SHARED ISLAND, SHARED WORLD, SHARED FUTURE: ENHANCING CROSS-BORDER LEARNING AND CONNECTION ON GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT

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DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors, McCreanor Murray Rose, and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or policies of Dóchas, CADA, IDEA, or any other organisations involved in this project.

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Acronyms

ACE	Adult and Community Education
APA	A Partnership with Africa
APGID	All-Party Working Group on International Development (NI)
CADA	Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies (NI)
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (NI)
CPD	Continuous Professional Development (ROI)
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (ROI)
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs (ROI)
DICE	Development and Intercultural Education Initiative (ROI)
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETB	Education and Training Board (ROI)
EU	European Union
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate (NI)
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (NI)
GENE	Global Education Network Europe
HEIs	Higher Education Institutes
IDEA	Irish Development Education Association
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly (NI)
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (ROI)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland

NSETS	North South Education and Training Standards
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PPN	Public Participation Networks
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SCOTENS	Standing Conference on Teacher Education (Cross Border)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning (NI)
TY	Transition Year (ROI)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Context

The Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future project represents a strategic partnership between Dóchas, CADA, and IDEA to strengthen Global Citizenship Education (GCE) across the island of Ireland. Funded by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund, this initiative addresses a critical gap: while organisations share common goals and face interconnected challenges, stark differences in policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, and institutional support between Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) create both barriers and missed opportunities for collaborative action.

At a time when societies across the island face interrelated challenges - from information disorder and rising polarization to climate crisis and far-right movements - GCE offers a valuable opportunity to equip learners with critical consciousness, empathy, and agency needed to navigate complexity and contribute to positive social change. However, the sector's capacity to respond remains constrained by both general sectoral challenges affecting GCE globally and specific structural barriers unique to cross-border collaboration on the island of Ireland.

Methodology and Participants

Between April and December 2025, this project employed a participatory dialogue methodology across six facilitated sessions designed to build shared understanding, identify barriers and opportunities, and develop collective priorities for advancing all-island GCE infrastructure. Four online sessions focused on landscape mapping, visioning, and strategic framework development, while two in-person gatherings enabled deeper dialogue through expert panels and collaborative priority-setting exercises.

54 practitioners participated across the series, representing 50 organisations engaged in GCE practice. Participants spanned diverse roles and contexts: large international NGOs, national coordination bodies, regional and networking organisations, and specialist GCE programmes. Expertise represented included formal education (early years through third level), non-formal education (youth work, community development), and thematic specialisations in climate justice, human rights, and sustainable development. The methodology combined whole-group dialogue, small group work, expert input, participatory ranking exercises (dot-voting), and backwards mapping techniques to ensure practitioner voice and lived experience shaped all strategic recommendations.

Key Findings: General GCE Sector Challenges

The dialogue sessions highlighted several challenges affecting GCE practice broadly, independent of jurisdictional differences:

- **Recognition and Evidence Gap:** GCE is not widely recognised by government departments, school networks, and education policymakers as essential to curriculum, with limited robust evidence base demonstrating impact on learner outcomes
- **Audience Reach Limitations:** Significant gaps in GCE provision (across both jurisdictions but much more starkly in NI) for youth , marginalised communities, and Adult and Community Education sectors
- **Thematic Coverage Gaps:** Under-engagement with conflicts, migration, controversial contemporary issues, AI/digital literacy, and connections between personal decisions and global impacts

- **Pedagogical Positioning Challenges:** Ongoing tension between GCE's critical, justice-oriented approaches and increasing emphasis, particularly in NI, on a 'knowledge-rich' curriculum framework that may marginalise space for contested knowledge and multiple perspectives
- **Capacity Constraints:** Under-resourced GCE sectors ((across both jurisdictions but much more starkly in NI) lack capacity for sustained all-island policy engagement, research partnerships, and long-term strategic planning
- **Structural pressures on collaboration:** While there is a strong culture of collaboration associated with this work, ongoing funding pressures can lead to competition for resources and therefore make sustained collaboration more challenging, even where there is strong intent to work together.

Key Findings: Shared Island-Specific Challenges

Distinct from general sectoral issues, participants identified critical barriers specific to cross-border GCE collaboration:

- **Jurisdictional Disparity and Funding Fragmentation:** The ROI benefits from well-developed infrastructure with substantial Irish Aid investment in GCE (€33.6m, 2021-2024) through strategic partnerships and multi-annual funding. NI's sector operates in fundamental fragility, with no British government funding for GCE since 2021 and loss of EU funding access post-Brexit. This asymmetry creates unequal partnership conditions and makes sustained cross-border initiatives difficult to resource.
- **Geographic Gaps with Cross-Border Dimensions:** Border regions, Midlands, rural areas, and NI as a whole show markedly reduced GCE provision, creating 'cold spots' precisely where cross-border collaboration could deliver greatest value.
- **Policy Misalignment:** Divergent curriculum frameworks, different ministerial portfolios, and absence of GCE in NI public and political discourse create structural barriers to coordinated advocacy and policy influence.
- **Absence of Cross-Border Infrastructure:** No formal coordination mechanisms, partnership structures, or dedicated funding streams exist to support sustained all-island GCE collaboration.
- **Curriculum Access Barriers with Jurisdictional Variations:** While GCE faces positioning challenges in both jurisdictions, NI practitioners encounter acute difficulties accessing curriculum space, particularly given current curriculum review directions that may further marginalise critical perspectives.
- **Differential Recognition:** GCE has achieved meaningful (though imperfect) policy recognition in the ROI through Irish Aid frameworks and development education discourse, while remaining almost entirely absent from NI government policy, funding streams, and political discussion.

This differentiation matters strategically: general sectoral challenges require collective advocacy and evidence-building across the GCE field, while shared island-specific barriers demand targeted cross-border solutions, dedicated coordination infrastructure, and policy interventions at both jurisdictional and all-island levels.

Strategic Framework: Four Interconnected Pillars

Through collaborative analysis, participants identified four essential pillars for advancing all-island GCE:

1. **Funding:** Long-term sustainable multi-annual funding supporting core organisational costs and cross-border programming, including both project-specific funding and Shared Island coordination mechanisms.

2. **Policy and Advocacy:** Coordinated sectoral voice advocating for all-island GCE recognition, with advocacy capacity developed across organisations and formal engagement mechanisms with policymakers North and South.

3. **Curriculum Integration:** GCE embedded across curricula in both jurisdictions while maintaining pedagogical space for critical, justice-oriented approaches that distinguish GCE from traditional citizenship education.

4. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Natural, streamlined cooperation extending beyond the GCE sector to include faith communities, trade unions, black and minority ethnic sectors, adult and community sectors and formal partnerships between educational bodies as essential infrastructure for sustained collaboration.

These pillars are deeply interconnected: funding enables policy engagement; policy recognition creates curriculum opportunities; curriculum integration requires collaborative capacity-building; and effective collaboration depends on adequate resourcing.

Shared Island Vision 2035 and Implementation Pathway

By 2035, GCE across the island of Ireland operates as a unified, sustainable ecosystem where practitioners collaborate naturally across the border, learners develop critical consciousness about global interconnection and local action, and GCE is embedded as essential curriculum content from early years through post-16 education. Participants envisioned moving toward 'less territorial approaches in terms of own orgs,' having 'found ways to collaborate more naturally' - representing fundamental reorientation of sectoral relationships.

Using backwards mapping methodology, participants identified critical milestones: by 2026, working relationships with funders established and GCE engagement with NI Curriculum Taskforce; by 2028, multi-year funding schemes supporting core costs, dedicated cross-border GCE mechanism within Irish Aid, and formal educational partnerships between the ROI and NI institutions enabling sustained cross-border curriculum development; by 2032, regular institutional funding enabling collaboration, GCE adopted as a whole-school approach, and curriculum frameworks integrating NGO expertise in NI.

Strategic Priority Recommendations

Building on comprehensive landscape mapping, expert panel insights, and participatory priority-setting exercises, strong consensus emerged across all breakout groups on five core strategic recommendations. These recommendations reflect where much of the dialogue and evidence in this process concentrated - particularly in relation to formal education systems, given their structural role in curriculum, policy alignment, and long-term change.

This emphasis should be understood in that context, rather than as a hierarchy of impact. Participants consistently affirmed the vital and enduring contribution of non-formal and informal Global Citizenship Education in shaping public understanding, strengthening community engagement, and supporting lifelong learning across the island. These sectors were recognised as integral to shared island GCE, and as areas where future, more focused work could usefully explore the distinct opportunities and challenges of cross-border collaboration in greater depth.

1. **Evidence-Based Development:** Commission joint North-South research demonstrating GCE's impact on curriculum priorities (literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, citizenship) to overcome recognition gap and strengthen policy case in both jurisdictions
2. **Knowledge-Rich Positioning:** Critically engage with 'knowledge-rich' curriculum reform directions, articulating how GCE's emphasis on critical thinking, contested knowledge, and multiple perspectives can be positioned within knowledge-focused frameworks without compromising pedagogical integrity - particularly urgent given NI curriculum reform process
3. **Parent and Community Engagement:** Build parent/guardian and community understanding by demonstrating how GCE develops essential capabilities - critical thinking, empathy, active citizenship - needed to navigate contemporary social, environmental, and political challenges
4. **Whole-School Approach Scale-Up:** Move from individual project delivery to scaling proven whole-school GCE models for systemic impact, building on successful approaches already demonstrating effectiveness
5. **Formal Partnership Structures:** Establish formal partnerships between educational bodies North and South as essential infrastructure for sustained collaboration, including links between teacher education providers, curriculum authorities, and school networks

These recommendations directly address both general sectoral challenges (evidence gap, pedagogical positioning, scale-up pathways) and shared island-specific barriers (formal cross-border infrastructure, coordinated advocacy capacity, jurisdictional policy alignment).

Priority Barriers

Through participatory ranking exercises using dot-voting and small group deliberation, practitioners identified the following as most urgent barriers to address:

- **Evidence & Recognition Gap (17 votes):** GCE not widely recognised by government departments and school networks as essential to curriculum
- **Funding Fragmentation (16 votes):** Short-term project-based funding prevents long-term planning and institutional sustainability
- **Curriculum Access Barriers (15 votes):** GCE positioned as 'add-on' rather than embedded throughout curriculum frameworks
- **Sector Capacity Constraints (8 votes):** Small, under-resourced GCE sectors (especially in NI) lack capacity for sustained engagement
- **Public Discourse Gap in NI (6 votes):** Absence of GCE in NI public and political discourse, with no government funding stream or ministerial portfolio

Next Steps and 2026 Opportunities

2026 presents critical windows for sectoral action. The envisaged mapping exercise of 20-30 GCE organisations across the island will provide essential infrastructure for strategic coordination and partnership development. This report's recommendations position the sector to advance policy influence during key moments: the renewal of Irish Aid's development education strategy, engagement with NI's curriculum review process, and potential funding opportunities. Progress toward the 2035 vision requires sustained collective effort across multiple fronts: developing robust evidence base, establishing formal North-South partnerships, diversifying funding mechanisms, building advocacy capacity, and shifting toward collaborative over a competitive sectoral culture. The momentum and consensus achieved through this dialogue series provides strong foundation for coordinated action.

1. Introduction and Context

The following pages establish the project's foundations, outlining the partnership structure that enabled the dialogue series, the methodological approach that shaped the six consultation seminars, and the diverse practitioner community whose collective insights inform this report's strategic recommendations.

1.1 Project Background and Partnership

The Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future project emerged from identified gaps in cross-border GCE coordination and builds on existing policy frameworks and collaborative initiatives across both jurisdictions.

1.1.1 Origins and Context

The **Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future** project addresses a critical gap in Ireland's GCE sector: while organisations across the island share common goals, there are significant differences in policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, and institutional support between NI and the ROI which create both challenges and missed opportunities for collaboration.

This strategic partnership between Dóchas, CADA, and IDEA represents approximately 150 member organisations engaged across formal, non-formal, and informal education settings. IDEA's Vision 2030 strategy provides the long-term sectoral framework within which this Shared Island initiative is situated, ensuring continuity between dialogue, policy influence, and systemic change beyond the life of the project. Recognising that GCE's transformative potential requires engagement across all educational contexts - from early years classrooms and youth clubs to community halls, adult education centres, trade unions and faith-based organisations - this project intentionally included diverse GCE practitioners.

Funded by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund, the project builds on two significant 2022 initiatives: the European Congress on Global Education (hosted in Dublin and co-chaired by Ireland and Luxembourg), which produced the Dublin Declaration positioning Ireland as an international leader in GCE, and a cross-border conference hosted by Children in Crossfire and Development Perspectives exploring how GCE can shape the future of border communities.

While this project focuses primarily on North-South collaboration, the 'Shared Island' framing necessarily involves both North-South and East-West dimensions. International development is a reserved matter controlled by Westminster. Notably, the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales have secured dedicated GCE support that Northern Ireland currently lacks. Building sustainable all-island GCE infrastructure therefore requires engagement across multiple levels of government and jurisdictions - a complexity reflected in the strategic recommendations throughout this report (see Section 4.1.1).

1.1.2 Strategic Alignment

The project aligns with multiple policy frameworks. Internationally, it supports SDG Target 4.7, which calls for all learners to *'acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality,*

promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity' by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). The project draws on UNESCO's 2023 recommendations on Education for Peace and Human Rights, which provides internationally recognised standards applicable to NI, UK, and the ROI as UN member states (UNESCO, 2023). Within Ireland, Shared Island responds to *IDEA's Vision 2030* strategy, which positions GCE as an all-island priority and explicitly states that "*the next national GCE strategy must maintain all-island scope and be central to the Shared Island Initiative*"

The *Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025* provides crucial policy anchoring, with €33.6 million invested between 2021-2024 engaging over 1.2 million people. Additionally, over 56,000 educators received training in GCE during this period (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2024), demonstrating significant reach across the education sector. However, the Mid-Term Review of the Irish Aid GCE Strategy identified critical gaps including insufficient presence in NI beyond formal education and the need for stronger cross-sectoral engagement - priorities this project directly addresses.

In summary, the **critical jurisdictional disparity between the north and south of Ireland shapes all collaboration efforts**, with implications detailed throughout this report.

1.1.3 Partnership Structure

The governance structure of Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future (Shared Island) includes a steering group with representatives from Dóchas, CADA, and IDEA, providing oversight, strategic direction, and accountability. The committee coordinates programme implementation; monitors progress and facilitates collaboration between participants from both jurisdictions.

The project's design reflected lessons from previous cross-border initiatives, including the *Building Bridges: Cross-sector Partnerships for the SDGs Networking Forum* (Belfast), which brought over 70 civil society organisations together, and Youth 2030's successful work with the North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) to embed Global Youth Work in professional standards across the island. These examples demonstrated both an appetite for cross-border collaboration and the practical challenges - different school systems, funding competition, transport issues, administrative burdens - that must be addressed for sustainable partnerships.

Through four online workshops and two in-person events scheduled throughout 2025, this project aimed to strengthen the sector's collective capacity to work across jurisdictional boundaries and contribute to a just, equal, and sustainable world.

1.2 Methodology and Participant Overview

The project employed a collaborative mixed-methods approach combining participatory action research, appreciative inquiry, and systems thinking to ensure both rigorous analysis and practical application. The methodology focused on exploring both the aspirational vision of all-island GCE and practical barriers arising from different systems, policies, governance structures, and funding landscapes across the Island of Ireland.

1.2.1 Dialogue Series Design

The six dialogue sessions (described in the Executive Summary) maximised accessibility through hybrid delivery while creating opportunities for relationship-building. Online sessions (Sessions 1, 3, 4, and 6) enabled wider participation across geographical boundaries, while in-person events (Sessions 2 and 5) were designed to facilitate intensive collaborative work and strengthen interpersonal connections.

Each session aimed to build systematically on previous learning: the introductory session established common ground; the first in-person event, held in Belfast, focused on practical implementation challenges; subsequent online sessions explored historical lessons and border-specific issues; the second in-person gathering, held in Dublin, synthesised emerging themes; and the final online session consolidated learnings into actionable next steps.

Data collection methods **included pre - and post-session feedback surveys, facilitated group discussions, collaborative mapping exercises, reflective** documentation, and stakeholder interviews, ensuring comprehensive capture of both individual experiences and collective insights.

1.2.2 Participant Profile

The dialogue series involved 54 individual practitioners representing organisations that collectively form part of wider networks comprising over 150 member organisations.

Participants brought diverse expertise spanning multiple dimensions of education and community work. Their experience ranged from frontline delivery to policy development, across formal education settings (early years, primary, post-primary, and third level), non-formal contexts (youth work, adult and community education, and community development), and informal education environments. Geographic representation was equally diverse including urban, rural, and border regions, with a wide variety of thematic specialisms including climate justice, human rights, sustainable development, and migration.

Participating organisations included: large international NGOs, national coordination bodies, specialist GCE programmes, regional organisations, network organisations.[1]

Geographical representation showed balanced North-South participation at the Belfast in-person session (session 2), with 11 NI and 15 ROI participants. The Dublin in-person session (session 5) attracted significantly higher ROI attendance with 36 participants, reflecting both the Dublin location and the Republic's greater number of development organisations. NI participation remained consistent at 12, with an additional 2 participants from Scotland.

1.2.3 Governance and Quality Assurance

Regular meetings with the Steering Committee ensured alignment with objectives, addressed emerging challenges, facilitated collaboration, and monitored budget and timeline adherence. McCreanor Murray Rose Consultancy provided session design, independent facilitation and coordination while ensuring participant voices shaped both process and outcomes.

[1] *Participant organisations at each session can be found in the appendix.*

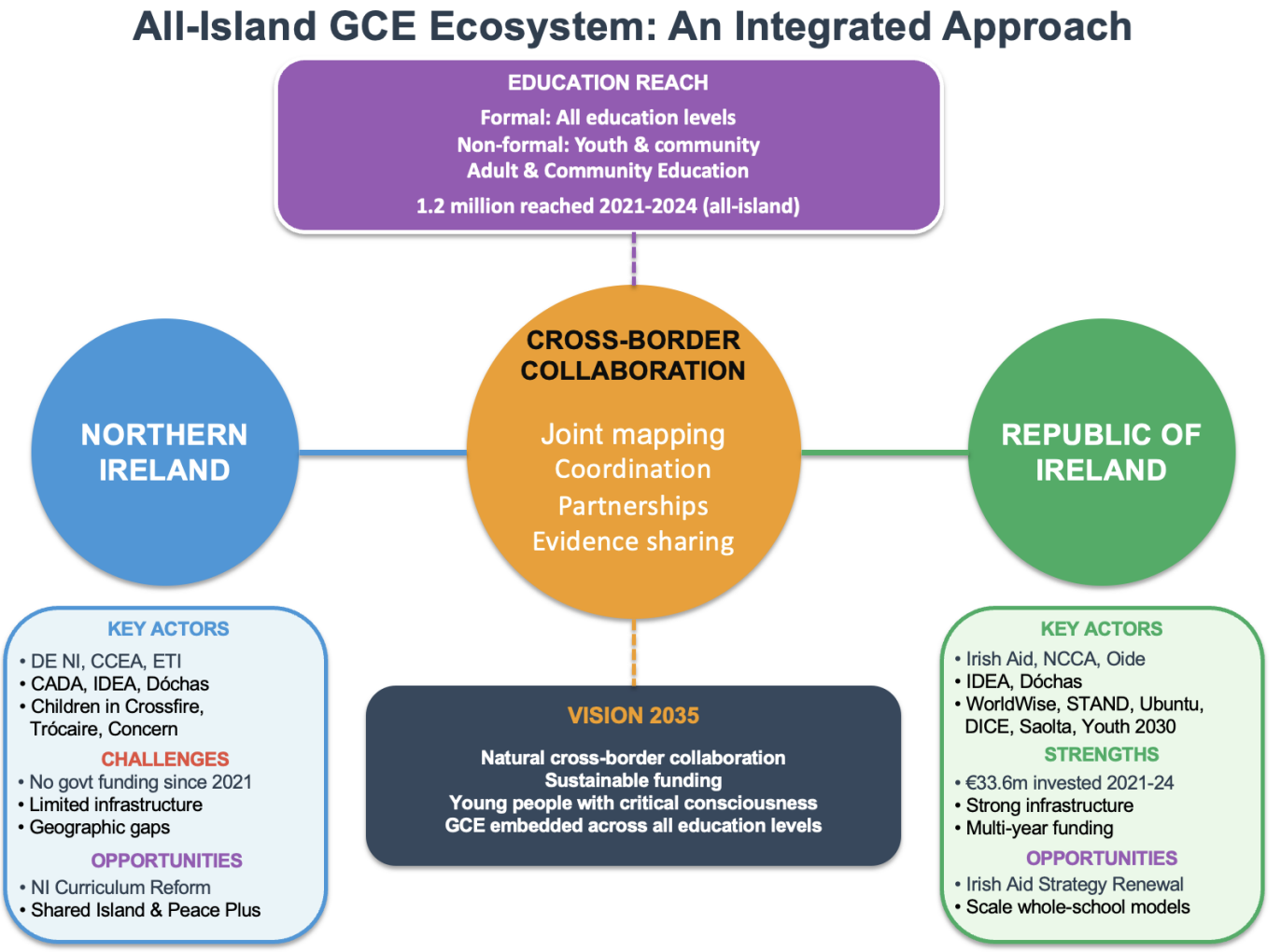
2. Global Citizenship Education Landscape Analysis

This landscape analysis examines the current state of GCE across NI and the ROI, building on the policy context established in Section 1. It documents infrastructure gaps and identifies opportunities for strategic development. By integrating findings from participatory sessions with insights from sector documents, the analysis demonstrates how barriers such as fragmented funding and curriculum marginalisation are interconnected, creating systemic challenges that require coordinated cross-border responses.

