HEA | An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

Shared Island Digital Creative Industries Innovation Programme

FAQ Document

22nd October 2026

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Shared Island Initiative

Shared Island Digital Creative Industries Innovation Programme (DCIIP)

Frequently Asked Questions

The Shared Island Digital Creative Industries Innovation Programme ("DCIIP") is a collaborative scheme supported by Government of Ireland funding through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science ("DFHERIS") and the Shared Island initiative. This document aims to clarify queries in respect of the funding call. Queries can be emailed to skills@hea.ie, the HEA will update this document with responses to all queries.

The HEA will not accept Call queries after 27th November 2026.

1. What is the DCIIP?

The DCIIP will strengthen the digital creative industries sector by building innovation capacity across Higher Education Institutions ("HEIs") and industry on an island-wide basis. Through collaborative research, innovation, skills development and industry engagement, the DCIIP aims to create new opportunities for the growth and international competitiveness of the digital creative industries ecosystem across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

2. Who manages the DCIIP?

The DCIIP is managed by the Higher Education Authority ("HEA") on behalf of DFHERIS and contributes to the objectives of the government's Shared Island initiative through supporting the further development of sustainable cross-border partnerships, research excellence, talent development, and innovation capacity in the digital creative industries.

3. What is the context of the DCIIP?

The creative industries are among the most dynamic sectors of the all-island economy and increasingly rely on digital technologies, innovation capabilities, and highly skilled talent. The **Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-2026** identifies significant opportunities to strengthen the sector through investment in research, innovation, entrepreneurship, skills development, and collaborative infrastructure.

In recognition of the interconnected nature of the creative industries across the island, and their considerable future potential, the government is supporting the **Shared Island Digital Creative Industries Innovation Programme**, to foster research collaboration between HEIs, industry partners, and relevant external partners, in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

4. What funding is available?

DFHERIS will contribute 60% (€6 million) to the fund, with the remaining 40% (€4 million) provided through an allocation by the government from the Shared Island Fund, in view of the island-wide dimensions to the sector and cooperation opportunity in this new **Shared Island Digital Creative Industries Innovation Programme (2027-30)**.

5. What are the DCIIP programme aims?

The DCIIP has been established to support collaborative innovation, research, skills development, and capacity-building across the digital creative industries ecosystem on the island of Ireland.

The DCIIP seeks to create long-term partnerships between HEIs, industry, and associated creative industries organisations (external partners), to strengthen research innovation capability and support the growth of internationally competitive digital creative industries. The DCIIP will:

- Build research and innovation capacity in HEIs, aligned with the current and emerging needs of the digital creative industries.
- Strengthen research, innovation, development, and collaboration in and between HEIs, by rewarding innovation and excellence, thereby enhancing the higher education sector in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- Advance the objectives of the government's Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-2026 as part of the NDP Review Tertiary Sector Sectoral Investment Plan 2025-2030.
- Expand the skilled workforce across the island, with a focus on innovation linked to emerging skills needs in the Digital Skills Industries.
- Leverage existing capacity and infrastructure on a cross-border basis.
- Promote networks of excellence and partnerships of scale for research, innovation, and development.
- Contribute to policy development in relevant sectors and benefit industry, north and south.
- Contribute to capacity building and innovation networks in a regionally balanced framework.

6. What activities will the DCCIP support?

The DCIIP supports activities across areas including, but not limited to:

- Digital media and content creation
- Creative technologies
- Immersive technologies (AR / VR / XR)
- Animation and visual effects
- Games development
- Digital storytelling
- Design innovation
- Audiovisual production
- Digital arts and cultural innovation
- Creative AI applications
- Creative entrepreneurship and commercialisation

7. What are the DCIIP key objectives?

The key objectives of the programme are to:

- Align with the objectives of the government's Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-2026.
- Strengthen collaboration between HEIs, industry, and associated creative industries organisations (external partners), across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.
- Build innovation and research capacity within the digital creative industries ecosystem.
- Support the development of highly skilled talent and future workforce capability.
- Promote interdisciplinary research collaboration between technology, arts, humanities, design, and creative disciplines.
- Foster innovation-led economic growth and international competitiveness.
- Support knowledge exchange, commercialisation, and industry engagement.
- Contribute to balanced regional development and the objectives of the Shared Island initiative.
- Create sustainable, long-term island-wide partnerships that continue beyond the lifetime of DCIIP funding.

