

**THE
B!G
iDEA**

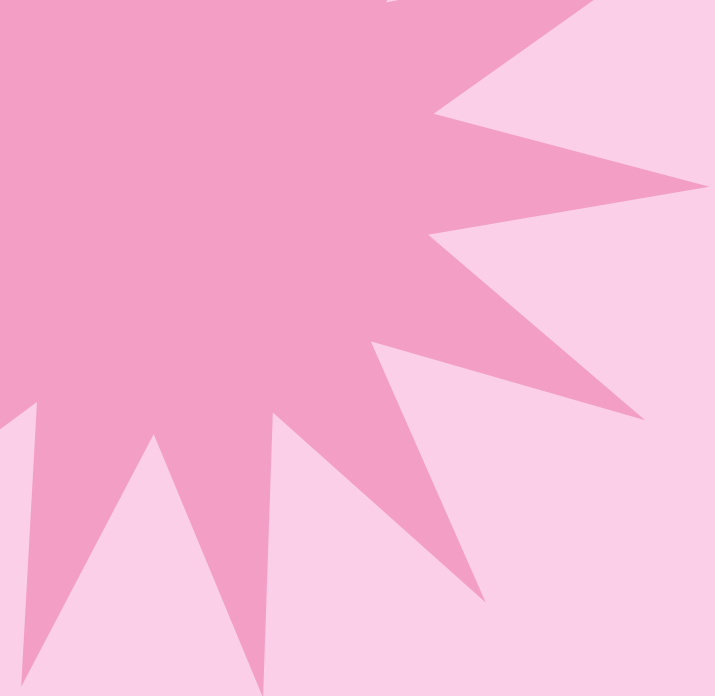
Strategic Plan
2026 – 2028



Inclusive

Creative

Future-Ready



“It was realising
that- they (the
students) can be
part of the solution.”

Patricia Dunphy,

Teacher, *Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School*



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Building the skills, confidence, and pathways young people need to shape Ireland's future - starting with those most often left behind.

Joint Chair and CEO Statement

As Chair and CEO of The B!G Idea, we are delighted to introduce this next chapter of our journey, one shaped by bold ambition, deep learning, and a shared belief in the incredible potential of young people across Ireland. Over the past five years, we've seen first-hand how creative thinking can change a young person's trajectory, elevating them beyond expectation. We've watched students who doubted themselves discover confidence, find their voice, and realise that their ideas matter. These building moments start small and become seismic, they are what drive this organisation forward.

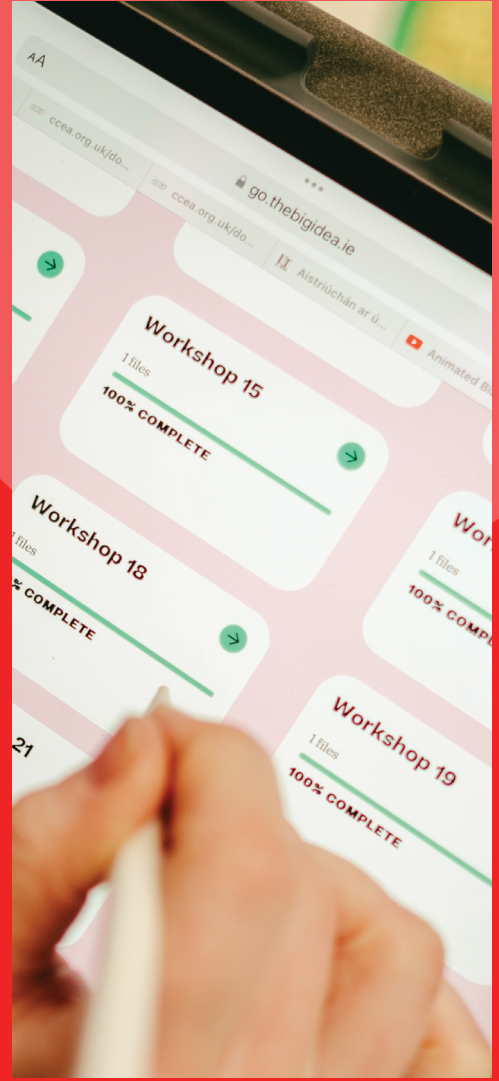
This strategic plan marks an evolution for The B!G Idea. We are moving from single-year programmes to a national, inclusive, creative innovation pathway: a model that ensures every student gets access to foundational creative thinking skills, with structured progression and real-world support for those who want, and need, deeper opportunities. This shift is grounded in evidence, lived experience, and the collective insights of students, educators, industry partners, and our team. What has never changed, and will never change, is our belief that creative thinking is a critical skill and a universal right.

