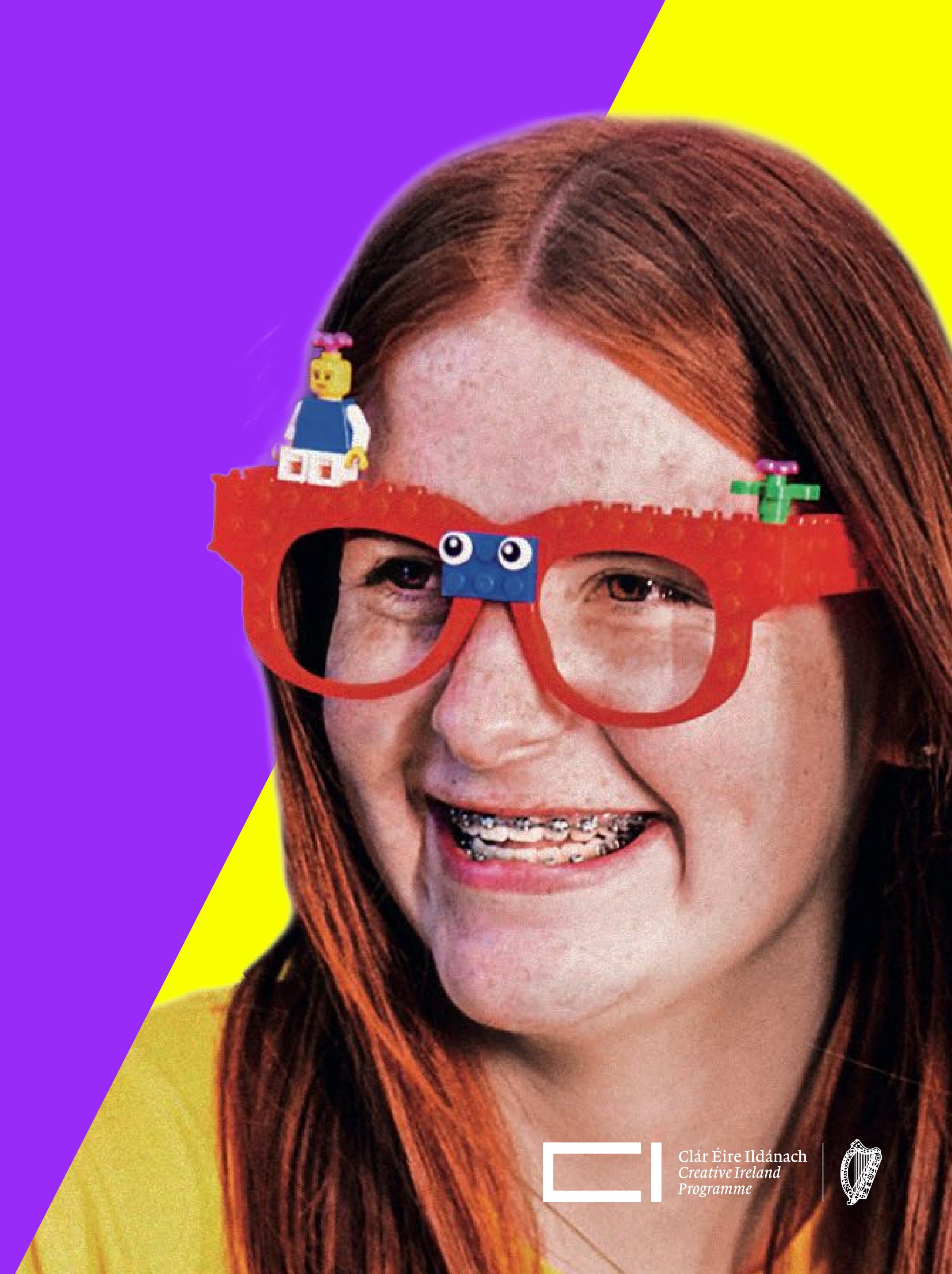


**THE
B!G
iDEA**

CREATIVE IRELAND REPORT
Shared Island



Introduction

The B!G Idea is a creative education initiative with the core mission of empowering young people to utilise creative thinking skills to tackle societal issues. Research shows that creative thinking skills are critical for young people to thrive in the 21st century across diverse contexts including education, career development, and civic participation. However, opportunities to develop these skills remain limited in many educational environments.

Through a series of free workshops, The B!G Idea aims to cultivate creative thinking capabilities in students. The programme bridges the gap between education and industry, connecting students with professionals to ignite new ideas and solutions for global challenges. This unique collaboration provides students with guidance and feedback to strengthen their creative confidence and build new in-demand skill sets.

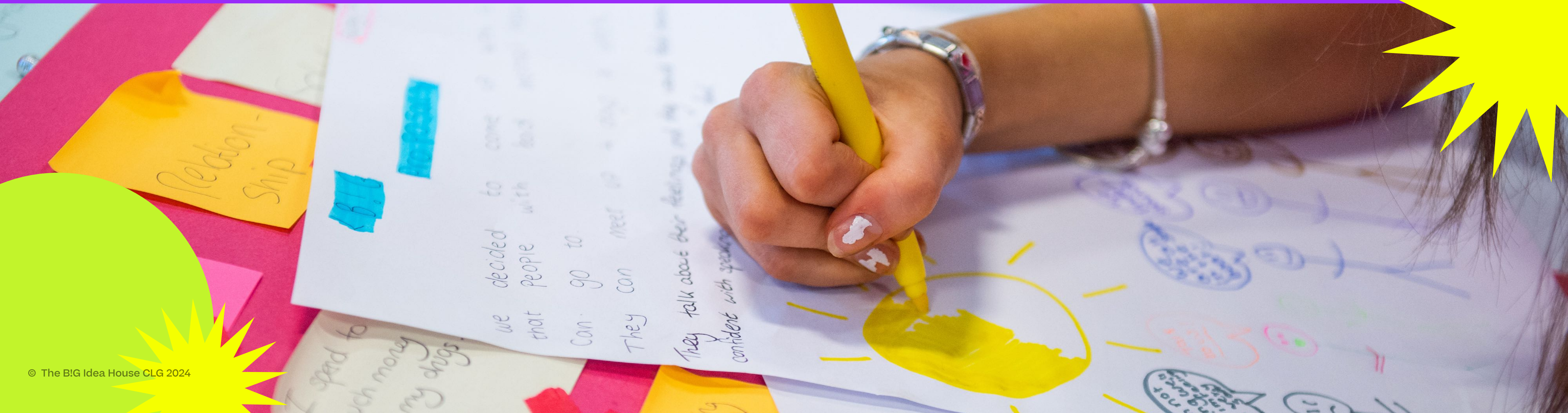
Shared Island funding has enabled The B!G Idea to collaborate with Ulster University, as an education partner, and Big Motive, as a strategic partner, on expanding the programme in Northern Ireland. The Shared Island initiative aims to empower youth creative thinking and build cross-border connections between educators, industry, and the creative sector. Alongside Ulster University and Big Motive, activities undertaken under this project by The B!G Idea have involved researching the Northern Irish education system and policy landscape, gathering stakeholder perspectives, and consolidating findings on strategic opportunities. These activities support The B!G Idea's integration into the Northern Irish context to boost creative skills and networks for young people, advancing Shared Island goals. The partnerships and phased approach have enabled insight-driven expansion tailored to Northern Ireland's unique opportunities as part of the island-wide programme.



This report summarises findings from qualitative research assessing the potential for The B!G Idea in the Northern Irish educational landscape. The research was led by education partners Ulster University as part of this Shared Island initiative. It involved observations, data analysis and interactive workshops with key stakeholders across Northern Ireland's education system and creative industries.

The research gathered insights on programme alignment, opportunities and challenges from diverse perspectives, including policymakers, school leaders, teachers, youth workers, creatives and funders. Ulster University's participatory approach encouraged open dialogue and collaborative analysis of how The B!G Idea's emphasis on empowering creative thinking in youth across the island of Ireland resonates with needs within the Northern Ireland education system.

Stakeholder perspectives suggest strong synergies between The B!G Idea's model and Northern Ireland's educational priorities and contexts. The research conducted by Ulster University provides a robust evidence base to inform strategic expansion of The B!G Idea into Northern Ireland and serves as the underlying framework for this report.



