This points towards further work to be done in gathering data on industrial entities, perhaps clients of support agencies, who are interested in design and the application of design in their sector. Further data might be collected through the Connected Hubs network also.

In-person sessions were very effective, and good connections were made between participants and our facilitators and partners. That said, the distances travelled might have impacted on the accessibility of these sessions, and further work is required to understand when in-person engagement is appropriate, and if online workshops might be more accessible.

End.

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Report for **Atlantic TIDE Partners** and **Creative Ireland**

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN MID-WEST

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN WEST

REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN NORTH-WEST

Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

—

Sean O'Sullivan

Email : sean.osullivan@leo.corkcoco.ie
Application ID : A7OS552
Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2022-12-05 15:58:28
Application Completed Date: 2023-01-18 09:22:44

Project Details

1	Project title
	Munster Animation Forum

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8 **Executive Summary**

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This section should introduce the project, giving detail on the main aims and objectives of the work. Please give the following

- a brief outline of the timeline of the project
- the partners and collaborators involved
- the objectives of the project
- provide the socio-economic context for the project, outlining the project in the wider context of your local authority – why did you feel this project was needed at this time?
- the outcomes on completion.

Original objectives included:

- Development of a 3-year strategic plan, incorporating implementation, for the systematic development of the animation sector in Munster, building on the findings of an earlier Feasibility plan;
- Support regional development of animation clusters seamlessly incorporating other relevant strategies (e.g. National Arts Strategy/five priorities, Regional Enterprise Plans) whilst also influencing local arts, education and investment policies;
- Co-ordinate existing resources in each county, creative enterprises, education and statutory agencies, to develop coherent communication and planning through an appropriate structure;
- Raise awareness, Nationally & Internationally of the commercial benefits and opportunities for high quality, cost effective, animated storytelling in the region.

The strategic objectives agreed during the project are:

- **Vision**: to be the most future orientated, tech-enabled, competitive and creative region in the World to develop and produce compelling, immersive animation content in ESG and Consumer Experiences for a connected global audience
- **Mission**: To build a shared competitive advantage for the animation sector in Munster that attracts, develops and scales innovative and progressive businesses, research, investment and talent by addressing gaps, aligning strengths and enhancing capabilities

The strategy will be built upon four key pillars:
1. **Growing Capabilities:** Developing sustainable leading-edge capabilities deeply anchored in industry leadership and genuine industry needs.
2. **Brand Impact:** A business led focal point for the animation sector within Munster.
3. **Compelling Propositions:** A dense and tightly interconnected collaboration networks which delivers pipelines of new projects, new collaborations, mergers, acquisitions, IP Creation/commercialization and new industry-developing opportunities.
4. **Economic Contribution:** An integrated private-public partnership approach to create economic transformation, value-add and development policy.

Timeline:

- Phase 1: Programme initiation - August
- Phase 2: Where are we going? - August / September
- Phase 3: MAF strategy – October / November
- Phase 4: How do we get there? – November / December
- Phase 5: Strategy sign-off – December

The Partners/Collaborators included the 8 LEO Offices in Munster, as well as Local Authority Arts Offices in each County. Also participating were Enterprise Ireland, Skills Ireland and Education partners MTU Cork & Kerry, UCC, TUS Limerick and Clonmel. The other primary collaborators was Industry itself, mainly small and medium enterprises, including many individuals scattered throughout the region.

As the project progressed an Educational ‘sub-system’ emerged, in many cases voluntary and with a ‘social inclusion’ and outreach remit. Included were a number oi Primary and Secondary schools involving highly engaged teachers along with the ETBs, BAI, Screen Ireland (Young Irish Filmakers) and sometimes augmented by particularly engaged teachers in the local schools and /or ETB’s, BAI, Screen Ireland (Young Irish Filmmakers).

9 **Process and Methodology**

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1. Outline the key processes of project planning and collaboration that enabled development of your project. Highlight those which are new to your team or local authority or where particular innovations took place.
2. Describe any methodologies employed in the planning or execution of your project.

The project was planned to be undertaken over five phases:

1. **Programme initiation** – project planning; initial development of cluster core design concepts; set up of MAF technology platform; workshop design and; programme plan; participant introductory briefings and workshops
2. **Where are we going?** – a series of workshops and one-to-one meetings to examine: key change drivers, trends and horizon risks for the sector; stakeholder pain points and potential pain relievers; disconnects within the Munster animation ecosystems and beyond; opportunities and implications for the design of the animation cluster organisation. Research was also undertaken into the development of high performing clusters internationally and recent trends in the evolution of European animation clusters.
3. **MAF strategy** – a series of workshops and one-to-one meetings to develop MAF's: overall strategy; key strategic pillars and business model as they evolve over time; key performance objectives for the animation cluster organisation; value proposition including areas of competitive differentiation and advantage.
4. **How do we get there?** – this phase developed the proposed strategy deliverables into an executable project roadmap, business case and risk management plan.
5. **Strategy sign-off** – approval of key deliverables and recommendations.

The process was designed around key workshops which:

- Sometimes included all stakeholders particularly in phase 1 and 2 to discuss big issues and trends which impacted everyone involved. These workshops often would include between 25 and 40 participants.
- Included single groups of stakeholders to focus on specific areas for example: animation businesses on their pain points; education institutions on industry development needs; education and animation businesses on disconnects between both groups; Local Enterprise Offices on economic development and Cluster Organisation design; Enterprise Ireland to discuss funding, export markets and economic development; etc.

The process also involved a considerable number of one-to-one meetings with members of the animation and education sector on a regular basis. Stakeholders also suggested other groups and individuals which the project team should meet. These one-to-one meetings were important to give key stakeholders a voice, build support for the programme and collect valuable contributions. The process also allowed us to validate and test findings and recommendations before they were brought to larger workshop groups for discussion.

Processes which were new to the local authority were the use of an online interactive platform to manage communications, share documentation and facilitate participant interaction in workshops and meetings.

The project combined several proven methodologies and tools including:

- **Strategic Foresight**: PESTLE analysis; SWOR analysis; scenario analysis.
- **Strategy Design**: One page strategy (house); business model canvas; economic development canvas; battlecards (competitive proposition and differentiation); Design Thinking
- **Strategy Execution**: LogFrame (strategy execution and risk management plan); Business case.

10 **Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries**

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1. Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries; including the number of Creative Practitioners supported through the funding.
2. Describe the structure of the team/partners and the role that each partner held.

Key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries

- Key partners: Partners who have invested financially or provided resources for the project.
- Collaborators: May include individuals, businesses or organisations which have contributed in non-financial capacities.
- Beneficiaries: This may include Artistic or Creative Practitioners who have been directly supported by funding, or those who have availed of the services or resources developed by the project.

The Partners and Collaborators initially included all the LEO Offices in Munster Region, as well as Local Authority Arts/Creative Officers (where they existed), together with national enterprises such as EI, Skills Ireland & Regional Skills. Initially, all the 'education' partners included all the main Third level institutes such as MTU Cork and Kerry, TUS Limerick and Clonmel, as well as UCC. As the project progressed an Educational 'sub-system' emerged, in many cases voluntary and with a 'social inclusion' and outreach remit, with a number of these connected through funding streams and programmes to the Arts Council. This significant 'underbelly' often goes unnoticed, has a main focus on Primary and Secondary level and augmented by particularly engaged teachers in the local schools and/or ETB's, BAI, Screen Ireland (Young Irish Filmmakers). Animation is very clearly emerging as a key area of focus given its natural connections with children as well as the emergence of advanced software, freely available and to which children take to quite intuitively and naturally.

The other primary collaborator was Industry itself, mainly small and medium enterprises, including many individuals scattered throughout the region and included entities such as Great Island Films (Cork) (www.greatislandfilms.com), LooksLoud production company (Cork) (www.looksloud.com), Internationally acclaimed Dingle Animation Festival (Kerry)(www.animationdingle.com), Magpie 6 Media studios (Clare) (www.magpie6media.com), motion graphic studio Elucidate Studio (Cork) (www.elucidatestudio.ie), as well as individuals such as actor and producer and leading-edge film maker Michael Curran-Dorsano, along with former CEO of Wexford Film Festival and filmmaker with a strong technology and VR/AR interest Linda Curtin, and indeed many more.

Lead Partner Roles

- Overall project Management (LEO Cork South/Cork North & West)
- Development of the 3-year Strategic Plan (LEO Kerry)
- Development and Delivery of Design Thinking Animation Cluster Workshops (LEO Clare)
- Development of Communications Portal and ongoing co-ordination of communications throughout the project (LEO Waterford)
- Budget monitoring (LEO Cork South)
- Coordination of Industry engagement (LEO Limerick)
- Mapping and relationship building of/with all suitable Digital Hubs/Community Enterprise Centres across the three regions (LEO Tipperary)

11 **Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes**

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Only by knowing your objectives and having them defined clearly, will you be able to define clear outputs and outcomes.

1. Outline the **objective of your project:** What did you aim to accomplish?
2. Describe the outputs and outcomes of your project. We are particularly interested in any impacts on the wider local/regional economy or the CCIs/CCS.
3. Describe how you **measured outputs and outcomes** and any other evaluation processes you employed. What were your indicators of success?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- An **output** is something materialised or produced in order to achieve a specific target or goal. Examples of outputs might include a workshop, product, research data/systems or toolkit.
- An **outcome** is a result, direct or indirect, of actions taken or decision made. What difference did the project make? These can be changes in/for individuals, revenues, systems, policies, institutions, market entry/penetration that you seek to achieve. They may reflect shifts in relationships, knowledge, awareness, capabilities, opportunities, and/or behaviours.

MAF intends to seize the opportunity presented by the current boom in the animation sector in a bid to build up its capacity to contribute to growth and job creation in the Munster Region.

The stated objectives of the project were to develop a clear strategic plan and roadmap to:

- identify infrastructure and incentives to attract and support animation companies in the province and regions;
- develop and deliver animation training programmes and initiatives, in collaboration with industry, providing new talent with a progression to employment, and continuing development for employees in the sector;
- Develop a supportive business environment, through an improved understanding of animation (and ancillary) businesses between industry, statutory agencies and education, training and skills providers;
- support the development of a vibrant and dynamic network of animation business in Munster;
- become a strong, unified voice for the animation industry of Munster.

The benefits of the cluster are expected to be:

- Significant differentiation of animated products based on themes, quality of storytelling, originality and innovation;
- Creating international leadership in ESG and technological innovation;
- Increased interaction between businesses located across the region;
- Concentration of sector-specific knowledge and skills;
- Growth of social capital (trust and collaboration);
- A focus on international markets;
- Greater opportunity to access regional, national or European public funding;
- Potential for growth not only in purely economic terms, but also in terms of competitiveness and image;
- Improved employer branding;
- Improving animation businesses'/animation professionals' image through cluster membership;
- Opportunity of accessing shared resources, capabilities and networks of skilled partners;
- Fast dissemination of information including research, thought leadership, market intelligence and

new business opportunities;
- Ability to provide and receive on-going business and technical training;

The expected benefits for Munster as a region include:

- Stimulating technological development and innovation in the region;
- Increase direct and indirect employment;
- Accelerate sustainability and environmental projects;
- Attracting investments from other countries;
- Retention of talent and attraction of talent to the region;
- Internationalisation and scaling of local businesses;
- Increase in the number of interdisciplinary projects with the participation of cluster members;
- Intensification of business-science cooperation.

The animation industry is currently considered an important part of the audio-visual segment of the creative industry (CCI) sector. However, the animation sector in Munster is characterised largely by small and micro businesses which mainly live hand to mouth, deliver smaller commissions and tend to have less opportunities to collaborate.

There are two key themes which have engaged the imagination of Munster animation. They create new and unparalleled opportunity:

1. **Environmental and Social Governance (ESG):** Globally, animation is increasingly affirming itself as a suitable language for telling current issues and moral stories to the general public. For ESG, animation can provide glimpses of the future in spectacular ways, show in-depth analysis of development projects and bring ideas to life.

2. **Digital Transformation:** We are also witnessing digital innovation which is enabling industry convergence where animation skills have wider application in transformation of consumer experience, human engagement and communications. Animation is helping transform training, education, retailing, medicine, public health, data visualization, architecture, financial services and many other sectors.

Interreg Europe note there are no regional strategies in place linking animation clusters with other regional smart specializations. They stress the importance of linking innovation in creative industries to other clusters. Within MAF there should be commercial opportunities to work with larger domestic organisations and the FDI sector within the region on ESG and Digital Transformation.

Discussions with ALICE (the Animation League for Increased Cooperation in Europe) indicated that this type of specialisation or theme would be unique and differentiating.

Key Outputs:

- A vision, mission, strategy and roadmap for the wider animation cluster ecosystem
- A phased business model, operating model, roles, responsibilities and KPIs for the cluster organisation

Key outcomes:

- Consensus around priorities and the development stages of the Munster animation cluster
- Recognition that an independent cluster organisation is critical to enabling small and micro animation businesses operate more efficiently, deliver larger scale commissions, leverage specialised resources and reach larger markets with more compelling and competitive value propositions
- The formation of embryonic collaborative networks with a willingness to increase the level of

collaboration in the pursuit and delivery of joint opportunities
- Surfacing and addressing within the ecosystem which have been acting as breaks on development of the sector
- Improved communications within the wider animation ecosystem
- Recognising ESG and Digital Transformation specialisation as a competitive advantage game-changer for the region
- Early stage expansion of networks within the animation sector to include primary and secondary schools, the social sector, industry-at-large and financial services
- Early stage engagement with international collaboration organisations including like-minded animation clusters.
- Indicators of success included:
- Positive engagement and high levels of participation amongst key stakeholder groups
- Strong commitment to key themes such as ESG and digital transformation
- Strong support from a broad range of stakeholders to a shared vision and mission and a common strategy.

12 **Additional Relevant Findings**

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In this section we invite you to include any information not covered above including but not limited to;

1. Research findings: If you carried out research, please give an overview of your findings.
2. Levels of public engagement, if relevant: To what extend did your project engage with the wider public or community, either in-person or online?
3. Any media coverage received, if relevant: If your project received media coverage, please list it here and include links where possible.

According to Interreg Europe “the cultural and creative industry (CCI) is one of the liveliest productive realities, capable of generating well-being and expressing unique and particular excellences.” The current boom and forecasted growth in the animation sector presents an opportunity for Munster to build upon nascent small and micro animation business across the region to build capacity to contribute to growth and high-value job creation. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for animation businesses within the cluster to focus on SMART innovation in the areas of ESG and digital transformation within the entertainment sector and across wider industry which could create unique competitive advantage.

However, research shows that Ireland and the EU: import enormous volumes of animated products from outside of Europe; that the animation sector is less competitive and developed than the market in other countries (e.g. the United States); there is a significant gap between the skills coming out of the education sector and the demands of businesses
operating in the sector,which need professionals who are constantly updated on innovative software, techniques and tools; There is a lack of standardisation at European level of the skills necessary for the professions related to this field.

Animation businesses in Munster are generally small and micro businesses which are characterised by the following:

- **Pain points**: Randomness of work / work continuity (feast or famine); A local and national market which lacks sufficient understanding of the potential role & benefits of animation; Rapid technology redundancy; Disillusionment with no regular income; Education potentially creating wrong specialists

- **Needs**: Access to marketing capabilities; Ability to target larger commissions; Access to commercial and funding opportunities; Business skills; Education aligned with business needs; Keeping up with technology / digital innovation.

Within the Munster region, there is a need for:

- An integrated, cohesive and connected strategy to develop the industry in the region
- To consider establishing an animation "enterprise centre" along the lines of other successful centres as a focal point for entrepreneurial activity and investment, while providing a capacity to pursue high value briefs and commissions on behalf of the sector
- To engage wider industry and funders at home and abroad (at tradeshow, industry events, innovation hubs etc.)
- Achieve better alignment within and across key stakeholders
- A business-led focal point for the industry: authoritative, properly resourced, capable of eliciting stakeholder buy-in, while promoting the sector in Munster at home and abroad
- Greater focus on key themes which play to the region's strengths and delivers commercial advantage
- An animation cluster brand image which captures the essence of the vision and conveys relevance to key existing and future partners.

The strategic objectives agreed during the project for the animation cluster in Munster are:

- **Vision**: to be the most future orientated, tech-enabled, competitive and creative region In the World to develop and produce compelling, immersive animation content in ESG and Consumer Experiences for a connected global audience
- **Mission**: To build a shared competitive advantage for the animation sector in Munster that that attracts, develops and scales innovative and progressive businesses, research, investment and talent by addressing gaps, aligning strengths and enhancing capabilities

The strategy will be built upon four key pillars:

1. **Growing Capabilities:** Developing sustainable leading-edge capabilities deeply anchored in industry leadership and genuine industry needs which translates into: Active identification, mapping and solving of industry level challenges including barriers to industry growth such as startup financing, establishing large-scale collaboration projects to attack and solve such challenges; Greater alignment of skills development with market needs; Optimum balance between depth and breadth of specialisms; Improved commercial skills & capabilities.
2. **Brand Impact:** A business led focal point for the animation sector within Munster which becomes: A trust-based collaboration platform where new connections and relationships are built and nurtured internationally across academia, policy, industry and capital around industry shifts and emerging economic opportunities; A strong magnet for accelerators, startups, investors, corporates, connected hubs, researchers who all want to relocate to Munster to better their chances of professional and personal success and; An internationally acclaimed showcase for the sector nationally and globally
3. **Compelling Propositions:** A dense and tightly interconnected collaboration networks which: Become highways of new projects, new collaborations, mergers, acquisitions, IP Creation / commercialization and new industry-developing projects; Actively develop around the high growth, high value solutions; Build out startup-, scale up- and fast-track to IPO programs with a focus on introducing and connecting the entrepreneurs with professional investors and venture capital companies; Provide leading edge scarce business resources to start ups- and scale-ups; Facilitate the connection and integration of animation resources and specialized suppliers for commercial benefit including speed up of the pace of the investment cycle.
4. **Economic Contribution:** An integrated private-public partnership approach to create economic

transformation, value-add and development policy which result in: Increased economic activity and employment; Shared go-to-market and business development opportunities for members; Identifying and developing national and international business opportunities for diverse member base and; Creating a sustainable and connected ecosystem of individuals and businesses in the sector.

One of the key challenges for Munster is to spread economic growth throughout the region. There is an imperative to address sustainable employment, improve job quality, improve the competitiveness and increase exports, particularly amongst SME businesses. Furthermore, There is a need to build resilience and diversification into Munster's economy to respond to the additional challenges and opportunities faced by businesses in the post-Brexit and post-COVID-19 environment including the transition to climate neutrality, the transition to a digital economy and the opportunities presented by remote or blended working.

Animation has some specific characteristics, which makes it relevant from a Munster regional economic development perspective. Unlike other visual content production, animation projects tend to employ large teams – often 50 to 120 full-time equivalent - over a period of typically two to three years for a production. The combination of the use of advanced technologies, the need for highly skilled workers and research and development activities give animation an industrial character and provides opportunity to set up local animation studios with global visibility and significant growth and highly qualified job creation potential, which makes it attractive from an economic development perspective.
The animation industry is one of the most innovative sectors globally. It has developed to a stage where it links the tech industry and the content industry to deliver new forms of revolutionary digital transformation. This bridging between content and digital technology is absolutely essential for the future of many industries outside of the entertainment sector. The potential of the cross over to other sectors is immense.