We are committed to ensuring that background, learning style, geography, or circumstance never determine a young person's chance to thrive. To deliver that vision takes courage, collaboration, and a community of partners who believe in the same future we do. We want to express our sincere thanks to everyone who



makes this work possible - our teachers, tutors, mentors, partners, funders, Board members, and our exceptional team. Your passion and generosity power this momentum. Together, we are building something that Ireland urgently needs: an equitable, future-focused pathway that gives young people the skills to navigate the fastest-changing world we've ever known and the confidence to shape the future they deserve. We invite you to continue thinking B!G with us. The next chapter is full of possibility, and we are proud to be writing it together.

Joe Hogan, Chair
Kim Mackenzie-Doyle, CEO & Founder
The B!G Idea



Executive Summary

Ireland's young people are growing up in a world that is changing faster than ever, and those facing the greatest disadvantages are being left furthest behind.

These young people urgently need creative confidence, problem-solving skills, and real networks of support to overcome the challenges in front of them. Since 2021, The B!G Idea has reached more than 16,500 learners with free, inclusive creative education, proving that creativity is teachable and transformative. But access alone is not enough. Real impact happens when young people gain deeper mentoring, stronger social capital, and clear pathways that turn possibility into opportunity.

Our 2026–2028 strategy evolves our work into Ireland's most inclusive creative innovation pathway. Every young person will access foundational creative thinking skills, and those who need or seek more support will progress into structured innovative skill-building, mentoring, industry connections, and real opportunities that help them overcome disadvantage and shape their futures with confidence.

This approach maximises talent, grows social capital for those who have least access to it, and sets a national precedent for democratising creative thinking. National policy is clear that creative problem-solving, adaptability, and collaboration are critical skills for Ireland's future competitiveness in an AI-enabled economy, requiring earlier, more inclusive, and sustained development pathways [1,2].

Evidence consistently shows that when young people receive sustained support across education, industry, and community, outcomes improve and inequalities narrow [3].

Our strategy is divided in three pillars: Equity and Access, Innovation and Digital Transformation, Collaboration for Impact. These are supported by investment into our enablers; our people, our governance, our capabilities, and our ongoing innovation.

This plan strengthens what works and removes barriers where they exist, ensuring the young people who need it most gain not only skills, but the belief and support to build a better future that once felt out of reach.



