National Design Strategy for Ireland
Executive Summary

This section will be drafted to reflect finalised content in the body of the document.

The Executive Summary will:

- Put the overall development of the NDS in context as a follow up to ID2015 and the Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland
- Position the value of design to Ireland and the potential for accelerating economic growth
- Summarise overall themes and objectives
- Highlight the need for sustained support and investment in order to ensure a lasting legacy from the ID2015 programme and that the work of Irish designers achieves the awareness and appreciation it deserves.
The Importance of Design

Design provides businesses with opportunities to increase productivity and create value in products and services in both traditional and emerging sectors, such as digital design. It leads to intuitive products, sustainable solutions to environmental challenges, user-friendly and efficient public services, better home and work environments, optimised cities, and much more.

Design provides tools for Irish companies to differentiate themselves, thus strengthening their competitiveness. In the public sector, design can be used to improve the service experience of users while at the same time identifying opportunities for reducing the cost of service delivery.

Design integrates and balances all aspects of the things that continue to be important to us, such as practical function, limited resources, cultural symbolism, human relations, usability, effective communications, and beauty. Design can be the key catalyst to fuse business, media and creative technologies together with the arts, culture and heritage, to bring about new economic opportunities in this intersection, creating innovation, and enabling new forms of creative expressions. In the emerging creative economy, design is moving up the value chain to embody intellectual property and creative capital.

Innovation is essential to the sustained prosperity of Irish businesses. Design is by its very nature innovative; it involves examining how things work and how they can be improved, a process that continually generates new ideas and combinations. As a driver of innovation, design can help companies develop new ways of making and selling products, environments and services. It can provide tools to develop new business models and ways to deliver value to customers, and commercialise new technologies by making them accessible to users.

Design can be used effectively across business, from start-ups and small to medium-sized businesses through to large, well-established organisations. The use of design in emerging sectors offers further opportunities. Consumers don't buy technology, but rather buy what technology can do for them. Technology companies can mitigate the risk of consumers failing to purchase their new technologies through the design of outstanding customer experiences, disrupting existing systems to create new markets.

Ireland’s Design Sector Today

Ireland's creativity in areas such as literature and music is world-renowned but we also have many great businesses producing creative products and services using excellent internationally competitive and innovative design.

Ireland is home to a number of highly successful indigenous design practices and design-led organisations, and Irish designers are increasingly in demand internationally. Global brands including IBM have chosen to take advantage of Ireland’s design talent and locate their design centres in Ireland. Ireland’s design education system includes leading design courses in the University and Institute of Technology sectors, and a growing number of programmes that link business and design.
The success of ID2015 has led to design being embedded in Government policy, most notably through the publication of the first Design Policy Framework for Design since the 1960s, with the recognition that design-led innovation will be a vital economic driver for the future, helping provide the competitive advantage that Irish industry requires.

Ireland’s design sector: ¹

- is a fast growing creative industry, with over 3,000 jobs created between 2011 and 2014;
- employs 48,000 people, equivalent to 2.48% of the total workforce;
- has a strong regional spread, with over 65% of registered design companies located in the regions;
- generates over €38 billion in exports, across traditional and digital design;
- attracts significant inward investment, with multinationals such as IBM establishing design centres in Ireland
- contributes to the wider enterprise base, with over 80% of Irish firms citing the importance of design to innovation, customer service and profit.

An untapped potential
While Ireland has a dynamic, internationally recognised design sector, many businesses fail to recognise the potential of design to significantly improve their innovation results. More than two-thirds of Irish businesses never, or rarely, use design, or use design only at a late stage².

Design is often considered a ‘nice to have’ rather than a necessity and, as such, is often restricted to a styling activity. Only a small number of Irish organisations currently use design at a strategic level or embrace leadership by design.

Opportunities for Irish business

Excellent design can be a catalyst for business success. Regardless of its type, size or sector, a business can use design to accelerate growth, de-risk research and maximise the return on investment. The Irish design sector can help address the need for rural and regional jobs and build upon Dublin’s strong design services sector to expand into the regions.

Design has the potential to address future social and economic challenges, such as health, housing and the third age, and the Irish design sector can provide Irish industry and society the tools to embrace and adapt to a new cognitive era.

