



Creative Youth Nurture Fund

Summary

	Timeframe	Funding
Strand A Nurture Fund	Mid 2026 to end 2027	Projects delivered in Ireland by a partner based in Ireland. €800k in funding in 2026–2027 to deliver approximately eight projects at a maximum of €100,000 per project.
Strand B Nurture Fund Shared Island	Mid 2026 to end 2028	Projects delivered on a Shared Island basis with one partner based in Ireland and one partner based in Northern Ireland. €1.5m in funding in 2026–2028 to deliver up to six projects at a maximum of €250,000 per project.



Isle of Song Creative Youth on a Shared Island. Photo: Alf Harvey

Who is Organising this Grant Call?

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government culture and wellbeing programme based in the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport with the ambition to inspire and transform people, places and communities through creativity.

We are committed to the vision that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential.

Our strategic goals are to:

- Establish a community of practice and participation
- Promote understanding of the value of creativity
- Measure impact and build evidence
- Embed creativity in public policy



*The Glór Dance Project, Creative Youth
Nurture Fund. Photo: Davi Matheson*

What is the Shared Island Initiative and how does it link with Creative Youth?

This Scheme has two strands covering (A) projects within Ireland and (B) projects on a Shared Island basis. This Shared Island dimension is being funded under the Shared Island initiative. The Government's Shared Island initiative aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future.

The objectives of the Shared Island/ Creative Ireland initiative are:

- 1 Connect people-to-people, community-to-community. Deploy culture and creativity – innovatively and collaboratively – as a strategy for wellbeing, social connection, or local economic development;
- 2 Enable communities, working with artists and the wider cultural and creative sectors to experience creativity through the lens of their counterparts, and ensure mobility of people across the island; Enhance broader community and civic understanding of the value of consensus amongst communities around a shared future, through the lens of cultural and creative engagement;
- 3 Ensure that initiatives are planned collaboratively on a shared island basis, to generate tangible and sustainable legacies into the future.

The role of Creative Ireland in the Government's Shared Island initiative is being continue until 2028. As part of this, Creative Youth aims to explore further creative opportunities to connect and create a shared sense of community, through participation in creative and cultural activity and engagement with and for young people.

Youth-led programmes can give young people the tools to imagine themselves as co-creators of change, encourage cultural connection and pride of place and can help young people imagine what it means to live on an island that is both diverse and interconnected.

Where we have come from: The Creative Youth Nurture Fund 2023-25 and the Creative Youth on a Shared Island Funding Scheme 2024-25

Under the Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027, new initiatives were developed to reach children and young people from many different backgrounds delivering creative projects in which they had a central role.

This included:

- The pilot Creative Youth Nurture Fund 2023–2025, which supported nine projects to deliver youth-led creative engagement by young people, focusing on those that are seldom heard and at risk of disadvantage. With youth voice at their core, the projects worked with young people from the Travelling Community, those seeking protection or granted refugee status, those with chronic health conditions, those in the youth detention system and those transitioning from the care system, among others. An evaluation of the pilot scheme attributed much of its positive outcomes to its youth-led ethos, and the deep commitment of project teams who built the trust necessary for change to occur. Details of the nine projects, and an evaluation of their impact, can be found here.

- Through the Governments' Shared Island Initiative, the Creative Youth on a Shared Island 2024–2025 funding scheme supported six projects to bring children and young people from across the island of Ireland together to nurture collaboration, understanding, and hope for the future through active participation in creative projects. Details of these Projects can be found here.



What do we mean by Creativity?

Creativity involves innate human abilities and learned skills. Everyone has the capacity for creative engagement and expression; and this experience is an act of personal fulfilment. As expressed by children and young people, it has no limits and is creating ideas from one's own mind to share with others. At the heart of creativity is the freedom to take risks, to use imagination and the potential to evoke a sense of fun, wonder and happiness. For the purposes of the Creative Youth Plan, the most appropriate skills and behaviours are those which support development and learning such as curiosity, resilience, imagination, discipline, and collaboration.

