

CRAFTS CODE Action Plan for Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI)

*Strategic Design Programme for Growth & Innovation
in the Craft Sector*



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Part I – General information

Project: CRAFTS CODE

Partner organisation: Design and Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI)

Country: Ireland

NUTS2 region: Southern Region

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Acronym	Meaning
DCCI	Design and Crafts Council Ireland
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GP	Good Practice
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
NDP	National Development Plan
NPF	National Planning Framework
PI	Policy Instrument
RPO	Regional Policy Objective
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SR	Southern Region
SRA	Southern Regional Assembly

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- ✓ **Other regional development policy instrument**
Policy instrument addressed: The policy instrument addressed by the Design and Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI) as part of the CRAFTS CODE project is the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern region in Ireland. No funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is used for the RSES. Indeed, there is no direct funding behind the RSES; it looks to funding opportunities to achieve the objectives outlined within the strategy.

It is important to note that the policy instrument initially addressed by DCCI as part of this project was the ERDF\ROP 2014/2020 Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programme\TO3-SMEs competitiveness. However, during the first Local Stakeholder Group Meeting in Semester 2, (05 February 2020) the Southern Regional Assembly, recommended that DCCI change the focus of the

project work from Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programme (because it was ending in 2020 with limited to no scope for influence) to instead focus on the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy, published on 31 January 2020. Aligning with the RSES instead could ensure meaningful impact and input on policy development as the RSES runs until 2026.

Despite this change, the objective of DCCI’s work has remained the same throughout the project, the focus being to foster innovation, competitiveness and provide business supports for craft SMES in the Southern Region. The Southern Region is committed to delivering and supporting a ‘Creative and Innovative’ enterprise base demonstrated through the many Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) set out in the RSES. This regional strategy places emphasis on the need to

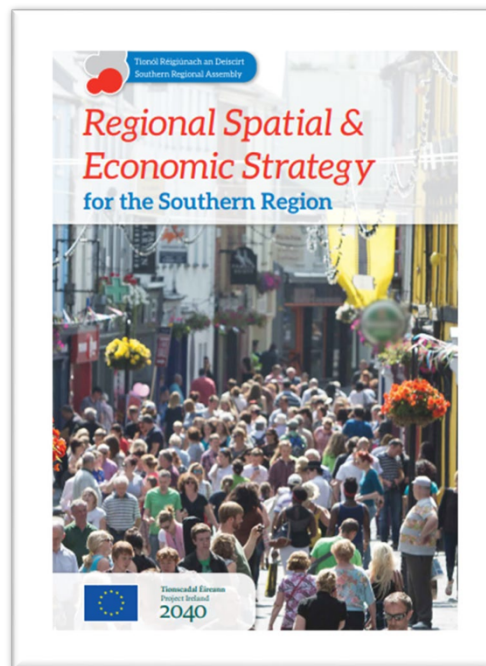


Figure 1: Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 380 page document published in 2020 by the Southern Regional Assembly.

*Source: Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region
<http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>*

‘enable infrastructure for development of the Cultural and Creative Sector’ in the Southern Region, a region which is abundant in vibrant and diverse cultural attributes.

If approved, the implementation of the action outlined in this document will **enhance the governance and implementation of the RSES** for the Southern Region. Through this project partnership, DCCI can identify good practices targeted at improving the competitiveness of craft SMEs from other EU partner regions and introduce them to the Southern Region of Ireland. With a lack of funding behind the RSES, European projects like the CRAFTS CODE initiative are crucial and unique opportunities which act as ‘implementation tools’ which can enhance the policy instrument. DCCI believe the learnings from the CRAFTS CODE Project can particularly have a positive impact and influence in facilitating the implementation of RPO 191: Cultural and Creative Sectors (2020. p.199). This will be achieved through the exchange between all actors involved in this action. All the good results obtained by the implementation of the action will be communicated to the SRA as the policy owner, with the DCCI as the Managing Partner, supported by the Design + Gateway at IT Carlow, and discussed with the Local Enterprise Office as the key stakeholder, for the SRA to consider learnings to inform future decisions with other local actors. There are several RPOs in the RSES dedicated to supporting a more innovative, productive, and creative economy so the impact is not limited to RPO 191. Although initially implemented at a local level, the proposed action will act as a ‘pilot test’ that may lead to a larger regional and national response over time.



Figure 2: Map of Ireland displaying the different Southern regions.