2.1 Current State Assessment

2.1.1 Mapping Results from Session 2

The mapping exercise, a part of in-person Session 2, brought together 26 practitioners (15 from ROI, 11 from NI) to systematically document the GCE landscape across the island, plotting existing activities and identifying strategic opportunities for enhanced collaboration.



Northern Ireland Mapping

The CADA GCE Working Group provides essential coordination infrastructure, primarily coordinating formal education sector engagement. CADA has advocated for GCE to be further embedded in the NI curriculum through submissions to the *2025 NI Curriculum Review* and presentations to the All-Party Working on International Development. However, the sector operates in the fundamental fragility detailed in Section 1.1.1: **no British government funding since 2021 and loss of EU funding access post-Brexit.** IDEA's Vision 2030 documents this crisis: "*Since 2021, there has been no state investment in GCE from the British government or the Northern Ireland Assembly…Because of these drastic funding cuts, the GCE sector there has been hugely impacted. Furthermore, with no GCE policy or strategy for NI and very few alternative funding opportunities, the sector is contracting*" (IDEA, 2025, p. 18). This assessment underscores the existential challenge facing NI's GCE infrastructure.

Republic of Ireland Mapping[2]

The ROI has a substantially more developed infrastructure and benefits from strategic government investment through Irish Aid (see Section 1.1.2). This investment has enabled strategic partnerships including WorldWise Global Schools (which has engaged with 70% of post-primary schools in the country), An Taisce's Green Schools Programme, and the Global Village programme for primary schools.

At third level, STAND works across 23 of 26 HEIs, while the Ubuntu Network and DICE respectively embed GCE in post-primary and primary initial teacher education. Youth sector engagement expanded through Youth 2030, led by NYCI in partnership with Concern, Trócaire, and Maynooth University.

Adult and Community Education benefits from the Saolta partnership (established 2019), which works to embed GCE and the SDGs into county development plans. Development Perspectives provides SDG advocate training, extending GCE reach into community development contexts. Organisations including AKIDWA, Financial Justice Ireland, Latin American Solidarity Centre, and regional development partnerships extend further reach to diverse communities through their programmes.

Beyond these strategic partnerships, over 50 organisations provide GCE across formal, non-formal and informal settings, supported by shared infrastructure including developmenteducation.ie (an open digital repository). Quality standards are maintained through the IDEA Code of Good Practice, with 54 member organisations committed to continuous improvement, while GCE has been structurally embedded within curricula through the inclusion of "being an active citizen" as a key competency in the primary curriculum framework and the integration of GCE into initial teacher education via the Céim Standards since 2022 (IDEA, 2025, pp.16-17, 35).

Existing Cross-Border Initiatives

Several programmes operate on an all-island basis: WorldWise Global Schools (expanded to NI in 2024), Youth 2030 (embedded Global Youth Work in NSETS professional standards), Global Village conferences, Concern Debates Programme, Development Perspectives (lead partner of the Saolta programme), Trócaire's programmes, STAND programmes (third-level), Habitat for Humanity's toolkit, Centre for Global Education's

[2] *Informed by Shared Island Participant sessions and sector mapping by other bodies/institutions including IDEA and Global Village.*

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review (a peer-reviewed journal) and various parish-based outreach and volunteer initiatives.

Digital Infrastructure and Networks

Digital infrastructure includes developmenteducation.ie and https://education.rebootthefuture.org/resources/ providing curated repositories, complemented by social media networks, and educational resources such as the 'Curious and Critical Classrooms' podcast by the DICE project.

2.2 Operational Barriers

Sessions 5 and 6 showed that operational barriers are connected and build on each other, creating complex challenges that need comprehensive solutions instead of isolated fixes.

2.2.1 The Vicious Circle: Invisibility, Under-resourcing, and Perverse Incentives

Session 5's voting revealed troubling circular dynamics between the top three barriers. The evidence and recognition gap exists partly because the sector lacks capacity to generate robust impact evidence - yet this capacity constraint results from funding fragmentation. Short-term project cycles prevent investment in the research infrastructure needed to build the evidence base that has the potential to unlock recognition and sustained funding.

Even multi-annual funding creates perverse dynamics. Staff seek new positions by year three, anticipating project end, preventing the very continuity three-year funding theoretically enables. Practitioners reinforced this observation, noting that *'even three-year funding rounds are short e.g. in third year staff start then looking for something else*' (Session 3). However, this dynamic reflects the absence of policy commitments and funding ecosystem stability rather than an inherent flaw in three-year cycles: within a context of sustained policy commitment to all-island GCE - such as a Shared Island approach backed by multi-jurisdictional support - rolling three-year cycles could provide genuine continuity if organisations had confidence in renewal. More insidiously, competitive funding undermines strategic collaboration: *'where funding is limited, it's easier to try finding a convenient partner elsewhere*' (Session 2) rather than investing in all-island relationships. When funders perceive cross-border work as potential duplication of effort across jurisdictions rather than recognising it as valuable collaborative infrastructure, this perception inadvertently incentivises organisations to avoid partnerships that would strengthen the sector. This explains why systemic cross-border infrastructure remains underdeveloped despite decades of shared work. The sector itself has articulated clear funding requirements to break this cycle. IDEA's Vision 2030 calls for "3% of Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to be invested annually in quality GCE for all, by 2030" (IDEA, 2025, p. 6), providing a concrete benchmark against which to measure progress toward sustainability.

NI's lack of multi-annual government funding leads to a significant gap in public discourse. Without ministerial portfolio or dedicated funding, GCE cannot generate the visibility needed to justify such structures - a classic catch-22. The contrast with the ROI, where Irish Aid provides both funding and policy legitimacy, demonstrates how breaking into this cycle can catalyse broader recognition.

2.2.2 The 'Add-On' Trap and Curriculum Marginalisation

Curriculum access barriers reflect deeper structural challenges. In NI particularly, GCE's positioning as optional enrichment rather than core curriculum reinforces marginal status - schools treat GCE organisations as *'nice to have'* (Session 4 participant) which justifies limited time allocation and maintains GCE's perceived peripheral position. While the ROI has achieved greater curriculum integration through frameworks like Junior Cycle and the new Leaving Certificate subject on Climate Action and Sustainable Development, both jurisdictions face challenges in moving GCE from peripheral enrichment to core educational provision. This positioning also risks reproducing passive learning models that undermine GCE's transformative potential. Session 5 participants emphasised the '*importance of young people at the core of the work*,' noting that *'too often GCE is done unto pupils rather than being led by them*' (Session 5 Survey). When curriculum structures position GCE as an add-on, it becomes more difficult to centre youth voice, agency, and leadership - precisely the pedagogical approaches that distinguish critical GCE from standard citizenship instruction. Different curriculum architectures compound this challenge: NI's subject-focused primary curriculum requires GCE content to be embedded within discrete subjects, while the ROI's cross-curricular integration approach allows GCE themes to span multiple learning areas. These differing structural approaches mean that GCE organisations must develop dual expertise and create resources suited to fundamentally different curriculum models, multiplying development costs while fragmenting impact across jurisdictions.

The NI curriculum review and reform process crystallises fundamental tension. While offering an opportunity, Session 5's specialist education panel speaker from Queen's University, Belfast raised concerns about ideological direction and rushed timelines of the review *'potentially creating less space for critical thinking*.' Even if GCE achieves formal integration by 2035, participants worried this '*brings its own issues (e.g. exam focused education)*' (Session 5), potentially sacrificing critical, contemporary NGO expertise that distinguishes GCE from standard citizenship education. The risk is winning curriculum space while losing pedagogical soul. This tension demands strategic clarity: the sector must advocate not only for GCE's presence within curricula but also for the pedagogical conditions - including practitioner involvement, critical approaches, and engagement with contemporary issues - that preserve its distinctive transformative purpose. Curriculum integration is meaningful only if it maintains space for the critical, justice-oriented education that defines GCE.

Session 3 participants also recognised this tension and suggested that *'GCE should be embedded with space for NGOs and organisations to bring current, up-to-date knowledge/expertise on current issues*' (Session 3).

2.2.3 The Missing Middle: Coordination Infrastructure Deficit

Session 6 revealed remarkable consensus on a barrier not captured in Session 5's voting: absence of coordination infrastructure. Every discussion group independently identified a need for dedicated mechanisms, with multiple groups proposing a coordinator role. This convergence suggests participants recognise individual organisational capacity cannot substitute for sectoral coordination infrastructure. Without it, opportunities get missed and effort is duplicated. The envisaged sector mapping project will visualise the sector but won't coordinate it - a critical next step will be to bridge the gap between knowing who's doing what and actually working together strategically.

Participants identified this need explicitly, calling to "*develop a network structure to support different strategic impacts*" while acknowledging that successful coordination requires moving beyond "*brand/ego" toward "a collaborative effort beyond our brand*" (Session 3). This recognition that coordination infrastructure cannot simply emerge from individual organisational initiatives, but requires dedicated mechanisms, suggests growing

sectoral readiness to move beyond cooperative relationships toward genuine collaborative infrastructure. ***Such infrastructure would enable strategic coordination where organisations specialise in areas of strength - research, programme delivery, teacher education, and advocacy - while maintaining sectoral coherence and reducing duplication of effort.***

2.3 Practical Barriers

Practical barriers create daily friction that compounds over time to constrain sector effectiveness.

2.3.1 The Attention Economy and Evidence Paradox

Educators face curriculum overload with GCE fighting for timetable space against examination pressures, safeguarding administrative requirements and performance metrics. Session 5's identification of substitute cover challenges for educators illustrates this: schools managing cover for literacy CPD/TPL but struggling to find cover for GCE training reveal peripheral positioning through resource allocation. The NI Curriculum Review's rapid timeline compounded this, creating '*challenges for proper consultation*' (Session 5, panel member).

Session 6's consistent emphasis on impact measurement reinforces the evidence paradox detailed in Section 2.2.1: organisations need evidence to secure funding yet generating evidence requires stable funding. The proposal for what could be called 'collective evidence banks' recognises that measurement must become part of collaborative infrastructure, yet this requires coordination capacity the sector currently lacks.

2.3.2 Political and Cultural Barriers

Political and cultural barriers fundamentally shape GCE by influencing resource allocation, defining acceptable discourse, and determining whether critical perspectives on power and inequality can be sustained in divided societies. These barriers extend beyond operational challenges - they strike at the heart of GCE's core identity and purpose.

In Northern Ireland, for example, Controlled and Maintained schools often bring distinct historical perspectives to international conflicts. Taking Israel-Palestine as an illustrative case: some Controlled schools may identify with Israeli security concerns based on resonances with their own historical experience, while some Maintained schools may feel affinity with Palestinian struggles for rights and recognition, drawing parallels with their own experiences of marginalisation. It is important to note that these perspectives are neither uniform nor universal - they vary considerably across individual schools, educators, and communities. They are referenced here solely to illustrate the contextual sensitivities that GCE practitioners must navigate, not to suggest fixed or homogeneous positions.

While political contexts differ, the sector's advocacy mandate remains grounded in rights-based, anti-racist, and global justice principles, consistent with Irish Aid policy and international frameworks. This mandate seeks to expand - not contract - the space for critical education.

2.3.3 Critical Pedagogy in Contested Space: The Positioning Gambit

Session 5 panel discussions explored whether 'anti-racism' adequately captures needed work on racial justice, and how to *'decolonise global education in ways that resonate with different communities*.' These aren't semantic quibbles but strategic challenges about GCE's core identity. The tension is fundamental: critical GCE requires addressing power and structural inequality yet operating in the ROI and a politically divided NI demands navigating community sensitivities around precisely these issues.

Session 6's consensus on 'knowledge-rich positioning' reveals a strategic compromise with significant implications - reframing GCE to align with curriculum reform while claiming to *'maintain critical perspectives and social justice foundations*.' While the sector clearly recognises the need to speak policymakers' language,

this positioning raises questions about compatibility with critical GCE principles. Knowledge-rich approaches have historically been critiqued by critical pedagogues for prioritising transmission of established knowledge over transformative, critical engagement with power structures. Positioning GCE *'as response to parent concerns about violence, far-right movements, and climate crisis*' (Session 5) may achieve political traction, but risks instrumentalizing GCE as a problem-solving tool rather than as fundamentally transformative practice. This tension between political viability and critical integrity remains unresolved.

The tension between effectiveness and integrity runs through all positioning discussions. Too critical, and GCE remains marginal; too palatable, and it loses transformative potential. Critical thinking itself illustrates this complexity: while it features as a core competence across several subject specifications at primary and post-primary level in the Republic of Ireland, and remains central to Northern Ireland's curriculum review (which emphasises that "critical thinking has never been more important than it is now"), disagreements emerge about how it should be taught and its relationship to knowledge acquisition. The challenge for GCE is not whether critical thinking belongs in curricula, but how to maintain educational integrity when the pedagogical approaches and contextual applications that underpin GCE become politically contested. The danger is that embedding GCE may require compromising its critical pedagogical approaches to achieve political acceptability

2.3.4 Asymmetric Political Economy: North-South Divergence

The jurisdictional asymmetry detailed in Section 1.1.1 creates profoundly different strategic challenges. As documented, the ROI operates within a complete self-reinforcing ecosystem (see Section 1.1.2), while NI has none of this infrastructure.

The ROI government's framework for sustainable development is the government's Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals (2022-2024), and their SDG Champions Programme can be used to demonstrate north-south divergence. The SDG Champions Programme now includes 74 organisations from GAA clubs to multinational corporations. While this programme provides no funding or direct support and does not constitute a commitment to GCE specifically, it demonstrates how the state creates visibility and recognition pathways for civil society contributions to sustainable development - infrastructure entirely absent in NI. This creates the asymmetric dynamic described in Section 1.1.1, where the ROI's virtuous cycle of funding, evidence, and policy frameworks has no parallel in NI.

ROI organisations navigate scale and integration from established legitimacy; NI organisations fight for basic recognition that GCE should exist. All-island collaboration must navigate this asymmetry without either exacerbating it (ROI organisations dominating) or ignoring it (pretending partnership between unequal positions). This dynamic mirrors the broader challenge of cross-border civil society collaboration where funding structures, policy frameworks, and institutional recognition differ significantly between jurisdictions.

2.4 Key Enablers: Windows, Networks, and the Conversion Question

Despite formidable barriers, Sessions 5 and 6 identified genuine enablers. ***The convergence of Irish Aid Strategy renewal, NI curriculum review and reform process (2025-26), and Shared Island Initiative represents an unprecedented opportunity to embed GCE across multiple policy frameworks simultaneously through coordinated advocacy.*** This creates a rare temporal alignment - what a Session 6 participant termed as '*conditions for meaningful progress*.' Individual windows open periodically, but

simultaneous occurrence creates compounding opportunities where success in one arena strengthens leverage in others.

Existing network infrastructure provides relational capital that new initiatives can leverage. Building Bridges' 70+ organisation forum, Youth 2030's NSETS cross-border success, and Five Nations advocacy capacity demonstrate coordination infrastructure exists - just not specifically for GCE strategic development. The collaboration among CADA, IDEA, and Dóchas to deliver this project itself represents emerging coordination infrastructure: over the past 18 months, these three networks have built collaborative capacity that previously didn't exist for all-island GCE dialogue. The Shared Island dialogue series created enabling infrastructure through relationship-building. Session 6's acknowledgment of a 'genuine community developed' represents tangible asset creation - trust, shared understanding, and collaborative capacity that subsequent initiatives can build on. This emerging infrastructure provides a foundation distinct from what existed before, demonstrating that strategic collaboration for GCE is possible even where formal structures remain underdeveloped

Participants' ability to discuss knowledge-rich positioning while explicitly maintaining commitment to critical perspectives shows the sector has learned to hold tactical flexibility and strategic integrity simultaneously. Session 6 discussions revealed '*complementary organisational strengths and interests*' across the sector, providing foundation for strategic division of labour. Natural partnerships emerged around specific areas: research expertise and evidence-building, programme delivery at scale, teacher education connections, and advocacy capacity.

The fundamental question is whether the sector can turn short-term opportunities, strong relationships, strategic planning, and proven dedication into lasting support before the chances disappear and progress slows down. Participants stressed the importance of making sure the '*dialogue series leads to real action instead of just becoming another report that gets ignored*' (Session 6). This analysis highlights significant challenges but also demonstrates that these challenges can be overcome.

2.5 Funding Landscape Analysis

Turning strategic opportunities into sustained cross-border infrastructure requires understanding the funding landscape that shapes collaboration possibilities. This section examines current funding ecosystems, critical gaps, and how funding mechanisms either enable or constrain all-island GCE development.

2.5.1 Funding Landscape Exploration

The all-island GCE sector operates within the starkly different funding ecosystems described in Section 1.1.1. The Republic of Ireland's substantial Irish Aid investment (detailed in Section 1.1.2) creates a self-reinforcing cycle where funding enables programmes, programmes generate evidence, evidence justifies policy frameworks, and frameworks attract further funding. However, this ecosystem has also created high levels of dependence on Irish Aid funding, making the sector vulnerable to changes in policy or reductions in the ODA budget. This concentration of funding sources presents sustainability risks even within a relatively well-resourced context.

By contrast, NI operates without the dedicated policy framework or government funding detailed in Section 1.1.1, facing invisibility within governmental discourse that requires constant justification of GCE's very existence. This structural challenge is compounded by constitutional arrangements: international deveopment is a reserved matter under Westminster control, meaning that when GCE is connected with development aid,

funding decisions become subject to UK-wide policy shifts and geopolitical pressures rather than devolved priorities. This leaves no space for NI-specific GCE funding responsive to local context or need. Unlike Scotland and Wales, which have achieved some devolved support for aid and GCE, NI lacks this infrastructure entirely. This creates a catch-22: the sector lacks capacity to generate evidence because it lacks funding, yet it cannot secure funding without evidence. The 2024 Irish Aid awards - where only four NI-based projects received funding - illustrate both progress and continued marginalisation.

2.5.2 Current Funding Sources

Against this backdrop of asymmetric infrastructure and systemic barriers, the all-island GCE sector currently relies on a limited range of funding sources that reflect these underlying disparities. Broadly, potential funding opportunities exist through:

- **Irish Aid (ROI):** Multi-annual mechanisms support core costs and cross-border programming for GCE (€33.6 million invested under the 2021-2025 Strategy - see Section 1.1.1 for details). Irish Aid Strategy Renewal presents a strategic opportunity for influence.
- **NI Assembly**: has no remit for international development and has never provided funding streams for development education.
- **British Government:** Has not funded DE/GCE since 2021
- **European Union**: Post-Brexit loss particularly impacts NI; ROI organisations retain access.
- **International NGOs**: Substantial funders at different points in the sector's development who continue to provide some funding and influence where resources flow across the island.
- **Alternative Sources**: There is a need to explore academic collaborations, Council of Europe grants, and philanthropic foundations[3]. Participants emphasised the strategic importance of diversification, arguing *'we should be sourcing funding from as many jurisdictions as possible, to avoid problems'* (Session 3). This reflects recognition that over-reliance on single funders - particularly given jurisdictional disparities - creates vulnerability and constrains strategic autonomy (Session 6)

Participants, across all sessions, emphasised the importance of multi-annual funding yet identified inopportune dynamics even within these structures. **Funding Mechanisms themselves remain a concern for the sector**. For instance, staff seek new positions by year three anticipating project end, preventing continuity. Project-based funding dominates for NI and cross-border work, creating constant restart cycles that drain capacity and prevent long-term planning. Vision 2035 milestones include multi-year funding supporting core costs by 2028 and regular institutional funding by 2032.

2.5.3 Funding Gaps & Challenges

Despite the available funding sources, significant gaps remain that prevent the sector from building the sustainable, evidence-based, cross-border infrastructure needed for long-term impact. These gaps include:

- **Funding Fragmentation**[4]: Short-term funding creates a paradox: sustained funding requires evidence, but building evidence requires sustained funding. Competition for resources means organisations tend to partner locally rather than cross-border. Where funders view cross-border work as duplication rather

[3] *This was highlighted during Session 6.*

[4] *Second highest identified barrier during Session 5.*

than collaboration, this can discourage partnerships and limit infrastructure development. Different grant requirements between NI and the ROI add administrative complexity.

- **North-South Asymmetry:** Different strategic imperatives - ROI organisations navigate scale and integration from established legitimacy while NI organisations fight for basic recognition - create challenges for genuine partnership and risk of ROI organisations dominating cross-border initiatives.
- **Core Costs Gap:** Project-based models fail to support essential organisational infrastructure, professional development, or coordination capacity. The evidence paradox (see Section 2.2.1) particularly challenges this.
- **Capacity Constraints:**[5] Small organisations, especially in NI, lack capacity for complex cross-border funding applications, cannot match co-financing requirements, and have insufficient infrastructure for multi-jurisdictional projects.
- **Limited Relationship-Building Investment:** Cross-border collaboration requires investment in trust and relationships, yet funding rarely covers cross-border meetings or partnership development costs.

