



Report on Stakeholder Workshop for WCQ Maker Hub Initiative

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Prepared For :



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City
& County Council

JOHN O'BRIEN
CONSULTANT: ARTS CULTURE
CREATIVITY

INTRODUCTION	2
A NOTE ON GOVERNANCE.	3
OUTPUT OF THE WORKSHOP	4
1. IDENTITY & VISION	4
2. SPATIAL EXPERIENCE & DESIGN QUALITIES	5
3. CREATIVITY, MAKING & ARTISTIC PRACTICE	5
4. COMMUNITY & PEOPLE	6
5. LEARNING & GROWTH	6
6. ECONOMY & SUSTAINABILITY	7
WHAT IT FEELS LIKE (THE VISITOR JOURNEY)	8
WHAT WILL THE PROGRAMME LOOK LIKE?	9
WHO BENEFITS AND HOW	11
AN OPERATING MODEL	13
FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMME EXAMPLE	13
STAFFING	15
WHAT DOES ARTS AND RESEARCH LOOK LIKE?	17
COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH EAST TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (SETU)	17
COLLABORATION WITH THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (SRA)	18
THE ECONOMIC IMPACT	19
THE GOVERNANCE ISSUE	21
CONCLUSION	24
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS	25
APPENDIX – CASE STUDIES	27
ARS ELECTRONICA – LINZ, AUSTRIA	27
ZKM – CENTER FOR ART AND MEDIA, KARLSRUHE, GERMANY	28
GRAY AREA – SAN FRANCISCO, USA	29
FACT LIVERPOOL (FOUNDATION FOR ART AND CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY), UK	31
NXT MUSEUM – AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS	33
BETA FESTIVAL - DUBLIN, IRELAND	34

Introduction

This report sets out a series of proposals and recommendations based on the outputs of a workshop held on the 26th of September to explore the purpose and potential of a “maker hub” building in Waterford’s Cultural Quarter.

In attendance at the workshop were representatives from the local authority (Waterford Cultural Quarter, Economic Development - architects), Garter Lane Arts Centre, SETU, Waterford based artists & creatives, Waterford Chamber of Commerce, and the Southern Regional Assembly

Given the nature of the challenge and the participants – rational, creative, practical and logistical – Lego Serious Play was chosen as the most effective workshop tool to bridge these different sensibilities.

The use of Lego Serious Play opened up a rich seam of reflection and conversation and by the end surfaced the central challenge of the proposed building:

“What is the purpose of the building and what will happen inside it?”

The first part of this report sets out what the workshop participants identified as the *purpose* of the building.

No consensus was reached in the workshop as to what would happen inside it, so the second part of this report proposes a curatorial and operational model based on the various ideas raised in the workshop and informed by the research to date, and the case studies identified.

The recommendations and a summary of the findings can be found in the Conclusion.

A NOTE ON GOVERNANCE.

It has been proposed that the governance and management of this new building could be taken on one of the existing arts/cultural organisations in Waterford. Leveraging existing local expertise in arts and cultural management in this way is best practice in creative place making and avoids the costs and challenges associated with establishing a new management and governance team.

An existing organisation would have the necessary skills and abilities to oversee the management of any creative space in the city on behalf of the Local Authority assuming an appropriate SLA is in place. However, it is important to bear in mind the funding arts/cultural organisations have little additional capacity in terms of people, time or money. Investment in such an organisation would be required from the get-go.

However, more clarity is needed on what such a partner organisation is being asked to oversee, and what the nature of the relationship between it, the Local Authority, and the new building will be.

Output of the Workshop

A thematic analysis of the workshop conversations produced the following:

Theme	Core Ideas/Language	Tone ("It must be...")
Identity & Vision	Beacon, landmark, iconic, outward-facing, aspirational	Bold / visible
Spatial Experience	Adaptive, easy to navigate, greenery, interesting spaces	Flexible / sensory
Creativity, Making, & Artistic Practice	Visible making, collaboration, artists, creative landscape	Process-driven / experimental
Community & People	Welcoming, collective, wellbeing, participation	Inclusive / social
Learning & Growth	Skills, lifelong learning, growth, adaptation	Educational / developmental
Economy & Sustainability	Continuous funding, sustainable, legacy	Resilient / future-proof

As we can see, the tone of the language produces a clear sense of what the building needs to be physically, what it needs to do in terms of activities, and how it needs to deliver in terms of values.