Source: Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region
<http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>



Figure 3: Overview of the Irish Planning System

Source: NPF 2040 <https://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

The Southern Regional Assembly

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) is one of the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland, working with key stakeholders at an EU, national, regional, and local level to support effective regional development in Ireland. ¹

The main functions of the SRA include:

- Regional, economic, and spatial planning
- The management of European Regional Development Funding
- Development, implementation and promotion of regional development policy and activities
- Acting as the national contact point for EU-funded transnational programmes
- The Assembly coordinates actions to support effectiveness in Local Government and public services

¹ In Ireland, the National Planning Framework (NPF) is a national document that guides at a high-level strategic planning and development for the country over the next 20+ years, so that as the population grows, that growth is sustainable (in economic, social, and environmental terms). The NPF with the National Development Plan (NDP) sets the context for each of Ireland’s three regional to develop their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies considering and co-ordinating with local authority County and City Development Plans in a manner that will ensure national, regional and local plans align. Following the publication of the NPF, the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland were tasked with articulating and implementing the national objectives at regional level.

SRA Vision: A Region that is economically strong, inclusive, connected, climate-resilient and sustainable.

SRA Mission: To be the leader of regional development through effective, sustainable spatial planning and the delivery of EU Programmes, with the support of our stakeholders.



Figure 4: Southern Regional Assembly based in Waterford.

The Policy Instrument (RSES) and the Southern Region

On 31 January 2020, the Southern Regional Assembly published its Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region (SR). The RSES – for the first time – brings together spatial planning and economic policy providing a strategic framework for investment in the Southern Region; marking a significant policy milestone for regional government in Ireland.[1]

The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future economic and social development of the SR, with the RSES aiming to ensure that the SR will become one of Europe’s most **Liveable**, **Greenest** and **Creative & Innovative** regions, allowing it to achieve effective regional development as envisioned in the National Planning Framework (NPF). In doing so, the RSES sets the framework for each Local Authority within the SR to develop their county and city development plans in a manner that will ensure national, regional, and local plans align. The RSES vision for the Southern Region is led by the need for transformative change. By 2040, the population of the Region is targeted to grow by 380,000 people to reach almost 2 million, requiring homes and new jobs. To achieve the spatial objectives set out in the NPF, the Southern Regional Assembly’s RSES recognises the strategic role played by all areas in achieving set regional and national targets and objectives. It establishes a broad framework to manage the future in a productive and sustainable way, a planned way in which our society, environment, economy, and the use of land can evolve.



Figure 5: 11 Regional Strategic Objectives that frame the RSES.

Source: Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

<http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>

The Southern Region is committed to delivering and supporting a ‘Creative and Innovative’ enterprise base demonstrated through the many Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) set out in the RSES. Chapter 7, 7.2-7.2.2 ‘Cultural Heritage and the Arts’ of the RSES (2020, p. 199-200) highlights the need to ‘enable infrastructure for development of the Cultural and Creative Sector’ in the Southern Region. The Region is abundant in vibrant and diverse cultural attributes across its cities, towns, rural areas, and islands which can be seen in the art galleries, museums, theatres along with our Gaeltacht areas and the festivals which bring great life and colour to many locations. The Kilkenny region has long been associated with design in Ireland and is recognised in the RSES as one of 14 key towns identified as strategically located urban centres with accessibility and significant influence in a sub-regional context.

A distinctive craft sector exists in Kilkenny today and a great number of craft SMEs are in this region. As far back as the 1960s, in Ireland’s bid for accession into Europe, design and craft was identified as an element that would be internationally recognised and that it could be easily leveraged as a key export. The Kilkenny design workshops were identified as the founding to

Ireland’s industrial development. The Crafts Council of Ireland, now the Design & Crafts Council Ireland was established in Kilkenny in 1971 and based in the Castle Yard in Kilkenny, DCCI is now the main champion of the design and craft industry in Ireland, fostering its growth and commercial strength, communicating its unique identity, and stimulating quality design, innovation, and competitiveness. DCCI’s vision is that Ireland is recognised and valued for its culture of Design and Craft. To raise the standard, profile and economic impact of Irish Design and Craft, DCCI provides a range of programmes, supports and services for Designers and Craftspeople, learners, and teachers, retailers and gallerists, shoppers, collectors, media and partner organisations.[2] DCCI is in partnership with the CRAFTS CODE project, as this initiative very much aligns with DCCI’s vision, mission and values outlined in their new strategy for 2022-2026 (published in August 2021).[2] Working on European projects like this, allows DCCI to boost the visibility of Irish crafts and design internationally, which in turn drives the commercial development of the sector. European projects also enable us to foster strong relationships with EU partners, allowing Ireland access to EU funding opportunities. The organisation’s strong EU link provides access to good practice knowledge which can be transferred, and this positions us strongly to support the Southern Region’s creative sector and make a positive impact at policy

level.