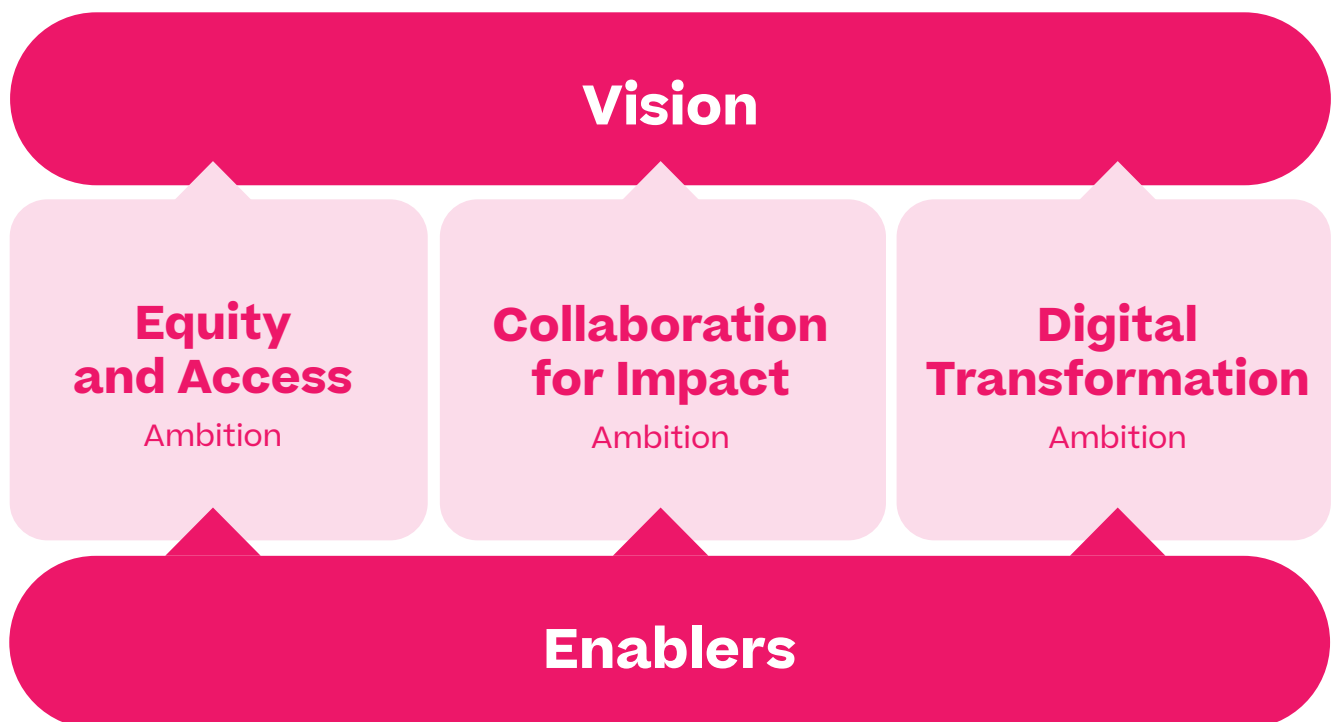
“Michael’s been here over 35 years since this place opened and [The B!G Idea] has been the best thing we have ever done.”

Michelle Howard,
Tutor, Tullamore CTC

How B!G Ideas Become Reality

Achieving our vision requires more than ambitious goals; it depends on the strength of the foundations that support them. Our enablers are the systems, capabilities, and conditions that turn intent into impact. They create the environment where innovation can grow, collaboration can flourish, and disadvantaged young people can access

the opportunities they deserve. These enablers ensure that our programmes are delivered with excellence, that our team is supported to lead change, and that we remain accountable, resilient, and ready to evolve. Together, they transform strategic ambition into real outcomes for young people across Ireland.



“They’ve also learned that their own ideas can apply to the real world and that they’re great. They will be the people having these ideas and will be contributing to issues such as global warming in the future.”

Kerry-Anne Walsh,
Teacher, Borris College

About Us

The B!G Idea is Ireland’s award-winning creative thinking education charity, on a mission to ensure that every young person, no matter their background, geography, or ability has the creative problem-solving skills, confidence, networks, and opportunities they need to thrive in a world changing at unprecedented speed.

Access to Thrive

We exist because, despite a growing number of enrichment programmes across Ireland, access and impact remain deeply unequal. Research shows that social and economic disadvantage strongly determines who participates and who benefits [4]. Students in DEIS and low-income communities are significantly less likely to access innovation pathways, mentoring, or industry networks [5]. Social capital, not ability, is often the deciding factor in who gets seen, supported, and encouraged. Many young people with enormous potential remain invisible simply because they lack the connections or confidence to step forward.

Inclusive Opportunity

Even with strong national initiatives in STEM, entrepreneurship, and wellbeing, participation is frequently built around selected students or confidence-based involvement. Young people who are quieter, less connected, or starting further behind are often excluded before they’ve even begun. While many all-class programmes offer valuable inspiration, evidence shows that without sustained development, exposure, mentoring, and progression pathways, disadvantaged students remain significantly underrepresented among top performers [3,6].