2.5.4 Cross-Border Funding Opportunities and Obstacles

Understanding both the emerging opportunities and enduring obstacles within the cross-border funding landscape is essential for charting a viable path toward sustainable all-island GCE infrastructure.

Opportunities

The current landscape presents strategic opportunities across multiple dimensions - from established networks to new funding programmes specifically designed for cross-border work, strategic opportunities include:

- **Priorities Alignment**: Evidence-based development through joint North-South research; knowledge-rich positioning enabling curriculum alignment; parent and community engagement; whole-school approach scaling; and formal partnership structures.
- **Network Infrastructure**: CADA, Dóchas, IDEA, Building Bridges (70+ organisations), Youth 2030's NSETS cross-border success, and Five Nations advocacy capacity demonstrate existing coordination infrastructure that can be leveraged. The Shared Island dialogue series created a "genuine community" providing trust and collaborative capacity which can continue to be built on.
- **PeacePlus Programme:** The €1.1bn EU-funded PeacePlus programme (2021-2027) offers substantial opportunities through its thematic areas, particularly Theme 1.1 (Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities) and Theme 2.1 (Collaborative Learning Together). The programme's explicit focus on cross-border cooperation, children and young people, shared education, and community peacebuilding aligns strongly with the project's objectives. However, the programme's scale and complexity may present accessibility barriers for small and medium-scale NI NGOs offering GCE, and there is limited evidence to date of the programme being significantly accessed for GCE-related initiatives. Partnership capacity already demonstrated through Shared Island activities positions the network well for collaborative applications, with potential for multi-year strategic funding supporting both pilot initiatives and scaled interventions. Exploring how to make PeacePlus more accessible to the GCE sector - or how consortium approaches might enable participation – may be worthwhile.
- **Centre for Cross Border Cooperation Partnerships:** As an independent research and policy organisation advancing cross-border cooperation, the Centre provides capacity-building support for cross-border project development and can serve as a strategic partner or facilitator. The Centre's

[5] *This received 8 votes in the barrier ranking during Session 5.*

secretariat functions for all-island education bodies (SCoTENS and Universities Ireland) offer potential collaboration pathways. Their expertise in navigating differing legislative frameworks North-South and their established relationships with government departments, local authorities, and higher education institutions provide valuable partnership infrastructure for programme development and implementation.

- **Shared Island Civic Society Fund:** The three-year €6m initiative (2025-2028) specifically targets grassroots community organisations developing cross-border links, with the 2025 round allocating up to €2m (average grants under €30,000). Applications require partnership between at least one organisation based in the South and one in the North, directly aligning with Building Bridges' network structure. The fund's emphasis on practical North-South cooperation across multiple sectors and themes offers accessible entry-point funding for pilot activities and relationship-building.
- **InterTradeIreland Research Collaborations:** Through support mechanisms facilitating North-South research partnerships, InterTradeIreland enables access to Horizon Europe's €95.5bn research and innovation funding (2021-2027). Travel vouchers and brokerage support lower barriers to collaborative research applications, presenting opportunities for evidence-based programme development partnerships between academic institutions North and South. This aligns with the project's emphasis on research-led curriculum development and evaluation frameworks.
- **Academic, Foundation and International Sources**: Council of Europe grants, research partnerships with universities North and South, and international development education networks present diversification opportunities beyond Irish Aid dependency. Practitioners distinguished between transactional project funding and relational partnership models, noting that philanthropic funding can offer flexibility and relationship-building opportunities that complement institutional funding streams, though accessing these sources requires capacity many small organisations lack.

Funding Barriers

Securing adequate funding for cross-border GCE faces multiple interconnected challenges. Structurally, the jurisdictional asymmetry detailed in Section 1.1.1 creates inherent barriers, compounded by funder perceptions of cross-border work as duplication which inadvertently incentivise single-jurisdiction approaches. The current absence of dedicated cross-border mechanisms within Irish Aid (though proposed for 2028) means existing structures are not designed for cross-border collaboration. Administrative complexity arising from different regulatory and reporting requirements North and South, divergent tax and legal compliance frameworks, currency management, and misaligned financial year cycles impose additional burdens on already-stretched organisations.

The sector faces a critical coordination infrastructure deficit, with remarkable consensus across all discussion groups identifying the need for dedicated mechanisms - multiple groups independently proposed a *'coordinator role'* (Session 2 and Session 6 Survey response). While mapping exercises can visualise the sector, they cannot coordinate it; without coordination capacity, opportunities are missed and efforts duplicated. Most significantly, the evidence paradox detailed in Section 2.2.1 particularly impacts cross-border work, making it difficult to demonstrate that collaborative approaches can be more effective than single-jurisdiction programming. GCE remains *'invisible in the spaces where decisions are made'* (Session 5 participant) with the cross-border dimension even less visible.

These structural challenges are exacerbated by competitive funding environments where scarcity drives competition rather than collaboration. Short-term funding cycles prevent meaningful partnership investment, success metrics focus on individual organisational outputs rather than collective impact, and organisations understandably prioritise survival over sector-wide collaboration. The political context - including Brexit complexity, different priorities North and South, absence of formal North-South development education frameworks, and political instability affecting long-term commitments - creates additional uncertainty that further constrains strategic cross-border development. Practitioners acknowledged that cross-border

programming itself can present political sensitivities, asking *'does doing this shared island programme raise some suspicions with certain communities? There's potential for this. The cross-community element is challenging'* (Session 3). This honest recognition that all-island GCE work must navigate complex political identities and competing narratives underscores why sustainable funding cannot be purely technical but must account for political and community dimensions of cross-border collaboration.

2.6 Gap Analysis and Strategic Opportunities

Session 2's landscape mapping revealed significant gaps across geographic, audience, and thematic dimensions that limit the sector's reach and impact. The five priority barriers from Session 5 reveal that these gaps are interconnected challenges rather than isolated issues. ***Targeted programmes informed by comprehensive mapping will be essential to address these geographic and audience equity gaps.***

2.6.1 Geographic Gaps

NI remains the largest geographic gap, operating in the fundamental fragility detailed in Section 2.1.1.

Geographic gaps include border regions (where cross-border collaboration barriers and perceptions of duplication limit joint programming), the Irish Midlands (with GCE provision concentrated in Dublin and major urban centres), and rural areas generally across both jurisdictions (facing transportation barriers, smaller school sizes, and limited local infrastructure).

The Shared Island dialogue series itself illustrated geographic trade-offs: four online sessions enabled wider participation, while Belfast and Dublin in-person gatherings *'facilitated deeper relationship-building and strengthened collective endeavour'* (Session 6 survey response).

2.6.2 Audience Gaps

Adult and Community Education (ACE) in NI shows the starkest lack of engagement, with only 9% of ACE provision includes GCE content. This is particularly significant given adult education's role in community development and peacebuilding.

Other critical audience gaps include: youth work and youth sector (limited integration despite young people's engagement with global issues); early years education (foundation-laying opportunity largely missed); teachers and school leaders in NI (limited teacher professional learning with substitute cover challenges); faith-based organisations (underutilised despite partnership potential); third-level education (particularly in initial teacher education in NI); and trade unions (workplace education opportunities unexplored).

These gaps in some measure result from funding structures prioritising formal school-based education, the "add-on" positioning limiting expansion beyond schools, sector capacity constraints preventing audience diversification, and evidence gaps making non-formal education contexts harder to justify to funders.

2.6.3 Thematic Gaps

Session 2 identified insufficient focus on several critical contemporary issues:

- Israeli-Palestinian conflict (political sensitivities can create reluctance despite educational importance. Participants consistently emphasised that this reluctance reflects structural and institutional constraints rather than a lack of commitment to human rights-based, critical global education.)
- Migration and forced displacement (a rising relevance not matched by provision)
- Controversial contemporary issues generally (a risk aversion in divided NI context)
- Climate justice versus environmental education (with justice dimensions of global inequality and historical responsibility underemphasised)
- Racism and anti-racism (Panel speakers in Session 5 questioned if existing approaches adequately address racial justice)
- Decolonisation and colonial legacies (with existing curriculum and pedagogy requiring fundamental rethinking)
- Conflict and peacebuilding (NI's experience is underutilised)
- AI and digital literacy (with rapid technological change outpacing curriculum)
- Connections between personal decisions and global impacts (there is a systems thinking gap) and
- Economic justice (with global economic systems and alternatives underemphasised).

These thematic gaps reflect the critical pedagogy tension identified in barriers analysis: GCE requires addressing power and structural inequality yet operating in divided NI demands navigating community sensitivities around precisely these issues.

2.6.4 How Gaps Interconnect

The gaps reinforce one another systematically. NI's geographic infrastructure deficit cascades into audience gaps and thematic gaps. Funding fragmentation prevents investment in reaching new audiences or developing new thematic areas. Sector capacity constraints mean identified gaps persist even when recognised. Again, as previously noted, evidence and recognition gap create a catch-22: evidence is needed to secure funding to reach new audiences, but reaching new audiences requires funding to build evidence. Curriculum access barriers determine what's possible and limited time prioritises established audiences and safe themes over expansion and innovation.

Generally, GCE provision concentrates where it's easiest: geographically in urban centres (Dublin, Belfast), by audience in formal education (primary and secondary schools), and thematically on established topics (sustainable development, poverty, human rights). This rational organisational response to funding incentives and capacity constraints creates systematic exclusion of rural/border communities, non-formal education contexts, and contemporary controversial themes. ***Addressing these systematic exclusions through refined sector mapping and targeted programmes for border regions, rural areas, ACE, marginalised communities, and young people outside formal education structures will be essential for equitable GCE access across the island.***

2.6.5 Strategic Opportunities for Addressing Gaps

Despite formidable challenges, Sessions 5-6 identified genuine opportunities:

- **Temporal Window Convergence:** The simultaneous occurrence of Irish Aid's strategy transition period (as the 2021-2025 GCE Strategy concludes), NI curriculum review and reform process (2025-26), and

Shared Island Initiative momentum creates conditions for meaningful progress where success in one arena strengthens leverage in others.

- **Five Core Strategic Priorities**: Core Strategic Priorities directly address identified gaps. First, evidence-based development through joint North-South research tackles the evidence gap. Second, knowledge-rich positioning while maintaining critical perspectives enables thematic expansion through curriculum alignment. Third, parent and community engagement addresses audience gaps and builds legitimacy for controversial themes. Fourth, a whole-school approach embeds GCE in rural and geographically underserved areas. Fifth, formal partnership structures coordinate gap-filling efforts across organisations.
- **Existing Network Infrastructure**: Building Bridges (70+ organisations), Youth 2030's NSETS cross-border success, Five Nations advocacy capacity, and the Shared Island dialogue series create a "genuine community" which provides relational capital and coordination foundations.
- **Complementary Organisational Strengths**: Natural partnerships emerged around research expertise, programme delivery at scale, teacher education connections, and advocacy capacity, enabling the potential for strategic division of labour[6].

2.6.6 Critical Success Factors

Converting opportunities into gap-addressing action could include:

- **coordination infrastructure**: establishing the "missing middle" and strategically allocating efforts to prevent duplication
- **funding transformation**: securing multi-annual core funding, developing cross-border mechanisms, and creating risk capital for innovation
- **evidence infrastructure**: Documenting impact in under-researched areas to build a stronger case for sustained investment
- **policy frameworks**: achieving government recognition and establishing accountability for universal access to GCE
- **sustained momentum**: converting dialogue into resourced action plans with clear accountability mechanisms

The fundamental question is whether the sector can convert temporal windows, network infrastructure, complementary strengths, and strategic capacity into sustained action before opportunities close and momentum dissipates. As one Session 6 participant emphasised, there is a pressing need to ensure that *'the dialogue series leads to concrete action rather than becoming another report that sits on a shelf'* - a comment reflecting hard-won realism about the gap between identifying needs and actually addressing them.

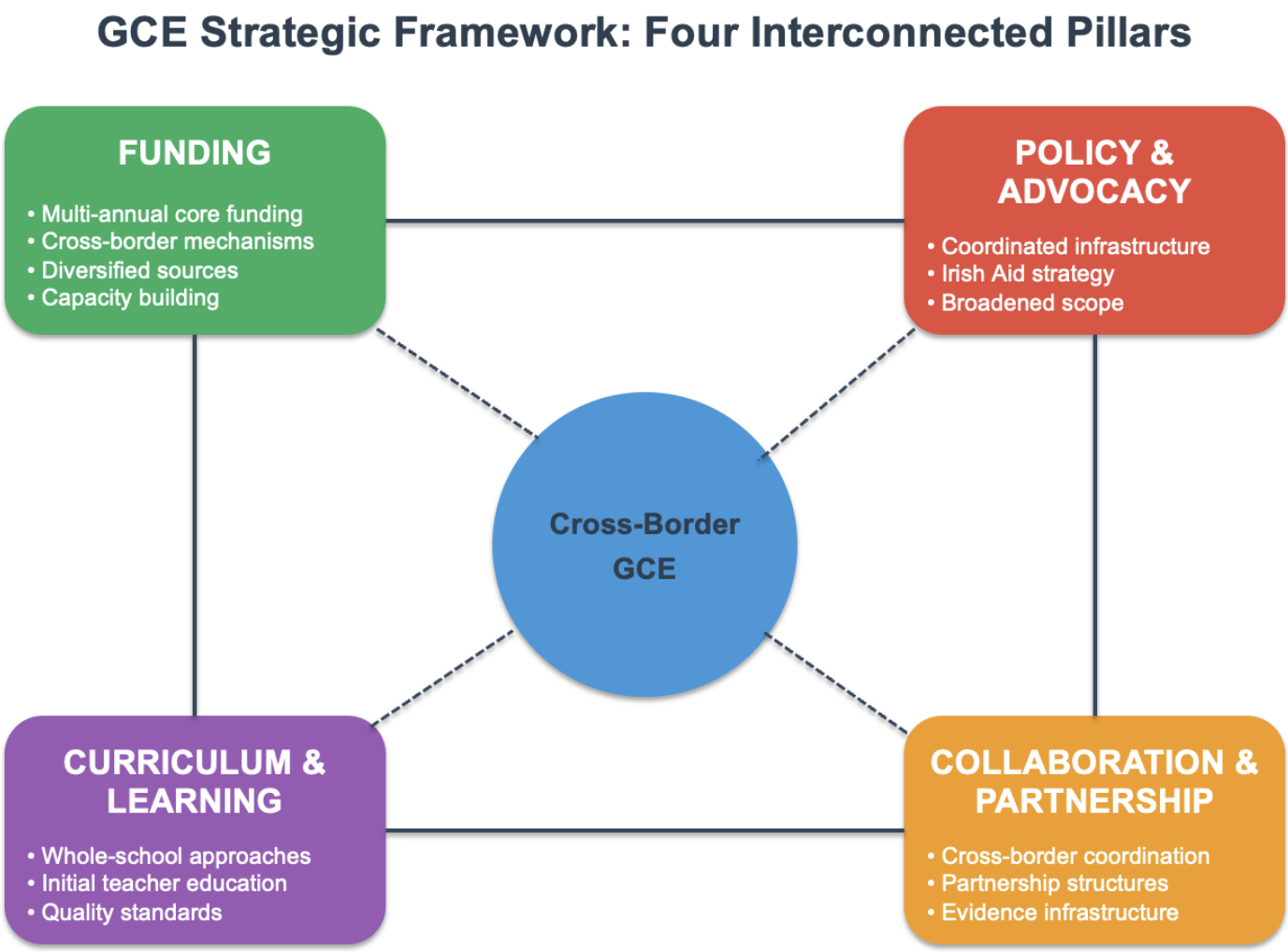
[6] *Coordinating sector activity to enable organisations to focus on these complementary strengths would reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and ensure the sector maximises its collective impact across both jurisdictions.*

3. Strategic Frameworks

Building on the landscape analysis in Sections 1-2, this section details the four interconnected pillars for advancing all-island GCE. These pillars emerged organically through participant dialogue across all sessions, reflecting both the complexities of cross-border collaboration and the holistic approach required for sustainable GCE development.

3.1 The Four Pillars

Funding provides foundational infrastructure, moving beyond short-term project cycles toward sustained investment in core organisational capacity, staff development, and cross-border programming. **Policy and Advocacy** create the needed enabling environment, ensuring governmental recognition of GCE's strategic value while building coordinated sectoral voice across jurisdictions. **Curriculum and Learning** Integration embeds GCE systematically rather than as an add-on, creating educational legitimacy and sustained reach. **Collaboration and Partnerships** amplify collective impact while moving beyond competitive organisational silos to embrace strategic complementarity and shared resources.



All pillars are interdependent: progress in one enables advancement in others

3.1.1 Critical Interdependencies

These pillars function as an integrated ecosystem where progress in one area enables advancement in others:

***Funding* shapes** all other pillars. Long-term multi-annual funding enables organisations to invest in policy officers, develop curriculum resources, and build sustainable partnerships - activities impossible under short-term project cycles. Conversely, strong policy frameworks and successful curriculum integration strengthen cases for increased investment.

Policy and Advocacy and **Curriculum and Learning** work in tandem. The NI curriculum reform process presents opportunities to align approaches while respecting different educational contexts, requiring coordinated advocacy at governmental and educational authority levels across both jurisdictions.

Collaboration and Partnership amplify impact across all areas. Partnerships extending beyond the GCE sector to include faith communities, trade unions, educational actors and others multiply advocacy power, enable joint funding applications, and facilitate curriculum co-creation.

The gaps identified in Section 2.6 (geographic, audience, and thematic) connect across pillars and demand coordinated responses through funding, policy, curriculum, and partnership strategies.

The framework's power lies in integrated application. Session 4's backwards mapping from 2035 demonstrated how early wins in one area create foundations for progress in others: establishing funder relationships (**Funding**) enables pilot cross-border projects (**Collaboration**), which generate evidence for advocacy (**Policy**) and inform curriculum development (**Curriculum**).

The following sections explore each pillar in depth while maintaining awareness of these essential interconnections.

3.2 Funding Pillar

The funding landscape reveals a multi-layered but deeply unequal ecosystem. Session 2's mapping identified four accessibility layers:

- at the centre, Irish Aid, Shared Island funding, PeacePlus, Reconciliation Fund, National Lottery, International Fund for Ireland, and British Council
- the second circle encompasses Erasmus+, Community Foundations, and EU programmes
- the third requires advocacy to access dormant accounts, philanthropy, and private funding
- the outermost contains international opportunities including cross-border consortia.[7]

However, as established in Section 1, this landscape masks profound jurisdictional disparity. NGOs face challenges navigating different grant requirements, reporting standards, and eligibility criteria between jurisdictions. The administrative burden of multiple applications consumes staff time, while funders' reluctance to support core costs prevents capacity-building. Geographic funding gaps exist in border regions, the Midlands,

[7] *Strategic mapping of these diverse funding opportunities and building organisational capacity for complex applications will be critical to sector sustainability.*

and rural areas - precisely where cross-border collaboration could be most transformative. ***Building sector capacity for cross-border project delivery through pilot collaborations and shared administrative frameworks will be essential to navigate these jurisdictional complexities.***

3.2.1 Funding Challenges and Vision 2035

The most significant barrier centres on short-term project cycles forcing perpetual restart mode. As a Session 3 participant articulated, organisations need *'longevity, ongoing permanent multi-year funding, which avoids having to start from the beginning on projects'* (Session 3) Institutional funders' unwillingness to support core organisational costs consistently emerged as a critical constraint. Participants emphasised that the symbolic dimension matters as much as the financial: *'funders and governments show they value GCE by supporting it through long term funding, making GCE central to the activities in schools'* (Session 3). Funding decisions communicate institutional priorities, and short-term project funding signals that GCE remains peripheral rather than essential. ***Addressing this requires strategic engagement with funders to establish multi-annual core funding relationships that support sustained cross-border collaboration and organisational development.***

One of the key elements of the Shared Island Vision 2035[8] is to ensure that "*organisations operate with secure multi-year funding avoiding project restart cycles, with funding explicitly including staff costs and core organisational functions"*. Session 4's backwards mapping identified some specific milestones to build towards this 2035 goal for sector funding, they include:

- **2026 milestones**:
  - working relationships with funders are established
  - pilot cross-border projects are being delivered
  - and GCE is visible in both jurisdictions' education strategies

- **2028 milestones**:
  - multi-year funding schemes that support core costs
  - a dedicated cross-border GCE mechanism is operating within Irish Aid[9]
  - and formal partnerships exist between educational bodies

- **2032 milestones**:
  - regular institutional funding enables collaboration
  - and GCE is adopted as whole-school approach through curriculum frameworks integrating NGO expertise

3.2.2 Cross-Border Integration

Funding represents the most fundamental cross-border challenge, shaping what collaboration is possible. Given the jurisdictional disparity outlined in Section 1.1.1, any funding strategy must explicitly address

[8] *The full Shared Island Vision can be found in the following section "4. Vision 2035".*

[9] *Achievement of these milestones depends on transitioning from project-based to multi-annual core funding models that include strategic organisational support.*

asymmetry rather than assume equivalence. ***This requires developing operational models and administrative frameworks that work effectively across both jurisdictions.***

Existing enablers can accelerate transformation, enablers include Shared Island Civic Society Fund, PeacePlus, International Fund for Ireland, and Community Foundations. Critical stakeholders include Irish Aid, Shared Island Unit, relevant NI government departments, and network organisations (IDEA, Dóchas, CADA). ***Maximising these opportunities requires comprehensive mapping of funding sources beyond Irish Aid and enhanced organisational capacity to navigate complex application processes across multiple funders.***

3.3 Policy and Advocacy Pillar

The policy landscape differs significantly between jurisdictions. The ROI benefits from well-developed infrastructure including: the *Irish Aid Strategy 2021-2025*, *Vision 2030* positioning GCE as all-island priority, and Ireland's co-chairing of the *2022 European Congress*. NI lacks a comparable strategic framework, though the *NI curriculum reform process* offers potential opportunity for GCE embedding through a "*purpose-led, knowledge-rich, continuous and coherent*" curriculum with "*Citizenship, Employability and Personal Development certified programme*" (Department of Education NI, 2025) as one option under consideration. ***Positioning GCE explicitly within the Irish Aid Strategy Renewal process and engaging with international frameworks such as UNESCO's Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights and SDG Target 4.7 provides common reference points that transcend jurisdictional differences.***

Within this landscape, IDEA plays a central coordinating role in all-island GCE advocacy, providing a shared platform through which member organisations' policy positions are consolidated, aligned with Vision 2030, and advanced in engagement with Irish Aid, government departments, and cross-border institutions. Current advocacy infrastructure also includes the CADA GCE Working Group (NI coordination), IDEA's all-island networks, and emerging engagement with highest political levels - MLAs, North-South Ministerial Council, and Irish Aid strategy development. ***Strengthening this infrastructure through a formal cross-border advocacy forum meeting quarterly would develop a unified sectoral voice and enable coordinated engagement with government representatives North and South.***

3.3.1 Cross-Border Integration

The most significant barrier stems from asymmetry between jurisdictions. Limited advocacy expertise within education-focused organisations emerged as a critical constraint, while the sector's fragmented voice undermines potential impact. ***This necessitates broadening advocacy scope beyond education to influence cross-governmental policy coherence on sustainable development, climate justice, and global solidarity through strategic engagement with the North-South Ministerial Council and other cross-governmental mechanisms***

Session 3 participants questioned whether GCE advocacy has become too narrowly focused on curriculum change, asking *'is GCE advocacy limited to curriculum change?"* and emphasising that *"advocacy strategy aligned with where the need is greatest - advocacy aligns with most important issues in our world, not just curriculum'* (Session 4). They stressed the sector's core remit is *'to address the root causes of poverty locally and internationally'* (Session 3), suggesting advocacy scope must extend beyond curriculum integration to

encompass systemic change, climate injustice, and economic inequality. This reflects a recognition that curriculum advocacy and justice advocacy are complementary rather than competing priorities: achieving better educational outcomes through curriculum embedding remains strategically important while the sector simultaneously addresses wider justice issues that constitute GCE's fundamental purpose. Political sensitivities around cross-border work will also require advocacy that navigates these complexities.