The action outlined in this document, which is a strategically designed programme to stimulate innovation in craft SMEs will provide a framework that will help facilitate the implementation of several RSES RPOs including (but not limited to) RPO 191: Cultural and Creative Sectors (2020. p.199).

Figure 6: RPO 191: Cultural and Creative Sectors

Source: *Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (2020, p.199)*.

<http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>

The programme which will be developed by design strategists at Design + Technology Gateways at the Institute of Technology Carlow, directly responds to this objective because in collaboration with key regional stakeholders, it will assist in providing growth and innovation within creative enterprises based in the Southern Region and in return, help develop a “vibrant cultural and creative sector in the region.” To date, despite the fast-growing craft and design sector in Ireland and the Southern Region, there has been no similar support and guidance dedicated to the unique requirements of this sector. This programme will connect craft businesses to a network of innovation development supports to ensure their continued growth. It will help craft SMEs to identify their business innovation strategy which can then be communicated through their strategic roadmap. The craft SME/business owner will then be equipped with a clear rationale, improved viability, and confidence in future business endeavours.

The main aim of the action is to impact on the policy instrument addressed through a change on the way the strategy is implemented. With a successful implementation of the action carried out in one territory (Kilkenny and/or Cork), the SRA as policy owner can support and encourage the wider roll-out of this action to other realities (local authorities, agencies, etc.) to thus helping to reach and widening RSES **objectives**.

Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement

As the project has progressed the SRA have become increasingly involved as stakeholders as it has become more apparent that learnings from the project will directly support delivering on certain Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) thereby improving the policy instrument and helping deliver the overarching ambition of becoming the most **Liveable**, **Greenest** and **Creative & Innovative** region. The implementation and oversight of the RSES delivery of the Economic Strategy offers the potential to promote place-based innovation priorities.

The RSES will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and state agencies through collaboration with key stakeholders to deliver on this vision and build a cohesive and sustainable region. This policy instrument affirms the commitment of the Southern Region to the implementation of a broad and diverse enterprise base inclusive of the crafts sector through the economic strategy in alignment with relevant regional policy. The economic vision for the

Southern Region is to enable sustainable, competitive, inclusive, and resilient growth requiring the development of a strong and diverse economic base. Key to achieving this is recognising and building on the Region's strengths and competitive advantages such as the regions cultural and heritage assets.

There is no direct funding behind the RSES, and it looks to funding opportunities to achieve the objectives outlined within the strategy. EU projects such as CRAFTS CODE have proven to be very effective implementation tools and the SRA will work with DCCI and relevant stakeholders to inform and monitor the change to ensure it enhances the RSES and adds value to the region.

Further to ongoing local stakeholder discussions, the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) was identified as the most relevant stakeholder to collaborate with DCCI to inform, fund and implement this action. No specific policy under which this programme will be financed has been defined; the costs to be incurred with the implementation of the action will be internalised in the current activities of the LEO. Funded by Enterprise Ireland, LEOs provide accessible financial supports for businesses in each local authority in Ireland (31 throughout Ireland). DCCI's activities are also funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation via Enterprise Ireland and DCCI has significant experience in devising and delivering collaborative innovation projects with the Local Enterprise Office. Assuming that this action is approved, the success of this programme will open the opportunity to roll out to other counties through the support of the LEO network. LEOs have witnessed the previous success of a similar innovation programme with other sectors which act as a stimulus for innovation and further development supports such as feasibility studies, business expansions and export opportunities.

At an online meeting between DCCI and Kilkenny LEO on 17 January 2022, Kilkenny LEO expressed great interest in implementing this innovation programme for craft SMEs as they intend on incorporating more innovation into the support they provide. Cork City LEO also showed interest when the action was presented in a meeting with DCCI on 20 January 2022. In the past two years, Design+ Technology Gateways, have successfully delivered (more than 70) similar cross sector innovation programmes to SMEs through the Local Enterprise Office in Ireland. However, to date there has been no similar support and guidance dedicated to the unique requirements of the crafts sector. The foundations of this design methodology programme are very apt and transferable for

the craft sector but considering the specific requirements of the crafts sector the intent is to further develop and tailor this programme, to make it more specific to craft SMEs. Kilkenny LEO are running a cross sector programme later this year, and the completion of that programme will determine the implementation of the proposed action, a bespoke innovation programme for craft SMEs. Cork North and West LEO are similarly running a cross sector innovation programme beginning in May 2022. The intention is to enrol craft businesses in this strategically designed programme to provide insight on what elements need to be refined to further suit craft sector.

