

EDGE26

IRELAND'S CREATIVE
ECONOMY SUMMIT

SUMMIT REPORT

INSIGHTS, OUTCOMES
AND NEXT STEPS

PUBLISHED JUNE 2026

**Building Momentum for
Ireland's Creative Economy**



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchlistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Tuaiscirt & an Iarthair
Northern & Western
Regional Assembly



Enterprise
Ireland

LEAD PATRON



Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Atlantaigh

Atlantic
Technological
University

WHERE
**CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES,
TECHNOLOGY
& ENTERPRISE
CONVERGE**



CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Looking Back, Looking Forward | 4 |
| 2 | EDGE26 By The Numbers | 5 |
| 3 | Why EDGE26 Matters | 6 |
| 4 | A Strategy In Action | 7 |
| 5 | Key Insights & Strategic Implications | 8 |
| 6 | From Momentum To Scale | 10 |
| 7 | Building Momentum | 11 |
| 8 | The Conversation Continues | 12 |
| 9 | Patrons, Partners & Collaborators | 14 |
| 10 | About CREW | 16 |
| 11 | Resources | 17 |

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

From Vision To Action

In May 2025, approximately one year after opening the CREW Enterprise & Innovation Hub, CREW launched its five-year strategy, Where Creativity Means Business.

The strategy set out an ambitious vision for supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and growth across the digital creative industries, while positioning the West and North West as a globally recognised centre for creative enterprise.

Founded by Atlantic Technological University and the Western Development Commission, CREW was established to strengthen the creative economy of the region. EDGE26 reflected that long-term ambition and the continued commitment of our founders, partners and supporters to building a thriving ecosystem for creative enterprise.

Bringing together more than 350 delegates, 34 speakers and 30 startup and SME exhibitors, the summit created a platform for meaningful discussion about the future of Ireland's creative economy and the role this region can play in shaping it.

One of the outcomes from EDGE26, was a research report commissioned by CREW, From Momentum to Scale, which explores opportunities for future growth across the West and North West.

**Áit a bhfuil tionscail
chruthaitheachta,
teicneolaíocht agus
fiontraíocht fite fuaite
ina chéile**

More importantly, EDGE26 demonstrated the value of bringing together industry, enterprise, education, research and government around a shared ambition. Throughout the day, conversations focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, internationalisation, talent development and the opportunities emerging across the creative economy.



The CREW team at EDGE26 at Dexcom Stadium, Galway

EDGE26 was never intended to be simply a one-day event. It was designed to strengthen connections, inform future action and help create the conditions required for long-term growth across the sector.

My sincere thanks to our patrons, partners, speakers, exhibitors, attendees, Board, Advisory Board and the wider CREW community whose support made EDGE26 possible.

The opportunity now is scale.

Niamh Costello
CEO, CREW

EDGE26

BY THE NUMBERS



**IRELAND, EUROPE
& UNITED STATES
REPRESENTED**

25
Volunteers

1045
Digital Creative
Companies
Identified
Regionally

350+
Delegates

20
Patrons

34
Speakers

30
Startup &
SME Exhibitors

150+
Hotel Room
Nights
Generated

€125,000+
Estimated Direct
Expenditure
Associated
with EDGE26*



*Estimate based on event delivery expenditure together with delegate accommodation and visitor spending in Galway.

WHY EDGE26 MATTERS

EDGE26 brought together stakeholders from across the creative economy ecosystem, creating space for collaboration, knowledge exchange and future partnership development.



INDUSTRY

Founders, SMEs, creative enterprises and industry leaders sharing insights, challenges and opportunities for growth.



EDUCATION & RESEARCH

Universities, researchers, educators and students, including representatives from Atlantic Technological University and University of Galway, helping shape future talent, innovation and knowledge creation.



POLICY & GOVERNMENT

Government representatives, agencies and regional stakeholders exploring how policy can support sector growth and competitiveness.



INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Speakers and delegates from Ireland, Europe and the United States contributing global insights, networks and market perspectives.

“EDGE26 was streets ahead of many conferences I’ve attended, both in Ireland and internationally. The energy in the room was palpable from start to finish.

