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Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme: Implementation and Lessons

Prepared by: Western Development Commission

Date: May 2014



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We would also like to thank the external evaluators who took the time to read and assess the applications and Newmarket Consulting Ltd for their input during the Scheme design stage.

The Scheme was administered by Maria Valles (for Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences), Pauline White (for the Western Development Commission) and Simon Österhof (for Film i Västebotten). This report was written by Pauline White, Policy Analyst, Western Development Commission.



Executive Summary

The aims of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme were to encourage collaboration within the creative sector, promote innovation in creative businesses and provide an opportunity for work experience and portfolio development for emerging creative talent.

The Scheme was implemented through the EU Interreg IVB Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) funded *Creative Edge* project.¹ Three of the project partners, Film i Västerbotten, Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences and the Western Development Commission, implemented the Scheme in their regions – Västerbotten (Sweden), Northern Finland and the West of Ireland.

How the Scheme operated

Early in the *Creative Edge* project it was decided that the Talent Voucher Scheme should be administered through the export platform website (MyCreativeEdge: The Creative Showcase for Europe's Northern Edge www.mycreativeedge.eu), also being developed under the project. This would reduce the administrative burden and if membership of the site was a requirement to apply for the Scheme, it would be an added incentive to join the site.

The Talent Voucher Scheme operated as follows:

- Creative business members of MyCreativeEdge could apply for a Talent Voucher for a specific creative project/assignment.
- This was done through an online application form in the members' area of the site.
- If awarded a Talent Voucher, the creative business selected and contracted an emerging creative talent, who is also a member of the site (profiled in the Employ a Creative section), to undertake the project / assignment.
- On completion of the assignment, the creative business paid the creative talent directly and then submitted a claim to the *Creative Edge* project partner to be reimbursed.
- Vouchers were for a maximum value of €2,000.
- The available budget meant ten Talent Vouchers were available in total – five from the West of Ireland, three from Västerbotten (Sweden) and two from Northern Finland.

When submitted, application forms were automatically e-mailed to the project partner organisation in the region of the applicant. The application form had four questions:

- Details of the assignment. Please outline the assignment you would like to apply for a Talent Voucher to support (400 words max.)
- What will be the main benefits for your business? (200 words max.)
- What will be the main benefits for the emerging creative talent? (200 words max.)
- The value of the Talent Voucher is €2,000. If this assignment will require additional resources, please give details of any contribution your business will make. (400 words max.)

¹ For more information see www.creative-edge.eu

The Scheme opened for applications on 13 June 2013 with the launch of the MyCreativeEdge website. The deadline was 20 September. During this period the Scheme was promoted in press releases, e-mails sent to creative enterprises and to trade and industry associations and at events. Emerging talent were encouraged to contact businesses they would like to work with and suggest they apply for a Voucher. Social media was also used to raise awareness and e-mails were sent to all members of MyCreativeEdge from the eligible regions.

Selection and implementation

By the deadline, 24 applications were received – 12 from the West of Ireland, 10 from Västerbotten and two from Northern Finland. Each application was assessed using the same criteria and 10 were selected:

From the West of Ireland

- Allan Curran Architects <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/allan-curran-architects/>
- Black Hole Studios <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/black-hole-studio/>
- Cox Power Architects <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/cox-power-architects/>
- Donegal Designer Makers <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/donegal-designer-makers/>
- Leitrim Design House <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/the-leitrim-design-house/>

From Västerbotten (Sweden)

- David Sandberg <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/david-sandberg/>
- Kulturstorm <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/kulturstorm/>
- Lucky Star Music <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/lucky-star-music/>

From Northern Finland

- Ilme Innoroom LTD <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/ilme-innorooms/>
- SunSää <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/sunsa/>

Each of the successful applicants was contacted about the conditions of the Scheme. These included submitting a short report on implementation of the assignment with their claim, along with proof they had paid the contracted talent.

The next step for the businesses was to select a creative talent featured in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge to undertake the assignment. They contacted them directly to make arrangements and the specific details of how the assignment would be completed and the cost were agreed between the business and the talent.

The assignments were implemented during October and November 2013. Eight were completed with reports and claims submitted and payments made by the end of the year. Two of the approved Vouchers did not proceed during the period. The outcomes of the eight completed assignments were:

Allan Curran Architects with Paul McGuckin Photography: A Talent Voucher was provided to Allan Curran Architects (Donegal, West of Ireland) for new professional photography of their previous work to show development and maturing of buildings and sites. Interior and exterior photography of eight

locations was undertaken by Paul McGuckin Photography (Donegal, West of Ireland). This material has been used in the development of Allan Curran Architects' website and in other promotional material.

Cox Power Architects with inTandem Web Design: A Talent Voucher was provided to Cox Power Architects (Mayo, West of Ireland) to re-design their website to be responsive on different devices, to enable better targeting of international clients and export markets and to be more easily managed by the company. The re-design was conducted by inTandem web design (Sligo, West of Ireland) and has resulted in a much higher Google ranking and a more professional and modern looking site.