3.3.2 Cross-Border Integration

Policy and advocacy represent areas where cross-border coordination delivers exponential rather than additive value. When IDEA, Dóchas, and CADA present unified positions, they demonstrate a genuine all-island consensus which can command governmental attention in both jurisdictions. Participants envisioned concrete mechanisms for this coordination, proposing the consideration of a *'collective sectoral voice'* enabled through a *'quarterly advocacy forum under IDEA - government reps present (cross-border governments)'* (Session 3). ***Establishing such a forum with advocacy capacity mapping and coordinated submission processes will transform periodic collaboration into sustained policy dialogue.*** This potential infrastructure could transform periodic collaborative advocacy into sustained dialogue with policymakers across both jurisdictions.

The convergence of the Irish Aid Strategy Renewal, NI curriculum review and reform process, and Shared Island Initiative represents a critical opportunity to strategically embed GCE in multiple policy frameworks and secure sustained commitment. The *2026 consultation on a new NI curriculum framework* creates a window of urgency for GCE policy advocacy. ROI organisations possess extensive experience which can inform NI advocacy, while NI's curriculum reform offers both jurisdictions a chance to develop aligned approaches. Newly aligned approaches would facilitate cross-border programming and resource sharing, creating coherence that benefits learners, educators, and practitioners across both jurisdictions. ***Achieving this vision requires explicit integration of GCE in the Irish Aid Strategy Renewal and strategic use of international frameworks to build common ground across jurisdictions.***

Critical stakeholders include governmental actors (Irish Aid, Department of Education NI, Shared Island Unit, North-South Ministerial Council), educational authorities (NCCA, CCEA, Education Authority NI), and network organisations (IDEA, Dóchas, CADA).

3.4 Curriculum and Learning Pillar

Some Progress has been made integrating GCE into curricula across both jurisdictions, though the extent of integration varies considerably between them. In the ROI there has been significant progress. Many Junior Cycle Statements of Learning reflect GCE/ESD themes, eight Junior Cycle key skills relate to GCE/ESD, a new Leaving Certificate subject on Climate Action and Sustainable Development exists, and 'being an active citizen' is included in primary curriculum framework competencies. In NI integration remains limited: while Local and Global Citizenship is part of GCSE Learning for Life and Work, and the primary curriculum emphasises cultural understanding. Consensus among practitioners suggests that meaningful GCE integration is minimal in NI when compared to the ROI experience. ***Promoting the IDEA Code of Good Practice as a sector quality standard,***

conducting comprehensive mapping to identify current GCE provision and capacity gaps, and sharing good practice across jurisdictions will support more consistent, high-quality GCE delivery.

Since 2022, all new student teachers in the ROI must study GCE in initial teacher education. Over 3,000 pre-service primary teachers were trained in GCE by DICE in 2024, while Ubuntu Network engages circa 800 post-primary student teachers annually (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2024). This systematic integration into initial teacher education represents a strategic shift from ad-hoc professional development to embedded GCE capacity building. ***Extending this approach to NI through engagement with universities and development of common professional standards via SCOTENS would ensure all newly qualified teachers across the island have foundational GCE competencies.***

Despite progress, educators experience immense time pressure from curriculum overload and competing priorities, preventing engagement with existing CPD offerings. Different curriculum structures between NI and the ROI require adapted approaches rather than simple resource transfers. ***Scaling proven whole-school GCE models through practitioner-led networks, implementation toolkits, case studies, and cross-border collaborative learning opportunities can address these challenges by working within existing curriculum structures.***

3.4.1 Cross-Border Integration

The NI curriculum reform process **presents a critical opportunity and challenge**. While it offers potential for GCE embedding, some practitioners fear that, unless there is a substantial change of direction, GCE's position may actually worsen post-redesign, particularly given the lack of dedicated funding and dependence on political will. The review's outcome remains uncertain, and without strategic intervention, the status quo of minimal integration could persist or even decline. ROI GCE organisations' experience with curriculum embedding can inform NI advocacy, and if NI's reform can be influenced positively, it offers both jurisdictions a chance to develop aligned approaches.

Cross-border coordination will enable shared resource development reducing duplication, creating common professional learning for educators, providing coherent progression for learners in cross-border initiatives, and offers the opportunity for collective advocacy influence. ***This coordination should prioritise scaling whole-school approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness in either jurisdiction.*** Participants articulated an ambitious vision for curriculum transformation, anticipating that once the review is completed '*Northern Ireland's curriculum will be more knowledge-rich, coherent, and inclusive, with stronger progression from early years to post-16 education'*, while highlighting that as a result they hoped that *'educators will be supported to understand the incredible importance of GCE'* (Session 3). This vision positions GCE not as a curriculum add-on but as foundational to educational purpose across both jurisdictions. ***Achieving this vision requires adoption of common quality standards and coordinated professional development that builds capacity across both formal and non-formal education sectors.***

Integrating GCE into ITE across both jurisdictions requires partnership between these stakeholders and engagement with SCOTENS to develop common professional standards. Critical stakeholders include the ROI (NCCA, Department of Education and Youth, Oide), NI (CCEA, Department of Education NI, Education Authority NI), cross-border bodies (SCOTENS, Centre for Cross Border Cooperation), and networks (IDEA, Dóchas, CADA).

3.5 Collaboration and Partnerships Pillar

3.5.1 Introduction & Current State

The GCE sector benefits from a rich partnership ecosystem, with several programmes operating on an all-island basis (detailed in Section 2.1.1). Strategic partnerships between Irish Aid and key delivery organisations provide multi-annual funding and stability.

The sector demonstrates diverse organisational capacity: large international NGOs bring extensive resources, national coordination bodies provide infrastructure, specialist GCE programmes deliver targeted interventions, and regional organisations connect global themes to local contexts. ***Establishing cross-border coordination infrastructure, including appointment of a dedicated GCE coordinator, would enable sustained collaboration based on organisational strengths and quarterly all-sector forums to share learning and coordinate activity.***

Despite recognition of collaboration's value, territorial approaches persist. As noted previously, when addressing context, capacity limitations are particularly acute in NI, creating fundamental asymmetry that collaboration must navigate. Competition for funding can distort incentives, while time and budget constraints prevent organisations from investing in the development of partnerships and collaborations. ***Supporting the establishment of formal partnership structures between curriculum authorities (NCCA/CCEA) and extending collaboration beyond formal education to under-served audiences would address these challenges.***

3.5.2 Cross-Border Integration

Collaboration represents the connective tissue enabling all other strategic priorities. Without effective partnerships, funding opportunities remain under-utilised, policy advocacy lacks coordinated voice, curriculum resources are duplicated, and educator development remains fragmented. ***Dedicated coordination infrastructure is essential to realise these benefits and overcome current collaboration barriers.***

Strategic collaboration is essential for addressing the jurisdictional asymmetry outlined earlier (enabling NI organisations as equal partners), resource efficiency (maximising limited resources), enhanced impact (achieving outcomes impossible for individual organisations), and sectoral strengthening (building collective capacity).

Practitioners articulated these benefits in practical terms: *'can amplify our voices cos different orgs have different expertise'* noting that collaboration enables organisations to *'get more reach...[and] pick up skill sets don't have"* through *"binding together different skills'* (Session 3). This recognition of complementary expertise suggests collaborative approaches can transcend resource constraints by strategically pooling diverse organisational strengths. ***Building a collective evidence base through joint North-South research on GCE impact, shared monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and a collective evidence bank will demonstrate these outcomes and strengthen advocacy efforts.***

Existing enablers include Shared Island funding, PeacePlus, Centre for Cross Border Cooperation network organisations (IDEA, Dóchas, CADA), sector-specific networks (Youth 2030, Ubuntu, DICE, Saolta), and successful existing partnerships providing learning models. ***These enablers can support commissioning of joint research that builds the evidence base for GCE's impact across both jurisdictions***

Formalised partnership structures between these stakeholders will provide the framework for sustained cross-sectoral collaboration. Critical stakeholders include network organisations, strategic partnership leads,

funders (Irish Aid, Shared Island Unit, Community Foundations), and cross-border bodies (Centre for Cross Border Cooperation, North South Ministerial Council, NSETS).

3.6 Framework Integration: How the Pillars Connect

The four strategic pillars function as a deeply interconnected system rather than separate work streams. Understanding these connections is essential for effective implementation.

Funding as Foundation

Funding enables all other strategic areas. Policy and advocacy work requires dedicated staff capacity that only core funding can support - Session 3's vision of *'advocacy/policy expert in each organisation'* (Session 2) depends on sustainable funding for core costs. Curriculum integration demands sustained resourcing for resource development, teacher training, and long-term engagement in curriculum development processes. Collaborations need time and resources for relationship-building that short-term project cycles cannot provide.

Conversely, **success in other pillars strengthens funding cases**. Strong policy frameworks demonstrate GCE's systemic value, supporting advocacy for increased investment. Successful curriculum integration provides evidence of educational impact. Effective collaborations can provide evidence of efficiency gains, countering funder concerns about duplication. Session 4's priority of establishing working relationships with funders by 2026 creates the foundation for all subsequent progress.

Policy-Curriculum-Collaboration Triangle

Policy frameworks create enabling environments for curriculum integration. The NI Curriculum Review's emphasis on "purpose-led, knowledge-rich" (Department of Education NI, 2025) education presents a complex alignment with GCE's evidence base: while the focus on knowledge can support substantive global learning, it exists in tension with GCE's emphasis on critical thinking and engagement with contested knowledge. How "knowledge-rich" is interpreted and implemented will determine whether it enables or constrains critical GCE. The ROI's curriculum reforms demonstrate what's possible with sustained policy support. Coordinated advocacy from IDEA, Dóchas, and CADA networks can amplify impact on both curriculum authorities and governmental policy development, particularly in shaping how curriculum principles are translated into practice.

Curriculum integration successes strengthen policy advocacy cases. When thousands of student teachers receive GCE training through DICE and Ubuntu, or when 70% of post-primary schools engage with WorldWise Global Schools, these outcomes demonstrate GCE's viability and impact, which can inform policy development.

Collaboration enhances both policy influence and curriculum development. Cross-sectoral partnerships (with faith communities, trade unions, other educational actors) multiply advocacy power through coordinated messaging. Collaborative resource development improves curriculum materials quality while at the same time reducing duplication. Youth 2030's success embedding Global Youth Work in NSETS standards exemplifies how partnership can achieve policy and curriculum integration simultaneously.

Cross-Cutting: Geographic and Audience Gaps

The geographic gaps detailed in Section 2.6.1 require coordinated responses across all four pillars:

- **Funding:** Dedicated resources for underserved regions and cross-border work

- **Policy:** Advocacy for equitable geographic distribution in strategy delivery
- **Curriculum:** Resources adapted to rural and border community contexts
- **Collaboration:** Regional organisations as partners connecting global-local

Similarly, the audience gaps identified in Section 2.6.2 demand multi-pillar responses:

- **Funding:** Support for programmes reaching underserved audiences
- **Policy:** Advocacy ensuring strategies address diverse learner needs
- **Curriculum:** Pedagogies appropriate to different learning contexts
- **Collaboration:** Partnerships extending beyond traditional GCE sector to reach new audiences

Backwards Mapping Demonstrates Integration

Session 4's backwards mapping from 2035 illustrated how the pillars must develop in concert. The 2026 early wins span all frameworks: establishing funder relationships, influencing the NI curriculum redesign , initiating pilot cross-border projects, gaining visibility in education strategies. Each win creates conditions for others - you cannot achieve any in isolation.

By 2028, foundational changes similarly integrate: multi-year funding enables formal educational partnerships which support curriculum reform implementation which strengthens collaborative infrastructure. By 2032, systems and structures reflect fully integrated approaches where GCE operates as embedded practice across multiple interconnected systems.

The framework's power lies precisely in refusing to separate what is inherently connected. Effective GCE development across the island requires simultaneous attention to funding security, policy alignment, curriculum integration, and partnership strengthening - not as separate work streams, but as mutually reinforcing elements of a single transformation.

4. Shared Island Vision 2035

By 2035, Global Citizenship Education across the island of Ireland operates as a unified, sustainable ecosystem where practitioners collaborate naturally across borders, learners develop critical consciousness about global interconnection and local action, and GCE is embedded as essential curriculum content from early years through post-16 education.

This Shared Island Vision 2035 is a project-generated, forward-looking scenario developed through the dialogue series. It is intended to complement and extend the ambitions of IDEA's Vision 2030 strategy by exploring how all-island Global Citizenship Education could evolve beyond the current strategic timeframe, rather than replacing or superseding existing sector strategies.

The Shared Island vision represents more than programmatic alignment - it embodies systemic transformation where:

- secure multi-year funding enables long-term planning
- coordinated sectoral advocacy influences curriculum frameworks and government policy at the highest levels
- educational institutions recognise GCE's contribution to developing informed, engaged citizens; and
- cross-border collaboration occurs through established mechanisms rather than extraordinary effort

Most fundamentally, it reflects a shift from project-based thinking to institutional sustainability, from fragmented initiatives to collective impact, and from competition to strategic partnership. Session 6 participants expressed '*a coordinated resolve to collaborate across the island but not to forget East-West learning*' recognising the value of situating all-island GCE collaboration within wider East-West learning, particularly drawing on experience from Scotland, Wales, and other UK contexts. This commitment reflects recognition that building sustainable cross-border infrastructure requires moving beyond individual projects toward institutional commitment and relationship investment.

Success in 2035 means GCE practitioners no longer navigate different funding requirements, and policy landscapes as barriers but as complementary frameworks supporting integrated approaches. It means people across the island engage with global justice issues through age-appropriate, culturally responsive pedagogy that honours diverse perspectives while building shared understanding. It means governments North and South demonstrate sustained commitment through dedicated funding streams, formal cross-border mechanisms, and curriculum frameworks that position GCE as core to educational purpose rather than optional enrichment.

Shared Island Vision 2035: Implementation Pathway

PHASE	KEY MILESTONES & ACTIONS
2026 **FOUNDATIONS**	• Working relationships with funders established • GCE engagement with NI Curriculum Review Taskforce • Pilot cross-border projects delivered • Sector mapping completed • Cross-border coordinator appointed
2028 **STRUCTURAL CHANGE**	• Multi-annual funding schemes operational • Cross-border mechanism within Irish Aid • Formal North-South educational partnerships • ITE integration (NI) begins • Whole-school models scaled
2032 **EMBEDDING**	• Regular institutional funding operational • GCE as whole-school approach at scale • 500 schools engaged across island • Curriculum frameworks integrate NGO expertise • Geographic gaps reduced significantly
2035 **VISION ACHIEVED**	• Natural cross-border collaboration as standard practice • Young people develop critical consciousness • GCE embedded in curriculum from early years • Sustainable, unified all-island GCE ecosystem

Progressive implementation from early foundations to systemic transformation

4.1 Cross-Border Integration Model

Achieving this vision requires a comprehensive integration model addressing political engagement, community participation, and the four strategic framework areas identified through the dialogue series: funding, policy and advocacy, curriculum integration, and collaboration and partnerships. As these elements function interdependently - progress in one area enables advancement in others, while gaps in any dimension constrain the whole.

4.1.1 Political and Institutional Engagement

Governmental Level: Cross-border GCE requires formal engagement with both the North-South Ministerial Council and individual government departments (Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Education NI, Department of Education ROI). The model positions GCE as addressing shared challenges - misinformation, climate crisis, polarization, racism - that transcend jurisdictional boundaries. By 2028,

dedicated cross-border GCE mechanisms operate within Irish Aid supporting NI-based organisations as equal partners, However, following models like Wales where devolved funding supports GCE through Welsh Government mechanisms, sustainable all-island infrastructure also requires corresponding commitment from UK government and the NI Assembly to match this investment. Without such reciprocal commitment, the structural asymmetry persists. While quarterly cross-border advocacy forums with government participation ensure coordinated policy development. Participants articulated this political vision ambitiously, calling for an *'all-island vision that leads to a multi-party agreement that sees huge opportunity of GCE investment and makes it a priority',* explicitly linking it to *'opportunity for community-building, reconciliation, integration of new communities'* (Session 3). This framing positions GCE as essential infrastructure for addressing not only global justice issues but also the pressing domestic challenges of misinformation, polarization, and social cohesion already identified in the model. Achieving this vision requires advocacy across both North-South and East-West dimensions: while North-South mechanisms enable all-island collaboration, East-West engagement with UK government, devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales), and Westminster is essential to secure the matched commitment and policy frameworks that make genuine partnership possible.

Educational Institutions: Formal partnerships between universities, teacher training bodies, curriculum authorities, and schools North and South create structural foundations for collaboration. Building on proven models like SCOTENS (Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South) and NSETS (North South Education and Training Standards), the sector develops common professional standards for GCE practice, shared monitoring frameworks, and joint programme accreditation enabling practitioner mobility and co-created curriculum resources.

Civil Society Networks: Existing platforms including Dóchas, CADA, and IDEA strengthen coordination while expanding engagement beyond traditional GCE actors to include faith communities, trade unions, youth organisations, and community development networks. This broadened coalition amplifies advocacy voices and deepens community roots for GCE practice.

4.1.2 Funding Ecosystem Integration

Sustainable cross-border collaboration requires a funding architecture specifically designed to support all-island approaches. By 2028, multi-year funding schemes explicitly support core organisational costs and staff development, replacing short-term project cycles with institutional investment. Participants specifically identified expansion of the Shared Island initiative to include matched funding across multiple jurisdictions (ROI, UK government, NI Assembly, and EU) as a priority pathway. This vision of matched funding across multiple jurisdictions and governmental levels - explicitly including UK government, NI Assembly, and ROI commitments working in concert - reflects understanding that sustainable cross-border GCE requires political commitment extending well beyond any single department or jurisdiction. The East-West dimension referenced here is critical: without UK government and NI Assembly engagement to match ROI investment, the structural funding asymmetry cannot be resolved.

Foundation relationships evolve from transactional grant-giving to strategic partnerships recognising GCE's long-term contribution to educational goals and societal cohesion. Diversified funding sources across public, philanthropic, and international streams create resilience, while shared monitoring frameworks demonstrate collective impact rather than isolated project outputs.

4.1.3 Policy and Advocacy Coordination

Coordinated cross-border advocacy transforms fragmented organisational voices into collective sectoral influence. The model establishes dedicated policy capacity in member organisations while creating collaborative structures - including a formal cross-border advocacy working group - that enable coordinated messaging, shared policy analysis, and strategic timing of interventions. Rather than advocating separately to different governments, the sector presents unified positions on issues transcending borders while respecting jurisdictional specificities.