Forms of creativity for projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Animation
- Architecture
- Augmented & virtual reality
- Circus
- Coding
- Comedy
- Cooking
- Creative Digital Technology
- Creative Writing
- Cultural heritage
- Dance (all types)
- Design (all kinds)
- Digital Art
- Digital games
- Fashion
- Film
- Irish Language Arts
- Literature
- Multi-disciplinary arts
- Murals
- Music (all genres)
- Participatory Arts
- Podcasting
- Storytelling
- Street Art & Spectacle
- Theatre
- Traditional arts
- Visual arts

A project can utilise a range of different creative disciplines/artforms across their lifetime.

What are we looking for?

Based on the key principle of youth participation in decision making, this Scheme aims to build on the success of the pilot schemes: Creative Youth Nurture Fund 2023–25 and Creative Youth on a Shared Island 2024–25, through one scheme that expands its reach across the island of Ireland in **two strands**:

Strand A: Nurture Fund 2026–2027

Strand B: Nurture Fund: Shared Island 2026–2028

Across both strands, we are looking for creative and cultural projects that take place outside of the school setting and are rooted in the local community. These projects should adopt a creative approach and be shaped by the active input and participation of children and young people. This funding may be used for new projects or to expand an existing project or pilot. The scheme encourages collaboration between organisations that can assemble a strong project team to deliver empowering projects that facilitate quality interactions between young people through a creative journey.

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- Applicants will be expected to apply a youth-led approach, for example by applying the [National Framework for Children and Young People's People's Participation in Decision-making](#) (Appendix 2), to enable them to identify, develop and engage in a creative project. It is critical that young people have as much agency as possible in the design of the project.
 - Evaluation will be a key element of this initiative to help us identify potential areas for future development – therefore **an evaluator must be in place from the beginning of the project**. Successful applicants will be expected to participate in the evaluation process and share their learnings. This will entail a systematic and objective assessment in the form of a written report, which will demonstrate the participation of children and young people. This evaluation will focus on measuring impact, capturing key learnings and assessing the sustainability of the project. In addition, projects are required to apply the [Creative Youth Evaluation Guidelines](#), completing the pre and post project evaluation forms.
 - The evaluation of the project may feed into research of the overall Creative Youth Plan and Shared Island Initiative that will be carried out between 2026–2028. The selection of projects will take into account broad representation in terms of priority groups and location.
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Funding and Criteria

Strand A – Nurture Fund 2026–2027

- Up to €800k is available for approximately eight projects of up to a maximum of €100k in total for delivery between 2026 and 2027.
- The Nurture Fund Strand (A) aims to reach groups of young people that are often “seldom heard” (see Appendix 3).
- With both the project lead and activity based in Ireland, Creative Ireland is looking for partners that can work with, and have experience with, the following specified target groups of children and young people **from birth up to 24 years**, and engage them in exciting creative projects:
 - Living with physical or intellectual disabilities and the neurodivergent community
 - Refugees and asylum-seekers
 - Living with mental health issues
 - LGBTQI+ community
 - Traveller and/or Roma communities
 - Those within, or transitioning from, the care system
 - Engaged with the youth justice system/ incarcerated persons and ex-offenders
 - Those at high risk of socio-economic deprivation

Strand B – Nurture Fund: Shared Island 2026–2028

- Up to €1.5 million is available for six projects, each with a maximum of €250k in total for delivery between 2026 and 2028.
- Projects must enable quality **in-person** engagement between children and young people from both Ireland and Northern Ireland, with at least one project partner based in each jurisdiction. Acknowledging that engagement and participation may take time to build relationships and overcome geographic distances, these projects can commence in 2026 and run until the end of 2028.
- Participants should be aged between **6 and 24** years and the scheme aims to support at least two projects that will target seldom heard cohorts (Appendix 3).

