



Creative Calling: Careers for the Curious

Report on Pilot Programme

November 2025

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1.Executive Summary

(1.1) Introduction

- In June 2025 a pilot initiative was established to address key strategic objectives outlined in the Creative Youth Plan 2023–2027 concerning the development of creative skills, and the promotion of careers in the creative sector among young people.
- The Creative Youth Plan outlines the need to increase “awareness for young people on the connection between creative interests and career opportunities, to broaden perceptions about the wide array of career options, from Post Primary School career guidance, to Further and Higher Education, and collaboration with professional bodies.”¹
- With this in mind, the pilot programme aimed to: **1)** map existing initiatives **2)** introduce cultural and creative industries to young people at national career events **3)** develop a recognizable visual identity for the new initiative, and **4)** explore strategic directions for its future life.
- A Steering Group, with representatives from the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport / Creative Ireland, Coimisiún na Meán, Screen Ireland, the Arts Council, and Cultural and Creative Industries Skillnet (CCIS), have partnered on the initiative under a Memorandum of Understanding, and supported the pilot with funding, shared resources, and guidance.
- The project focused on job opportunities across the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). In the context of this pilot project, the CCIs incorporate the sectors and subsectors covered by the Steering Group partner agencies, and have been broadly classified as: the arts as defined in the Arts Act 2003 (Theatre, Music, Dance, Literature, Visual Art, Architecture, and Circus); as well as Film, TV, Radio, Animation, VFX and Post Production, Digital Creative Industries (including digital games), and Writing, Journalism and Media.
- Cultural and Creative Industries Skillnet (CCIS) was tasked with leading on, and managing, the pilot project.
- CCIS engaged a Project Manager (Dr. Mary Jane Boland) and an Event Manager (Charlene Lydon) in June / July 2025 to oversee the successful delivery of the expected outcomes.

(1.2) Stakeholder Engagement & Mapping

- Key stakeholders, including Steering Group Partners, sub-sectoral groups under their remit, youth groups, higher education partners, educational organisations, and leaders of similar initiatives across the UK, were engaged throughout the pilot.
- There are many excellent programmes happening across Ireland in this space, but these are often fragmented, localised, and rarely connect creative activities with the acquisition of professional skills, or a pathway to a creative career. No programme of

¹ <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2023/03/Creative-Youth-Plan-2023-2027.pdf> pg 34.

this kind, that brings together all of the CCIs for a shared purpose to promote careers, currently exists.

- All engagement with stakeholders (mentioned above) included a gathering of resources and scoping of activities/current initiatives in this space. Various other national mapping efforts have already been undertaken, or are already underway, and the Project Manager has also engaged with the creators of those existing maps.

(1.3) Branding & Public Engagement

- A new identity – *Creative Calling: Careers for the Curious* – was developed by Skillnet with Think House.² It aimed to debunk myths and demonstrate that the CCIs are everywhere, and for everyone; the change from ‘Careers’ to ‘Calling’ helped to shift the focus from a creative ‘job’ to a sense of purpose and a broader career.
- The pilot included a presence at Ireland’s largest careers fairs: *Higher Options* and *World Skills*. Events took place from 17-19 September 2025, and catered to 30,000+ students and their teachers / parents / guardians. *Creative Calling* had a stand at both events, with volunteers from across the sector on hand to offer advice and support to participants. Each stand also had demonstrations from people working in the sector (model-making, podcasting, and VR headsets).
- Assets were developed by Think House to coincide with the events. These included a downloadable information pack full of relevant resources for students, a dynamic carousel that played on stands, and merchandise design (tote bags and laptop stickers). A social media campaign was also launched, which included all of the Steering Group Partner comms teams.
- Despite a tight timeline for delivery, the events were very successful, with an extremely enthusiastic response coming from all quarters.

Summary of Key Findings

1. Stakeholder Engagement, Scoping, & Mapping:

- Having key partners from the cultural and creative sector come together with a shared purpose helps to instil confidence and unity amongst people already working in the sectors, and projects a sense of coherence to the wider public.
- However, the management of many different stakeholders was challenging for the organisers due to the fragmented funding model, the timeframe for establishing consensus, and the need to access existing resources and materials across multiple teams.
- Scoping revealed that visibility is one of the most important drivers in encouraging people into the sector – *if you can’t see it, you can’t be it*. Targeting specific age groups, and not generalising when it comes to students, is also key, as is the need to make information as simple and easily accessible as possible.

² Think House is a leading marketing agency that specialises in youth culture: <https://www.thinkhousehq.com/>

- Inclusivity remains an ongoing issue, particularly in rural and underserved /disadvantaged communities.
- More collaboration, peer-learning, and relationship-building is needed between all sub-sectoral stakeholders working in this space, many of whom have never met.
- There are many opportunities across the sector for Irish speakers, and this ‘as gaelige’ dimension of the project should be explored further.
- More work is needed to bridge the arts, culture, and creative industries (including large CCI companies or small, local CCI businesses) with schools.
- There is an increasing shift in other sectors (such as life sciences) away from the concept of a ‘career’ or a specific qualification, towards transferrable skills development. This is particularly important in today’s world, where the future of work is increasingly uncertain with the proliferation of AI and automation.

2. Branding & Public Engagement:

- The Creative Calling brand design was very popular with all parties and drew a lot of attention.
- The event delivery at Higher Options and World Skills was highly successful, with excellent levels of online and real-world engagement.
- There was a keen appetite at the events for more information from all parties, with students, teachers, and guidance counsellors all seeking more resources, and enquiring about speakers coming to schools in future.
- Many students had a poor understanding of the CCIs in broad terms, and no knowledge at all of the variety of jobs available in more specific terms.
- More work is needed to underline that a person does not need to be ‘creative’ to have a purposeful creative career.
- At the fairs, numerous students enquired about job prospects and security in the sector. Little measurement is currently undertaken of the CCIs in Ireland, and as a result scant information could be provided to students about the size of the CCIs as an economic block, how many jobs there are, where the jobs are, and what skills gaps currently exist

Summary of Recommendations

- **Recommendation:** A spokesperson / public point of contact for the programme is urgently needed to field incoming inquiries from schools and sectoral organisations.
- **Recommendation:** There simply wasn’t enough time for the Project Manager and team to meet many relevant groups (educators, creative practitioners, industry, youth organisations etc). More time to listen to these groups is needed in any future iterations of the project, so that decisions about long-term direction are as informed as possible.
- **Recommendation:** It would be beneficial to convene all of the stakeholders delivering youth-based initiatives at a conference/gathering, to offer a platform for

discussion and peer-to-peer learning, broker inter-institutional relationships, and invite international guests to speak about best practice.

- **Recommendation:** As mentioned on pgs 18-19, some mapping of existing initiatives has already been undertaken by other agencies/organisations, or is currently ongoing. It would be beneficial to convene all these ‘creative cartographers’ together to share information and ideas about best practice, and to decide (if possible) how best to distil all the information that has been gathered into a central place for young people to access it (whether that be an app, or a website).
- **Recommendation:** More links and partnerships with art-form representative bodies, industry-representative associations, and more inclusion of industry voices in future planning, is needed.
- **Recommendation:** A large youth consultation was beyond the scope (time and resources) of the pilot. It should be the one of the first actions undertaken by a future Project Manager. The Arts Council, who work closely with young people through Creative Schools, would be well-placed to provide guidance and assistance with this.
- **Recommendation:** The impact on the target audience was limited to the schools that attended the two fairs. This means that schools outside the Leinster region were engaged on a limited level, particularly those from very rural, disadvantaged, or new communities (including Youthreach, and DEIS schools outside Leinster). Some consideration should be given in future to providing a complimentary series of regional roadshows, or local careers fairs to meet that need.
- **Recommendation:** Those offering information to students on the Higher Options / World Skills stands need more training and tools in future to better guide students and other visitors to the stands.
- **Recommendation:** Future promotional activity would benefit from more youth consultation, particularly with regard to the creation of online promotional materials, and the channels that are used. For e.g. a website was listed as the most popular destination for learning more by survey respondents. It may be possible to repurpose some website materials from the *UK Discover! Creative Careers* initiative and expand the website further.
- **Recommendation:** More involvement of young people as the actual creators or collaborators on the branding, and the online promotion. This would mean that content would be *by* young people, *for* young people, but it would also allow them to gain real world experience of designing, launching, and managing a campaign, which would expose them to a creative career in practice.
- **Recommendation:** Ensure that skills acquisition and skills development is at the heart of any future iteration of the programme, especially as roles across the CCIs are fluid and skills can easily be transferred across sectors.
- **Recommendation:** More work is needed to understand the structures of successful STEM initiatives in Ireland, and how they are funded and operated. As the lines between science, technology, design, and creative-thought become increasingly blurred, it would be beneficial to look at opportunities for collaboration. It would also

be useful for a future Project Manager to open a conversation with the National Skills Council on strategic direction and policy making.

- **Recommendation:** Conversations with peers in Northern Ireland and the UK suggest that the most effective way of developing programmes such as this is by working with small community and school groups, at a local level. However, ‘buy-in’ is also needed from parents, grandparents, teachers, counsellors, community leaders, and most importantly, local and national government, so, better awareness of the CCIs more broadly, and positively, at a societal level, is also needed. Consequently, for a successful delivery of this programme in the long-term, the approach needs to be both top-down and bottom-up.
- **Recommendation:** A future Project Manager and CCIS team-members, along with members of the Steering Group, should go to Belfast to meet with the education leader and creative organisations there, and open a meaningful conversation about cross-border collaboration in this space.
- **Recommendation:** It was beyond the time constraints of the pilot project to engage in a proper scoping of European initiatives in this space. Whilst it is valuable to see what is happening across the border in Northern Ireland, and in neighbouring England, Scotland and Wales, the UK is operating on a much bigger scale than Ireland. It would be insightful to engage with a country with a similar population and GDP to Ireland (such as Denmark) in future iterations of the project. Likewise, it would be beneficial to look beyond Europe, at countries like Japan or South Korea, whose creative industries have thrived as a result of targeted, strategic interventions by Government.³

Conclusion

- Overall, the pilot programme was highly successful: agreed deliverables were met and the outcomes have been impactful for various reasons, from excellent levels of public engagement, to the development of key insights on what is needed, and how best it can be delivered.
- A sense of momentum has developed that should be built upon and expanded.
- Challenges did arise, particularly relating to the extremely tight timeframe, the fragmented funding mechanism, and the management of multiple stakeholders.
- However, many of these challenges can be alleviated with the provision of more support and resources, with the benefit of more time and space to plan and grow, and by the cultivation of collegiality – a seed that has already been sewn by the project’s very existence.