Finally, animation has a key role to play in helping address the urgent need to safeguard the environment and society from the dire consequences of the climate emergency. Animation is one of the most effective means to illustrate the future and can provide glimpses of the future in spectacular ways; show in-depth analysis of development projects and; bring ideas to life. Amination delivers visualizations of the not-yet made, the world to-be, the unthinkable and the unpalatable like no other medium.

We believe that building a vibrant animation sector which contributes to delivering the unprecedent global demand and opportunity for animation content provides an opportunity to scale high value digital employment. But more fundamentally, we are convinced that there is an opportunity to be at the fore front of digital transformation and ESG storytelling which will have wider socioeconomic benefits to the region and globally.

International Research

At an international level, animation is increasingly affirming itself as a suitable language to make the general audience aware of topical issues such as environment and social issues. Just as comics have now established themselves as an effective means to tell great pages of journalism for adults and children, animation cinema is increasingly opening up to current issues and news.

For instance, the 2019 edition of Anima, the international animation film festival in Brussels, hosted in its programme three feature films that tell the civil war in Angola, the repression of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and life in the refugee camps of Beirut.
This trend follows the success of films that have been applauded at an international level, such as Persepolis and Waltz with Bashir.

However, feature films take time to be realised and require significant productions, capable of focusing on diffusion in international festivals as well as of platforms such as Netflix (see the American Love, Death & Robots). In some countries such as Italy, the still unripe market has so far pushed most studios to focus on

the “safer” entertainment market (television series for children), rather than on films for adults. But things have been changing, thanks to new tenders and laws that encourage production, such as the recent Tax Credit for Italy (used in many European countries as well): tools that aim to develop the market, in favour of the growth of new talents and stronger studies, able to afford more “experimental” film productions. It is worth noting a growing attention
to the new generations of authors and animators that involves schools and training institutions or festivals of this sector that have multiplied.

ALICE – the Animation League for Increased Cooperation in Europe, funded by
INTERREG Europe Programme 2014/2020. There is an opportunity for MAF to link up with and potentially participate in the next phase of ALICE. ALICE explores avenues for interregional collaborations in the animation sector to leverage the sector's potential for growth and innovation and to foster the development of a pan-European, world-leading industry. ALICE intends to seize the opportunity presented by the current boom in the animation sector in a bid to build up its capacity to contribute to growth and job creation in Europe. The six partners of the ALICE project are Wallimage, Wallonia (BE), Pictanovo, Hauts-De-France (FR), PROA, Catalonia (SP), Puglia Region, Department of Tourism, Economy of Culture and Valorization of Territory (IT), Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava (SK) and the Rzeszow Regional Development Agency, Rzeszow (PL). We have had meetings with individuals from Puglia and Catalonia. ALICE provides an excellent reference point for: benefits of a connected animation cluster; the architecture of an animation cluster; funding sources; governance models; SMART specialisations; training and education requirements. ALICE also documents the profiles of each of the six clusters. This provides useful benchmark information for MAF.

NESTA UK:
Creative Nation. Key findings on creative industries include:

- They are a motor of growth in local economies. Creative industries have been growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy.
- They concentrate in a small number of top locations
- Although they are more productive than comparably sized businesses, they will not materially contribute to addressing regional productivity problems unless they scale-up significantly.
- They tend to be more productive than companies in other sectors in almost all parts of the country. However, many are micro-businesses which limits the sector’s ability to lift regional productivity.
- Regional rivals should work together to grow their creative industries: For example, locations that saw their neighbours become more specialised were almost 80 per cent more likely to become more specialised in that sector.
- The wider creative economy is stronger in creative clusters: analysis also suggests that companies in non-creative industry sectors operating in creative clusters tend to be more creative too.

NextGen report – digital natives to digital creatives. Key findings include:

- There are significant disparities between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils in terms of the opportunities available to develop creative digital skills, as well as between geographical regions, that need to be addressed. And it was noted that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are far less likely to access extra-curricular activities.
- There is a skills gap in both specific creative digital skills, as well as social and emotional skills, such as resilience, communication and interpersonal skills. And we know both these so-called ‘createch’ skills and social and emotional skills are going to be more in demand in the future.
- Teacher capacity can be a real challenge. Education practitioners may lack confidence and experience in developing young people’s creative digital skills, and we need to support them with adequate time, training and professional development.
- Parents and teachers, as well as young people, often lack awareness about the relationship between

creative digital skills and future career opportunities.
- We need a common language and definition for what we mean by digital creativity and creative digital skills. While employers often ask for software-specific skills, discussions with industry experts and labour market researchers suggest that focusing on developing technical skills may not be the best solution, given technology and software changes so rapidly. We also need to describe skills in a way that is accessible and meaningful for schools, drawing on best practice.

Research: What organisations underpin UK creative tech clusters? Key findings include:

- There should not be a cookie cutter approach to thinking about cluster development. But, building on the strengths and challenges that make a place unique, we can apply good practice to promote inclusive growth.
- A renewed focus on clusters creates important new agendas for local organisations. Cluster thinking suggests that companies have a tangible and important stake in the business environments where they are located. Performance of the business, and indeed the cluster as a whole, is intricately tied into the relationships companies have with one another alongside their links with non-commercial stakeholders.
- This shift in focus from national to local ecosystems has been reflected in an emphasis on local policy making, highlighted most noticeably with the powers being transferred to cities and regions
- There is a move in thinking about companies. Historically, companies thinking about competition and strategy have focused on what goes on inside their organisation. But much of the research on clusters suggests that a good deal of competitive advantage lies outside companies. As such, some (like Michael Porter) have suggested that the unit of analysis has changed, from the company to the locations at which they are based.
- As such, the health of the cluster is important to the health of the company. This makes sense - in its simplest sense, the more vibrant (economically, socially and culturally) a local area is, the more the area attracts new companies, investment and consumers. Therefore, other organisations, alongside companies, are increasingly important in providing an ecosystem of support to ensure sustainable and resilient economic growth.
- A large - and growing - number of organisations representing the needs of companies and individuals are offering access to services like information and funding. Collectively, they form a powerful political and cultural force, and their activity is having an influence on the places they are based.

World Economic Forum
White Paper - Factors for Enabling the Creative Economy. Key findings:
No single determining force drives success in the creative economy, but commonalities exist in many creative hubs. There are five simple factors that policy-makers should take into account when aiming – to stimulate creative economies in their countries. They can be considered a framework for maximizing the contribution of the creative economy to wider economic growth and development:

- The local strengths: Successful creative economies are found in close proximity to academic, research and cultural centres, allowing ideas and people to mingle.
- The technological enablers: Digital technology enables creative ventures to be launched from any location at scale, and successful creative entrepreneurs have been able to harness technology to their advantage.
- The inspiring entrepreneurs: The catalysts in creative hubs are successful individuals who demonstrate what is possible while inspiring and training other creative entrepreneurs.
- The role of government: By using regulation and incentives wisely, governments can help create the right conditions for creative economies to flourish.
- The power of place: Creative economies are in places where people want to live due to location and amenities – and the most successful have established themselves as international hubs.

International Innovation Super Clusters
We researched the:

- **Norwegian Innovation Super Clusters**: including: Ocean space; Seafood and; Energy
- **Canadian Innovation Super Clusters**: including the Digital Supercluster; the Ocean Supercluster and; the Protein Supercluster

Key lessons from these developments include:

- Supercluster models are replacing traditional cluster models as a more successful approach to deliver sustainable regional economic development
- **Traditional innovation clusters (c.7,000 globally) are**: often built around the Triple Helix Framework; Local by design; Often organized around legacy industries. Focus on sustaining old, cornerstone industries in the region; Closely linked with local universities; Suffer from limited resources; Poor environments for investors, capital and scale- ups.
- **Superclusters** initiatives: Are specifically designed & built; Have a strong focus on story & narrative of building large Innovation Superclusters; Have a legal structure, Board, CEO in place; Focus on financial velocity, connecting startups and corporates, growing a stronger collaboration culture; Based upon a pentagonal model.

London School of Economics:
Are engaged in various projects to evaluate creative platforms, particularly animation including:

- How to reach reaching vulnerable and marginalised communities and ensuring help and guidance is easily accessible. For example, a campaign to encourage young people to become more aware of factors that may be having a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.
- The impact animation can have in driving significant conversion rates in online shopping environments
- Using animation to better represent and understand social issues including Colombian women's experiences of migrating to Chile
- The ability of animation to improve discourse on racial violence
- The impact of animation in tangibly improving effectiveness of digital conversational agents. Results show that the perception of a conversational agent is dramatically altered when the agent is voiced by an actual, tangible animated person.

Public Engagement to date
The project did not engage with the wider public or community to this point as it has been deemed too early to do so. However, there was significant outreach to the education sector including primary, secondary and third level. It has been suggested by discussions we have had with moderators at COP27 that it would be beneficial if MAF instigated a series of animation prizes for the wider community to engage in producing short explainer videos on how individuals and communities can have positive impacts on the environment.

It is proposed that Jan/Feb 2023 will be a test phase for the strategic plan output and that we will do a public launch of this plan during Local Enterprise Week 2023 in early March 2023.

Conclusions

19 **Conclusions and Looking Ahead**

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In this section, give details of any final reflections or conclusions that have arisen from your project including the following;

- Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
- How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
- Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
- Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
- Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
- Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?
- Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

We established an online collaboration and workflow portal called Skills to share information, conduct and facilitate workshops. The platform also provided data analytics and a range of AI enabled assessment tools to support information gathering and improve user experience at workshops.

Given the considerable diversity and number of stakeholders involved in the process we created "informed pre-cooked deliverables" for review during working sessions. It would have been impractical to utilise a blank sheet of paper facilitated processes to otherwise achieve consensus and productive input from all.

Given the micro and small business profile of participating animation businesses there was a lack of understanding of wider business developments and the impact of technology on the future of the sector. Many of the businesses are living hand to mouth and are struggling to secure sufficient commissions to enable their businesses thrive.

How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?

The is potential for the project to evolve as follows:

- Development of integrated regional Smart specialisations around specific digital innovation and ESG themes across sectors e.g. animation, technology, pharma, engineering, training etc.
- Application to join ALICE or other collaborative regional animation clusters
- Application for European Funding to support the development of the cluster e.g. Horizon Europe 2021 to 2027: Pillar 2 - "Culture, creativity and inclusive society"; Pillar 3 "European ecosystems of innovation". Creative Europe 2021-2027
  the EU framework programme that supports activities in the cultural and audio-visual sectors.

Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?

The overall objectives of the project proposal did not change. However, there were some changes to focus and deliverables. These included the development of the ESG and Digital Innovation Themes.

Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?

As a result of the project:

- Informal networks have been created or improved
- There is better understanding between academia and industry on key issues and requirements
- There is better understanding of the considerable expanded role and opportunity which animation can deliver beyond entertainment
- The network of necessary stakeholders has widened to (a) primary and secondary schools (b) businesses which will benefit from animation as part of their digital transformation and customer engagement processes and (c) finance industry.

Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?

The application and role of animation in key development issues such as ESG, digital innovation, user experience, customer journeys, customer communications etc will enable animation have a wider role in the success of other businesses in the community. In particular, there should be opportunities to scale animation businesses as they become part of the wider ecosystem of FDI and larger businesses locally.

A very welcome opportunity has arisen as a result of the work undertaken to date to have the Environmental Research Institute of UCC offer to collaborate with the project to help underpin the expertise that will be needed in both communicating environmental priorities and understanding these to the extent that our animator bodies can then readily bring the messaging to life.

Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?

The process acted as a magnet for:

- Other small animation businesses outside of Munster to become involved in the process and provide valuable input to interviews and workshops

- Private Equity and Venture Capital firms who are interested in providing “impact funding” for SME animators.

Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

The application process was relatively straightforward but timelines relatively short. However, it was very late in the year to undertake the process and then expect significant work to be completed and fully paid out by the end of the year. Forcing a process into such a short and somewhat unrealistic/artificial timeline works against the opportunities to potentially get the best from each project. Projects can have different challenges and complexities and it would be good if the timelines set were more realistic to allow for this. Support from Sheila Deegan at all times was excellent and this was welcomed and appreciated.

Declaration

20	I hereby confirm that all details provided in this application for funding under the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme are accurate and true and that all the requisite regulatory approvals are in place.

Signed: Sean O'Sullivan Verified
Created: 2022-12-12 16:56:05 Authenticated: 2023-01-18 09:23:09

Final report

— Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

Sean O'Sullivan

Application ID: A7OS552

Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

—

John O'Hara

Email : john@creativecoastdonegal.ie
Application ID : A4OJ553
Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2022-12-05 16:02:38
Application Completed Date: 2022-12-09 15:25:12

Project Details

1	Project title
	Creative Coast 22

Please provide the below information for the contact person

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7	Website (optional)
	www.creativecoastdonegal.ie
8	**Executive Summary** - This section should introduce the project, giving detail on the main aims and objectives of the work. Please give the following • a brief outline of the timeline of the project • the partners and collaborators involved • the objectives of the project • provide the socio-economic context for the project, outlining the project in the wider context of your local authority – why did you feel this project was needed at this time? • the outcomes on completion.

The project – Creative Coast 2022, which is based on the aims and objectives outlined in the Creative Strategy for Donegal 2019- 2022 and the recommended actions within the Donegal Strategic Enterprise Action Plan - "Donegal 2030: Writing our Own Enterprise Future", seeks to identify and enhance the processes at the local level through which the sector can increase innovation and knowledge sharing and thus add to its sustainability and its contribution to economic activity within the county.

A two-stranded approach to project CC-22 was proposed which aimed to facilitate innovation, knowledge sharing, collaboration, and next-generation creative start-ups. The project aimed to be the driving force behind building strong stronger creative businesses through greater inter-discipline and inter-sector integration and peer learning.

The two strands identified were:

1. **Three Year Action plan** - This was in line with the Donegal 2030 Plan recommendations for the

sector. The action plan aimed to focus on areas such as innovation within the sector, Investment, collaboration, identifying a flagship project, promoting new creative start-ups, enhancing skills in the sector, and creating and retaining staff.

1. **Identification and facilitation of Cluster Model -** Identification of a model for the clustering of creative businesses. · Enhanced skills through peer learning. · Raised awareness and levels of innovation. · Enhanced Knowledge Sharing · Enhanced Skills Through Peer Learning · Identification and maximization of collaborative opportunities.

Key partners and collaborators in the project were the Creative Coast Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was instrumental in identifying how the objectives in the two strands would be achieved, namely:

1. Establishing a tender for the development of a three-year action plan
2. The organisation of 12 pilot creative network meetings, online and in person, for the craft and design industry
3. The organisation and facilitation of a conference for the fashion and textile industry in Ireland Northwest

Each of the above points was necessary and timely given the socio-economic context:

1. The development of a follow on plan from "Strategic Action Plan for Creative Entrepreneurship 2019-2022" is in line with the Donegal 2030 recommendations for the sector.
2. The Craft & Design sectors represent the largest cohort of Creative businesses in the County.
3. Donegal has a rich and unique history of contributions to the fashion & textile sector, ie. Donegal Tweed.

Outcome:

These objectives were met throughout the duration of the Creative Coast 22 project:

1. Relating to the 3-year action plan, a scoping document for an action plan for the Creative Industry in Donegal was completed with the full action plan due for completion in early 2023
2. Relating to the identification and facilitation of a cluster model:
3. 12 pilot Creative Network meetings for the Craft and Design sector were held throughout Donegal and online
4. A successful cross-border conference for the fashion and textile industry was facilitated

9 **Process and Methodology**

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1. Outline the key processes of project planning and collaboration that enabled development of your project. Highlight those which are new to your team or local authority or where particular innovations took place.
2. Describe any methodologies employed in the planning or execution of your project.

Members of the Creative Coast Steering Committee were key influencers in the project planning and collaboration that enabled the development of the Creative Coast 22 project, as follows:

1. The Steering Committee were instrumental in publishing the tender for the development and the road map of the 3-year action plan (see road map below).
2. The Steering Committee were key contributors in deciding to structure the Creative Network Meetings for the Craft and Design sectors as opposed to the wider Creative industry. Previous network meetings arranged by Creative Coast for the Creative community had mixed results, with feedback largely stating that the previous approach was "too broad" and not specialised enough. To respond to this, Creative Coast 22 offered the network to Creatives specifically within the Craft and Design industry - the largest cohorts within the Creative industry in Donegal as identified by the Skills Audit described below.
3. The Steering Committee influenced the decision to host a conference for the fashion and textile industry in Ireland Northwest. Donegal and Derry have a rich history of contributions to the fashion and textile industry. Donegal Tweed has had an international impact, with various successful textile businesses present within the County. Derry was once an international manufacturing hub for shirt making, and its history is woven into the city of Derry itself.
4. The Steering Committee were instrumental in identifying the opportunity to access Shared Island funding and the opportunity to collaborate with the Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) for the development of the Fashion and Textile Industry Conference.

Between December 2021 and April 2022, Local Enterprise Office Donegal commissioned a survey and in-depth interviews of creative businesses to assess skills gaps (a lack of proficiency in the existing workforce) and shortages (a lack of suitable applicants with the required skills, qualifications and/or experience) within the sector. The report found that stakeholders within the sector were asking for further networking opportunities. Furthermore, the report found skills gaps in key business areas (sales, marketing, accounting, etc.). The Skills Audit particularly informed the direction of the project.

The 3-Year Action Plan road map will focus on areas such as innovation within the sector, Investment, collaboration, identification of a major a flagship project, promoting new creative start-ups and identification of potential funding sources for the implementation of the action plans and the sector.

10 **Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries**

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1. Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries; including the number of Creative Practitioners supported through the funding.
2. Describe the structure of the team/partners and the role that each partner held.

Key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries

- Key partners: Partners who have invested financially or provided resources for the project.
- Collaborators: May include individuals, businesses or organisations which have contributed in non-financial capacities.
- Beneficiaries: This may include Artistic or Creative Practitioners who have been directly supported by funding, or those who have availed of the services or resources developed by the project.

Key partners who provided financially for the project are:

1. Creative Ireland
2. Donegal County Council / Local Enterprise Office Donegal
3. Shared Island

Key Collaborators are the Creative Coast Steering Committee (A public/private partnership committee), as follows:

1. Donegal Film Office, Public Services Centre, Carndonagh
2. Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny
3. Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Donegal County Council, Letterkenny
4. Donegal Cultural Services Division, Donegal County Council
5. Udaras na Gaeltachta, Derrybeg
6. ATU, Port Road, Letterkenny
7. Fiona O'Reilly, On the Dot Media, Graphic Designer
8. Paul McGuckan, Photographer & Videographer
9. Michelle Mc Carroll, MiChi Knitwear, Knitwear Designer
10. James Doherty, Greeble TV, Animation Services
11. Liz Doherty, I Teach Trad, Music Services

Beneficiaries:

1. 228 businesses engaged with the Creative Coast 22 project.
2. The Craft and Design industry in Donegal who attended the Creative Network Meetings. 114 attendees attended 12 meetings, online and in person.
3. The Fashion and Textile industry in Donegal and Derry benefited from the expertise and networking opportunities offered at the Yarns conference. 114 attendees attended 6 events over a 2-day period.
4. The Creative industry in Donegal will benefit from the completion of the 3-year action plan in early 2023.