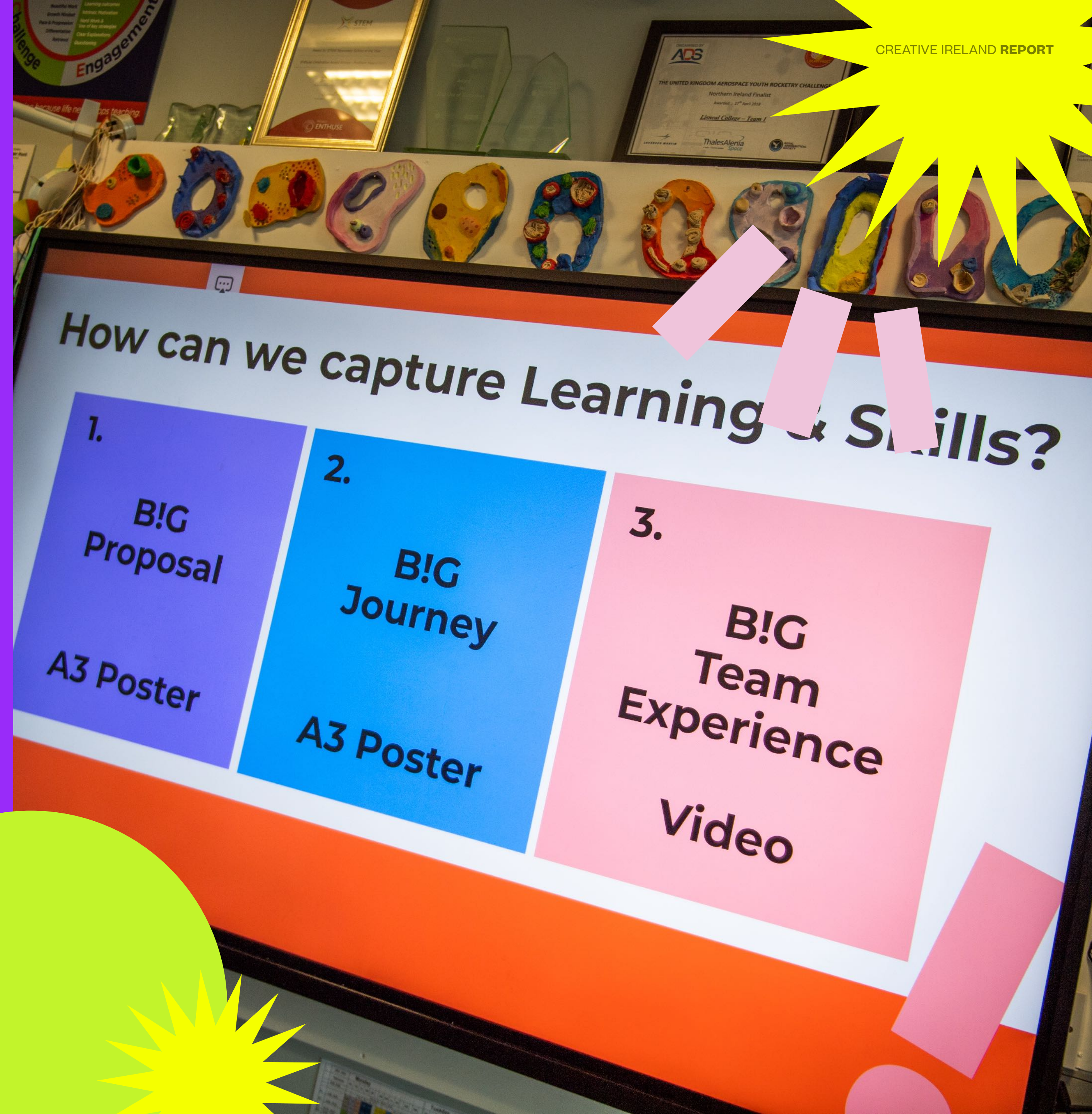
Main Educational Stakeholders in Northern Ireland

The administration of education in Northern Ireland involves multiple governmental and sectoral organisations with intricately interwoven roles and responsibilities. While the Department of Education holds overall accountability to the Northern Ireland Assembly, it is supported by various arm's length bodies that provide specialised functions. This complex web of actors undertakes different aspects of education management, from policy setting to curriculum development, school oversight, teacher employment, and beyond. Successful implementation of new programmes necessitates engagement across this multifaceted system to align with policies and priorities.



The different supporting bodies provide the following functions:

- The Education Authority oversees schools and ensures service provision for children.
- CCEA leads curriculum development, exams, and assessment.
- The Education and Training Inspectorate inspects education standards across NI.
- The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools employs teachers and advises Catholic schools.
- NI Council for Integrated Education encourages integrated education.
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta promotes Irish-medium education.
- The Controlled Schools' Support Council enhances education in controlled schools.



Schools are either selective Grammar schools or non-selective secondary schools, reflecting NI's academic selection system. Further education colleges offer curricula aligned with The B!G Idea's approach. Higher education institutions educate teachers, provide research, and can support mentor programmes.

This complex web of actors undertakes different aspects of education management, from policy setting to curriculum development, school oversight, teacher employment, and beyond. Successful implementation of new programmes necessitates engagement across this multifaceted system to align with policies and priorities.



Research Aims, Process & Methods

The research undertaken as part of this project was undertaken by The B!G Idea (lead partner), Big Motive (strategic partner) and Ulster University (education partner). The workshops were designed and facilitated by The B!G Idea and Big Motive, while the research was directed and formulated by Ulster University.

This research aimed to investigate the suitability of The B!G Idea programme for the Northern Ireland educational ecosystem. This included exploring alignment with educational objectives and learning outcomes in Northern Ireland, analysing secondary data on participant experiences in the existing Big Idea

programme, conducting stakeholder engagement to gather perspectives, and employing design thinking techniques to identify challenges and opportunities. The combined analysis informs this report on the potential for implementing The B!G Idea programme in Northern Ireland.

Research Process

Qualitative research methods were utilised to gather and analyse non-numerical data in order to understand the suitability of The B!G Idea programme within the context of the Northern Ireland educational ecosystem. Qualitative methods provide rich, detailed insights into the subjective experiences of participants (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). A key qualitative method used was thematic analysis - a systematic approach to identifying, analysing and interpreting themes within the data. This allowed the complexity of perspectives gathered to be understood.

During project meetings, it was proposed by Ulster University that the research be conducted via a stakeholder workshop, observation of the student cross-border workshop and utilisation of existing transcripts gathered by The B!G Idea from previous years' participants.

Specific research activities included interviews with stakeholders in Northern Ireland's education system and creative industries, focus groups with students and educators, and analysis of documents such as educational policies and The B!G Idea curriculum. Data was coded to identify key themes related to the research questions. Themes were then analysed and interpreted in order to develop recommendations on the feasibility of The B!G Idea in Northern Ireland. Thematic analysis enabled the qualitative data to be organised into meaningful themes that captured the essence of participants' experiences and perspectives on the potential of The B!G Idea programme. (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024). The Ulster University team then utilised a logic model to analyse the findings from the different research activities.

This helped to integrate the data from the various sources in a structured way. It also identified the key outcomes relevant to assessing the suitability of The B!G Idea programme for Northern Ireland (see Appendix 1). It also aided in synthesising and making sense of the insights gathered through the mixed methods approach.



Research Timeline

This research project has been conducted over four months between November 2023 and February 2024 as shown in Figure 1.

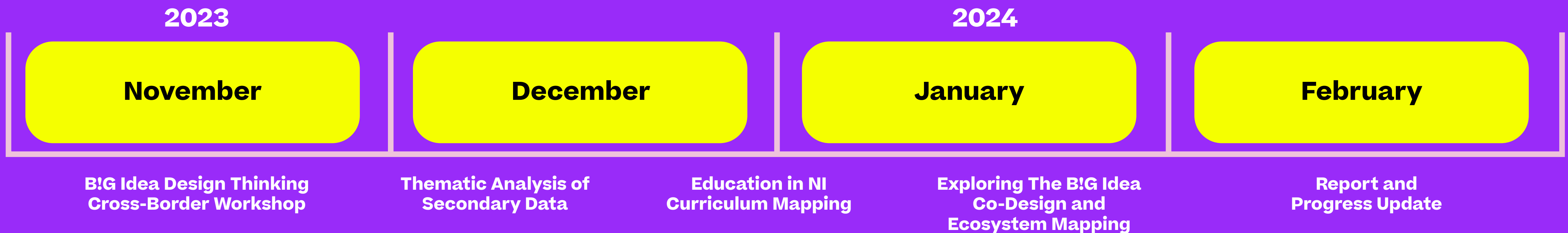


Figure 1: Research Timeline

Research Activities

Four key research activities were led by Ulster University, in conjunction with The B!G Idea and Big Motive, to explore opportunities for The B!G Idea programme in Northern Ireland.