David Sandberg with Trickfabriken: A Talent Voucher was provided to David Sandberg (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) to assist with the development of digital environments and effects for his 'Kung Fury' movie and its trailer. Trickfabriken AB (Skellefteå, Västerbotten, Sweden) worked with David Sandberg to produce visual effects shots of different environments such as a police station and the top of a Miami skyscraper. The Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign for Kung Fury, using this trailer, raised US\$630,020 from 17,713 backers.

Donegal Designer Makers with Shaun Egan Photography: A Talent Voucher was provided to Donegal Designer Makers (Donegal, West of Ireland) for photography of the craft products of members of the network. Twenty-five individual craft makers and designers had their products professionally photographed by Shaun Egan Photography (Donegal, West of Ireland). These images will be used to produce a new craft trail brochure for tourists visiting the county and will link with place-based tourism marketing. The photographs will also be available to the makers and the network for other promotional uses.

Kulturstorm with Elisabeth Widmark: A Talent Voucher was provided to Kulturstorm (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) to develop six illustrations to reflect the core values of the organisation. Kulturstorm is a non-profit association working in the cultural field. Their focus is on kids and youths with limited access to the cultural life of Umeå and Västerbotten county in Sweden. The talent who developed the illustrations for their book was Elisabeth Widmark (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) and this was the first time they had ever commissioned original artwork.

Leitrim Design House with David Knight Photography: A Talent Voucher was provided to the Leitrim Design House (Leitrim, West of Ireland) network of craft makers and designers for professional photography of makers with their products. David Knight Photography (Roscommon, West of Ireland) took photographs of 22 makers who are members of the network with their products. Images have been used for new retail point of sale material, cards for distribution and a 2014 calendar for sale. They also form an image bank for future online and print promotional activities.

Lucky Star Music with Hanna Karlzon Illustration & Design: A Talent Voucher was provided to Lucky Star Music (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) to develop artwork to help promote their new interactive entertainment product Lucky Star Karaoke. Hanna Karlzon Illustration & Design (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) developed the artwork and the resulting illustration reflects the combination of ideas from both companies and has been used in various formats to promote the product.

SunSää with Jaakko Posti: A Talent Voucher was provided to SunSää (Rovaniemi, Northern Finland) to produce promotional photography to help support SunSää's weather reactive advertising software. The Talent Voucher enabled SunSää to commission photographer Jaakko Posti (Rovaniemi, Northern Finland) to produce a series of photographs which will provide a ready-made photo gallery to assist SunSää's customers develop their adverts. This is an important added attraction for potential clients.

Performance in meeting objectives

How the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme performed in terms of meeting its original objectives is set out here.

- **Inter-disciplinary collaboration:** Ultimately the objective of the Scheme which was most successfully met was promoting collaboration across creative disciplines. The eight completed assignments represent a broad range of examples of how different creative disciplines can collaborate on projects such as photography of creative products, illustration of creative ideas, web design for creative services and visual effects to achieve a creative vision.
- **Experience for emerging talent:** One of the main issues for the Scheme related to a broader issue for the MyCreativeEdge website. A criteria for the Voucher Scheme was that the talent contracted needed to be included in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge which was intended to be a 'talent bank' for new emerging talent seeking employment. However in practice many well established creative businesses chose to be featured in the Employ a Creative section. Also relatively few new emerging talents were featured on the site with less than 5% of the site's membership aged under 25 years. This meant that although one of the objectives of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme was to provide an opportunity for experience and portfolio development for new emerging talent, in practice this only occurred in a minority of cases. For any future scheme where this is the primary or sole objective, the criteria for the talent to be selected would need to be quite specific to ensure only new emerging talent were contracted.
- **Innovation and product/service development:** Another objective of the Scheme was to promote innovation and product/service development, bearing the mind the relatively limited time and budget available. As described above, each Voucher made a notable contribution to the development of the participants' business and some will have considerable long term benefits.
- **Incentive to join MyCreativeEdge:** A secondary objective of the Talent Voucher Scheme was to act as an incentive to join MyCreativeEdge. In the initial promotion and marketing of the site, the availability of the Talent Voucher Scheme was included as an added incentive to join. While it is not possible to judge exactly how important a role this played, by the deadline for applications to the Scheme (20 September), 240 creatives from the three participating regions had registered on MyCreativeEdge. Exactly 1 in 10 of these applied for a Voucher.

Key lessons

A number of lessons can also be learned from the experience of designing and implementing the Scheme which may be useful for any future implementation of this or similar schemes.

- **Timing:** As the Talent Voucher Scheme was linked to the MyCreativeEdge website, it could not be launched until the site went live. This happened in mid-June. The summer months however, were not the best time to be promoting the Scheme nor for applicants to be submitting

applications. The application period for any similar schemes should avoid the holiday/summer period.

