

**THE
B!G
iDEA**

Impact Report
2022 – 2023



Thinking

B!G

For Life

“They’ve completely changed their mindset on their lives and their goals. They now know they can have dreams.”

Michelle Howard,
Tutor, Tullamore CTC



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Letter from Kim



Kim Mackenzie-Doyle
Instigator & CEO of The B!G Idea

The Call for Change

The challenges our youth face today are immense, encompassing hidden poverty, mental health struggles, a lack of inclusivity, and the threat of climate change. They navigate a complex, uncertain landscape, making our role as guardians and leaders crucial. We must acknowledge this pivotal moment and take meaningful action. Each of us can play an integral role in shaping a better future.

Our rapidly evolving world widens the gap between the skills our young people learn versus the skills they need. It's a daunting reality that calls for massive efforts to protect and empower the young and vulnerable members of our society.

The demand for creative thinking has taken precedence as the most sought-after skill in today's world, outshining even Big Data and technical

literacy. In a society grappling with critical issues, our approach serves as a dynamic intervention, backed by industry and academia.

Our work, intricately aligned with key government strategies in education, innovation, and sustainability, underscores this. Our alignment, particularly with the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, emphasises the importance of unlocking human potential in the next generation.

From a humble beginning with 500 students in three counties, we've evolved over three years into a multi-award-winning initiative, accredited by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. We've helped over 6,500 young minds think differently, increase their potential, and

create a meaningful impact within their local communities.

This year, we reached out to 4,000 students, including 1,191 through DEIS, expanding our footprint to include Youthreach and CTC. We became an all-island initiative by our extension into Northern Ireland, marking a new chapter in our story as we supported pioneering schools, with more lined up for 2024.

We proudly stand as a trusted educational intervention to well over 100 schools in 23 counties, with the invaluable support of mentors from every sector in Ireland. The dedication of our supporters underscores the urgency and significance of our work for Ireland's future. Investing in the skills and capabilities of our young people is a vital mission for progress and innovation, a mission we take on with great pride and passion.

Dear friends of The B!G Idea,
I am proud to welcome you to
our 2022/2023 Impact Report,
a testament to our ongoing
commitment to positive change.



Honoured by the recognition from HundrED.org, highlighting us as one of the world's 100 most impactful and scalable education initiatives, and our win at the international Think Global awards, we're equally delighted by the OECD's recognition of our initiative as a best practice example, here at home. While such acknowledgment is reassuring, our focus remains on consolidating our efforts. Should Ireland not invest in reshaping the mindset of the next generation through creative thinking, we risk not achieving our country's ambitions and global targets.

In these uncertain times, the only certainty we have is the power of human capabilities. Investment in our young people is more important now than ever. Our initiative is a key driver in equipping today's youth to face challenges and shape a brighter future for Ireland.

“If Ireland does not invest in changing the way the next generation thinks, through creative thinking, we will fall behind.”

Our Impact in Numbers

We have made a strong impact since 2021.

6500+	creatively empowered young people
2040	DEIS learners supported
750+	diverse industry mentors engaged
234	companies represented in our B!G mentor community
152	Youthreach and CTC students supported
131	schools reached
47	corporate partners

8m	reached through social media and PR
27	online events delivered
23	counties participating in the programmes
12	academic partners
10	B!G global issues tackled by students
9	critical skills developed by students
8	UN Sustainable Development Goals addressed
5	trial programmes completed
4	in-person events delivered
2	schools in our Northern Ireland pilot
2	accreditations from NCCA
1	EU project

Mission, Vision and Values



Our mission is to change the world with creative thinking, connecting young people in education with industry mentors for our collective future.



Our vision is a world where our young people, no matter what their background, have the creative thinking ability to tackle and solve the challenges ahead of them.



Our values of inclusivity, empathy, curiosity, collaboration and resilience drive our mission to democratise creativity.



Year in Review

As we come to the end of our third year, we are immensely proud to share another year of incredible impact on the ground.



Programme Expansion

Transition Year and LCA:

Our TY programme grew from 2,000 participating students to a whopping 4,000 students, including 32% from DEIS schools.

Youthreach and CTC:

We were able to extend our Youthreach and Community Training Centre programme from 16 learners in one centre to 152 in 12 centres.

Northern Ireland:

Our creative thinking programme has headed north and we completed a successful pilot programme in Northern Ireland fostering a Shared Island approach, with even more schools signed up again for the 2024 programme.

Second Year Pilot:

To further explore how our creative thinking programme aligned with and drove key aspects of the Junior Cycle curriculum, we ran a successful pilot with 80 second year students in Galway in both a Visual Arts and a Business class.

Our Achievements

European Project:

We worked with education providers in Denmark, Greece, Italy and Croatia for our EU BANG project and KA2 EU project to help develop an open source learning framework for an EU community of educators and learners.

A Growing B!G Mentor Community:

This year, we connected 354 incredible mentors with our students, bridging the gap between education and industry.

Backed by Industry:

We welcomed back existing valued partners as well as academic institutions as partners and added an additional 12 companies and 2 Believers to the B!G community!

Our Hybrid Showcase:

We welcomed 100 guests to an in-person watch party at Dogpatch Labs in Dublin including students, mentors, partners and supporters of The B!G Idea.

The B!G Exhibition:

This year, we celebrated hundreds of incredible B!G Ideas in our student Exhibition online - the future is looking bright!

Winning Streak:

In 2023 we won the Social Impact Award at the Irish Diversity in Tech Awards, an ICAD Silver bell and an award for Best Use of Technology at IDI Awards 2023.

Accelerating Student Impact:

We took the first step this year to help students develop their B!G ideas even further with a pilot Student Accelerator. This is an exciting development area for us and will help us to create even more impact beyond our programme.

Global Leadership:

We are proud to receive global recognition for our work. We've been selected as an impactful and scalable education innovator in HundrED's 2024 Global Collection and we also won the Think Global Awards (Education & eLearning category). Back home, the OECD highlighted our work in its report into creative thinking education.

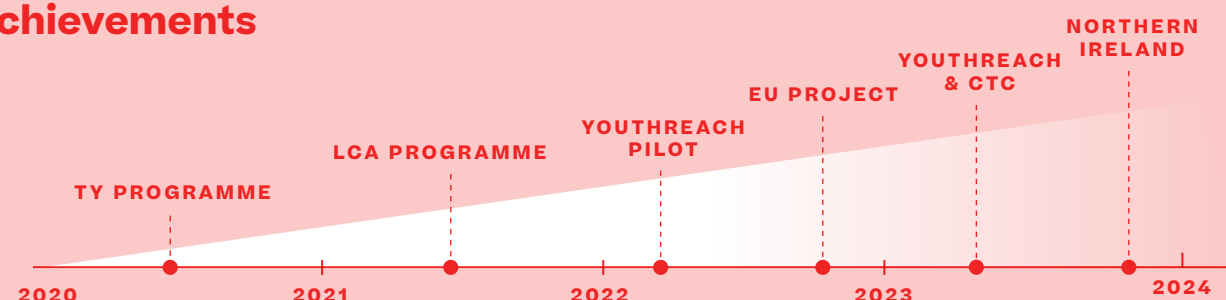
Sustainability Initiatives:

This year we streamlined learning resources into more eco-friendly Think B!G classroom packs and integrated the 17 UN SDGs into our programmes. We have also begun to track our own sustainability journey, as well as how we can better support partners' sustainability and ESG goals.

“The 2023 students of The B!G Idea are now thinking differently. They are the next generation of creative changemakers who can make a significant impact, not only in their own communities but also the world.”

Maria Walsh,
Member of the European Parliament

Our B!G Achievements





“We have more belief in ourselves as a whole. Before this many of us would have struggled with creativity but The B!G Idea has helped us to grow our creativity and be more confident.”

Team Cabhrú,
Students, Borris Vocational School

Education

Letter from Siobhán



Siobhán Blaney
Head of Education, The B!G Idea

Enhancing Educational Outcomes Through Creative Thinking

Formal education frequently undervalues the crucial role of creative thinking skills in shaping learners' futures. The B!G Idea is at the forefront of integrating creative problem-solving across disciplines, aiming to significantly enhance both educational and life outcomes.

Our 25-workshop programmes, designed for learners aged 15-19, provide essential creative thinking skills based on proven pedagogical best practices. Using or embedding Universal Design principles, our resources cater to diverse learning needs. Educators from various subjects can easily deliver the programmes, and industry mentors provide real-world connections bridging the gap between industry and education.

Cultivating creative thinking

The B!G Idea is teaching transformative creative thinking skills and cultivating a generation of young people with essential problem-solving abilities.

is not just beneficial; it's a pivotal skill for future readiness, recognised by influential voices like the World Economic Forum and Forbes. It enhances confidence, empathy, collaboration, well-being, and intrinsic motivation for learning.

Despite its evident importance, integrating creative thinking into education remains a persistent challenge. Creativity is often confined to arts and major innovations, overlooking the power of 'little c' creativity in shaping everyday life. OECD research identifies systemic obstacles, from overcrowded curricula to inadequate teacher training, while highlighting The B!G Idea as an exemplary model for fostering creativity in education.