11 **Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes**

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Only by knowing your objectives and having them defined clearly, will you be able to define clear outputs and outcomes.

1. Outline the **objective of your project:** What did you aim to accomplish?
2. Describe the outputs and outcomes of your project. We are particularly interested in any impacts on the wider local/regional economy or the CCIs/CCS.
3. Describe how you **measured outputs and outcomes** and any other evaluation processes you employed. What were your indicators of success?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- An **output** is something materialised or produced in order to achieve a specific target or goal. Examples of outputs might include a workshop, product, research data/systems or toolkit.
- An **outcome** is a result, direct or indirect, of actions taken or decision made. What difference did the project make? These can be changes in/for individuals, revenues, systems, policies, institutions, market entry/penetration that you seek to achieve. They may reflect shifts in relationships, knowledge, awareness, capabilities, opportunities, and/or behaviours.

OBJECTIVE #1

Three Year Action plan

In line with the Donegal 2030 Plan recommendations for the sector. The action plan will focus on areas such as innovation within the sector, Investment, collaboration, identifying a flagship project, promoting new creative start-ups, enhancing skills in the sector, and creating and retaining staff.

OUTPUT & OUTCOME #1

Creative Coast 22 commissioned external consultants to develop a 3-year action plan for the creative industries in Donegal.

The 3-Year Action Plan roadmap focuses on areas such as innovation within the sector, Investment, collaboration, identification of a major flagship project, promoting new creative start-ups, and identification of potential funding sources for the implementation of the action plans and the sector.

The outcome is the development of a scoping document that will allow the completion of a full action plan in early 2023.

OBJECTIVE #2

Identification and facilitation of Cluster Model

· Identification of a model for the clustering of creative businesses.
· Raised awareness and levels of innovation.
· Enhanced Knowledge Sharing
· Enhanced Skills Through Peer Learning
· Identification and maximization of collaborative opportunities.

OUTPUT & OUTCOME #2

Creative Network Meetings for The Craft & Design Sector

Creative Coast 22 facilitated pilot Creative Network Meetings to support the development of creative clusters within the county. The network meetings aimed to enhance attendees skills through peer learning, raise awareness and levels of innovation, offer enhanced knowledge sharing, and provide an opportunity for collaborative business opportunities for attendees. Furthermore, these meetings provided an opportunity to engage directly with the Creative industry within the County, learn of the commercial challenges they face, ascertain the appetite that exists within the cohort for a Creative Network and identify further support for creative entrepreneurs, based on feedback from the creatives themselves.

Eight in-person facilitated meetings were held throughout Donegal, and a further 4 meetings were held in an online format. After an initial introduction outlining the rationale for the meetings, an external guest speaker (each a proven entrepreneurial with a creative background) presented to the group and this was followed up with a facilitated question and answer session. An external Facilitator then delivered a brief business-related presentation on a topic relevant to the group. After these presentations the facilitator then engaged with the grouping to ascertain:

1. The appetite with the grouping for a facilitated network
2. What were the key commercial challenges amongst the participants that they sought to have addressed by the network
3. How any network could or should be implemented within the county

There were 114 attendees in total who attended the 12 meetings. The objectives listed in identifying a cluster model (Raised awareness and levels of innovation, Enhanced Knowledge Sharing, Enhanced Skills Through Peer Learning, & Identification and maximization of collaborative opportunities) were achieved at the Creative Network Meetings and have supported the identification of a Cluster model.

The final report by the facilitator is in draft form, the complete report will be available W/C 19th December 2022. This report will be made available upon completion.

Creative Conference for the Fashion & Textile Industry in Ireland Northwest

The Creative Conference for the Fashion and Textile Industry in Ireland Northwest (Yarns) took place in venues around Derry and Donegal. (See brochure - http://donegalleo.com/yarns/). This unique celebration of the northwest's textile heritage brought leading figures from the world of Irish fashion to the northwest, including Irish Times Fashion Editor, Deirdre McQuillan, fashion entrepreneur Sonya Lennon, stylists Aisling Farinella and Paula Hughes, and designer Aideen Bodkin. The event included practical workshops for budding designers and one-on-ones with industry experts and local fashion and textile businesses to support the development of their brand.

The event was well attended across both regions, with 114 attendees across 6 events in Donegal and Derry over 2 days. Feedback ascertained at the event and by survey following the event was largely positive. The event recieved a 4.5 rating out of 5 based on a Survey sent to all attendees (24 responses). Survey results were uploaded separately.

The objectives listed in identifying a cluster model (Raised awareness and levels of innovation, Enhanced Knowledge Sharing, Enhanced Skills Through Peer Learning, & Identification and maximization of collaborative opportunities) were firmly achieved at Yarns and has supported the identification of a Cluster model.

12 **Additional Relevant Findings**

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In this section we invite you to include any information not covered above including but not limited to;

1. Research findings: If you carried out research, please give an overview of your findings.
2. Levels of public engagement, if relevant: To what extend did your project engage with the wider public or community, either in-person or online?
3. Any media coverage received, if relevant: If your project received media coverage, please list it here and include links where possible.

- Deirdre McQuillan, fashion editor of the Irish Times and speaker at Yarns, published the following article coinciding with Yarns conference: https://www.irishtimes.com/life-style/fashion/2022/11/19/parma-ham-feta-cheese-waterford-blaa-could-donegal-tweed-be-next/

- Derry Journal: https://www.derryjournal.com/news/people/12-pictures-of-the-yarns-conference-in-derry-and-donegal-3928235

- Donegal Daily: https://www.donegaldaily.com/2022/11/14/yarns-fashion-and-textile-conference-to-offer-expert-advice-for-northwest-designers/

- Donegal Democrat: https://www.donegallive.ie/news/pictures---videos/972635/in-pictures-yarns-conference-celebrates-donegal-s-rich-textile-heritage.html

- Derry Now: https://www.derrynow.com/news/home/959740/heritage-of-north-west-fashion-and-textile-industry-to-be-celebrated-in-cross-border-conference.html

Conference Videos:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0QpVhNRnq0

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFFCGykHsDM

A follow on conference video series is in development and will be available W/C 19th December 2022.

Conclusions

19 **Conclusions and Looking Ahead**

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In this section, give details of any final reflections or conclusions that have arisen from your project including the following;

- Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
- How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
- Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
- Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
- Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
- Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?
- Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

The Creative Coast 22 project was a success. 228 businesses were creative businesses were engaged over the course of the project, which achieved:

1. A robust scoping document in place will allow for the completion of the 3-Year Action Plan for the Creative Industry in Donegal in early 2023.
2. The successful rollout of pilot Creative Network Meetings for the Craft & Design industry, and the successful organisation and facilitation of a Fashion and Textile Industry Conference. Both of these activities contributed largely to the Identification and facilitation of Cluster Model through Raised awareness and levels of innovation, Enhanced Knowledge Sharing, Enhanced Skills Through Peer Learning, & Identification and maximization of collaborative opportunities.

Learnings have emerged from the process. The strong pre-existing relationship between key members of the project team was a crucial factor in the successful collaboration. The project was ambitious from the outset, and it was found that time constraints were challenging. Short timeframe necessitated scheduling some work during the Summer/holiday periods - thus becoming challenging to achieve certain project goals due to stakeholder availability.

Declaration

20	I hereby confirm that all details provided in this application for funding under the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme are accurate and true and that all the requisite regulatory approvals are in place.

Signed: John O'Hara Verified
Created: 2022-12-07 12:03:35 Authenticated: 2022-12-09 15:25:50

Final report

— Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

John O'Hara

Application ID: A4OJ553

Towards a Creative Dún Laoghaire

Towards a Creative Dún Laoghaire

Institute of Art, Design + Technology Dún Laoghaire

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland Programme
2017–2022

Public Design Lab.

dlr Comhairle Contae County Council

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Project Timeline & Partners

Towards a Creative Dún Laoghaire - a six-month inter-disciplinary research initiative ran from June to November 2022.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Economic Development Unit and Arts Office partnered with IADT's Public Design Lab on this collaborative project funded by Creative Ireland.

The Economic Development Unit (EDU) is based in DLR's Finance and Economic Development Department. The Unit provides direct financial supports, drives strategic projects, acts as a voice for businesses in DLR and generally drives initiatives that foster economic growth in the County. The Arts Office supports artists and creatives at all career stages. It works in partnership with a range of organisations and community-based services in the County to support local arts development and the cultural life of its residents of all ages, programming and developing a wide range of arts activities and opportunities across the County.

IADT is a leader in higher education with a specialist focus on the development of future makers, shapers, technologists, thinkers, storytellers and creators who lead and innovate in a changing digital world. The Public Design Lab (PDL) is an interdisciplinary hub at IADT. It drives a vision for IADT to collaborate and consult with industry, government and civic partners, and to develop advanced research with a positive social and environmental impact. The principles of IADT's Public Design Lab were applied to the project, namely: *collaborative, eco-centric, transparent, economically responsible, inclusive, ethical, just and intergenerational.*

Main Project Team
↘

Ella Fitzpatrick
Research Assistant
IADT – PDL

Justyna Doherty
Research Assistant
IADT – PDL

Ciara King
Assistant Arts Officer
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council – Arts Office

Ursula O'Connor
Administrative Officer
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council – Econ Dev Unit

Róisín Cronin
Senior Staff Officer
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council – Econ Dev Unit

Clyde Doyle
Lecturer, Researcher, Co-Programme Chair, PDL Founder
IADT – PDL

Peter Evers
Lecturer, Researcher, Programme Chair, PDL Founder
IADT – PDL

Bernadette Meagher
Project Manager
IADT – Directorate of Research, Development & Innovation

Project Objectives

The objectives of this project were to explore ways of forging closer co-operation and embedding a presence for IADT in Dún Laoghaire town. Additionally, to examine ways to enable IADT graduates and other creatives to stay working within Dún Laoghaire town, and the wider County environs.

At an early stage of the process, a mission was defined by the partners to focus the research on ways *'To collectively support & develop a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable creative economy in Dún Laoghaire.'* Once the project mission was defined, a methodology was agreed to address the project objectives, albeit within the timeframe and resources available. Stage 1 of the process included context mapping, place-based research, desk-based research, a literature review, stakeholder mapping, 1:1 interview, charrette* planning and execution. Planning and developing strategies were mapped out broadly at the outset and were subject to on-going refinement. Stages 1 to 3, including observations and reflections, are outlined on page 9.

**A charrette is a workshop devoted to a concerted effort to solve a problem or plan the design of something.*

Socio-economic context

This project sought to strengthen and build on the strong existing partnership between DLR and IADT as a direct response to some of the key themes identified in **Dún Laoghaire 2040, A Spatial and Economic Study for Dún Laoghaire Town**, commissioned by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in 2021 and undertaken by KPMG Future Analytics. **Dún Laoghaire 2040** references research which identified that there is significant opportunity to capitalise on innovation initiatives that are a core function of IADT; and that bringing the focus on innovation into the town centre could create scope for new high-potential start-ups to develop in the town with positive effects. Theme 1, Pillar 2, specifically references increasing the student population in the town with regard to IADT (Dún Laoghaire 2040 122, 66)

Proposed Outcomes

The **Towards a Creative Dún Laoghaire** project research and collaborative inter-disciplinary activities undertaken and outlined below provided the opportunity to explore the critical role of the creative economy in Dún Laoghaire in realising the inherent value and importance of the developing relationship between Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and its neighbouring third level institution, the Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dún Laoghaire (IADT). This project allowed stakeholders to articulate their ambitions towards a 'Creative Dún Laoghaire' and those ambitions have been captured in this study. The research validates the claim of the KPMG report that retaining students in the area is essential for the local economy of Dún Laoghaire and an important factor in growing the town's vibrancy. During the initial interviews, there was a unanimous request for a creative hub to be facilitated, and this was re-iterated by the students during the charrette workshops. The design of a virtual creative hub/networking platform in response is among other key actionable items.

"The only email I make sure to check in my inbox is the DLR update to see how can we collaborate, upcoming grants etc."

Fiona Snow
IADT Lecturer

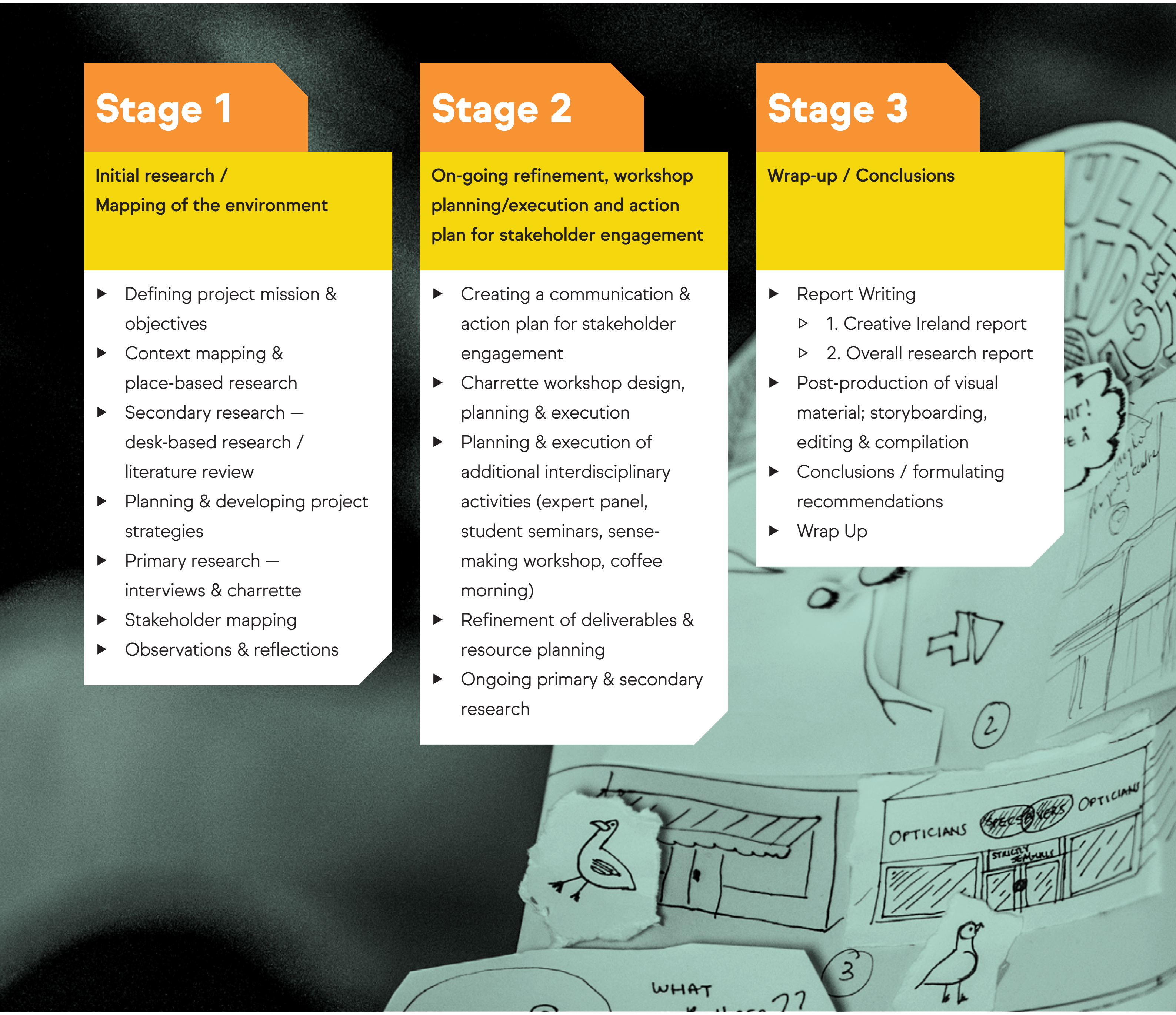
It is widely accepted that an IADT presence in the town will have the desired economic multiplier effect. Currently senior executives in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and IADT are working towards an agreement in this regard as well as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to plans to expand collaborations in a structured, formal, strategic and mutually beneficial way – *announcement pending early Dec. 2022*. While this is a result of long-term discussions between both institutions, this project provides the impetus for change to happen providing further momentum for 'Towards A Creative Dún Laoghaire' stated project objectives.

Process and Methodology

Project Planning & Collaboration

Co-design methodologies were employed to research, ideate, and propose actionable ideas with local stakeholders to facilitate the development of the local creative economy.

This project was divided into three stages outlined below. The project team met regularly to discuss strategies and progress.



Stage 1

Initial research / Mapping of the environment

- Defining project mission & objectives
- Context mapping & place-based research
- Secondary research — desk-based research / literature review
- Planning & developing project strategies
- Primary research — interviews & charrette
- Stakeholder mapping
- Observations & reflections

Stage 2

On-going refinement, workshop planning/execution and action plan for stakeholder engagement

- Creating a communication & action plan for stakeholder engagement
- Charrette workshop design, planning & execution
- Planning & execution of additional interdisciplinary activities (expert panel, student seminars, sense-making workshop, coffee morning)
- Refinement of deliverables & resource planning
- Ongoing primary & secondary research

Stage 3

Wrap-up / Conclusions

- Report Writing
  - 1. Creative Ireland report
  - 2. Overall research report
- Post-production of visual material; storyboarding, editing & compilation
- Conclusions / formulating recommendations
- Wrap Up

New processes / Innovative tools

Co-design tools and strategies were employed to reach as many stakeholders as possible using a range of formats for communication and engagement. A variety of public engagement activities took place; a week-long charrette workshop, coffee morning, expert panel discussion and 1:1 interview with stakeholders.

Interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaboration occurred in a variety of group sizes; 1:1, large and small group events, to capture important insights and facilitate discussions about the creative economy. The conversations served both as a method of data collection and as an accelerator in terms of building relationships between the stakeholders, which was a valuable outcome of the strategic design of this research study.

Research Methodologies
↘

Research Methodologies

1
Interdisciplinary collaboration

2
Methods

- Design Thinking
- Speculative Design
- Systems Thinking
- Future Thinking

3
Tools

- Stakeholder mapping / stakeholder value maps
- Context mapping
- Brain writing
- Idea filtering
- Storyboarding
- Worldbuilding
- Affinity map
- Research sense-making

“Creativity without an economic benefit, is creativity for the sake of creativity.”

Martin O’Bryne
Local Businessman

Collaborators

Members of DLR’s creative community, business community, students, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council staff and elected representatives and IADT staff. Further details re. collaborative activities, events and statistics are outlined below.

Link to video overview of the project research activities **HERE**

Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes

Expert Panel Discussion at IADT's National Film School studio.
↓

Context & The Definition of Creative Activities

The project objectives are outlined in the Executive Summary. However, it is useful to outline the context and the definition applied to creative activities for the purposes of this study.