- **Promotion/awareness:** A challenge with any new scheme is to make people aware of it and its purpose. It would have been beneficial to have had more time to promote the Scheme during a longer application period.
- **Simple and short online application form:** Incorporating the application form into MyCreativeEdge proved very successful in terms of administration. As a member had to be logged in to complete the form the system could 'auto-fill' all of their contact details which reduced the time and burden involved in completing the form.
- **Business selects the talent:** In the initial planning of the Scheme it was decided that the selection of the talent would be left up to the businesses. The only criteria were that the talent be featured in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge, that a talent could not accept more than one assignment and that they be able to invoice for the work on a freelance basis. This 'arms length' approach reduced the administrative burden on the project partner organisations. It also meant the creative businesses had considerable freedom to choose the talent they felt was best suited to the assignment and their own business / working approach. Though as noted above, this meant many of the talents selected were experienced, rather than new emerging talent.
- **Duration of implementation:** This was the biggest problem expressed by participants. Due to the timing for applications and the end date of project funding, assignments had to be completed in just under eight weeks. Ideally the timeframe for implementation of Talent Voucher assignments should be longer, perhaps six months.
- **Invoicing:** As those contracted under the Vouchers included new emerging talent, issuing invoices for work may not be a familiar process for them. It may be useful to provide some business mentoring to any new emerging talent participating in such a scheme.
- **Financial procedures:** For some of the partner organisations the process of issuing payment of the Talent Voucher was a new procedure. The financial and accounting procedures in the organisations administering the Scheme need to be considered in the early design stages.



Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme: Implementation and Lessons

1 Background

The aims of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme were to encourage collaboration within the creative sector, promote innovation in creative businesses and provide an opportunity for work experience and portfolio development for emerging creative talent.

How this Scheme was designed and implemented, the outcomes of each of the eight completed Talent Voucher assignments and lessons learned from the experience are examined in this report.

1.1 *Creative Edge* project

Organisations from four regions of the Northern Periphery area of Europe came together to apply for funding under the EU Interreg IVB Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) to support the development of the creative industries sector. The resulting project *Creative Edge* received €1.2m in funding and ran during 2011-2013.²

The five organisations, from four regions, who implemented *Creative Edge* were:

- National University of Ireland, Galway (Lead Partner)
- Western Development Commission (WDC), Ireland
- Region Västerbotten / Film i Västerbotten, Sweden
- South East Economic Development / Craigavon Borough Council, Northern Ireland
- Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences (KTUAS), Finland³

² For more information see www.creative-edge.eu

³ KTUAS merged with other institutions and became Lapland University of Applied Sciences from 1 January 2014.



Fig. 1: Map showing the four regions participating in the Creative Edge project

1.2 Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme

The *Creative Edge* project was implemented through five work packages. Work Package 3 was led by the WDC and included a pilot *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme. **Three of the project partners – Film i Västerbotten, Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences and the Western Development Commission – implemented the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme in their three regions.**

The *Creative Edge* project proposal stated that under the project a Talent Voucher Scheme would be designed. This would be used by client creative SMEs to contract identified creative talent from the export platform website, also to be developed under the project (MyCreativeEdge: The Creative Showcase for Europe's Northern Edge www.mycreativeedge.eu).⁴ The aim was to kick start product and market development opportunities for the SMEs whilst giving a real value to emerging talent from engaging with the export platform. The Talent Vouchers would provide existing businesses with cost-effective additional resources and emerging talent with experience and portfolio development opportunities.

1.3 Purpose of this report

This report has been written by the WDC to outline how the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme was implemented and to assess its performance. We hope that it will be a useful resource for others interested in operating a similar type of scheme for the creative sector. We have tried to document the entire process including challenges which arose. Ultimately we have identified a number of key lessons from this experience which we hope will be of benefit to others within the Northern Periphery area and across Europe.

⁴ A report on the development of the export platform can be downloaded from <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/new-report-developing-mycreativeedge-published/>

2 Design of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme

2.1 Designing how the Scheme would operate

Very early in the implementation of the *Creative Edge* project it was decided that the Talent Voucher Scheme should be intimately linked with the export platform website (MyCreativeEdge: The Creative Showcase for Europe's Northern Edge www.mycreativeedge.eu), also being developed under the project. It was agreed that it would be most efficient to incorporate the Talent Voucher application process into MyCreativeEdge as:

1. It would reduce the administrative burden if applications could be made online.
2. If membership of MyCreativeEdge was a condition to apply for, or be chosen to work under, the Talent Voucher Scheme it would be an incentive to join the site.