³ [Japan’s Hottest Export Is About To Be Its Cool](#), Bloomberg 21 February 2025

2. Introduction & Background to Pilot

- Both the development of creative skills, and the promotion of careers in the creative sector amongst young people, are key strategic objectives of the Creative Youth Plan 2023 – 2027.⁴
- With that in mind, a Steering Group with representatives from the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport / Creative Ireland, Coimisiún na Meán, Screen Ireland, and the Arts Council was established in 2024 to explore a “creative careers” concept and the roll out of a pilot project with assistance from Cultural & Creative Industries Skillnet (CCIS). This worked continued in 2025 under a MoU.
- CCIS took on a lead role in managing the pilot.
- The “creative careers” referred to here relates to the job opportunities that exist across the arts, media Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in Ireland. In the context of this pilot project, the CCIs incorporate the sectors and subsectors covered by the Steering Group partner agencies, and have been broadly classified as: the arts as defined in the Arts Act 2003 (Theatre, Music, Dance, Literature, Visual Art, Architecture, Circus) as well as Film, TV & Radio / Animation, VFX & Post Production, Digital Creative Industries (including digital games), Writing, Journalism & Media.

(2.1) What is the problem we want to solve?

- In early meetings there was an acknowledgement amongst members of the Steering Group that there is no coordinated initiative by the sector in Ireland to engage with educators and young people, in order to explain to them that the CCIs are a place in which they can find a sustainable and purposeful career.⁵
- That consensus is corroborated by some key facts:
 - ⇒ The **Institute of Guidance Counsellors Ireland** (IGC) offers no resources to members on the variety of jobs that exist across the CCIs, nor does it offer information on the best pathways for students who are interested in a career in a creative field (like music, or film, or radio).⁶
 - ⇒ **Oide** (the support service for teachers and school leaders) provides training and resources for Leaving-Cert subjects like Music, Visual Art, and the new Drama, Theatre and Film Studies subject. It would be useful to explore a ‘careers pathways’ dimension for these subjects in partnership with Oide.⁷

⁴ Creative Ireland, [Creative Youth Plan 2023 – 2027](#), 20.

⁵ Minutes of Meeting: Careers in the Arts and Creative Industries for Post Primary Students, Tuesday 10th December 2024, 3.30pm.

⁶ <https://igc.ie/resources-post-primary/>; the dearth of material on the creative sector from the IGC was also corroborated during scoping conversations with members and key personnel within the organisation by the Project Manager in September 2025.

⁷ <https://oide.ie/post-primary/home/music/music-senior-cycle/>; <https://oide.ie/post-primary/home/visual-art-art-senior-cycle/>; <https://oide.ie/post-primary/home/dfts/>.

- ⇒ There has been a concerted campaign over the past two decades by **Science Foundation Ireland** (now part of Research Ireland) to promote skills development and careers in STEM across Ireland, through initiatives like Science Week, Curious Minds, and (the now concluded) Smart Futures, much of which has been fortified at a macro level by government strategy and the Dept. of Education’s STEM Education Policy and Implementation Plan.⁸ Even when the difference in economic impact and employment generation between the STEM industries and the CCIs is taken into account, the latter remain poorly underserved by comparison, particularly when it comes to awareness of the creative sector amongst the general public. Students (and indeed parents/guardians) who may be curious to know more about a ‘creative career’ have currently got a very limited number of places to turn.
- ⇒ In the UK, a dedicated initiative to promote careers in the creative sector exists: **Discover! Creative Careers** offers resources for teachers/classrooms, a website with databases of the various creative jobs that exist (600+ roles), a month-long creative careers festival of events, and a dedicated engagement platform for industry partnerships.⁹ This initiative is funded by the UK Government, initially just in England, but its funding was extended in May 2025 to allow for its establishment in Scotland and Wales.¹⁰ An initial sum of £1.8 million was invested in this programme (for England) in 2018. A further £1.5 - £2 million has been invested in the programme since 2023.

- With all of this in mind, it was decided that a pilot initiative would be established in Ireland to fill these gaps, with support from each of the aforementioned partner organisations (both through varying levels of funding, guidance, and shared resources/materials).
- It was agreed that the pilot would aim to resolve the dearth of knowledge by **1)** developing a more coherent sense of what is already happening, both nationally and globally **2)** by introducing the CCIs to young people at a national career event(s), and using this event(s) as a platform to promote professional opportunities across the CCISs **3)** by developing a dynamic and recognisable identity for the initiative and **4)** by exploring strategic directions for its future life.

(2.2) What is the broader context?

- A lot of long-running and successful creative initiatives for young people exist across the country, many of which are led by organisations supported by the Steering Group partners. For instance, Learning Waves, the main training provider for commercial radio, offers a week-long work experience programme for TY students;¹¹ the Irish

⁸ <https://www.scienceweek.ie/>; <https://www.sfi.ie/engagement/smart-futures/>; <https://www.sfi.ie/engagement/curious-minds/>; [STEM Education Policy Statement 2017 - 2026](#)

⁹ <https://discovercreative.careers/>

¹⁰ [Scotland](#); [Wales](#); [Discover! Expands to Scotland and Wales](#)

¹¹ <https://www.learningwaves.ie/ty-media-programme>

Architecture Foundation runs an ‘Architects in Schools’ programme, which provides workshops in architectural drawing and model making, and includes resources like student handbooks;¹² Young Irish Film Makers and Fresh Film both run a variety of workshops and programs for young filmmakers, and the Irish Film Institute offers annual careers days across the screen sectors.¹³ *careersportal.ie* has a section of its site dedicated to ‘Creative Arts’, including resources from the Design and Crafts Council Ireland and Screen Ireland, and Screen Ireland also has its own stand-alone careers website with information on careers in the screen sector.¹⁴ As well as this, creativity is brought into the heart of many classrooms thanks to the Arts Council’s successful Creative Schools initiative and DEY initiatives such as Creative Clusters, BLAST and TAP, which offer good examples of how to engage creative practitioners with schools at a local level.¹⁵

- Creative subjects at Leaving Cert level have a healthy and extremely consistent uptake amongst the student population (see fig. 1). For e.g. in 2025, Art was selected by 15% of students – a figure that has remained reasonably similar over the past 15 years, and is once again on the rise. That means Art is a more popular subject choice with the student body than Physics, Engineering, and Accounting, and around the same as Construction Studies, Chemistry, and Spanish. Art is predominantly chosen by girls (74%), so it could be argued that female students are being disproportionately disadvantaged by the lack of creative-career support and the dearth of knowledge in how to translate that chosen subject into a future job.¹⁶ A new curriculum for Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies has been developed and is being rolled out in a small number of schools starting in September 2025.

¹² [Short clip detailing the Architects in Schools programme](#)

¹³ YIFM; Fresh Film, IFI

¹⁴ https://careersportal.ie/sectors/sector_categories.php?category_id=4 ; <https://www.careersinscreen.ie/>

¹⁵ Murphy & Eivers, *Evaluation of Creative Schools/ Scoileanna Ildánacha Final Report*, Dublin City University, 2023, p 13.

¹⁶ <https://www.examinations.ie/statistics/?l=en&mc=st&sc=ryr&yr=r25> ; Stats related to gender were kindly provided to the author by the State Examination Commission.

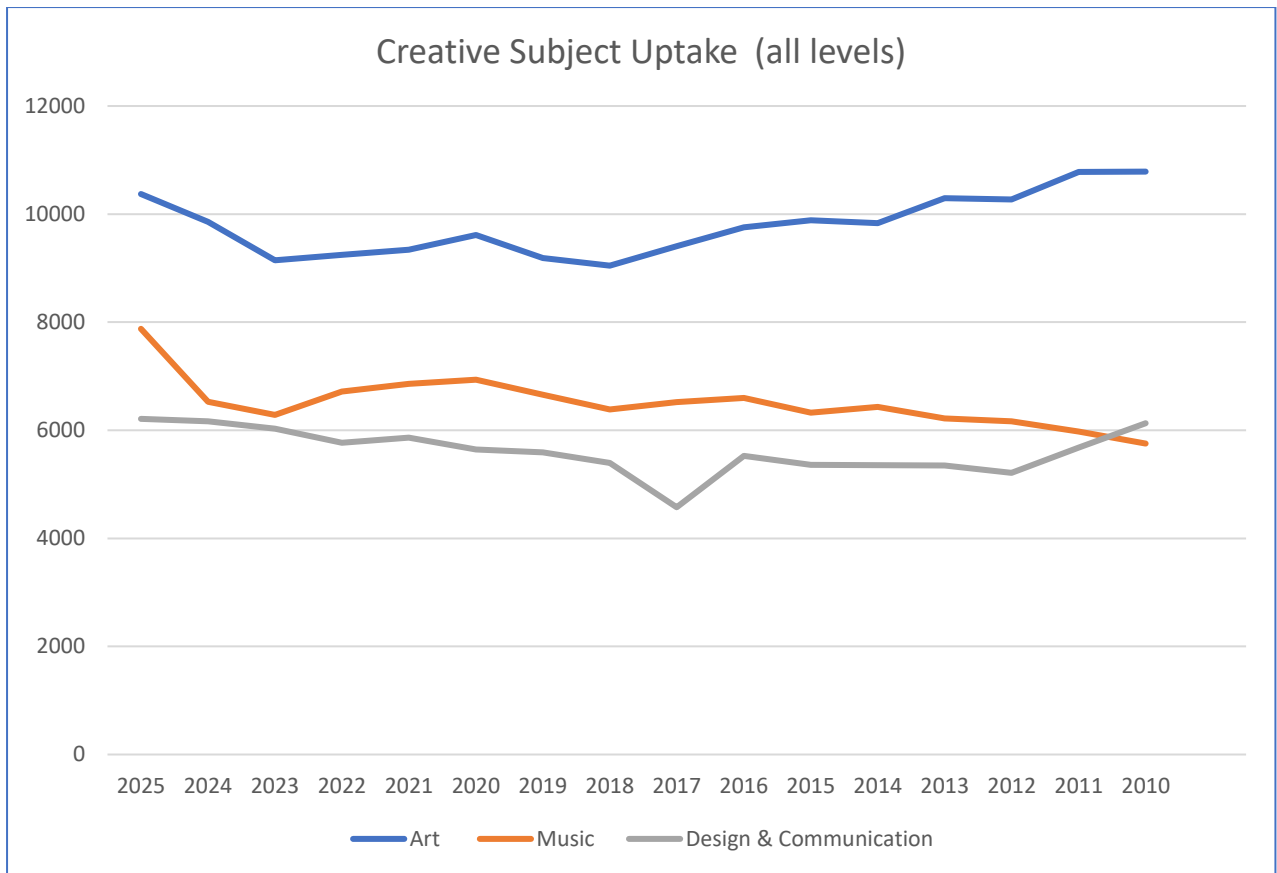


Fig 1: ‘Creative’ subject uptake 2010-2025. Source: [State Examinations Commission](#)