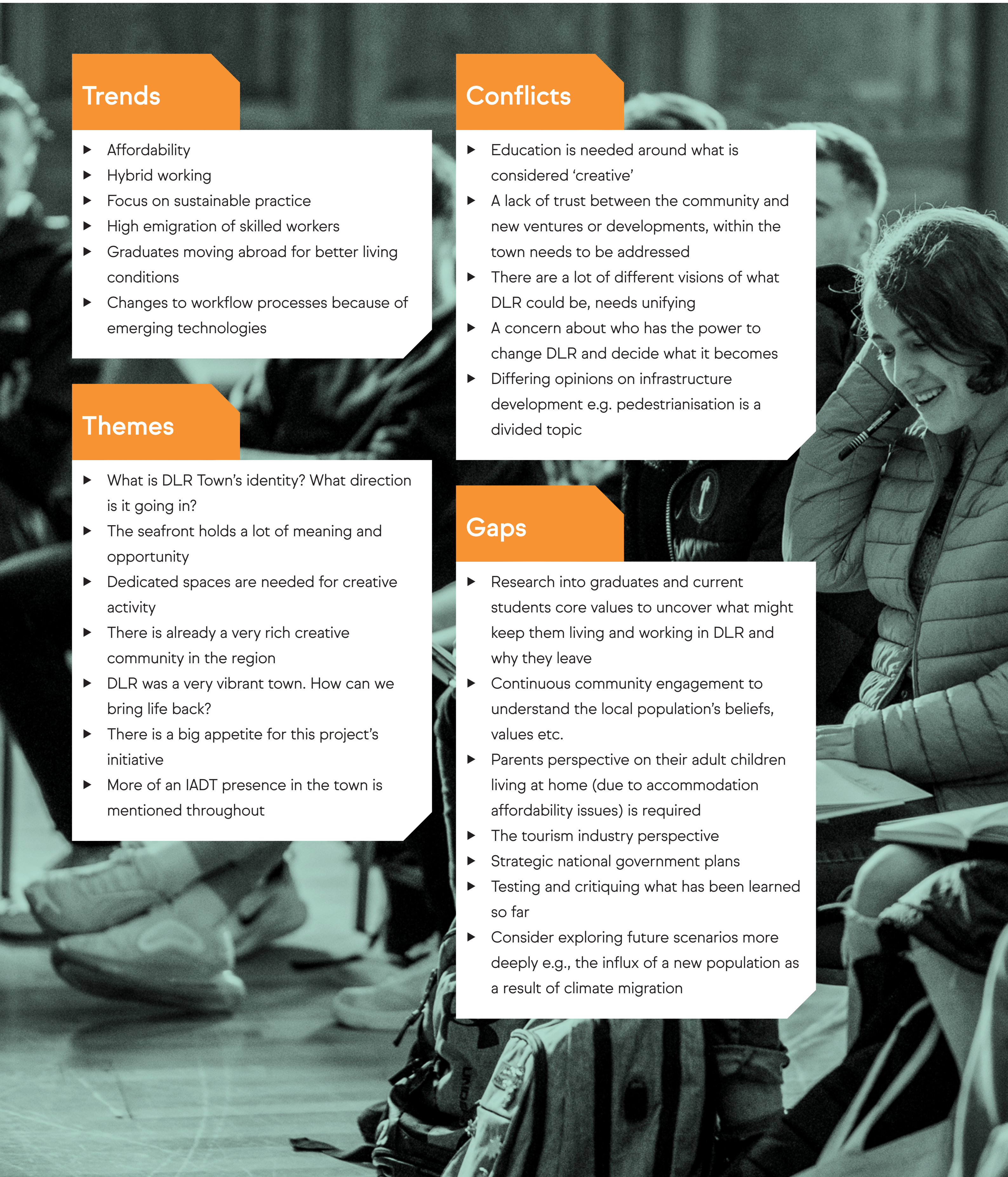
From the data collected for this project, creative activities were defined as follows: creative activities are the day-to-day processes and long-term strategic plans that are concerned with innovation, artistic expression, empathy building and performance. Some of these activities will elicit economic profit, but all these activities are necessary and contribute to economic growth. It is the diversity of creative activities within a system that creates sustainable economies where scalability becomes available only when it is necessary and beneficial to do so.

Research & Engagement — Outputs

Exploratory Research Interviews

Exploratory research interviews were conducted to understand the challenges and opportunities the creative economy faces. A variety of stakeholders were selected based on their influence within both DLR and IADT. Using IADT's Public Design Lab as a reference point, the project was introduced to prospective interviewees using a specifically designed explanatory video. Link to the Call Out Explanatory Video is **HERE**

The interviews took place in-person and online and each were documented. The observations were then combined by the researchers to identify thematic topic clusters. Some key trends and themes that emerged have been highlighted, as well as gaps where further study and enquiry is necessary.



Trends

- Affordability
- Hybrid working
- Focus on sustainable practice
- High emigration of skilled workers
- Graduates moving abroad for better living conditions
- Changes to workflow processes because of emerging technologies

Themes

- What is DLR Town's identity? What direction is it going in?
- The seafront holds a lot of meaning and opportunity
- Dedicated spaces are needed for creative activity
- There is already a very rich creative community in the region
- DLR was a very vibrant town. How can we bring life back?
- There is a big appetite for this project's initiative
- More of an IADT presence in the town is mentioned throughout

Conflicts

- Education is needed around what is considered 'creative'
- A lack of trust between the community and new ventures or developments, within the town needs to be addressed
- There are a lot of different visions of what DLR could be, needs unifying
- A concern about who has the power to change DLR and decide what it becomes
- Differing opinions on infrastructure development e.g. pedestrianisation is a divided topic

Gaps

- Research into graduates and current students core values to uncover what might keep them living and working in DLR and why they leave
- Continuous community engagement to understand the local population's beliefs, values etc.
- Parents perspective on their adult children living at home (due to accommodation affordability issues) is required
- The tourism industry perspective
- Strategic national government plans
- Testing and critiquing what has been learned so far
- Consider exploring future scenarios more deeply e.g., the influx of a new population as a result of climate migration

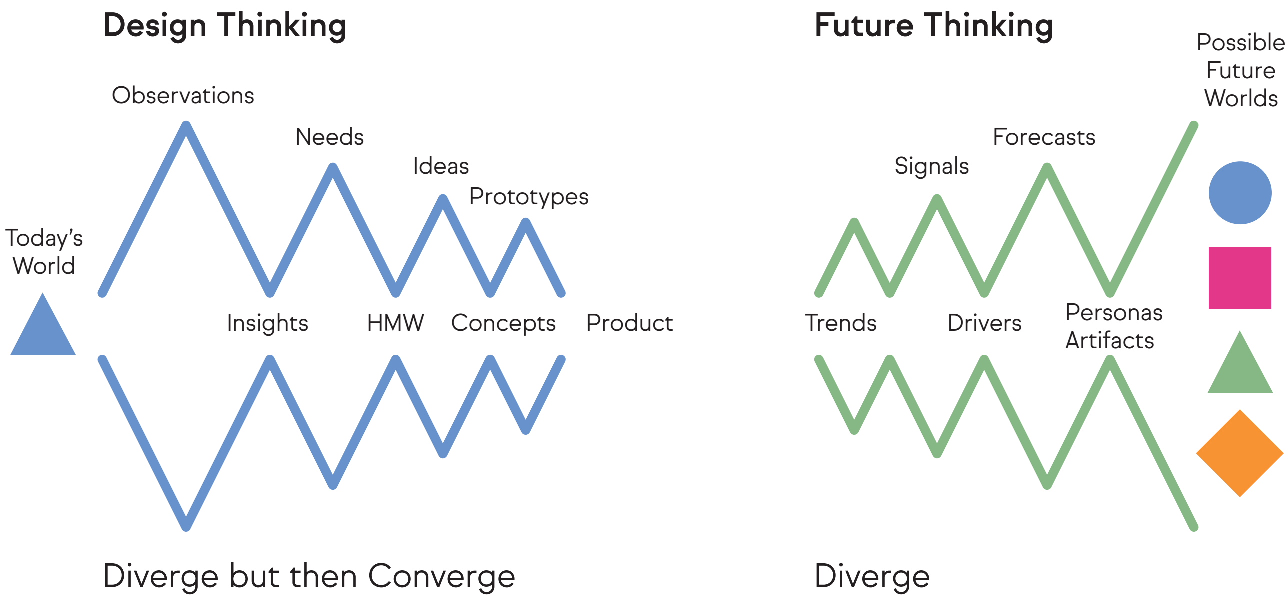
Charrette Week-long Workshop

The week-long charette workshop brought together, for the first time, a cross-section of IADT students, graduates, staff from various departments of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and IADT, as well as local business people, and artists. Design thinking methodologies were used to gain insights, provide a forum for exchanging ideas, explore alternate approaches, and to foster the inclusion and alignment of diverse stakeholders. Design and future thinking tools, speculation and worldbuilding were used to create scenarios and elaborate on future possibilities, and to develop tangible visions of the future. They also provided workshop participants with a number of helpful tools to embrace and navigate through the complexities of the systems with the defined purpose of looking towards the long-term future.

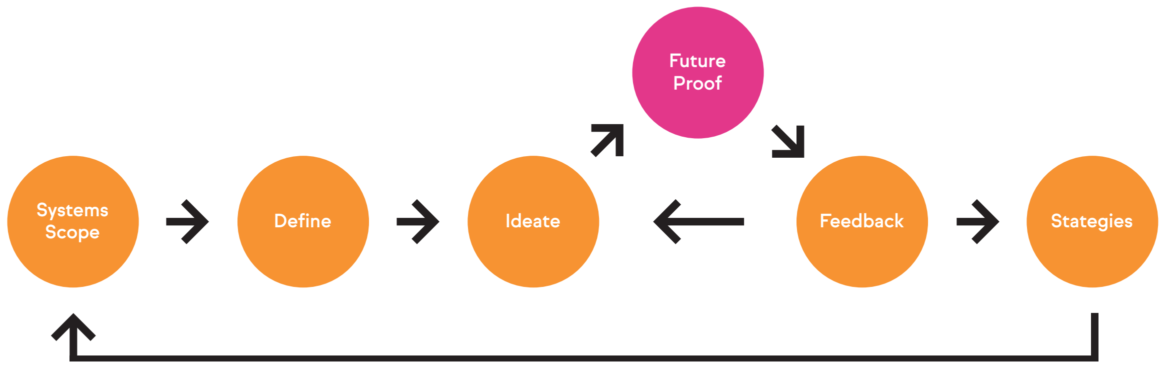
The charrette involved IADT students from the Animation and Business Management courses and was an experimental strategy for engagement between the Local Authority and the local higher education institution. The key takeaway from the workshop was that students were challenged to think creatively about a local and real-world initiative. Introducing design thinking as a method for creative solutions provided the students with a valuable skill to use within their respective disciplines. As the future generation of workers, it is important to provide the students with alternative ways of thinking about 'wicked'* problems such as climate change when designing the future of Dún Laoghaire and the wider area/environment. From the perspective of the Local Authority, there was great insight into the value of engaging with students to provide originality and enthusiasm which contributes to a more vibrant and optimistic outlook. While the solutions the students proposed were far reaching and other worldly, the intention behind their ideas was a passion to get involved with local projects and an appreciation for student focused investment.

**A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult to solve because of its complex and interconnected nature, subject to real-world constraints which hinder risk-free attempts to find a solution.*

Full Charette Report available **HERE**
A reportage video of the charette is available **HERE**



Future Thinking incorporated into Design Thinking process



Coffee Morning

A project research update was presented to a group of 26 stakeholders at a coffee morning hosted in dlr Lexicon. Attendees included artists, business people, DLR County Councillors, IADT and DLR staff, as well as senior executives from both institutions. A lively discussion followed the presentation, providing further insights and ideas and highlighting current challenges. A reportage style video of the coffee morning is available HERE.

"There is a wealth of challenges, so we need people who come from different perspectives."

Andrew Errity

Expert Panel Discussion

IADT experts participated in a valuable discussion about the creative economy and the future for creatives in Dún Laoghaire. The insights from Faculty Heads of Department and senior lecturers across a range of disciplines gave clear evidence that creativity is needed more than ever to provide comfort during times of crisis such as the pandemic, and to be a catalyst for social change. They warned of the potential dangers and implications of accelerated technological advancement and how they are educating their students to employ critical conscious awareness within their design processes. Emphasis was placed on nurturing creatives, especially in early development stages, and on protecting creativity during times of economic precarity.

“Empower people and create spaces for tacit knowledge”

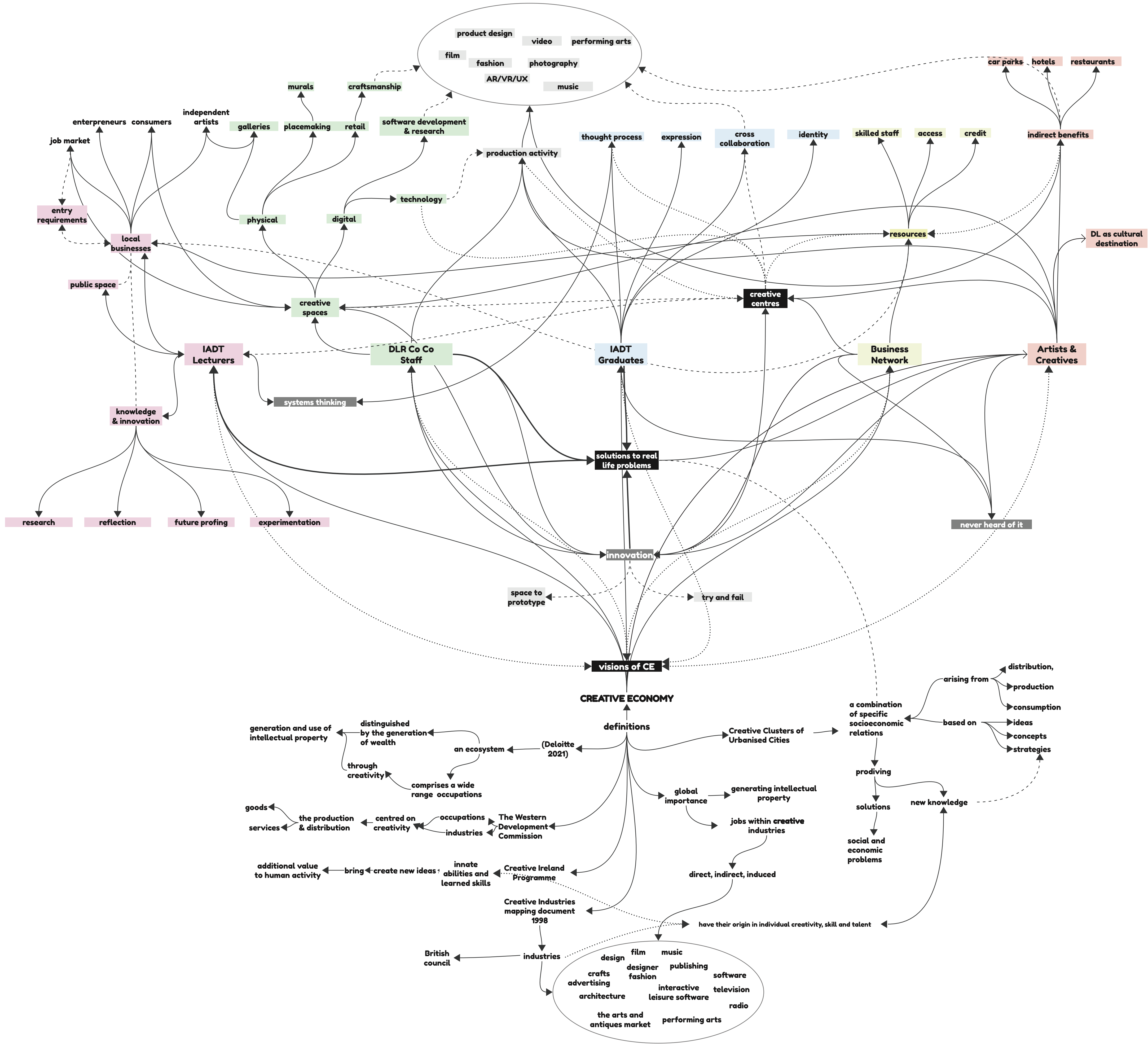
Clodagh Emoe

Desk Research

The study looked at various creative centres around the world to find common denominators and investigate how different organisations build partnerships and collaborate on events and projects. While connectivity and interdependence run at a macro-level of agencies and institutions, important networks are formed between creative and cultural practitioners at a micro-level.

Peer-to-peer interconnections, through formal and informal networks, seem to be a means to create the personal support infrastructure a creative practitioner needs. The UK Creative Industries: Unleashing The Power and Potential of Creativity Report, commissioned data from Oxford Economics projected that, with suitable investment, the UK creative sector could recover faster than the UK economy as a whole, growing by over 26% by 2025, citing creative industries as a catalyst for post-pandemic recovery (The UK Creative Industries). Oxford Economics estimated that for every £1 the Creative Industries contributed prior to the pandemic, an extra 50p was generated in the broader economy through their supply chains (The UK Creative Industries). This may be relevant to the creative economy in Ireland with similar potential to create opportunities and unlock entrepreneurialism, creativity and sustainability.

Research showed that supporting social diversity helps to increase vitality and participation, reinforce people’s feelings of ownership, and create a stronger sense of belonging. An open mindset, finding new initiatives the willingness to take risks and learn from failure, supported within the structures, will help to enrich Dún Laoghaire’s creative potential. People, places and events can act as catalysts, the role of which could be investigated in further studies. Moreover, a significant mindset shift is to see Dún Laoghaire not as a town of many projects but as a combined project of importance to all.


product design
video
performing arts
film
fashion
photography
AR/VR/UX
music
car parks
hotels
restaurants
murals
craftsmanship
independent artists
enterpreneurs
consumers
job market
galleries
placemaking
retail
software development & research
production activity
thought process
expression
cross collaboration
identity
skilled staff
access
credit
indirect benefits
technology
entry requirements
physical
digital
local businesses
resources
DL as cultural destination
public space
creative spaces
creative centres
IADT Lecturers
DLR Co Co Staff
IADT Graduates
Business Network
Artists & Creatives
systems thinking
knowledge & innovation
solutions to real life problems
research
reflection
future profing
experimentation
never heard of it
innovation
space to prototype
try and fail
visions of CE
CREATIVE ECONOMY
definitions
generation and use of intellectual property
distinguished by the generation of wealth
an ecosystem
(Deloitte 2021)
through creativity
comprises a wide range occupations
Creative Clusters of Urbanised Cities
a combination of specific socioeconomic relations
arising from
distribution,
production
consumption
based on
ideas
concepts
strategies
prodiving
solutions
new knowledge
social and economic problems
goods
services
the production & distribution
centred on creativity
occupations
industries
The Western Development Commission
global importance
generating intellectual property
jobs within creative industries
additional value to human activity
bring
create new ideas
innate abilities and learned skills
Creative Ireland Programme
direct, indirect, induced
Creative Industries mapping document 1998
have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent
British council
industries
design
film
music
crafts
designer fashion
publishing
advertising
software
architecture
interactive leisure software
television
radio
the arts and antiques market
performing arts

Measurement & Evaluation Methods Employed

An exploratory process was followed, proven by observations and recordings. Outputs of collaboration included diaries, logs from journals, deciphering ideas, thoughts, experiences, feedback from the charrette, and overall involvement of various community members. Participants identified a wide range of interlinked aspects or elements of success relating to the creative economy, such as space, recreation, sustainability, transport and communication; finally, an in-depth understanding of the creative economy was reflected in the mapping constructed during the process.

"In turbulent times, we reach for nature, poetry, writing and drawing things that help to soothe the soul."