¹ Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland, DJEI, 2015
² Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland, DJEI, 2015
Businesses that invest in high-quality design perform better across a number of metrics including the ability to secure investment, growth and market share. This brings significant opportunities for businesses within Ireland as well as for the Irish economy as a whole.

Investment in the design sector and design education is essential to ensure that this creative mindset can contribute to driving innovation across disciplines and throughout the Irish economy. The value of a design education can be seen in the number of leading technology companies co-founded by designers including Flickr, Pinterest, Youtube, Path, Milk, Kickstarter, Airbnb, Twitter and Irish companies such as Intercom.

Ireland has the potential to be an emerging powerhouse of design. With appropriate funding and resourcing, the delivery of this Strategic Plan through the collaborative efforts of education, enterprise and industry can harness this power for innovation and competitiveness.
National Design Strategy for Ireland

The National Design Strategy has been developed through consultation with key stakeholders and seeks to address the economic, education, social and cultural challenges and opportunities facing Ireland in the 21st century.

The main aims of this strategy are to:

• develop Ireland as a internationally-recognised centre of excellence for design and design research
• create a design culture and promote a better understanding of the value of design
• develop Ireland’s design skills base, from primary level upwards
• increase the use of design as a source of innovation in Irish businesses, especially in the sectors identified as key growth areas for Ireland
• ensure the use of good design in addressing Ireland’s societal challenges and increase the use of design by public bodies
• ensure that public procurement processes use design to drive innovation

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) will co-ordinate and deliver the National Design Strategy in conjunction with enterprise, education and research bodies, and undertake the following actions:

• establish an inter-department government steering group to oversee design strategy implementation
• determine priority areas for strategic development
• undertake benchmarking against our international peer group
• devise an approach to create competitive advantage through design
• ensure adequate long-term resourcing for the delivery of the strategy
• publish a policy paper on the value and potential of design education and research
• establish funding mechanisms to support design research
• establish a programme for promoting design competence in the public sector
• develop and publish a manifesto for integrating design thinking within the Oireachtas, Government Departments, State Agencies and key suppliers
Strategic Themes

While developing the National Design Strategy, DCCol has consulted widely with industry, academia, professional bodies, government agencies, design enterprises and other key stakeholders.

The information gathered throughout this process has informed the following strategic themes:

- Design Policy & Promotion
- Design Research & Innovation
- Education through to Enterprise
- Society, Culture & Collaboration

Theme 1: Design Policy & Promotion

Policymakers across the world face significant challenges to get the most from reduced budgets whilst also boosting economic growth and improving public services. Design offers ways to bring more open creative approaches to complex problems in the public sector, particularly policymaking which is shifting from service delivery to co-creation, and from problem-solving to envisioning. The value of design for policy makers lies in its role to link policy vision to implementation on the ground, making complex ideas tangible and creating user-friendly public services. The design policy and promotion strategy aims to encourage inclusive policy making through design, and build on the awareness raising achievements of ID2015.

High-level actions within this theme include:

1. Work with Government to publish a Government Design Policy led by DJEI and sanctioned by all government departments drawing upon the National Design Strategy
   1.2. Continue to consult with the Design Community, Industry and Education Providers
   1.3. Connect the National Design Strategy to government wide initiatives such as Innovation 2020 and Enterprise Policy 2015-2025, as well as EI and IDA strategies and the strategies of all government departments
   1.4. Review the policy for Public Procurement to include design with criteria for assessment of all submissions

2. Examine policy mechanisms and the provision of incentives for promoting design to assess Industry needs
   2.1. Implement strategic tax incentives for undertaking R&D activities in Design
   2.2. Implement strategic tax incentives for companies both supplying and using design services
   2.3. Implement changes to existing research funding mechanisms to include design, and establish additional routes to targeted funding
3. Embed design into government policy and enterprise support mechanisms
   3.1. Acknowledgement of design as a means for Ireland to improve competitive advantage, create high value employment and generate economic value in both intensive and non-intensive sectors
   3.2. Instruct state bodies to embrace the potential of design to modernise and compete
   3.3. Devise and deliver appropriate supports for the design sector to grow market potential and exports
   3.4. Devise and deliver appropriate supports for design led start-ups and existing design businesses
   3.5. Continuously evaluate and measure design’s contribution to the economy
   3.6. Integrate design into the marketing and promotion of Ireland as a country to visit, a place to do business and a place to procure products and services from
   3.7. Support design intensive and design service companies to scale and meet the needs of Irish SMEs and multinationals