Cross-border Creative Workshop Observation

A B!G Idea design thinking workshop co-created by Big Motive and The B!G Idea, involving students and teachers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, was hosted by Ulster University on its Belfast campus. The workshop introduced participants to creative thinking principles through interactive activities focused on developing solutions to social problems. Participants included 18 young people and five teachers from a range of settings including two post-primary schools and two youth education settings. Fifty-seven percent of the group were from settings in the Republic of Ireland and forty-three percent from Northern Ireland. Two B!G Idea industry mentors also attended.

The workshop successfully promoted creative thinking, collaboration, and empathetic problem-solving. Pre- and post-workshop questionnaires measured impacts on creative thinking. Notably, while 83% initially agreed they incorporate creative activities daily, after the workshop 100% expressed being more inclined to do so. All students agreed the workshop positively influenced their creative skills development.

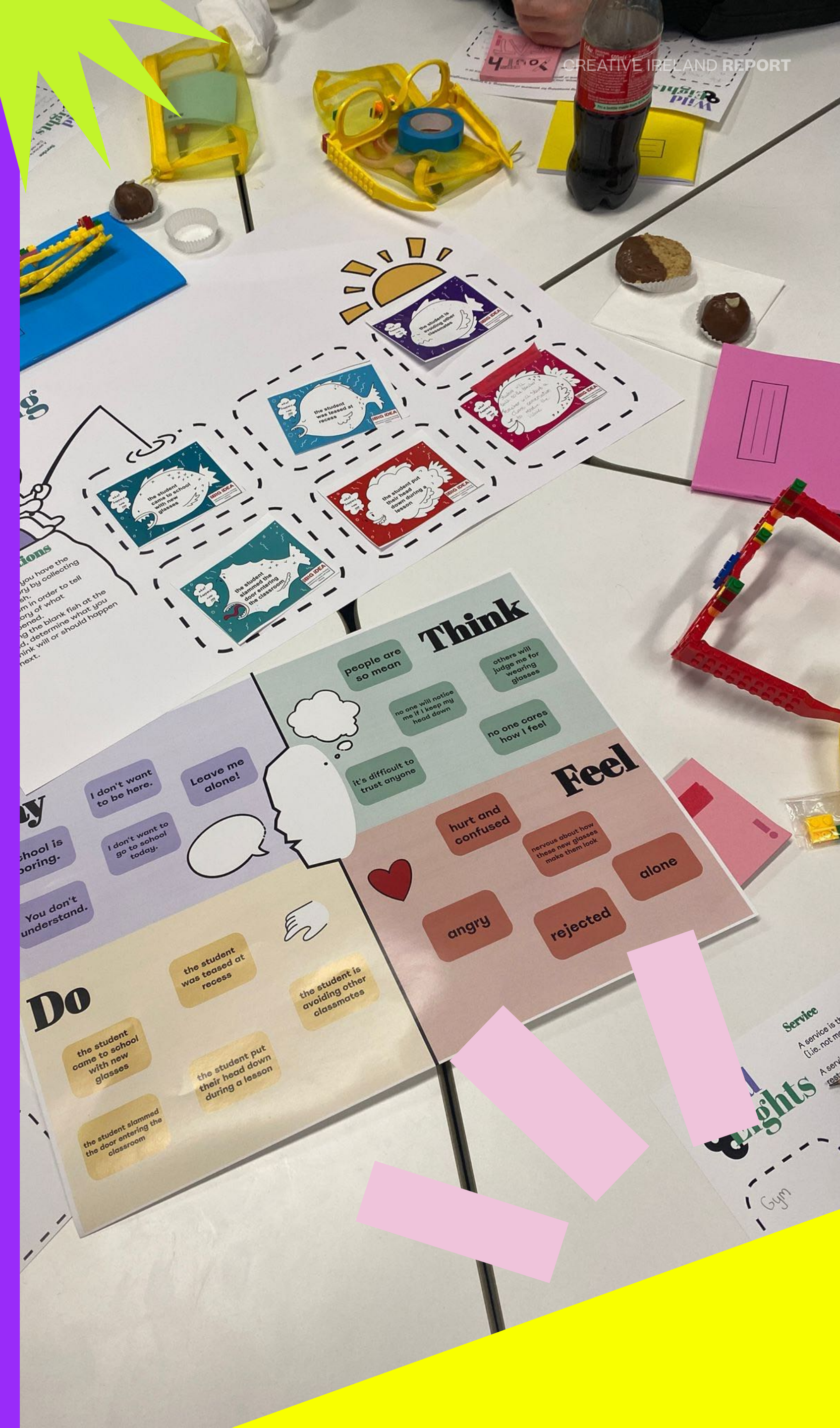
Observing the workshop in action provided valuable first-hand insights into The B!G Idea's programme delivery and pedagogy. These observations by Ulster University informed the development of subsequent research approaches.



Thematic analysis was conducted by Ulster University on 36 transcripts of student and teacher evaluations from The B!G Idea's initial years in the Republic of Ireland. The transcripts captured feedback from 28 students aged 15-19 and eight teachers across various secondary school subjects. All teachers were from secondary schools representing a range of subject backgrounds including, Geography and Environmental Studies, Home Economics, Science, History and Business Studies. This qualitative dataset provided subjective insights into participant experiences and programme outcomes. The student dataset, encompassing diverse perspectives and experiences, offered insights into programme engagement, skills development, and influences on learning and personal growth. The teacher interviews provided a complementary viewpoint, concentrating on curriculum integration, skill building amongst students, and overall programme effectiveness within educational environments.

Collectively, the student and teacher data presents a comprehensive picture of how the programme operates in practice. The varied student narratives illustrate individual journeys, while teacher commentaries detail implementation and observable impacts from an instructor standpoint. This multi-dimensional qualitative evidence informs a nuanced understanding of the potential value and challenges of embedding an initiative within formal educational settings (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024).

As these interviews were conducted by The B!G Idea team, the questions focused on general reflections rather than specific research goals. Ulster University focused on coding emerging themes, thereby gaining insights regarding potential alignment with the NI curriculum. The most prevalent theme was linking learning to real-world societal issues like Hidden Poverty. Students remarked how the programme prompted them to consider issues they had not thought about in depth before. For example, this student talks about Hidden Poverty:




“Well we know that there’s so many ways that you can get into Hidden Poverty and we learnt that the Covid ’19 pandemic really influenced it. A lot of people are really struggling at the moment just from the effects of it... **Yeah it’s just mad, the main thing we looked at was the price of groceries and the effect it has on people and just some of the situations we just would never have known.**”

- *Female student*

Connecting with industry mentors was also frequently mentioned. Students valued seeing professional settings first-hand and teachers felt the industry links added credibility, exposing students to different career options. As one teacher noted, "it opened their eyes to different career paths" while one student remarked: "You actually get to see how the business is really done and the people behind it, so I think it's really good" (Female student).

Both students and teachers reported skill development through the programme's progression. Early research and ideation skills evolved into teamwork and communication capabilities. Teachers highlighted these transferable skills as vital for school and professional contexts.



“They’re developing collaborative skills, social skills within their own little groups and within the classroom as well. They’re well able to talk and put ideas forward, argue, disagree, whatever the case may be, but **those skills are vitally important for the workplace, for school, for going forward as well into senior cycle.**”

- *Teacher, Secondary School*

Students also reflected on assessing their strengths, like confidence and inspiration, and contributions to group work. As one student explained, “I was one of the few people that actually spoke up to get everyone into it.”

The overwhelmingly positive evaluations highlighted 12 key outcomes from participating in The B!G Idea. While not focused on NI curriculum fit, identifying these outcomes provides initial insights into potential compatibility and value-adds for Northern Ireland. The qualitative data reveals meaningful impacts through participants' direct voices.