Our approach aligns with key governmental education

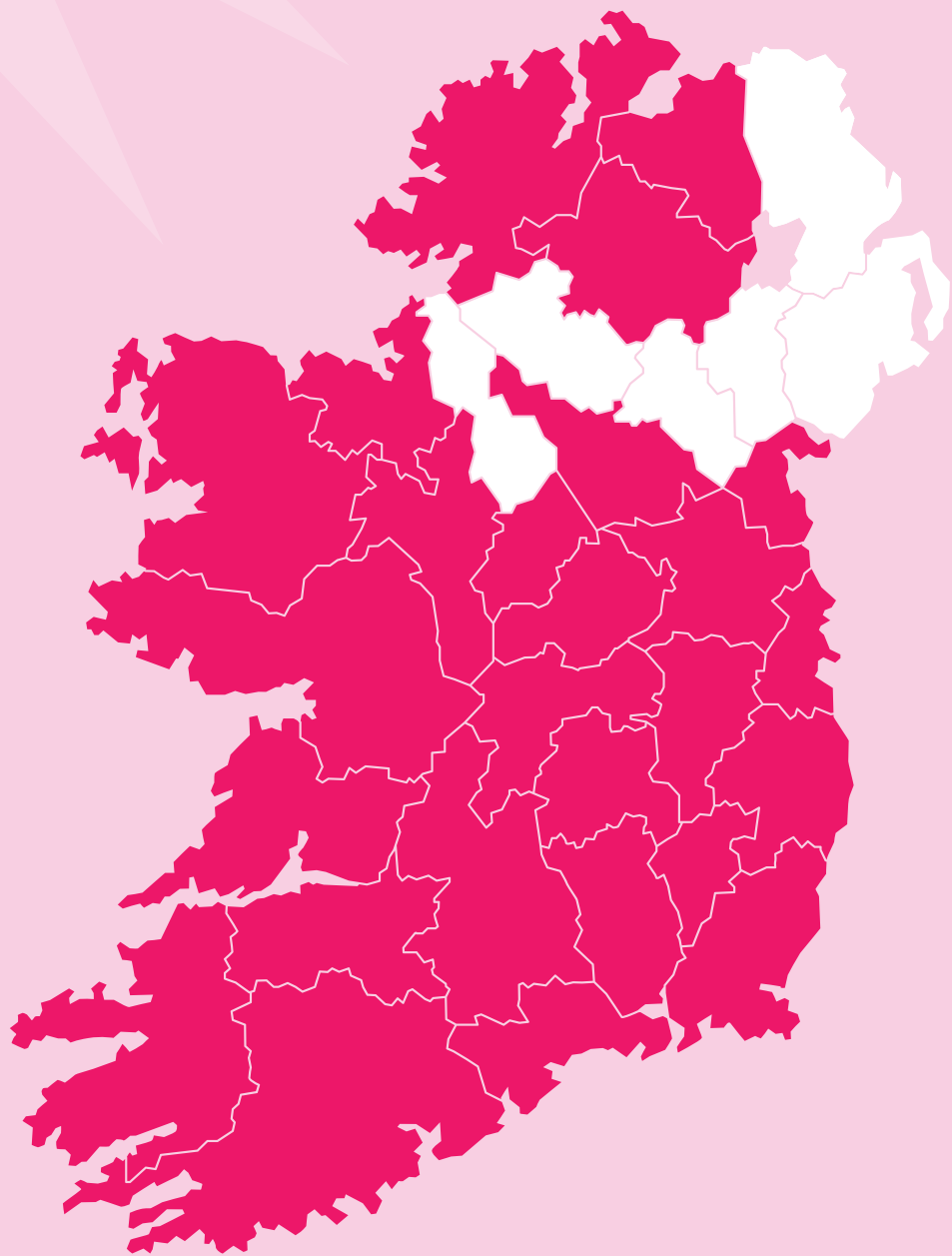
policies, such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), promoting a comprehensive educational approach. Our mission, emphasising empowering the creative potential of children and youth, aligns with the recently launched 'National Policy Framework for Children and Young People - 2023-2028' in support of Ireland's youth. This strategic alignment underscores our commitment to enhancing Ireland's educational landscape and driving systemic change for social, economic, and cultural development.

Since its launch, The B!G Idea has achieved meaningful educational outcomes by embedding creative thinking in schools and learning centres. Nurturing creativity in our youth strengthens society, paving the way for a more innovative and resilient future.

“Students are becoming more independent thinkers, critical thinkers... they are using their creativity every single day in class and they’re relying on each other.”

Michele Daly,
Teacher, Coláiste Iósaef Community College

National Engagement



KEY STATISTICS		STUDENT STATISTICS		
23	Counties	3497	152	
		Transition Year	Youthreach / CTC	
		103	249	32%
		Northern Ireland	LCA	DEIS

Student Success

Data gathered in 2023 once again demonstrates that programmes are making a direct impact in the lives of our students.

We democratise access to creative thinking education ensuring that it is accessible and free to all students. Our programmes are fully inclusive and are designed for all learning styles and abilities, allowing students to take ownership of their own learning and apply the skills learned to innovative projects, this year tackling the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

With a diverse range of student backgrounds and abilities, success has a different meaning for each participant. Our ultimate measure of success lies in the students’ active engagement in the creative process.

100% of students learned new skills proving that creative skills can and should be taught to our young people, giving them every opportunity in any future direction that they take.

“The most important thing we have learned is to always keep an open mind and to not see failure as a bad thing, but as a learning opportunity.”

Team Diamond Housing,
Students, St. Patrick’s Comprehensive



Our 2023 Impact

This year 4000 students from 23 counties around Ireland participated in our programmes and were surveyed on their B!G experience.

94%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Do you have a deeper understanding of creative thinking now than before The B!G Idea?

94%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Do you feel more confident in using creative thinking in the future to address challenges you might encounter?

96%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Do you have a better understanding of the needs of others in your community and world?

100%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Did The B!G Idea contribute to developing the following skills and competencies:

Creative knowledge

Overall wellbeing

Working in a team

Research skills

Communication

84%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Did The B!G Idea programme and lessons have a positive impact on your life?

88%

Answered **yes** when asked:
After taking part in the programme do you now feel confident in your problem solving ability?

91%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Has The B!G Idea improved your confidence and wellbeing?

91%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Did you learn new skills and information through the programme?

93%

Answered **yes** when asked:
Do you feel these skills will support you as you move into senior cycle and beyond?

Policy and Research

The B!G Idea is aligned with a number of youth focused and educational frameworks and policies, including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

National Educational Framework Alignment

Transition Year Programme

- Local and Global Citizenship, Social Moral and Personal Transition Year Areas of Study
- TY Key Skills: Critical and Creative Thinking, Working with Others, Being Personally Effective, Communicating, Information Processing

Junior Cycle: Cross-Curricular Links

- Key Skills: Being Literate, Being Numerate, Managing Myself, Staying Well, Communicating, Being Creative, Working with Others, Managing Information, Thinking
- Indicators of Wellbeing: Respected, Active, Responsible, Resilient, Aware, Connected
- Individual Subject Learning Outcomes

Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

- Social Education and Vocational Preparation Modules
- Aligns with the Underlying Principles of the LCA
- Senior Cycle Key Skills: Critical and Creative Thinking, Working with Others, Being Personally Effective, Communicating, Information Processing

Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) Youthreach

- Suitable for both 5th and 6th year students
- Youthreach Soft Skills Framework
- Senior Cycle Key Skills: Critical and Creative Thinking, Working with Others, Being Personally Effective, Communicating, Information Processing

Northern Ireland Education Policy and Framework

- Digital Learning and ICT: ICT in Education Strategy
- Educational Inequalities: Tackling Educational Disadvantage Community Engagement
- Partnerships: Community Partnerships
- Shared Education: Shared Education Policy

Policy Alignment

OECD/ PISA 2022 Creative Thinking Assessment

Stresses global education's need for the integration of creative thinking in curricula, teacher training and assessments.

STEM Education Policy Statement, 2017-2026

Department of Education. Pillar 3 - Support "Creative Youth" school programmes combining STEM and the Arts including creative practitioners, creative technology, design thinking and other practices.

Creative Youth Plan 23 - 27

This cross departmental initiative intends to enable the creative potential of young persons aged 0-24 through expanded initiatives delivered between 2023 and 2027.

Action Plan for Education

Department of Education. Fosters creativity, innovation, and interdisciplinary learning as essential skills for a diverse and inclusive STEM workforce driving economic growth and societal progress.