1. Identity & Vision

Keywords:

A Cultural Beacon, South East Beacon, Landmark, Iconic Entrance, Bright Canvas, Outward Facing, Global – Big Picture, Aspirational, Futuristic, Legacy for Arts Community

Theme:

The building should be recognisable, ambitious, and visible; a symbol of Waterford's creative confidence and future orientation.

It needs to be a local anchor, instrumental in the development of the cultural quarter and in the support of innovative creative practices, and it needs to aspire to be a regional/global reference point in terms of best practice in arts and creative industries development.

2. Spatial Experience & Design Qualities

Keywords:

Easy to Navigate, Interesting Spaces, Involved Spaces, Greenery, Fun, Adaptive, Expands and Contracts, Sustainable

Theme:

Although the building's design is completed, there is – as one of the county architects put it – an "envelope for change". Given that possibility, the building's architecture, internal design, and fit out should be flexible, "legible", and inviting. It must be a place that can physically change to adapt to different uses, it must offer a feeling of discovery, and it must integrate sustainability in construction and wellbeing in layout and activities.

3. Creativity, Making & Artistic Practice

Keywords:

Creative, Making, Make with us, Collaborate, Creative through making, Visibility – Watch us make, Artists/Zeitgeist, Artists on legacy of each other, Develop creative landscape, Bench, Adaptive

Theme:

The core of the building must be dedicated to creative production that is open, visible, and with hands-on making opportunities for visitors.

It must support both professional artists (studio, exhibition and performance possibilities and equipment support), and community creativity through hands on making opportunities. It must also encourage experimentation and the evolution of new practices and creative technologies.

4. Community & People

Keywords:

People Focused, Community Co-operative, Welcoming & Inclusive, Collective Spirit, People Contribute, Collaboration, Accidental Encounters, De-stress, Learning for all abilities, Skills, Supportive

Theme:

The building must be experienced as a shared civic space where everyone feels ownership, including artists, public, families, and tourists/visitors.

As with any public cultural institution it should nurture social wellbeing, shared creativity, and participation across all abilities and ages through its atmosphere, ethos, and activities.

5. Learning & Growth

Keywords:

Learning for all abilities, Skills, Continuous Growth and Adaptation, Develop creative landscape

Theme:

The building must be a learning environment across informal and formal levels, ranging from school workshops, through artist residencies, to research

partnerships with academia and industry. It must be a site of lifelong learning promoting personal and organisational growth, upskilling, and innovation.

6. Economy & Sustainability

Keywords:

Continuous funding considered, Sustainable, Legacy, Develop creative landscape

Theme:

The building must be financially resilient and environmentally sustainable. This means that long-term funding must be committed to it by the local authority, and that real investment partners, prepared to contribute to its ongoing operational costs, must be found as construction is ongoing.

The building must have energy-conscious design.

The value of the building must be understood in terms of impact as opposed to return. If done right the value it will create in the local economy will be significant. In there is no long term commitment to funding the project will falter and revert to being an office space or a "hall for hire".

What it feels like (the visitor journey)

The thematic analysis reveals that there is a strong, clear, shared sense of what the building is, what it should feel like, and what its value is.

By combining the workshop findings with the case studies provided in the first report (see appendix), and research into emerging trends in the arts/technology/creative industries space the following section attempts to answer the question raised in the workshop:

“what actually is going to go on in this building”.

It is important to emphasise that what is proposed here is purely speculative and is a response to the work done to date. It is offered as a provocation and not a final solution.

Iconic, Welcoming, Inclusive

The ground floor is porous with multiple entrances so that the energy and activities of the building seem to spill onto O’Connell Street. There is a public lobby, a café, a reading space, and a play space. The building has a “media façade” that can be artist-programmed, turning the building itself into a canvas for local and international work, similar to Ars Electronica’s LED skin.

The visitor’s first encounter.

The lobby opens onto a free, hands-on “Taster Hall” that offers 10 - 15 small scale, touchable demos of current art/tech (creative AI, volumetric capture, bio-materials, augmented soundwalks, AR installations, etc). These “bite-size” encounters lower the threshold for families and tourists. This approach has been used successfully in several of our case studies.