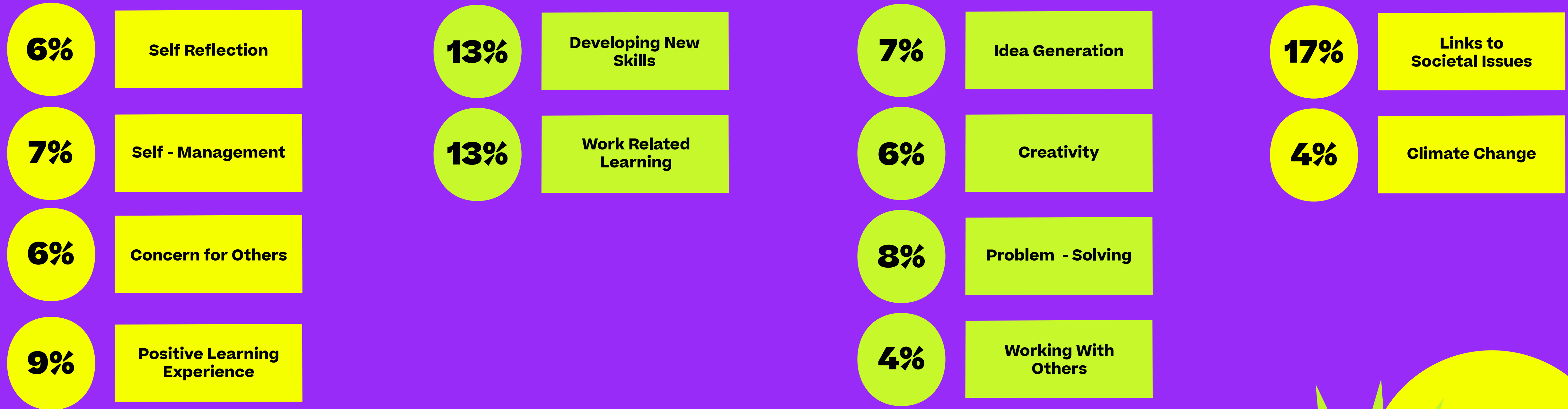


Figure 2 Key outcomes of The BIG Idea Programme that support NI curriculum

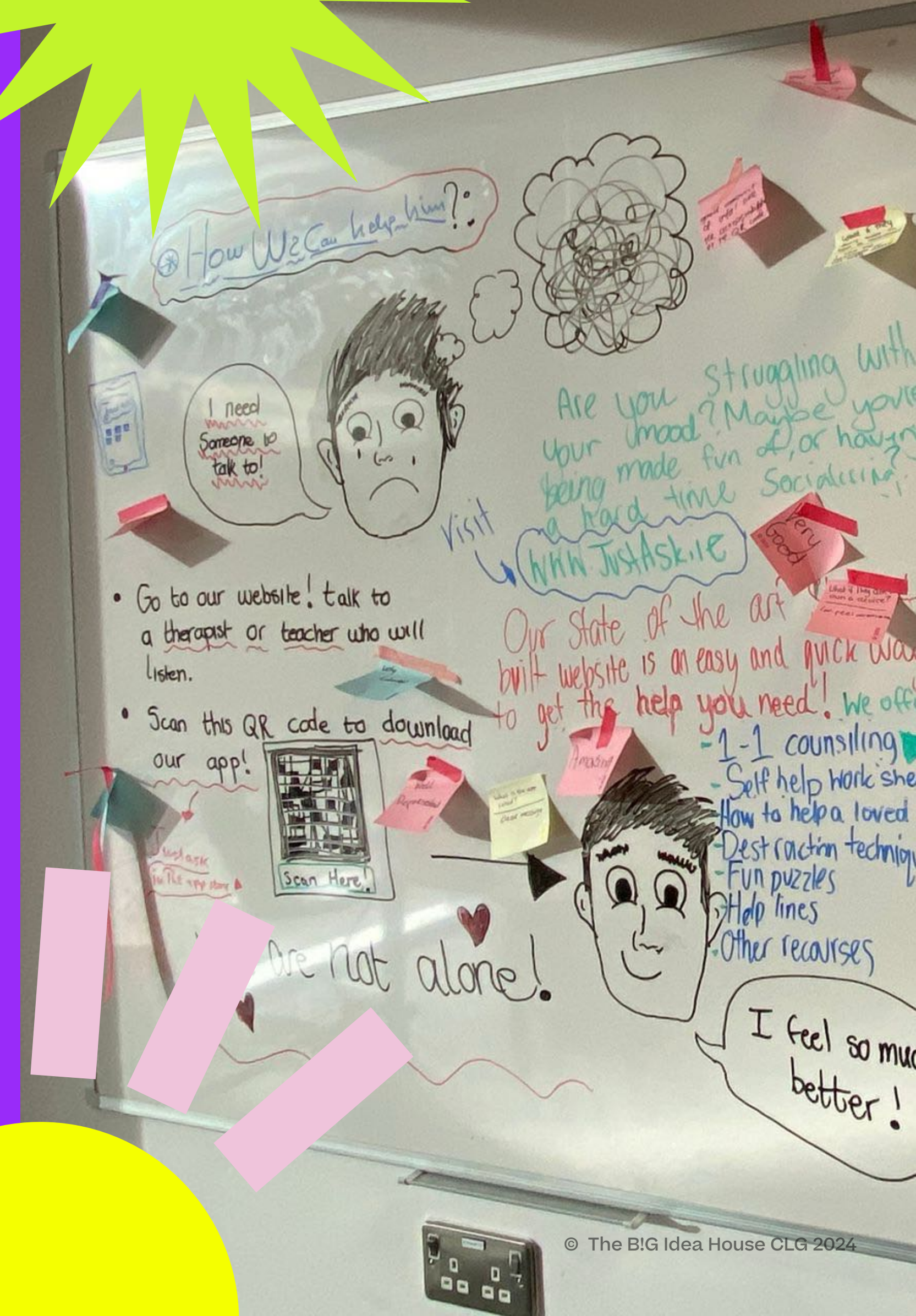
Curriculum Mapping

Introduced in 2007, the Northern Ireland Curriculum marked a significant shift towards skills-based learning and student-centred instruction. Moving away from rote learning, the new curriculum emphasises development of transferable life skills to meet societal and economic needs.

Grounded in sociocultural learning theory, the framework utilises instructional scaffolding to build cognitive competence and practical skills. Schools are recognised as pivotal in nurturing not just academic growth, but holistic development across emotional, moral, cultural, spiritual and physical domains. As a result, central emphasis is placed on subjects like 'Learning for Life and Work' (LLW) and the cross-curricular development of 'Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities' (TSPC). Learning experiences are shaped around students' unique identities, backgrounds and contexts.

Essentially, the Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to represent a thoughtful, forward-looking approach to prepare students for the 21st century (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024). The objective of this skill-centric, learner-centric model is to develop transferable competencies for life and work beyond the classroom. This scaffolding aims to build the skills and mindsets students need to meaningfully participate in life beyond school.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum's main aim is to 'empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives' and this is supported by three curricular objectives, 'to develop the young person as an individual', 'to develop the young person as a contributor to society' and 'to develop the young person as a contributor to the economy and environment' (CCEA, 2007).



Mapping themes from The B!G Idea participant data to Northern Ireland's KS4 curriculum highlighted strong alignment between the two. The B!G Idea programme promotes inclusivity and key attitudes like empathy, curiosity and resilience. One student explained how The B!G Idea grew her confidence and creativity: "I was never the most creative person...but through The B!G Idea it's kind of an eye opener how much I have creativity and what it can accomplish." In keeping with the six key skills of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities framework, The B!G Idea develops key skills like managing information, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, collaboration, and self-management. Students participating in The B!G Idea programme gather, classify, interpret, and present a wide range of information. Through their involvement in the programme, students learn to manage their time, stay organised, and remain motivated - key aspects of self-management.

They are also required to work within their group to effectively transition through processes from ideation to product design. To do this, students are required to engage in problem-solving and decision-making exercises throughout. One of the teachers was keen to identify synergies between the programme and thinking skills and personal capabilities:

“It complements the curriculum, thinking skills and personal capabilities where the students are problem solving, managing information, thinking critically, they are being creative, they are working with others and collaborating, and the students really enjoy it and are engaged with it so all for that reason.”

Teacher, Secondary School

The B!G Idea's focus industry connections and real-world issues resonate with the priority of key Northern Ireland stakeholders on connecting learning to life and work. The B!G Idea programme has been informed by years of industry experience and central to the experience for young people is to connect with industry mentors. Students address actual problems, ideate solutions, and develop innovations using design principles, digital tools and multimedia - crucial lifelong skills. There are examples from within the evaluation data which indicate that the pedagogy used in the design of The B!G Idea programme has supported students to develop their critical thinking skills and supported students to develop their knowledge and understanding of how these skills are used in industry, for example:

“Just that there’s a lot of different methods to use and that they use them very well to find out research and to really build on their own ideas. I didn’t realise that. **I thought they just came up with a brilliant idea and that’s it, but they really research things.** So, it’s been good to find out.”