By expanding advocacy scope beyond curriculum to address root causes of poverty and inequality locally and internationally, the sector positions GCE within broader social justice frameworks while maintaining educational focus. Effective policy and advocacy coordination at all-island level requires a clear institutional anchor. Building on its Vision 2030 mandate and existing policy engagement, IDEA is positioned to provide this anchor by convening coordinated advocacy processes, supporting evidence-informed policy positions, and facilitating structured collaboration with Dóchas, CADA, and other sector actors in engagement with governments North and South.

4.1.4 Curriculum Integration

Cross-border curriculum integration leverages jurisdictional differences as opportunities for mutual learning rather than barriers. Republic of Ireland experience embedding GCE across subject areas informs NI's curriculum reform, while NI's citizenship education emphasis offers insights for strengthening civic engagement dimensions in the Republic. The model creates mechanisms for sharing pedagogical approaches, co-creating resources, and developing common language around GCE learning outcomes despite different assessment systems.

Technology-enhanced delivery enables all-island classroom connections, joint projects, and shared professional learning for educators. Participants stressed how *'digitisation/web/multimedia creating opportunities to transcend geographic borders in Ireland and around the world - opens doors for innovation and collaboration, also increased access to knowledge, tools and resources from other countries'* (Session 3). They anticipated that by 2035, *'use of technology will enhance curriculum delivery, with options for all-island approaches and collaboration'* (Session 3), transforming geographic separation from barrier to opportunity for rich cross-border educational experiences.

4.1.5 Collaboration and Partnership Architecture

The model transforms ad-hoc collaboration into sustainable partnership infrastructure through shared governance structures, clear communication protocols, and collective impact measurement frameworks. Rather than duplicating efforts, organisations identify complementary strengths - some focusing on curriculum resources, others on teacher professional learning, some on advocacy, others on research - with coordination ensuring comprehensive coverage without gaps or wasteful competition.

Successful existing partnerships (see Section 2.1.1) provide templates demonstrating what works. The model scales these successes while addressing current limitations - particularly the need for partnerships extending beyond projects to institutional relationships, and beyond GCE-specific actors to broader educational and community stakeholders.

By 2035, participants envisioned a maturity where they *'would be wiser on differences... ironed out all the differences that limit us now',* with cross-border collaboration *'streamlined into our work' to the point where 'it is just there... (not having to work on it)'* (Session 3). This vision of naturalised collaboration - where cross-border partnership becomes routine rather than exceptional - represents the deepest transformation: from cooperation requiring constant negotiation to integration enabling seamless joint work.

4.1.6 Community Engagement and Ownership

Cross-border GCE integration ultimately succeeds through community participation beyond institutional actors. Parents, young people, community organisations, and local leaders engage as partners in shaping GCE approaches relevant to their contexts. The model recognises diverse communities across the island - urban and rural, majority and minority, economically advantaged and marginalised - require culturally responsive approaches rather than standardised programmes. Anti-racist frameworks, decolonisation perspectives, and climate justice imperatives embed throughout practice, supporting educators to address difficult topics young people want and need to discuss.

4.1.7 Implementation Pathway

The integration model phases through identified milestones:

- **2026** establishes foundations - working relationships with funders, presence on policy taskforces, pilot cross-border projects, initial collaborative networks
- **2028** creates structural changes - multi-year funding schemes, dedicated cross-border mechanisms, formal institutional partnerships, curriculum reform implementation
- **2032** embeds systemic transformation - regular institutional funding, whole-school GCE adoption, curriculum frameworks integrating NGO expertise, established cross-border governance

This phased approach recognises that systemic change requires patience while at the same time maintaining urgency around current opportunities.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations outline strategic priorities across four interconnected pillars that together create the conditions for sustainable, quality cross-border Global Citizenship Education (GCE) across the island of Ireland. The Curriculum pillar has been expanded to Curriculum & Learning to fully reflect session conversations and areas for progress. These recommendations represent the collective priorities identified by practitioners and stakeholders through the dialogue process, focusing specifically on actions that benefit from or require a cross-border, all-island approach.

Funding Pillar

Theme	Strategic Recommendation
Multi-Annual Core Funding	Establish strategic relationships with funders to transition from project-based to multi-annual core funding that supports sustained cross-border collaboration, organisational development, and strategic planning.
Cross-Border Funding Mechanism	Build sector capacity for cross-border project delivery through pilot collaborations and development of shared administrative frameworks that work across both jurisdictions, creating operational models and evidence to support future cross-border funding streams.
Funding Diversification & Capacity	Map funding opportunities beyond Irish Aid (including Peace Plus, Shared Island Civic Society Fund, Council of Europe, Horizon Europe) and build organisational capacity for complex applications through shared resources and mentoring.

POLICY & ADVOCACY PILLAR

Theme	Strategic Recommendation
Coordinated Advocacy Infrastructure	Establish a cross-border advocacy forum meeting quarterly to develop a unified sectoral voice, complete advocacy capacity mapping, and coordinate submissions to government representatives North and South, positioning the GCE sector as an essential policy partner.
Strategic Policy Integration	Position GCE explicitly within the Irish Aid Strategy renewal process and engage with international frameworks (UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, SDG Target 4.7) as common standards across both jurisdictions.
Critical Windows Leverage	Strategically capitalise on the convergence of the Irish Aid Strategy renewal, NI curriculum reform, and Shared Island Initiative to embed GCE in multiple policy frameworks and secure sustained commitment beyond immediate timeframes.
Systemic Change Advocacy	Broaden advocacy scope beyond education to influence cross-governmental policy coherence on sustainable development, climate justice, and global solidarity through strategic engagement with the North-South Ministerial Council and Shared Island Initiative.

CURRICULUM & LEARNING PILLAR

Theme	Strategic Recommendation
Whole-School Approaches	Scale proven whole-school GCE models through practitioner-led networks, develop implementation toolkits and case studies, and create cross-border collaborative learning opportunities that work within existing school structures and resources.
Initial Teacher Education (ITE)	Integrate GCE into ITE in NI through engagement with NI universities and development of common professional standards via SCOTENS, ensuring all newly qualified teachers have foundational GCE competencies with qualifications recognised across the island.
Quality Standards & Professional Development	Promote the IDEA Code of Good Practice as a sector quality standard, conduct mapping to identify current GCE provision and capacity gaps across formal, non-formal, and informal education, and share good practice examples to support quality improvement across the island.
Geographic & Audience Equity	Address identified gaps through refined sector mapping and targeted programmes for border regions, rural areas, underserved audiences, Adult and Community Education, marginalised communities, and young men.

Collaboration & Partnership Pillar

Theme	Strategic Recommendation
Cross-Border Coordination Infrastructure	Establish cross-border coordination infrastructure, including appointment of a dedicated GCE coordinator, to enable sustained collaboration based on organisational strengths, and quarterly all-sector meetings. Complete sector mapping to inform coordination planning.
Formalised Partnership Structures	Support the establishment of formal partnership structures between curriculum authorities (NCCA/CCEA) and extend collaboration beyond formal education to underserved audiences including faith communities and trade unions.
Collective Evidence & Learning	Seek funding to commission joint North-South research on GCE impact, establish a collective evidence bank, and pilot shared monitoring and evaluation frameworks to build robust evidence base demonstrating GCE's impact on critical thinking and civic engagement.
Strategic Complementarity	Coordinate sector activity so organisations can focus on their strengths in research, programme delivery, teacher education, and advocacy, reducing duplication and increasing efficiency across the sector.

Implementation Approach

These recommendations require differentiated implementation timelines based on resource availability, policy windows, and partnership readiness. Priority actions include:

- Establishing cross-border coordination infrastructure and appointing a coordinator
- Leveraging the 2026 critical windows (Irish Aid Strategy Renewal, NI curriculum reform, Shared Island Initiative)
- Securing commitment for multi-annual funding transitions
- Launching the cross-border advocacy forum

- Initiating ITE engagement and professional standards development

Successful implementation depends on strategic sequencing, adequate resourcing, and sustained commitment from partner organisations, funders, and policymakers across both jurisdictions. The establishment of coordination infrastructure and the leveraging of current policy windows are foundational to progress across all pillars.

6. LOOKING AHEAD

2026 presents opportunities for transforming dialogue into sustained cross-border GCE collaboration. With sector mapping completing in January, Irish Aid Strategy renewal proceeding, and NI's curriculum reform process advancing, conditions converge for meaningful progress - if practitioners can convert the relationships and shared understanding built through this initiative into coordinated action. **The genuine community forged across these six dialogue sessions represents tangible infrastructure: trust, strategic clarity, and collaborative capacity that subsequent work can build upon.**

This forward momentum should address both general sectoral challenges affecting GCE practice everywhere and barriers specific to cross-border collaboration on the island of Ireland. General challenges - evidence gaps, capacity constraints, competitive rather than collaborative culture - require collective advocacy and research partnerships across the GCE field. Shared island-specific barriers - jurisdictional disparity in funding and policy frameworks, absence of cross-border coordination infrastructure, differential recognition of GCE between North and South - demand targeted solutions through formal partnership structures and dedicated coordination mechanisms.

The path forward navigates persistent asymmetry between jurisdictions while working to transform it. NI's GCE sector operates without the policy frameworks, funding infrastructure, or governmental recognition that ROI organisations increasingly benefit from - no government funding stream since 2021, no ministerial portfolio, minimal curriculum access. Yet this disparity creates imperative: cross-border collaboration offers NI practitioners access to resources, networks, and legitimacy broadly unavailable domestically, while providing ROI organisations crucial all-island perspective in addressing shared challenges from information disorder to climate crisis to rising far-right movements.

This report serves multiple strategic purposes for the GCE sector: Practitioners can use Section 3's pillar frameworks and Section 2.5's funding landscape analysis to strengthen applications to Irish Aid, PeacePlus, and Shared Island funding streams. Policymakers and curriculum developers will find Section 2's barrier analysis and gap identification particularly relevant to the Irish Aid Strategy renewal and NI curriculum reform processes. Network organisations including IDEA, Dóchas, and CADA can draw on the participatory consensus documented throughout to inform coordinated advocacy strategies. The appendices provide detailed session documentation that evidences genuine cross-border practitioner engagement and shared priorities across jurisdictions.

The strategic recommendations emerging from practitioner consensus position the sector for concrete 2026 action. Joint North-South research must demonstrate GCE's impact on curriculum priorities - literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, citizenship - to overcome recognition gaps in both jurisdictions. Positioning must evolve to engage with "knowledge-rich" curriculum reform directions while maintaining space for critical consciousness and contested knowledge. Parent and community engagement strategies must articulate how GCE develops capabilities - critical thinking, empathy, active citizenship - essential for navigating contemporary challenges. Proven whole-school approaches require scaling beyond individual project delivery toward systemic impact.

Most crucially, the coordination infrastructure deficit identified across all dialogue groups demands resolution. Further sector mapping will provide essential visibility, but sustained collaboration requires dedicated mechanisms to convert visibility into strategic action. Formal educational partnerships between North and South institutions - teacher education providers, curriculum authorities, school networks - must move from aspiration to implementation. Equally, strategic investment in non-formal and informal GCE - through youth work, adult and community education, and civil society networks - must address the systematic exclusion of these contexts, particularly given their critical role in community development and reaching audiences beyond formal schooling. Diversified funding sources combining project-specific support and Shared Island coordination funding can begin addressing resource asymmetry.

The practitioners who participated in this dialogue series have charted a pathway toward Shared Island's 2035's vision of a unified, sustainable all-island GCE ecosystem. They have demonstrated both commitment and complementary capacities. **The task ahead is to implement this pathway collectively - building the evidence base, establishing formal partnerships, developing advocacy capacity, and moving from competitive funding dynamics toward strategic collaboration.**

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Appendix

Appendix A Key Documents Summary

Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025

The Strategy outlines Ireland's plan to increase public awareness and engagement with global challenges like climate change, poverty, and inequality through education across all sectors. The strategy commits to expanding funding to €10 million annually, launching new programmes for primary schools and community education, strengthening partnerships with educational institutions and NGOs, and supporting teacher training to embed global citizenship themes throughout Ireland's formal and non-formal education systems. The ultimate goal is to empower people in Ireland to understand their connection to global issues and take individual and collective action toward building a fairer, more sustainable world, while also increasing public understanding of Irish Aid's international development work.

Mid-Term Review of the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025

The Mid-Term Review reveals substantial progress in establishing Ireland as a global leader in GCE, with €33.6 million invested and over 1.2 million participants engaged across formal, informal, and non-formal education settings between 2021 and 2024. Key accomplishments include the establishment of effective strategic partnerships with multi-annual funding structures, successful integration of GCE into initial teacher education through initiatives like DICE and Ubuntu, curriculum development that embeds global citizenship in primary and post-primary education, and the launch of the Innovation Challenge Fund. The strategy has demonstrated flexibility in delivery across diverse learner groups, built synergies with Education for Sustainable Development, and increased educator capacity with over 56,000 educators receiving training in GCE between 2021-2024. Ireland's co-chairing of the 2022 European Congress and adoption of the Dublin Declaration further cemented its international leadership position.

However, the review identifies several areas requiring additional attention and development. Critical gaps include limited engagement with hard-to-reach and marginalised communities (requiring consistent support like childcare and transportation), insufficient presence in NI beyond formal education settings, and lack of strategic partnerships in higher education curriculum and early childhood education. The strategy needs stronger engagement with business, trade unions, and local government networks, better geographic mapping to understand urban-rural coverage, and enhanced mechanisms for measuring qualitative impact beyond quantitative statistics. Additionally, there is need for improved cross-governmental awareness of GCE, expanded partnerships with the Global South that avoid extractive approaches, stronger alignment between GCE and Education for Sustainable Development policies, and more robust research infrastructure. The review recommends seven priority considerations for 2025, including exploring new partnerships across the education lifespan, conducting geographic mapping, leveraging cross-promotional opportunities, building internal government awareness, researching Global South partnerships, engaging with GENE quality assurance, and maintaining multi-annual funding commitments.

Vision 2030: Towards a Society of Active Global Citizens

Key Principle: GCE is positioned as an all-island priority responding to all-island challenges (misinformation, polarization, climate crisis, racism). The next national GCE strategy must maintain all-island scope and be central to the Shared Island Initiative with strong north-south governmental coordination.

Global Citizenship Education and Cross-Border Work on the Island of Ireland

Current State

All-Island Approach: The Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021-2025 is explicitly all-island in scope, aligning with the Shared Island Initiative. Between 2021-2024, €33.6 million was invested in GCE across the island, engaging over 1.2 million people.

Stark North-South Divide**:**

- **ROI**: Well-developed infrastructure with strategic partnerships, multi-annual funding, and increasing integration in education policy
- **NI**: Sector in crisis since 2021 with no British government funding and loss of EU funding access post-Brexit. Only 4 projects solely based in NI were funded by Irish Aid in 2024, plus some all-island projects reaching 29 primary and 30 post-primary NI schools

Key Cross-Border Initiatives

- **WorldWise Global Schools** expanded to NI in 2024, offering grants for secondary schools
- **Youth 2030** worked with North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) to embed Global Youth Work in professional standards for youth work programmes across the island
- **Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future** project (2025) - collaborative initiative between Dóchas, CADA (Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies NI), and IDEA to enhance cross-border GCE cooperation

Critical Gaps in Cross-Border Work

1. **Funding disparity**: NI requires ringfenced resources and targeted support beyond current Irish Aid allocations
2. **Limited reach beyond formal education** in NI - need for more investment in youth and community sectors
3. **Curriculum differences** between north and south require tailored approaches
4. **Weak cross-border partnerships** - insufficient collaboration between organisations north and south
5. **No engagement with NI government structures** on GCE policy integration

Vision 2030 Priorities for All-Island GCE

Immediate Actions**:**

- Conduct mapping of GCE projects across the island to identify geographic gaps and inform cross-border collaborations
- Review all-island approach including resourcing, curriculum, cooperation, and partnerships
- Expand IDEA membership in NI

- Support CADA GCE Working Group as coordination space
- Increase Irish Aid funding for NI and cross-border projects through new mechanisms (possibly a strategic partnership for NI)

Strategic Engagement:

- Engage with NI Department of Education, CCEA, and Education Authority
- Support the "Case for Global Learning" campaign advocating for UK state funding
- Strengthen partnerships with Shared Island Unit and North South Ministerial Council on education cooperation
- Encourage cross-border collaborations in current projects with appropriate resourcing

SDG Target 4.7 and broader SDG framework

SDG Target 4.7 is the primary international policy anchor for Global Citizenship Education, explicitly calling for all learners to "acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" by 2030. This target situates GCE as essential infrastructure for achieving the broader SDG framework, recognising that transforming our world requires citizens equipped with critical thinking skills, systems understanding, and the capacity for collective action on interconnected global challenges.

IDEA's Vision 2030 document positions GCE as directly contributing to multiple SDGs beyond education—including climate action (SDG 13), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), peace and justice (SDG 16), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17)—while noting that with only five years remaining until 2030 and only 17% of SDG targets globally on track, there is urgent need to scale up GCE investment and embed it across government policies.

Ireland's approach recognises GCE not as a peripheral add-on but as a core mechanism for building the informed, engaged citizenry necessary to address the climate crisis, inequality, conflict, and other systemic challenges that threaten achievement of all 17 SDGs, making the target of investing 3% of Official Development Assistance in GCE aligned with the internationally recognised "Envision 4.7 Roadmap."

GeoHive.ie

The GeoHive is Ireland's official platform for tracking progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals, managed by the Central Statistics Office. It maps Ireland's progress against all 17 SDGs using state-of-the-art geospatial technology, presenting data at national, regional, and local levels through accessible visualisations. The platform demonstrates Ireland's commitment to transparent SDG monitoring and provides existing infrastructure that GCE organisations can use to demonstrate their contributions to national targets, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Dublin Declaration on Global Citizenship Education

The **Dublin Declaration on Global Education** (formally titled "European Declaration on Global Education to 2050") was adopted in November 2022 at a European Congress co-chaired by Ireland and Luxembourg. It represents a landmark commitment by the Irish Government and 24 other European governments to prioritise Global Citizenship Education through 2050.

Key Elements

Core Vision: The Declaration articulates that "for the first time in human history, the scale and complexity of problems we face are such that they threaten our very existence" - including climate change, inequality, poverty, and war. It positions education as "a powerful force in bringing about long-term change" but emphasis this education must "take account of these realities of local and global injustice."

Definition of Global Education: The Declaration describes it as education that "enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts, and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It involves imagination and hope, respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future."

Aspirational Goal: The Declaration envisions "a world where every single person – especially the most vulnerable and the most marginalised – can live a decent life, with fairness, peace, and respect for their rights guaranteed…a healthy planet and understanding between different cultures and nations and respect for all forms of diversity."

Pedagogical Approach: It emphasises learning processes that encourage "necessary competences such as critical analysis, the ability to evaluate multiple perspectives, the ability to learn better as well as the ability to unlearn those things that are no longer useful."

Significance for Ireland: The Dublin Declaration demonstrates Ireland's international leadership position in GCE and provides policy legitimacy for continued investment. IDEA's Vision 2030 explicitly aligns with and references the Dublin Declaration as both validation of Ireland's current approach and as a framework extending to 2050, beyond IDEA's 2030 horizon.

Ireland's Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024

This Implementation Plan was developed through extensive consultation with government departments, local authorities, and over 5,000 stakeholders. It represents Ireland's framework for SDG implementation during 2022-2024, it builds on the first National Implementation Plan (2018-2020).

Key Context

- Ireland is above EU average on 12 of 16 SDGs with sufficient data, and making progress on 8 of these
- Ireland performs particularly well on economic and social SDGs including Quality Education, Reduced Inequalities, Peace/Justice, Decent Work, and Good Health
- Further work is required on environmental goals, particularly Climate Action, Responsible Consumption/Production, and aspects of Clean Water and Life on Land

Five Strategic Objectives

1. *Embedding SDGs in Government Work*

   Actions include integrating SDGs into administrative frameworks (RIA, Memoranda to Government, budgetary processes), capacity-building across departments, and working toward Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

2. *Integrating SDGs into Local Authority Work*

   Includes showcasing existing initiatives, capacity building, embedding SDGs in governance frameworks, and incorporating into local planning

3. *Greater Partnerships for the Goals*

   Emphasis multi-stakeholder engagement including relaunch of National Stakeholder Forum, SDG Champions Programme, and enhanced sectoral engagement mechanisms.

4. *Leave No One Behind Principle*

   Opening collaborative dialogue to explore what "Leave No One Behind" means in Irish context, to inform future implementation structures.

5. *Strong Reporting Mechanisms*

   Includes robust monitoring of SDG progress, target-level reporting, and preparation of Ireland's second Voluntary National Review for presentation to UN in 2023

Governance Structures

Whole-of-Government approach with each Minister responsible for relevant SDG targets, coordinated through SDG Senior Officials Group, Inter-Departmental Working Group, and CSO Data Governance Board

Key Implementation Approaches

1. *Development of bespoke eLearning modules and SDG toolkit for civil servants*

   Exploration of incorporating SDGs into Regulatory Impact Analysis, Memoranda to Government, and budgetary processes

2. *Annual target-level reporting to capture policy updates from all lead departments*
3. *Stakeholder Engagement*

   The Plan includes substantial focus on:

   - Business sector engagement
   - Civil society and community participation
   - Libraries, youth, and education sectors
   - Persons with disabilities
   - Enhanced mechanisms for meaningful participation

Consultation Findings

Market research found only 17% of Irish adults aware of SDGs and familiar with their purpose, with awareness highest among under-35s and upper social classes.