4. Examine the regulatory framework that takes into account copyright and intellectual property in line with international best practice
   4.1. Conduct a benchmarking exercise regarding best practices relating to rights protection, patents and trademarks
   4.2. Develop plans for offering Irish businesses comprehensive advice on rights protection

5. Promote the benefits of design to all, with customised programmes to specifically target the general public, public sector and industry.
   5.1. Establish a National Design Centre framework focused on research and innovation and areas of high potential growth such as design in technology. The framework will encourage and promote best practice in research and design at a regional level, with an overview of Ireland’s capabilities mapped out so that regional developments in this area can be supported at a national level.
   5.2. Implement dedicated programmes for industry highlighting the importance of design as a key component in innovation and competitiveness
   5.3. Maintain awareness raising activities with the general public regarding the role of design in enhancing our lives, our environment and our society
   5.4. Develop design led infrastructure (broadband, mobile phone coverage etc) to enable Irish businesses to function in a modern e-environment

6. Sustain and develop promotion abroad of Irish design and designers
   6.1. Develop and implement a targeted plan for Irish participation in key high profile design events around the world
   6.2. Develop and implement a plan for design-specific trade missions
   6.3. Engage the network of Irish embassies in international promotional activities
   6.4. Collaborate with other agencies in Ireland and internationally on promotional programmes
   6.5. Promote ‘Designed in Ireland’ as a key component of Brand Ireland
Theme 2: Design Research & Innovation

Design research can achieve substantial impacts on public and institutional policy and professional practice, as well as raising awareness and understanding among the public. Key to this is the ability to apply design innovation, theories and methodologies to real-world issues, translating research findings into practice and establishing partnerships between industry, academic, corporate, non-profit and government sectors. The design research and innovation strategy aims to promote interaction and engagement across key sectoral domains that embed design as a strategic enabler for the future development of Ireland’s competitiveness, economic and societal well-being.

High-level actions within this theme include:

1. Develop a roadmap of existing design and innovation competencies in Ireland and benchmark against international exemplars
   1.1. Embed design thinking and process across all levels of the private and public sectors
   1.2. Develop a policy that incentivises the use of design expertise across local authorities, 3rd level providers, LEOs, EI, Technology transfer centres, Gateways and Incubators
   1.3. Analyse gaps and identify opportunities building design competencies in areas where gaps have been identified
   1.4. Connect designers, innovators, entrepreneurs and technologists across target market sectors to adopt a design-led approach to innovation
   1.5. Undertake a programme of evidence building and research to gain a better understanding of the ways in which design can enhance the innovation process, linking to Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)

2. Incorporate design as an essential component of Ireland’s existing Innovation 2020 policy agenda
   2.1. Ensure design is represented on the government implementation group and associated consultation groupings tasked to deliver on objectives as part of the Innovation 2020 action plan
   2.2. Include design in the rollout of the tax incentive ‘Knowledge Development Box’ scheme
   2.3. Incentivise and embed design as a core component in all aspects of research through to active programmes in partnership with relevant agencies.

3. Include design as a core component in existing policies and funding mechanisms delivered through EI and other state agencies as appropriate
   3.1. Review existing policies and develop new models as appropriate to deliver on the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs and on the policy for fostering design in non-design intensive sectors
   3.2. Embed design in the following EI programmes: Competitive Start Fund, Innovation Vouchers, Innovation Partnerships and Commercialisation Fund
   3.3. Assist businesses to achieve greater scale and commercial success through the effective use of early stage design through expansion of the Design4Growth Voucher scheme in partnership with LEOs
4. Develop the infrastructure to support design led models and platforms that are flexible, responsive and adaptive and that use design as a tool that adds value to the changing needs of business communities; advancing societies; public sector and civic communities
   4.1. Research international models to develop a platform that facilitates a collaborative and experimental approach to design driven solutions, involving citizens and businesses in creating new solutions for society
   4.2. Invest in challenges (such as Universal Design Challenge and Global Irish Design Challenge) and thought leadership activities (such as conferences, master classes, seminars with international experts) that address and identify grand challenges
   4.3. Encourage public/private sector investment in high potential concepts resulting from design based challenges
   4.4. Establish a platform for public/private partnership that promotes interaction and engagement through design working across sectoral domains, such as cities, health, technology and advanced manufacturing