Incorporating the application process for the Talent Voucher Scheme into MyCreativeEdge however impacted on the Scheme's timing, as it had to await the launch of the site. A report on the development of the online export platform MyCreativeEdge sets out the process of its design and development, including the incorporation of the Talent Voucher Scheme.⁵

In April 2013, as MyCreativeEdge was being developed, work began on designing the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme. An external service provider⁶ had been appointed by the WDC to support it in the development of the export platform and this contract also included support in the design of the Talent Voucher Scheme. The WDC worked with the contractor to develop initial ideas of how the Scheme should operate. This planning drew on the experience of the NESTA Creative Credits pilot initiative run in Manchester in the UK.⁷

The three project partners implementing the Scheme (Film i Västebotten, KTUAS and the WDC) then worked together through e-mails and con-calls to further develop and agree the process for operating the Scheme. It was agreed that the Scheme would operate as follows:

- Creative business members of MyCreativeEdge (profiled in the Creative Showcase section) would apply through the site for a Talent Voucher for a specific creative project/assignment.
- With the Talent Voucher they would contract an emerging creative talent who is also a member of the site (profiled in the Employ a Creative section) to undertake the project / assignment.
- Vouchers would be available for a maximum of €2,000.
- The available budget meant ten Talent Vouchers would be available in total – five from the West of Ireland, three from Västebotten (Sweden) and two from Northern Finland.

It was also agreed that the choice of the creative talent that the selected businesses would work with should be left up to the businesses, with certain criteria.⁸ It was felt that this would provide greater

⁵ <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/new-report-developing-mycreativeedge-published/>

⁶ Newmarket Consulting Ltd <http://www.newmarketconsulting.ie/>

⁷ See <http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/guide-creative-credits>

⁸ This differs from the approach taken by other similar schemes such as the Creative State North West programme which took a more active brokerage approach to matching SMEs and creative suppliers. That programme

freedom and flexibility for the businesses to select the talent most suited to them and the assignment and that it would also reduce the administration required by the implementing organisations. Ultimately the Scheme operated as follows for each of the parties involved.

2.2 Creative businesses

To apply for the Scheme a creative business had to be registered on MyCreativeEdge. When logged in to the site, they went to the Talent Vouchers page (in the members' area). They then completed an online application form. As the maximum value of the Voucher was €2,000, if the project/assignment required more, the applicant had to state how the rest would be funded. They then submitted the application and received an automatic confirmation e-mail.

If awarded a Talent Voucher the creative business was sent a letter of offer. They then contacted the creative talent(s) they were interested in working with. This had to be someone who was registered in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge and had selected to participate in the Talent Voucher Scheme (see below). When logged in, all members can see an icon on a creative talent's profile page indicating if they are participating in the Scheme. The creative business contacted the talent to discuss the assignment, rates etc. with them. They could contact a number of talents to discuss and get quotes before making a final decision.

The creative business then contracted the selected creative talent to undertake the assignment on a freelance basis and notified the *Creative Edge* project partner organisation in their region of the agreement. The assignment was then undertaken. When completed the creative business paid the talent directly for the work. The business then submitted a claim for the Talent Voucher funding to the *Creative Edge* project partner, along with a short report on the assignment and proof of payment. They then received payment to the value of what they paid the talent, up to a maximum of €2,000.

2.3 Emerging creative talent

To be hired under the Scheme, a creative talent had to be registered and have a profile in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge. During the process of creating a profile on MyCreativeEdge, if a member indicated they wanted to be featured in Employ a Creative, and were from one of the three participating regions, they were given an option to indicate if they were interested in participating in the Scheme. When logged in, members of the site can see an icon on the profile page of anyone who has selected this.

If contacted by a creative business who was awarded a Talent Voucher, the emerging creative talent provided additional information and discussed the assignment, rates etc. If selected, they agreed terms and entered into a contract with the business on a freelance basis. They could only enter into a contract with one business under the Scheme. They then undertook and completed the assignment as agreed with the business. On completion they received payment directly from the business.

provided talent vouchers to SMEs from other sectors e.g. tourism, food, cosmetics, to contract creative suppliers for a project <http://www.creativestatenorthwest.com/>

2.4 Administrators

One staff member was responsible for administering and overseeing the Scheme in each of the three participating organisations and regions. As the WDC was the lead partner for the Scheme they took overall responsibility.

Once the Talent Voucher Scheme was designed, the WDC arranged for the online application form to be uploaded to MyCreativeEdge. The administrators also finalised the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme and agreed the deadline for applications.

They then began raising awareness of the Scheme among potential applicants and creative talent in their regions and used social media to promote it. The *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme was launched to coincide with the launch of MyCreativeEdge in June 2013.

During the application period each partner promoted the Scheme to members and potential members of the site in their region. This promotion was of the benefits of the Scheme in its own right and also as an added advantage of joining MyCreativeEdge. They also responded to any queries.

Each partner organisation established an evaluation panel, including an external evaluator, for applications from their region and the three partners agreed common criteria for assessing applications.