Vanessa Gildea

The success of this short research study may be measured by the valuable conversations which have been generated between IADT and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council. While relationships between the organisations have been long standing, this project contributed to the continued ambition of building connections, raising awareness, and creating a basis of knowledge within IADT about the local creative economic activity. An indication of the project's success is in the wealth of collaborative appetite expressed by individuals from each organisation and by the personal networks which have been created. Events that engage the stakeholder groups in less formal contexts were identified, these would help to maintain the re-ignited interest. Locally rooted institutions and universities play a vital role in their community and in many aspects of cities or towns creative, economic, and social evolution. Consequently, one measure of success of this project is the strength of relations developed between Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and IADT and by mapping out ways for IADT to become a centre of knowledge and excellence by expanding its reach beyond the campus borders, providing education and training, and supporting local businesses through its core initiatives of research and innovation.

Outcomes

Proposed Strategic Developments

There is no specific point at which a city (or town) is finally “creative”. The challenge is to develop future thinking capabilities, be alert to opportunities and open to experimentation while prioritising co-creation and sustainability.

‘Creative Dún Laoghaire’, as a town of possibilities, will require a creative strategy operating at multiple levels. This includes flexible funding schemes, the provision of various workspaces and incubation centres, higher-profile events, and revised external communications. The latter might initially focus on a series of niches, from the maritime field to social innovation. Cultural events could become one of the main regenerators of the town, and, if well-directed could become transformational to the creative economy ecosystem of Dún Laoghaire and the wider County.

A strategic outlook in terms of Dún Laoghaire’s connectedness, accessibility and local networking could help to create a roadmap on how networking between organisations and sectors could improve and how the mindset and organisational cultures could shift further.

Embracing the uniqueness of Dún Laoghaire and its creative potential to future-proof the town’s liveability is especially important in a moment where cities are on the front line responding to new challenges such as climate change or welcoming migrants and newcomers. Towns that convey a distinctive and differentiating character based on a coherent, genuine identity are more competitive and gain new opportunities (The Global Identity of Cities).

“We need to nurture, incentivise and value creativity through all phases of life”

Andrew Errity

Potential Actionable Ideas

Like all aspects of the economy, the creative economy is concerned with efficiencies and actions as an expression of values, social impact and sustainability. To achieve this, business support is required to build up the value and activity in a sustainable yet scalable way. Support is required where art, technology and business intersect in the delivery of products and services and to tackle specific barriers-to-entry and ongoing viability issues that creatives, entrepreneurs and emerging creatives may experience, including protecting their intellectual property. The provision of a formal structure for collaborative opportunities with other creatives, businesses and higher education institutions would be beneficial. Resilience and well-being supports for creative entrepreneurs due to the precarious nature of the industry are also important.

My Dún Laoghaire/Seedling Activities/Virtual Creative Hub

‘My Dún Laoghaire’: a call-to-action initiative aimed at local artists, inviting them to submit an artwork that they feel represents their lived experience of the town. Selection criteria might include capturing the essence of the locale, with relatable stories depicting the most resonant values of the town. Social media could be utilised to involve the local community, with the finalists’ creativity displayed in the town.

Seedling activities throughout the town could build trust between the local population and the creative community. The planning of one or two events in the near future which focus on crowd involvement is one strategy to invite the public into the creative community to participate.

In addition, there is potential for a virtual creative hub to be designed where best practices and innovation are being harnessed and cultivated. While a long-term strategic plan to build a creative hub in Dún Laoghaire town is well supported, a short-term and cost-effective solution is an online network. A platform based on the values and purpose of a physical creative hub, but which is responsive to today’s hybrid working trends and resilience to future unforeseen challenges of in-person meeting. Whether virtual or physical, it would be a space for creative individuals and organisations to meet, collaborate, share ideas and support each other. Furthermore, the development of a virtual platform could be leveraged as a foundation for the development of a physical space by working with the established online creative network. The development of a virtual creative hub would be a large undertaking, requiring further investigation into resources required, ownership and a development plan to move it forward.

Examples of existing online networks are included in the Appendix 2.

Additional Relevant Findings

Further Research

Further research is required to identify and embrace Dún Laoghaire as a cultural, creative, and recreational destination for various groups or individuals — from students to families. Design thinking methodologies could be beneficial in identifying strategic locations and transformative events, and choosing the right course of action

Experimental research within this field could help to simplify the issues and the complexity of the creative economy, with the aim of creating a new sense of agency and activism while achieving sustainable goals.

In addition, an examination of other successful models within the creative economy, such as those evident in the Irish Film and Animation industry, could be beneficial. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and Wicklow County Council have been particularly successful in attracting film-based companies and production activity to their respective regions over many years.

It is acknowledged that further study will require further funding. The creative sector has gained importance in terms of its contribution or potential contribution to the economy, nationally and the EU context. Certain strands of EU funding (such as Creative Europe) may be worth considering applying for in the future. Additionally, local and national sectoral agendas could provide a source of further funding to expand on the research as suggested above, such as the **Creative Ireland programme** (Publications) and the National Research & Innovation Strategy 2022-2027 (New National Research).

Creative Europe (Culture - European Co-operation Projects Calls + Cross-Sectoral - Creative Innovation Labs Calls

Horizon Europe

New European Bauhaus

Culture Moves Europe (funding for residencies & mobility for 7,000 EU creatives).

Public Engagement

The reach of the project has been wider than expected. As conversations and events took place, interest in the research gained traction. For example, IADT lecturers have realigned some modular mandatory student assignments to specifically focus research on Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. In addition, as a significant issue consistently arose around the subject of sustainability, IADT's Public Design Lab conducted a pilot survey on this subject, which has now been expanded to a wider audience. The findings of this are yet to be analysed but it is anticipated that this important consideration, locally, nationally and globally will influence decisions around future developments for the creative economy.

Stats:

34

Stakeholder Interviews x 34

8 | 20

Student groups & lecturers (Speculative Design re. the future of IADT) – 8 lecturers + 20 4th year students

35

IADT staff survey (pilot) re. strategic plans on sustainability in IADT — 35 respondents for pilot survey. Call out to be expanded to all staff.

8

Direct beneficiaries (8 as reported in part B of the submission)

5 | 10

Expert panel discussion – 5 experts + 10 film studio crew + producer

20 | 4 | 9

Charrette – 20 students + 4 workshop facilitators + 9 external participants

26

Research update event / coffee morning – 26 attendees (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Councillors, representatives of the DLR Economic Development Unit, Parks Dept., Arts Office, local businesses people, IADT's President, researchers, and local artists network representatives.

Media

https://lnkd.in/gqceNFuw Dublin South FM Radio Interview with Lecturer and Found of IADT's Public Design LAB
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council & IADT News Items:
https://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/visual-arts-and-film/towards-creative-d%C3%BAn-laoghaire
https://iadt.ie/news/towards-a-creative-dun-laoghaire/
https://iadt.ie/news/iadts-public-design-lab-dun-laoghaire-rathdown-county-council-receive-creative-communities-economic-action-funding/
https://pdl.iadt.ie/work/towards-a-creative-dun-laoghaire/

As the Towards A Creative Dún Laoghaire project is near completion the services of a PR company, Enkom PR, has been commissioned to support the project team to further disseminate and promote the research findings. Update to follow - late December/early January 2023.

Conclusions and Looking Ahead

Learning and Limitations

The project was short term (6 months), which necessitated scheduling some work during the summer months. This made it challenging to achieve certain project goals due to stakeholder availability. The short duration also meant working with a relatively small cohort which is a limitation in itself. Lead in time for newly recruited researchers had to be factored in, to enable them to build their knowledge of the local creative economy and familiarity with internal structures and people in both partner organisations as well as with the external community.

Dún Laoghaire is home to multiple creative enterprises and individuals working across various categories, such as; *crafts, fashion, art, multimedia, film, and creative solutions*. Mapping the creative economy in the DLR region using 'NACE' codes was highlighted as necessary by some stakeholders. The NACE code is the common basis for statistical classifications of economic activities within Ireland. However, it was not achievable in the time frame, given the projects overall objectives and the resources available. A mapping exercise for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown could prove useful to support proposed actionable ideas and strategies.

The creative economy, as defined by Deloitte's report 'The Future of the Creative Economy' is an eco-system that comprises a wide range of occupations distinguished by the generation of wealth and jobs through individual creativity driving the generation and use of intellectual property (The Future of the Creative Economy 5). The Western Development Commission definition includes occupations and industries centred on creativity, for the production and distribution of original goods and services. This is broadly speaking across three areas: Craft, Culture & Creative (Collins 3). Some will elicit profit, be scalable, sustainable but all are necessary, diverse and contribute to economic growth. However, research insights indicate that the term creative economy is not widely understood, therefore a communications strategy at a national level may be beneficial to the town

Liveability, urban spaces, and infrastructure

Creative activities reshape urban spaces and drive other forms of creativity and economic activity. Investing in public spaces facilitating adaptive reuse of structures and open spaces in Dún Laoghaire could provide opportunities for transformation into creative hub(s), co-creation spaces, innovation, as well as for cultural activities to increase participation across the generations. For example, proactively linking the County Council architects with design researchers at IADT on local projects could provide additional value to the local creative economy.

Social networks, catalysts, and technical and financial support
Workplaces and education have become less transactional and more collaborative. Using co-design tools, such as those utilised for this study, is commonplace, and design thinking strategies are used in the public and private sectors to find creative solutions.

Consequently, future thinking and design can help to adapt the emergence of new and more creative possibilities, foster the inclusion and alignment of diverse stakeholders, and provide for ongoing learning through prototyping and experimentation by using design tools and approaches to achieve deeper insight and alignment around current reality.

Innovation is about scalability and growing ideas. For many creative entrepreneurs, support to innovate will be required. Creative hubs, similar to those discussed above and County Louth's Creative Spark, provide a space for creatives to work alongside others on a similar journey (Creative Spark 2020). Through creative exchanges, creative entrepreneurs can benefit from feedback, links to investors, funding, mentoring, professional development opportunities, business support and learn how to protect their intellectual property (IP).

Similar supports for creative arts higher education students are considered advantageous as early-stage / emerging career interventions. This enables them to think differently about the creative economy, their potential contribution and the potential rewards. Study modules that help creative arts undergrad students learn how to develop and pitch their ideas, collaborate, source funding and investment, play a key role in developing sustainable, viable creative careers.

Institutions, regulations, and partnership
Encouraging partnerships within the creative community could have a significant positive impact on Dún Laoghaire's creative economy. An effective coalition between the County Council, artists and representatives of cultural institutions, local community stakeholders, and education campuses will help create the right environment where creatives can flourish. Productive dialogue with creative communities and other creative practitioners could form part of an approach to policy making. This type of interdependency is essential in the cultural and creative economy ecosystem.

Dún Laoghaire's uniqueness
A clearly defined identity/brand for Dún Laoghaire will help to foster sustainability, increase economic growth and attract investments. A vision of Dún Laoghaire as a receptive and responsive place for artists and innovators, where graduates and creative entrepreneurs thrive and contribute to the community, could bring multiple benefits to those who live, work and visit the town.

Looking Ahead

Building a creative economy in Dún Laoghaire town will require developing a culture of diverse possibilities, across all areas of the economy, between social and cultural actors, public administration, and addressing concerns like sustainable development. A long-term vision can be adopted alongside short-term policies as the system interacts at different levels.

Summary

The journey towards creativity is a continual process of becoming, an ongoing evolution in effectively adapting within a changing world. The task is to develop a culture of diverse possibilities across the town - through the Local Authority, across all areas of the economy, between social and cultural actors, while addressing cross-cutting concerns like sustainable development.

This research allowed for a deep dive into the subject of the creative economy, conversations around its meaning helped identify gaps in knowledge as well as opportunities. It is impossible to talk about the local creative economy without considering the creative economy in the broader context. Many inter-linked themes and trends came to the fore through participants' observations, reflections, concerns and frustrations about the future of Dún Laoghaire.

The Towards a Creative Dún Laoghaire project research and collaborative inter-disciplinary activities outlined in this report provided the opportunity to explore the critical role of the creative economy in Dún Laoghaire, to realise the inherent value and importance of the developing relationship between Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and its neighbouring third level institution, the Institute of Art, Design & Technology. Furthermore, it allowed all stakeholders to articulate their ambitions towards a 'Creative Dún Laoghaire' as captured and documented in this study.

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Appendix 2

Examples of existing online network websites

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https://www.iotplus.network/en/

https://lelab.live/

https://european-creators-lab.com/category/home/

https://fabcafe.com/strasbourg/

https://digitalcreativity.ac.uk/

http://creativeflip.creativehubs.net/creative-hubs-ambassadors-of-change/

https://hopin.com/events/creative-coalition-2023/registration?utm_source=website

Examples of other networks and creative hubs

Austria	https://www.cis.at/en/about/creative-industries-styria/
Denmark	https://arthubcopenhagen.net/en/about-art-hub/
	http://thisdesigntool.com/copenhagen-municipality
France	https://medium.com/fab-city-grand-paris/re-store-reclaiming-space-and-reusing-materials-in-paris-14f20d90056b
Germany	https://factoryberlin.com/
	https://karibuni.berlin/
	https://berlin.impacthub.net/
	https://www.bimm.ac.uk/news/bimm-berlins-new-home-in-renowned-creative-hub/
	https://houseofmusic.berlin/en
	https://www.de-hub.de/die-hubs/berlin/
Japan	https://fabcafe.com/jp/tokyo/
Norway	https://657.no/
Portugal	https://arterialab.uevora.pt/
	https://buinho.pt/
Spain	http://on-the-move.org/work
Switzerland	https://www.creativehub.ch/en/about/mission/

Slovenia	https://transformation-lighthouse.com
Sweden	https://teh.net/about-us/
Portugal	https://resartis.org/listings/buinho-creative-hub/
Poland, Warsaw	https://cktargowa.pl/
Italy, Milan	https://base.milano.it/en/
UK	https://www.wearecreative.uk/
	https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/partners/creative-england
	https://www.cads-online.co.uk/
	https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/
	https://www.cultureliverpool.co.uk/community/
	https://pec.ac.uk/research/geography-of-the-creative-industries

Art+ Design — online platforms and initiatives

http://www.fresh-europe.org/

https://www.elearningartdesign.org/about-us.html

https://www.cultureagora.com/en/home

https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home

https://www.designcities.net/design-cities/

https://www.spacesandcities.com/

https://eurocities.eu/cities/

Festivals / Events

France	https://www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/en/events/global-periphery-journey-through-space-imaginaries
UK	https://hopin.com/events/creative-coalition-2023/registration?utm_source=website
	https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/brighton-creativity-wellbeing-week-2022
	https://cool-collective.co.uk/
	https://www.baltic-creative.com/
Germany	https://zerowasteeurope.eu/2019/06/waterkant-2019-festival-truly-zero-waste/
	https://www.feschmarkt.info/en/feschback/
	https://www.whatdesigncando.com/events/wdcd-live-amsterdam-2022/
Denmark	https://www.creativeclub.dk/creative-hub?page=1&cat=Alle%20nyheder

Other

https://www.ecbnetwork.eu

https://www.ietm.org/en/projects/ietm-global-connect

https://creativesunite.eu/

https://startupheatmap.eu/

Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

—

Gabriel Mullarkey

Email : gabriel.mullarkey@outlook.com
Application ID : A2MG543
Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2022-11-08 14:30:16
Application Completed Date: 2022-12-07 09:07:46

Project Details

1	Project title
	Wild Galway Games Initiative (WGGI) 2022

Please provide the below information for the contact person

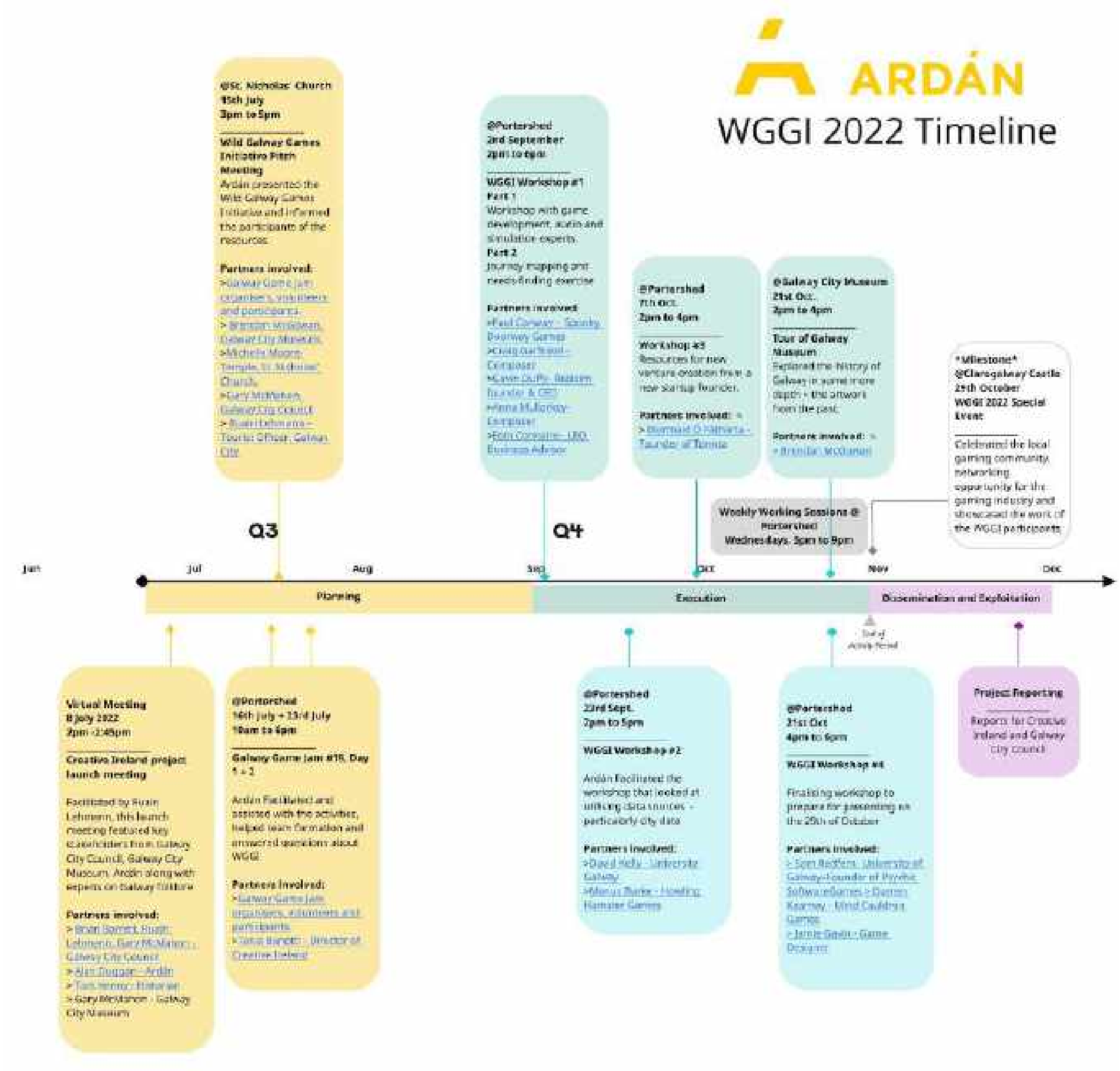
2	Name of contact person
	Alan Duggan
3	Role/title
	Project Lead / Ardan CEO
4	Phone number
	091770748

5	Email	
	alan@ardan.ie	
6	Postal address	
	Cluain Mhuire Wellpark Road, Galway City, Ireland, H91 WP9K	
7	Website (optional)	
	https://ardan.ie/	
8	**Executive Summary** - This section should introduce the project, giving detail on the main aims and objectives of the work. Please give the following • a brief outline of the timeline of the project • the partners and collaborators involved • the objectives of the project • provide the socio-economic context for the project, outlining the project in the wider context of your local authority – why did you feel this project was needed at this time? • the outcomes on completion.	