Male Student

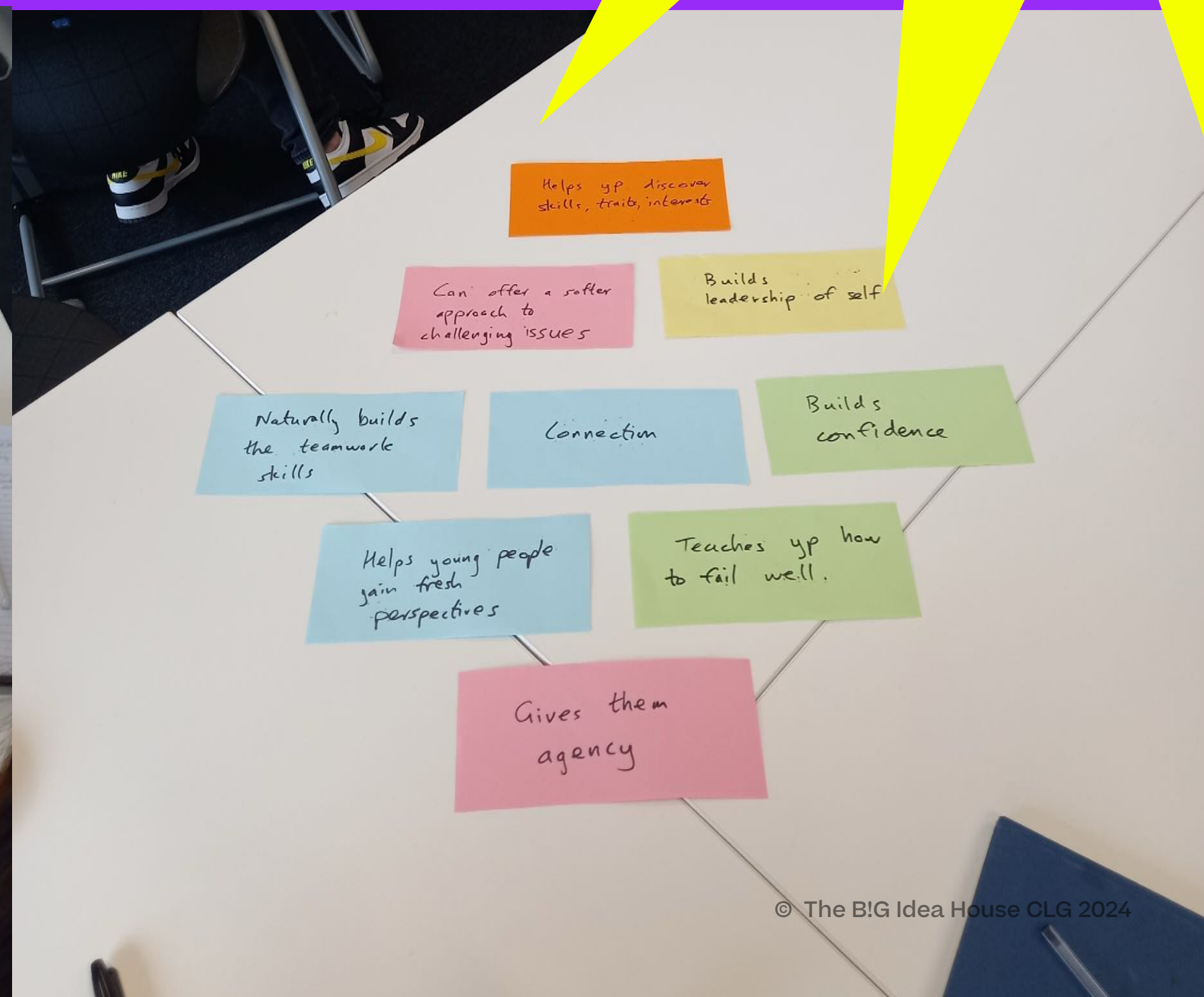
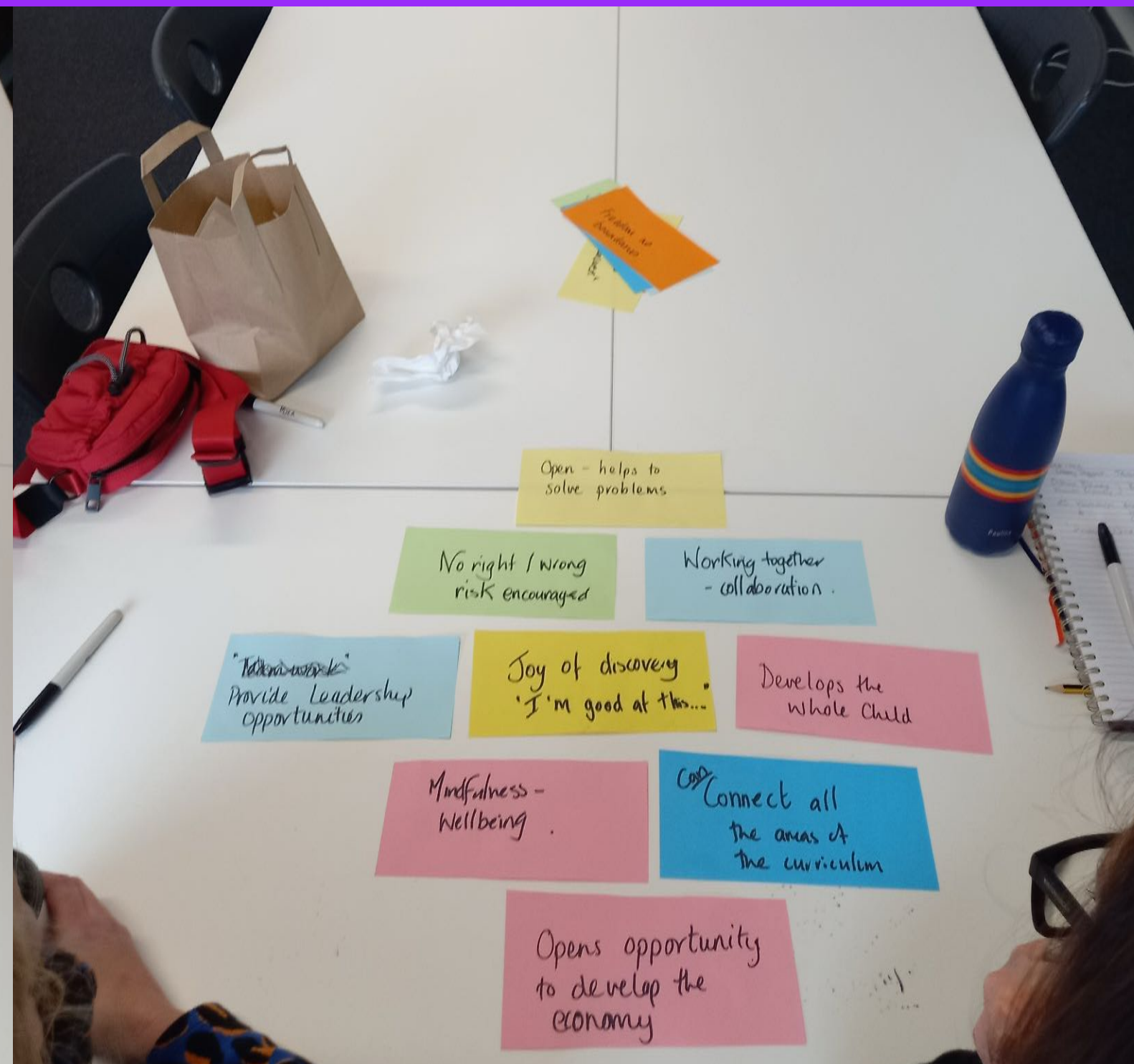
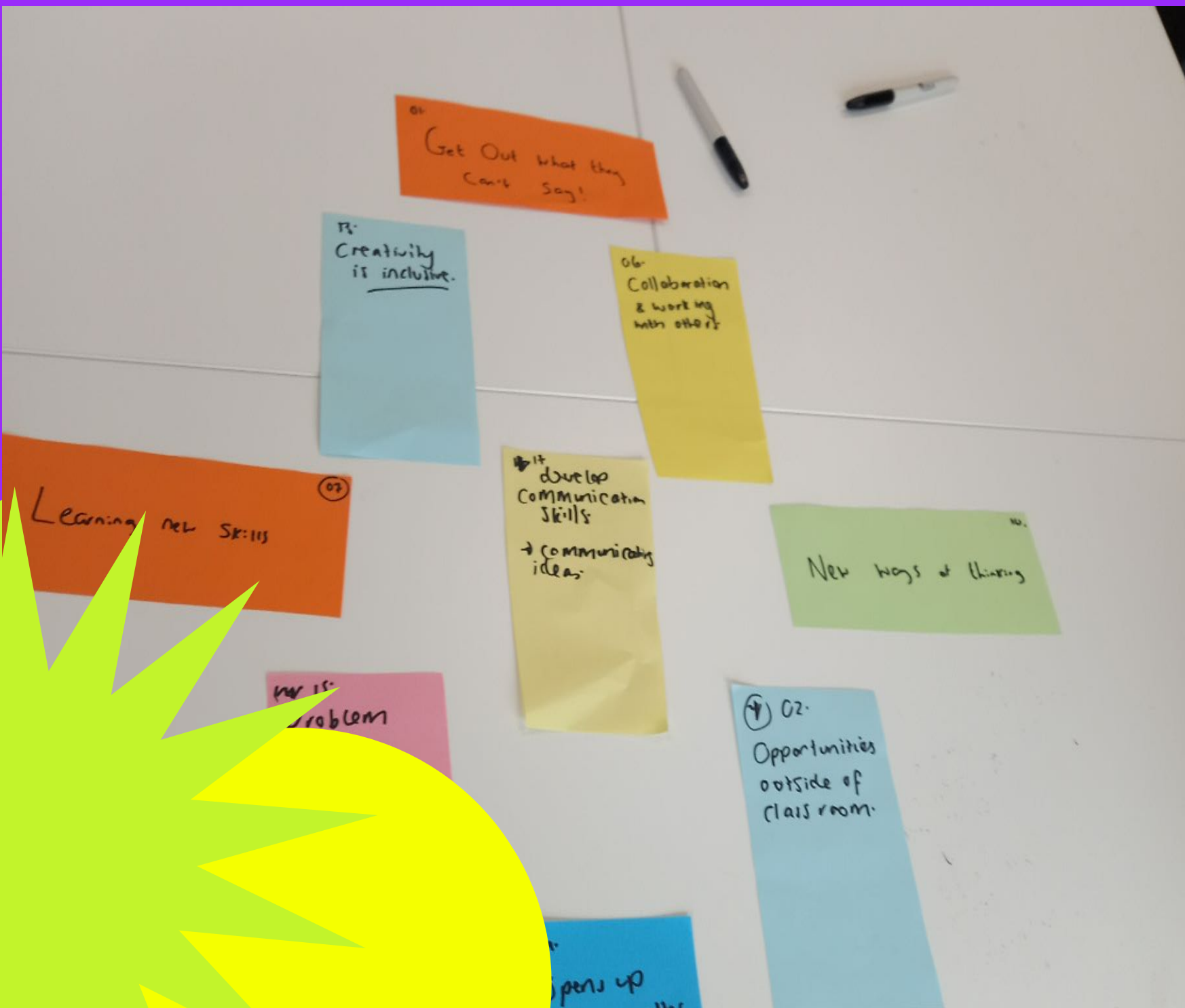
Stakeholder Workshop