After the deadline, all applications were assessed and Talent Vouchers awarded. Successful and unsuccessful applicants were informed. Letters of offer were sent to successful applicants setting out the conditions of the Scheme and the deadline for submission of reports and claims for payment.

The administrators monitored implementation of the assignments through regular contact with the businesses. When reports, claims and proof of payment were received from the businesses, these were checked and assessed. If found satisfactory, payment was issued to the businesses to the value of what was paid to the creative talent; up to a maximum of €2,000. Payments needed to be issued and cleared in banks before the end date of *Creative Edge* project funding (31 December 2013).

3 Application Process

3.1 Application form

The online application form for the Talent Voucher Scheme was incorporated into the members' area of MyCreativeEdge as it was developed. A page was created for the Talent Vouchers and it was included in the navigation menu in the members' area. The page set out the purpose of the Scheme, how it would operate and contained the application form.

The questions on the application form had been agreed by the three partner organisations. There were four questions:

- Details of the assignment. Please outline the assignment you would like to apply for a Talent Voucher to support (400 words max.)
- What will be the main benefits for your business? (200 words max.)
- What will be the main benefits for the emerging creative talent? (200 words max.)
- The value of the Talent Voucher is €2,000. If this assignment will require additional resources, please give details of any contribution your business will make. (400 words max.)

The Terms and Conditions of the Scheme were also uploaded. These are set out in Annex 1.

When a member submitted a completed application form, all of their contact details and creative sector details were automatically included with the application. This was auto-filled from the details they provided when creating their profile on MyCreativeEdge. This reduced the time needed to complete the form.

When submitted, an application form was automatically e-mailed to the project partner in the region of that member. As part of the development of MyCreativeEdge, e-mail accounts had been established for each of the partner regions for all mails from the site e.g. sweden@mycreativeedge.eu, westofireland@mycreativeedge.eu. So an application from a member based in the West of Ireland was e-mailed to westofireland@mycreativeedge.eu.

As part of the application, applicants were also asked to 'save' any profiles of creative talent they were interested in working with and these were submitted with the application form. This was merely to provide an indication of who they might work with and did not commit them to working with someone they identified at this stage.

3.2 Application period

The *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme opened for applications on 13 June 2013 with the launch of the MyCreativeEdge website. As the original end date for the *Creative Edge* project was 30 September 2013, the deadline for implementing the Talent Voucher Scheme was very tight. However the project partners had already applied for an extension to the project's end date to the end of the year, partly to allow a longer period for the Talent Voucher Scheme to be implemented, and this was granted by the NPP Secretariat. Therefore the deadline for applications was extended to 6 September and then extended for a further two weeks to 20 September.

3.3 Promotion

When MyCreativeEdge was launched, the Talent Voucher Scheme was mentioned in all marketing and communications messages about the launch, including press releases and e-mails sent to creative trade and industry associations and creative enterprises. The Scheme was also promoted at events where MyCreativeEdge was promoted.

The *Creative Edge* social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter were also used extensively to raise awareness of the Scheme and encourage applications (Fig. 2). These posts directed people to articles about the Scheme on MyCreativeEdge. It was also promoted by project partner staff through their membership of LinkedIn and Facebook groups.



Fig. 2: Image of a Facebook post promoting the Scheme, 27 August 2013

An e-mail was sent on 1 August to all members of MyCreativeEdge from the eligible regions with specific details of the Scheme (Fig. 3). An e-mail about the extension of the deadline was sent on 2 September.

Apply for a Creative Edge Talent Voucher

Is this email not displaying correctly?
[View it in your browser.](#)

mycreative edge
The Creative Showcase
for Europe's Northern Edge
www.mycreativeedge.eu

EDGE Northern Periphery Programme
WDC
KITT Galway
Wilder
Kern-Tornøe University of Applied Sciences
SOUTH COAST

Apply for a Creative Edge Talent Voucher Now

Members of [MyCreativeEdge](#) can apply to the Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme. The voucher allows you to contract a 'creative talent' who is featured in the '[Employ a Creative](#)' section of the website to do a specific assignment for you. They will do the assignment on a freelance basis and invoice you, and you will then be refunded by the Creative Edge project.

Vouchers are available to a **maximum of €2,000**. The scheme is open to creative businesses and talent in the West of Ireland, Västerbotten (Sweden) and Northern Finland.

How to apply

Login to the site, visit the **Talent Vouchers page** and **complete the short online application form**.

The deadline for applications is **Friday, 6 September 2013** with all assignments to be completed before the end of November.

The Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme is funded through the Northern Periphery Programme funded Creative Edge project. Find out [more](#)

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Our mailing address is:
MyCreativeEdge
Dillon House
Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon 00
Ireland

[Add us to your address book](#)

MailChimp

Fig. 3: e-mail promoting the Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme sent to MyCreativeEdge members in eligible regions, 1 August 2013

All communications with creative enterprises and talents in the three participating regions included reference to the opportunity to apply or benefit from the Talent Voucher Scheme. The WDC e-mailed several hundred creative enterprises and trade associations in Ireland to raise awareness of MyCreativeEdge and the Scheme.