What stood out most was the calibre of the discussion. The conversations were grown-up, honest and forward-looking, focused not just on the creative work itself but on the investment, infrastructure and long-term thinking needed to build a thriving creative economy. That shift in focus felt both exactly right and long overdue.

Most importantly, EDGE brought together an incredible mix of people who might not otherwise have shared a room, and the connections made throughout the day will continue to deliver value long after the event itself. A remarkable achievement for a first edition, and a hugely exciting sign of what’s to come.”

- Summit Attendee

One of EDGE26’s greatest strengths was the diversity of perspectives represented. By bringing together stakeholders from across industry, education, research, policy and international markets, the summit created space for meaningful conversation, new connections and future collaboration.

A STRATEGY IN ACTION

Delivering CREW's Strategy 2025–2029

CREW's Strategy 2025–2029, Where Creativity Means Business / An áit a gcasann Cruthaitheacht le Gnó, is built around four strategic pillars designed to support the growth and international competitiveness of the digital creative industries. EDGE26 provided a practical demonstration of these priorities in action.

PILLAR 1

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

- Startup & Creative Technology Showcase
- Founder Stories & Entrepreneur Panels
- New Business Connections
- Innovation-led Discussions

PILLAR 2

Enhancing Infrastructure & Resources

- Knowledge Sharing
- Ecosystem Building
- Regional Collaboration
- Sector Visibility

PILLAR 3

Industry Growth & Internationalisation

- International Speakers
- Global Market Perspectives
- Cross-Border Collaboration
- International Networks

PILLAR 4

Capacity for Continuing Impact

- Whitepaper Launch
- Policy Engagement
- Research & Evidence
- Long-Term Sector Development



KEY INSIGHTS & STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

What EDGE26 Told Us About the Future of the Creative Economy

Across keynote presentations, panel discussions, startup showcases and networking conversations, several consistent messages emerged about the future direction of the creative economy.

MESSAGE

The Opportunity Now Is Scale

The foundations have been built. The next challenge is supporting growth and international competitiveness.

Creative Industries Drive Innovation

Creativity is increasingly influencing innovation across technology, healthcare, education, tourism, media and enterprise.

AI Is Reshaping Creative Enterprise

AI is transforming creative practice, production, business models and competitiveness.

WHY IT MATTERS

Continued investment in leadership capability, innovation and internationalisation will be critical to unlocking the sector's next phase of growth.

Creative industries are becoming an important driver of innovation, competitiveness and value creation across multiple sectors.

Building AI literacy, capability and responsible adoption will be essential for future competitiveness.

MESSAGE

Global Connections Create Regional Opportunity

International collaboration, market access and knowledge exchange were recurring themes.

Stronger Alignment is Required

Speakers consistently pointed to the need for closer collaboration across enterprise, education, research and government.

WHY IT MATTERS

Future growth will depend on both regional capability and strong international networks and routes to market.

Unlocking the sector's full potential will require coordinated action, evidence-based policy and targeted investment.

“The scale of opportunity within Ireland’s creative industries is significant, and supporting ambitious Irish creative enterprises to grow internationally is a key priority.”

- Minister Alan Dillon



FROM MOMENTUM TO SCALE

Commissioned by CREW and prepared by UrbanLab at the University of Galway, the report *From Momentum to Scale* was developed to provide an evidence base for discussion at EDGE26 and to better understand the scale and characteristics of the digital creative industries in the West and North West.

KEY FINDINGS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>1045 Digital Creative Companies Active in the Region</p> | <p>WELL ESTABLISHED REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM FOR THE DIGITAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES</p> |  |  |
|  | <p>SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE REGION TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION WITHIN THE GLOBAL DIGITAL CREATIVE ECONOMY</p> | <p>50%+ Growth in Employment Across Selected Sectors</p> | |

ROADMAP TO 2036

The report explores opportunities and considerations for the continued development of the digital creative industries across the West and North West. It highlights areas for future collaboration, investment and strategic focus, helping to inform conversations about the sector’s potential to 2036.