- According to the most recent Eurostat statistics, an estimated 7.7 million people work in Europe’s cultural and creative sector, which equates as 3.8% of total EU employment.¹⁷The importance of the CCIs as an economic growth engine for many countries was highlighted in the UK in June 2025, when the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lisa Nandy) announced a new Creatives Industries Sector Plan as one of the key pillars of the Government’s Industrial Strategy.¹⁸ According to Eurostat, in 2024, almost 80,000 people were engaged in cultural employment in Ireland.¹⁹
- In 2025, the World Economic Forum *Future of Jobs* Report identified ‘creative thinking’ in the top five ‘core skills’ needed for the job market in 2025 – a skill that is predicted to grow even further in importance for employers by 2035, as technology becomes more advanced, and AI becomes more ubiquitous as a workplace tool.²⁰ Likewise, a report commissioned by NESTA (UK) found that jobs asking for creativity are far more likely to grow as a percentage of the labour market by 2030;²¹ as Eliza Easton [former Head of the Policy Unit at the Creative PEC UK] has said

¹⁷ EUROSTAT, [Cultural employment by NACE Rev. 2 activity \(2008-2026\)](#)

¹⁸ [The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy: Creative Industries: Sector Plan](#), 23 June 2025.

¹⁹ EUROSTAT, [Cultural employment by NACE Rev. 2 activity \(2008-2026\)](#)

²⁰ World Economic Forum, [Future of Jobs Report 2025: Insight Report](#), January 2025

²¹ NESTA, [The Future of Skills: Employment in 2023](#), 27 September 2017

“digital skills are nothing without creativity to back them up – whether that is being creative with a spreadsheet or with an easel and paintbrush.”²²



All of this indicates that a pipeline of talent for the CCIs in Ireland is integral to future-proofing the workforce. The cultivation of initiatives (like this pilot) that promote the acquisition of transferrable skills learned in the creative sector (like critical thought and creative problem-solving) will be key to ensuring Ireland is at the cutting edge of the European – and global – labour market over the coming decade.

²² [Is Creativity the Key to the Jobs Market of the Future?](#)

3. Outcomes / Delivered Results

- On 16/06/2025, a Project Manager (Dr. Mary Jane Boland) was engaged by CCIS to oversee the pilot project and deliver the expected outcomes (for 45 days), supported by the CCIS team, in particular Gareth Lee and Fran Keaveney.
- CCIS appointed an event manager (Charlene Lydon) on 30/06/25 to oversee the successful coordination/execution of stands at Higher Options and World Skills (for 25 days).
- The Project and Event Managers worked well with the CCIS team to ensure deadlines were met. However, the timeline from July to early September for stakeholder engagement, brand development, and event delivery was exceptionally tight, with lots of people on holiday during that period, which made elements of the planning very difficult.

(3.1.) Brand Development

- As the pilot initiative was spearheaded by Creative Ireland, and the timeline was limited (especially for including market research and a youth consultation), it was decided that a temporary visual identity would be established for the pilot, and that it would sit under Creative Ireland's 'Creative Youth' pillar. This meant that time and resources would be saved by following existing Creative Ireland brand guidelines, and that there was already an existing relationship with the website designers for establishing a landing page.
- A brand brief was issued by the project/event managers. The brief requested that the brand reflect the following messaging:
 1. Careers in the CCIs are open to all, regardless of background, or skillset etc. There are lots of roles and lots of opportunities for all, from business to technical, and from creative to production skills.
 2. A career in the CCIs is a purposeful and rewarding career.
 3. The CCI community is supportive and welcoming.
 4. Skills learnt in the CCIs are transferable, and can be used to progress or pivot career direction.
 5. The skills you learn in the creative industries are recognised as key future skills that employers look for
- It was agreed by all Steering Group Partners that the new 'Creative Careers' initiative would have a presence at Ireland's two largest careers fairs – Higher Options and World Skills.²³
- Think House, a design-agency focused on youth culture with a track record of working with Creative Ireland, was engaged to develop the visual identity for the pilot initiative. This included the design of the stands for Higher Options and World Skills, the development of digital/social media assets, assets for merchandising, website style guide/design, and social media management.

²³ <https://higheroptions.irishtimes.com/home?language=en>; <https://worldskillsireland.ie/worldskills-events/>

- Think House developed ‘*Creative Calling: Careers for the Curious*’ as the brand for the pilot initiative. The change from ‘Careers’ to ‘Calling’ helped to shift the focus from a creative ‘job’ to a sense of purpose. The overall colour scheme was bright and engaging – the logo (Fig. 2) reflected the shape of a megaphone, in order to underline the idea that the initiative is ‘calling out’ to those with a curiosity in finding a creative path.



Fig 2: Creative Calling logo as designed by Think House 26/08/25

- A montage of images collected from Steering Group Partners accompanied the logo on the design for stands (Figs. 3 & 4), many of which showed creative practitioners engaged in roles that are ‘behind-the-scenes’ in nature, and are therefore often ‘invisible’ to many people. This helped to fulfil the requested design brief that the visual identity would ‘bust myths’ and show that careers in the CCIs are everywhere and for everyone.

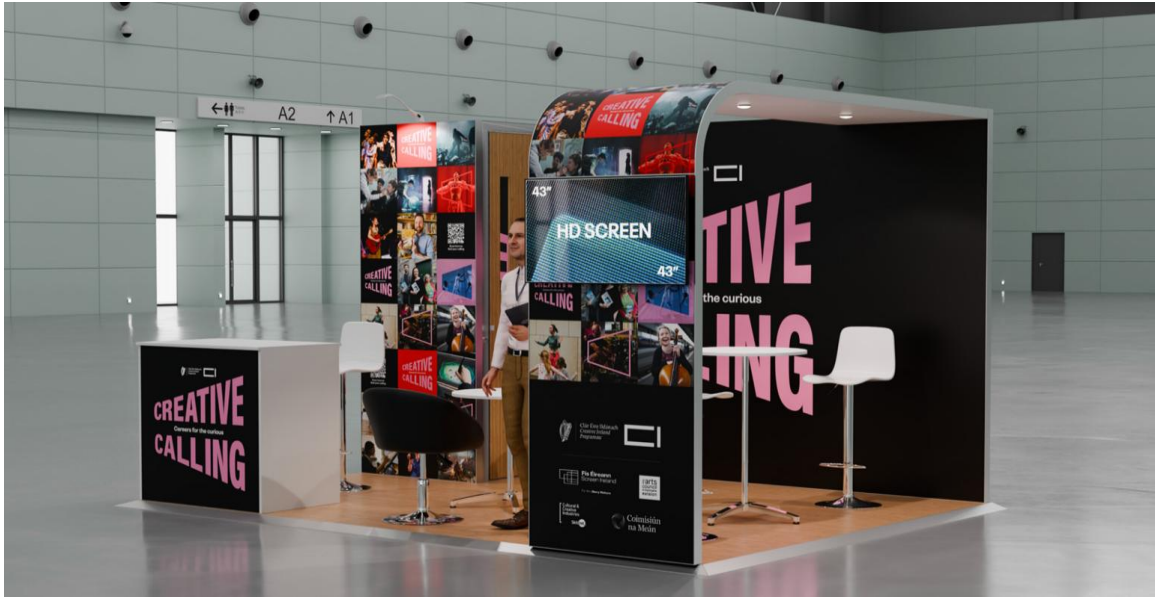


Fig 3: Creative Calling stand at Higher Options, as designed by Think House 26/08/25



Fig 4: Creative Calling stand at World Skills, as designed by Think House 26/08/25

- The Steering Group Partner logos were represented at all times across all the branding, both on ‘real world’ designs (like the event stands and merchandising) and across all online activity (website and social media posts). This helped corroborate the point that the initiative was a collective effort and supported by all sectors and subsectors of the CCIs.
- Throughout the brand development process there was a lot of discussion about video assets and whether short-form video content should be created for the initiative for sharing online. On receiving a number of quotes, it became apparent that the commissioning of new video assets would not be possible within the confines of the 2025 budget. It was then agreed that pre-existing video material would be gathered from the Steering Group Partners and repurposed for this initiative. However, it was difficult for the Project/Event Managers to ascertain whether relevant video material existed, and any resources that were shared by partners did not fit well for the remit of ‘Creative Calling’. Finally, it was decided that a dynamic carousel with images, text cards, and graphic illustrations would be created instead. This carousel [see Appendix 2] was played on a loop on the event stands, and was cut into shorter versions for the social media campaign.
- It is also worth noting that, on investigation, many short form videos created for a similar purpose by Discover! Creative Careers (UK) have low-levels of engagement online, so before commissioning them in future, an assessment should be made of whether videos of this kind provide an impact that is proportionate to the cost of creating them.²⁴

(3.2) Stakeholder Engagement

- As soon as the Project Manager was in place, meetings (both online and in-person) were set up with each of the Steering Group Partners (DCCS/CI, Coimisiún na Meán, Screen Ireland, and the Arts Council).
- Meetings were also held with the sectoral groups under each agency’s remit (for eg., the National Talent Academies, the Irish Film Institute, Young Irish Filmmakers, Fresh Film, the Irish Design Institute, the National Gallery of Ireland, Learning Waves, Performing Arts Forum, the Writers Guild of Ireland, Minding Creative Minds, IAPI, etc.).
- In each of these meetings, the Project Manager and CCIS team sought to understand what was currently happening within this space for 16–19-year-olds, what the stakeholder thought was working well, and what the stakeholder thought could work better – and how best that should be managed in future.
- Beyond these meetings, many of the sub-sectoral groups were also engaged via email and encouraged to send a representative to participate on the stands at Higher Options / World Skills, and to share resources for young people.
- The Project Manager and Gareth Lee (CCIS) engaged with higher education partners over the course of the initiative, holding meetings with the Creative Futures Academy,

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3oobpEn8Qxi1R3Opeu8wJg> The most recent video has 67 views.