A stakeholder engagement workshop was held on Thursday, 11th January 2024 at Ulster University's Belfast campus. In total, there were six participants comprising two post-primary senior leadership/teachers, two senior leaders from educational organisations, one representative from a funding organisation, and one mentor/industry representative. Ulster University proposed conducting qualitative data gathering through an interactive workshop rather than a conventional focus group. This format aimed to bolster engagement and participation among attendees. It also facilitated contextualising The BIG Idea programme within broader conversations around the value of creative thinking skills for students and teachers. Additionally, the workshop enabled practical exploration of how The BIG Idea could align with and enrich the Northern Ireland curriculum.

The co-designed workshop engaged educational stakeholders to explore curriculum fit, policy alignment, and funding for potentially expanding The BIG Idea into Northern Ireland. The workshop aimed to inform and validate the wider design and implementation of potential future BIG Idea programmes within Northern Ireland's education system. A blend of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Design Thinking (DT) methods introduced stakeholders to The BIG Idea programme and prompted reflection on associated opportunities and challenges. This encompassed discussing the value of creativity in education and investigating alignment with the Northern Ireland Curriculum, specifically at Key Stage 4. The interactive format enabled stakeholders to actively share perspectives on introducing The BIG Idea in the local context, highlighting considerations for maximising fit and impact in schools.



Their insights and feedback will shape next steps in determining the feasibility of expanding The BIG Idea across the educational ecosystem in Northern Ireland. Stakeholders identified goals like developing thinking skills, achieving through experimentation, and connecting curriculum areas. A word cloud of workshop responses highlighted outcomes like confidence, critical thinking, and teamwork.



Positive Attributes of The B!G Idea Programme

Stakeholders participating in the co-designed stakeholder workshop, having reflected on earlier themes (such as creativity in education), identified a range of positive attributes related to The B!G Idea programme and the perceived value of the programme if it were to be provided to schools and young people in Northern Ireland as shown in Figure 10. It is important to note that stakeholders were not evaluating the programme, however, contemplating and imagining possible advantages of the programme for young people in education within Northern Ireland generated a range of possible attributes as shown.

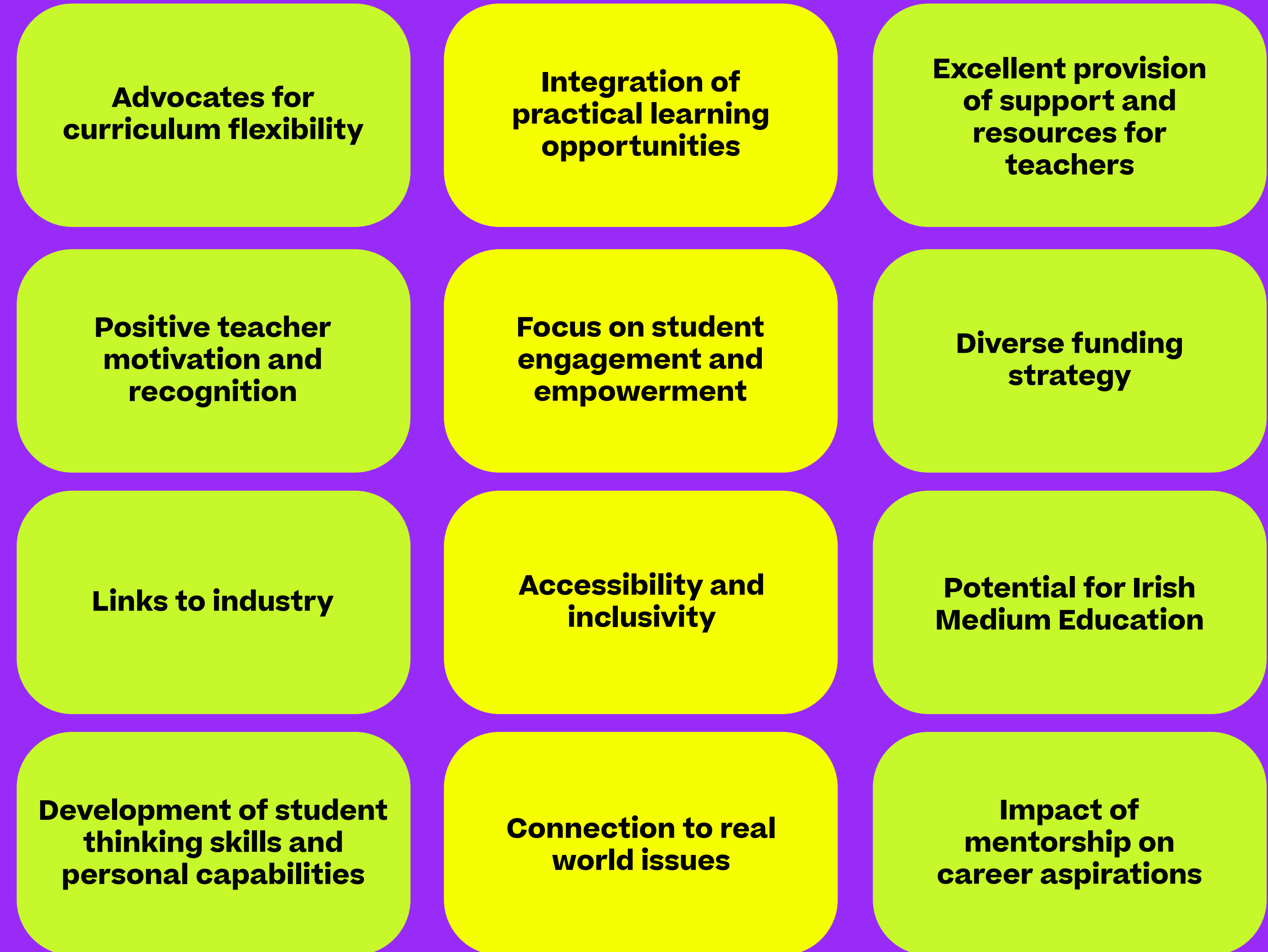


Figure 4: What are the positives of The B!G Idea programme?