WHY IT MATTERS

The research provides an up-to-date picture of the scale and characteristics of the digital creative industries across the West and North West. It brings together data and insights to support discussion and contribute to a better understanding of the sector and its future opportunities.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

The conversations, connections and opportunities emerging from EDGE26 continue to inform CREW's programmes, partnerships and strategic engagement activity.

350+
Delegates

1045
Digital Creative
Companies

34
Speakers

30
Startup &
SME Exhibitors

ACROSS THE WEST & NORTH WEST

Bringing together founders, researchers, educators, policymakers, investors and industry leaders, EDGE26 created a platform for meaningful discussion, new connections and future collaboration.

The summit's themes and recommendations continue to be shared through media coverage, stakeholder engagement and industry networks, extending the conversation beyond the event itself.

"What impressed me most about EDGE was the quality and curation of the people in the room. The mix of founders, universities, government, and industry leaders created meaningful conversations and real opportunities for collaboration. Having attended many conferences, EDGE stands out because of the strong community CREW has built across the creative industries."

- International Speaker Daniel Crane Story7 and 2112 Chicago



THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

EDGE26 was never intended to be a one-day event. The conversations, partnerships and opportunities emerging from the summit will continue to inform CREW's programmes, partnerships, advocacy and ecosystem development work.

EDGE26 aligns strongly with CREW's CLIMB (Creative Leaders Innovating for Market & Business Growth) initiative, supported through Enterprise Ireland's SMART Regions Programme, which will continue to build leadership capability, innovation capacity and commercial readiness among creative enterprises across the region.

NEXT STEPS

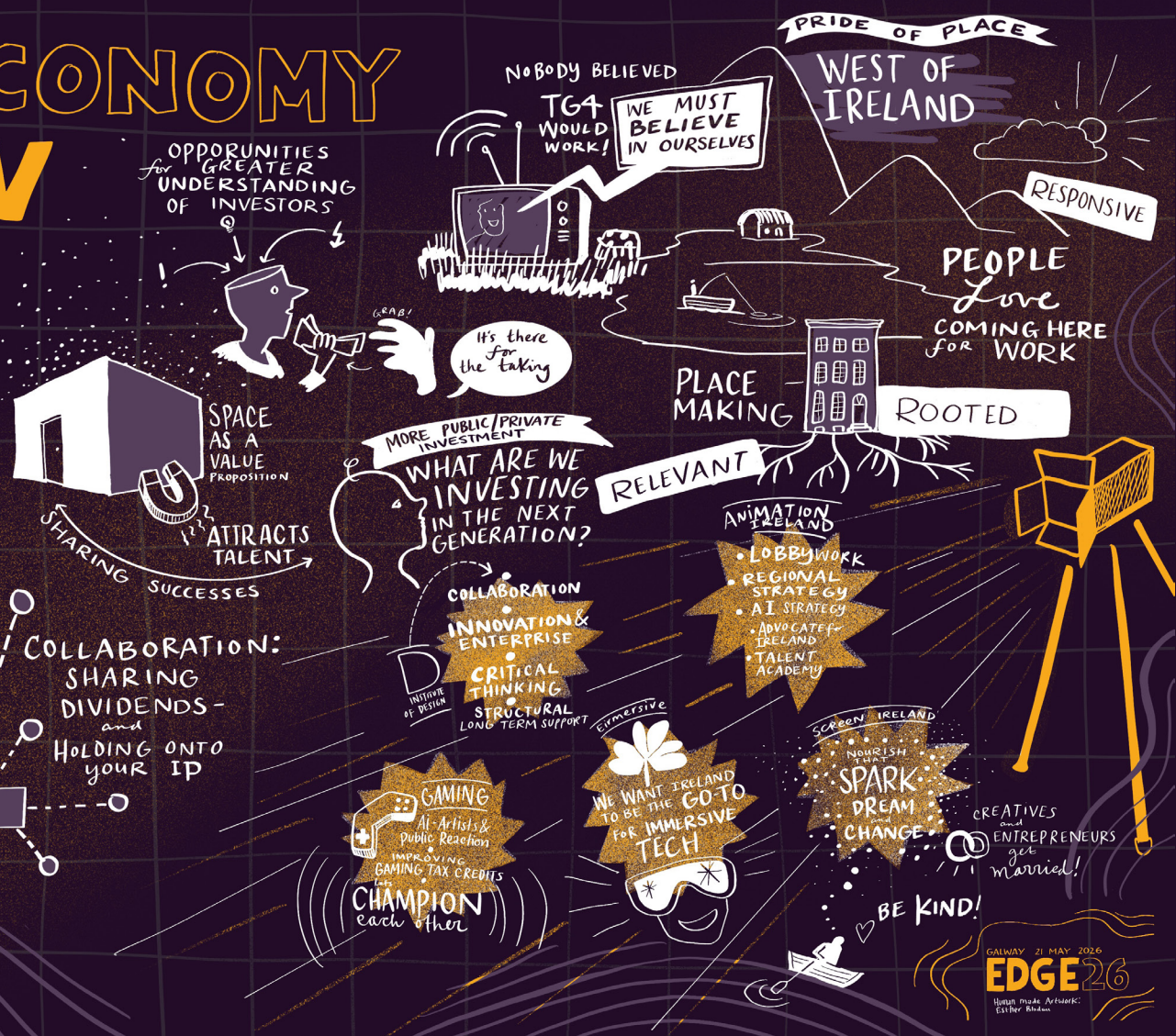
- CREW Strategy 2025–2029
- CLIMB Programme
- Whitepaper Dissemination
- Ecosystem Development
- Industry Collaboration