National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2023-2028

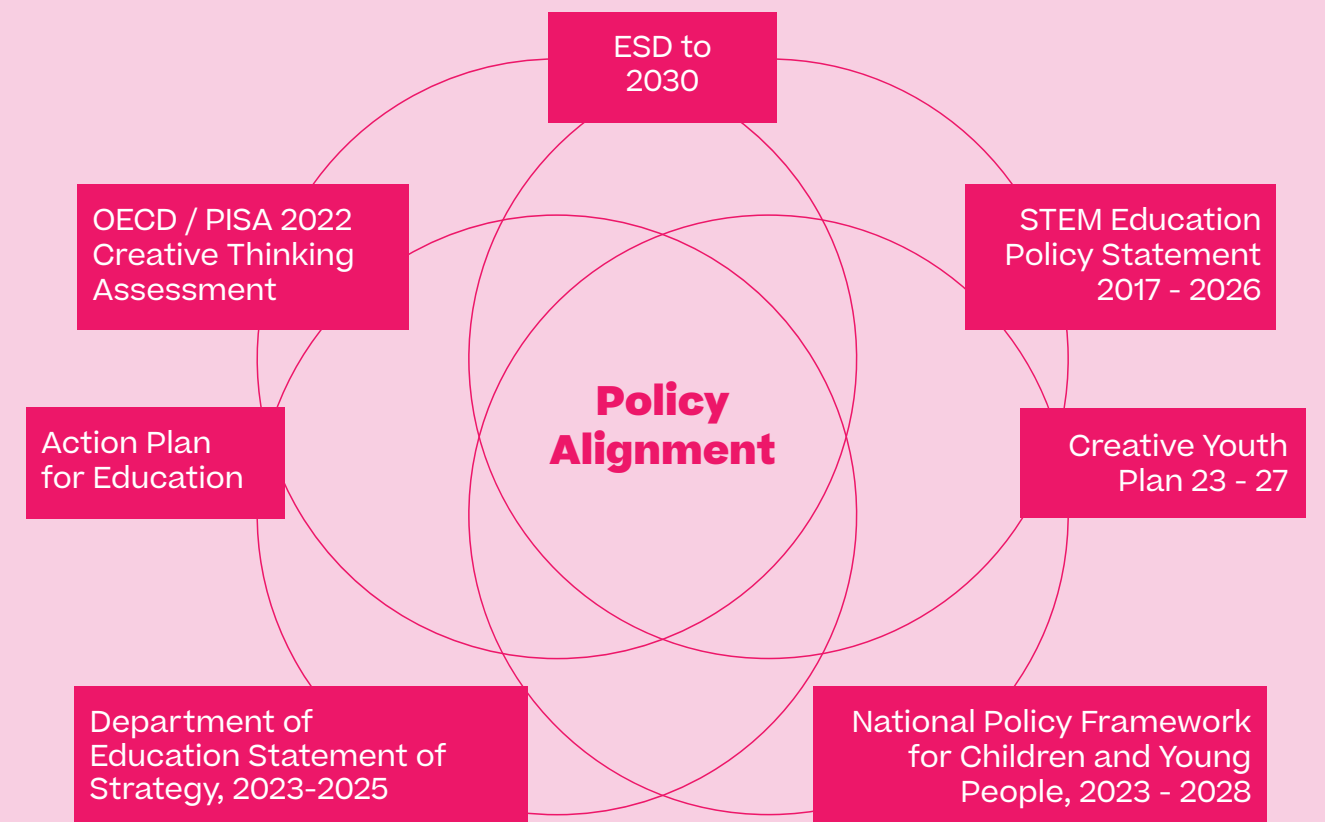
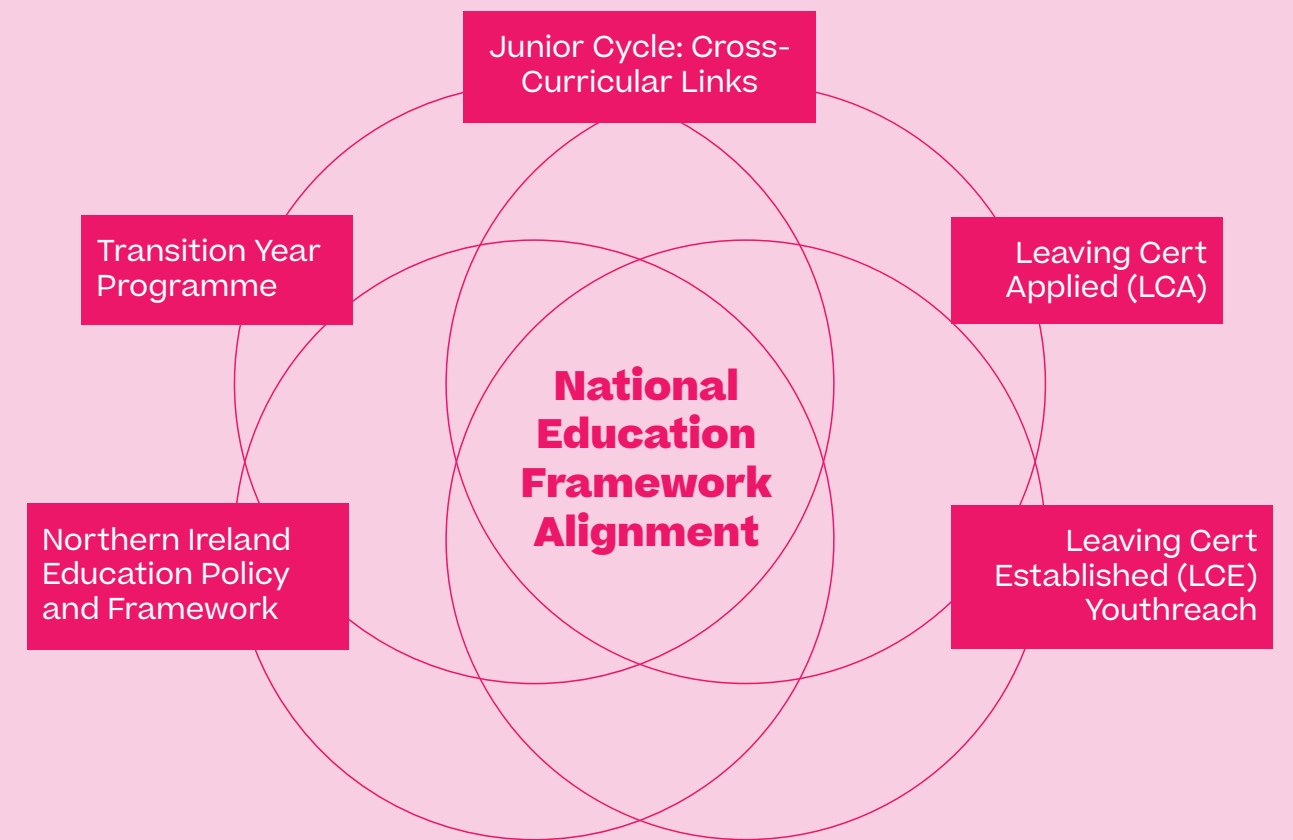
Prepared by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Emphasises supporting the creative potential of all children, particularly those seldom heard, by enhancing their access.

ESD to 2030

This cross departmental report underscores the vital role of integrating sustainability education, transversal skills, and youth engagement in shaping a sustainable future.

Department of Education Statement of Strategy, 2023-2025

Addresses the need to prepare students as active citizens and future leaders by equipping them with skills for a low-carbon, digitalised world, fostering a culture of innovation.



Student Stories: Transition Year and DEIS

Borris Vocational School exemplifies how an innovative educational approach embeds perfectly in Transition Year to transform students into independent, solution-oriented thinkers.

We believe that the creative skills we teach empower all young people, regardless of their background, to thrive in any future direction they take. Of the 131 schools taking part in the TY programme this year, 32% were DEIS schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) which provide extra help and resources in areas where students face additional challenges.

“They learned that their own ideas are good, they’re taken seriously, and they are the people who will be having these ideas and will be contributing to issues such as global warming in the future.”

KerryAnne Walsh,
Teacher, Borris Vocational School

Borris Vocational School in Carlow, known for its progressive approach, has embraced The BIG Idea programme for three years. This initiative has been a game-changer in fostering critical thinking and independence in students.

Challenge: Learning approaches are traditionally more teacher-led, but with The BIG Idea, teacher KerryAnne Walsh observed, “they’ve got a lot more freedom... they have been allowed to flourish and be independent.”

Solution: This shift allowed students to interact with industry experts, fostering an environment where their ideas were nurtured and taken seriously. The BIG Idea programme introduced a new way of learning. KerryAnne notes, “It opened their eyes to different career paths that they could possibly go down themselves.”

Impact: The programme’s success was highlighted when Team Community Cara won the Overall BIG Idea award for their app, INFOL, targeting hidden poverty in Ireland. Reflecting on their journey, the team said, “We have learned that everybody can be creative. We have learned about the importance of creativity in the workplace.”