This Implementation Plan represents a clear commitment to mainstreaming the SDGs across Irish government and society, with concrete actions, timelines, and accountability mechanisms to drive progress toward achieving Agenda 2030.

Relevant UNESCO framework and guidelines

The Dublin Declaration itself represents a European regional interpretation of UNESCO's global frameworks, tailored to the European context while maintaining alignment with UNESCO principles.

UNESCO 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development

This comprehensive recommendation is explicitly listed in IDEA's Vision 2030 as a guiding policy framework. It represents UNESCO's updated global guidance on implementing education that promotes peace, human rights, and global citizenship - directly applicable to both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland as UN member states.

Key Points of Relevance:

Policy Coherence: UNESCO frameworks provide internationally recognised standards that both the Republic of Ireland and NI (via UK membership) can reference, making them particularly valuable for cross-border cooperation where different governmental structures exist.

Target 4.7 Alignment: UNESCO is the custodian agency for monitoring SDG Target 4.7, providing guidance on how member states should implement and report on GCE. This creates a common measurement framework applicable across the island.

Pedagogical Guidance: UNESCO frameworks emphasis transformative, learner-centred, and action-oriented approaches to GCE - methodologies that IDEA members employ across both jurisdictions.

Cross-Border Significance:

While the IDEA Vision 2030 document doesn't elaborate extensively on UNESCO guidelines, it positions them within the international policy landscape that legitimises GCE investment. For cross-border work, UNESCO frameworks are particularly valuable because they:

- Provide neutral, internationally-recognised standards that transcend north-south political differences
- Offer common language and definitions for GCE that facilitate cooperation between different education systems

- Support advocacy for investment in both jurisdictions by demonstrating global consensus on GCE's importance
- Enable Ireland to demonstrate international leadership while providing benchmarks for improvement

Relevant North-South Cooperation Policies

Shared Island Initiative (Department of the Taoiseach)

Significance: The Vision 2030 document explicitly states that GCE "should be a principal component of the Shared Island Initiative" with "strong coordination between relevant government departments north and south of the border." This is the primary governmental framework for north-south cooperation that IDEA advocates should centrally include GCE.

Current Status: The document notes a focus on "cross-border cooperation in education" within this initiative but suggests GCE needs stronger integration.

North South Ministerial Council (Education Cooperation)

Significance: Mentioned as a key engagement point for advancing cross-border GCE cooperation. This is the formal governmental structure established under the Good Friday Agreement for north-south collaboration.

Application to GCE: IDEA advocates for greater engagement with this council specifically on education matters.

North South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) for Youth Work

Significance: A major success story - Youth 2030 worked with NSETS to include Global Youth Work in professional endorsement criteria for youth work programmes across the island. This means GCE is now embedded in learning requirements for Higher Education Institutions offering youth and community studies on both sides of the border.

Impact: This creates common professional standards that facilitate cross-border practitioner mobility and shared approaches to youth work education.

Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South

Significance: Identified as a relevant cross-border stakeholder for advancing GCE in teacher education, though the document doesn't detail current engagement levels.

APPENDIX B: SESSION REPORTS

SESSION 1 SUMMARY REPORT

Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future
29 APRIL 2025, Online, 11am-1pm

SESSION 1

The overall purpose of the 2-hour online session was to introduce participants to the intentions of the initiative; introduce the group to one another and their organisations; and to prepare them to look forward to what a collaborative, all Island, future might look like for GCE programmes.

Session Outline:

- Welcome
- Seamus O'Gorman introduced the Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future project and offered a quote from the Dalai Lama as a frame for the workshop
- Ambassador David Donaghue provided opening remarks which emphasised the importance of North-South cooperation and the role of GCE in achieving the sustainable development Goals
- Participant Introductions: one interesting thing about yourself; your connection to work in NI ROI; and any cross-border projects you're currently involved with or aware of
- Two Futures Activity: "Business as usual" and "Collaborative Transformation"
- Group Work, achieving collaborative transformation, groups asked to consider:
    - What are the first steps to make the vision happen?
    - What 2-3 critical foundations must we build in the next year to start the journey?
    - What resources and networks can we use today to improve global collaboration?
    - What barriers block North-South collaboration, and how can we overcome them?
- Group Work Feedback
- Signposting to Survey Monkey (to assist in Belfast planning) and Google Registration Sheet for Belfast session (20 May)

Achieving Collaborative Transformation: Group Work Feedback Summaries

Group 1:

- Emphasised a need for genuine collaboration and stakeholder mapping
- Highlighted the importance of including groups from the North and South (N/S)
- Stated that there needs to be meaningful inclusion of Irish Aid in N/S collaborations
- Believe that GCE needs to be "galvanised" to respond to contemporary issues like the rise of the far right
- Identified the need for networking, funding and "sensitively done" collaborations

Group 2:

- Highlighted the need for collaborative approaches and the importance of mapping

- Recognised the fragility of the GCE sector in NI and the need for government support and research
- Emphasised the importance of a top-down approach and advocacy at the highest level
- Identified the need for resources and networks, including best-practices from European colleagues

Group 3:

- Discussed the importance of funding and collaboration; and recognised the opportunities that the Shared Island funding provides
- Highlighted the need for political interest ("warmth") and the involvement of various government departments
- Suggested the North-South Ministerial Council should be involved in Shared Island activities
- Emphasised the importance of getting buy-in from MLAs and other advocates

Group 4:

- Focused on the importance of strong collaboration within and between IDEA and CADA
- Recognised the need for a plan with funding security and internal advocacy within INGOs
- Highlighted the challenges of collaboration due to funding and time constraints
- Discussed practical and logistical barriers, such as different school systems etc, as considerations for cross-border collaborations

Group 5:

- Identified the importance of mapping exercises to identify gaps, opportunities and to avoid duplication
- Emphasised the need for an all-Island approach to policy making within Irish Aid
- Highlighted the potential of the Shared Island initiative and the need for more support from Irish Aid
- Suggested that time constraints, practical factors, and knowledge gaps are barriers to collaboration

Attendees:

21 attendees:

Seamus Gorman, Children in Crossfire, CADA
David Donahue, Guest Speaker
Gillian Ivory, Dóchas
Bobby McCormick, Development Perspectives, IDEA
Ruairí McKiernan, IDEA
Stephen McCluskey, Centre for Global Education, CADA
Elisha Kelly, Global Villages
Myra McAuliffe, Inishowen
Victoria Trimble, Habitat Ireland
Laura Rio Fernandez, Trócaire
Amelia Deehan, Concern
Ellie Irving, Concern
Katie Martin, Afri
Emma Lynch, Tearfund
Leigh Brady, IDEA
Valerie Duffy, NYCI
Aidan Clifford, APA (A partnership with Africa
Georgina Eastaugh, Concern

Maeve Mlowzei, Sightsavers Ireland
Person attending on behalf of Chris O'Donoghue, Logan, Friends of Africa

Rosie McCreanor
Lisa Rose

Apologies:

Katie Chapple, World Wise Global Schools
Caroline Murphy, Comhlámh

Guest Speaker and Facilitators:
Ambassador Donoghue

SESSION 2 SUMMARY REPORT

Shared Island Shared World Shared Future

20 May 2025
NIVA, Belfast
1100-1530

Agenda:

Welcome
Speed Networking
Mapping
Collaborative Ecosystems

26 participants

15 From Republic of Ireland

11 From Northern Ireland

Saolta	QUB, School of Social Sciences Education and Social Work
Concern/CADA NI	Trócaire
Development Perspectives	ChangeMakers Donegal Inishowen Development Partnership
Development Perspectives	Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation
Friends of Africa	STAND
The Education and Training Inspectorate	CADA
Christian Aid Ireland	IDEA
Community Foundation Northern Ireland	Children in Crossfire

Global Village	Centre for Global Education
CADA	Tools for Solidarity
CEA	National Youth Council of Ireland
The DICE Project	Habitat for Humanity Ireland
GOAL	

Speed Networking Activity

The speed networking activity received considerable positive feedback in the event evaluation, with several participants requesting that the questions be shared for replication in their own contexts.

Participants particularly valued the structured approach, with one noting that the speed networking was "very beneficial and well managed." However, some suggestions emerged for future iterations. Due to the seven-round format required by time constraints, one participant observed that "it was a shame we didn't get to meet everyone in the setting." Another recommended enhancing cross-border engagement by ensuring NI and ROI attendees were seated in different circles to maximise opportunities for cross-jurisdictional connections.

While all participants found the activity beneficial, one or two experienced sensory overload due to the high level of concurrent conversations and movement. This challenge was compounded by venue space limitations, which necessitated the restricted space format.

Cross-Border GCE Collaboration Mapping

This activity aimed to map existing GCE activities in three stages and identify concrete opportunities for enhanced collaboration. The session employed a structured approach designed to move participants from networking to actionable collaboration opportunities:

Methodology

Working in mixed North-South groups, participants undertook a systematic three-step mapping process:

1. **Current Landscape Mapping**: Participants plotted existing GCE initiatives geographically and thematically using colour-coded categories (Educational Resources, Training Programmes, Advocacy Campaigns, Community Engagement, Research Initiatives)
2. **Resource and Network Analysis**: Groups mapped available resources, partnerships, and networks across concentric circles (organisational, sectoral, regional, and international levels)
3. **Gap and Opportunity Identification**: Systematic analysis of geographic, thematic, audience, and cross-border collaboration gaps

Key Outcomes

The mapping exercise revealed a rich landscape of existing GCE activity across both jurisdictions, while highlighting significant opportunities for enhanced cross-border collaboration. The results demonstrate both the depth of current

work and the potential for more strategic, coordinated approaches to Global Citizenship Education across the island of Ireland.

The following sections present the detailed findings from each mapping activity, providing a comprehensive picture of the current GCE ecosystem and identifying priority areas for future collaborative development.

Participant Group Work Flipchart Notes

Mapping Key:

- **GREEN:** Educational Resources/Curriculum
- **BLUE:** Training Programmes
- **YELLOW:** Advocacy Campaigns
- **PINK:** Community Engagement
- **ORANGE:** Research Initiatives
- **LIGHT PINK:** Anything Else

North

- CADA member's GCE working Group
- GCE/NI Curriculum review: All party group engagement at Stormont
- CADA members provide educational resources and programmes individually in interested schools
- Training of school placement supervisors in ITE – how to support teachers on placement and how to be anti-racists
- Habitat – Youth for Housing (tertiary), GCE CADA working group – all party international development working group
- Learning for Life& Work GCE in GCSE
- Submission to NI curriculum review: primary (World Around Us) and post-primary (Learning for Life and Work (GCSE))
- Educating the Heart: primary, post-primary, ITE, curriculum links: 20 schools in the current year: thematic workshops – climate action, refugees race & migration, students' participation, SDGs
- Input to NI curriculum review: submissions to 2025, presentation @ APGID, possible research into GCE in NI, input to Education committee
- ETI evaluation framework, CCEA materials and guidance, evaluation
- Educating the Heart training programmes: school staff, school leadership; building a whole school approach to GCE
- CADA GCE Working Group
- Policy Proposal: Anaka Stranded Dreams: Education for asylum seekers/refugees
- Policy and Practice Journal
-

South

- UN Ambassadors Programme facilitated by NYCI
- NYCI Global Youth Work publications, materials and resources (www.youth.ie/programmes) – primarily in Ireland but available all-island – global youth network
- GCE needs analysis of primary school teachers and educators
- Anti-racism education in initial teachers' education led by DCU supported by 3 other universities
- Global Youth Work Certificate (level 8) delivered by NYCI Global Youth Work in partnership with Maynooth University
- GCE curriculum for initial teacher education for primary schools (DICE and DEY)
- DICE website for teaching resources, teacher/educator resources
- A series of public consultations with young people on specific themes and issues to inform government policy and promote global citizenship
- Women's leadership at Glencree
- Podcast series – Curious and Critical (players in GCE sector) on Spotify
- Global Education Time: Research mapping of GCE in European context
- Concern - GCE campaigns team: Project Us (university level); One Planet for All; Intergenerational Climate Café; TY Academies
- GCE training with BED students and PGCE
- Occupied Territories Bill
- Vacancy and dereliction
- Advanced GCE training for ACE practitioners
- Developmenteducation.ie: repository of GCE resources
- The Boyne Ripple
- Promotion of GCE in initial teacher training
- Developing a GCE critical theory framework
- IDEA GCE champions
- Global Education time: resources linked to junior cycle (APA)
- Learning Cert subject: Climate Action and Sustainable Development
- Stand – EU programmes, DEFY: Developing a resource of methodological approaches for dealing with "difficult knowledge" supporting educators and youth workers
- Saolta Mapping of GCE
- Community Connections (Adult & Community)
- Change Makers Programme (post-primary)
- Primary Schools programmes: "our waste, our world" – "our water our world)
- Skills programme (OCN accredited)
- GCE and teachers: CCP for teachers and GCE stakeholders, resources shared, advice offered
- IDEA GCE champions initiative
- IDEA capacity development: trainings, webinars, workshops, signposting
- IDEA: capacity development, championing, policy and advocacy, networking
- Global Village research with DCU
- Global Village/DICE/Developmenteducation.ie: thematic planning resource tool
- IASP's working collaborating: joint promotion of GCE
- IDEA DEWG: advocating for curriculum reform/update
- GOAL NEXT GEN, X-Change campaign (arts, culture, creativity for global solidarity)

- GOAL Corporate engagement (business and enterprise)
- GOAL Next Gen Youth Network (global youth programme)
- GOAL GCE primary workshop delivery, teacher engagement, student teacher training (7 regional Global Village)
- Worldview Public Engagement Research Dóchas
- Palestinian Solidarity Campaign
- Irish Local Development Network
- Sustainability Passport (for adults)

North/South

- Game based learning & documentary film programme for young people (ROI & NI)
- ITE in HEIs for pre-service primary and post-primary teachers (ROI & NI)
- Parish based outreach
- Volunteer programme (ROI & NI)
- Global justice resources on themes such as climate justice – primary/post-primary (ROI & NI)
- Video/Books: resources to support, inform, upskill – curious and critical, Brave (video series)
- Social media networks to share insights, info, resources etc
- Concern Debates Programme NI and ROI – all island – primary and post-primary
- SDG Advocates
- Training and trainers Saolta
- SDG packs, comms resources, disinformation resource
- Policy and Practice Journal
- Third level non-formal (all Ireland programme): STAND News (all year students journalist programme; Ideas Collective (Summer programme social action enterprise); STAND leadership and activities (9-month programme)
- Trocaire Programmes: Game Changers (primary, post-primary, youth); The Right Focus (post-primary and youth)
- The Case for Global Learning
- Trócaire Global Justice Resources: early years, primary, post-primary, youth
- Habitat Ireland's Global Education Toolkit: educational curriculum linked resources; one pack for NI, one pack for ROI
- Global Village (primary schools), resources contain links to both NI and ROI curriculum
- Global Village events – GCE representation from across the island (primary), educators and GCE stakeholders
- Global Village school workshops open to schools across the whole island (primary educators)
- WorldWise Global Schools: curriculum-based resources for post-primary schools
- QUB/University of Limerick implementation science
- Getting started with cross border collaboration (organisations and individuals – free online- guided/self-guided)
- Game Changers/Right Focus Trócaire
- Standing Conference on Teacher Education (SCOTENS) seed funding, teacher exchanges, webinars, research, annual conference
- Research Platform on the Centre for Cross-border Cooperation website: opportunities for sharing research
- Rights of Nature

Mapping Step 2: Resources and Networks

- CENTRE Circle (**immediately available and available within organisations**): Current grants/funding already secured that could be shared or redirected to support cross-border work; organisational core funding with flexibility; small discretionary budgets; any other resources you can identify
- SECOND Circle (**wider networks**): Funding opportunities accessible through existing partnerships; shared funding applications possible within current network members; foundation relationships maintained by partner organisations
- THIRD Circle (**through advocacy/new partnerships**): Potential new funding sources that require relationship building; grants requiring new types of partnership; funding sources that need advocacy to access
- OUTER Circle (**International/External**): International donors; EU funding streams; global foundation opportunities; cross-border specific funding mechanisms

CENTRE Circle

Events/Collaboration/Partnership funding could be diverted
Concern GCE
Changemakers
PeacePlus Fund
Reconciliation Fund
Irish Aid
Shared Island
National Lottery
International Fund for Ireland
British Council
WWGS provide online CPD – open online to all; events (in-person) Dublin/Cork target audience teachers and school leadership
IDEA
Developmenteducation.ie
Concern
Trócaire
Stand
Youth 2030
Shared Island Project 2025

SECOND Circle

Challenge of diversification of funding
The One Foundation
Creative Ireland International

International Fund for Ireland
Community Foundation (NI & ROI)
Forag Nag and Ulster Scots Society
Concern
Erasmus +
British Council
Irish Aid
Foundations/Trusts
Concern
Shared Island
EU/PeacePlus
Trócaire
Waterways Ireland & Loughs Agency (NI)
Global Solidarity Hub (e.g. National Ploughing)
Horizon
Erasmus+
PeacePlus
NYCI
USI

THIRD Circle

No work, no cost options
Dormant Accounts
Philanthropy
Private companies
Lottery

OUTER Circle

Inspectorate – cross-border dissemination events
5 Nations GCE
New Partnerships: support for all Ireland work, collaboration wider reach, consortia, expertise
Criminal Assets Recovery/proceeds of time

Mapping Step 3: Gap and Opportunity Analysis

Audience Gaps:

Adult and community NI (only 9% access ACE)
Youth – NI (non-formal)
TY students in NI
Young men
Migrants

Travellers
Parents
Students in general
DEIS: Socio-economic marginalised
Men
Older people
Roma
Travellers
Diaspora Communities (e.g. Go Fund Me)
Trade Unions (natural allies)
Disengaged Communities (e.g. far right)
Irish language
Adult & Community Ed
Teachers/Principals (in NI)
Youth in general

Cross-border Opportunities

Youth 2030
IDEA
Shared Island Project
Concern
Trócaire
STAND
Habitat for Humanity
SAOLTA
Peace+ Funding
WWGS (expanding remit of conferences)
Global Village conferences for NI and ROI teachers
Presentations to each other about scope and ambition of their work
Invite donors to October event (PeacePlus, Shared Island, Community Foundation, Irish Aid, Horizon)
The One World Promoters Programme (Eine Welt Netz)
Exchanges: youth workers, teachers, knowledge, skills, funding, delivery – share resourcing
Maximise collective efforts
Education
N-S Postgraduate
Scholarships (Universities)
Historical Groups/Industrial heritage
Skills/Upskilling
Youth 2030 – Shared learning
Community of Practice Opportunities – youth space, education, adult and community
Shadowing /Mentoring “a day in the life”

Geographic Gaps

Midlands for ACE (& schools)
Western Seaboard*
Border*
Midlands*
All-Ireland scope within GCE strategy
6 areas of education N/S: Collaboration being under-utilised: Can GCE fit into this?
GCE Champions – could MLAs be invited to participate/doesn't' include MLA
Lack of funding in the border and NI areas
Curriculum linking (ESG)
Midlands
Border counties
Rural
Linked to demand/population
Migration

**Transport issues*

Thematic Gaps

Tró – 21 primary, 5 post-primary
ESD bridge
Wellbeing – GCE bridge
Migration
Controversial issues
Gender roles & equity
AI
Palestine
Refugees & Asylum Seekers
Neoliberalism
LGBTQ+
Gender
Palestine
Digital (e.g. disinformation)
"Moral muddle"
"Connection" how my life and decisions in my country connect with others globally
"individualism"

Data & Perception Gaps (added by group)

Webinar July (anyone doing) GCE at primary level (NI & ROI) – Global Village to 6 database

Collaborative Ecosystem Design

Participants designed mechanisms to support sustainable cross-border collaboration, focusing on five key ecosystem elements: Knowledge Exchange Systems, Cross-Border Funding, Policy Alignment Processes, Community Engagement Strategies, and Collective Impact Measurement.

Collaborative Ecosystems:

- Knowledge Exchange Systems
- Cross-border Funding
- Policy Alignment Processes
- Community Engagement Strategies
- Collective Impact Measurement
- Task to consider:
  - Current State Assessment (what exists now)
  - Gap Analysis (what's missing)
  - Proposed Mechanism Design (specific structures)
  - Implementation Roadmap (key steps over 4 months)
  - Roles and Responsibilities (who needs to do what)

Knowledge Exchange Systems

Information, expertise, best practices, resources:

- Prevents duplication
- Build a success
- Accelerates learning
- Networks/Working Groups
- Digital Platforms
- P.D. & Training
- Research Institutions
- Barriers to info flows

What already exists/What knowledge is valuable to share:

- WWGs – granting
- IDEA – Summer knowledge share session
- Working groups: IDEA (FEWG), Dóchas, DEG, CADA, joints submissions (NI, ROI)
- Dóchas – Kumu (tool) – network mapping tool
- Code of Good Practices

Collective Impact Measurement

- No impact measurement taking place
- Specific programme data of programmes in North & South (not with cross-border lens)
- Each organisation has own focus, own outputs/reach
- Gap Analysis:
  - The whole area!