National College of Art and Design, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, University College Cork, and University College Dublin.

- All education institutions with a presence at the career's events were contacted via email with information about the Creative Calling project in the weeks before the events.
- Whilst at Higher Options and World Skills, the Project Manager spent time speaking to representatives from Munster Technological University, University of Galway, Technological University of Dublin, South East Technological University, Atlantic Technological University, and Dundalk Institute of Technology, each of whom showed lots of enthusiasm and encouragement for the Creative Calling project.
- Time constraints of the pilot initiative meant that it has not been possible to meet everyone offering education pathways into a creative career. Therefore, more meaningful engagement with each of these education partners, and those who have not yet been engaged, would be a key component of any future iteration of this project.
- The Project Manager has also been in contact with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and met with its representatives on its stand at World Skills. Following the events, the IGC sent a missive to its members with information about the Creative Calling initiative (including the downloadable Information Pack, mentioned below).
- The IGC has expressed an interest in having a representative from Creative Calling at its annual conference in March 2026, and/or at regional meetings throughout the year, as well as dedicating some space to the project in its *Guideline Magazine* (published for members every March, May, and October).²⁵ Any future Project Manager should further develop this relationship as a priority, and accept the offer to collaborate at events and in the magazine, as requested.
- Work is still needed to engage other government departments and agencies such as the Department of Education and Youth, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Skills, the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and the Heritage Council. It will be easier to develop connections and (potentially) collaborate with these departments when a clear plan for the future direction of the initiative has been decided, aligned with the required funding allocation, and more specific requests for engagement on shared projects, resources etc. have been formulated.
- Many teachers and parents were engaged by stand volunteers and the Project/Event Managers/CCIS team during the three days of Higher Options and World Skills, all of whom were curious about the programme and pleased that resources were being created. Several teachers asked if 'Creative Calling' posters could be made available for hanging in their schools and wondered who the point of contact for them would be going forward (for eg, if they wanted to invite a speaker to come to the school).

²⁵ <https://igc.ie/guideline-magazine/>



All engaged stakeholders from the sectoral and sub-sectoral organisations expressed a sense of relief and appreciation that the Steering Group Partners had come together to work on this initiative as a collective voice, and reinforced the point that there is a major gap in this area in Ireland (as outlined on pgs 8 - 10). Almost everyone the Project Manager and CCIS team spoke to had their own story to tell about their experiences at school, and the lack of support they were offered when they expressed an interest in working in the arts.

(3.3) Mapping / Scoping of Current Initiatives

- All engagement with stakeholders (mentioned above) included a gathering of resources and scoping of activities/current initiatives in this space. The mapping dimension of this project is still in development and will be delivered in draft form to Steering Group Partners when completed.
- A range of mapping activities have already been embarked upon by a variety of stakeholders and partners (including Steering Group Partners) within this space:
 - ⇒ **Coimisiún na Meán** has an ongoing mapping project that ties in closely with the actions set out under ‘Recommendation 2–6’ on Diversity, Education, Training and Employment in the Future of Media Commission Report (2023).²⁶In particular, the focus is on mapping current media career pathways, looking at where education and training strategies are working, and where the barriers are, and exploring potential for new routes, like apprenticeships, and more flexible learning models. Each of these aspects are being mapped in relation to inclusivity and accessibility specifically (and not just in general). The Project Manager met with Mairéad Nic Gabhann, who is leading this mapping project, and An Coimisiún is keen to collaborate, share resources, and ensure work is not being unnecessarily repeated by multiple stakeholders.
 - ⇒ In 2020, the **National Youth Council of Ireland** commissioned a report to map youth arts provision in youth work settings across the country.²⁷ This work demonstrated the benefits of engagement in youth arts for young people, and “highlighted the urgent need for a shift at policy level, and significant financial investment, in order to advance meaningful and sustainable youth arts provision in Ireland.”²⁸The mapping dimension of this project (www.mappingtheyoutharts.com) is no longer live online and therefore inaccessible. The Project Manager will engage with the authors of this report and request access to their map.
 - ⇒ Ciarda Tobin, the Next Generation Manager at the **Irish Film Institute** (IFI), along with the Education Team at the IFI, are currently engaged in a mapping

²⁶ Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, [Future of Media Commission Report: Implementation Strategy & Action Plan](#), 2023, pg 11.

²⁷ Hogan, E., Furlong, N. and Drohan, D. (2020) [Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings in Ireland](#), Dublin: National Youth Council of Ireland.

²⁸ Hogan, E., Furlong, N. and Drohan, D. (2020) [Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings in Ireland](#), Dublin: National Youth Council of Ireland. Pg 2.

exercise for Screen Ireland. Details about what this mapping includes are not available, but Screen Ireland / IFI has told the Project Manager that more information will be provided in due course.

⇒ IADT confirmed that it has completed a mapping exercise (not published) to support the initial funding application/case for the establishment of Creative Futures Academy and that this mapping could potentially be shared in the future.

- Funding awarded by Steering Group Partners (such as Screen Stakeholder funding from Screen Ireland or Sectoral Learning and Development Funding from Coimisiún na Meán) provide a useful way of tracking what ‘next generation’ activities are taking place nationwide every year.²⁹ For eg., in 2025, Screen Ireland supported various ‘next generation’ screen initiatives such as:
 - Atticus Education for *Future Leaders of Screen: Screen Careers for TY Students and Teacher’s Pack*, to encourage young people to pursue a career in the screen industry by teaching them and their teachers about the sector;
 - Cinemagic International Film and Television Festival for Young People for *Cinemagic Film Futures*, to engage trainees from the island of Ireland to create a short film supported by masterclasses and skills development;
 - Emerging Limerick Filmmakers for *Scenario X*, a film programme for young filmmakers, focusing on genre filmmaking and connecting participants with industry professionals;
 - Nerve Centre/Foyle Film Festival for *Screen School North West*, a series of screen production schools for Transition Year students in Donegal to train and inspire the next generation of story makers.
- The scoping of current initiatives proved useful for the development of the Information Pack (Appendix 3), which is downloadable from the Creative Calling website. Many of the tools and resources found helped to inform the design of the pack, and many were included as part of the ‘list of resources’.
- It was also useful to speak to organisations like The Big Idea (a national programme to promote critical thinking and problem solving amongst students) and to learn about how the organisation was established (months of scoping and listening to teachers before planning phase), how it is funded (competitive grants, revenue streams, philanthropy, corporate funding, and government funding), and what has worked well for its roll out (a free learning pack for all schools, appointing mentors, and appointing a leadership board helped substantially with its growth).³⁰

²⁹ <https://www.screenireland.ie/funding/distribution-loans/screen-stakeholders>;
https://www.cnam.ie/app/uploads/2025/03/20240304_SecDevSuccessful-applicants-2025_SMC.pdf

³⁰ <https://thebigidea.ie/>



Mapping of youth-centred creative activities across the country has been challenging for a variety of reasons:

The landscape for ‘youth’ engagement nationally is fragmented and often localised, so, beyond large-scale programmes and projects (many of which are centralised), it is hard to track *what* is happening, *where*, and at *what level* (as information is often only available in local media, posters, within schools, etc).

Various youth arts projects that have been discontinued are still promoted online, so discerning what is a ‘live’ project and what is a ‘dormant’ project adds another layer of complication.

Many youth initiatives are about bringing creativity into schools and young people’s lives, but do not present the CCIs in professional terms or offer advice about a pathway into a creative career. For eg., many students who were engaged by volunteers at Higher Options / World Skills stands loved to play an instrument, were actively engaged in performance and recitals at school and in their communities, and were interested in pursuing their interest further. However, they had no idea what jobs exist within the music industry (or indeed how that industry works), or what they could do with their passion and skills after school, beyond becoming a ‘rock star’ or becoming a music teacher – which, tellingly, are the two ‘music’ professions that are visible to them.

3.4 Mapping of International Initiatives

United Kingdom

- As mentioned on pg 9, a well-established creative careers initiative exists in England: *Discover! Creative Careers* was founded in 2018 with an initial investment of £1.8 million from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and has been supported by creative businesses, institutions, trade bodies, and institutions across the country.³¹
- A cross-sectoral steering group (including each sectoral representative body – for eg., UK Music, RIBA, etc.) was immediately established to ensure all stakeholders had a voice and a part to play in the formation of the programme, and could offer industry-specific advice and guidance.
- In the development of the programme, organisers found that many of the descriptions of creative jobs on various careers service websites (and beyond) were full of inaccuracies. Consequently, the programme created more than 600 new job profiles, with the help of the sectoral steering group, which were written by people who had

³¹ Based on information offered by Sara Wybrew (who set up *Discover! Creative Careers*, and is now Director, Skills and Workforce Development, British Film Institute) during a conversation with the Project Manager on 10/11/25.

worked in those roles, as they were best placed to provide, genuine, industry-led information.³²

- Evaluation of the programme has indicated that industry-led activities have contributed to young people's increased engagement with the sector, including a radical change in perception.³³ However, it is still too early to measure impact on workforce, which would need a longitudinal study, with tracking happening over five to ten years. [Advice was that such a longitudinal study should be factored into the investment and development of any new initiative in Ireland.]
- In 2020 *Discover! Creative Careers* received additional funding from Arts Council England to develop a video programme to be used in schools during National Careers Week.
- From 2023 - 2025, *Discover! Creative Careers* was funded to support and engage with schools and young people across 77 priority areas in England, identified as those facing the greatest disadvantage. The funding for the 2023 – 2025 phase of the programme (for England only) was £947,000.00.³⁴
- These priority locations were identified by cross-referencing the Department of Education's 'Opportunity Areas' with Arts Council England's map of low-arts engagement areas.³⁵
- Regional managers were appointed to scope/map and engage with local creative businesses and connect them with schools.
- In March 2025, a very detailed tender for a new work experience programme for *Discover! Creative Careers* was announced.³⁶ The allocated budget for this was £299,250.00. In May, it was announced that Mission Guru had won this tender.³⁷
- It is currently (until end of 2026) funded by the UK government and run by Screen Skills UK.
- In May 2025, it was announced that the *Discover! Creative Careers* programme would expand to two of the devolved nations,³⁸ and would provide £225,000 per nation (while presumably all of the online resources of the England programme are also at the disposal of the devolved nations). In July 2025, it was announced that Film Scotland and Film Cymru (Wales) had won the tenders.³⁹

³² Based on information offered by Sara Wybrew during a conversation with the Project Manager on 13/10/25.