Cultivating Student Agency and Lifelong Skills

131

TY Mainstream and
DEIS schools took part

100%

of students agreed the skills
learned will support them moving
forward in education and work

32%

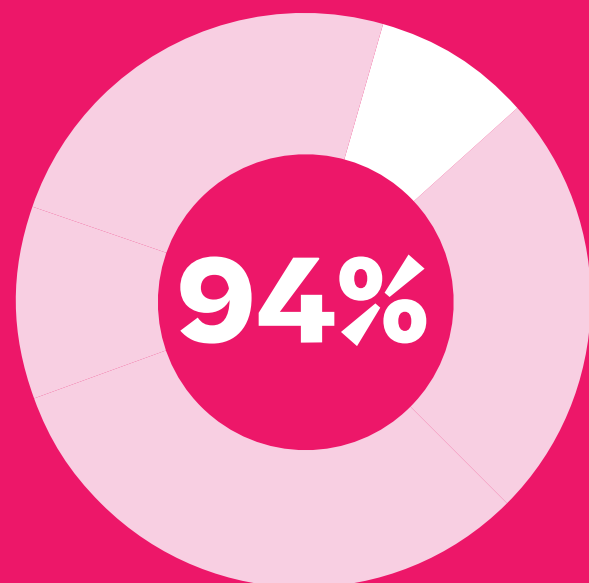
DEIS schools



Giving a Platform to Ireland's Disadvantaged Youth

152

learners benefitted and learned new skills



felt more confident in using creative thinking to address challenges

12

Youthreach and CTC Centres



Student Stories: Youthreach and CTC

Tullamore Youthreach highlights the significant impact of providing inclusive and supportive educational environments for disadvantaged students, enabling them to find their voice and realise their creative potential.

Empowering every young person to thrive in life is at the core of our ethos. Recognising that traditional schooling isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, our programmes at Youthreach and Community Training Centres (CTC) are tailored for those seeking alternative educational pathways, supporting 152 learners in 2023.

“We learned our voices can be heard and we have important things to say.”

Team Hopout,
Students, Tullamore Youthreach

Tullamore Youthreach has demonstrated the transformative power of inclusive education. The centre caters to young people seeking an alternative learning environment, helping them gain new skills and qualifications.

Challenge: Many students at Tullamore Youthreach face unique challenges and require a supportive environment to unlock their potential, especially in addressing sensitive issues like mental health.

Solution: Our programme offered these young people and their tutors a safe space to embark on a creative journey, where failure is encouraged and confidence is a key success metric. They tackled Mental Health under SDG 3, blending technology and physical solutions to explore men's mental health issues.

Impact: Their project won the Mental Health Award, a testament to their innovative approach and empathetic understanding of a complex issue. The programme facilitated increased interaction and collaboration among students. Tutor, Michelle observed, “It just broke down so many barriers... it just made such a wonderful atmosphere.”

Student Stories: Leaving Cert Applied

Equitable Access and Inclusive Learning

Scoil Bernadette in Cork upholds the value of inclusive education demonstrating how equitable access to education and skill development enables young people to thrive.

The two-year Leaving Certificate Applied curriculum in Senior Cycle is facilitated in mainstream schools, Youthreach centres and schools for students with additional needs across Ireland.

In 2023, our hybrid programme, designed to be fully inclusive and to accommodate all learning styles and abilities, supported 64 students in LCA, reflecting the dynamic nature of our programmes.

Scoil Bernadette in Montenotte, Cork, champions inclusive education, aligning with its motto, 'Learning For Living'. In 2023, their team, Eco Activists, embraced The BIG Idea programme, demonstrating exceptional success. This story exemplifies how equitable access to education and skill development enables young people to thrive and can lead to meaningful contributions to societal challenges.

Challenge: The Eco Activists, an all class group with diverse needs and learning abilities, sought to address pressing issues of climate change and its psychological impact, notably eco-anxiety among young people.

Solution: The team identified their hero, as 'Brian the Bee', and creatively linked Climate Change (SDG 13) with Mental Health (SDG 3) to address the problem they had identified.

Impact: Their innovative approach and empathetic solution earned them a BIG prize in the Climate Change category at our national Showcase. The project not only addressed wider environmental and mental health concerns but also fostered a sense of accomplishment and self-expression among the students.

“The most important thing we have learned is that we can use our creativity skills to work together towards a common goal.”

Team Eco Activists,
Students, Scoil Bernadette



64

empowered students

100%

of students agreed that their confidence improved as a result of participating in The BIG Idea

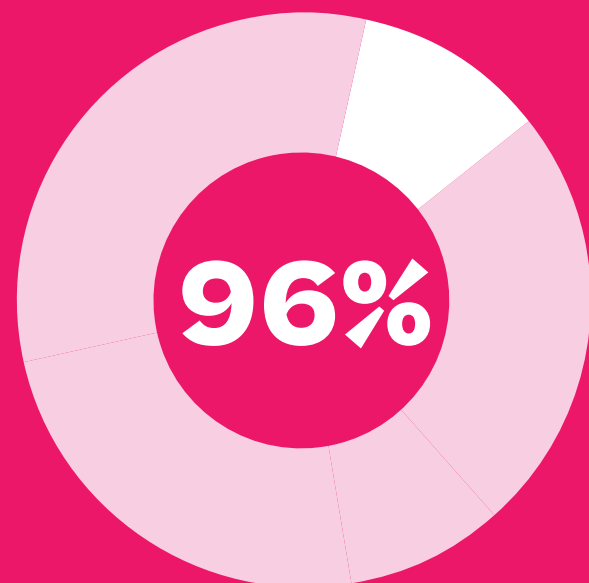
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LCA schools

Empowering Students in Diverse Curriculums

103

students took part in our Northern Ireland pilot



shared that The B!G Idea had a positive impact on their life

6

classes in Northern Ireland took part in our programme



Student Stories: Northern Ireland

Lisneal College illustrates the power of our collaborative and creative learning initiatives in any educational setting, fostering well-rounded, socially conscious young individuals.

By expanding our reach to Northern Ireland, this pilot programme engaged 103 students from Year 10 Science and Year 13 Careers classes in two schools. Fostering collaboration between students and mentors across Ireland, this programme successfully cultivated problem-solving and critical thinking skills in young people through two distinct curriculums.

Background: This pilot marked a significant step in promoting creative thinking in diverse educational settings and exploring how we can work collaboratively and creatively to all thrive on the island of Ireland.

Solution: The students concentrated on creating a centre for open discussion of mental health issues, providing a supportive space for peer connection and support. This project was chosen due to the relevance and urgency of mental health challenges among young people.

Impact: Sophie, a participating student, discovered her creative and leadership capabilities. She reflected, *“I learned to be creative. Now, I can adapt to other people’s ideas and combine them with my own to make them even better.”*

Another student, Amber, emphasised the importance of addressing mental health: *“Mental health is such a struggle for young people... it’s really important that we try and find ways to solve that.”*

“The B!G Idea is a fantastic project for students... they’re thinking critically, working with others and collaborating.”

Colin Loudon,
Facilitator, Lisneal College

Our Teachers

Our B!G Idea teachers recognise that cultivating a creative mindset is important in today's rapidly changing world.

Our 2023 Creativity Champions

We believe that every teacher facilitating The B!G Idea is a Creativity Champion, however, each year there are some that go above and beyond in empowering students to really understand and use the creative thinking skills they are learning and their importance in society.

This year students and learners nominated their teachers and facilitators and told us why they deserved to be a Creativity Champion.

“Lucky for me I had a really amazing teacher. She definitely helped us but what I admire is that she gave us the instructions and gave us the freedom to do our own thing individually.”

Lesina,
Student, *Borris Vocational School*



Patricia Dunphy,
Geography and Environmental Studies, Mercy Secondary School, Waterford.

Patricia has facilitated The B!G Idea programme for the last two years with her Transition Year students. Her enthusiasm for creative education, empathy for her students and ability to empower them to take ownership of their learning encapsulated the qualities of a Creativity Champion.



Lynsey McCabe,
Coordinator, Tullamore CTC, with the support of tutors Michael Bracken and Michelle McDonald

The B!G Idea programme was facilitated in their centre for the first time in 2023 and led by Lynsey, the whole team of students and facilitators demonstrated perfectly the impact creativity can have, not only on the learners but on the wider society. A Creativity Champion in action!

Creating Cultures of Change and Creativity



Donal Enright is a TY and LCA Programme Coordinator, and Vice Principal at Desmond College, Limerick who has facilitated The B!G Idea since the launch of the programme in 2021.

Background: Donal, a teacher at Desmond College, has been pivotal in piloting The B!G Idea programme. Over the past three years, he has leveraged this programme to enhance creativity in various subject disciplines, significantly enriching his teaching approach.

Our programme has continually evolved, informed by feedback from educators like Donal. He notes, *“It builds on what we enjoyed the first year... there's more people involved, and that's exciting.”* He has guided over 100 students in fostering creative thinking, encouraging a shift from conventional methods. *“We have developed skills and techniques over the past two years as to how we are going to tackle things”*

Impact: *“This programme has allowed students to express themselves and show me a creative side that I wouldn't have seen otherwise,”* he remarks. This experience has streamlined his teaching, integrating programme methodologies into regular classes, demonstrating the indirect yet substantial impact of The B!G Idea

on educators. It highlights the programme's role in also upskilling teachers, broadening the scope of creative thinking in education.