LEOs have no legal binding agreement to implement or fund this programme but it is in their best interest to do so. Enterprise Ireland's Strategy 2022-2024, 'Leading in a Changing World' outlines how Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs are committed to working together, to ensure that 'companies of all sizes are provided with a flexible model of service in response to their growth and development needs is most welcome.' (2022, p.6) [3]. The SRA and the LEOs work as catalysts together, sharing the same visions to help improve the Southern Region. The RSES was developed through an extensive consultation process, Enterprise Ireland inclusive of the relevant LEOs were key stakeholders in the development of the RSES taking part in the consultation phase to inform and provide direction to the RSES.

In considering the innovation programme as a response to our regional policy objective, it is important to highlight that whilst a single programme (with 10 craft companies per programme) begins as a transactional response, it also forms the beginning of regional network for innovation supports. These include the regional Local Enterprise Offices (9 in the South-East and South-West Region), Design+ Technology Gateways, (4 in our region all connected to the programme design) and the craft participants network through DCCI (DCCI has over 3,500 registered craft clients). It is envisioned that the network elements in the programme contribute directly to building and strengthening the regional innovation capacity. In using a strategic design response, the aim is to also consider the longer-term transformational impacts that the programme can introduce to the craft companies and the embedding of longer-term cultural change.

Building our regional innovation capacity and delivering engagements with transformational impacts are two key policy objectives which we aim to address through the innovation

programme which will be developed through the identified needs and insights gained throughout the CRAFTS CODE initiative.

Due to the size and variation of the Southern Region, the Kilkenny region has been identified as the main target area to deliver the programme. As previously noted, a distinctive craft sector exists in Kilkenny today and a great number of craft SMEs are in this region therefore through local stakeholder engagement it was decided that this area would act as a 'pilot area' or foundation site that could lead a larger regional and national response over time.

Needs Addressed

From the project learning activities and SWOT analysis carried out during phase 1, specific territorial needs have been identified. DCCI has operated throughout the learning phase to address these needs accordingly and identify possible actions which will improve the situation whilst having tangible impacts at local level.

Ireland's position as a small economy means that Irish enterprise realising opportunities in both the Irish and global markets is essential for our economic prosperity. Enterprise must evolve and keep pace with global markets, changing customer needs, the accelerating influence of digitalisation and the transition to a low carbon economy. [3]

The Southern Region faces significant challenges in terms of recent rises in unemployment because of the Covid pandemic. The regional unemployment rate was 5.5% in 2019. [4] However, following the pandemic, the unemployment rate grew to 6.4% by the end of 2020. [5]. The region still records the highest rate in the country, remaining above the national average (5.7%), but below the EU level (7.3%). In response to major economic challenges, such as COVID-19 and Brexit, there is a need for the region to drive structural transformation and enhance local capabilities to make the region's economy fit for the future and ensure long-term inclusive prosperity. These challenges have especially intensified problems already faced by the crafts sector and fast action is required to

provide concrete support to creative businesses, particularly micro-SMEs, who are struggling.

The publication of ‘Winning by Design’ report by the Irish government in 2018 marks the clear linking of design and innovation by the Irish State [6]. Design was recognised as a process of innovation and design thinking as a strategic tool for innovative business development. Increasing the competitiveness of Irish enterprise through strengthened innovation and capability will underpin sustained growth in Ireland and on world markets. ‘Winning by Design’ is a strategic document for the future of Ireland’s workforce, and it is quick to address the necessity of building a reputation as dynamic and having an adaptive workforce. It presents that the adaptability of an organization to change goes hand in hand with innovation. The requirements for the past production-based economy were steeped in uniformity, repetition, and efficiency: however, a knowledge-based economy requires critical thinkers and a new approach to achieve innovation for future growth. In 2021 further development of this strategy was introduced through the Together for Design report, and a latent and industry driven need for the development of strategic design supports was identified [7]. Innovation through design and adaptability to change are embedded in Ireland’s future strategies for growth.

However, there are challenges surrounding craft SMEs owners/managers capacity to innovate and develop growth strategies as it is often limited to operations and production. Craft companies need support in introducing strategy planning structures to their existing models. The Southern Region of Ireland possesses strong cultural and creative sectors, and it is important to take a strategic approach to promote, support and further develop these sectors and it is evident that a strong effort at governmental level is required. There is a great desire to apply possible fast and working solutions learned within the CRAFTS CODE project within the Southern Region and it is recognised that this opportunity to improve the region is unique and is only possible because of DCCI’s participation in this European project. To begin with, there is a need to see evidence of the potential transformational impacts that strategic design and innovation can have in the Southern Region context which will potentially result in longer-term cultural change.