The Immersive heart

This is a “signature space” that will underpin reputation and market position. It is a high-resolution “Deep Space”- style hall for ultra-short-throw projection on wall and floor that can support live AV, data choreography, cultural heritage visualizations, and even community cinema nights. A similar format is used by Ars Electronica, and it clearly demonstrates the attractiveness of this kind of space for general audiences.

Galleries that talk back.

Two reconfigurable galleries (either on ground floor or first floor) present interactive, research-driven shows (AI, game culture, climate sensing). Both ZKM and HEK have successfully demonstrated that this kind of exhibition, forging media art with research, can produce brilliant artistic, educational, and experience outcomes.

Studios you can see.

On upper floors we find glass-fronted maker studios, resident artists, and office space (XR, sound, light, robotics, sustainable manufacture, 3D print crafts, Cultural Quarter HQ, Filmmakers etc.). FACT Liverpool’s Studio/Lab suggests that a visible R&D culture both grows local talent and excites public curiosity.

Rooflight forum.

A top-floor event forum that can host talks, festivals, digital craft markets and rooftop garden/farm that can function as both showcase, performance space and classroom.

What will the Programme look like?

- **Open Lobby & Café:** This is a kind of “community living room” with free Wi-Fi, family tables, and a media wall linked to the façade; it could host daily “five-minute futures” demos/talks/performances

- **The Taster Hall:** This will have easily changeable modules for hands-on science/art experiences. It needs to be child friendly and tourist-friendly.
- **Immersive Hall:** This has a 4-sided audio, floor projection capabilities and doubles as a community cinema, a film-maker resource and a festival venue.
- **Gallery A and Gallery B:** One gallery can be used for major commissions, one for agile shows with local collaborations. ZKM's mixed-media model is a useful reference here.
- **Studios & Labs.** These are modular, convertible, expandable etc. They can house XR labs, sound labs, electronics/robotics, textiles/bio-materials, and there will be a recording booth. The studios and labs will have public "view days." FACT's Studio/Lab in Liverpool is a good working example of this
- **Education Hub:** The building's education programme is designed for children and young people and offers after-school tech labs in coding, motion capture, animation, digital fabrication etc. (Armenia's TUMO model could be an interesting starting point and potential partner for this kind of work).
- **Residency Cluster:** Prioritise artists from Waterford and the Southeast and foster international exchanges with partner labs such as at HEK, ZKM, Nxt Museum, etc.
- **Community Workshop:** This can be a digital tools library (AR/VR kit, 3D printing etc) with free instruction time with supervised use.
- **Back-of-house.** Assuming there is any space left this is for loading in and out, and for storing equipment.

Who Benefits and How

It should be evident from the above that this kind of programme establishes the building as a cutting edge, future focused, arts and cultural centre. It offers support to artists, communities and tourists, and could have a significant impact on the development of the Cultural Quarter.

For it to “work” each relevant stakeholder group needs to take ownership and identify a real benefit and value in their participation.

For Artists

- Hire of studio space on a scaled basis that can include equipment time and technician support if required.
- Residencies with financial, equipment, and technical support.
- Access to Exhibition and performance space
- Access to valuable networks and opportunities.
- A visible production line that can move from the idea or prototype, to a “test” in the Taster Hall, and onto the opportunity for a full commission for a Gallery/Immersive Hall exhibition/event (very similar to the R&D-exhibition blend at ZKM/HEK.)
- Drop-in Studio/Lab membership for locals, as used by FACT in Liverpool.

Community

- Free daily “tasters”, Saturday family labs, children/young people workshops that could allow the older participants (16+) to progress into studio internships/apprenticeships.
- Evening upskilling classes for teachers, lecturers, youth workers, creatives, and small businesses – for example XR for heritage tours, creative coding for micro-enterprises, etc.

Tourists

- A **must-do 60–90 min loop** including a facade show on the outside of the building, a guided Taster Hall experience, an Immersive set piece, culminating in the café. Nxt Museum in Amsterdam suggests that large-scale immersive installations have a strong visitor pull if such ticketed experiences rotate and partner with festivals.

Seasonal tie-ins with Waterford’s festivals using the façade as nightly “showtime” beacon – an approach used effectively by Arz Electronica in Linz.

An Operating model

Some of the stakeholder responses (from some artists) have called for a 24 hour building. While this may be impractical the building will need to have a 12 – 16 hour day.