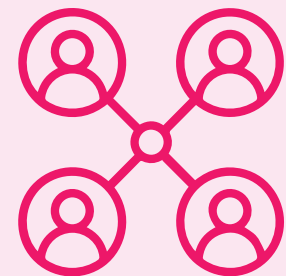
Over the three years, Donal has noted the level of support from The B!G Idea team and the innovative resources and materials available to teachers facilitating the programmes.

“It's a different way of teaching, a different way of learning, and it has been a very engaging programme.”

Donal Enright,
Teacher, *Desmond College in Limerick*

Teacher's View

100% of teachers facilitating The B!G Idea in 2023 agreed that the programmes contributed to developing the following student skills and competencies:



**Working
in a Team**



Creativity



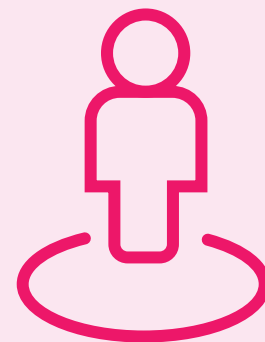
**Overall
Wellbeing**



Confidence



**Ability to Learn
from Failure**



**Working
Independently**



**Research and
Investigation**

100%

Amplifying Student Voices

There are hundreds of incredible B!G Ideas submitted each year from teams across the country. This year, the creative journey, originality and development of the following teams impressed our mentors and judges across the board.

Overall B!G Winner: Supported by Creative Ireland

Winning Team: Community Cara, Borris Vocational School Carlow

The winning project, INFOL, presents a digital response designed to tackle hidden poverty in Ireland. The app aims to provide real-time information about vital local services – such as financial and food support - using a map feature, highlighting service locations and accessibility information.

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



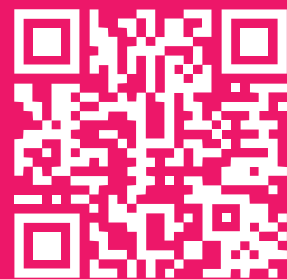
“[The B!G Idea] allows the young people in our communities to understand their creative potential and see the difference they can make in their worlds.”

Netwatch,
Partner 2021 to 2023

Category: Climate Change Youthreach and CTC

Winning team: Kilkenny YR, from Kilkenny Youthreach, Kilkenny

Kilkenny YR's idea is a cutting-edge app to leverage Augmented Reality (AR) and educate primary school students on the local impacts of climate change. By overlaying photos or videos showing the potential damage to familiar locations, Kilkenny YR hopes to highlight climate change's consequences.



See our B!G
Winners of 2023



“Continuous innovation in education is vital if we want to provide young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to build a sustainable future.”

HundrED.org,
Organisation Specialised in Education Innovation

Category: Mental Health supported by the RIAI

Winning team: Sarah's Strength, St. Patrick's College, Tyrone

It Takes Strength is a website devoted to promoting mental health and wellbeing for university students. With peer-to-peer advice and relevant information on financial concerns and time management, the platform adopts a human-centred approach, offering inclusive features like voice-overs to ensure accessibility for all.



Category: Climate Change supported by MSD Ireland

Winning team: Scoil Ber Eco Activists, Scoil Bernadette, Cork

Scoil Bernadette celebrated success with their wonderful wildflower garden. Combining climate change and mental health, the garden provides a safe haven for the team's hero "Brian the Bee" and is also a calm space for students when they need it.



Category: Mental Health Youthreach & CTC

Winning team: Team HopOut, Tullamore CTC, Offaly

This impactful project centres on unspoken men's mental health challenges. Their Community Hub and drinks coaster equipped with a QR code, act as a lifeline for those seeking help. The innovative QR code signposts individuals to vital support.



Category: Displaced People supported by Rethink Ireland

Winning team: Cabhrú, from Borris National School, Carlow

Cabhrú emerged successful with a comprehensive multi-lingual website supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland. The proposed website, Cabhrú.ie, acts as a much-needed one-stop-shop, offering resources on education, housing, and employment.



Category: Hidden Poverty supported by Netwatch

Winning team: Immoderate, from Mercy Secondary School, Longford

Immoderate's ingenious app, "Incognition," addresses hidden poverty. By fostering an online community, it provides vital support for those experiencing financial hardship. The detail is exemplified in the app name – Incognition – 'Incog' from 'Incognito,' protecting the anonymity of the service.



Category: Diversity & Inclusion supported by Carlow LEO

Winning team: The Bois, Meánscoil San Nioclás, Waterford

The Bois' excellent project aims to promote mental health wellbeing with their "Mind Blogging" journal. Tailored to aid young individuals impacted by childhood trauma, the journal encourages emotional wellbeing through various activities.



Our B!G Showcase

Our end of year event is the ultimate celebration of creative thinking and innovation. This year's event was even B!GGER and better than ever!

Bringing the B!G Community Together

Our highlight every year is without a doubt the end-of-year Showcase when we get the chance to listen to some truly inspiring speakers, hear about all the incredible projects that have been submitted and unveil the year's B!G winners.

This year surpassed all our expectations as we were joined by a class of students along with teachers, mentors and partners. Hosted in Dogpatch Labs, Dublin by RTE's Emma Power, the Showcase was officially launched by Maria Walsh, MEP. Catherine Martin, TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture, the Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media spoke about the importance of creative thinking in education and Leigh Mc Gowran, a journalist with Silicon Republic, told us about the breakthrough of AI into today's world and how we can use this creatively to our best advantage.

Eight worthy student teams and two special Creativity Champions were also given awards while thousands of students and learners who took part this year were celebrated.

Creative Workshopping with Synge Street CBS

This year, for the first time, we introduced an exciting new element by welcoming students to join our event.

We invited a class from the nearby Synge Street CBS to participate in a workshop alongside some of this year's B!G mentors where students had the opportunity to apply some of their newly acquired creative thinking skills to complete a Dragon's Den style challenge.

“Linesight is always on the lookout for those innovative and creative solutions that will help make our planet a better place on which to live and work. And who better to support in finding that B!G Idea, than the talented and ingenious minds of the younger generation.”

Linesight,
Partner 2022 and 2023



Watch The B!G Showcase 2023 here





Accelerating Student Ideas

As part of our goal to cultivate creative thinking outside of the classroom we grew our activity to transform student innovation into wider societal impact.

Our B!G Exhibition - It's Worldwide!

Our newly designed virtual exhibition went live in May. This online exhibition is an opportunity for us to share the incredible journeys that all of our students underwent and showcase their solutions to a number of pressing issues they tackled as part of the programme.

Any member of the public can log onto our website and enjoy the exhibition which has been viewed by visitors not only from Ireland but from all around the world.

B!G and Bright Ideas

With the support of our Climate Change partner, MSD Ireland, and hosted by Accenture's The Dock, we were excited to hold a pilot Student Accelerator for the overall winners of The B!G Idea 2022.

The innovative Trash Scan team from St Leo's, Carlow were invited to a day-long workshop to engage with partners and mentors and develop their B!G idea even further through a mini accelerator session. Using their new skills while working hand-in-hand with their mentors from different sectors, the students were able to develop their idea further and explore a range of career prospects and opportunities.

“In our commitment to ‘Inventing for Life’, we proudly support The B!G Idea, fostering Ireland’s next wave of creative inventors and innovators who will shape our future.”

MSD,
Partner 2021 to 2023



Check out our first Student Accelerator here



“I was never taught skills like problem solving and question asking yet every day in work we have to use these type of skills”

Cormac Donnelly,
Irish Life Health

Industry

Letter from Niamh



Niamh Cooney
Head of Development and
Sustainability, The B!G Idea

A Time of Transformation

Rapid technological progress, inflation, economic uncertainty, along with unprecedented sustainability challenges have converged this year, forcing businesses all across the world to continuously rethink their strategies.

Our mission is more important than ever - ensuring that every student, irrespective of their background, gets an equal shot at shaping a brighter future, not just for themselves but for industries and communities at large. We're preparing them for a dynamic job market. We're fostering cross-generational collaboration to tackle global challenges - a workforce which celebrates and sees the value in diverse groups of people and thinking.

With direct alignment to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals and bolstered by diverse industry

The lack of availability of a skilled workforce is a growing concern and challenge for Irish businesses. The B!G Idea is tackling this from the ground up, equipping the next generation with vital skills for success.

mentors and third level institutions, our programme is transformative.

What started as a creative educational programme is evolving year on year. We are creating a community that merges the energy and ideas of our young people with the expertise and knowledge of industry. Our programme thrives on strong partnerships with diverse companies across Ireland. Every mentor, partner, Board member, and contributor brings unique value to this B!G Community.

By working with us, businesses get an insider's view into Gen Z's innovation, all the while shaping our programme to stay relevant to fast moving industry needs and trends. Our returning partners signify the mutual value derived from this association. Beyond ESG and CSR enhancements, partnerships empower

employees as mentors, directly benefitting both businesses and our youth. Our 2023 programme further proved the limitless potential of our young people here in Ireland. To all our partners, mentors, and supporters, a heartfelt thank you. We simply cannot do any of this without your support. Our dedication to fostering these vital skills in young people isn't just altruistic; it has to be strategic.