5. Build on the legacy of ID2015 to develop Ireland's reputation as a 'Design Island' by cultivating our design community
   5.1. Establish a network of regional design centres
   5.2. Encourage inward investment of multi-nationals, through IDA, that align with and require a high level of design skills
   5.3. Support the ongoing development of sectoral and regional design networks
   5.4. Develop a mechanism to raise awareness of and cultivate a community of design champions
   5.5. Invest in programmes that build Ireland's reputation for design and innovation internationally
   5.6. Promote Ireland as an ideal location for the establishment of industry design centres
   5.7. Encourage philanthropy to build excellence in design infrastructure and leadership
   5.8. Build design competency in companies through the expansion of Design Mentoring panels with regional spread

6. Develop a strategy to target EU funding for design led innovation and research
   6.1. Identify appropriate EU funding streams
   6.2. Develop partnerships to submit bids that develop design, innovation and commercial opportunities for the sector
   6.3. Promote greater design research collaboration and knowledge exchange between industry and academia
Theme 3: Education through to Enterprise

The design sector has transformed in the last ten years, with the emergence of new technologies, creative methods and collaborative working models that challenge the previous certainties of design disciplines. In order to respond to these seismic changes it is imperative that Ireland reinforces the link between education and enterprise. The education through to enterprise strategy aims to integrate design thinking and skills into and across all levels of education from primary through third level and on to continuous professional development, in order to develop and design new programmes of study in line with current and emergent industry and societal needs.

High-level actions within this theme include:

1. **Develop an education framework that meets the future needs of the design sector and wider industry**
   1.1. Produce a directory of all design education providers on the island of Ireland
   1.2. Identify and publish existing formal links and pathways between further and higher education design programmes
   1.3. Review existing education programmes to identify if current design and design thinking provision meets current and future needs of the design sector and wider industry in consultation with multinationals, indigenous companies and with design-related education training providers
   1.4. Establish a framework for the development of new academic programmes, in particular vocational programmes, to meet skills gaps of the design sector, working with further and higher education and skills training agencies including SOLAS, ETBs and the HEA
   1.5. Establish Centres of Design Excellence across Ireland, building on regional expertise and ensuring strategic partnerships with third level institutions
   1.6. Review primary and secondary curriculum to embed design literacy and design awareness within curriculum
   1.7. Develop and deliver CPD for teachers at primary and second level to extend design skills, subject leadership and awareness
   1.8. Develop and deliver CPD for lecturers within third level education to extend design thinking and awareness, helping promote design thinking within other disciplines
   1.9. Establish umbrella organisation/s representing supply (design education providers) and demand (design sector and wider industry)
   1.10. Embed design and design thinking modules within third level programmes in general
   1.11. Invest in cutting edge technology, resources and equipment to support the design agenda

2. **Promote a collaborative pipeline between education and enterprise**
   2.1. Encourage design graduates to enter into other start-ups in tech, science and other fields
   2.2. Encourage graduates into design related postgraduate courses and enter mainstream industry through the provision of quality business modules within the undergrad system and increased workplace placement modules
   2.3. Provide collaborative incubation space for collaborative design services start-ups
3. Develop an enterprise framework that meets the future needs of the design sector and wider industry
   3.1. Produce a directory of all design enterprises in Ireland that includes their location, areas of specialisation, number of employees and turnover
   3.2. Produce a directory of all providers of incubation space for design and design related industries on the island of Ireland
   3.3. Undertake a skills audit of the design sector to help inform current and forecasted skills gaps
   3.4. Identify, establish and regularly publish key sectoral metrics to chart growth, development and future needs
   3.5. Establish design industry advisory groups comprised of enterprise and education representatives, to set medium and long term strategic goals for specified design sectors
   3.6. Ensure new courses designed by educational institutions are developed in collaboration with enterprise partners
   3.7. Ensure the development of brand, marketing and selling skills within the design sector through training and mentoring programmes