Objectives of Nurture Fund: Shared Island 2026–2028 (Strand B):

- The use of culture and creativity to foster person-to-person connections between young people across the island of Ireland, and to provide the space for meaningful interactions
- To provide a greater understanding of the value of consensus amongst young people around a shared future, and to identify common themes of importance to young people through culture and creativity
- Enable young people across a range of communities, working with artists and the wider cultural and creative sectors, to experience creativity through the lens of their peers
- Projects under this strand are encouraged to contribute to the themes of the [Shared Home Place Programme](#), part of the Government’s [Shared Island Initiative](#).

We recognise that Shared Island projects will incur additional costs for project teams and project participants to travel and stay overnight as part of the project. This needs to be budgeted for at application stage.

Compulsory Elements of Application and Project Team

Team Structure/Composition

The project team must include expertise in the following areas:

- Artists, creative practitioners(s) or cultural / creative organizations (more than one permitted)
- Project Manager
- Support for participants (if needed, e.g. youth worker, occupational therapist, art therapist)
- Accountant (or services)
- Independent evaluator
- All organisations must be fully compliant with the Children First Act 2015 (Ireland) and/or The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 if dealing with or in contact with children and young people under 18 years of age

Essential Information for Successful Recipients

- The Creative Ireland Programme is administered through the Department of Culture, Communications, and Sport.
 - The administration of the grant must adhere to Circular 13/2014 – Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds. Grantees should read and familiarise themselves with this circular before commencing.
 - All grants are paid out on the basis of vouched expenditure. This means that grant amounts are recouped retrospectively once expenses have been incurred and paid for. Proof of each transaction must exist in the form of a receipt and the payment matched to a transaction on a bank statement or a financial management system.
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- Successful recipients of central Government funding will be required to sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA). A sample is available [here](#) and it will outline reporting requirements. Please note that there are several governance and reporting requirements as part of this fund for its duration. You will need to ensure that your project team has the capacity to manage this.
 - In addition, the Creative Ireland Programme aims to be an active funder. Our level of engagement with grantees will look like:
 - Grantee attendance at capacity building and training events provided by Creative Ireland.
 - Regular contact with Creative Ireland and responding to requests for budget updates, briefing material, communications and PR materials, and event details as they arise
 - Site visits and/or attendance at project events. This is an essential part of Creative Ireland's understanding of the context and progress of your project.
 - If deemed necessary by the Creative Ireland Programme, research or evaluation may be conducted independently of your own evaluator to support or assess your project.
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Financial and Budgeting Requirements

The grant can be spread as you see fit throughout the lifetime of the project, but expenditure per year must be agreed at the time of signing grant agreement. Feasible and realistic financial forecasting/spend is expected from all projects, with consideration to appropriate use of public funding.

When creating your budget please make sure you have discussed individual fees and project budgets as a team. We expect all members of your project team to agree your budget prior to the contract signing with Creative Ireland. You must ensure that the following areas are accounted for:

- **Project Management** – This fee should cover administrative staff time (for example to cover project management and/or financial administration), as well as any contribution towards overheads or other reasonable costs required to participate.
- **Evaluation** – This fee should be included to cover the cost of hiring an independent individual /company from the start to evaluate the impact of your project/project outcomes.
- **Remuneration** – We are looking for a transparent and competitive budget that remunerates individuals and organisations properly for their time. Fees for artists should be in line with recognised industry guidelines ([see information from the Arts Council on the remuneration and contracting of artists](#)).
- **Travel and Subsistence** – Appropriate budgeting for teams and participants (including support staff if required) to travel and attend events.
- **Materials** – We are interested in supporting low carbon solutions and environmentally friendly practice in project planning and delivery, as well as your choices of partners and suppliers.
- **FX Rate Fluctuations** – If transacting in multiple currencies.