By joining forces to nurture our nation's young talent, our B!G Community is tackling the widening skills gap from the ground up. We're laying the groundwork for a resilient future where Ireland spearheads global innovation and fosters widespread creative thinking and innovation for a brighter future for us all.

“Creativity is the currency of our future generations. The B!G Idea is an incredible initiative to help encourage innovative thinking in today's youth.”

PA Consulting,
Partner 2021 to 2023

Industry Policy and Research

Our inclusive and industry-led educational initiatives align with a number of industry policies. This alignment ensures that we are equipping the next generation of changemakers and leaders in Ireland with the up-to-date skills they need to thrive today and in the future.

In today's age of AI and digitisation, the landscape of employment and the skills needed for the future are constantly changing.

Creative thinking and innovation are at the forefront of all industry sectors globally. According to a recent survey by PwC with global CEOs, creativity and problem solving, distinctly human skills and abilities that stimulate innovation, stand out as the most crucial qualities required when hiring. Skills like collaboration, resilience and critical thinking have always had their value but they are increasingly becoming prerequisites. Our immersive programmes closely align with industry and government policies and research to further reinforce their value in preparing young people for this ever-evolving landscape.

“Equipping the next generation of students with problem-solving skills to tackle complex global issues like climate change and hidden poverty is exactly what Ireland and the technology industry needs right now.”

EPAM,
Partner 2023

OECD Skills Strategy Ireland 2023

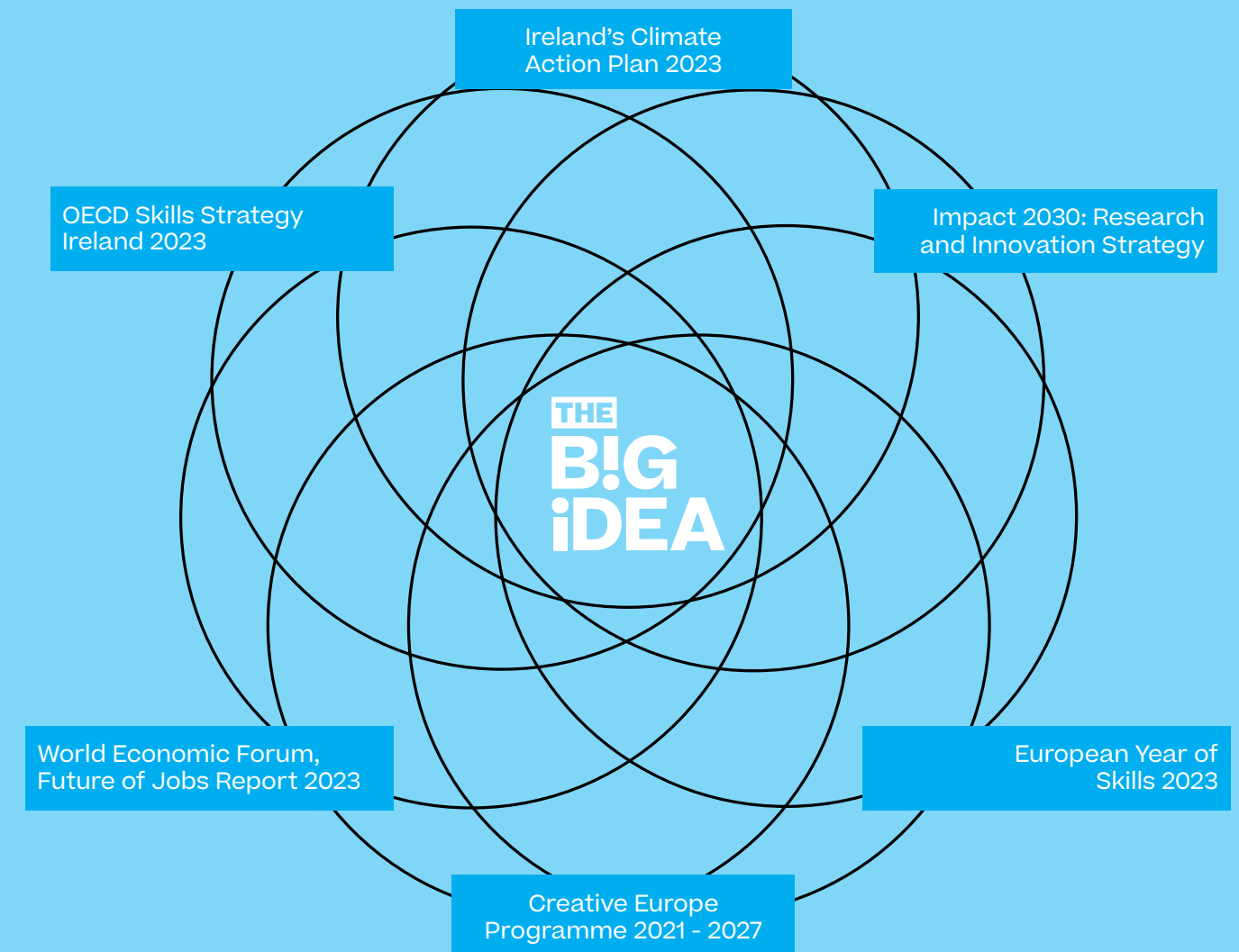
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Improving the development of transversal skills for innovation, such as creativity, critical thinking, and communication, across the education system, including lifelong learning.

Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2023

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. The Climate Action Plan 2023 stresses the need for education and awareness, especially among youth, to drive innovation and transition Ireland towards a low-carbon future.

Impact 2030: Research and Innovation Strategy

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Places an emphasis on talent, inclusion, innovation, international governance, and capacity, and aims to maximise the contribution of R&I to multiple policy objectives.



World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2023

Recommends that education systems focus on developing a broad range of skills, including digital literacy, problem-solving, and creativity, and provide opportunities for experiential learning and real-world problem-solving active learning, resilience.

Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027

Recognises culture and freedom of creation are vital for the European Union and its citizens, as a means for strengthening democracies and values.

European Year of Skills 2023

Seeks to bridge skills gaps and enhance the EU's skills strategy. It aims to reskill individuals for quality employment, through national efforts, EU initiatives, and funding. It fosters creativity by aligning skills development with emerging demands and collaboration.

United Nations: SDGs



This year The BIG Idea embedded the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the programme, cultivating creative and critical thinking skills in students to address pressing global challenges.

“It is a great opportunity to be able to introduce young people to the SDGs and to get them to start thinking about the problems of today that will affect them in the future. A nice thing is to be able to provide guidance, give feedback to progress their ideas and to learn from them as much as they learn from us.”

Rebecca Robinson,
Mentor and Believer 2023, Munster Technological University

Embracing the SDG Goals

Our programmes sit firmly under **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** by empowering students and learners in 2023 to tackle societal issues including **Hidden Poverty (SDG 1)**, **Mental Health (SDG 3)**, **Diversity and Inclusion (SDG10)**, **Displaced People (SDG 16)** and **Climate Change (SDG 13)**.

Aligned with SDG 4, our mission breaks educational barriers, emphasises youth skills for employment and entrepreneurship (Target 4.4), and fosters knowledge and skills for sustainable development, including education in sustainable lifestyles, human rights, and global citizenship (Target 4.7). (38)

Complementing our commitment to SDG 4, we also embody SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) through collaborative efforts to find solutions to these challenges, and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by actively engaging students with industry mentors. This holistic approach supports both individual growth and broader societal progress.



Our B!G Mentors

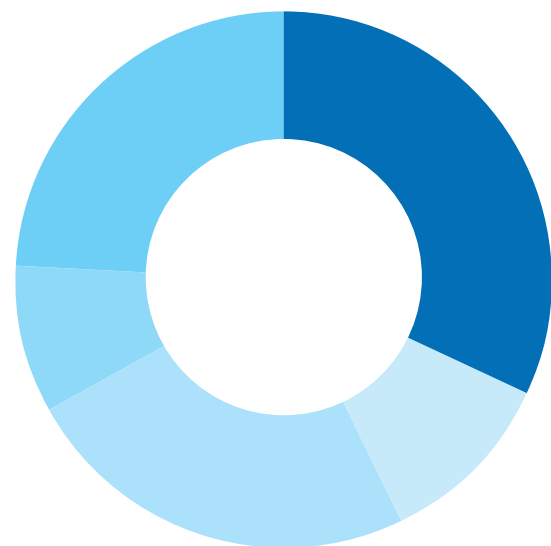
Supporting students at pivotal moments in their learning journey, our B!G mentors are at the heart of our programmes. This year 354 incredible mentors helped to empower 4000 students across Ireland!

Regardless of their professional background or geography, our bespoke mentoring platform ensures mentors can engage at their own pace, from anywhere. This year 70% of our mentors were part of partner and corporate teams, while 30% were individual industry professionals and we increased our international mentor cohort from 2-8%!