³³ Based on information offered by Sara Wybrew during a conversation with the Project Manager on 10/11/25.

³⁴ Tender: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/creative-careers-programme-2223-2425-competition> ; Guide to Applicants: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6275292c8fa8f5206c75d3e4/20220308_CCP_Grant_Guidance_for_Applicants.pdf

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas> ; <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/your-area/priority-places>

³⁶ https://www.screenskills.com/media/vxihjp2f/dcc_work_experience_tender_180325.pdf

³⁷ <https://www.mission.guru/> ; <https://www.mission.guru/wex/>

³⁸ <https://www.screenskills.com/news/discover-creative-careers-programme-expands-to-reach-100-000-young-people/>

³⁹ <https://www.screenskills.com/news/discover-creative-careers-to-reach-young-people-across-scotland-and-wales/>

- Separately, the British Film Institute (BFI), recently announced £6.3 million in funding for ‘Careers and Progression’ from April 2026 – March 2029. This initiative aims to inspire 11–18-year-olds to choose a career in the screen sector.⁴⁰
- The *Discover!* programme now runs a month-long series of events every November (*Discover! Creative Careers Month*). It also hosts a year-round fleet of online activities including: online insight sessions, video resources, lesson plans, and training for career professionals.
- The BFI will hold a special careers festival at their London Southbank headquarters in February 2026 –a concerted decision has been made for this not be a ‘fair’, and there will be no stands, as previous experience has found this to be an ineffective way of reaching young people.⁴¹
- In June 2025, the *UK Industrial Strategy - Creative Industries Sectoral Plan* announced £9 million to deliver a "refreshed" creative careers service, working with the new Jobs and Careers Service (which it hopes to launch in late 2026). Within that context, a £4 million tender for the promotion of creative careers across the North East over a three-year period was published in late September 2025 [currently on hold].⁴²
- In October 2025, the Department of Culture Media and Sport (UK) published a report on ‘creative careers’ that included the findings of a survey undertaken to better understand levels of awareness and interest in the creative industries amongst young people and their parents. Key motivators for working in the creative industries included being able to pursue a passion, having control over one’s working life, and having an impact. Interest in the creative industries also increased after learning about the diversity of the jobs available in the sector, suggesting awareness of the diversity of the jobs available in the sector could be a key enabler.⁴³
- Sara Wybrew, who was the lead on setting up *Discover! Creative Careers*, believes that the establishment of a successful initiative in the Republic of Ireland would require an investment of €1 million over two years (based on size of country and number of schools - approx. 700). She believes that careers fairs offer a poor return on investment (“they take all the resources for very low impact”).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ <https://www.bfi.org.uk/strategy-policy/screen-culture-2033/national-lottery-strategy/bfi-national-lottery-funding-plan-2026-2029>

⁴¹ Details of this festival are TBC. It is a pilot initiative for schools in the south east, with satellite activity happening on the same day in sites around the country. Based on information offered by Sara Wybrew during a conversation with the Project Manager on 13/10/25 & 10/11/2025.

⁴² <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/056282-2025>

⁴³ [DCMS creative careers research](#), 31 October 2025

⁴⁴ Based on information offered by Sara Wybrew during a conversation with the Project Manager on 10/11/25.

United Kingdom – Northern Ireland

- The Project Manager consulted with John Newbiggin (OBE) in September 2025,⁴⁵ who argued that current best practice in Europe in education, careers guidance, and creativity is happening in Northern Ireland (NI).
- Culture, music, and film talent is nurtured across the region in a series of ‘Nerve Centres’ – engaging hubs that run wide-ranging programmes of arts events, festivals and community engagement initiatives.⁴⁶
- Moving Image Arts has been offered at A-Level and GCSE in Northern Ireland since 2003 and 2009 respectively. It was the first qualification of its kind in digital arts.⁴⁷
- Northern Ireland Screen and Into Film NI are particularly well engaged with schools, and have built a series of programmes that bridge industry with education by offering year-round work experiences programmes. Working directly with industry is a key driver of success in this space in Northern Ireland.
- NI Screen’s *Screen Works* initiative is a flagship programme that puts work experience at the heart of engagement with schools.⁴⁸ It is designed to introduce 14- to 19-year-olds across the region to careers in the screen industries. The programme is funded by the Dept. of Communities (through NI Screen) and delivered by Into Film. It offers free hands-on programmes throughout the year (3-5 days at a time) from industry practitioners. The objective is to teach the students about the roles available across the screen sector, by allowing them to spend meaningful time working with industry experts. Schools have supported students to take time off (outside of allocated work-experience weeks) to attend the programmes. [Designated ‘work experience weeks’ do not tend to work for an industry that has movable schedules] Travel bursaries are provided for students travelling to the programme.
- The Into Film NI network, which is funded by both the BFI, and NI Screen / Department for Communities (NI), is dedicated solely to working with schools and has eight full time staff working at its NI office.
- The team at Into Film are working closely with Studio Ulster on a new ‘Skills for Urban and Rural Futures’ programme to ensure that local residents are trained and qualified to work at the new studio facility.⁴⁹
- The team at Into Film NI, who also work extremely closely with *Discover! Creative Careers* were enthusiastic about working more closely with the *Creative Calling* initiative, and felt there was no need for Irish programmes to create any new resources

⁴⁵ Newbiggin was the founder and first Chair of Creative England. As Special Advisor to the UK Minister for Culture, Chris Smith, he was part of the team that developed the UK government’s first policies for the creative industries in the 1990s. He is currently London Mayor Sadiq Khan’s Ambassador for the Creative Industries, and advises governments internationally on creative industry strategic policy. Conversation with the Project Manager on 09/09/25.

⁴⁶ <https://nervecentre.org/>

⁴⁷ <https://ccea.org.uk/moving-image-arts>

⁴⁸ <https://northernirelandscreen.co.uk/education/screenworks/>

⁴⁹ Details on this scheme are not publicly available, this information is based on a conversation between Sean Boyle and Sean Kelly (Into Film), and the Project Manager on 16/10/25.

– what they have could be repurposed and tweaked to be made more local to the ROI.⁵⁰

(3.5) Event Delivery

Planning

- Planning for the Higher Options and World Skills commenced in July 2025. The Event Manager worked closely with the organisers on positioning of stands, and developed the stand designs with Think House (as seen in Figs. 3 & 4).
- Following stakeholder engagement, the Event Manager began scheduling volunteers to ‘man’ the stands. As soon as the schedule was ready, each volunteer was sent a resource pack to prepare for the events. Many of the volunteers got involved thanks to their own good will. Whilst this meant many were highly engaged because they had a genuine interest in working with young people, others dropped out ahead of the event, and did not take part. It also meant that there were varying levels of knowledge amongst the people on the stands.
- It was challenging to recruit volunteers at an entry-level stage of their career; in future iterations, it would be beneficial to have more young people, who are more accessible to the students attending.
- During the planning process, the Event Manager reached out to organisations to provide demonstrations on the stands, and/or to provide creative objects (etc.) that could be put on display. Among the organisations contacted, such as the Abbey Theatre and the Irish Architectural Foundation, many were very keen to offer assistance but simply did not have the resources available during the week in question, due to the dates coinciding with Culture Night and The National Ploughing Championship. (Note the dates of the careers fairs are fixed as are the others so there will always be a clash).
- The Event Manager contacted various people from across industry to appear on stage for a series of ‘career talks’ that happen at the events over the course of the two days.
- The Project Manager developed the Information Pack for students and worked closely with Think House on the design of the pack, as well as with the website designer on the development of a QR code that would link to the pack.
- The Project Manager liaised with Think House and the comms team at Creative Ireland on a comms strategy to coincide with the events. Comms teams from across the Steering Group Partner organisations were also included in all conversations and provided with a social media calendar/planner ahead of the events.
- The Event Manager consulted with stakeholders on the suggestions for merchandise to be offered on stands and worked with Think House on the design of chosen merchandise.

⁵⁰ Based on information offered by Sean Boyle and Sean Kelly at Into Film during a conversation with the Project Manager on 16/10/25.

- Fran Keaveney and the team at CCIS led on all matters relating to contracting, procurement of quotes, merchandise ordering, insurance, budget management, and payment of vendors.

Execution

- The two careers' events – Higher Options and World Skills – took place on Wednesday 17th, Thursday 18th, and Friday 19th Sept 2025 from 09:00am - 12:00pm, and from 12:00pm to 3.00pm, at the Royal Dublin Society Event Halls (Ballsbridge, Dublin 4).
- The stand designs were vibrant and colourful and stood out from the crowd, particularly at Higher Options where the stand was positioned in an area with lots of footfall. The World Skills stand was more hidden and cramped, particularly in relation to some of the other exhibitors at that event (some of which included large-scale demonstrations with microphones, and substantial display items – like cars!).
- Each stand had three to six volunteers present at all times, each wearing the 'Creative Calling' stickers or t-shirts (Fig. 5).



Fig 5: Creative Calling volunteer t-shirts

- These volunteers included all members of the CCIS team, representatives from the Irish Film Institute, Irish Design Institute, Young Irish Film Makers, the Arts Council, Minding Creative Minds, Performing Arts Forum, IAPI, Irish Writer's Guild, and National Talent Academies. Each was asked to fill in a feedback form at the end of the events (their responses have been collated in a spreadsheet – see Appendix 2).
- Demonstrations were provided across the two stands: at World Skills, Odyssey Model Making provided models for students to engage with, and YIFM provided a podcasting suite; at Higher Options, the National Talent Academy for Animation provided two VR headsets for students to try.

- Sarah Doyle, Business & Legal Affairs Coordinator at Cartoon Saloon, spoke on the World Skills careers panels as a representative from the creative sector. Likewise, artist Alana Daly Mulligan spoke on panels at Higher Options.
- The [Information Pack](#) (Appendix 3) was available for participants to download. It was easily accessible via a QR code that led to the Creative Calling website.⁵¹ The QR code was printed on all merchandising and across the stands. The Information Pack proved a useful tool for volunteers, some of whom used it as a guide whilst talking to students. Stakeholders across the industry have commented on the quality and usefulness of the Information Pack, as have teachers and parents.
- Tote bags (2,000) and laptop stickers (5,000) (Fig. 5) were selected by Fran Keaveney as the main branded merchandising (sweets were also available), and these proved extremely popular with students, many of whom came to stand just because they had seen them from the distance.