Talent isn’t the Problem

Access is the problem. Ireland is overlooking a generation of creative, capable problem-solvers and innovators because opportunity still works like a talent show: show up, speak up, stand out. Talent is not the problem, access is. Confidence is not the measure of potential. And inspiration without follow-on support leaves too many young people right where they started [3].



What We Do

The B!G Idea delivers free, inclusive creative problem-solving education to TY, Youthreach, LCA, and NI learners across Ireland that builds the most sought-after skills for the world of work and society.

Our custom EdTech platform hosts interactive workshops, creative thinking activities, integrated team mentorship, and guided learning that support teachers and students throughout the programme. Alongside this, our Think B!G Packs, hyper-accessible, action-ready kits filled with unique learning tools, worksheets, and hands-on activities, equip every student with the skills to research, analyse, ideate, collaborate, and prototype solutions to their real challenges.

Together, the platform and packs create a consistent, accessible, high-quality 360 degree learning experience, regardless of school resources, connectivity, student or teacher background.

Why We Do It

We do it because our education system still isn't built for every learner. It rewards a narrow set of skills, leaving too many young people - especially those who don't fit the typical mould - without the networks, mentors, and opportunities they need to thrive. Instead of widening horizons, it often reinforces inequality, widening the gap. We believe every young person deserves equitable access to innovative skills and the connections that open doors, spark possibility, and shape brighter futures.

“I learned that, my voice is as important as anyone else’s. We’re all important. In school, I never got that. I never, got a chance to speak up about what’s on my mind, or just in general. So The B!G Idea was really like, okay, it’s your turn. We’re gonna listen to you as you speak. I never got that in school.”

Youthreach Participant,
UCD Evaluation, Interview 2025



How We Do It

We deliver a two-stage creative innovation pathway that moves students from access to transformation.

1. Broad Access

Our broad-access model ensures every young person can participate fully and meaningfully.

Our EdTech platform delivers inclusive collaborative workshops, structured creative activities, guided learning, and digital mentor interaction.

Our Think B!G Packs, delivered to every classroom, bridge the digital and physical experience, providing equitable, hands-on tools that ensure no student is left behind due to ability, access, resources, or technology.

Together, these create a dynamic blended-learning environment where students collaborate in teams to tackle real-world

challenges through curriculum-aligned hybrid workshops. They build confidence, strengthen problem-solving skills, develop mental agility, and grow resilience from the ground up. This dual approach removes barriers, boosts participation, and ensures consistent, high-quality learning in every school and centre, no matter the location or context.

2. Deep Progression

For students who show strong engagement or need deeper support, we provide structured progression pathways that open real opportunities. We offer class-based digital mentoring, the national Think B!G Fest, and purposeful alumni support that connects young people with industry experts, networks, and experiences they would not otherwise access.

This model ensures inclusion doesn't stop at access, it continues through transformation, giving every student not just a beginning but a clear next step.

**Broad and
Equitable Access**

Ambition

Deep Progression

Ambition

**Wider
Societal
Impact**

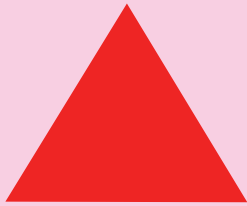
Our Vision & Values

Our Vision

An Ireland where every young person has the creativity, skills, and belief to shape the future they deserve.

Our Values

We think creatively, communicate openly, collaborate inclusively, and commit fully, so every young person can thrive in our changing world.



Creative

We think differently and stay curious, constantly exploring new possibilities with agility, courage, and a sense of fun. We take risks, we f-learn (learn through failure), and we innovate with purpose. Creativity is our spark, the tool we use to open doors, challenge norms, and help young people impacted by systemic inequality see a new future for themselves.



Communication

Communication is how we build trust and connection. Through empathetic listening, clear storytelling, and respectful dialogue, we ensure everyone feels heard and understood. We communicate openly and transparently with young people, partners, and each other, because shared understanding leads to shared impact.



Collaboration

We achieve more when we work together. We foster an inclusive environment where every voice matters, every partner adds value, and every young person belongs. Collaboration across education, industry, and community is how we build Ireland's most inclusive innovation pathway and how we help ideas become action.