Introduction

The concept of the Wild Galway Games Initiative (WGGI) 2022 arose from Galway City Council engaging with Creative Ireland via the Creative Communities Economic Action (CCEA) fund. The objective of the fund is to support local authorities to "*lead the development of the creative economy at local/regional level through initiatives and models which harness and demonstrate the value of culture and creativity in local economic development*

Timeline



WGGI 2022 Timeline.pdf

Objectives

The objective of WGGI 2022 was to create an initiative to collaborate with the local gaming ecosystem to create an immersive gaming experience for children and preteens where the city and its myths and legends act as an arena to deepen the visitor experience in the City. Ardán worked with Galway City Council and a host of collaborators in the region. Experimenting, learning, connecting and collaborating were key objectives of the project.

Context for the project

The Gaming industry in the Galway region is burgeoning. EA Games and Romero Games have had a footprint in the city for some time and independent developers have had recent successful titles, notably Darkside Detective from Spooky Doorway. Compared to other regions, recent initiatives to highlight the region as a games hotspot have come from the grassroots-led Galway Game Jam Community through 'game jams' - collaborative game development workshops. The CCEA fund allowed Ardán to develop a pilot for a scalable *framework of engagement* where stakeholders can collaborate with the games community on a particular challenge. Additionally, the upcoming tax credit for companies involved in developing games further confirmed the timeliness of the WGGI initiative.

Outcomes on completion

- Turn the spotlight on the Galway region as a place where the gaming industry is welcome and supported.
- Develop skills of indigenous game developer community
- Build a robust community of practice in the region
- Deepen relationships with national gaming industry

9 **Process and Methodology**

-

1. Outline the key processes of project planning and collaboration that enabled development of your project. Highlight those which are new to your team or local authority or where particular innovations took place.
2. Describe any methodologies employed in the planning or execution of your project.

Launch

WGGI-2022 was formally announced at a gathering in St Nicholas' on Friday the 15th of July. Ardán, along with the main stakeholders including Galway City Council, Galway Museum as well as experts on Galway history and folklore defined the subject matter for game developers in attendance. Key reference material and contextual information was presented as was the Wild Galway brief - see file *'WGGI2022-one_page_explainer.pdf* .

Ardán arranged with the Galway Game Jam to pitch the theme at their summer Game Jam. Ardán maintained a presence during the two day-long sessions (16th and 23rd of July) to ensure the teams that chose to pursue the *Wild Galway* theme had access to contextual information such as the folklore collection *The Corrib: Myth, Legend and Folklore* .

Team Formation

Three separate teams formed to pursue the Wild Galway theme. Ardán didn't assign judges or mentors to the teams, in keeping with the non-competitive and experimental spirit of game jams. Two teams subsequently took on the Wild Galway theme and became the part of WGGI-2022 Pilot programme - The Lazy Poodle Men with their game Escape the Black Hound and Team Púca with Corrib Crash Course

Activity Period - Workshops and Working Groups

Once the teams were established, Ardán identified (1) a space for workshops and collaborative teamwork and (2) experts from the Galway area that would inspire and inform the teams as they work to build out their concepts.

The Portershed was selected from a shortlist of spaces due to its central location, excellent facilities and network of entrepreneurs connected to the creative industries. The working sessions on Wednesdays from 5pm to 9pm proved successful with a good turnout from both teams.

Ardán defined topics that would form the structure of the workshop series and the experts who would facilitate them:

Workshop Themes
***Wild Galway* Topic**
Galway City cultural heritage
Game Development
Publishing
Game design
Immersive
Integrating city datasets
Sound design
New venture creation
Early-stage startup resources
Talking to founders
Human-centred Design
Journey-mapping
Needs-finding

Next, Ardán invited local experts to align with the chosen topics and help the teams develop their visions according to the brief. These experts were sourced from academia, the games industry and the startup ecosystem.

Ardán adopted a human-centred approach to understanding unmet needs. For Example, in Workshop #1, Ardán carried out a needs finding exercise with the participating teams to identify areas where supports could be improved for the game development community (see file WGGI 2022 journey-map.pdf).

Ardán created a handbook for the teams that features a timeline of workshops, key dates and deliverables. It was important the teams had concrete dates for the workshops as many commute into Galway city or have to work around their day job. The handbook gave everyone a target to work towards and important dates they could plan around (see file: WGGI2022-participant_handbook).

To manage communication, the Ardán team decided to adopt a communications platform that is widely used in game development communities - Discord. A dedicated Ardán Discord server was opened for the teams and experts to disseminate information about WGGI 2022 and converse between themselves, facilitators and stakeholders on a platform they use and enjoy.

10 **Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries**

-

1. Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries; including the number of Creative Practitioners supported through the funding.
2. Describe the structure of the team/partners and the role that each partner held.

Key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries

- Key partners: Partners who have invested financially or provided resources for the project.
- Collaborators: May include individuals, businesses or organisations which have contributed in non-financial capacities.
- Beneficiaries: This may include Artistic or Creative Practitioners who have been directly supported by funding, or those who have availed of the services or resources developed by the project.

Partners

Ardán Team

- Alan Duggan - Project Lead
- Eoin Butler Thornton - Project Coordinator
- Kathryn Reynolds -
- Gabe Mullarkey (Consultant)

Galway City Council

- Brian Barrett, Community, Economic Development, Tourism, Culture
- Ruairi Lehmann, Tourist Officer,
- Gary McMahon, Head of Economic Development, Community & Culture

Galway City Museum

- Brendan McGowan, Education & Outreach Officer

Collaborators

- Gaming Community
- Galway Game Jam Organisers

Collaboration and Networking Space

- Galway City Innovation District (Portershed)
- Claregalway Castle

Local Experts in Gaming Development

- Paul Conway, Spooky Doorway Games Founder
- Manus Burke, Howling Hamster Games
- Gavin Duffy, Realsim founder & CEO
- Sam Redfern, University of Galway+Founder of Psychic SoftwareGames
- Darren Kearney, Mind Cauldron Games
- Jamie Gavin, Game Designer

National Experts in Gaming Development

- Craig Stephens - Kartridge Games / Imirt
- Colm Larkin - Gambrinous Games

Sound Design

- Craig Garfinkel, Composer
- Anna Mullarkey, Composer

Data Utilisation and Visualisation

- David Kelly, University of Galway

Startups

- Diarmaid Ó Fátharta, Founder of Tonnta

Beneficiaries/Creative Practitioners :

Participating Team members

- Pat Ryan
- Lauren Keogh
- Tara J Burke
- Matthew Cunningham
- Luke Dight
- Pearse Egan

Galway Game Jam Organisers

- Brian O'Brien
- Alanna Kelly
- Communications
- Unbound Media

11 **Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes**

-

Only by knowing your objectives and having them defined clearly, will you be able to define clear outputs and outcomes.

1. Outline the **objective of your project:** What did you aim to accomplish?
2. Describe the outputs and outcomes of your project. We are particularly interested in any impacts on the wider local/regional economy or the CCIs/CCS.
3. Describe how you **measured outputs and outcomes** and any other evaluation processes you employed. What were your indicators of success?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- An **output** is something materialised or produced in order to achieve a specific target or goal. Examples of outputs might include a workshop, product, research data/systems or toolkit.
- An **outcome** is a result, direct or indirect, of actions taken or decision made. What difference did the project make? These can be changes in/for individuals, revenues, systems, policies, institutions, market entry/penetration that you seek to achieve. They may reflect shifts in relationships, knowledge, awareness, capabilities, opportunities, and/or behaviours.

Objectives

Ardán worked with Galway City Council and a host of collaborators from the gaming ecosystem in the region to co-create an initiative for local developers to learn, connect, collaborate and be mentored by top local game development talent, while also working with Galway City Council towards a project that will be beneficial to the local tourism sector

Outputs

Project Deliverables

For the 29th of October, the teams were tasked with preparing a number of deliverables:

A game pitch document, 5-page max, including

- Currently and planned features of the project
- How the project fits the WGGI theme.
- Proposed business model
- Planned next steps
- Credits for all people who worked on the game as well as any necessary asset accreditation

6 to 8 screenshots of the current project status (build or concept)

A working build, either delivered directly or hosted online on Itch or other platform ***OR*** a detailed design document clearly outlining the game platform, pillars, UX, mechanics, narrative, progression, and user engagement strategy.

The most impactful outputs were the playable game demos that encapsulated both the creative intent of the teams and their technical ability in an interactive audio-visual experience for the attendees at the WGGI special event.

Social Media Community building

Social media campaign focused on three main channels: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtags: #WGGI #WGGI-2022 #wildgalwaygamesinitiative. Over 20K impressions (the number of times social media browsers have been shown WGGI content) were recorded from WGGI content across all the platforms from July to early November 2022. Whis was achieved organically with no expenditure on social media advertisements. Table 5 in the appendix highlights the top posts on across Ardán's platforms.

From workshop #1 it was apparent that Discord they would most enjoy interacting with each other on so Ardánadopted it to manage communications with the WGGI teams and the local developers who offered assistance to them. The Discord server has proved particularly useful for managing events and daily comms.

Proactive Teams

The teams have expressed interest in continuing their efforts on their game concepts beyond the activity period. Ardán are actively supporting the teams for the rest of the year in terms of access to resources, space and expertise as required to advance their games to a point where they can present to potential funders, sponsors or partners.

Established Framework for Engagement

The WGGI 2022 pilot has informed Ardán on how to engage proactively with the burgeoning game development community in the Galway region. As national efforts to support the games industry progress (the new tax credit for the digital gaming sector for example), a framework for engagement will be necessary to enable those working in game development (artists, designers, developers, sound designers etc.) to capitalise on the new and upcoming incentives to create new ventures and employment in the region.

Ardán is in a unique position to be a catalyst for new game venture creation in the region. Over a condensed time frame, Ardán have uncovered unmet needs among the community , connected to support and defined a pathway from concept to playable demo. During the post WGGI dissemination and exploitation activities will further define a framework for engagement so that the scope and ambition of future initiatives can be expanded and replicable for other regions.

Outcomes

Build a Robust Community of Practice in Galway

As the grassroots game development community hasn't received any meaningful support in the past, it was essential to develop a trusting relationship. This was achieved by adopting a hands on approach -

Ardán were on the ground at every workshop and working session. They facilitated focus-group style activities to uncover needs and, importantly, acted on the insights garnered from the community.

Ardán leveraged their network of experts for WGGI workshops including educators on the subject of game development from ATU Galway and University of Galway. Local game developers, experts in sound design and data visualisation all contributed to workshops and helped build connections in the local games ecosystem.

The commercial potential of the WGGI outputs was another consideration. The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) was engaged in workshop #1 to observe and get acquainted with the community. Workshop #3 focused on resources for startups. As the teams progressed, those individuals interested in entrepreneurship were directed to resources such as CREW to develop their entrepreneurial potential.

Deepened Relationship with National Gaming Industry

The WGGI special event was an opportunity to expand the regional scope of the project to engage with the national network supporting the games industry in Ireland. Creative Ireland and Imirt had the opportunity to network with Galway City Council and game development lecturers from local HEIs. Early-career game developers had the opportunity to learn from established developers in the industry. Above all, the event was an opportunity to turn the spotlight on the Galway region as a place where the gaming industry is welcome and supported.

12 **Additional Relevant Findings**

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In this section we invite you to include any information not covered above including but not limited to;

1. Research findings: If you carried out research, please give an overview of your findings.
2. Levels of public engagement, if relevant: To what extend did your project engage with the wider public or community, either in-person or online?
3. Any media coverage received, if relevant: If your project received media coverage, please list it here and include links where possible.

Research findings

During Workshop #1, a needs-finding and journey mapping exercises were carried out to discover unmet needs and test assumptions the Ardán team had in relation to the game developer community and the subject matter of the WGGI. The aim was to inform subsequent investments and activities to align with their needs where possible.

The needs finding exercise focused on testing assumptions about resources available to the local game development community and discovering what would be appreciated by them for developing the WGGI projects. Findings are as follows:

- More opportunities to collaborate
- Coworking space
- Access to talent that complements core team skills
- Mentorship opportunities
- VR projects are daunting in terms of steep learning curve and equipment

Ardán endeavoured to meet these needs where applicable and within the scope of the initiative.

The journey mapping exercise put the teams into the shoes of a teenage tourist to Galway. Using the - World tourism organisation's definition of tourism, "*persons going to places outside their usual environment*", the teams visualised what the teen might be doing, feeling and thinking along a timeframe of a holiday to Galway. This activity helped the teams to uncover potential ways the target audience could interact with a virtual experience. Some ideas for iterating with the target audience include:

- Planning the trip, travelling to the destination and the return back home are potential areas to engage with the target audience.
- A portal for young tourists could help inspire them while planning a trip to Galway
- Campaigns on youth focused social media platforms, e.g. TickTock
- Team orientated activities for tourists
- Optimise digital advertising around the city for young tourists with animation and interactive media, e.g. the upgrades phone box network

While these ideas are beyond the scope of the initiative, they will be used to inform discussions with Galway City Council and other stakeholders for future iterations.

Any media coverage received

Ardán Blog
Announcing the Wild Galway Games Initiative
https://ardan.ie/news/announcing-the-wild-galway-games-initiative/#:~:text=The%20ultimate%20aim%20of%20this,to%20the%20local%20tourism%20sector

Darren Kearney's Blog
Galway Game Jam 19 – "Wild" / "Wild Galway" – hybrid jam
https://darrenk.net/thoughts-on-game-jams-after-galway-game-jam-19/

Galway Bay fm newsroom
Funding for city project to create tourism gaming experience
https://galwaybayfm.ie/galway-bay-fm-news-desk/funding-for-city-project-to-create-tourism-gaming-experience/

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Press release
Creative Ireland awards €551,000 to support development of creative industries
https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/44698-creative-ireland-awards-551000-to-support-development-of-creative-industries/

Conclusions

19 **Conclusions and Looking Ahead**

-

In this section, give details of any final reflections or conclusions that have arisen from your project including the following;

- Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
- How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
- Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
- Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
- Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
- Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?
- Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

Measuring

The WGGI pilot incorporated a human-centred design approach in order to gain insights of the target audience **-** the regional game developer community. This iterative approach cycles between analysis and synthesis; understanding what needs are unmet in the current environment and forming plans to meet those needs.

The WGGI 2022 pilot focused on the needs of the region's game development community and with this in mind, a *formative process* of evaluation is most suited. This approach determines what aspects of the initiative worked well, what didn't work so well and why they did or didn't work well.

What Worked Well

Workshop Sessions
Ardán strived to deliver a series of workshops that would both inform the teams as they built out their games and inspire them to take their games further. At the same time it was important to use the sessions to understand their needs, frustrations and ambitions. As a result, the WGGI workshops were very well attended by the teams and, nearer the end of the activity period, by local experts who volunteered their time to help the teams.

Why: The combination of the topics covered in the workshop series proved to be the main draw. From technical to cultural, from entrepreneurial to data-driven, the series informed the participants and inspired them to look beyond the WGGI activity period. What also worked was a sense of progression through the workshop series. Also the weekly working sessions allowed the teams to work together and apply what they learned to their game designs.

Inspirational Stories
The Galway city Museum and Galway City Council provided Ardán with a collection of Galway folklore stories titled *The Corrib: Myth, Legend and Folklore* (this collection has since been published on the Galway City Museum Website). These compelling narratives and visuals inspired the teams. This is clearly evident in the game designs and storytelling.

Why: Considerable effort was put into the creation of the *The Corrib* collection. The storytelling, custom artwork and use of historical images of Galway. The effort involved in creating the collection particularly inspired the creative designers and storytellers in the teams as they built out their games.

Special Event and Networking
The turnout at the special event was remarkable with full capacity with some attendees travelling from as far as Dublin for the occasion. The talks, networking and feedback sessions for the teams

Why: As a mostly grassroots community, the regional game developers have not been a target for support in the past. The Game Jams in the past have been community driven with little or no budgets. The community really appreciated support for the community and the networking opportunities that the special event in particular helped foster.

Access to Experts
The opportunity to engage meaningfully with experts in game development and related subjects would not be attainable for the grassroots gaming community under normal circumstances. Meeting, conversing with and establishing relationships with the experts through the workshops and networking opportunities

Why: the Ardán team prioritised targeting experts based on what they could deliver to the participants. Situation where silos would have existed were now possible. For example, gaming experts from University of Galway actively gave time to speak to graduates and experts from ATU Galway. This is a result of Ardán's ability to motivate, connect and bring together disconnected stakeholders behind a mission.

Using the Discord Platform
Engagement with the game development community via Discord allowed for a fluent dialogue between WGGI facilitators and participants with more interactivity and direct messaging functionality. Rich media sharing and instant messaging functionality enables a dynamic platform for engagement at little or no cost.

Why: Despite the Ardán team's unfamiliarity with the Discord platform **,** adopting a platform that is already widely used, well liked within the target community proved to be worth the additional effort and learning curve.

What didn't work so well

Lack of qualitative information on end user (teenage tourist) to inform the teams
Ardán lacked both qualitative and quantitative information on the subject matter outlined in the brief **-** a teenage tourist to galway. This information would have given the teams more context about the end customer/user however, there seems to be a lack of or inability to share both qualitative and quantitative data with Ardán over the activity period.

Why: There may be confidential or GDPR reasons for not sharing or the data that exists in incomplete and not ready to share by the local authority.

Lack of interest in developing with virtual reality (VR) hardware.
Despite the brief encouraging "real-world Interaction", the teams were wary of investing their time on developing wit VR hardware.

Why: After the needs finding workshop, the Ardán team discovered the reasons behind the reluctance to take it on for WGGI 2022: the short timeline, the fact that the participants have full time careers and the steep learning curve. However, with with a longer timeline and suitable supports, Ardán are confident that VR and immersive experiences would be embraced by the community.

Declaration

20	I hereby confirm that all details provided in this application for funding under the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme are accurate and true and that all the requisite regulatory approvals are in place.

Signed: Alan Duggan Verified
Created: 2022-12-07 09:05:54 Authenticated: 2022-12-07 09:09:01

Final report
— Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

Gabriel Mullarkey

Application ID: A2MG543

Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

—

Philip Delamere

Email : pdelamere@leitrimcoco.ie
Application ID : A8DP555
Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2022-12-06 17:08:53
Application Completed Date: 2023-01-26 17:42:09

Project Details

1	Project title

Spark - Arts & Business collaborations

Please provide the below information for the contact person

2	Name of contact person

Philip Delamere

3	Role/title

Arts Officer

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	Leitrim County Council Áras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim, Ireland. N41 PF67

7	Website (optional)
	www.leitrimarts.ie

8	**Executive Summary** - This section should introduce the project, giving detail on the main aims and objectives of the work. Please give the following • a brief outline of the timeline of the project • the partners and collaborators involved • the objectives of the project • provide the socio-economic context for the project, outlining the project in the wider context of your local authority – why did you feel this project was needed at this time? • the outcomes on completion.