“What stood out to me as an Exhibitor at EDGE was the quality and diversity of the people involved. Having industry, academia, policymakers and entrepreneurs together created conversations that simply wouldn't happen elsewhere”

- Guillaume Auvray, Founder of Nuwa & EDGE26 Exhibitor



CREATIVE ECONOMY IN ACTION




Live Graphic Recording: Esther Blodau

PATRONS, PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

EDGE26 was delivered by CREW with the support of its founding organisations, Atlantic Technological University and the Western Development Commission, together with our patrons, partners and collaborators. Their commitment helped create a platform for meaningful discussion, new connections and future opportunities across the digital creative industries.

LEAD PATRON



Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh
Atlantic Technological University

As Lead Patron and founding organisation of CREW, Atlantic Technological University played a central role in supporting EDGE26 and advancing the shared ambition of strengthening the creative economy of the West and North West.

PATRONS



COLLABORATORS



MEDIA PARTNERS



ACCOMMODATION PARTNER



FUNDING



Funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ERDF Northern & Western Regional Programme 2021-2027



“As a founding partner of CREW, Atlantic Technological University has seen first-hand the growth and ambition emerging across the region’s creative industries. EDGE26 demonstrated the power of bringing together talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration to help realise the significant opportunity that exists for the West and North West.”

- Dr Orla Flynn President, Atlantic Technological University



ABOUT CREW

CREW is Ireland's Creative Enterprise and Innovation Hub, supporting entrepreneurs and enterprises operating across games, animation, screen, immersive technologies, digital design and creative technology.

Since opening its Enterprise & Innovation Hub in 2024, CREW has supported hundreds of entrepreneurs, enterprises and creative professionals through programmes, mentoring, events, innovation initiatives and community building.

Founded by Atlantic Technological University, the Western Development Commission, and Ardán, CREW exists to support innovation, entrepreneurship and growth within the digital creative industries.

Through its Strategy 2025–2029, Where Creativity Means Business, CREW is working to position the West and North West as a globally recognised centre for digital creative enterprise.



RESOURCES

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of EDGE26.

- Speakers
- Founders
- Exhibitors
- Attendees
- Patrons
- Partners
- Board Members
- Advisory Board Members
- Volunteers
- The CREW Team

Photo Credits: Andrew Downes, Xposure;
Sarah Connor and Illustration: Esther Blodau.

FURTHER READING

Click the links below for further information:

- [CREW Strategy 2025–2029](#)
- [From Momentum to Scale](#)
- [EDGE26 Photo Gallery](#)
- [CREW YouTube Channel](#)

VISIT CREW'S WEBSITE



**The opportunity
now is scale.**

Together, we
are building the
future of Ireland's
creative economy.



CREWDIGITAL.IE