Commitment

We show up. We take responsibility. And we do what we say we will do. Our commitment extends to young people, to impact, and to continuous improvement. We act with integrity, hold ourselves accountable, and follow through because trust is built one action at a time.

Strategic Themes (2026-2028)

Equity & Access

(Aligned with SD4, SDG10, SDG11)

Ensuring every young person, regardless of background, ability, or context, can access creative thinking skills and develop meaningful networks to thrive.

What this covers:

- Universal access through free, all-class programmes
- Prioritising schools and centres highlighted by the Pobal Deprivation Index
- Flexible delivery for DEIS, DEIS+, TY, Youthreach, LCA & NI
- Inclusion-first accessible design
- Removing barriers to participation
- Measuring equity of progression

Innovation & Digital Transformation

(Aligned with SDG8 & SDG9)

Building a future-ready, tech-enabled, creative innovation pathway that evolves with learners' needs and Ireland's changing landscape.

What this covers:

- Platform V2 with personalised learning and dashboards
- Digital enhancements and AI-supported programme delivery
- Responsible, accessible AI literacy for all learners
- Accelerator pathways and alumni journeys
- Data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement
- R&D cycles and co-design with students, educators, and industry

Collaboration for Impact

(Aligned with SDG17)

Uniting education, industry, and community to drive systemic change that benefits every young person.

What this covers:

- Strategic industry, academic, and government partnerships
- Evolving Mentor integration and social capital access
- Co-created programme content and pathways
- Multi-year and core funding fueling shared investment
- Adaptable teacher supports for inclusive learning
- National visibility and momentum for system-level change

“The B!G Idea project made us realise how indifferent we can sometimes be. Working on our challenge ‘No Poverty’ helped us to be more empathetic. We also learned about the different ways poverty can affect people and that someday in the future we may need the help of an organisation. We will be more mindful of how we can help others in the future.”

Student Team,
Castletroy College, Limerick

Strategic Ambitions (2026-2028)

Our strategic themes reflect more than areas of focus; they capture the kind of organisation we are becoming. They affirm our belief that every young person deserves equitable access to skills and opportunity, that innovation must be responsible, purposeful and inclusive, and that meaningful change happens when education, industry, and community move together with shared intent.

As we look to 2026–2028, these themes shape our ambitions that push us to evolve flexible pathways for diverse learning contexts and needs, strengthen our digital infrastructure to support meaningful scale, and deepen collaboration across sectors. They ground us in the realities of the young people we serve while guiding us toward a purpose-led future where creative thinking is a universal critical skill, a source of confidence, and a gateway to opportunity for every learner, in every part of Ireland.





Equity & Access

Ensuring every young person can participate, progress, and thrive.

1.1

Expand Equitable Access Across Diverse Learning Contexts

Deliver flexible, inclusive programme models across DEIS, DEIS+, TY, Youthreach, LCA and NI so learners of all backgrounds and abilities can engage meaningfully. Increase universal transversal skill learning opportunities tailored to complex learning settings and needs.



Innovation & Digital Transformation

Building the systems, tools, and infrastructure that power scale and personalisation.

2.1

Transform our Digital Infrastructure to Power Personalised Learning

Deliver Platform V2 with real-time visibility, smart processes, personalised learning journeys, and intuitive tools for students, educators, and mentors' use. Integrate AI as an enabler of personalisation, scale, and inclusion.



Collaboration for Impact

Uniting sectors to unlock opportunity, drive innovation, and expand social capital.

3.1

Deepen Cross-Sector Collaboration to Unlock Social Capital

Strengthen partnerships across industry, academia, government, and community to open new opportunities for evidence-based programme development and networks for young people.

1.2**Strengthen Creative Thinking as a Universal Skillset**

Establish creative problem-solving, collaboration, and resilience as core outcomes for every learner through skill development, structured activities, tools, and teacher supports across all programme contexts.

1.3**Build a Seamless Innovation Pathway From Classroom to Opportunity**

Create accessible, supported pathways, from all-class access to deeper mentoring, Accelerator tracks, and long-term alumni support.