Spark has operated as an artist in residence programme in Leitrim for a number of years. The purpose of the programme is to explore and demonstrate the value of creativity to conventional businesses and the unique role that artists as creative sector experts can bring to those environments. Essentially to explore creativity in industry as opposed to creative industries.

In 2022 the partners behind the programme – Leitrim County Council Arts Office and Leitrim's Local Enterprise Office – worked with the Hair & Beauty Industry Confederation of Ireland (HABIC) to develop a unique Spark project with artist Amanda Jane Graham that allowed us to explore and develop such a project to a much greater extent that was previously possible and to examine the dynamics and potential of artists residencies as stimulus for creativity in conventional business environments.

Objectives

- To undertake a spark project to a much greater depth than previously possible.
- To examine the processes and dynamics of Spark in an international context.
- To disseminate the learning from this project.
- To demonstrate the value of artists residences as a means to engender creativity in conventional business environments.

Actual outcomes

Certainly, the project has pushed the nature of what is possible in Spark to a much greater extent than ever before. The increased budget allowed for a greater investment of time by all project partners giving rise to a greater understanding of the value of creativity by business owners and a recognition of how creativity and the work of artists in business contexts can help achieve business objectives. International research we have undertaken has uncovered a great deal of valuable case studies and information that will be useful in formulating the future development path for Spark. We realise however that we have only really scratched the surface of this, and while the conventional creative industries have been well defined and explored, the value and impact of creative programmes in conventional industry has been largely ignored. So, while some conclusions can be determined at this stage, we will use this project as a springboard to further this research in 2023.

The culmination of this phase of work under the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund was presented at an exhibition in Dublin in January 2023 along with a publication describing the work undertaken, and panel discussions exploring these themes.

Additional Outcomes

Some of the processes employed as part of the project looked to how 3D printing technologies could be harnessed by artists and designers to develop new work. As a result of this project we are developing a training programme for artists in the utilisation of 3D printing technology as part of their practice.

9 **Process and Methodology**

-

1. Outline the key processes of project planning and collaboration that enabled development of your project. Highlight those which are new to your team or local authority or where particular innovations took place.
2. Describe any methodologies employed in the planning or execution of your project.

There were two parallel processes employed to address the different specific strands of this project.

1. This Spark project with HABIC, artist Amanda Jane Graham and other stakeholders that addressed issues relating to how creativity is understood with regard to the hairdressing industry.
2. Spark as a programme which explores and expands ideas about creativity in business, including the development of a greater understanding of the application of creativity generally.

The HABIC Strand
This strand emerged from a 3-week creative action research phase to discover areas of common purpose. The methodology was developed by Leitrim Arts Office and LEO and adapted in partnership with HABIC and artist Amanda Jane Graham. It was open ended and exploratory. A second phase explored areas of common interest identified - namely how a historical understanding of hairdressing, when looked at through a creative lens, could contribute to the long-term developmental needs of the industry. The third phase developed the creative outcomes of that research, drawings, sculptures, recorded interviews, along with a mediation and dissemination programme.

The Spark Strand
The spark strand comprised of an analysis of international examples of creativity programmes in business, an interrogation of the nature, purpose and value of creativity, and an analysis of the dynamics of the Spark programme itself.

10 **Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries**

-

1. Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries; including the number of Creative Practitioners supported through the funding.
2. Describe the structure of the team/partners and the role that each partner held.

Key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries

- Key partners: Partners who have invested financially or provided resources for the project.
- Collaborators: May include individuals, businesses or organisations which have contributed in non-financial capacities.
- Beneficiaries: This may include Artistic or Creative Practitioners who have been directly supported by funding, or those who have availed of the services or resources developed by the project.

Core Partner Organisations:
Leitrim County Council Arts Office
Local Enterprise Office Leitrim
Hair and Beauty Industry Confederation of Ireland (HABIC)

Project Personnel:
Philip Delamere, Arts Officer, Leitrim County Council
Margaret O'Rourke Doherty, CEO, HABIC
Alice Dixon, Leitrim County Council Creative Ireland Projects Manager
Joe Lowe, Head of Enterprise, Leitrim County Council
Geraldine Reynolds, Leitrim Local Enterprise Office
Joeleen Lynch, Project Manager
3D printing Ireland
Irish Architectural Archive

Research:
Professor Fayçal Falaky; Professor Desmond Hosford; Professor Alicia Caticha; Professor Joan E. DeJean; Professor Don Herzog; Professor Joann Fletcher; Dr. Annmarie Ryan and Lucy Costelloe, Kemmy Business School, University of Limerick.

Hairstylists:
Barbara Bankz, Aimee Brady, Greg Clarke, Gemma Crosson, Sam Donnelly, Stanley Donnelly, Angie Dromgoole, Leah Dunne Ging, Lisa Eccles, Ruth Fennell, Susan Frazer Wall, Suzanne Grealish, Keith Harris, Stephen Kelly, Laila Valentino, Michael Wall.

Other contributors:
Jenny Crawford, Creative Director, Kazumi Hair Salon; Dylan Bradshaw, Dylan Bradshaw Dublin; Greg Clarke, Amica Eco Hairdressing; Maeve O'Healy Harte, Hairstylist and Editor of the Irish Hairdresser Magazine; Professor Mary Corcoran; Roisín Loughrey, Artist; Eden Jane Graham Walsh, Artist; Bobby Walsh; Dickon Whitehead; Joanne Laws; Shane Finan; Raven Walsh; Nessa O Brolchain; Roberto Gómez de la Iglesia, Director, Conexiones improbables; Damien McGlynn, Director, Create; Prof. Kerstin Mey, President, University of Limerick; Dr. Jonathan Price, University of Leeds and Dr. Declan Long, NCAD.

11 **Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes**

-

Only by knowing your objectives and having them defined clearly, will you be able to define clear outputs and outcomes.

1. Outline the **objective of your project:** What did you aim to accomplish?
2. Describe the outputs and outcomes of your project. We are particularly interested in any impacts on the wider local/regional economy or the CCIs/CCS.
3. Describe how you **measured outputs and outcomes** and any other evaluation processes you employed. What were your indicators of success?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- An **output** is something materialised or produced in order to achieve a specific target or goal. Examples of outputs might include a workshop, product, research data/systems or toolkit.
- An **outcome** is a result, direct or indirect, of actions taken or decision made. What difference did the project make? These can be changes in/for individuals, revenues, systems, policies, institutions, market entry/penetration that you seek to achieve. They may reflect shifts in relationships, knowledge, awareness, capabilities, opportunities, and/or behaviours.

Objectives

1. To undertake a spark project to a much greater depth than previously possible.
2. To examine the processes and dynamics of Spark in an international context.
3. To disseminate the learning from this project.
4. To demonstrate the value of artists residences as a means to engender creativity in conventional business environments.

Objective 1

To undertake a spark project to a much greater depth than previously possible.

Output

Developed the largest and most successful Spark project to date. Undertook extensive stakeholder dialogue. Developed a large body of artworks including drawings, sculptures produced using new 3D printing technology, and an installation featuring recorded interviews with hairdressers from different backgrounds.

Outcome

The use of 3D printing as a means for artists to produce new artworks has opened up new opportunities for the high numbers of artists and designers in the region. This agenda is being furthered under the Enterprise Ireland funded Creative Heartlands programme – a joint initiative of the arts offices and LEOs of Leitrim, Sligo and Roscommon. The exhibition itself served as an anchor for the entire programme and a physical manifestation of the project objectives, contributing to shifting of opinions of the hairdressing profession for hairdressers themselves and for decision makers on education and employment policy.

Objective 2

To examine the processes and dynamics of Spark in an international context.

Output

Desk Research Report produced by Dr. Annmarie Ryan and Lucy Costello at the Kemmy School of Business at the University of Limerick.

Outcome

We realized the scope of the task, if done properly, was much greater than originally envisaged. Rather than trying to carry that out poorly, we determined to complete the desk research properly and to plan a further strand of research to be carried out in 2023.

Objective 3
To disseminate the learning from this project.
Output
We produced a hardcopy publication, developed a website and held a number of conference events and workshops/gallery talks with different groups. Press coverage included radio interviews with Arena (RTE), Dublin Live FM and Talking History (Newstalk). Press coverage included Irish Times, Irish Independent and Examiner. Magazine coverage included Image Magazine, VAI newsletter and a number of hairdressing magazines.
Outcome
Each of these has served to create a greater awareness of the programme, and its value to HABIC and the hairdressing profession and to Leitrim County Council Arts Office and Local Enterprise Board and their agenda to advance the importance of creativity in business contexts.

Objective 4
To demonstrate the value of artists residences as a means to engender creativity in conventional business environments.
Output
In addition to the exhibition itself, the desk research and Inside Creativity public event have been the most tangible outputs that demonstrate the value of artists residences as a means to engender creativity in conventional business environments.
Outcome
The outcomes for this objective are still only forming. Already, next steps and alterations to our approach to Spark are under consideration, and other ideas of how artists can positively impact on conventional business and vice versa are also being considered. Finally, planning for ongoing research to be undertaken now will be more focused and directed differently based on the experience gained.

12 **Additional Relevant Findings**

-

In this section we invite you to include any information not covered above including but not limited to;

1. Research findings: If you carried out research, please give an overview of your findings.
2. Levels of public engagement, if relevant: To what extend did your project engage with the wider public or community, either in-person or online?
3. Any media coverage received, if relevant: If your project received media coverage, please list it here and include links where possible.

Research report, commissioned essays and project publication available separately.

Project website: www.thecoiffured.com

Selected press coverage:
Professional Hair & Beauty
RTE.ie
Irish Architecture Diary
Creative Headmag
Irish Times
The Gloss
Irish Independent

Conclusions

19 **Conclusions and Looking Ahead**

-

In this section, give details of any final reflections or conclusions that have arisen from your project including the following;

- Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
- How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
- Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
- Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
- Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
- Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?
- Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
Even though the basic tenets of Spark were well know to us, to do a project on this scale was new, and to explore the ideas that underpin it was new. Most things works, and worked very well, but not everything – or at least not as planned. We underestimated the scale of research required and decided early on to divide that into phases, concluding desk research on comparable projects only.

How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
Spark will now be able to point to better and more practical examples of how creativity and the work of artists in particular, can positively impact on business environments. The learning from the practices of other international models will help us to further develop our methodology.

Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
While the core focus remained with the parallel strands of an appreciation of creativity within the hairdressing sector and more broadly how creativity can impact on business environments, a further strand of research has emerged regarding the affordances and constraints on creativity throughout our lives, which will be very relevant to our wider Creative Ireland programme.

Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
While the partnership between the Arts Office and LEO to creativity has always been a strength in Leitrim, it has been further reinforced through this project. There is a greater interest in the design technologies used in the project among artists in the region, which is likely to grow.

Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
HABIC had very clear objectives for the hairdressing profession that this project could advance. It is too early to say whether these will be realised, but the interest and response from the profession and stakeholders responsible for its development have been encouraging.

Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process
We are aware that this project was atypical in the context of the Economic Action Fund. It is concerned with creativity in industry rather than 'creative industries'. We appreciate the latitude and trust to include projects of this nature, and would urge that this latitude be maintained in future rounds. The benefit of this Fund is to explore new ideas and means by which creativity can be impactful in an economic context, and who knows where the next big idea might be.

Declaration

20	I hereby confirm that all details provided in this application for funding under the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme are accurate and true and that all the requisite regulatory approvals are in place.

Signed: Philip Delamere Verified
Created: 2023-01-26 17:42:01 Authenticated: 2023-01-26 17:42:24

Final report

— Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

Philip Delamere

Application ID: A8DP555

Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

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Ciaran Mangan

Email : Ciaran.Mangan@meathcoco.ie

Application ID : A6MC554
Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2022-12-05 16:32:29
Application Completed Date: 2022-12-19 14:41:23

Project Details

1	Project title
	Kells - Harnessing Culture, Connecting the Dots

Please provide the below information for the contact person

2	Name of contact person
	Ciaran Mangan
3	Role/title
	County Librarian/Creative Ireland Co-Ordinator
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5	Email
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6	Postal address
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7	Website (optional)
	www.meath.ie

8 **Executive Summary**

-

This section should introduce the project, giving detail on the main aims and objectives of the work.
Please give the following

- a brief outline of the timeline of the project
- the partners and collaborators involved
- the objectives of the project
- provide the socio-economic context for the project, outlining the project in the wider context of your local authority – why did you feel this project was needed at this time?
- the outcomes on completion.

Kells – Harnessing Culture, Connecting the Dots **is a programme under the Kells Creative Placemaking Project. The aim of the project was to positively impact the strategic development of the creative economy locally, regionally and nationally linked to individual and societal wellbeing and quality of life.**

The project focused on deepening and strengthening existing collaborative partnerships and the creation of new partnerships to operationalise the ambitions of:

• Kells Printing Works and Centre of Typography
• Courthouse Tourism and Cultural Hub

Our partners for this element of the project included -

• Meath County Council led by Arts and Heritage Office- the project receives cross council support
• Meath Local Enterprise Office – through their Building a Craft and Design Enterprise Programme (BCDE)
• Boyne Valley Tourism Ltd – who run the tourism and visitor centre on the ground floor of the courthouse
• Kells Festival Consortium – Hinterland; Guth Gafa & Type Trail

- Sóilsiú Films – anchor tenants in the cultural hub
- Sawmills Studio Company Ltd, National Print Museum, Print industry and third level institutes

Project Timeline:

- **May -** Prepare detailed project plan;
- **June-Augus**t – Scoping/Audit third levels with printing, design and typography courses, marketing collateral, Operationalise key elements of the vision for the Courthouse Cultural Hub;
- **Sept –Nov -** Engage with third levels, letter press printing/design industry, implementation of key strategic priorities the Festival Consortium (Hinterland, Guth Gafa & Type Trail) strategic priorities identified through capacity building process;
- **Nov/Dec -** Project reporting, drawdown and evaluation.

Project Objectives include:

· Establish Kells Print Works and Ireland's first Centre for Typography and build on existing collaboration between Project Partners and third-level institutes in relation to typography and letterpress printing

· Develop an international training centre for continued professional development in letter press printing and practical outreach/educational programmes with third level colleges and institutes

· Support the development of Hinterland Festival of Literature and Arts, Guth Gafa International Documentary Film Festival and Kells TypeTrail

· Provide festival office space and increased programming capacity through the provision of bespoke cultural venues

· Support artists by providing facilities for the creation, production, exhibition and performance of artistic works

· Promote and support job creation in Kells through providing facilities for the creation, production, exhibition and performance of artistic works

· Increase the cultural programming capacity of Kells through an increased offering of artistic training, enterprise incubation, creative residency entertainment and tourism offerings

·

The Strategic Vision of the Development Plan is: ***'To improve the quality of life of all citizens in Meath by creating an environment that supports a vibrant growing economy and a well-connected place to live, learn and do business.'***

This proposition aligns with key elements of the CDP specifically Chapter 07. Community Building Strategy 7.7.12 and chapter 04. Economy and Employment Strategy.

9 **Process and Methodology**

-

1. Outline the key processes of project planning and collaboration that enabled development of your project. Highlight those which are new to your team or local authority or where particular innovations took place.
2. Describe any methodologies employed in the planning or execution of your project.

Collaboration, built and sustained over a number of

years, has been the corner stone of the success of Kells Creative Placemaking Project. Collaboration takes a sustained effort and the strength of this new economic fund is that it allowed resources necessary to engage and work to build partnerships and collaborations over an 8-month period. In terms of process and methodologies the project focused on building on existing work to date and focusing on operationalising and animating the business plan for the newly established cultural and creative spaces Kells Printworks and Courthouse Cultural Hub. For Kells Printworks an audit of third level courses in Ireland with print, graphic design and typography courses was undertaken and this formed the basis of making contact with the third levels institutes. A key partnership secured through this project was with the National Print Museum to build upon the successful Creative Ireland and National Print Museum -*Making Our Impression Skills Transfer Programme.* This partnership and investment by Creative Ireland will help preserve the craft of letterpress for future generation by helping to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next.

Funding was invested in the development of

Courthouse Tourism and Cultural Hub by delivering on key findings and outcomes of Festival Consortium Capacity Building and building on associate artist programme.

10 **Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries**

-

1. Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries; including the number of Creative Practitioners supported through the funding.
2. Describe the structure of the team/partners and the role that each partner held.

Key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries

- Key partners: Partners who have invested financially or provided resources for the project.
- Collaborators: May include individuals, businesses or organisations which have contributed in non-financial capacities.
- Beneficiaries: This may include Artistic or Creative Practitioners who have been directly supported by funding, or those who have availed of the services or resources developed by the project.

Kells - Harnessing Culture – Connecting the Dots was a proposal with multiple economic and social impacts. The regeneration of Kells through creative endeavor will lead to an influx of arts practitioners. The Courthouse incubation cultural hub is attracting creative businesses and start-ups. Kells Print Works with its unique collection has engaged with partners both national and international and will offer students and tourists unrivalled experiential learning. Strengthening of current cultural infrastructure i.e. Hinterland, Guth Gafa International Documentary Film Festival and Type Trails festivals will increase the opportunity for job creation, have substantial impact on the community and will combine to form a sustainable model for Kells regeneration.

Key partners included – Meath County Council, Meath LEO, Boyne Valley Tourism, Kells Festival Consortium (Hinterland Festival of Literature and Arts, Guth Gafa International Documentary Film Festival, Kells TypeTrail), Sawmills Studio Company.

Kells Festival Consortium - The consortium comprises of three festivals; Hinterland Arts and Literature Festival, Guth Gafa established in 2006, is Ireland's largest independent documentary film festival; Kells Type Trail, an annual festival celebrating typography and lettering now in its 12th year. The Festival Consortium worked together to identify needs to build capacity and capability to help deliver the festivals – key areas identified included strategic development, production management (including H&S) and development of associated artists programme. These key areas were supported through the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund.

Sawmills Studio Ltd - is a key partner in the Kells Printworks and drove the deliverables in relation to Kells Printworks by cultivating partnership with third-level institutes and the letterpress industry. Mark Smith (Creative Director and Founder Kells Type Trail).

National Print Museum – A key success of this project was establishing a collaboration with the National Print Museum through its CEO Carla Marrinan to build on their pilot *Making Our Impression Skills Transfer Programme* which was funded by Creative Ireland.

Meath Local Enterprise Office – established the Meath Craft Network Collective in 2022.

Throughout this project thirteen creative professionals and artists were directly supported to deliver on the aim and objectives of the project – (see budget breakdown for details).

11 **Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes**

-

Only by knowing your objectives and having them defined clearly, will you be able to define clear outputs and outcomes.

1. Outline the **objective of your project:** What did you aim to accomplish?
2. Describe the outputs and outcomes of your project. We are particularly interested in any impacts on the wider local/regional economy or the CCIs/CCS.
3. Describe how you **measured outputs and outcomes** and any other evaluation processes you employed. What were your indicators of success?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- An **output** is something materialised or produced in order to achieve a specific target or goal. Examples of outputs might include a workshop, product, research data/systems or toolkit.
- An **outcome** is a result, direct or indirect, of actions taken or decision made. What difference did the project make? These can be changes in/for individuals, revenues, systems, policies, institutions, market entry/penetration that you seek to achieve. They may reflect shifts in relationships, knowledge, awareness, capabilities, opportunities, and/or behaviours.