Challenges Regarding Future Implementation Within Northern Ireland Schools

The focus group discussion identified several key challenges regarding expanding The B!G Idea programme into Northern Ireland schools.

1. Examination-focused education system - Stakeholders noted the strong emphasis on exam outcomes in Northern Ireland's "exam factory" system. This fixation on exam preparation across Key Stages 4 and 5 limits time for new content, posing barriers to integrating The B!G Idea.
2. Timetabling constraints - The B!G Idea's extended 25-workshop format is misaligned with Northern Ireland's rigid 35-minute class structure. For in-school delivery, the programme would need condensing to 10-12 workshops to fit timetables.
3. Curriculum integration challenges - Given Key Stage 4 exam pressures, stakeholders viewed directly embedding the current B!G Idea model into the statutory curriculum as unfeasible. Some reimagining may be required for Northern Ireland compatibility.

4. Teacher professional development - Unlike the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland lacks comparable teacher training structures. Views differed on whether CPD certification would incentivise engagement. Integration into initial teacher education could raise awareness.

5. Wider political concerns - At the time of the workshop in January 2024, Northern Ireland's inactive Executive was impeding education policy change and leadership. Broader political instability poses risks for new programme adoption.\

In summary, while stakeholders recognised The B!G Idea's merits, several contextual factors could hinder implementation in Northern Ireland. However, with insight and innovation, these need not be intractable barriers. From systemic exam focus to constrained timetables and teacher development structures, these challenges highlight the value that The B!G Idea initiative could bring to the Northern Irish educational landscape. With strategic adaptation and tireless advocacy, these challenges can become springboards for even greater impact. What may first appear misaligned can spark important conversations about shaping an education system fit for the future (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024).



Figure 5: Challenges for The BIG Idea regarding future implementation within Northern Ireland schools.

Opportunities Regarding Future Implementation Within Northern Ireland Schools

The focus group discussion highlighted several potential opportunities for The B!G Idea programme in the Northern Ireland context:

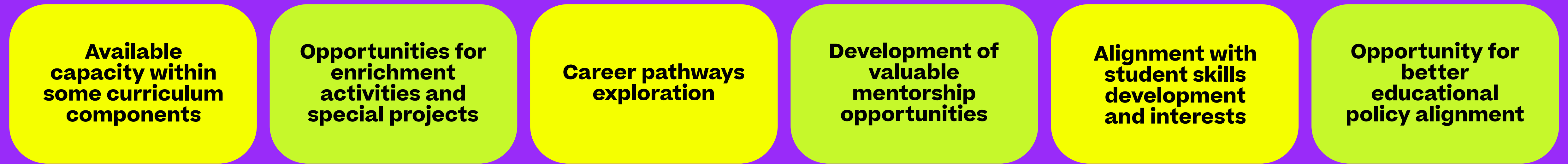


Figure 6: Where might The B!G Idea be able to support schools and young people in Northern Ireland?

1. Curricular capacity – Direct integration into the core curriculum poses challenges, however, some areas could provide openings to incorporate elements of The B!G Idea programme. For example, careers education classes or themed ‘squash days’ collapsing regular timetables at Key Stage 3. Developing modular 10-12 week programmes may align with Learning for Life and Work classes across different year groups.

“Or some schools at Key Stage 3 do a squash day... They take a day for a Year 8, 9 or 10, and they have like a thematic day. **That's where they will be bringing in organisations to really help these young people flourish and really demonstrate how they've been teaching thinking skills and personal capabilities.**”

- School Leader



2. Enrichment activities – Stakeholders suggested one-off ‘collapse days’ at Key Stage 3, programming at the end of Year 13 when exams finish, and EOTAS groups as avenues for more intensive experiential enrichment activities. The industry connections and real-world learning within The BIG Idea could greatly empower and broaden horizons for vulnerable student groups in EOTAS programmes.

" ...some of those young people are leaving our system with no GCSE's. To give them an opportunity to be mentored by industry leaders and to show **different pathways and career options that really appreciate some creativity, but there is some type of accreditation, I think, would be really very interesting.**"

Educational Stakeholder

3. Careers pathways – The B!G Idea strongly resonates with the aims of careers education in preparing students for future pathways. Integration into Key Stage 3 careers classes as either standalone or modular content was advised by stakeholders. Additionally, condensed programmes could work as end of Year 13 enrichment following exams. The B!G Idea could also help address existing gaps in careers support, for example, by providing Irish-language speaking mentors to enrich offerings within Irish-medium schools. For one school leader, the high quality of the teacher support resources was a key feature, especially when potentially exploring the use of the programme for Careers at Key Stage 3. Often, delivery of careers is by non-specialist teachers, therefore an ‘off-the-shelf’ high quality programme could potentially add considerable value for schools although the length of the programme would still need to be reduced to between 10 or 12 sessions (35 minutes in length).

4. Mentorship – Quality mentorship was highlighted as highly impactful by all stakeholders. Despite some existing mentor programmes, one school leader noted difficulties accessing them due to restrictive criteria. The B!G Idea’s integrated industry mentors were seen as a particularly beneficial element. Expanding industry connections and mentorship opportunities for Northern Ireland students could add significant value.

5. Skills development – The diversity of real-world skills cultivated through The B!G Idea’s problem-based learning and integrated industry mentorship closely aligns with student interests and aptitudes. For wider reach, developing tailored extracurricular or community-based models outside the classroom could be explored.

“For people to see that they could go to different jobs and gather a range of different skills in different areas that would actually give them a broader opportunity to work in the sector that they want. **I feel like that's only going to come from the people working in the sector, who know the challenges in the sector.**”

- Funding Stakeholder

6. Policy influence – While acknowledging curriculum and assessment policies pose implementation barriers, stakeholders noted The B!G Idea could positively influence the upcoming NI curriculum refresh. With data demonstrating benefits, The B!G Idea provides a compelling case study for integrating more creative, collaborative and student-led learning where possible.



Next Steps

The research study conducted by Ulster University aimed to explore The B!G Idea's suitability for Northern Ireland's education ecosystem from design and education perspectives. The findings highlight strong alignment between The B!G Idea's themes/outcomes and the Northern Ireland Curriculum's aims and objectives. The B!G Idea's mission to "change the world with creative thinking, connecting young people in education with industry mentors for our collective future" (The B!G Idea, 2023) complements the NI Curriculum's overall aim to "empower young people to achieve their potential and make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives" (CCEA, 2007)."

The B!G Idea's real-world, community-focused model supports Northern Ireland priorities like 'Learning for Life and Work' and developing positive 'Attitudes and Dispositions'.

While complementarity is assured, implementing The B!G Idea in Northern Ireland poses challenges in navigating the post-primary model, particularly the lack of Transition Year. The cumulative journey of The B!G Idea programme enables participants to develop skills and purpose over time. Condensing the programme to fit school timetables is necessary but risks compromising outcomes. Careful adaptation is needed to retain core elements while adjusting to constraints (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024).

A summary of The B!G Idea programme's assets, research actions and corresponding potential for programme growth in NI is provided in Figure 7.



Potential for Programme Growth in NI

Off the Shelf
Tried and tested programmes that can be adapted.

Flexible
Programme elements can be scaled up or down as needed.

International Links
Programme has extensive industry and academic support.

Believer Network
Programme has extensive industry and academic support.

Design Thinking
Programme clearly addresses the requirements of modern working.

Addressing Gaps
Programme may help to provide support to groups currently under-represented eg. EOTAS.

Curriculum Support
Programme has the potential to support statutory curriculum.

Research Actions

Scoping
Establishing ways of working by observing programme elements in action.

Stakeholder Workshop
Design-thinking workshop to consult with teachers and stakeholders on potential of the programme for NI.