8. What are the DCIIP application requirements?

Project applications must demonstrate:

1. Excellence in innovation, research, and creative practice.
2. Clear contribution to the development of the digital creative industries on an all-island basis.
3. Strong partnerships between HEIs, industry, and associated creative industries organisations (external partners).
4. Tangible outcomes relating to innovation capacity, skills development, talent pipelines, and industry growth for the digital creative industries.

9. What are the DCIIP key policy documents?

- Impact 2030;
- the Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-2026;
- the Shared Island Initiative;
- sectoral and regional innovation and enterprise strategies, north and south, on the island of Ireland; and
- relevant European and international innovation priorities.

10. What is "Pillar I: Innovation Hubs and Collaborative Networks"?

Innovation Hubs and Collaborative Networks will support the development of all-island digital creative industries innovation hubs, shared facilities, collaborative networks, and innovation ecosystems that bring together HEIs, industry, and associated creative industries organisations (external partners).

Activities may include:

- Shared facilities
- Innovation labs
- Testbeds
- Knowledge exchange platforms
- Incubators
- Creative technology demonstrators

11. What is a "Pillar II: Partnerships of Scale"?

Partnerships of Scale will support large-scale strategic collaborations focused on research, innovation, skills development, technology adoption, and industry engagement within the digital creative industries.

They will supports strategic collaborations focused on:

- Research and innovation
- Talent development
- Technology adoption
- Commercialisation
- Industry engagement
- Internationalisation

12. Who can apply?

Project applications are open to eligible researchers employed in the listed eligible institutions, innovators, and interdisciplinary teams from **creative industries relevant disciplines**, including technology, engineering, arts, humanities, media, and design.

13. What are the minimum Consortium partners required?

Each project application must have **one Lead Investigator** who will be employed at the Lead Administrative/ Governance Institution in Ireland and one Lead Investigator employed at the lead HEI in Northern Ireland at the time of award commencement, and an industry partner from outside higher education and research institutions.

14. How many projects can an investigator lead on?

A Lead Investigator/ Co-Lead Investigator from Ireland and from Northern Ireland may be involved in **only one project application per Pillar** in a leading capacity. If an investigator is involved as a Lead or Partner in multiple projects recommended for funding, they will be required to confirm their capacity to deliver their commitments to the projects, in writing to the HEA, prior to any awards being made.

15. What other partners can be included?

Each project application must adhere to the minimum consortium partnership requirements detailed in question 13. There is no specified maximum limit on the number of partners. Project applications may include **external partners** from further education, civic society, cultural organisations, creative enterprise, and innovation from Ireland and Northern Ireland, and other **additional partners** from outside of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

16. How many applications can be submitted?

Each HEI in Ireland may act as **lead or co-lead** on **no more than one application under Pillar I** and **no more than one application under Pillar II**. There is no limit on the number project applications in which a HEI may participate as a supporting partner. There is no limit to the number of project applications where a Northern Ireland HEI can be lead, co-lead, or supporting partner.

17. What is an industry partner?

Industry partners are registered companies from outside higher education and research institutions including SMEs, multinational companies, and industry representative organisations.

Industry partners currently in receipt of public funding must declare this funding at the time of application or if received after obtaining DCIIP funding, must notify the HEA in writing. Resources funded through existing public funding should not be utilised in the industry participation in the proposal. Industry partners are responsible for ensuring that they are in full compliance with state aid rules for receipt of public funding.

Spin outs and campus companies may act as industry partners, provided their reason for collaboration is clearly justified and their inclusion does not contravene State Aid rules.

18. Are HEIs not listed in appendix 1 eligible participate in the DCIIP?

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are not listed in Appendix 1 of the DCIIP Call Document, including private and independent HEIs, that are based in Ireland and Northern Ireland **are eligible to participate in the DCIIP as supporting academic partners** of a proposal led by a HEI listed in appendix 1.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are **not** listed in Appendix 1, **cannot** lead or co-lead an application to the DCIIP.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that are **not** listed in Appendix 1, that are based in Ireland and Northern Ireland **can receive funding as a supporting academic partner**. The funding requested must be respective of their contribution and must be within the maximum budget allowable for their leading academic partner.