The objectives of the project were to:

· Seek to leverage the power of arts and creativity for community benefit and economic gain through increased cultural tourism and job creation

· Establish Kells Print Works and Ireland's first Centre for Typography and build on existing collaboration between Project Partners and third-level institutes in relation to typography and letterpress printing

· Develop an international training centre for continued professional development in letter press printing and practical outreach/educational programmes with third level colleges and institutes

· Support the development of Hinterland Festival of Literature and Arts, Guth Gafa International Documentary Film Festival and Kells TypeTrail

· Provide festival office space and increased programming capacity through the provision of bespoke cultural venues

· Support artists by providing facilities for the creation, production, exhibition and performance of artistic works

· Promote and support job creation in Kells through providing facilities for the creation, production, exhibition and performance of artistic works

· Increase the cultural programming capacity of Kells through an increased offering of artistic training, enterprise incubation, creative residency entertainment and tourism offerings

· Promote engagement with schools and develop activities and spaces for young people to be creative within the venues

Outputs were as follows –

(a) Audit of third level institutions with printing, design and typography courses and research programmes both in Ireland to establish a database of key contacts

(b) Networking trip to London to engage with letterpress printing/design industry to explore collaborative opportunities with Kells Printing Works – meetings with Alan Kitchin (Master Printer), St Bride Library, The Design Museum, New North Press Studio, Hugh Tarpey, Creative Director and Type Tasting with Sarah Hyndman.

(c) On-going collaboration with Hamilton Wood Type and Printing Museum (https://woodtype.org/) in Two Rivers Wisconsin and attendance at their annual Wayzgoose conference which was attended by 200 designers, printers and typographers from across North America

https://woodtype.org/pages/wayzgoose-schedule - to highlight Kells Printing Works and make connections
(d) Engage directly (onsite visits and zooms) with fourteen third level institutes/cultural organisation to scope and discuss how Kells Printworks and Centre for Typography could complement existing core courses or provide an opportunity to develop further bespoke courses based on practical hands-on experience of this unique collection of historic printing presses
(e) Successful collaboration with National Print Museum to build upon the successful Creative Ireland and National Print Museum Project – '*Making Our Impression Skills Transfer Programme*' to help preserve the craft of letterpress printing and pass onto to future generations by harnessing the specialist knowledge of retired printers and compositors.
(e) Engaged a graphic designer to develop marketing and branding for the Kells Printworks – marketing collateral, website, social media, branding etc.
(f) Collated and catalogued complete photographic archive of project from 2017 to 2022 – for branding and website development.
(g) Engaged a suitably qualified individual to prepare an Event management Plan and Risk Assessment for Hinterland and TypeTrail
(h) Engaged an arts consultant to research & prepare Courthouse Cultural Hub & MAMU Hub Artists development support reports
(i) Built upon the Associate Artist Programme
(j) Training and mentorship programme for Festivals Consortium

This project has resulted in the following outcomes:

- Kells Printing Works is being developed into a nationally and internationally significant creative enterprise and the ground work through this project has ensured that third-level students and the print industry are aware it and many have expressed interested to directly engage to experience this national asset through existing courses and with the possibility of establishing summer school/study abroad programme/artist in residence.
- Through the connection with Hamilton Wood Type and Printing Museum key partnership has been established with the leading institute for letterpress printing in North America. Hamilton participated as an artist in Kells TypeTrail 2022 and Kells Printing Works have participated in a number of online events run by the museum and have been invited to present at an online event hosted by the museum.
- A key partnership was established with the National Print Museum to deliver a vital skills transfer programme as the museum endeavors to safeguard the skills and knowledge, and the oral histories associated with the technology and craft of printing in Ireland which is part of Ireland's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage
- The third level colleges were very enthusiastic about the development of the new Kells Printing Works and the education opportunities it presents – models were discussed whereby students can prep off site and then do on-site classes in bocks for hands on printing experience
- The trip to London as well as establishing key contacts resulted in the donation of a significant collection of type to Kells Printing Works which will be a major asset
- Increased capacity building with the Kells Festival Consortium including mentoring, event planning, health and safety
- Key elements of the vision for the Courthouse Cultural Hub were operationalized including Meath Artist Meet Up (MAMU), Associate Artist Programme was expanded
- Branding for Kells Creative Placemaking and Kells Printing Works

12 **Additional Relevant Findings**

-

In this section we invite you to include any information not covered above including but not limited to;

1. Research findings: If you carried out research, please give an overview of your findings.
2. Levels of public engagement, if relevant: To what extend did your project engage with the wider public or community, either in-person or online?
3. Any media coverage received, if relevant: If your project received media coverage, please list it here and include links where possible.

NA

Conclusions

19 **Conclusions and Looking Ahead**

-

In this section, give details of any final reflections or conclusions that have arisen from your project including the following;

- Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
- How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
- Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
- Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
- Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
- Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?
- Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

This project focused on deepening and strengthening existing collaborative partnerships and creating new partnerships to operationalise the ambitions of (a) Kells Printing Works and Centre of Typography and (b) Courthouse Cultural Hub.

Collaboration takes a sustained effort and time and the strength of this new fund is that it allowed resources to focus on building those partnerships and collaborations over an 8-month period which was particularly important post-covid. The face to face contact allowed the time to explore mutually beneficial opportunities and synergies for stakeholders. The key success has been that as we advance the capital programme of works for the adaptive re- use of the Sawmills building and Kells Courthouse to house the restored printworks and cultural hub, respectively – significant progress has been made through this project to animate and programme these cultural spaces.

It has highlighted to us the benefit and the need for a full time /dedicated project manager for Kells Creative Placemaking Project. Currently the project is co-managed by the Arts Officer and Heritage Officer and it fits within their existing and extensive work programme. Kells Creative Placemaking is a multi-partnership and multi layered collaboration and a dedicated project resource would be most beneficial in terms of securing its long-term sustainability and realising its potential.

Declaration

20 I hereby confirm that all details provided in this application for funding under the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme are accurate and true and that all the requisite regulatory approvals are in place.

Signed: Ciaran Mangan Verified
Created: 2022-12-19 14:40:40 Authenticated: 2022-12-19 14:41:49

Final report

— Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

Ciaran Mangan

Application ID: A6MC554

Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

—

Katherine Collins

Email : creativewaterford@waterfordcouncil.ie
Application ID : A3CK546
Custom Ref. -

Application Start Date: 2022-11-21 10:48:45
Application Completed Date: 2022-12-08 16:26:30

Project Details

1	Project title
	Creative Ecosystem Development in South East Ireland

Please provide the below information for the contact person

2	Name of contact person
	Katherine Collins
3	Role/title
	Creative Ireland Waterford Coordinator
4	Phone number
	087 9268520

5	Email
	kcollins@waterfordcouncil.ie

6	Postal address
	Waterford Gallery of Art, 31 O'Connell Street, Waterford

7	Website (optional)

8 **Executive Summary**

-

This section should introduce the project, giving detail on the main aims and objectives of the work. Please give the following

- a brief outline of the timeline of the project
- the partners and collaborators involved
- the objectives of the project
- provide the socio-economic context for the project, outlining the project in the wider context of your local authority – why did you feel this project was needed at this time?
- the outcomes on completion.

Waterford City and County Council, in partnership with RIKON in the South East Technological University applied to the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund to undertake *Creative Ecosystem Development in South East Ireland*. Regionally, innovation & creative industries have been identified as having potential to diversify our enterprise base ensuring the south-east economy is more resilient and adaptable. This is identified in the policies and strategies of Waterford City and County Council and we sought the funding to assist public bodies in making the best possible decisions, based on data, when supporting and funding the creative economy of the region.

The overall aim of the project was to develop a better understanding of the creative ecosystem in the region, specifically the creative industries through a survey and data analysis, and to carry out research into the digital creative sector through examining how networks in this area might be best supported. Both the local authority and the University realised that there was a dearth of data and information about the creative industries in the region. The Local Enterprise Office in Waterford and Creative Waterford are interested in examining the sector and ecosystem to understand how they can be best supported and resourced through policy and through informed and specific funding based on facts and information.

Please note that this is an interim rather than a final report – the final report is expected to be delivered in February 2023.

The objectives of this project are to:
1. Create an interactive inventory of creative industry practice in Waterford and neighbouring counties of Wexford and Kilkenny, allowing for ongoing insights into local and regional creative opportunities and ecosystems, identification of future needs and analysis of impacts over time (Leveraging Three Sisters 2020 European Capital of Culture Creative Industries Report 2015)
2. Design and implement a networking platform to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between creative industry practitioners;
3. Build on identified strengths and opportunities, focus on areas of specialisation to develop networks who share an interest in operationalising creative innovation-focused initiatives and seek European funding to build and internationalise identified specialisations.

The project kicked off in May 2022 and is expected to be fully complete in early Spring 2023.
- Project set up May – August 2022
- Survey set up September – November 2022 (including GDPR & data sharing agreement)
- Digital Creatives network research & research Sept – December 2022
- Digital Creatives Workshops January 2023
- Data analysis January – February 2023
- Final reports – February 2023

9 **Process and Methodology**

-

1. Outline the key processes of project planning and collaboration that enabled development of your project. Highlight those which are new to your team or local authority or where particular innovations took place.
2. Describe any methodologies employed in the planning or execution of your project.

The key processes of project planning and collaboration

· Set up of the operational structure (e.g. project coordination, goals, partnership commitments, meeting schedules, events) including stakeholders from WCCC and SETU

· Scoped the development needs of the proposed network specialism.

· Conducted a secondary analysis of the locality creative network needs assessment and analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities facing the network specialism

· Preliminary stakeholder profiling of creative activities and experiences

· In line with good data governance, created industry database for analysis

· In line with good data governance, created an audit methodology for gathering industry data

· Put in place a data sharing agreement between Waterford City and County Council and SETU. This aspect of the project took longer than expected however it was essential that all aspects were completely agreed and legally correct before proceeding with the work.

Some of the methodologies employed include:

Qualitative and quantitative research

Quantative

· Survey 123 to gather economic and financial data.

Qualitative research leveraging design thinking methodologies and including the following:

· In depth structured interviews (creatives),

· Opinion research (stakeholders),

· Observations (attending creative meetups),

· Needs analysis and clustering (community needs analysis after interviews),

· Secondary research (Reading of industry reports, studies and strategic planning docs).

· Conceptual research stage: Ideation, prototyping and testing.

10 **Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries**

-

1. Outline of key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries; including the number of Creative Practitioners supported through the funding.
2. Describe the structure of the team/partners and the role that each partner held.

Key partners, collaborators, and beneficiaries

- Key partners: Partners who have invested financially or provided resources for the project.
- Collaborators: May include individuals, businesses or organisations which have contributed in non-financial capacities.
- Beneficiaries: This may include Artistic or Creative Practitioners who have been directly supported by funding, or those who have availed of the services or resources developed by the project.

Key Partners:
Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) is the lead on this project and made the application for funding with letters of support from Kilkenny and Wexford County Councils. WCCC has consulted with the Creativity and Culture Teams and LEO's of each local authority to seek an understanding of the particular challenges and opportunities in each LA as well as ensuring a wide dissemination of the survey through out the South East. WCCC - LEO and Waterford Cultural Quarter are integral partners to this project.

South East Technological University: SETU was in a period of transition during the early period of the project due to the merging of Carlow Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology. Waterford City and County Council has maintained its very strong links with SETU in many areas of research through undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes and WCCC has partnered with SETU to deliver on the proposed research. Both WCCC and SETU have strong connections with the innovation community through their own companies and departments; Arclabs, RIKON, Walton Institute and with the innovation enterprise community including Immersive VR, Emagine & Nemeton TV and will support the development of creative innovation networks.

· Waterford City and County Council - Waterford Local Enterprise Office & Waterford Cultural Quarter.
o Lead applicant and decision maker.
· South East Technological University – RIKON
o Main partner. Responsible for carrying out the survey element of the project.
· Wexford County Council
o project support providing information and guidance
· Kilkenny County Council
o project support providing information and guidance
· Project resource: JK Innovation
o research and industry needs analysis into network potential for the region.

Collaborators:
Digital Creatives:
4 digital designers.
1 animator
1 illustrator
1 digital marketer
1videographer
3 visual artists
2 film makers
3 digital creative companies – Emagine, JR Gringo, Engage VR

Beneficiaries:
These will be identified in the final report following workshops.

11 **Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes**

-

Only by knowing your objectives and having them defined clearly, will you be able to define clear outputs and outcomes.

1. Outline the **objective of your project:** What did you aim to accomplish?
2. Describe the outputs and outcomes of your project. We are particularly interested in any impacts on the wider local/regional economy or the CCIs/CCS.
3. Describe how you **measured outputs and outcomes** and any other evaluation processes you employed. What were your indicators of success?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- An **output** is something materialised or produced in order to achieve a specific target or goal. Examples of outputs might include a workshop, product, research data/systems or toolkit.
- An **outcome** is a result, direct or indirect, of actions taken or decision made. What difference did the project make? These can be changes in/for individuals, revenues, systems, policies, institutions, market entry/penetration that you seek to achieve. They may reflect shifts in relationships, knowledge, awareness, capabilities, opportunities, and/or behaviours.

Some expected outcomes & outputs

· Information supporting policy such as the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and WCCC Draft Development Plan – e.g. reports regarding workspace needs of digital creatives

· Information regarding funding opportunities for LEO's, Enterprise Ireland and Local Authority Creative Ireland programmes in the creative ecosystem of the region

· Information for planning and decision making e.g. specific feedback relating to the types of events and activities that creatives wish to interact with and find useful in order to being building networks

· Data relating to the impact on the collective regional creative economy ecosystem.

· Data supporting the including of creative industries as a key component of Smart SE

· An agreed definition of the creative ecosystem in the south east for the local authorities and the University to use going forward and for use in funding applications etc.

· A digital map of the creative sector in the region

Objective1: Create an interactive inventory of creative industry practice in Waterford and neighbouring counties of Wexford and Kilkenny, allowing for ongoing insights into local and regional creative opportunities and ecosystems, identification of future needs and analysis of impacts over time.

Outputs:

· A clear definition of the creative ecosystem in the South East region of Ireland

· A database of over 600 creative industries in the region

· A bespoke survey examining the economic impact of creative industries to the south east economy

· An approved data sharing agreement between WCCC and SETU for this and further projects

· Project steering committee in place

· A mapping exercise to show the geographic spread of creative industries in the region.

Outcomes: To be finalised February 2023

Objective 2. Design and implement a networking platform to facilitate collaboration and cooperation

between creative industry practitioners;
Output:
·	Based on outcomes of Objective 3, a decision was made to use in-house WCCC licencing to develop the networking platform rather than a stand-alone website or similar product which would require on-going resourcing and maintenance. All parties were agreed on this, and projects such as mapping, surveys and ongoing platform development using Storymaps are in progress and planned.
Outcomes: A awareness of the level of resource needed to support networks
·	To be finalised February 2023

Objective 3. Build on identified strengths and opportunities, focus on areas of specialisation to develop networks who share an interest in operationalising creative innovation-focused initiatives and seek European funding to build and internationalise identified specialisations.

·	A deep dive needs assessment of creatives in order to create networks and research into the requirements for useable and modern workspaces as well as the types of common “tech labs” or equipment that could be funded in the region.
·	Research into how the creative industries view the term “digital creatives”
Outcomes: To be finalised February 2023

Further information to be provided in the final report.

12 **Additional Relevant Findings**

-

In this section we invite you to include any information not covered above including but not limited to;

1. Research findings: If you carried out research, please give an overview of your findings.
2. Levels of public engagement, if relevant: To what extend did your project engage with the wider public or community, either in-person or online?
3. Any media coverage received, if relevant: If your project received media coverage, please list it here and include links where possible.

Further information to be provided in the final report.

Conclusions

19 **Conclusions and Looking Ahead**

-

In this section, give details of any final reflections or conclusions that have arisen from your project including the following;

- Learnings that have emerged from the process – what worked, what didn't and any challenges you faced. Please include lessons that you believe could benefit other creative economy projects.
- How might the process and project evolve or change going forward?
- Did the objectives change from what was outlined in your project proposal? Why did they change? In what way?
- Have you observed any short-term impacts at local level as a result of the project?
- Do you envision that the project might have longer term impacts, either directly benefiting stakeholders at local level or relating to policies or process within the Local Authority?
- Did any unintended impacts emerge that surprised you?
- Feedback on the Creative Communities Economic Action Fund application and process

Learnings thus far:

· The creative economy is difficult to define and many creative industries straddle the creative sector and the tech sector. There are many micro enterprises in the creative economy and it is a difficulty to include these in economic analysis in comparison to bigger enterprises with employees and ways to show income / expenditure or import / export data.

· GDPR and data protection requires a close understanding of the regulatory environment and it takes time to ensure that people signing up to surveys or allowing their information to be gathered are well informed about what they are signing up to and how their data will be used – this should be built into the project from the very start rather than as an add on.

· In our application for funding, it was described how fundamental to this overall proposal is the empowerment of the creative industries and it was proposed that a regional enterprise platform would be created as part of this project to encourage participation by creative companies in the future imagining of their industry and in the collaborative decision-making to bring about that future. As this project progressed, our research showed that a dedicated platform requires a large resource to manage, oversee & curate. That resource is not currently available to either partners or stakeholders outside of the remit of the project parameters, and it was decided to work with WCCC GIS licenced software to provide an internal "light touch" platform to allow for the continuing gathering of data (Survey 123), and to communicate with the creative industries in the region through mapping - ARCGIS and Story Maps - Story Maps combine the latest mapping technology with narrative text, images, and multimedia content to tell compelling stories. They are an ideal tool to communicate data and narrative in a way to capture attention.

Longer term impacts:

· WCCC and SETU are currently developing a smart city experimental lab concept, *smartSE*. Capital funding is in place to renovate a former newspaper office and printing facility in the city centre, and an application will be made to Enterprise Ireland in 2023 for operational funding.

*smart*SE will be a state-of-the-art smart city experimental facility that offers a unique environment for start-ups with exciting ideas, forward-looking companies, international organisations, scientific institutions, foundations, artists as well as other creative and visionary minds with the perfect place to develop innovative and sustainable concepts for the City of the Future through the application of analytics and technology. This unique experimental facility will be sufficiently large (2000sqm), open and flexible to enable horizontal and vertical federation with other experimental facilities and stimulates development of new applications by users of various types including experimental advanced research on IoT technologies and realistic assessment of users' acceptability tests.

Through the CCEAF fund and project, we have been able to justify the importance of co-locating supports for the creative regional sector in *smartSE* along with innovators and entrepreneurs in the smart city area. Importance of knowing what kinds of supports, events, workspaces, networks and associated resources are required for this.

Further information on project learnings to be provided in the final report.

Declaration

20	I hereby confirm that all details provided in this application for funding under the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme are accurate and true and that all the requisite regulatory approvals are in place.

Signed: Katherine Collins Verified
Created: 2022-12-08 15:56:00 Authenticated: 2022-12-08 16:37:27

Final report

— Creative Communities Economic Action Fund 2022 - End of Project Report

Katherine Collins

Application ID: A3CK546