[1] Southern Regional Assembly (2020) *Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for Southern Region*. <http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>

[2] KPMG Global Strategy Group (August 2021) *Design & Crafts Council Ireland Strategy 2022-2027* https://issuu.com/craftscouncilofireland/docs/dcci_eia_report_august_2021

[3] Project Ireland 2040 (2018) <https://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

[4] Enterprise Ireland (2022) *Enterprise Ireland | Strategy 2022-2024 Leading in a changing world* <https://strategy2022.enterprise-ireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Leading-in-a-changing-world-Strategy-2022-2024.pdf>

[5] Eurostat (2021) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

[6] Central Statistics Office (2021) <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications>

[7] National Skills Council. (2018, June 19). *Winning by Design*. Retrieved from Expert Group on Future Skills Needs: Skills Ireland. <http://www.skillsireland.ie/all-publications/2017/winning%20by%20design.pdf>

[8] EGFSN. (2020). *Together for Design*. Dublin: Expert Group on Future Skills Needs: <http://www.egfsn.ie/expert-group-on-future-skill-group/all-publications/2020/together-for-design.pdf>

The present document is the result of the work carried out during the 3 years of CRAFTS CODE project development (phase 1).

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

TITLE OF ACTION:

Strategic Design Programme for Growth & Innovation in the Craft Sector

1. Action description

The action is a bespoke strategically designed programme, developed by stakeholder Design+ Technology Gateway based at the Institute of Technology Carlow, specifically to stimulate innovation in Irish craft SMEs. The proposed programme will consist of a series of targeted workshops (6 masterclasses 2 hours long, final session 1-to-1 between expert and the participant) which will guide craft businesses through a strategic design process utilising a specific design tool kit.

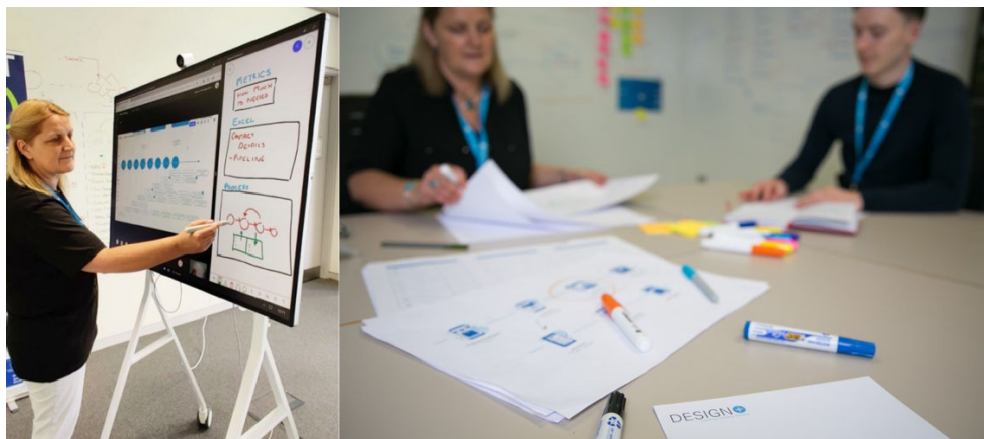


Figure 7& 8: Design team at Design+ Technology Gateways

Source: Design+ Technology Gateways at the Institute of Technology, Carlow

The design strategy team at Design + will develop the toolkit informed by learnings of the project and it will be a combination business tools, design tools and tools newly developed by the team which respond to identified business needs. The tools are infographic prompts which come in a mixed media format of digital and hardcopy, and they ensure the thinking is being challenged at each step of the way and that all things are being considered. The tools differ from templates in that they are flexible and can be used in different ways unlike a template which is predefined. The result is organisations which are nimble and quick to adapt utilising an innovation process which will assist in identifying new opportunities and evaluating ideas for improved viability. The innovation toolkit is suitable for all organisations from all sectors whether they have an existing

idea or whether they are approaching with no specific ideas for innovation yet. This process will open the possibilities and opportunities surrounding organisations within their business ecosystem.

Design and Craft businesses will be supported and guided in the development and generation of new ideas and evaluate them through usability, feasibility, and viability to support decision making. This will result in the development of new products/service, new markets, and new ways of doing things for the SME participant.