Other Costs May Include

- Costs to appoint a team member with experience in youth participation.
- Costs to convene a diverse group of young people to design and oversee the implementation of the scheme.
- Documentation costs.
- Networking/showcasing of initiatives awarded funding through your scheme.
- Wraparound support depending on participant needs.
- Access costs especially for those young people with additional needs.

Co-Funding

We welcome co-funded projects – through other public funds, philanthropy or private sector contribution. If you are awaiting funds from an alternative source, please outline this in your application and include the timeframe when you expect to be notified of the outcome, as this may impact on your project timeline and budget requirements.

Ineligible Costs

Please note that ineligible expenditure includes:

- Costs not directly related to the project
- Retrospective costs i.e. expenditure which has taken place prior to the project approval date
- Capital requests for building improvements to workspaces and venues
- Applications relating to television series or a standalone advertising campaign.
- Additional overhead costs that exceed 15% of the total budget.

Eligibility

Applicants should be able to demonstrate:

- A commitment to supporting children and young people to access culture, creativity and the arts. (See broad definition above)
- How they can reach and support children and young people to engage in creative activities, outlining a participant recruitment plan
- How you will ensure children and young people are at the heart of decision making in the development of the creative initiative using best practice outlined in the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making
- How you will evaluate and report on the process and outcomes, with input from the children and young people involved
- Your governance procedures and proven track record in project management and financial/accounting/ budgeting management

Specific to Strand A:

- How you can reach and support children and young people who experience barriers to access creative opportunities, in particular those within one of the priority groups listed above.

Specific to Strand B:

- How you can connect and engage children and young people from communities across the island of Ireland.

*The Glór Dance Project Creative Youth
Nurture Fund. Photo: Ciara Carroll*



Who can apply?

- For Strand A, the lead applicant must be based in or operate substantially within Ireland.
- For Strand B, collaboration with partners from Northern Ireland is required. The lead applicant can be from either Ireland or Northern Ireland.
- Collaboration with organisations and bodies based outside of Ireland is welcomed.
- A lead organisation can apply for both strands.
- Organisations or artists can be included on more than one project team.

We are looking for collaborative applications from (but not limited to):

- Youth organisations
- Community development organisations
- Arts and cultural organisations or institutions
- Family Resource Centres
- Local Authorities (not as lead partner but as part of a partnership)
- Registered Charities or not-for-profit organisations
- Philanthropic and research bodies and Foundations
- Creative organisations, networks, museums, galleries and art centres
- Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
- Social enterprises
- Business, commercial companies

As a community initiative, it is **not open for schools** to participate, however activities may take place in school premises outside of school hours. For example, artists and creative organisations/institutions may wish to partner with another organisation that works directly with the groups of young people we are seeking to reach. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a track record of delivering youth-focused and/or youth-led initiatives. Support of a [Local Creative Youth Partnership](#) coordinator, local authority [Culture and Creativity Team](#), or Arts Office and/or a national or regional youth work organisation is welcome.

Lead Applicant

- A Lead Applicant is required who will apply on behalf of all partners and who will be the central point of contact for the team throughout the project
- They must have the capacity to manage grant funding, must produce audited accounts and must have an organisation bank account and the services of an accountant.
- In your application you should clearly articulate who each of the partners are, their role in the project, and the governance arrangements with the lead partner.

This scheme encourages collaborative proposals from interdisciplinary partnerships and project teams to fully support young people to play a key role in the process. This is an opportunity to push boundaries by bringing together the creativity, fresh ideas and perspectives of children and young people, the experience of creative professionals and the expertise of those working in youth participation, youth work, disability, inclusion, education, research, mental health, special needs, inclusion, and in public and community engagement.

Evaluation Criteria

Shortlisted applications will be reviewed by an assessment panel made of representatives of the Creative Ireland Programme and will include representation by young people.

This is a competitive scheme. Funding is not guaranteed even if shortlisted. The assessment process will take into account geographic spread and diversity across projects.