Secondary Data
Reports and evaluations from previous programme activity.

Evaluation
Secondary 'evidence' includes transcripts from participants who have previously taken part in programme activity.

Curricular Mapping
Review of data and cross-referencing with NI Curriculum to evaluate potential fit.

Ecosystem Mapping
Identification of future stakeholders to include funders and possible delivery partners.

Programme Assets

Existing experienced staff having set up, delivered, improved and expanded programme to date

Widespread support for the programme extending to government, funders, stakeholders and academia

Existing extensive mentor networks with industry support

Award-winning programme with the capacity to improve and evolve

Diverse funding/ income streams with established funders/ investors

Figure 7: Summary of research outcomes and potential for The B!G Idea programme growth in Northern Ireland

Policy Alignment

There are a number of areas in which The BIG Idea can find synergies and opportunities for increased alignment between programme delivery and Northern Ireland government policy, including:



Independent Review of Education

The Independent Review of Education (Bloomer et al., 2023) highlighted several areas where The BIG Idea's approach aligns with recommendations on tackling disadvantage, supporting wellbeing, developing skills and providing professional learning for teachers.

While complementarity is assured, implementing The BIG Idea in Northern Ireland poses challenges in navigating the post-primary model, particularly the lack of Transition Year. The cumulative journey of The BIG Idea programme enables participants to develop skills and purpose over time. Condensing the programme to fit school timetables is necessary but risks compromising outcomes. Careful adaptation is needed to retain core elements while adjusting to constraints (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024).

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A 10x Economy and the Skills Strategy

The Department for the Economy's '10x Economy' vision seeks to drive innovation and inspire entrepreneurship amongst youth (DfE, 2021). Outcomes like confidence, creativity and resilience strongly resonate with the guiding principles. The subsequent Skills Strategy calls for transformative change in developing future-focused skills for productivity and inequality reduction. As an established programme cultivating these skills, The B!G Idea can answer this call and demonstrate its role in skills transformation.

There are notable synergies regarding the broader aims of this strategy and the outcomes and benefits of participation in The B!G Idea programming for young people, for example, the 10x Economy strategy identifies that 'We need to inspire future generations to work in and create their own businesses and provide opportunities for our talented young people, with the ultimate goal of attaining and retaining these entrepreneurs and innovators of tomorrow' (DfE, 2021, p.13).



Conclusion

Upon comprehensive examination of The B!G Idea programme, inclusive of stakeholder consultations and investigation of prevailing data sets, it has become clear that the programme is ideally situated for a dynamic extension into the Northern Ireland environment. This core observation underscores the scheme's capacity for substantial influence throughout the entirety of Ireland.

In conjunction with our Ulster University partners, a series of strategic and pragmatic steps are proposed, presented in Table 1.

Aspiration	Next Steps
Offer The B!G Idea programme to all young people across Ireland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify groups of young people for further exploration of The B!G Idea programme delivery in Northern Ireland within the short-term. 2. Develop a complementary research strand to support the programme as it grows and evolves.
Evolve The B!G Idea programme to align with curriculum delivery in Northern Ireland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the programme delivery team to remodel The B!G Idea programme for flexible delivery in Northern Ireland. 2. Explore the potential of delivering the programme in alternative settings, particularly youth or community - based settings in Northern Ireland.
Extend and develop networks of support in Northern Ireland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build relationships with government departments, local government, sectoral organisations, funders, delivery partners, educational, community, and youth organisations in Northern Ireland. 2. Grow the network of 'Believers' and 'Mentors' within industry and academia.
Establish The B!G Idea as an all-island programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build relationships with government departments, local government, sectoral organisations, funders, delivery partners, educational, community, and youth organisations in Northern Ireland. 2. Grow the network of 'Believers' and 'Mentors' within industry and academia.

Table 1: Strategic next steps

The proposal to offer The B!G Idea programme to the entire youth population of Ireland calls for a sustained emphasis on the particularities of the Northern Ireland environment and its associated parties. This entails pinpointing groups of adolescents who could instantly derive advantage from the programme in its present form, such as those attending EOTAS Centres, or with slight adjustments, by considering how the initiative may be customised, for instance, to complement a Key Stage 3 curriculum within Learning for Life and Work (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024). Concurrently, instituting a solid research component is paramount, supplying continuous data to reinforce and direct the programme's progressive development.

Synchronising The B!G Idea programme with the curriculum offerings in Northern Ireland represents not merely an aim but also an opening for creativity.

Amidst the current curriculum renewal in Northern Ireland, there lies a chance for ingenuity from governing entities. Reforming the programme to propose adaptable delivery frameworks, specifically crafted for Northern Ireland's distinctive educational setting, is vital. Additionally, there is considerable potential for growth to incorporate within the current Shared Education initiatives and partnerships between schools in Northern Ireland, and to consider a more comprehensive all-island school pairing, utilising The B!G Idea's established network in the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, implementing the programme in youth or community contexts presents new pathways for participation and influence, unbound by the curriculum and scheduling limitations underscored by certain educational stakeholders (McCaffery-Lau, Taggart & Magee, 2024).

Building a network of support in Northern Ireland requires integration and collaboration



Establishing strong relationships with a spectrum of stakeholders, including government, sectoral organisations, and community groups, will increase the programme's reach and impact. Cultivating the existing network of industry and academic 'Believers' and 'Mentors' is key to embedding the programme within the fabric of Northern Ireland's educational and professional communities.

In conclusion, introducing The B!G Idea programme to Northern Ireland represents more than mere expansion - it is strategic integration into an ecosystem where it naturally belongs, as this report has outlined. Through collaboration with key stakeholders, The B!G Idea can build on existing synergies to maximise its impact across Ireland.

This will involve continually adapting to align with the needs of young people north and south. By leveraging its inherent alignment with the Northern Ireland curriculum, tailoring delivery models and cultivating partnerships, The B!G Idea can put down enduring roots across the island and fulfil its potential for both learners and communities.



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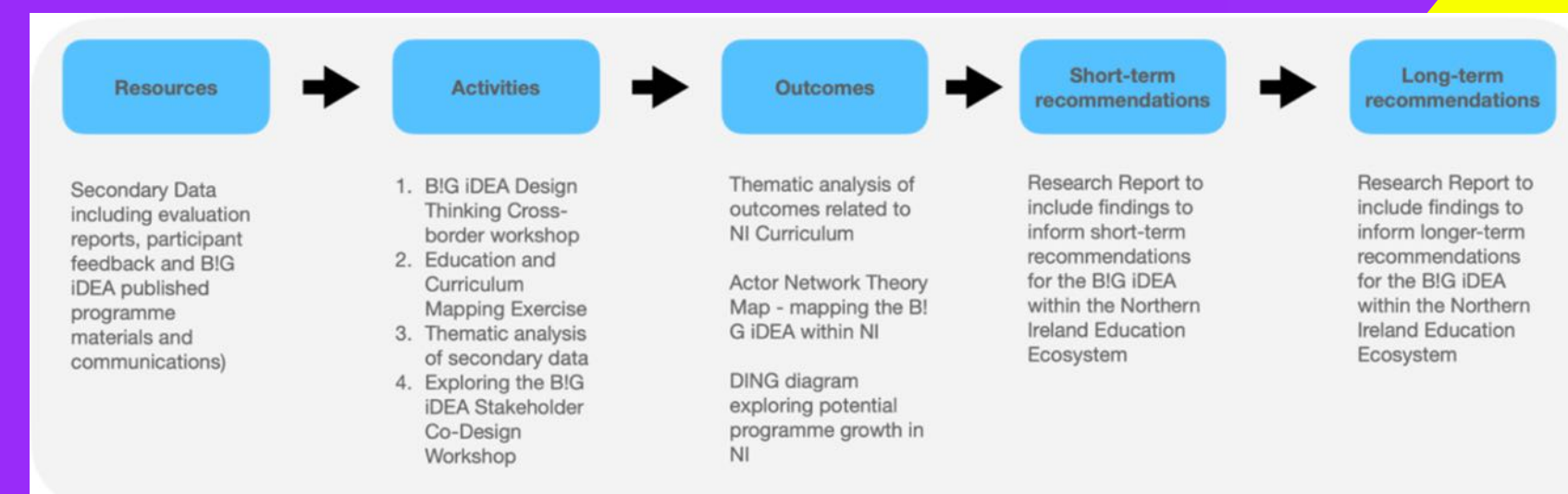
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Appendix 1



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