    - All relational work – longer impact work
    - Working independently so all shared learning isn't "shared"
    - Haven't started process of shared impact
    - No framework, no data, no forum
- Proposal Mechanism Design
    - Balance of quantitative/qualitative
    - Shared Indicators
        - They need to be for each org in each jurisdiction and then cross-border lens
    - Runs the risk of formulaic
- Code of Good Practice
- GCE champions

Cross-Border Funding

- What exists now:
    - Shared Island
    - PEACE
    - Community Foundation IRE NI
    - Post-Graduate Scholarships
    - Universities
- What's missing now:
    - Cross border Dev Ed funding
    - An idea person based on the border to build capacity (build dev ed capacity in border regions – supporting existing projects)
    - Youth leadership voices in the conversation
    - Collaborative projects
- Specific Structures
    - The rights of nature project, project funding administered by partners (universities/agencies)
    - Lasting change?
- Roadmap
    - Mapping of shared island funding
        - Including gap analysis – pitch for new funds?
        - Identify area, identify urgent projects, seek resources to implement
- Roles and Responsibilities
    - Researchers
    - GOAL & Irish Aid
    - Local development companies
    - IDEA/Dóchas, Cada: representatives north and south
    - Regional Development Officer

Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future
Session 3
30 June 2025, Online, 11am-1pm

Attendees: 18 participants including 5 members of 'management panel'. To date 17 participants have attended all 3 workshops

Myra McAuliffe - Change Makers ROI
Laura Fernandez – Trocaire NI
Amelia Deehan – Concern NI
Katie Chapple – World Wise Schools ROI
Dorothy Jacob – Self Help Africa ROI
Emma Lynch – Tearfund ROI
Ruairí McKiernan – Idea ROI
Stephen McCloskey- Centre for Global Education NI
Leigh Brady – Idea ROI
Valerie – NYCI ROI
Georgina Eastaugh – Concern ROI
Seamus O'Gorman – Children In Crossfire NI
Gillian Ivory – Dóchas ROI
Ellie Irving – CADA NI
Mary Coogan – Trocaire ROI
Victoria Walshe – GOAL ROI
Christine Burnett – Saphara NI
Aidan Clifford - ROI

The overall purpose of the 2-hour online session was to build on the comprehensive landscape mapping from Sessions 1 and 2, transitioning participants from analysis to collaborative visioning. The session aimed to co-create a shared 2035 vision for Global Citizenship Education across the island of Ireland through structured framework-focused group work.

Session Outline:

- Welcome & Icebreaker: One thing that's caught your attention
- Project Context & Direction: Review of progress from Sessions 1 & 2
- Framework Overview & Previous Session Insights: Key learnings organised by strategic framework (Funding, Policy/Advocacy, Curriculum, Collaboration/Partnerships)
- Brief Q&A/Clarifications
- Comfort Break
- VISION Co-Creating: 2035 Visioning in specialised groups
- Vision Sharing: Group presentations
- Next Session planning and closing

Participants

Mixed North/South representation with participants organised into 4 groups of 3-4 people each, ensuring cross-jurisdictional collaboration from the start.

2035 Vision Co-Creation Process:

The session employed a structured three-phase approach:

Phase 1: Individual Reflection in Groups (5 minutes)

- Participants shared initial thoughts with their assigned framework group
- Focus on specialty area within broader 2035 vision context

Phase 2: Collaborative Vision Building (20 minutes)

- Groups developed rich vision statements addressing all framework areas
- Specialised focus on assigned area while maintaining holistic perspective
- Documentation in Google Docs for each group

Phase 3: Presentation Preparation (7 minutes)

- 2-minute presentation focusing on key 2035 vision elements
- Most exciting/important aspects highlighted
- Connections to overall shared vision identified

Framework Groups and Key Vision Elements:

Group 1: Funding Focus

- **Key Vision**: Long-term sustainable multi-year funding avoiding project restart cycles
- **Critical Elements**:
    - Willingness to fund staff costs and core organisational functions
    - Reduced administrative burdens through collaborative approaches
    - Government recognition of GCE value through sustained investment
    - Diversified funding sources across multiple jurisdictions
- **Success Indicators**: Enhanced foundation relationships, joint applications, shared resource models

Group 2: Policy/Advocacy Focus

- **Key Vision**: Broadened advocacy scope addressing "root causes of poverty locally and internationally"
- **Critical Elements**:
    - Dedicated advocacy/policy officers in all GCE organisations
    - Collective sectoral voice through coordinated representation
    - GCE embedded in curriculum with space for NGO expertise
    - Political advocacy addressing systemic change beyond curriculum
- **Success Indicators**: Quarterly advocacy forums with cross-border government representation, collective voice through IDEA

Group 3: Curriculum Focus (NI/ROI)

- **Key Vision**: More holistic, knowledge-rich education with global perspective
- **Critical Elements**:
    - Enhanced curriculum coherence from early years to post-16
    - Growth in integrated and shared education with global citizenship focus
    - Technology-enhanced delivery enabling all-island collaboration
    - Educator support recognising GCE as crucial for next generation

- **Success Indicators**: Continued collaboration with curriculum authorities, well-resourced mechanisms for shared resources and exchanges

Group 4: Collaboration/Partnerships Focus

- **Key Vision**: Natural, streamlined collaboration that moves beyond territorial organisational approaches
- **Critical Elements**:
    - Collaboration at strategy development and programming levels, not just project implementation
    - Partnerships extending beyond GCE sector to include faith communities, other educational actors
    - Realisation of all-island organisational potential with shared understanding of jurisdictional differences
    - Technology-enabled collaboration combining "boots on ground" with online potential
    - Trust-based networks supporting different strategic impacts beyond individual organisational branding
- **What Excites**: Amplified collective voice through different organisational expertise; natural stepping back and forward as organisations complement each other; building critical questioning capacity through solidarity-based engagement; using shared humanity as leverage for engagement
- **Success Indicators**: Single-issue collaboration entry points (e.g., specific campaigns); event-based collaboration drawing diverse participants; network structures serving strategic focus; funders accepting collaborative approaches without seeing duplication

Key Themes Emerging from All Groups:

- **Systemic Approach**: Move beyond project-based thinking toward integrated, whole-system collaboration
- **Political Engagement**: Advocacy targeting highest levels (MLAs, North-South Ministerial Council, Irish Aid strategy)
- **Sustainability**: Long-term funding models and embedded curriculum approaches
- **Collective Impact**: Shared measurement and coordinated sectoral voice
- **All-Island Vision**: Multi-party agreement prioritising GCE investment for community-building and reconciliation

Participant Feedback (via Survey Results):

4 Respondents

Most Useful Aspects

- 50% found "Exploring framework areas" most valuable
- 25% each valued "One thing that caught your attention this week," "Where we are and where we're going," and "Key learnings from Session 1 and 2"

Session 4 Priorities:

- Practical implementation steps for partnership development
- Guidance on next steps and focused outcomes
- Advocacy scope clarification and all-island work practicalities
- Summary report to maintain focus and track progress

Next Steps:

- **Session 4 Scheduled**: 16 September 2025, Online, 11am-1pm
- **Focus According to Initial Session Scheme**: Implementation planning, practical partnership steps, and refined strategic direction

- **Preparation**: Consolidation of framework-specific visions into comprehensive Shared Island GCE 2035 vision

Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future
16 September 2025, Online, 11am-1pm

Attendees: 10 attendees in total. Attendance was lower than expected due to the National Ploughing Championships, illnesses and planned travel

Laura Fernandez, Trócaire
Katie Chapple, WorldWise Global Schools
Stephen McCloskey, Centre for Global Education
Georgina Eastaugh, Concern Ireland
Ellie Irving, CADA
Aidan Clifford, APA
Gillian Ivory, Dóchas
Seamus O'Gorman, Children in Crossfire
Bobby McCormack, Development Perspectives
Amelia Deehan, Concern

The 2-hour online workshop aimed to translate the shared 2035 vision into concrete strategic priorities and actionable initiatives. Building on the visioning work from Session 3, participants heard from Dr Anthony Soares (CEO, Cross Border Cooperation), who delivered a 30-minute presentation on developing sustainable cross-border partnerships, focusing on key challenges and opportunities facing cross-border networks today. In the second half of the workshop, participants began work to develop framework-specific strategic priorities through structured backwards mapping exercises.

Session Outline

- Welcome & Reconnection
- Vision Summary & Strategic Context
- Guest Presentation: Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS)
- Break
- Strategic Priority Setting in Framework Groups
- Group Presentations & Synthesis
- Introduction to Collective Intelligence Approach
- Next Steps & Session 5 Preview

Participants

Mixed North/South representation with participants organised into 4 framework-focused groups, ensuring cross-jurisdictional collaboration and specialised strategic development.

Vision Summary & Strategic Context

The session opened with a brief comprehensive review of the collective 2035 vision developed in Session 3, which was organised by the four established framework areas:

Funding Ecosystem: Long-term sustainable multi-year funding avoiding project restart cycles; willingness to fund staff costs and core organisational functions; reduced administrative burdens through collaborative approaches; government recognition of GCE value through sustained investment.

Policy/Advocacy: Broadened advocacy scope addressing root causes of poverty locally and internationally; dedicated advocacy/policy officers in all GCE organisations; collective sectoral voice through coordinated representation; GCE embedded in curriculum North and South with space for NGO expertise.
Curriculum Integration: In Northern Ireland, more holistic, knowledge-rich education with global perspective; enhanced curriculum coherence from early years to post-16; growth in integrated and shared education with global citizenship focus; technology-enhanced delivery enabling all-island collaboration.
Collaboration/Partnerships: Natural, streamlined collaboration beyond territorial organisational approaches; collaboration at strategy development and programming levels; partnerships extending beyond GCE sector; realisation of all-island organisational potential; trust-based networks supporting strategic impact.
This vision was explicitly connected to both the Irish Aid GCE Strategy 2021-2025 and IDEA's Vision 2025, demonstrating alignment between governmental commitments and sector-led aspirations.

Guest Presentation: Centre for Cross Border Studies

Speaker: Dr. Anthony Soares, CEO, Centre for Cross Border Studies

Focus: "From Vision to Reality: Practical Insights for Cross-Border Collaboration for NGOs working within the Education sectors North and South"

Dr. Soares provided practical guidance on navigating cross-border collaboration, drawing from CCBS's extensive experience facilitating partnerships across jurisdictions. Key insights included:

- Structural support requirements for sustainable cross-border partnerships
- Trust-building through long-term relationships rather than transactional approaches
- Importance of aligning collaborative initiatives with broader policy frameworks
- Simplifying administrative processes and enabling flexible, core funding to reduce barriers
- Supporting shared learning, evaluation, and infrastructure to strengthen the overall ecosystem
- Understanding and respecting jurisdictional differences while pursuing common goals

The presentation emphasised that successful collaboration requires both practical tools and strategic alignment with policy environments in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Strategic Priority Setting Process

Following a 10-minute break, participants engaged in intensive framework-focused group work using a structured strategic planning process:

Process Structure

Groups worked through five key stages for each framework area:

1. **Vision & Strategy Anchor:** Review framework area connections to the 2035 vision and strategic priorities in Irish Aid/IDEA documents
2. **CCBS Integration:** Apply insights from Dr. Soares' presentation to framework-specific challenges and opportunities
3. **Backwards Mapping:** Identify key milestones working backwards from 2035 through 2032, 2028, and 2026
4. **Strategic Priorities:** Develop 3-4 strategic priorities essential to achieving the vision
5. **Cross-Border Integration:** Articulate how priorities specifically leverage or require North-South collaboration

Framework Groups and Strategic Priorities

<u>Group 1: Funding Ecosystem Development</u>

Strategic Context: Irish Aid commitment to increase funding to €10 million per year; support for all-island approaches and collaboration with Northern Ireland-based organisations.

Key Milestones Identified:

2026 Early Wins:

- Established working relationships with funders
- Increased visibility and recognition of GCE in both jurisdictions' education strategies
- Presence on NI Curriculum Taskforce
- Initial collaborative networks formed between schools, NGOs, and government agencies
- Pilot cross-border GCE projects funded and successfully delivered

2028 Foundational Changes:

- Introduction of multi-year funding schemes supporting core costs and staff development
- Establishment of dedicated cross-border GCE funding mechanism within Irish Aid
- Formal partnerships between educational bodies in Ireland and Northern Ireland
- Curriculum reform task force recommendations implemented to include GCE themes
- Development of shared monitoring and evaluation frameworks for cross-border projects
  2032 Systems/Structures:
- Regular institutional funding enabling organisational collaboration on GCE
- GCE adopted as whole school approach at foundational, primary and post-primary levels
- Curriculum framework integrating NGO expertise

Strategic Priorities: not completed in group work allotted time

<u>Group 2: Policy & Advocacy Alignment</u>

Strategic Context: Irish Aid commitment to strengthen cross-government coherence on GCE and ESD; Northern Ireland Curriculum Review 2025 emphasising purpose-led, knowledge-rich curriculum; Vision 2030 calling for GCE as principal component of Shared Island Initiative.

Key Milestones Identified:
2026 Early Wins:

- ESD and GCE showing more coherence
- SDGs integrated into advocacy framework
- [Additional wins to be specified]

2028 Foundational Changes: not completed in group work allotted time
2032 Systems/Structures: not completed in group work allotted time
Strategic Priorities: not completed in group work allotted time
Cross-Border Integration: Priorities require coordination between NI and ROI government departments, leveraging North-South Ministerial Council structures and CADA GCE Working Group as space for collaboration and advocacy.
<u>Group 3: Curriculum Integration & Innovation</u>
Strategic Context: Irish Aid commitment to support whole-of-institution approaches; Northern Ireland developing new Citizenship, Employability and Personal Development certified programme; Vision 2030 emphasising every learner, north and south, having knowledge and skills for active global citizenship.
Key Milestones Identified:

2026 Early Wins:

- Influence shape of new NI Curriculum framework by September 2026
- Task force convened to channel input from Shared Island group
- GCE visible in early NI curriculum developments

2028 Foundational Changes:

- Better space for GCE in new NI curriculum
- Common Shared Island vision for GCE strengthening in curriculum
- Recognition of sector's capacity to provide training and resources
- GCE sector known by government departments and school networks

2032 Systems/Structures:

- Shared Island network/task force strengthening GCE across Ireland
- Whole school approaches at large scale, embedding GCE and supporting schools
- GCE sector recognised as essential resource for curriculum implementation

Strategic Priorities: not completed in group work allotted time

Key themes emerging from group discussion included:

- Packaging GCE as knowledge-rich to align with curriculum reform direction
- Positioning GCE as having answers to current challenges (violence, far-right movements, climate crisis)
- Embedding GCE throughout curriculum, not as bolt-on subject
- Whole school approaches within education system
- Engaging parents/guardians and wider community
- East-West collaboration to ensure all communities are on board

<u>Group 4: Collaboration & Partnership Structures</u>

Strategic Context: Irish Aid references work throughout the island of Ireland and collaboration with Belfast-based organisations; Vision 2030 calling for GCE as principal component of Shared Island Initiative with strong cross-border coordination.

Key Milestones Identified:

2026 Early Wins: not completed in group work allotted time

2028 Foundational Changes: not completed in group work allotted time

2032 Systems/Structures: not completed in group work allotted time

Strategic Priorities:

Key themes from group discussion:

- Helpful to define various levels of partnerships needed (government, institutions, educational bodies, community organisations)
- Learning from other models (German One World Promoters programme, Scotland-England-Wales GCE collaboration)
- Moving beyond territorial organisational approaches
- Need for proper resourcing and structural detail from Irish Aid on how all-island collaboration will work in practice

Group Presentations

Each group briefly presented their top strategic priority to the full session.

Introduction to Collective Intelligence Approach

Participants were informed that the October in-person session would focus the entire group on developing ONE cross-cutting initiative incorporating all framework areas: **"The Shared Futures GCE Collaboration Collective"** - a practical initiative addressing funding, policy, curriculum, and partnership needs simultaneously.
This collective intelligence approach will enable participants to move from individual framework priorities to integrated, collaborative action.

Key Themes Emerging from Session 4

- **Strategic Alignment:** Strong connection between sector-led vision and governmental policy commitments
- **Practical Application:** CCBS insights provided concrete frameworks for implementing cross-border collaboration
- **Backwards Mapping Effectiveness:** Working from 2035 back to present day helped identify realistic milestone progression
- **Cross-Framework Integration:** Recognition that funding, policy, curriculum, and partnership priorities are deeply interconnected
- **Urgency and Opportunity:** NI curriculum reform timeline creates immediate opportunity for influence by September 2026

Participant Feedback (Survey Results)

Most Useful Aspects (4 respondents):
- 50% found "Dr Anthony Soares' presentation and tips for working on a cross-border basis" most valuable
- 50% found "Group Work - Strategic Priorities" most valuable
- 0% selected "Vision - summary to date" (though this provided important context)

Why These Aspects Were Useful:
- "Practical tips and insights"
- "More discussion with colleagues"
- "Hearing from others about conversations they've had. Hearing ideas I'd not thought of myself"
- "It was interesting to hear the different ways in which we can connect and how partnerships can benefit but they are not without challenges"

Relevance of Dr. Soares' Insights (4 respondents):
- 50% found insights "Very relevant" to their organisation's work
- 50% found insights "Somewhat relevant"
- 0% found insights "Not relevant"

Session 5 Priorities (4 respondents, multiple selections allowed):
- 75% prioritised "More detailed case studies of successful cross-border initiatives"
- 50% prioritised "Practical tools for partnership development"
- 25% prioritised "Funding strategy activities"
- 25% prioritised "Policy/advocacy planning session"

Looking Forward to In-Person Format (2 respondents):
- "Connect with colleagues from the sector in person"
- "A chance to meet again in person"

Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future

22 October 2025, Dublin, In-Person

Attendees:

Session 5 brought together the core Shared Island cohort for the first in-person gathering since the dialogue series began. The Dublin venue facilitated deeper engagement and relationship-building among participants from across both jurisdictions.

The session built on the strategic priority setting from Session 4, this full-day workshop in Dublin brought participants together to hear from expert practitioners working on global citizenship education across Europe and the UK, and to collectively rank barriers and strategic opportunities facing the sector.

The morning featured a panel discussion with speakers from Global Education Network Europe (GENE), ScotDec Development Education Centre, and Queen's University Belfast. The afternoon session engaged participants in interactive prioritizing and ranking exercises to identify the most significant barriers to advancing GCE and to assess strategic opportunities based on their potential impact and achievability.

Abdallah Abusamara, IDEA	Bronwyn April, Comhlámh	Leigh Brady, IDEA
Michael Briggs, Christian Aid Ireland	Suzie Cahn, The Wheel	Lisa Cartmill, CCBC
Katie Chapple, WorldWise Global Schools	Hannah Clyne, SIDA	John Connoly, Association of Secondary Teachers
Mary Coogan, Trócaire	Melia Cusak, NCCA	Georgina Eastaugh, Concern Worldwide
Valeri Duffy, NYCI	Charlotte Dwyer ScotDec	Laura Fernandez, Trócaire
Jenny Gannon, DICE	Peter Heaney, Trócaire	Ellie Irving, CADA NI
Itofa Ivarah, Oxfam Ireland	Gillian Ivory, Dóchas	Elisha Kelly, Global Village
Emma Lynch, Tearfund Ireland	Roisin McAtamney, Sightsavers Ireland	Bobby McCormack, Development Perspectives
Ruairí McKernan, IDEA	Katie Milner-McLoone, Children in Crossfire	Onyewuchi Obirieze, Africa Solidarity Centre
Lassane Ouedraogo, Africa Solidarity Centre	Aodán Ó'Clúmháin, A Partnership with Africa	AnneMarie Poyner, Children in Crossfire
Cheryl Stafford, ETB NI	Victoria Trimble, Habitat for Humanity Ireland	Dorothy Jacobs
Leslie Emmerson, Queens University Belfast		

Session Outline

- Welcome & Reconnection
- Recap of Sessions 1-4 Journey

- Morning Panel: Global Citizenship Education Perspectives
- Panel Discussion & Audience Questions
- Break
- Afternoon Session: Interactive Prioritising & Ranking
- Barrier Identification & Voting
- Strategic Opportunity Ranking Exercise
- Synthesis & Closing Reflections

Global Citizenship Education Panel

The morning panel brought together three expert practitioners to provide critical context on the state of global citizenship education across Europe and the UK, with particular attention to challenges and opportunities relevant to the Shared Island context.

Panel Speakers

- **Liam Wegimont** - Global Education Network Europe (GENE)

  Liam emphasized the importance of forging hope in education despite significant challenges facing the sector. Drawing on his experience with GENE, an entity focused on global education across Europe working with policy makers and civil society organisations, he highlighted several key themes:

  - **Using Historical Narratives:** Rather than inventing new frameworks and materials, Liam stressed the value of drawing on past narratives and experiences. He emphasized basing responses to current challenges on historical knowledge and existing resources.
  - **Cross-Border Collaboration:** Shared a story about GENE's efforts to integrate public opinion polling into the OECD's Development Cooperation report, demonstrating the importance of cross-border work in global education.
  - **Policy Engagement:** Discussed strategies for engaging with policymakers and building evidence for global citizenship education's value.

- **Charlotte Dwyer** - ScotDec Development Education Centre

  Charlotte provided insights from Scotland's experience implementing 'Learning for Sustainability' policy, which integrates global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, and outdoor learning. Key points from her presentation included:

  - **Policy Framework:** Learning for Sustainability is positioned as an entitlement for all learners in Scotland, providing a strong policy foundation for GCE work.
  - **Implementation Challenges:** Despite the robust policy framework, Charlotte discussed significant challenges in translating policy into practice, including the need for better engagement with the adult learning sector and youth sector.
  - **Community Engagement:** Emphasised the importance of community engagement in education, citing recent reports from the Children's Parliament and Scottish Youth Parliament that highlight the need for young people's voices to be heard in education policy and practice.
  - **Funding Context:** Discussed challenges resulting from the loss of European funding for global citizenship education programmes in Scotland.