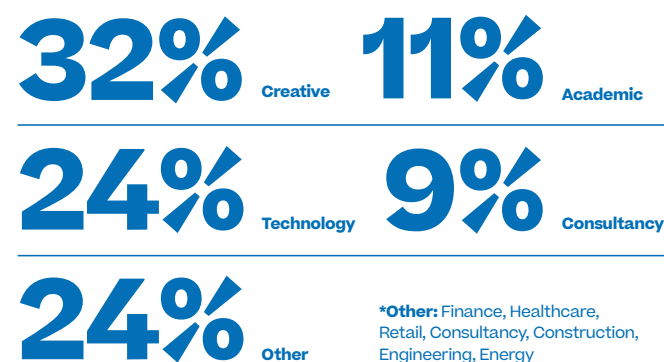
Our mentors not only fund and help develop our programmes, they also bridge a widening gap by bringing current industry insights and trends, applied creative problem solving practices, and real world methodologies to our students at a time when it can make a real difference

in the trajectory of their lives. They collaborate with students on the 17 SDGS ensuring that knowledge is being shared between generations and Ireland's youth are being given a voice in tackling critical global issues.

Beyond the rewarding experience of fostering youth skills, mentors benefit from joining a global professional community, amplifying collaboration and innovation to build connections, nurture learning cultures, and enhance key leadership skills.



Mentors by Industry



Our Mentor Community

This year we were delighted to host our first face-to-face events with a mentor meet-up in Dublin in November, as well as our Showcase event in May.





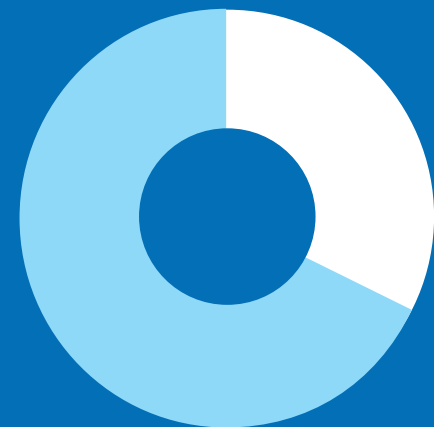


354

Mentors

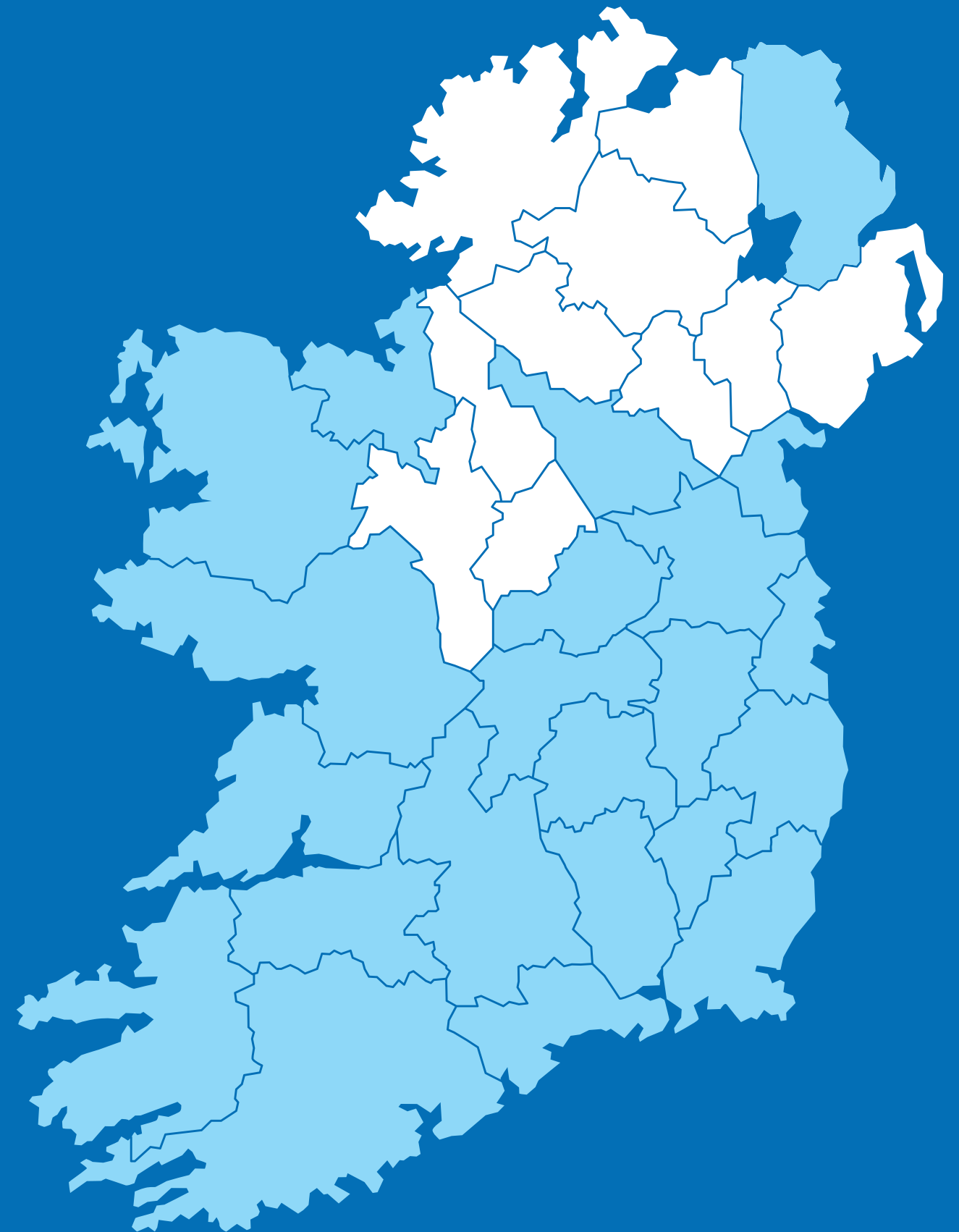
70%

Corporate Teams



93%

Gained Enhanced Coaching
and Mentoring Skills



Mentors in Ireland and Worldwide

Amsterdam
Antrim
Australia
Carlow
Cavan
Clare
Cork

Dublin
England
Galway
Kerry
Kildare
Kilkenny
Laois

Limerick
London
Louth
Malaysia
Mayo
Meath
Offaly

Sligo
Spain
Tipperary
Waterford
Westmeath
Wexford
Wicklow

92%
based across
the island
of Ireland

8%
international
stretching
even to the US

What Our Mentors Say

The reasons our mentors choose to take part are as many and as varied as the wonderful industry professionals themselves, but they all agree it's a programme with impact that is needed in Ireland right now.



Jon Cheung,
Unum, Mentor 2023

"The B!G Idea is a great programme for young people to explore their creativity and to interact with their fellow students and just to solve very important problems."

unum®



Lucy Fitzgerald,
MSD, Mentor 2022 and 2023

 **MSD**
INVENTING FOR LIFE

"I definitely recommend being a mentor. It's been such a really great experience. It really brings you back as well to your own core understanding of creative thinking and problem solving."

"The older ways of doing things are changing and to solve new problems we need new ways of thinking, new ideas and new methodologies. Having a programme like The B!G Idea - encouraging and reaching 4000 students across the country - I think is exceptionally important and it's going to lead to great things for the future of the country."

 **AUTODESK**



Sami DeLuca,
Each&Other, Mentor 2023

"You'd absolutely love it! It's amazing to see the ideas that come out of the next generation - it's incredibly encouraging and rewarding!"

Each&Other



Neil O'Connor,
Autodesk, Mentor 2023

Our B!G Partners

Our partners provide vital funding to keep The B!G Idea free and help us to reach thousands of students each year. We are so grateful for their continued support.

Award Partners



Programme Partners



Grant Partners



Believers



Foundation Partners



Partner Support

It is thanks to the support of a diverse range of partners and funders that The B!G Idea continues to grow year on year. We are so appreciative of such hands-on support from a wide range of industry and academic partners which helps us to support even more young people.

Companies all across Ireland value creative thinking skills as essential for the future and this year 22 of Ireland's most progressive companies joined forces to support our work with young people. This year we worked on enhancing partnerships to not only activate CSR and ESG strategies but also to further boost team engagement with a whopping 70% of our B!G mentors coming from our partners!

We're proud to have six third-level institutions in Ireland amplifying our impact by providing academic mentors and enriching the student experience.

Notable grants aiding our expansion this year came from Creative Ireland, Rethink Ireland, Siol Foundation, ESB, Energia, Aviva, CEUD, Community Foundation Ireland and more.

Together we are empowering, engaging and upskilling the next generation with the skills they'll need to thrive and create a better future for us all.

22 diverse corporate partners

13 grant partners

11 industries represented

6 third level institutions

“Empowering the next generation to engage more actively with issues affecting the built environment is a key objective of the RIAI. The B!G Idea is a programme which aims to tackle challenges through creativity, and the RIAI is delighted to announce its ongoing partnership with the programme.”

Royal Institute of Architects Ireland,
Partner 2022 and 2023



“It’s time to back big ideas and sustainable solutions. Our vision is an Ireland which is more just, equal and sustainable because of social innovation.”

Rethink Ireland,
Partner 2023

Society

Future Focus

Approaching our fourth year, we are poised to take our mission to new heights, armed with the knowledge and insights we've gained along the way.