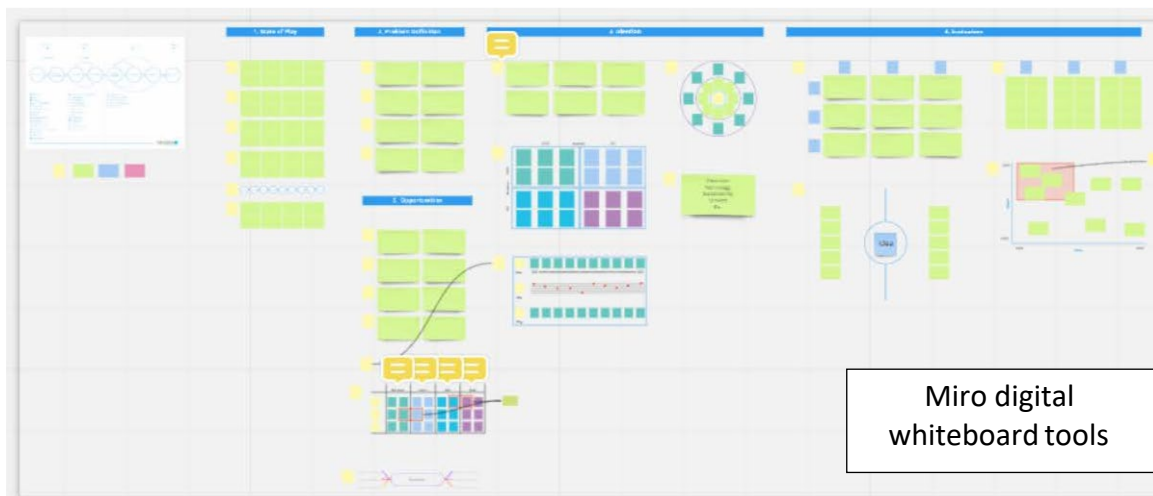


Figure 9: Digital tools which will be incorporated into the innovation programme

Source: Design+ Technology Gateways at the Institute of Technology, Carlow

A tailored ‘strategic-roadmap’ for growth and innovation, with clear steps to implementation, will be developed for each craft business that participates. The programme will connect craft businesses to a network of innovation development supports to ensure each businesses’ continued growth. Peer exchange and further support providers, such as LEO grant specialists, researchers in Technology Gateways, or other experts in specific fields will be key components of the programme. By following this process, craft SMEs will identify their business innovation strategy which can then be communicated through their strategic roadmap. This programme will equip that craft SME/business owner with a clear rationale, improved viability, and confidence in their next steps.

In the past two years, Design+ Technology Gateways, have successfully delivered (more than 70) similar cross sector innovation programmes to SMEs through the Local Enterprise Office in Ireland.

However, to date there has been no similar support and guidance dedicated to the unique requirements of the crafts sector. The foundations of this design methodology programme are very apt and transferable for the craft sector but considering the specific requirements of the crafts sector the intent is to further develop and tailor this programme, to make it more specific to craft SMEs.

The CRAFTS CODE project has provided a unique opportunity to enhance the governance and implementation of the RSES and RPO 19 - with no dedicated funding behind the RSES this presents a timely opportunity to mobilise stakeholders and implement this important action dedicated to the needs of the creative sector in the Southern Region. This action incorporates strategic design approaches which are recognised by the Irish and regional government as promoting industry growth through innovation and developing adaptability to change. Therefore, this programme will actively help improve the implementation of RSES RPO 191 which aims to develop the creative sector as a key enabler for enterprise growth and innovation and ultimately support the ambition of becoming the most Liveable, Greenest and Creative and Innovative Region in Europe. The concrete impact would be on the way the policy instrument (RSES) is implemented, in the sense that the policy owner will be able to encourage and support the initiative further, thanks to the results obtained by the action here proposed, and mobilise other local authorities and stakeholders to replicate the action also in other regional territories.

The programme has been inspired by more than one good practice it has learned about from other CRAFTS CODE regions. It has been inspired by the Murate Idea Park (MIP) programme, which was presented by our lead partner, Comune di Firenze in Italy at the 1st Interregional Thematic Seminar on the 12 and 13 May 2020. It has also been greatly influenced by D-Tool which was presented by our Spanish partner, Fundesarte at the 3rd Interregional Thematic Seminar on the 10 and 11 May 2021.