4. Provide demand-side insight and assistance for a wide range of Irish-based companies who wish to provide products and services to global markets
   4.1. Enhance market opportunities for Irish businesses in order to enable them to open up and access markets for export, as well as within Ireland, through the successful use of trade supports and interventions
   4.2. Develop innovative buyer relationship initiatives to ensure that Ireland's design sectors thrive in the competitive global marketplace
   4.3. Facilitate a strong digital marketing focus in the design sector to ensure that enterprises are best placed to capitalise on commercial opportunities online
   4.4. Enable the scaling of high potential businesses across all the relevant disciplines of design products and services
   4.5. Assist Irish companies to grow their brands and reputations at the individual enterprise level
Theme 4: Society, Culture & Collaboration

Design in Ireland can be a catalyst in creating a successful sustainable and inclusive society that values participation, equality and respect for all citizens, resulting in a strong, confident design industry. Irish designers are increasingly moving beyond their traditional design disciplines and becoming engaged with social, environmental and cultural agendas, recognising that they can apply innovative processes and transferable design skills across a spectrum of settings. The society, culture & collaboration policy aims to facilitate and support creative communities and drive innovation through the user-centred design of products, services and the environment that focus on people's real needs and address ecological issues.

High-level actions within this theme include:

1. **Promote the role, use and commissioning of design in government, industry and wider society**
   1.1. Incorporate Universal Design into government procurement requirements
   1.2. Promote the appointment of designers to Boards of Directors, through bodies such as State Boards and the Institute of Directors, to encourage the use of design thinking across a range of practical applications, and permeate organisational culture
   1.3. Promote the use of design as an integral part of all public funded projects, and ensure authorities lead by positive example
   1.4. Establish interdisciplinary design research units to address design challenges such as health and well-being, housing, transport, water, tackling issues through the lens of Universal Design and Person-centred pathways
   1.5. Establish a public-private Design Lab partnership with Government for developing and trialling innovative policy approaches to societal issues
   1.6. Promote collaboration across design disciplines and between public, private and third sector
   1.7. Include design as a process in the NSAI guidelines for all public sector agencies and companies

2. **Promote and measure the societal benefits of good design**
   2.1. Establish a research fund and research centre focused on designing products, environments and services for the third age
   2.2. Develop and fund an inclusive design research programme
   2.3. Research and disseminate the role design can play in addressing the inequality in socio economic disadvantaged communities in Ireland
   2.4. Promote the use of sustainable and environmental design
   2.5. Teach societal design at all levels of education
   2.6. Develop and sustain Ireland’s reputation for universal design

3. **Build on Ireland’s existing design networks, heritage and culture**
   3.1. Support sustainable communities of creative practice
   3.2. Facilitate regional and sectoral design networks through targeted supports such as maintaining the Design Innovation Fund introduced as part of Irish Design 2015
   3.3. Honour Ireland’s design heritage and culture through targeted activities such as exhibitions, interpretation and workshops
Steering Committee

Karen Hennessy, DCCoI (Chair)
Eugene Forde, DJEI
Stephen Hughes, Enterprise Ireland
Andrew Bradley, IDI
Bernard Hanratty, NCAD
Bill Kearney, IBM
Elaine McDevitt, ICAD
Gerald M. Craddock, NDA
Greg Swift, LEO
Jim Duggan, VFX Ireland
Kathryn Meghen, RIAI
Michael Hanley, DCCol
Ali Grehan, Dublin City Council
Laura Magaby, MCO
Edmund Shanahan, Council of Irish Fashion Designers
Annie Doona, IADT
Philip Nolan, Maynooth University
Paul Young, Animation Ireland
Fiona McAndrew, UX Design
Danny McCoy, Ibec
Frank Ryan, IDA
Clive Bellows, Chambers Ireland
Caroline Spillane, Engineers Ireland

Alex Milton, ID2015
Louise Allen, DCCol
John Tynan, DCCol
Aileesh Carew, DCCol
Tanya Jones, DCCol
Susan Brindley, DCCol
Brian McGee, DCCol