Fig 6: Creative Calling merchandise

⁵¹ <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/creative-careers/?prevcc25=1/>

Public Engagement Outcomes

(4.1) Target audience

- Post-primary students from Transition Year onwards, and especially those who are actively deciding what to do when they leave school, are the main audience for this initiative.
- Teachers and guidance counsellors are also an important group of stakeholders to target, given their presence in, and influence on, students' lives.
- Likewise, parents/guardians and grandparents need to be made more aware of the opportunities that exist across the CCIs so that they can respond positively when members of their family express an interest in a creative career.



Publicly available information (or research) on the main 'influencers' on a student's career choice, whether teachers, parents/guardians or peers, is extremely sparse in Ireland. There is some suggestion that the mother has the most impact,⁵² whilst Research Ireland has found that self-identity and peer-belonging has a much greater impact than previously realised.⁵³ More work on this aspect of the project would be useful in future and would be a key question to ask during a planned youth consultation.

(4.2) Overview of Comms Plan

- The Creative Calling initiative did not have any standalone social media accounts or channels.
- Therefore, the Project Manager worked closely with Ciara Carroll and Janelle McDonald from the Creative Ireland Comms Team to deliver a social media campaign for the two careers events. Think House were also engaged by Creative Ireland to assist with this and provide a 'live capture' social media presence on Wednesday 17th September.
- Comms Teams from the Steering Group Organisations were brought in to these conversations and partner logos were included throughout all social media assets.
- The plan involved a series of collaborative posts from the Creative Ireland Instagram and LinkedIn accounts, and some on Tik Tok, that included all the Steering Group Partners as co-posters.
- The Project Manager contacted RTÉ & TG4 to gauge interest in reporting on the initiative in the weeks ahead of the event. Evelyn O'Rourke (RTÉ News Arts Correspondent) offered to come to the events with a crew.
- Think House delivered a series of social media assets (Figs. 7 & 8 & 9) and all were approved by Project Manager and Steering Group Partners prior to posting. Several

⁵² <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/mothers-the-single-biggest-influence-on-student-career-choices-1.3753774>

⁵³ Based on information offered by Ruth Freeman (Research Ireland) during a conversation with the Project Manager on 16/10/25.

redrafts and delays occurred during this time which made the tight timeline challenging.

- A webpage (Fig. 10) was created by Fusio (who also manage Creative Ireland’s website) to launch in conjunction with the events. It followed the brand guidelines set out by Think House for the Creative Calling visual identity and contained logistical information about the events, a link to the Information Pack, and a ‘straw-poll’ for webpage visitors to answer (see results on pg 31).
- A press release about the pilot initiative was released by Creative Ireland to coincide with the opening of events. It included the following quote from Minister Patrick O’Donovan: *“As someone who has spent time in the classroom, I know how important it is to show young people the range of opportunities that can flow from their passions and interests. Creative Calling: Careers for the Curious is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the diverse array of careers the creative, artistic and cultural sectors can offer. Professionals from across these Irish sectors have made a significant impact both at home and abroad and can inspire the next generation of young creatives. This initiative aims to highlight the breadth of options available to guide them on their career pathway.”*⁵⁴



Fig 7: Creative Calling – Announcement Post (Instagram)

⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/press-releases/minister-odonovan-welcomes-creative-careers-initiative-at-higher-options-and-worldskills-ireland-events-in-the-rds-dublin/>



Fig 8: Creative Calling –Teaser Post (Instagram)

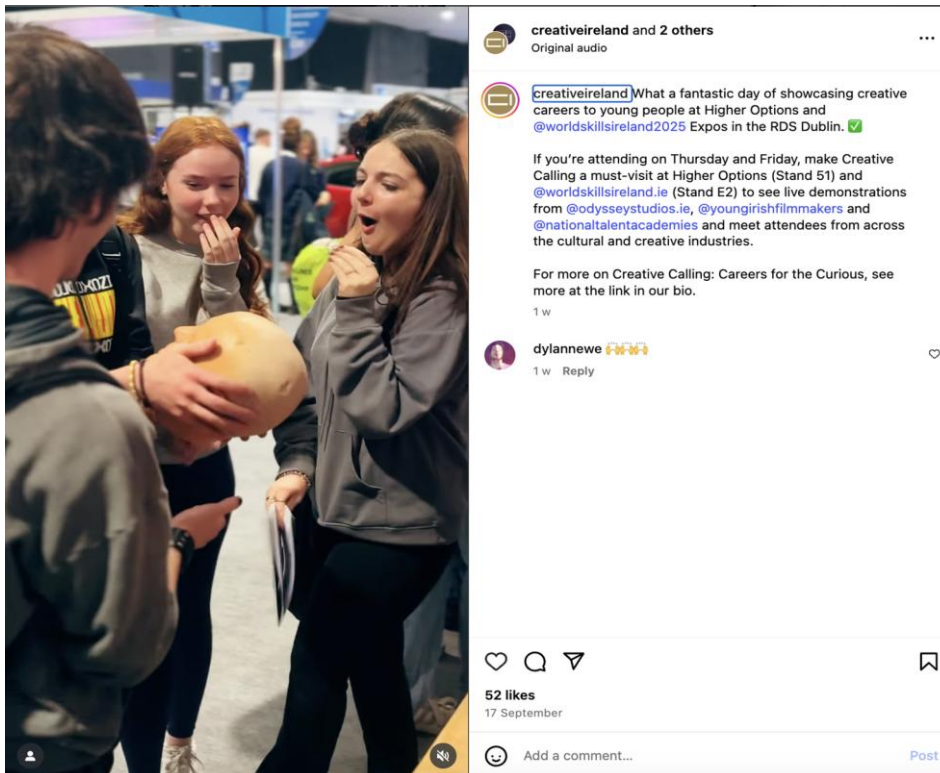


Fig 9: Creative Calling – Highlights Post [video] (Instagram)

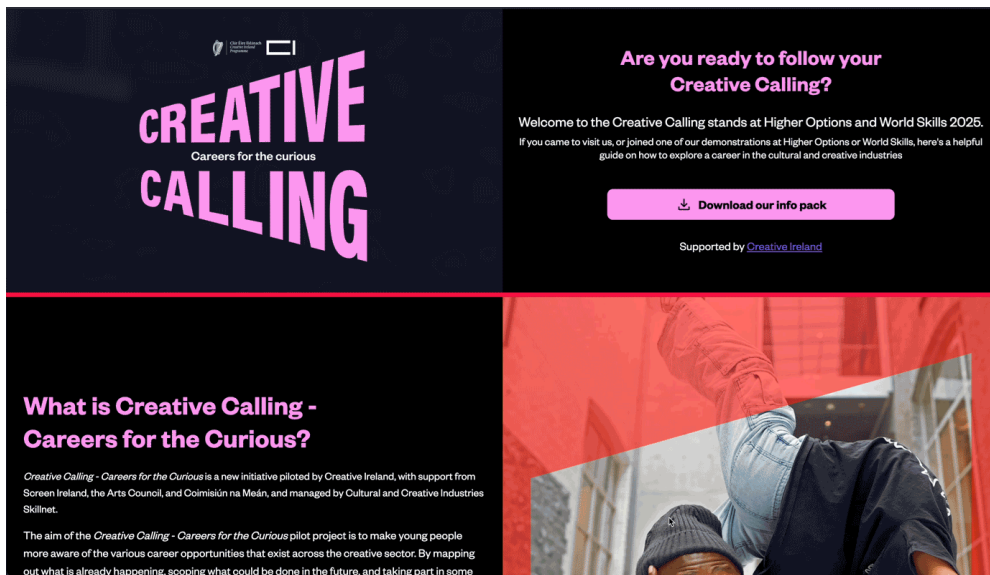
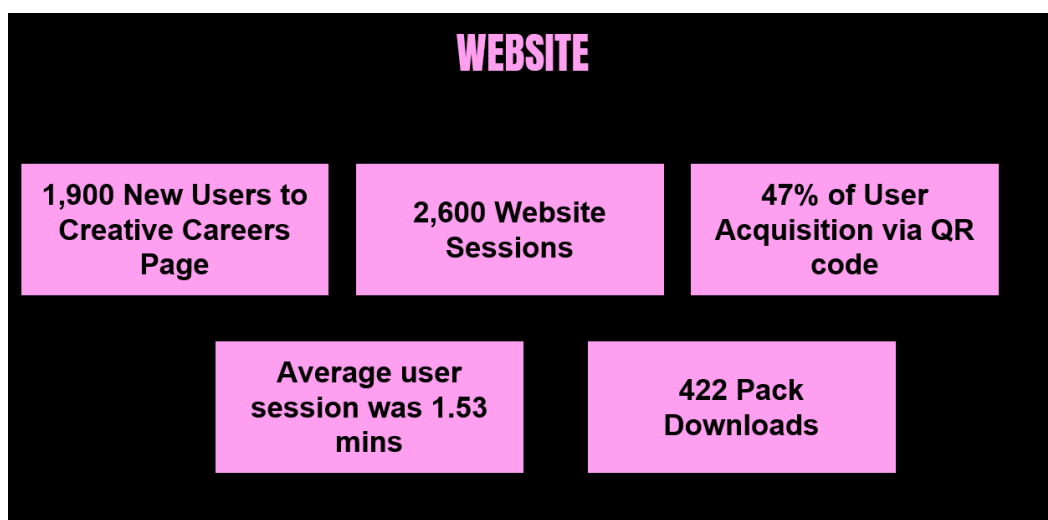