In Västerbotten, Sweden one of the main approaches was to encourage creative talents to approach creative businesses with a proposal to do an assignment for them and suggest they join MyCreativeEdge to apply for the Voucher to contract them to do it.

In Northern Finland the Talent Voucher Scheme was mainly promoted via e-mails to about 600 potential creative companies and creative talents. Also, an e-mail was sent to KTUAS students and there were several meetings with students with some lecturers also promoting it in their lectures. Project staff also attended the Cultural Marathon event held in the University and the Cultural Days in Sweden where the Scheme was promoted.

4 Selection Process

4.1 Selecting the creative businesses

As it was expected there would be a larger number of applications than available Talent Vouchers, the project partner organisations had to agree a common method for selecting which applicants would be funded in each region. They discussed and agreed common evaluation criteria and weightings to be used in assessing the applications (Table 1).

Table 1: Evaluation criteria for Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme

Selection Criteria	Weighting
Benefit to applying company	20
Benefit to selected talent	20
Transnational element e.g. selection of talent from other partner region	15
Appropriateness of expectations and overall quality of application	25
Wider benefits for creative sector	20
Total	100

Each application would be assessed using the same criteria to ensure fairness and transparency. In each region, an evaluation panel including an external evaluator was also established to read, assess and mark the applications according to these criteria. In Northern Finland this turned out not to be necessary due to the small number of applications.

By the deadline of 20 September a total of 24 applications were received. There were 12 from the West of Ireland, 10 from Västerbotten and two from Northern Finland. Following evaluation, 10 were selected as follows:

From the West of Ireland

- Allan Curran Architects <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/allan-curran-architects/>
- Black Hole Studios <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/black-hole-studio/>
- Cox Power Architects <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/cox-power-architects/>
- Donegal Designer Makers <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/donegal-designer-makers/>
- Leitrim Design House <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/the-leitrim-design-house/>

From Västerbotten (Sweden)

- David Sandberg <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/david-sandberg/>
- Kulturstorm <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/kulturstorm/>
- Lucky Star Music <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/lucky-star-music/>