Criterion	Marks Available
Experience of working effectively with the target cohorts children and young people – includes capacity to recruit the participants and facilitate meaningful interactions.	25
The project idea and its creative approach	25
Approach to facilitating strong participation from children and young people in the project development and delivery	20
Team structure, governance and feasibility	15
Evaluation plan	15
Total Marks Available	100

How to Apply Online

- Applications can be made by completing the online application form at <https://creativeireland.submit.com/> by than 1pm, Friday 27th February 2026.
- All personal data you submit to us as part of the application process, will be processed in accordance with [Department's Privacy Policy](#).
- NOTE: The below will not be considered:
 - Applications received after the above deadline
 - Application submitted by post, e-mail, hand or courier
 - Applications with a status of 'draft' at the closing date and time

Clarifications and queries can be sent between now and Friday 13th February, to creativeireland@ccs.gov.ie. Please use "Creative Youth Nurture Fund" in the subject line of the email so that we can direct your query.

Using The Application Portal

- Clarifications and additional information will be provided on the application portal.
- While completing, your application form can be saved in draft on the online portal and returned to later.
- If you need to navigate away from your current page, please ensure that you have saved your progress.
- Upon submission, you will receive an email advising that your application has been received.

Timelines

Phase	Details	Date
Fund Opens for Applications	The online application portal will open for submissions.	1st December
Online Information Webinar	An online information session with an opportunity for Q&A. Register Here	15th December 1-2pm
In-person Networking Session	Two in-person networking sessions will be held to provide an overview of the available funding. This will allow prospective project partner applicants to ask questions. Belfast: Creative Ireland Grant Information Session Dublin: Creative Ireland Grant Information Session	Belfast: 14th January 2026, The MAC Dublin: 22nd January 2026, Radisson Blu Royal Hotel
Fund Closes for Applications	Only applications received before 1.00pm on this date will be considered.	27th February
Evaluation of Applications	The evaluation panel, including representatives from the Creative Ireland Programme and Shared Island Unit, together with independent experts, will evaluate applications according to the criteria above.	March–April 2026
Applicants Notified	All applicants are notified of the outcome of their applications.	Q2 2026

Evaluation

The evaluation committee including representatives from the Creative Ireland Programme, together with independent assessors, will evaluate applications according to the criteria above.

Interviews

Short-listed applicants may be called for an interview with the evaluation committee to clarify aspects of their application.
Ineligible Costs

Notification of Applicants

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email of the outcome of their application.

Window for Project Modification

Successful applicants will have a one-to-one meeting with the Creative Ireland team ahead of SLA signing, during which any proposed changes can be discussed.

Signing of Service Level Agreements (Contracts)

Each Grantee will be required to sign an SLA with the Department to agree the conditions of funding. A sample SLA is available [here](#).

Training and Development Day(s)

Dedicated workshop sessions will take place once the SLA is signed, covering topics such as youth voice and participation, creative facilitation, and evaluation. Attendance is a condition of funding. Further information will be provided on the date and location in due course.

Appendix I

Further Shared Island Material

Government of Ireland

- [Creative Ireland Shared Island Evaluation Report](#)
- [Shared Homeplace](#)
- [Shared Island Initiative Report 2024 - Action on a Shared Island](#)
- [Collaborating on Healthcare on an All-Island Basis: A Scoping Study](#)
- [Shared Island Youth Forum Outcome Statement](#)
- [Shared Island Initiative Report 2022 – Action on a Shared Future](#)

National Economic and Social Council

- [Shared Island; Shared Opportunity: NESC Comprehensive Report Council Report No 157, April 2022](#)

ESRI

- [Sharing the Island: Economic and social challenges and opportunities: Evidence from an ESRI research programme](#)

The Future of cross-border cooperation in the arts

- [Policy Briefing and Executive Summary](#)

Cavan County Council and UCD

- [Building Capacity for the Cultural Industries: Towards a Shared Island Approach for Dance and Theatre](#)