The daily programme would look something like this:

Time	Activities
Day	Engagement with schools and colleges via “labs” and taster sessions. Residency production. Free public tasters.
Late afternoon	Guided “tech-behind-the-art” tours; meet-the-maker windows in studios.
Evening	Ticketed immersive set piece; talks/performance, rooftop events; community cinema;
8:00pm – 10:pm	Facade “showtime”

First-year Programme Example

A body of work and relationships should be in place before the building opens. Programming of events and activities needs to be ready from day one, otherwise the building will struggle for traction.

Activity Type	Description
Commission:	<p>There would need to be a commission ready to open the building with. For example “<i>Tides & Signals</i>” could be an immersive piece developed in collaboration with SETU visualising coastal data and local voices.</p> <p>Other immersive commissions could include “City of Print” celebrating the legacy of the printing city</p>

	in the area, and “Plunder and Progress” exploring the art and craft of the Viking legacy. The show would be a ticketed main hall event with a free lobby sampler and trailer on the façade.
Gallery:	International touring partnerships could be developed prior to the building opening with, for example ZKM/HEK. One gallery could, for example, receive their “Playable Cities” exhibition on game culture and open worlds.
Gallery:	Southeast artists could be set up prior to building opening , to develop work for the second gallery.
Schools/Childre/Young People:	Animation, Creative coding, Sound for screen, identifying fakes, etc
Festival partnership:	A mini “Future Waterford” weekend promoting city events with nightly façade performances

Staffing

There was an interesting contribution at the end of the workshop to the effect that if the local authority picked up all the maintenance and utility costs and responsibilities then two people could manage this building.

If this is to be a best in class cultural centre at the forefront of creative industries and arts/technology practice, a destination building, and an anchor in the Cultural Quarter, and if it is to deliver a programme similar to that outlined above then optimum staffing will look like this:

Artistic & Programme

Role	Core remit
Artistic/Executive Director	Sets vision, curates long-term programme, leads fundraising, partnerships, and city/region advocacy.
Curator / Producer (Exhibitions & Residencies)	Commissions, schedules, and manages exhibitions and artists-in-residence; liaises with local and international partners.
Performing & Immersive Producer	Runs the immersive hall: live AV, festivals, cinema, touring shows.
Education & Community Lead	Designs schools/teen/adult learning, community co-creation, and inclusion strategies.

Technical & Production

Role	Core remit
Technical Director	Oversees AV systems, projection, network, lighting, fabrication labs; plans capital upgrades.
Digital Fabrication/Studio Manager	Runs maker/XR/sound labs, trains artists, manages equipment booking & safety.

AV/Systems Technicians (2–3 FTE)	Daily install/de-install of exhibitions, immersive shows, and routine maintenance.
Front-end Developer / Interactive Systems Designer (optional)	Supports bespoke software builds and interactive installations.

Visitor Experience & Operations

Role	Core remit
Operations & Facilities Manager	Building management, health & safety, sustainability targets, supplier contracts.
Visitor Services Manager	Supervises welcome desk, café/retail, ticketing, and tourist engagement.
Front-of-House Team & Guides (6–8 PT)	Daily shifts; trained to give short interactive demos.
Events/Private-Hire Coordinator	Earns venue income through rentals, festivals, conferences.

Development, Marketing & Admin

Role	Core remit
Development & Partnerships Manager	Grants, sponsorship, EU projects, donor relations.
Marketing & Digital Content Lead	Branding, social media, press, website, data analytics, media-façade scheduling.
Finance & HR Manager	Budgets, payroll, contracts, compliance.

The programme will also require a pool of seasonal freelance people including Artist educators & workshop facilitators for school/teen labs, Exhibition installers for major shows and Festival/event crew for peak periods.

What does Arts and Research look like?

A key question that emerged in the course of the workshop was “what do you research in a place like this?”

Looking at the work being carried out in the case studies, we can translate that to a Waterford context when we see that the building isn’t just a venue - it generates data, prototypes, and practice-based research that can feed academic and regional policy agendas.

We can view the work that goes on in the building as a “testbed” where artists, technologists, and planners can trial ideas at a city scale (urban screens, sensors, XR).

For example

Collaboration with South East Technological University (SETU)

Practice-Based Research & Joint Labs

An Immersive Heritage Lab: for example, SETU computing, and design students co-create an AR Viking Waterford heritage trail with artists-in-residence; outputs count as both artistic work and peer-reviewed research.

Bio-Material & Circular Design Studio: artists collaborate with SETU Science staff and students to pilot seaweed-based bioplastics for art installations; the results can be published in sustainability journals.