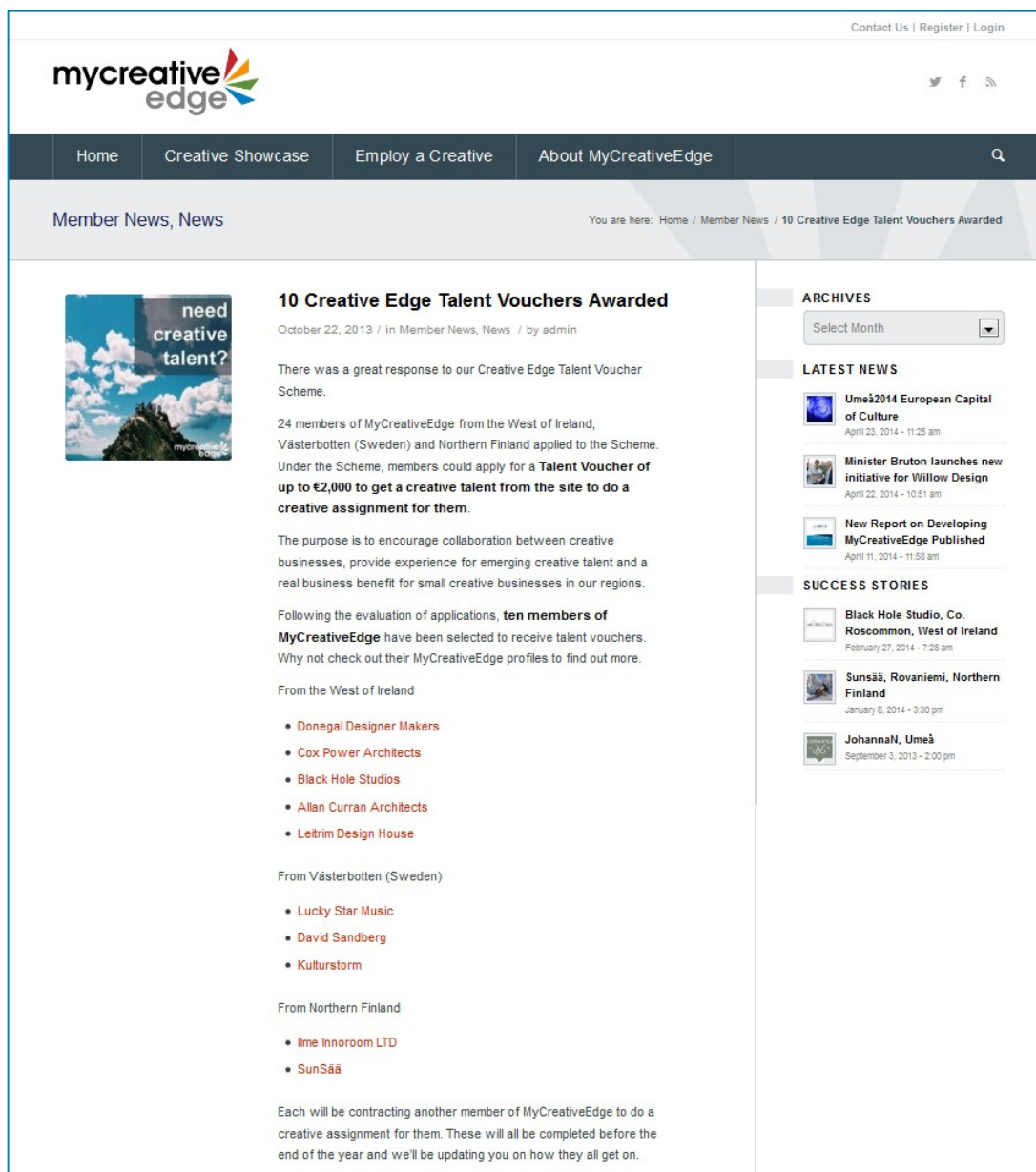
From Northern Finland

- Ilme Innoroom LTD <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/ilme-innorooms/>
- SunSää <http://www.mycreativeedge.eu/profile/sunsaa/>

Unsuccessful applicants were notified.

Each of the successful applicants was then contacted to discuss the next steps and official letters of offer were sent, setting out the details and conditions of the Scheme (see Annex 2). The conditions included that they submit a short report on implementation of the assignment with their claim, along with proof they had paid the contracted talent. The deadline for submission of claims was 22 November to ensure the claims could be assessed and payment issued by the partner organisations before the end of the *Creative Edge* project (31 December).

An article about the chosen applicants was uploaded to MyCreativeEdge and promoted through social media. It was also included in newsletter e-mails to members of the site and those who had signed up to MyCreativeEdge's newsletter list.



The screenshot shows the MyCreativeEdge website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: Home, Creative Showcase, Employ a Creative, About MyCreativeEdge, and a search icon. Below this is a header area with the MyCreativeEdge logo and social media icons. The main content area features an article titled "10 Creative Edge Talent Vouchers Awarded" dated October 22, 2013. The article text describes the scheme, mentions that 24 members applied, and lists the winners categorized by region: Donegal Designer Makers, Cox Power Architects, Black Hole Studios, Allan Curran Architects, Leitrim Design House (from the West of Ireland); Lucky Star Music, David Sandberg, Kulturstorm (from Västerbotten, Sweden); and Ilme Innoroom LTD, SunSää (from Northern Finland). A sidebar on the right contains sections for Archives, Latest News (including Umeå 2014 European Capital of Culture and Minister Bruton's initiative), and Success Stories (including Black Hole Studio and SunSää).

Fig. 4: Article on MyCreativeEdge about successful Talent Voucher applicants

4.2 Selecting the creative talent

The next step for the businesses was to select a creative talent featured in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge to undertake the assignment. Several had in fact already selected the person they wanted to work with before submitting their application and had included these details in their application form.

The businesses contacted the creative talents directly to make arrangements to undertake the assignments. The specific details and conditions of how each assignment would be completed and the cost were agreed between the business and the talent. They then notified the administrator of who was selected and when the assignment would be undertaken.

5 Implementation

The *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme assignments were implemented during October and November 2013. In each of the three regions the administrator kept in contact with participants over the period and responded to any queries.

By the deadline of 22 November reports and claims were received from eight of the participating businesses. Based on these reports and claims, which provided proof that the business had already paid the creative talent for the completed assignment, payments were issued by the project partners before the end of the *Creative Edge* project (31 December 2013).

Of the ten approved Talent Vouchers, one assignment (Black Hole Studios) could not be completed during October-November due to the weather conditions needed for aerial photography. The WDC has agreed to honour the Voucher from its own resources in 2014. The Ilme Innoroom Ltd Voucher from Northern Finland did not proceed.

Reports of the eight completed assignments are set out here.

5.1 Allan Curran Architects with Paul McGuckin Photography

A Talent Voucher was provided to Allan Curran Architects (Donegal, West of Ireland) for new professional photography of their previous work to show development and maturing of buildings and sites. Photography of eight locations was undertaken by Paul McGuckin Photography (Donegal, West of Ireland). This material was to be used in the development of their website and other promotional material.

5.1.1 Assignment

Allan Curran Architects are an architecture practice with offices in county Donegal. The assignment involved selecting a photographer to visit and photograph various buildings that Allan Curran Architects have designed over the last number of years in the border region of Co. Donegal and Co. Fermanagh. The main objective was to show how these properties had matured and developed over time. The photographer took interior and exterior shots of each building for use on Allan Curran Architects' website and in other promotional materials.