International Journal of Nursing and Health Care Research

- [Evaluation of Social value of the Creative Ireland Health & Wellbeing Project – The Art of Life in the International Journal of Nursing and Health Care Research](#)

Donegal County Council & Derry City & Strabane District Council

- [Collaborative Audience Development](#)

iCommunity A Vision for Addressing Challenges on our Shared Island

- [Community and Voluntary Sector](#)



Living Legends Creative Youth on a Shared Island. Photo: Deirdre Power

Appendix 2

The Lundy Model of Child Participation

The Lundy Model of Child Participation is supported by:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).
- The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making.

It is a child-rights model of participation developed by Professor Laura Lundy, Queens University, which provides guidance for decision-makers on the steps to take in giving children and young people a meaningful voice in decision-making.

Participation with purpose means that when children and young people are involved in decision-making, their views are listened to, taken seriously with the intention of leading to an outcome or change. One of the key principles of the Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027 is that children and young people must have agency and a voice in decision-making on its implementation. As a Youth Led initiative young people should be in charge in the planning and implementation of the projects supported by Creative Youth on a Shared Island as much as possible.

In Ireland, the Participation Framework¹ supports government departments, state agencies and organisations to improve their practice in listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making.

Hub na nÓg, set up by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, is Ireland's national centre of excellence and coordination on giving children and young people a voice in decision-making, supporting Government of Ireland Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations with a particular focus on those that are seldom-heard. It provides training, coaching, development, advice and support to organisations to more effectively listen to and act on the voices of children and young people.

Space	Voice
HOW: Provide a safe space for children to express their views.	HOW: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views.
— Have children's views been actively sought? — Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely? — Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?	— Have children been given the information they need to form a view? — Do children know that they do not have to take part? — Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?
Audience	Influence
HOW: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen.	HOW: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate.
— Is there a process for communicating children's views? — Do children know who their views are being communicated to? — Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?	— Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change? — Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously? — Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

Figure 1: Lundy's Voice Model Checklist for Participation

¹ <https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/>

Appendix 3

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

In March 2023, the new *Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027* was launched by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland.

The *Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027* aims to continue ensuring that creativity is a key part of children and young peoples' lives. To develop their creativity, it encourages partnership between adults that work in education, early years and school-age childcare, youth and community work and relevant support services.

Under Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child children have the right:

"to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and parties shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity".

A key focus of the new *Creative Youth Plan* is on young people that have the least access to creative opportunities.

The *Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027* aims to achieve its vision through ensuring that children and young people are provided with enhanced opportunities to engage with creative activities in a way that supports greater equity of access. The Plan commits to prioritising seldom heard children and young people who currently experience low levels of participation in creativity, culture and the arts, by implementing specific equity, diversity and inclusion measures. Our definition of seldom heard children includes:

Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027

Seldom Heard Children and Young People

(children and young people who have fewer opportunities and more obstacles in their lives).

They may include those children and young people who are:

- Children in care;
- Engaged with the youth justice system/ incarcerated persons and ex-offenders;
- Experiencing domestic violence;
- From a minority ethnic background;
- Homeless or at risk of losing their home / living in temporary / unsuitable accommodation;
- In hospital (including those with mental health issues);
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT);
- Living in poverty;
- Living in rural isolation;
- Living with mental health issues;
- Living with parental addiction;
- Living with strained family relationships;
- Not in school;
- Living with physical and intellectual disabilities;
- Have special education needs;
- Refugees and asylum-seekers;
- Traveller and Roma;
- Unemployed;
- Young carers;
- Young people heading up a one parent/ caregiver family;
- International protection applications;
- Low paid employees;
- Long term unemployed; and
- Those at risk of social isolation.

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



An Roinn Cultúir,
Cumarsáide agus Spóirt
Department of Culture,
Communications and Sport



Shared Island
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Cover Image:
*Living Legends, Creative Youth on a
Shared Island. Photo: Deirdre Power*