2.2**Use Data and Insight to Drive Learning, Adaptation, and Impact**

Strengthen platform customised impact measurement per stakeholder group, increase flexible feedback loops for diverse learner contexts, and AI automation to enhance decision-making, increase engagement, and optimise flexible delivery.

2.3**Embed Continuous Innovation Across Programmes and Operations**

Ringfence time and resources for R&D in programme development. Apply agile, evidence-informed development practices to evolve inclusive content, AI literacy, access points, delivery, partnerships, and digital tools for streamlined operational activities.

3.2**Invest in Organisational Capacity for Sustainable Growth**

Build a resilient organisation with strong systems, governance, a supported team, and develop a multi-year/core funding model that sustains long-term impact. Reduce reliance on annual fundraising cycles by building more predictable, multi-year partnerships and revenue generating income.

3.3**Champion a National Movement for Inclusive Creative Thinking**

Amplify learner voices from all backgrounds with a focus on disadvantaged youth. Utilise partner leadership, and programme insights to position creative thinking at the centre of Ireland's future skills and innovation agenda.

Strategic Enablers

Our strategic enablers support everything we do. We will invest in our people and culture so our team can learn, collaborate, and innovate with confidence. We will maintain strong governance to ensure accountability, transparency, and good decision-making. We will build the resources and capabilities needed for sustainable

delivery, from funding to systems to operational excellence. And we will champion continuous innovation, using evidence, creativity, and new technologies to keep our programmes relevant to young people's needs. Together, these enablers give us the foundation to grow our impact with clarity, quality, and purpose.

Our People

Invest in skills, wellbeing, and inclusive culture so our team can lead, collaborate, and innovate with confidence.

Grow a diverse, purpose-driven workforce and volunteer network reflective of the communities we serve.

Reduce key-person dependency through distributed leadership, shared ownership, and strong internal processes.

Our Governance

Embed strong compliance and accountability, including CRA Governance Code, SORP, safeguarding, GDPR, and accessibility.

Strengthen Board oversight and decision-making through clear policies, risk frameworks, and regular review.

Champion transparency and ethical practice to uphold stakeholder trust and social impact integrity.

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Our Capabilities

Build sustainable financial and operational systems to support resilient, long-term delivery.

Enhance digital and organisational infrastructure for scalable, efficient programme delivery.

Develop consistent, high-quality processes to ensure reliability and continuous improvement across all regions.

Our Innovation

Cultivate a culture of creativity and experimentation across the organisation and programmes.

Use evidence and emerging technologies to evolve our programmes and respond to changing needs.

Collaborate with industry, academia, and communities to shape next-generation learning experiences.

Trust and Governance

As a proud registered charity, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of governance, transparency, and accountability.

The Power Behind the Impact

- Fully adopting the Charities Regulator's Governance Code, embedding best practice across every aspect of how we operate
- Publishing an annual Trustees' Report and independently audited financial statements since our inception, openly available to the public to demonstrate our impact and stewardship
- Following the Charities Regulator's Guidelines on Fundraising, ensuring every euro entrusted to us is used ethically and responsibly
- Maintaining rigorous safeguarding and child-protection policies so every young person we serve is safe, respected, and supported
- Ensuring strong oversight through an experienced, committed Board of Trustees, who guide our mission with integrity, expertise and strategic leadership.

Our Board

Our Board provides strategic oversight, governance, and guidance to ensure The B!G Idea delivers maximum impact with integrity and ambition.

“We empower the next generation to think B!G, act boldly, and create a brighter future through innovation, mentorship, and accessible education for all.”

Joe Hogan,
Chairman, The B!G Idea



A B!G Idea for Ireland's Future

The B!G Idea is building the skills, confidence, and pathways young people need to shape Ireland's future - starting with those most often left behind. We deliver free, inclusive creative thinking education in classrooms across the island of Ireland, paired with deep, structured progression routes that turn potential into real opportunity.

Powered by scalable technology, multi-year partnerships, and a resilient organisation, we are driving systemic change in how creative skills, social capital, and access to networks are developed - ensuring young people from every background can progress with confidence in an uncertain world.