Student Pathways & Curriculum: Fine Art, Games & Animation, Data Science students can be embedded in the building’s studios for thesis projects.

“Creative Technologies for Public Engagement” modules could be taught half on campus, half in the hub’s immersive hall.

Applied Data/AI Research: we could, for example, use anonymised visitor-flow data to feed SETU's data-visualisation research.

Collaboration with the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA)

It's my understanding that the SRA coordinates EU regional development funds and the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy. With this in mind the building could be a demonstrator site for SRA priorities such as climate action, smart cities, and creative economy.

Smart Region Testbed: SRA and SETU could install environmental sensors on the building façade and the resident artists could translate live air-quality data into nightly projections.

EU-funded Regional Projects: Cross-border programme where the hub hosts residencies for artists and planners from Coastal cities to prototype culture-led climate adaptation.

Just Transition & Coastal Futures: Arts-based public engagement around offshore renewables, generating evidence for SRA's climate adaptation strategy.

These kinds of collaboration provide SETU with real-world labs for practice-based PhDs, EU consortia leverage, and public-impact metrics; the SRA with tangible, public-facing evidence of smart-region policy and creative-economy growth; and allows the building to access research funding streams and a pipeline of students, data, and co-created knowledge that keeps the program at the cutting-edge.

The Economic Impact

Talking about the economic impact of cultural organisations is never easy – particularly one that doesn't actually exist. However, given that everything that follows is speculative we can offer some estimates

Projected visitor numbers for Garter Lane Arts Centre, which is adjacent to the proposed new building, are approximately 50,000. Given that the new building's programme has an added "high-tech" quality to it, we can suggest that its annual visitor numbers will be at least 100,000.

Source	Typical annual value (steady-state, Year 3+)	Notes
Visitor spend in city	€3–4 million	80–100k ticketed/immersive visitors × €35–40 average city spend (food, retail, accommodation – this is possibly an underestimate).
Venue turnover	€2 – 2.5 million	Public funding, earned income (tickets, café/retail, hires), R&D grants.
Employment	18 FTE core + 15–20 PT/seasonal	Salaries circulate locally (multiplier approximately 1.9).

The Indirect & Induced Effects

If we use a conservative regional cultural multiplier of 1.9 (cited in Arts Council/Indecon studies for Ireland's creative sector and elsewhere) then we can say that :

Indirect: Suppliers (manufacture/build, AV hire, design, catering) will gain an extra €3.8 - €4.75 million per year based on projected turnover

Induced: The building staff and artists will spend wages/fees locally, supporting retail and services generating approximately another €1–1.5 million.

Growth of the Local Creative-Industry

The building could act as an anchor tenant for a tech-arts cluster in the Cultural Quarter: co-working, XR studios, micro-gaming firms etc. – very much in the model of Richard Florida’s “creative class” model.

It is worth noting that both FACT Liverpool and Ars Electronica report approximately €3 - €4 of wider creative-economy activity for every €1 of core subsidy.

Talent Development and Retention

Practice-based PhDs and SETU student pipelines could raise the region’s skill base in immersive media, AI-driven design, and digital fabrication—skills transferable to manufacturing, med-tech and tourism.

Tourism Uplift

The building’s programme, cutting edge ethos, and international partnerships could position Waterford beyond heritage tourism. Even a 5 % uplift in overnight stays in the Cultural Quarter could add possibly €4–5 million annually to the hospitality sector.

The Intangibles and the Feel Good Factor

“Ireland’s Future Arts Lab” will enhance Waterford’s international profile, and support inward investment.

Higher footfall supports private investment in cafés, housing, and creative workspace in the Cultural Quarter.

The Governance Issue

The relationship between Local Authorities and cultural buildings has two basic governance models.

1. The Local Authority maintains ownership of the building and the operations, incorporating all maintenance, staff, operational and programme costs into its own budgets and processes.
2. The Local Authority commissions an existing or new cultural management company established as a CLG with the task of managing the asset and developing the programme. This relationship works best with a clear SLA and an understanding that the CLG are managing on behalf of the Local Authority and in pursuit of Local Authority goals.

As mentioned earlier commissioning an existing cultural organisation with a track record, expertise and skills in developing, managing and curating cultural spaces is best practice in creative place making and utilises existing resources effectively. We need to remember that the arts/technology is an emerging and fast moving sector, so some external expertise will be necessary.