- **Lesley Emerson** - Queen's University Belfast

Lesley provided critical context on the state of citizenship education in Northern Ireland and raised important concerns about the current curriculum review process:

- **Low Status of Citizenship Education:** Highlighted the structural limitations of citizenship education in Northern Ireland, including its low status in schools and lack of adequate teacher support.
- **Curriculum Review Concerns:** Raised concerns that the new curriculum review may be ideologically driven and rushed, potentially creating less space for critical thinking and critical perspectives.
- **Risk of Avoiding Critical Literacy:** Expressed concern about the potential for the new curriculum framework to avoid critical perspectives and critical literacy, which are essential to meaningful global citizenship education.
- **Teacher Professional Learning:** Emphasized the need for better professional development and support for teachers to address critical issues effectively.

Audience Questions and Panel Responses

Following the panel presentations, participants engaged in a rich discussion exploring several key themes relevant to advancing GCE across the island of Ireland.

Key Discussion Themes

Curriculum Review in Northern Ireland

An attendee asked about the status of citizenship education in the new curriculum review in Northern Ireland. Lesley explained that while citizenship education will have a higher status in the new curriculum framework, there are significant concerns about the content and the ideological direction. The rapid timeline for the review (with implementation by September 2026) creates challenges for proper consultation and meaningful input from the GCE sector.

Cross-Border Collaboration

An audience member asked about the 'glue' that binds the island together in terms of global citizenship education. Lesley emphasized the importance of cross-border collaboration and the need to influence systems from within rather than from the outside. The panel discussed how existing networks and relationships can be leveraged to support shared approaches across jurisdictions.

Decolonizing the Curriculum

Another member of the audience raised questions about the challenges of decolonizing the curriculum and making voices heard in the new curriculum review process. Both Charlotte and Lesley emphasised:

- The importance of professional learning for teachers to support critical engagement with decolonization
- The need to draw on existing resources and networks rather than starting from scratch
- The history of work on decolonizing curriculum in global education that can inform current efforts

Making Voices Heard

The panel discussed strategies for ensuring the GCE sector's voice is heard in curriculum review processes:

- Using existing networks like the Five Nations network to bolster advocacy
- Building relationships with influential individuals in curriculum development

- Strengthening partnerships with NGOs and community organisations
- Identifying ways to amplify voices from the global education community

Language and Framing

Discussion explored whether the phrase 'anti-racism' adequately captures what is needed in terms of racial justice in GCE, and how to contextualise and decolonise global education in ways that resonate with different communities and political contexts.

Afternoon Session: Interactive Prioritising & Ranking

The afternoon session shifted to collaborative exercises designed to identify the most significant barriers facing the GCE sector and to assess strategic opportunities based on their potential impact and achievability.

Barrier Identification & Voting

Participants engaged in a structured process to identify and prioritise the key barriers preventing advancement of Global Citizenship Education across the island. Through discussion and voting, five primary barriers emerged:

1. Evidence & Recognition Gap (17 votes)

The GCE sector is not widely recognised by government departments and school networks as essential to the curriculum. This lack of recognition manifests in:

- Limited understanding among policymakers of GCE's contribution to broader educational goals
- Absence of GCE sector representatives in key curriculum development processes
- Insufficient evidence base demonstrating GCE's impact on student outcomes
- Schools treating GCE organisations as optional enrichment rather than curriculum partners

2. Funding Fragmentation (16 votes)

Short-term, project-based funding cycles prevent long-term planning and institutional sustainability. Key issues include:

- One-to-three-year project cycles that require constant fundraising
- Inability to invest in organisational infrastructure and staff development
- Loss of institutional knowledge when projects end and staff move on
- High administrative burden of constant proposal writing and reporting
- Difficulty building sustained relationships with schools and teachers

3. Curriculum Access Barriers (15 votes)

GCE is positioned as an 'add-on' rather than embedded throughout the curriculum frameworks in both jurisdictions:

- GCE treated as optional enrichment rather than core curriculum content
- Limited time allocation in already crowded curriculum
- Lack of clear pathways for GCE content across key stages
- Inconsistent embedding across different subject areas
- Competing with multiple other priority areas for curriculum space

4. Sector Capacity Constraints (8 votes)

Small, under-resourced GCE sectors (especially in Northern Ireland) lack capacity for sustained engagement and collaboration:

- Limited number of organisations working in GCE
- Small staff teams stretched across multiple priorities
- Insufficient resources for advocacy and policy engagement
- Challenges maintaining presence in both research and practice
- Geographic disparities with stronger capacity in some regions than others

5. Public Discourse Gap in Northern Ireland (6 votes)

Absence of GCE in Northern Ireland public and political discourse, with no government funding stream or ministerial portfolio:

- No dedicated government funding for GCE in Northern Ireland
- No ministerial portfolio responsible for GCE
- Limited visibility in public policy debates
- Contrast with Republic of Ireland where Irish Aid provides clear policy home

Strategic Opportunity Ranking Exercise

Participants engaged in a collaborative mapping exercise to assess strategic opportunities on two dimensions: potential impact (high/medium/low) and achievability (high/medium/low). Working in groups, participants placed various strategic opportunities on a 3x3 matrix, generating rich discussion about sequencing, dependencies, and realistic pathways for change.

Methodology

Groups considered strategic opportunities drawn from Sessions 3 and 4, including:

- Irish Aid Strategy Renewal timing
- NI Curriculum Review 2025-26 window
- Evidence base development through joint research
- Whole-school approach scale-up
- Pilot multi-annual funding streams
- Shared Island Initiative alignment
- Knowledge-rich positioning of GCE
- Coordinated organisational approaches
- Formal partnership structures
- Cross-border policy coherence
- Parent and community engagement

Key Findings from Ranking Exercise

High Impact / High Achievability

Multiple groups identified the following opportunities as both highly impactful and highly achievable:

- **Irish Aid Strategy Renewal (3 groups):** The timing of the next Irish Aid GCE Strategy development creates a critical opportunity to strengthen all-island approaches. Groups noted that Irish Aid's explicit commitment to work throughout the island of Ireland and collaborate with Belfast-based organisations provides a strong foundation for influence.
- **Evidence Base Development (3 groups):** Commissioning joint North-South research demonstrating GCE's impact on curriculum priorities (critical thinking, civic engagement) was seen as both achievable and essential for overcoming the recognition gap.
- **Whole-School Approach Scale-Up (3 groups):** Expanding proven whole-school GCE models at scale rather than relying on individual project delivery was identified as a highly achievable pathway with significant potential impact.
- **Shared Island Initiative Alignment (3 groups):** Positioning GCE as a principal component of the Shared Island Initiative as outlined in Vision 2030 represents a strategic opportunity with strong policy foundations already in place.

High Impact / Medium Achievability

Multiple groups identified one opportunity under this category:

- **Pilot Multi-Annual Funding (3 groups, 1 on borderline with low achievability):** Securing a pilot funding stream specifically for Shared Island GCE collaboration and institutional strengthening was recognised as highly impactful. Groups varied in their assessment of achievability, with some placing it at the boundary between medium and low achievability, reflecting uncertainty about funder willingness to commit to multi-year approaches.

Medium Impact / Various Achievability Levels

Groups placed several opportunities in the medium impact category, with varying assessments of achievability, consensus was identified for:

- **Cross-Border Policy Coherence (2 groups):** Aligning ESD and GCE frameworks across both jurisdictions using SDGs as common language received mixed placements, with some groups seeing it as low impact and others as medium, depending on whether policy coherence was viewed as an end in itself or as an enabling condition.

Lower Achievability Opportunities

Several opportunities were consistently placed in lower achievability categories, often due to dependencies on external actors or longer timeframes, to serve as examples:

- Establishing entirely new formal partnership structures requiring buy-in from multiple government departments
- Achieving full cross-border policy coherence across different governmental systems
- Comprehensive parent and community engagement campaigns requiring significant resources

Key Themes Emerging from Session 5

- **Critical Windows of Opportunity:** Strong recognition that the Irish Aid Strategy renewal and NI Curriculum Review create time-sensitive opportunities for influence that must be strategically leveraged.
- **Evidence as Foundation:** Consistent emphasis on the need to build an evidence base demonstrating GCE's contribution to broader educational priorities to overcome recognition gap.
- **Systemic vs. Project Approaches:** Growing consensus on the need to move from project-based delivery to systemic integration through whole-school approaches and embedded curriculum.

- **Funding Model Transformation:** Recognition that short-term project funding is a fundamental barrier requiring advocacy for multi-year institutional support.
- **Professional Learning Imperative:** Panel discussion highlighted the critical need for teacher professional development to support critical perspectives and decolonization work.
- **Cross-Border Collaboration Value:** Reinforced understanding that collaborative approaches strengthen advocacy, resource sharing, and sector capacity.
- **Strategic Framing:** Discussion of how to position GCE in language that resonates with current curriculum priorities while maintaining critical perspectives.
- **Network Building:** The in-person format facilitated deeper relationship-building and strengthened sense of collective endeavour.

Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future
15 December 2025, Online

Attendees:

Session 6 brought together the Shared Island cohort for the final session of the dialogue series. Participants engaged in synthesising strategic priorities and exploring concrete pathways for collaborative action in 2026.

Session 6 marked the culmination of the Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future dialogue series. This final online session built directly on the strategic work from Sessions 3, 4, and 5, moving the group from vision and priority-setting to concrete action planning. The session had two distinct parts: Part 1 focused on finalising the top five strategic recommendations for the final report and introducing the sector mapping exercise; Part 2 shifted to exploring organisational interests, capacities, and commitments for advancing the work beyond the formal dialogue series into 2026.

Attendees were:

Emma Lynch, Tearfund Ireland	Aodán Ó Clúmháin, A Partnership with Africa	Mary Coogan, Trócaire
Gillian Ivory, Dóchas	Katie Chapple, WorldWise Global Schools	Elisha Kelly, Global Village
Georgina Eastaugh, Concern Worldwide	Ellie Irving, CADA NI	Jenny Gannon, DICE
AnneMarie Poyner, Poyner Household	Gerry Campbell, CCEA	Gerard McCann, St Mary's University Belfast
Katie Milner-McLoone, Children in Crossfire	Seamus O'Gorman, Children in Crossfire	Stephen McCloskey, Centre for Global Education
Ruairì McKernan, IDEA	Onyewuchi Obirieze, Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland	Lassane Ouedraogo, Africa Solidarity Centre

Session Outline

Part 1:

- Welcome & Recap
- Mapping Exercise Overview
- Identifying Top 5 Priorities for Final Report
- Breakout Room Discussions
- Group Reports & Synthesis

Part 2:

- Moving from Vision to Action
- Group Discussions on Organisational Capacity
- Four Group Reports
- Steering Group Reflections
- Next Steps & Timeline

- Evaluation & Closing Remarks

Part 1: Strategic Priorities & Sector Mapping

Mapping and Data Collection for GC Sector

The session opened with an overview of the upcoming and additional sector mapping exercise, which is being run by an outside researcher/data specialist.

Scope and Approach:

- **Organisations:** The mapping will focus on 20 to 30 organisations involved in the forum over the past year, ensuring representation of the active GCE community.
- **Timeline:** The project targets completion by late January 2026.
- **Data Collection:** The approach will be straightforward, requesting information on overall activities, sub-sectors of work, and specific interest in north-south collaboration.
- **Methodology:** The consultant will contact participants before Christmas to request initial information. This will be followed by a small number of focus group discussions in January to deepen understanding and validate findings.
- **Output:** The final output will be a Google map featuring participating organisations, providing visual representation of the GCE sector across the island. This map will be shared with all participating organisations.

Identifying Priorities for Final Report

The central work of Part 1 focused on distilling the extensive strategic thinking from previous sessions into five core recommendations for the final report. Participants were reminded that Sessions 3, 4, and 5 had generated priorities across four framework pillars:

- Funding
- Policy and Advocacy
- Curriculum Integration
- Collaboration and Partnerships

Participants were provided with a matrix (summarising Session 5 outcomes) to help frame discussions around high, medium, and low impact activities, encouraging participants to consider both impact and achievability when ranking priorities. The guiding question was: *'If the final report could only make five strategic recommendations to advance Shared Island GCE, what should they be?*'

Breakout Room Discussions and Group Feedback

Participants divided into breakout rooms to discuss and rank the top five priorities. Groups were instructed to consider priorities across all four pillars and to think about which recommendations would have the greatest collective impact and be most achievable given current contexts and opportunities.

One important theme emerged early in group discussion feedback: the interconnection between policy and curriculum integration. Participants emphasised that these two pillars should be addressed together given their interdependence in practice.

Common Themes Across Group Reports

When groups reported back, remarkable consensus emerged on core priorities:

1. Evidence-Based Development
All groups identified commissioning joint North-South research to demonstrate GCE's impact on curriculum priorities (critical thinking, civic engagement) as a top priority. This evidence base is seen as essential for overcoming the recognition gap identified in Session 5 and for supporting advocacy with policymakers and funders.

2. Knowledge-Rich Positioning
Groups emphasised the strategic importance of reframing GCE as 'knowledge-rich' to align with curriculum reform directions in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This positioning was seen as critical for the Northern Ireland Curriculum Review while maintaining GCE's critical perspectives and social justice foundations.

3. Parent and Community Engagement
Multiple groups prioritised positioning GCE as a response to parent and community concerns about violence, far-right movements, and the climate crisis. This grassroots engagement approach was recognised as essential for building broad-based support for embedding GCE in educational systems.

4. Whole-School Approach
Groups consistently identified moving from individual project delivery to scaling proven whole-school GCE models as a strategic priority. This systemic approach addresses the curriculum access barrier and creates more sustainable impact than one-off interventions.

5. Formal Partnership Structures
Establishing formal partnerships between educational bodies North and South emerged as essential infrastructure for sustained collaboration. Groups discussed building on existing models like SCOTENS and NSETS while developing GCE-specific partnership mechanisms.

Additional Strategic Considerations

Beyond the top five priorities, groups highlighted several important strategic considerations:

- **Irish Aid Strategy Renewal:** The timing of the next Irish Aid GCE Strategy development presents a critical window of opportunity for strengthening all-island approaches.
- **Shared Island Initiative Linkages:** The need to position GCE work within the broader Shared Island Initiative framework for greater visibility and coordination.
- **Diversified Funding:** Exploring funding opportunities beyond Irish Aid, including academic collaborations, Council of Europe grants, and other European funding streams.

<u>Part 2: From Vision to Action</u>

Self-Reflection and Group Discussions

The final 40-minute session shifted the focus from what should happen to what could happen. The emphasis moved to understanding individual and organisational interests, energy, and capacity for action toward Vision 2035.

Participants were divided into groups to discuss three key questions, with Google Docs provided for collaborative note-taking:

- *Which priorities from Part 1 resonate most with your organisation's capacity and interests?*
- *What type of involvement might be possible (lead, partner, support, honour)?*
- *What resources, partnerships, or clarity would you need to move forward?*

Four Group Reports

The four groups reported back with distinct yet complementary perspectives on organisational commitments and capacity.

Group One: Research and Collaboration

Group One emphasised collaborative research as central to their organisational interests:

- **Cross-Border Events:** Potential collaborations between World Wise Schools, Global Village, and other partners for events in Northern Ireland were identified as achievable near-term actions.
- **Decolonising the Curriculum:** The need to ensure decolonization work aligns with GC values and principles was highlighted, with attention to whose voices are centred and how materials are developed.
- **Logistical Challenges:** Practical barriers were identified, including substitute cover for teachers participating in professional development and challenges in transferring policies and approaches across different jurisdictional contexts.

Group Two: Longitudinal Study and Advocacy

Group Two focused on comprehensive sector mapping and sustained advocacy:

- **Longitudinal SEC Study:** Proposed mapping the entire GCE sector beyond formal education to include adult learning, community education, and youth sector work.
- **Curriculum Advocacy:** Emphasized the importance of sustained advocacy for GC in curriculum frameworks and maintaining integration efforts.
- **Teacher Education Partnerships:** Identified potential partnerships with Ubuntu and the DICE project focusing on initial teacher education to embed GCE perspectives from the beginning of professional formation.
- **Coordinated Approach:** Highlighted the need for coordinated approaches to facilitating GC in Northern Ireland and the critical importance of impact measurement.

Group Three: Programme Delivery and Funding Structures

Group Three concentrated on coordination and funding architecture:

- **Northern Ireland Coordination:** Emphasised the need for more coordinated programme delivery approaches in Northern Ireland to maximize impact and avoid duplication.
- **Funding Structures:** Stressed the importance of advocating for better funding structures within Irish Aid and impact measurement frameworks.
- **Evidence Bank:** Proposed developing a collective bank of evidence on GCE impact for advocacy and funding applications.
- **Irish Aid Cohesion:** Highlighted the need for greater cohesion within Irish Aid's approaches to GCE across different funding streams and programmes.

Group Four: Evidence-Based Development and Coordination

Group Four emphasised systematic approaches and infrastructure needs:

- **Local Issue Positioning:** Discussed positioning GCE in relation to local issues and concerns, making global connections relevant to communities' immediate experiences.
- **Cross-Northern Ireland Coordination:** Identified the critical need for coordination across Northern Ireland organisations to strengthen collective voice and impact.
- **Part-Time Coordinator Role:** Proposed exploring a dedicated coordinator or part-time role to drive GCE initiatives forward, facilitate collaboration, and maintain momentum from the Shared Island process.

- **Partnership Education:** Highlighted the importance of educating partners about the work and value of different organisations in the network.
- **Funding Challenges:** Identified funding as the most significant challenge requiring ongoing advocacy and exploration of diverse sources.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Several themes emerged consistently across all group discussions:

- **Coordination Infrastructure:** All groups identified the need for better coordination mechanisms, with the part-time coordinator proposal resonating across discussions.
- **Collaborative Research:** Research partnerships were emphasised as both achievable and essential for building the evidence base.
- **Teacher Education:** Initial teacher education was recognised as a strategic leverage point for embedding GCE perspectives.
- **Funding as Fundamental Challenge:** Funding structures were identified as the most significant barrier requiring advocacy and diversification.
- **Impact Measurement:** The need for better approaches to measuring and demonstrating impact was consistently emphasised.

Steering Group Closing Remarks

Steering group members offered reflections that captured the significance of the Shared Island process and its potential for ongoing impact.

The steering group acknowledged the momentum and urgency generated through the dialogue series. The combination of strategic windows of opportunity (Irish Aid Strategy renewal, NI Curriculum Review, Shared Island Initiative) and growing sectoral cohesion creates conditions for meaningful progress.

Participants highlighted the genuine sense of community that had developed through the series. The importance of collaborating on a North-South basis was emphasised not just as strategic necessity but as a source of strength and mutual support, particularly given the challenging global and local contexts facing the sector.

Strong emphasis was placed on keeping the Shared Island project alive and moving forward in 2026. Participants expressed commitment to ensuring the dialogue series leads to concrete action rather than becoming another report that sits on a shelf.

Next Steps and Report Timeline

Final Report Development

- **Draft Report:** To be shared with the steering group by January 5th, 2026
- **Steering Group Feedback:** Requested by January 12th, 2026
- **Final Report:** To be completed within 5-7 working days of receiving feedback, targeting completion by mid-late January 2026

The report will synthesise insights from all six sessions, incorporating feedback from previous meetings and ensuring it meets participants' expectations for informing advocacy and action in 2026.

Key Themes Emerging from Session 6

- **Strong Consensus on Priorities:** Remarkable alignment emerged on the top five strategic recommendations across all groups, validating the collaborative process and creating a solid foundation for the final report.
- **From Vision to Action:** The session successfully moved participants from identifying what should happen to determining what could happen, grounding aspirational goals in realistic organisational capacity.
- **Infrastructure Needs:** All groups identified coordination infrastructure as essential, with concrete proposals for part-time coordinator roles and enhanced mechanisms for collaboration.
- **Complementary Capacities:** Group discussions revealed complementary organisational strengths and interests, suggesting natural partnerships for advancing specific priorities.
- **Commitment to Continuation:** Strong participant commitment to continuing the Shared Island collaboration beyond the formal dialogue series, seeing it as valuable infrastructure for the sector.
- **Evidence as Foundation:** Consistent emphasis on research and evidence-building as the foundation for overcoming recognition gaps and securing resources.
- **Realistic Assessment:** Honest discussion of capacity constraints and resource needs, balancing ambition with pragmatism about what organisations can realistically commit to.
- **Sense of Community:** Recognition of the genuine community that has developed through the dialogue series, providing foundation for ongoing collaboration.

Session 6 successfully brought the Shared Island, Shared World, Shared Future dialogue series to a close while opening pathways for continued collaboration and action. The six-session process achieved its objectives of building relationships and trust across organisations and jurisdictions, developing a shared vision for GCE across the island, identifying strategic priorities through collaborative analysis, mapping organisational capacities and commitments for action, and creating momentum for leveraging critical windows of opportunity in 2026.

The final report will synthesise the strategic recommendations and pathways forward, providing a roadmap for advancing GCE across the island. Participants' commitment to keeping the project alive through continued collaboration, coordination infrastructure, and strategic action positions the sector to influence critical policy developments and strengthen GCE's contribution to education and society.