2. The background

Based on the 2021 national government report 'Together for Design', one of the identified needs of the craft sector, and those who are involved in solving complex business problems, was business and management skills. This was further evidenced throughout the CRAFTS CODE stakeholders' meetings by craft sector representatives. As an example, Eric McGuire from McGuire Diamonds,

jewellery designer, presented to the group on 26th Feb 2021 and discussed the challenges faced in innovating when you are a singular owner/manager with limited capacity. Eric had sought out external supports in strategic design which identified appropriate technology solutions which enabled significant growth in his business which resulted in securing €40,000 in a business expansion grant. Alison Power from Mohu Design also presented to the stakeholder group on 26th Feb 2021 and contributed to multiple additional stakeholder meetings. Alison had also sought external supports through strategic design, to identify opportunities for distribution improvements. Alison developed a strategic roadmap with steps to implementation for a new supply chain and business model to bring a specialized product to mainstream retail.

The area of strategic design encompasses a broad and holistic approach that can be applied to the creative sector. In the CRAFTS CODE context, the initial consideration for the Action Plan by the Irish partners was to explore D-Tool as a best practice model to apply to the crafts sector as it utilises a design approach. D-Tool, designed by the Asociación de Diseñadores de la Comunidad Valenciana, ADVC (Association of Designers of the Valencian Community) in collaboration with the Agencia Valenciana de la Innovación (Valencian Innovation Agency) was presented by Fundesarte, CRAFTS CODE's Spanish partner at the 3rd Interregional Thematic Seminar held online on 10 and 11 May 2021. It is a self-assessment tool for businesses that evaluates the level of usage of design in one's business model. It then recommends steps to be taken to include more design in the business and accordingly make it more efficient and well-designed.

This evaluation tool prompted DCCI and its stakeholders to consider how this could be incorporated and presented a starting point and potential means of taking a design approach to support RSES RPO 191. Bilateral exchanges were difficult during this period with continuous COVID-19 restrictions, nonetheless progress was made by engaging in online discussions. Between May and December 2021, DCCI and the local stakeholders group took part in many online meetings to discuss the principles of D-Tool and its potential here in the context of the Southern Region. The group were particularly impressed with the simple survey approach taken by ADCV (who developed D-tool) to test design in businesses. DCCI and the stakeholders however felt the need to take this effective tool a step further, to build upon this good practice and develop and implement an entire innovation programme (like the Murate Idea Park programme implemented in Italy), which would incorporate D-tool.

The Murate Idea Park (MIP) programme identifies and introduces a mentor that counsels the entrepreneur on acquisition of knowledge, perspective, and social skills, guiding the mentee along

complex decision-making phases. Mentorship starts at early stages of a new business formation, this is a long-term trusted relationship, in which the mentee will lead the relationship, inviting the mentor to assist in working through difficult decisions. The MIP delivers valuable advantages to start-up organisations by imparting new skills and support for personal and professional growth, in turn developing future leaders. In Italy, the results of this programme have been staggeringly successful, as evidenced by the maturity of the business propositions and successful execution of the resulting business plans. In online meetings between May and December 2021, it was identified that the objectives of this good practice aligned with the objectives of DCCI's proposed action to improve the RSES for the Southern Regions.

The 4th Interregional Thematic Seminar (ITS) on the 18 and 19 November 2021, hosted in hybrid format by our Spanish partner Fundesarte in Madrid, provided a platform to further consider these good practices, particularly to extract more information from Fundesarte who had previously presented D-Tool. Alongside DCCI, one of the Irish stakeholders, Lynne Whelan, Senior Design Strategist at Design+ Technology Gateway attended the 4th ITS. Lynne had some previous experience with D-Tool application and could discuss with the international partners, the possible frameworks through which the principles of D-Tool could be applied. At this two-day seminar, DCCI and Lynne had the opportunity to learn how the Spanish Partner's good practice had taken the Danish Design Ladder and developed a questionnaire which would result in a positioning on the Ladder, the combined questionnaire approach and Design Ladder positioning formed the D-Tool basis.

After the 4th ITS, many emails were exchanged between Design+ and DCCI and bi-lateral online meetings were held on 14 and 21 December and 11 January 2022. Lynne Whelan, and the manager of the Design+ Technology Gateway, Richard Whyte considered ways in which D-Tool would support the aims of the CRAFTS CODE initiative and meet the policy objectives. A consensus was reached to further develop this best practice with the aim to introduce a specific action, modelled on the MIP programme, which would not only measure the application of design within an organisation, but also work towards introducing and supporting design at a strategic level within craft SMEs.

3. Players involved



Organisation: Design and Crafts council

Contact: Brian McGee

Role: EU Projects Manager

- Support and liaison in relation to the approach and outcomes of policy impacts
- Work with the support of SRA on the action where appropriate, taking on an advisory and governance role and support the Local Enterprise Office and other stakeholders involved to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the RSES objectives by replicating the action in other local contexts in the region.