If this option, commissioning a local organisation, is to be pursued it is recommended that

- an independent expert in the field of arts/tech is commissioned to work with the organisation to develop the programme, budgets, and relationships for the first three years of operation.
- That the overall management of the building is put out to tender (as it will have to be to comply with procurement) on the understanding that leveraging the local resource is best practice.

Whatever legal entity takes on the responsibility for this project the following should be in place:

Legal/Ownership Framework

It should be an independent not-for-profit company or CLG (Company Limited by Guarantee)

Board of Directors (10–12 members)

The board membership should be balanced across:

- Artistic/Cultural: Practising artist or curator.
- Academic/Research: 1–2 SETU nominees
- Regional Policy: SRA nominee - someone with senior policy/innovation expertise
- City/Community: Waterford City & County Council, local enterprise/creative business, community representatives.
- Finance/Legal: independent members with fundraising, legal, or property expertise.

The board must understand that their role is active, and is focused on strategy, compliance, major funding approvals, and appointment of the Artistic/Executive Director.

The board must appoint a series of effective sub-committees including:

Advisory & Working Committees

Committee	Composition	Key remit
Research & Innovation Committee	SETU research leads, SRA policy officer, hub Artistic/Executive Director, 2 external media-arts researchers	Set joint research agenda, review practice-based PhDs, approve EU project bids, oversee data/ethics.

Programme & Community Committee	Artistic team, artists' rep, educators, community groups	Advise on exhibitions, residencies, inclusion targets, access policies.
Technical & Facilities Committee	Technical director, SETU engineering/fab-lab rep, sustainability expert	Capital upgrades, shared labs, cybersecurity, environmental performance.
Finance & Development Committee	Board treasurer, Development Manager, external fundraising expert	Budget scrutiny, sponsorship policy, risk.

Conclusion

The proposed building, like all public buildings, is more metaphor than function. It is not simply a construction project, it is an expression of an ambition for the city to be a place where art, technology, and community meet to drive creativity, learning, and economic growth; it is an expression of an ambition to be a future-facing cultural and innovation beacon in the South East.

The stakeholder consultations and workshop clarified that the building should be a beacon for creativity, a welcoming civic space, a visible hub of making and learning, and a driver of cultural and economic regeneration.

Six thematic pillars emerged:

1. **Identity & Vision** - A bold, visible landmark symbolising Waterford's creative ambition.
2. **Community & People** - A shared, inclusive civic space fostering wellbeing and participation.
3. **Creativity & Making** - A hands-on, experimental environment supporting both artists and the public.
4. **Spatial Experience** - Flexible, adaptive design integrating sustainability and discovery.
5. **Learning & Growth** - Lifelong, accessible learning and partnerships with SETU.
6. **Economy & Sustainability** - Financially resilient, environmentally conscious, with long-term commitment.

This report proposes a vision for use of the internal space of the building, with programming that would connect artists, community, education, and tourism, offering residencies, youth tech labs, accessible family workshops, and rotating international partnerships. The vision is based on research and case studies of similar existing institutions across Europe.

A very rough economic calculation suggests the hub could generate €9–10 million annually in total impact, with an ROI of 6-8x on public investment through tourism, creative-industry growth, and skills development.

Governance is proposed through a not-for-profit company (CLG) with a board representing artistic, academic, regional, community, and financial expertise.

An existing local arts/cultural organisation could be a potential managing partner. While this would allow the Local Authority to leverage considerable experience and skill in such an organisation, there will always be a real capacity issue around human resources: arts/cultural organisations are underfunded and frequently dependent on employment grants. There may also be a gap in creative industries, arts/tech expertise. Despite these challenges an effective local organisation will bring considerable curatorial and community engagement expertise.

Recommendations for Next Steps

1. Local Authority and Cultural Quarter to agree and commit to a vision of what this building is, what it does, and who it is for.
2. Arrange visits to case study sites for key decision makers
3. Agree the preferred operating model
4. Prepare and tender for the governance and management of the organisation (and don't confuse the building with the organisation)
5. Commission an independent arts/tech specialist to develop a three-year start-up programme and budget.
6. Design the funding model and scope out the economic impact in detail.
7. Scope out the potential investment partners (statutory and commercial) and prepare a pitch
8. Prototype the "maker hub" ethos through temporary labs or pop-up programmes in existing spaces. Use these pilots to build audiences, data, and partnerships before opening.