Because one B!G Idea will change their world.

“To solve new problems, we need new ways of thinking and new ideas and methodologies - it's giving students an opportunity to think about problem-solving in a completely new way. I think it's exceptionally important and it's going to lead to great things for the future of the country.”

Neil O'Connor,
Director, Autodesk



Grounded in Evidence. Aligned with Policy. Built for Impact.

Our strategic plan is underpinned by a strong evidence and policy foundation, informed by five years of programme delivery, independent evaluation, and sustained consultation with students, educators, industry, and policymakers.

Our approach responds directly to well-documented inequalities in access to creative skill development and social capital, particularly for young people from disadvantaged communities. It draws on national and international research demonstrating that sustained, inclusive creative education and mentoring can narrow socioeconomic gaps, improve learner outcomes, and strengthen future workforce readiness.

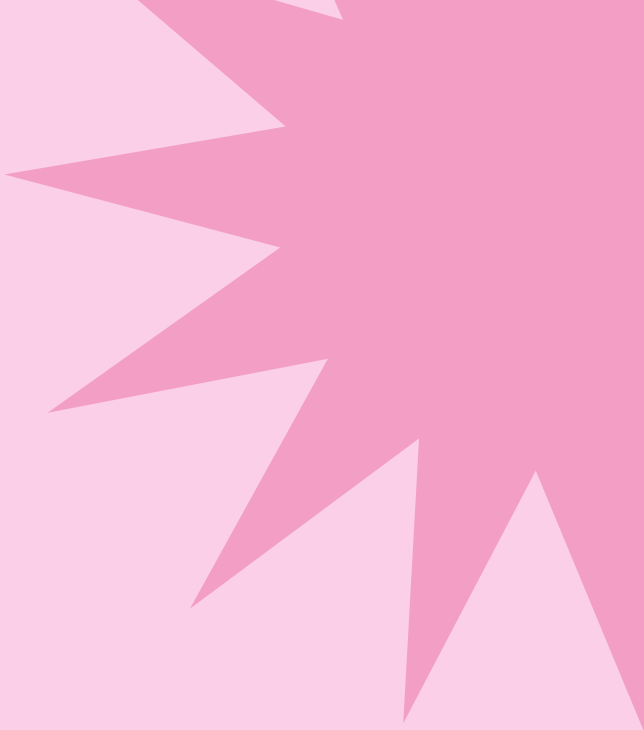
The strategy is explicitly aligned with current Irish Government priorities, including the National AI Strategy for Ireland (2024), Transition Year Programme Statement (2025) the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Impact 2030, and Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025, among many others. Collectively, these frameworks emphasise creativity, adaptability, problem-solving, collaboration, and ethical AI literacy as critical skills for Ireland’s social and economic future.

The convergence of these policy agendas in 2024–2025 creates a unique and time-bound opportunity to implement scaled, inclusive creative education pathways. This strategy positions The BIG Idea to translate policy ambition into practical, equitable delivery - ensuring that young people most at risk of being left behind are equipped not only to participate in Ireland’s future, but to help shape it.

Strategy	What It Calls For	How We Deliver
National AI Strategy for Ireland	Creative thinking as an essential human skill; AI literacy	Foundation creative skills; teach students to use AI creatively
TY Programme Statement 2025	Transversal skills; real-world learning; industry partnerships	All-class creative problem-solving; mentor pods; project-based learning
National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030	Early intervention; progression pathways; parity of esteem	Secondary-to-tertiary bridge; supports both FET and HE routes
SOLAS FET Strategy 2020 -2024 and 2025-2029 Consultation	Youthreach innovation; industry partnerships; progression focus	Co-designed Youthreach model; Accelerator pathways
Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025	Creative problem-solving workforce; inclusive talent pipeline	Builds exact skills employers need; DEIS/Youthreach priority
Impact 2030	Research and innovation addressing challenges modern Ireland faces, both economic and social.	Inclusive, practical skill-stacking that empowers young people to solve a range of current and future national challenges.

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“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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