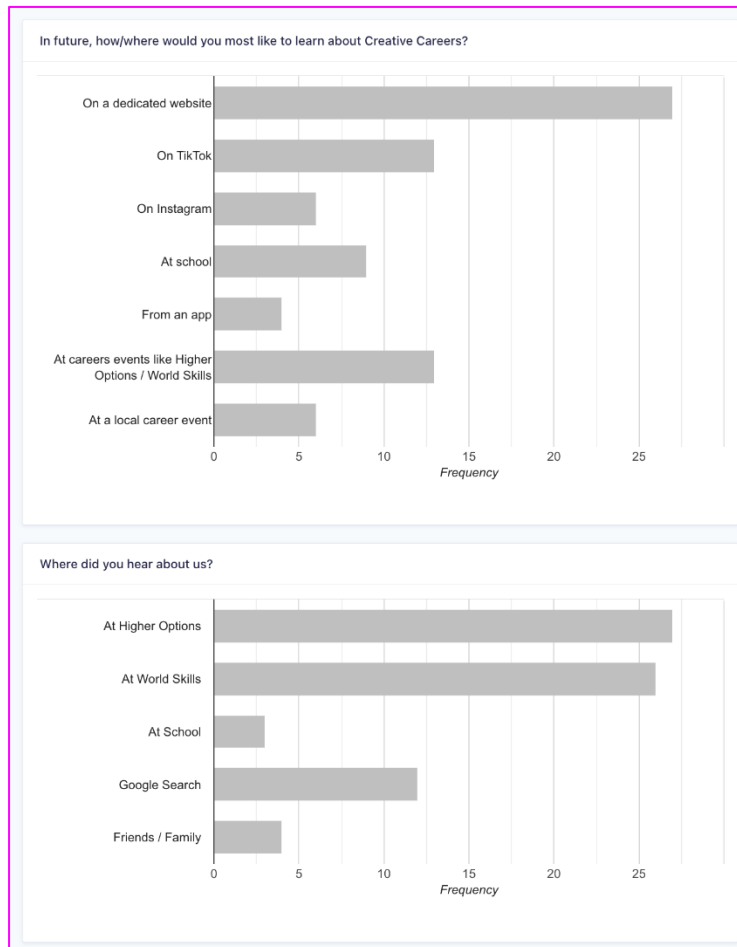
Fig 10: Creative Calling – Website

(4.3) Online Engagement

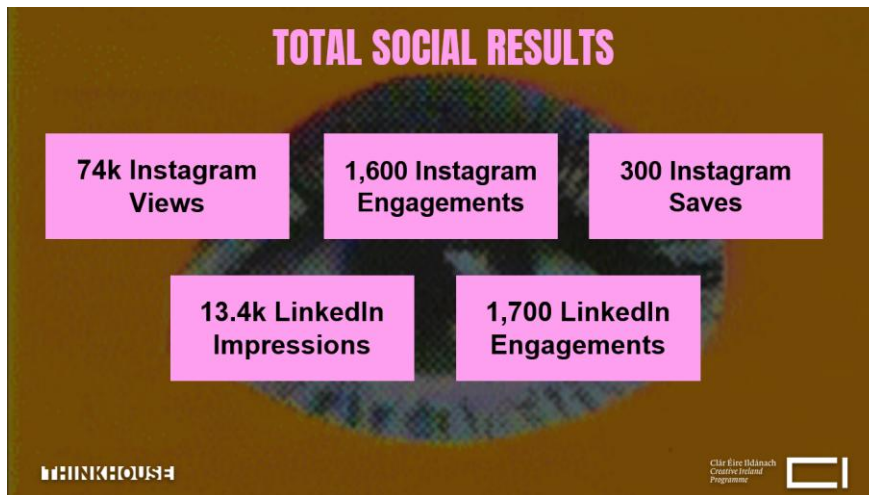
- Before, during, and after the events, organisations like the Arts Council and IAPI included information about the initiative in their email newsletters, which led to some enquiries about the initiative and its future life.
- Likewise, the IGC sent an email to members detailing the new programme and pointing them towards the Information Pack.
- Whilst including promotional material in these kinds of email chains is valuable for driving awareness, there remains no official point of public contact for the programme (there is no creative calling email address), which means the benefit becomes somewhat obsolete. Having a dedicated person in place as the spokesperson for the programme would resolve this issue.
- The webpage performed well:



- Time spent on the webpage remains high, suggesting users consume all the available information, and download the Information Pack.
- Users have also filled in the ‘straw poll’:



- Many users found the webpage using the QR code, which means it performed well, but many others (43%) found it via other means, which suggests the social campaign and other drivers to the website (like media coverage) also met their intended purpose of bringing people to the site.
- The Information Pack has been downloaded 400 times to date, indicating that users may re-use it and re-visit it when they are looking for resources on creative careers.
- The social media campaign (as outlined in 5.2) performed well:



- A key indicator that the posts had meaningful engagement is revealed in the number of ‘saves’ (300), which means users intended to revisit the post and review in future.
- LinkedIn performed higher than expected (with a better level of engagement than Instagram). The reasons for that are unclear – it may be that more young people are using LinkedIn as a new tool in the planning of their career path, particularly as it allows users to build a professional ‘personal brand’; it could be that there was a high-level of curiosity in the initiative from people on LinkedIn actively working in the CCIs; or it could be parents/teachers with children/students interested in the CCIs.
- A ‘soundbites’ post on Tik Tok had 306 views, although there was a delay in posting this, which may have impacted its relevance.



The under 25 demographic accounts for 4% of Creative Ireland’s Instagram followers and 10% on TikTok. Very few students that were engaged by volunteers at the events were following any of the partner organisations on social media. This raises questions about the overall impact of the campaign with the target audience. In future, it may be more impactful to run a campaign in partnership with creative practitioners that have large followings amongst young people, rather than standalone agency campaigns.

(4.4) Real world engagement

- 30,000+ students attended Higher Options and World Skills over the course of the three days. It is very difficult to know how many of those 30,000 visited the Creative Calling stands: tracking was not possible as the stands were extremely busy at all times. It was also not possible to track where participants were from, although anecdotally most seemed to be from the Leinster region.
- Volunteers on the stands reported that students were highly engaged and curious about the information on offer, despite there being some initial confusion about what ‘Creative Calling’ was all about (many asked if it was a university).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Appendix 2: Volunteer Feedback

- Most volunteers commented that a stand encapsulating many different sectors and professions (like Creative Calling) is harder for students to grasp than a stand representing a clear-cut profession (like nursing, or accounting). As one volunteer said, “We were successful in raising awareness around the creative industry and the many career paths, but I felt many were left a little confused without the tangible training options offered by most of the other booths.”⁵⁶
- Volunteers felt that the messaging could be slightly clearer. All thought more preparation / training for people manning the stands would be needed in future. One also mentioned that the engagement levels for students are different depending on the level they are at: TY students have time to listen and explore the demonstrations; Leaving Certs are more interested in finding out about the courses they can do and security of employment in the sector.
- The demonstrations, particularly the VR headsets, proved to be extremely useful tools for driving engagement, as volunteers could speak to the students while they waited in line for the headset.
- A lot of interest was generated by a report on the initiative that featured on the RTÉ 6:1 News on Wednesday 17th September (Fig. 11),⁵⁷ and which was also shared widely online.

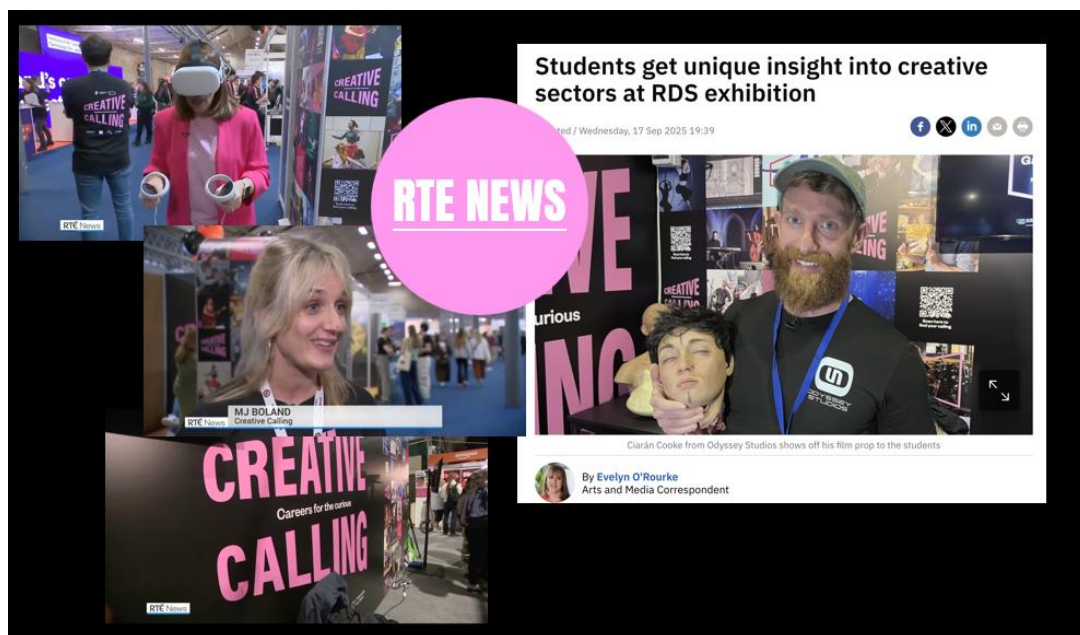


Fig 11: Creative Calling – RTÉ News Features

- On Thursday 18th September, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless, attended the stand and was introduced to the *Creative Calling* initiative.

⁵⁶ Appendix 2: Volunteer Feedback

⁵⁷ <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2025/0917/1534042-creative-and-cultural-industry-exhibition/>

- As listed in Section 4.2, a lot of education institutions, guidance counsellors, and teachers were also engaged by the Project Manager and volunteers at the events. Many of them came to the stands, keen to learn more about the programme.
- Everyone – from the volunteers to the students, and from the Steering Group Partners to the teachers – complimented the brand design and commented on how successful the pink and black colour scheme was for catching the eye.



It became apparent almost immediately that very few people (students, teachers, parents, guardians) really understood what the CCIs include, the number of jobs that exist across the CCIs (many of those not ‘creative’), and that the CCIs contribute to the country’s economic success. So, whilst the events were beneficial for students thinking about a ‘creative career’, they also helped build awareness more broadly for the sector at every level. As well as this, the events provided a platform for the CCIs in Ireland to present themselves as a unified group, see themselves in professional terms, and share a space with other deep-rooted and recognisable industries, like pharmaceuticals or agriculture. Instilling this confidence in the sector is a vital component in its future growth and success.