9. Define KPIs for economic impact, participation, diversity, and sustainability.

The Maker Hub is not simply another cultural building—it needs to be understood as the keystone project for Waterford’s Cultural Quarter, combining artistic ambition, civic purpose, and economic value.

If fully supported, it will:

- Anchor Waterford’s position as the South-East’s creative capital,
- Generate significant economic and tourism dividends,
- Foster innovation through collaboration between artists, academia, and industry, and
- Serve as a visible, inclusive space where creativity becomes part of daily public life.

With clear purpose and governance, secure funding, and early activation, the Maker Hub can deliver enduring value as both a cultural landmark and a working engine for regional innovation.

John O’Brien

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Appendix – Case Studies

Ars Electronica – Linz, Austria

<https://ars.electronica.art/center/en/>

Overview:

Ars Electronica is a globally renowned platform for media art and tech-driven cultural innovation, centred around its Ars Electronica Centre (AEC) and Futurelab. It bills itself as the Museum of the Future and has a clear “call to action”: *Work in and on the Future*.

It is a destination/educational venue with no clear supports for makers.

Governance:

Operates under Ars Electronica Linz GmbH, a limited company established in 1995. Leadership includes both artistic and financial directors.

Funding Model:

It appears to have a mixed funding model - public grants from the City of Linz, Upper Austria, and Austrian federal ministries combined with corporate sponsorships, ticket sales, merchandising, and sponsorships from media and tech partners

The centre also delivers the STARTS Prize, which gives a €20,000 award plus festival presentation for artists working at the intersection of science, technology, and art (fundsforindividuals.fundsforngos.org).

ZKM – Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany

<https://zkm.de/en/development-philosophy>

Overview:

ZKM is a hybrid museum, media lab, and research institution focused on new media, digital culture, and experimental technology-driven art.

It states that

“The ZKM was founded in 1989 with the mission of continuing the classical arts into the digital age. During the founding phase, the artist and author Jürgen Claus contributed his idea of an »electronic Bauhaus«, which was later adapted by Peter Weibel into the »digital Bauhaus“. From the very beginning, it has also taken on the task of creating the conditions for the creation of works of art, whether by guest artists or employees of the house - for this reason it is called a centre and not a museum.”

Governance

There is no detailed information publicly available on the ZKM regarding governance. It is however a global institution.

It has a staff of approximately 100 people from administration, through a team of curators, researchers, artists, and publications department, and it appears to have some staff members on secondment from various institutional partners.

Funding

The ZKM again operates a mixed funding model with state funding via Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst (Ministry for Science, Research, and the Arts) in Karlsruhe and a very long list of institutional and corporate partners (including EU funding programmes)

Gray Area – San Francisco, USA

<https://grayarea.org/>

Overview:

Gray Area is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cultural incubator in San Francisco dedicated to art, technology, and social impact. It programmes media arts festivals, educational workshops, artist residencies, and “labs” in creative coding and immersive media. It’s worth quoting its mission statement in full:

“Our mission is to cultivate, sustain, and apply antidisciplinary collaboration - integrating art, technology, science, and the humanities - towards a more equitable and regenerative future. Since our inception in 2008, Gray Area has established itself as a singular hub for critically engaging with technology and culture in the Bay Area, while also reaching a global audience. Through our platform of public events, education, and research programs we empower a diverse community of creative practitioners with the agency to create meaningful social impact through category-defying work.

We use digital tools to create art and design projects that benefit society. We test and scale projects with high impact potential, teach digital tools to support artists and technologists, and inspire our community by promoting meaningful new work.

We apply the promise and inspiration of digital art to a broader social context. Our programs are transforming cities into creative outlets, applying technology to solve problems, and shaping how art is created and consumed in the digital era.”

Governance:

It’s a standard American model for an arts based, non-profit organisation. It’s managed by a voluntary board primarily tasked with finding money. It has a professional management team/staff and volunteers. The founder served as Executive Director until 2019.

Funding Model:

Again this is the typical US model – it's a mix of grants, donations, and crowdfunding. In its early days it raised \$300,000 via crowd support to help restore the Grand Theatre building, supplemented by other grants. There is a really interesting article by its founder here (thecreativeindependent.com) where she talks about the need to adapt the organisation through multiple funding forms in the absence of a significant endowment.