Owner of the policy instrument addressed, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES):



Organisation: Southern Regional Assembly

Contact: Karen Coughlan

Role: EU Projects Officer

- Support and liaison in relation to the approach and outcomes of policy impacts
- Work with DCCI on the action where appropriate, taking on an advisory and governance role and support the Local Enterprise Office and other stakeholders involved to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the RSES objectives by encouraging the replication of the action in other local contexts in the region.

Supporting agency who will design and coordinate the programme:

Organisation: Design+ Technology Gateways Institute of Technology Carlow

Contact: Lynne Whelan

Role: Senior Design Strategist

- Assistance with development of Action Plan
- Design of 'Strategic Design for Innovation' programme specifically for craft sector
- Development of appropriate materials required for programme to include strategic/innovation toolkits for participants and digital whiteboard software for participant use.
- Delivery of programme through a series of facilitated workshops over a specified timeframe.
- Participation in final networking event, preparation, and presentation of certificates of participation.
- Links to follow on support through the Technology Gateway network required for development of new ideas opportunities and innovation because of the programme.

Stakeholder who intends on launching, funding, and implementing this programme:

Organisation: Local Enterprise Office

Contact: Padraic McEllwee,

Role: Head of Enterprise Clare LEO



- Review of craft business performance on LEO run Innovate programme
- Evaluation of the craft specific programme proposal
- Consideration of funding allocations to craft specific programme proposal to be run in partnership with the LEO network (Q3 2022)

4. Activities and Timing

Number	Brief description of activity	Envisaged Timing
1	Develop the programme response for 'Strategic design for Innovation' specifically for the craft sector. To be developed by the Design+ Technology Gateway in Institute of Technology Carlow – Role's review, criteria for selection, timescales, supports, materials, toolkit development, workshop design, metrics for success factors, network development, network event etc.	Feb - Aug 2022
2	Funding development - further in-depth discussions with Local Enterprise Office network, to support their evaluation of running a craft specific programme including criteria, payment terms, deliverables etc.	Mar - Jul 2022
3	Feedback from De Bruir craft SME who participated in strategic design approaches for innovation through a similar programme designed by Design+ Technology Gateway. This will provide insight on what elements need to be refined to further suit craft sector.	April – Jun 2022
4	Marketing & Recruitment phase- Materials, outreach, selection criteria. Have agreement from LEO on support for craft specific programme proposal	May - Aug 2022
5	If agreed Programme outline confirmed for Q1 / Q2 2023 (8 – 10 craft SMEs)	Sept- Dec 2022
6	Final Networking event (hosted by DCCI), for the purpose of peer exchange and support exchange between experts such as LEO grant specialists, researchers in Technology Gateways and innovation programme participant.	Nov 2022
	Develop and circulate 'Participant of innovation programme' review (a total of 8-10 participant review surveys)	Jun 2023
	Analysis of programme with reference to policy objectives and CRAFTSCODE initiatives	Jun 2023

	Monitoring of implementation activities related to the Action proposed and gathering of results, including possibilities for replicating the initiatives with a larger group of SMEs, also in other territories	Jan-Jul 2023
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5. Costs and Funding (if relevant)

Description of the identified costs	Cost (insert the estimated amount)	Funding source
Programme Design and Implementation	25,000	TBC Local Enterprise Office - The costs to be incurred with the implementation of the action will be internalised in the current activities of the LEO.

6. Monitoring and indicators

Self-defined performance indicator could include:

- One finalised toolkit
- Gather feedback from 2 craft SMEs who will partake in strategic design approaches for innovation through a similar programme designed by Design+ Technology Gateway. This will provide insight on what elements need to be refined to further suit craft sector.
- One final networking event for the purpose of peer exchange and support exchange between experts such as LEO grant specialists, researchers in Technology Gateways and innovation programme participant.
- Have 8-10 number of craft SME's signed up by end of phase 2 to take part
- Circulate and analyse a total of 8-10 participant review surveys
- One final report detailing Analysis of programme with reference to policy objectives and CRAFTSCODE initiatives – this will inform the future direction and success of the design + programme developed for the craft sector

Date	20/06/2022
<p>Signature</p> <p><i>Ensure from the very beginning of your Action Plan drafting that the Policy Owner is fully committed to the proposed policy improvement. They are the ones that are supposed to SIGN this document (once it is validated by the Joint Secretariat).</i></p>	
<p>Stamp of the organisation (if available):</p>	