Building Momentum

As we advance into 2024, building on three years of impactful growth, our focus is on deepening our reach and enhancing key programme elements. This approach is informed by valuable feedback from students, teachers, mentors and partners ensuring we meet the evolving needs of all young people in our programmes.

In 2024, our goal is to scale our programme thoughtfully, prioritising quality and adaptability and delivering four tailored programme streams: Transition Year (TY), LCA, Youthreach / CTC and Northern Ireland.

Our expansion plan includes accommodating 4050 students and 400 industry mentors, ensuring a balance between growth and maintaining programme integrity.

We remain committed to increasing our LCA, Youthreach and DEIS outreach to support disadvantaged youth and aim to reach up to 50% of DEIS students and learners in 2024.

We will continue to work in collaboration with key partners in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on expanding our reach in Northern Ireland, as well as delivering a Shared Island project. This diverse approach aims to foster a shared sense of community across Ireland, further leveraging creative opportunities for social interaction and engagement, in line with key government policies.

Our inclusive and industry-led educational initiatives are showing that with equitable access to skills, opportunities and education every single young person can not just succeed but thrive. We are excited to further pilot and deliver digital and in-person opportunities for young people on our programme to avail of further support and have access to opportunities for learning and growth as they finish their B!G Idea programme journey. Our Student Accelerator is a key growth area which adds to student experience and knowledge building. We want to increase the long-term impact of our programme and support the development of a potential pipeline of youth-led, socially responsible start-ups in Ireland.

With our growing community of mentors and partners from all across industry and academia we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. Collectively and collaboratively we are doing important work - giving young people the tools, skills and confidence to tackle the biggest problems they face. Because one B!G Idea can change our world.



Letter from Joe



As we celebrate our accomplishments, this Impact Report is a testament to our commitment to transforming lives through creative thinking.

Joe Hogan
Chairman of The B!G Idea,
EY & EU Entrepreneur of the
Year 2011, Co-Founder of
Openet, CTO of Amdocs.

The B!G Idea - Year 2022/2023

**Dear partners and friends
of The B!G Idea,**

**This year has been nothing
short of extraordinary as
we have witnessed growth,
innovation, and impact
through the typical challenges
in a scaling social enterprise.**

Our third year in operation has been a leap forward, marked by expansion, recognition, and an unwavering determination to drive change.

Our programme expansion has been a cornerstone of our success in the past year. The Transition Year (TY) programme experienced an astounding transformation, doubling its participants from 2,000 in 2022 to an impressive 4,000 students. The Youthreach and Community Training Centre (CTC) extended pilot reached new heights, further

showcasing how thinking B!G can help disadvantaged young people. A major highlight has been our journey into Northern Ireland through the success of our pilot programme which has set the stage for a promising future. More schools have eagerly embraced our approach, signifying the broad appeal and potential impact of our initiatives for the 2023/2024 year.

Our achievements echo our resounding success. Since our inception, we've supported over 6,500 young people across Ireland, an accomplishment that speaks volumes about the resonance and necessity of our programmes. While this milestone is remarkable in three short years, we recognise the imperative of further outreach to empower young minds across Ireland. The year saw us embrace

the global stage through European expansion. While at home, our global mentor community remains a pillar of strength, connecting our students with industry experts who contributed invaluable insights. A group of 354 mentors bridged the divide between education and industry, exemplifying the meaning of mentorship. Our ever-growing team welcomed fresh faces, infusing renewed energy and expertise into our mission. Collaborating with our programme partners, we extended our reach by engaging progressive companies, underscoring the collaborative spirit that propels The B!G Idea.

Our events resonated with resounding success. The hybrid end of programme Showcase blended online and in-person experiences, in a captivating

watch party at Dogpatch Labs in May. The B!G online Exhibition showcased the brilliance of countless young minds, underlining the impact of our vision on creativity.

Global recognition affirmed our mission's universality. Being selected as an impactful education innovator in HundrED's 2024 Global Collection helps solidify our position as change-makers. Securing the Think Global Awards in the Education & eLearning category, alongside significant praise in the OECD's recent report into creative education in Ireland, validates our pioneering efforts.

Our accolades are a testament to our student learning journey, their growth and their application of their new-found skills, as well as our unwavering commitment to excellence.

In closing, The B!G Idea's journey in 2022/2023 embodies our relentless pursuit of transforming thinking, nurturing creativity, and fostering a future where we can all succeed. With your continued support, our mission will continue to flourish, creating a lasting impact on generations to come.

The B!G Board

Joe Hogan
Kim Mackenzie-Doyle
Fiona Byrne
Fergal Doyle
Mary Clare Byrne
Enda Murtagh
Cyril Treacy
Gavin O'Doherty
Sinéad Cuthbert
Caroline Hynes
Paul Sweetman



Get Involved

We are ready to go even B!GGER and deliver even more impact! We cannot do it alone.

“This project is crucially important to prepare learners for the demands of higher education and lifelong learning.”

Griffith College,
Partner 2023

Teacher

Teaching Creative Skills

Our multi-award winning free creative thinking programmes have been designed to empower your students with the 21st century skills they need. Developed by educational and industry experts, your students and learners will have the opportunity to learn transferable skills to support them in tackling the B!GGEST problems they might face.

Benefits

- 1. Empower your students** with the skills they will need for now and their future and to activate social change in their local communities through applied creative thinking.
- 2. A fully supported programme** that has been designed by award-winning experts where materials, class content and resources are provided for free to students, parents and schools.
- 3. Learn new skills** from the programme that can enhance teaching and learning in your individual subject discipline.

Individual

Become a B!G Mentor

We're on a B!G mission to create a better world through creative innovation. Sign up to become a mentor today and join our growing community of up 400 mentors in 2024. Our first three years were a huge success and we need even more B!G mentors to support 4,000 students in our programmes next year! Will you join us and support the next generation of creative problem solvers?

Benefits

- 1. Support our students.** B!G mentors directly fund two students, equipping them with creative skills for life while offering advice and support.
- 2. Join like-minded people.** Collaborate, connect and grow with other mentors in an inclusive, diverse and forward-thinking community of professionals from all industries.
- 3. Be a part of The B!G Idea.** Help us to shape the development of The B!G Idea programme for young people and be a part of our exciting future.

Company

Become a B!G Partner

As a B!G partner your company will be one of the most progressive organisations in the country, bridging the gap between industry and education. In 2024, we want to empower 4,000 students with creative skills for life. We're on a mission to create a better world through creative thinking and we cannot do it alone. We need your support.

Benefits





- 1. CSR.** Create a meaningful connection with young people from all backgrounds and their communities and elevate your ESG impact.
- 2. HR.** Boost employee engagement, add to CPD and L&D offerings, network with peers and nurture the future talent of tomorrow.
- 3. Marketing.** Reach a dynamic audience of young people, school communities, parents and professionals at every level, nationally and internationally.

Learn More

Interested in Learning More?

If you would like one of The B!G Idea team to come and speak about creative thinking at your organisation, or your team would like to participate in one of our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops, drop us a line at hello@thebigidea.ie. To talk to us about Think B!G Funding and how you can financially support disadvantaged young people, please email: hello@thebigidea.ie

Contact Us

-  [@The Big Idea – Ireland](#)
-  [@the_big_idea_irl](#)
-  [@TheBigIdea.IRL](#)
-  [@TheBigIdea_IRL](#)

Thank you!

Our Students and Learners

Our BIGGEST thank you goes to our students and learners, for trusting the creative thinking process and proving to everyone that our young people are our greatest asset.

Our Teachers and Tutors

Thank you for facilitating the programmes in your schools or Youthreach/CTCs and allowing students and learners to develop a new way of thinking.

Our Mentors

For supporting our students and volunteering your time, sharing your industry knowledge so generously. For giving vital input into the lives of young people across the island of Ireland.

Our Partners

For providing core funding to keep our programmes free and accessible, believing in us, and bringing your teams onboard to support our work, helping us to improve outcomes for our young people.

Our Believers

To the universities and colleges who share our vision and purpose and support us with mentors, advice and solidarity in the world of educational innovation.

Grant Awarding Bodies

For recognising our impact and potential, aiding The BIG Idea to reach even more young people this year.

Our Advocates

For cheering us on and standing shoulder to shoulder with us as we grow. Minister Catherine Martin; MEP Maria Walsh; journalists, news producers, and editors for supporting us with media coverage; photographers Ruth Medjber and Josh Mulholland; videographers John and Lucy Hennesy from Kerbute for capturing the magic of The BIG Idea.

Our Website

Philip Farmer, Unthink for helping us stay connected with our BIG Community.

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Because one B!G idea can change their world...

See how you can take part, sign-up or become a mentor or partner visit **thebigidea.ie**

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme

RIAI

Lines

aws

cl



Energy for
generations



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

AUTODESK



NUTRITICS

“We have learnt that even though we are only 16/17 years old, there is still so much that we can do to help solve big issues.”

Team JAAM,
Calasactius College, Desmond College

thebigidea.ie