FACT Liverpool (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), UK

<https://www.fact.co.uk>

Overview:

FACT Liverpool specialises in emerging media, digital art, and creative technology. It combines exhibition spaces, cinema screens, and labs to support experimental practices “at the intersection of art, science, and innovation”.

From Waterford’s perspective FACT is an interesting case study. It opened in 2003 and claims to be the UK’s first building dedicated to digital art.

It supports both emerging and established artists working with AI, immersive tech, gaming, coding, data, and interactive media through memberships and residencies. It programmes residencies, labs, commissions, and education programmes including work with local communities. It has gallery spaces for rotating exhibitions of digital and media art.

It develops partnerships with institutions like Liverpool John Moores University, Open Data Institute, and Mozilla Foundation

It’s in Liverpool’s city centre

Governance:

There are similarities between the UK and Ireland in the governance of arts organisations and FACT is a registered charity and non-profit company limited by guarantee (what we would call a CLG).

It’s governed by a Board of Trustees drawn from local cultural leaders, academics, and business experts all of whom serve voluntarily.

Day to day operations and programming are led by an Executive Director and a curatorial/programmes team.

It has a staff of approximately 44 people, and its organisational structure is interesting:

- Executive Directors Office and HR
- Programme Team
- Visitor Services
- Casual Gallery and Events Team
- Marketing and Comms
- Development
- Building Operations
- Finance

Funding Model:

Again, it's a mixed funding model.

FACT is designated a National Portfolio Organisation by the Arts Council of England, so its core public funding is from ACE. Additional support from Liverpool City Council, from project specific grants from Innovate UK, Creative Europe, and the Wellcome Trust, from various other trusts and foundations, from partnerships with universities and private sector sponsors, and sales income from venue hire, ticket sales (cinema), and retail.

Bear in mind that the UK has many private trusts and foundations focused on arts, science and research, and Ireland does not have a comparable number of such trusts.

NXT Museum – Amsterdam, Netherlands

<https://nxtmuseum.com>

Overview:

NXT Museum, established in 2020 in Amsterdam North, is dedicated entirely to new media art. It explores the intersection of art, science, and technology through large-scale, immersive, and time-based installations. Its focus is on works that are digital by nature rather than digitally enhanced, presenting multi-sensory environments and collaborations between artists, technologists, and researchers.

The museum positions itself as a space for experimentation and future-oriented creativity, aiming to “expand human experience and imagination through innovation.” It also runs education programmes, artist labs, and events engaging younger audiences and creative technologists.

Governance:

NXT Museum is privately founded and directed by entrepreneur and curator Merel van Helsdingen. It operates as a privately held cultural enterprise rather than a non-profit foundation. Its team includes curators, technicians, and producers drawn from both artistic and commercial creative industries, reflecting its hybrid cultural-business model.

Funding Model:

The museum operates primarily through private investment, ticket sales, merchandising, partnerships, and venue hire. It also collaborates with technology companies and creative agencies for co-productions and sponsorships. Unlike publicly funded institutions such as FACT or ZKM, NXT functions on a more commercial basis, though it has accessed occasional cultural innovation grants from Dutch and EU programmes.

Beta Festival - Dublin, Ireland

<https://betafestival.ie>

Overview:

Beta Festival is a new Irish festival celebrating art, technology, and digital culture, first launched in 2023. It presents exhibitions, performances, talks, and workshops showcasing creative work at the intersection of art, science, and emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, gaming, and immersive media.

The festival describes itself as “a meeting point for artists, researchers, and audiences exploring how technology is shaping the future of creativity.” It takes place across multiple Dublin venues including the Digital Hub, Science Gallery, and IMMA, and has quickly established itself as Ireland’s leading platform for digital arts and innovation.

Governance:

Beta Festival is an initiative of Dublin City Council and The Digital Hub, with support from partners including Science Foundation Ireland, Culture Ireland, and the Arts Council. It is directed by a curatorial and production team drawn from the Irish arts and tech sectors. The festival collaborates with national institutions, independent studios, and international partners to curate its annual programme.

Funding Model:

The festival is publicly funded through Dublin City Council and the Arts Council of Ireland, supplemented by sponsorships and project-specific grants from Science Foundation Ireland, Creative Europe, and private sector technology partners. It also generates some earned income through ticketing and workshops, though its model is largely grant-supported in the early stages of development.