(4.5) Afterlife of Events

- As mentioned previously, organisations, teachers, and students have already enquired about the future of the project and asked for a Creative Calling presence at forthcoming events.
- For example, the Project Manager attended the National Youth Film and Animation Day 2025 in Kilkenny on Saturday 1st November following an invitation from the organisers to take part.⁵⁸
- As is apparent from the information received in the volunteer feedback forms, the organisations engaged for this year’s events are already thinking about how things could be improved for the same events next year, and many suggested more local events or roadshows across the country. Many of them enthusiastically shared the footage and posts from the events on their own social media channels, which has helped to build a sense of momentum.

⁵⁸ <https://yifm.com/nyfan-nationalyouthfilmandanimationnetwork/>

5. Relevant Findings & Recommendations

(5.1) Stakeholders

1. One of the most rewarding aspects of the project was the willingness that was shown by Steering Group Partners to work together. It projected a sense of unity and purpose on behalf of the sector – both to the sub-sectoral organisations that were involved, and to the broader public. However, bringing everyone ‘into the tent’, establishing consensus, and accessing existing resources and materials to help this project, was also one of the most challenging and time-consuming aspects of the pilot.
2. Scoping Meetings with stakeholders working in the youth space revealed:
 - a. When it comes to young people, it is more effective if they can be specifically targeted by age; a 16-year-old and a 19-year-old have quite different needs, attitudes to their future, and understandings of the sector. This is also the case with teachers versus parents/guardians – or rural students versus urban students. So, the targeting needs to be *micro-targeted* for specific audiences. Additionally, 16- to 19-year-old school-leavers should not get left behind by this initiative.
 - b. Young people are not good ‘information-finders’, they need a lot of guidance. Facilitating information that is easy-access and simple to understand is key.
 - c. Visibility is one of the most (if not *the* most) important factors in encouraging young people into a creative career – they have to be able to see themselves in the roles the project is promoting (*if you can see it, you can be it*).
 - d. Young people respond best when they are treated as collaborators and their own creative practice is taken seriously.
3. Collaboration is happening between stakeholders but this is often happening at on a personal level rather than an institutional level. Many of the organisations offering youth activities in the creative space have never met.
4. Inclusivity remains an issue. There is no dedicated website for creative job postings,⁵⁹ so a lot of jobs are found by word-of-mouth. This means that new-entrants to the sector, especially from migrant backgrounds, or underprivileged communities, find it very inaccessible as an industry.
5. In some sectors, at mid-career level, there are now lots of training opportunities, but very few jobs. Positioning a career in the CCIs as purposeful, but often precarious, is a challenge that will need to be addressed in future iterations of the programme.
6. There are a lot of opportunities for people in the CCIs if they are fluent Irish speakers, and organisations like TG4 have excellent initiatives available for students interested in a creative career ‘as gaelige’. There is more work needed to explore this dimension of the project and the potential collaborations therein.

⁵⁹ <https://artsmanagement.ie/> which posted new job opportunities, and helped organisations create their job specs, was wound down in 2024, as it became too labour-intensive for its voluntary status. It had 10,000 subscriptions at the time of shuttering. (Based on information offered by Prof. Emily Mark-Fitzgerald, who ran the website, during a conversation with the Project Manager on 07/08/25). The most popular site now in terms of visits seems to be <https://www.performingartsforum.ie/jobs/> which posts a wide variety of roles outside the performing arts as well.

7. **Recommendation:** It would be beneficial to convene all of the stakeholders delivering youth-based initiatives for a peer-learning session, and to forge relationships, so that everyone is better aligned and more strategic in their outlook.
8. **Recommendation:** A large youth consultation was beyond the scope (time and resources) of the pilot. It should be the one of the first actions undertaken by a future Project Manager.
9. **Recommendation:** There simply wasn't enough time for the Project Manager to meet many relevant groups (educators, creative practitioners, industry, youth organisations etc). More time to listen to these groups is needed in any future iterations of the project, so that decisions about long-term direction are as informed as possible.

(5.2) Existing Initiatives (Ireland & International)

- There are many excellent initiatives happening across Ireland (as briefly outlined on pg 9) but these are often fragmented, localised, and rarely connect creative activities with the acquisition of professional skills, or a pathway to a creative career.
- No initiative of this kind, which brings together all of the CCIs together for a shared purpose to promote careers, currently exists.
- More work is needed to bridge industry (whether large corporations or small local businesses) with schools. This is happening far more effectively across Ireland's STEM sector, for eg. Schools' programmes like *SciFest* work directly with industry sponsors like Boston Scientific and Intel.⁶⁰ In the UK, *Discover! Creative Careers* works with local SMEs to offer 'Getting to Know You' sessions, where students go and visit a creative business in their locality and talk to the people that work there.⁶¹
- There is an increasing shift in the STEM sector away from the concept of a 'career' or a specific qualification, towards transferrable skills development. This is a particularly important in today's world, where the future of work is increasingly uncertain with the proliferation of AI and automation.⁶²Of course, knowing what the future skillset needs to be is also challenging.
- Conversations with peers in Northern Ireland and the UK suggest that the most effective way of developing programmes such as this is by working with small community and school groups, at a local level. However, 'buy-in' is also needed from parents/guardians, grandparents, teachers, counsellors, community leaders, and most importantly, local and national government, so better awareness of the CCIs more broadly, and positivity at a societal level, is also needed.
- **Recommendation:** Consequently, for a successful delivery of this programme in the long-term, the approach needs to be both top-down and bottom-up.
- **Recommendation:** As mentioned on pgs 18-19, some mapping of existing initiatives has already been undertaken, or is ongoing. It would be beneficial to convene all these 'creative cartographers' together to share information and ideas about best practice,

⁶⁰ <https://scifest.ie/Page/Partners-and-Sponsors/3652/Index.html>

⁶¹ <https://discovercreative.careers/teachers-career-leaders/careers-professionals-training/previous-training-events/>

⁶² [Does HR still need humans?](#), Financial Times, 18 August 2025.

and to decide (if possible) how best to distil all the information that has been gathered into a central place (whether that be an app, or a website).

- **Recommendation:** Ensure that skills acquisition and skills development is at the heart of any future iteration of the programme, especially as roles across the CCIs are fluid and skills can easily be transferred across sectors.
- **Recommendation:** More work is needed to understand the structures of successful STEM initiatives in Ireland, and how they are funded and operated. As the lines between science, technology, design, and creative thought become increasingly blurred, it would be beneficial to look at opportunities for inter-industry collaboration. It would also be useful for a future Project Manager to open a conversation with the National Skills Council on strategic direction and policy making.
- **Recommendation:** A future Project Manager and the team from CCIS, along with members of the Steering Group, should go to Belfast to meet with the education leader and creative organisations there, and open a meaningful conversation about cross-border collaboration in this space.
- **Recommendation:** It was beyond the time constraints of the pilot project to engage in a proper scoping of European initiatives in this space. Whilst it is valuable to see what is happening across the border in Northern Ireland, and in neighbouring England, Scotland and Wales, the UK is operating on a much bigger scale than Ireland. It would be insightful to engage with a country with a similar population and GDP to Ireland (such as Denmark) in future iterations of the project. Likewise, it would be beneficial to look beyond Europe, at countries like Japan or South Korea, whose creative industries have thrived as a result of targeted, strategic interventions by Government.⁶³

(5.3) Brand Identity

1. The Creative Calling brand design was very popular with all parties and drew a lot of attention. The decision to shift from ‘Career’ to ‘Calling’ also helped to underline the message that a job in the creative sector comes with a sense of purpose.
2. There was some indication that the branding is not specific enough and needs to be clearer about what exactly is being represented.
3. **Recommendation:** Future promotional activity would benefit from more youth consultation, particularly with regard to the creation of online promotional materials, and the channels that are used. For e.g. a website was listed as the most popular destination for learning more by survey respondents. It may be possible to repurpose some website materials from the UK Discover! Creative Careers initiative and expand the website further.
4. **Recommendation:** More involvement of young people as the actual creators or collaborators on the branding, and the online promotion. This would mean that content would be *by* young people, *for* young people, but it would also allow them to

⁶³ [Japan’s Hottest Export Is About To Be Its Cool](#), Bloomberg 21 February 2025

gain real world experience of designing, launching, and managing a campaign, which would expose them to a creative career in practice.

(5.4) Engagement of Target Audience

- The event delivery at Higher Options and World Skills was highly successful, with excellent levels of online and real-world engagement. There were no complications or mishaps; all ran very smoothly, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Gareth Lee, Fran Keaveney and all the team at CCIS, the Event Manager, and the team of volunteers.
- Volunteers on stands felt the messaging was somewhat confused and said they could have been better prepared.
- There was a keen appetite at the events for more information from all parties, with students, teachers, and guidance counsellors all seeking more resources, and enquiring about speakers coming to schools in future.
- The target audience(s) had very poor understanding of the CCIs and what jobs they incorporate. Many students asked about job security and earning potential. Little measurement is currently undertaken of the CCIs in Ireland, and as a result no information could be provided to students about the size of the CCIs as an economic block, how many jobs there are, where the jobs are, and what skills gaps currently exist.
- **Recommendation:** A spokesperson / public point of contact for the programme is urgently needed to field incoming inquiries from schools.
- **Recommendation:** The impact on the target audience was limited to the schools that attended the two events. This means that schools outside the Leinster region were engaged on a limited level, particularly those from very rural or disadvantaged communities (including DEIS schools outside Leinster). Some consideration should be given in future to the core objective of funding the events, and whether it is being met.
- **Recommendation:** Those offering information to students on the stands need more training in future.



Overall, the pilot programme was highly successful: agreed deliverables were met and the outcomes have been impactful for various reasons, from excellent levels of public engagement, to the development of key insights on what is needed, and how best it can be delivered. A sense of momentum has developed that should be built upon and expanded. Challenges did arise, particularly relating to the extremely tight timeframe, the fragmented funding mechanism, and the management of multiple stakeholders. However, many of these challenges can be alleviated with the provision of more support and resources, with the benefit of more time and space to plan and grow, and by the cultivation of collegiality – a seed that has already been sewn by the project’s very existence.

Appendix 1:

- Feedback from volunteers: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1miUhzgGGM4IGLk2CE9fTUSEufy-brkkH7Yq0Y_G1zW0/edit?gid=358327995#gid=358327995

Appendix 2:

- Carousel asset: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FwAwfa0krDTvdx6hKDN9y6ocW79H_VkX

Appendix 3:

- Information Pack: <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/creative-calling-info-pack.pdf?v=1>