5.1.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

On the awarding of the Talent Voucher, Allan Curran Architects assessed the nine photographers in which they had indicated an interest in their application to the Scheme. Firstly they reviewed their websites and then contacted them directly to see if a working relationship could be achieved that would suit the company profile. Paul McGuckin came at the top of this selection process as he is based locally in Donegal and their artistic and creative views were compatible. Having worked previously with notable architects in Donegal he sent samples of his work for them to review and his standard was more than acceptable to Allan Curran Architects.

5.1.3 Implementation

After discussions they engaged Paul McGuckin on the basis that he would provide a number of full days of photography including post-production and provision of high resolution images for a total of €2,000.00. Paul McGuckin visited and photographed the interior and exterior of the following buildings:

Co. Fermanagh

- Dwelling at Lough Eyes
- Dwelling at Lough Shore
- Canoe Centre
- Dwelling at Tempo Road

Co. Donegal

- Dwelling at Ardmore, Muff
- Dwelling at Mullinasole
- Dwelling at Dromore
- Dwelling at Bundoran

5.1.4 Conclusions

Allan Curran Architects were hugely satisfied with the outcome of the process, it has allowed them to gather enough promotional material to maintain and update their website for at least twelve months and will allow them to produce a regular newsletter for clients showcasing their latest work. They felt

the process was painless and that they gained very considerably from it. They had no problems understanding the terms of the Scheme and found that Paul McGuckin was very helpful, communicative and co-operative throughout the process.

They reported no issues with how the Scheme operated and were very happy with the way it worked for them.

See more at www.allanarc.com and <http://www.landscapeireland.com/>



Fig. 5: Photo taken by Paul McGuckin for Allan Curran Architects



Fig. 6: Photo taken by Paul McGuckin for Allan Curran Architects

5.2 Cox Power Architects with inTandem Web Design

A Talent Voucher was provided to Cox Power Architects (Mayo, West of Ireland) to re-design their website to be responsive and to enable better targeting of international clients and export markets. The re-design was conducted by inTandem web design (Sligo, West of Ireland).

5.2.1 Assignment

Cox Power Architects are an architecture practice based in Westport, Co Mayo. The assignment they applied for was to create a new online presence that adapts to all modern devices and is designed so that it can be managed, controlled and updated by them going forward. Their previous website was in need of a makeover and as a design business they understood that their visual brand was of utmost importance.

They were experiencing problems with their existing website including the following:

- Very difficult to upload content.
- News / Awards pages were buried at the back of the site and consisted only of raw text with no graphic content.
- The site changed format (for the worse) when viewed on different devices or with different screen resolutions.
- The graphics were not of a standard expected for a (visual) creative business.
- Their current export services (40% of turnover in 2012) did not appear on the site.
- Their Google search ranking was extremely poor.

They wanted their new website to come across as professional, innovative and interesting to all users even those who may not be as familiar with the area of architecture. They felt their old website did not reflect, as much as it should, the creative side of their business.

5.2.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

Cox Power Architects reviewed the MyCreativeEdge website and selected inTandem web design (Carolyn Collins) for development of their new website. They were impressed with inTandem's portfolio as shown on MyCreativeEdge and further exploration of inTandem's work on the company's own site confirmed this view.

They made contact with inTandem prior to applying for the Talent Voucher to gauge their interest and availability to proceed with the project should their application be successful. They felt from the start that Carolyn understood and explained the issues / problems they were experiencing with their current website and also understood the direction in which they wanted their new website to go. This confirmed to Cox Power Architects that inTandem were the right talent to go with for the new website.

The benefits to inTandem from working with Cox Power Architects included the ability to:

- Broaden their client base with expansion into a new geographical area.
- Reach clients in new areas with a subsequent opportunity for business growth through referrals, which can be of tremendous value to a supplier of creative services.
- Showcase their own skills at their best through involvement in a highly design-driven website development project.

- Attract further clients who wish to create a new online presence that adapts responsively to all modern devices. (As this is a relatively new trend, it has benefited inTandem to add this new service to their portfolio.)

5.2.3 Implementation

The assignment was carried out through web-meetings, phone calls and e-mails. It is worth noting that Cox Power Architects and inTandem did not actually meet face to face. Their relatively remote geographical locations did not prove a barrier to carrying out this assignment and in fact their respective offices could have been in different countries. They both felt that this reinforced the concept behind the *Creative Edge* project that creative services can be traded easily from regional locations.

Once Cox Power Architects had reviewed the problems with their existing website and their needs and expectations from the new website, they then gathered the information / images etc. that inTandem would need to develop the site.

inTandem provided a very detailed client needs analysis document for Cox Power Architects to complete which included an analysis of comparable websites for review and information on their business objectives.

When inTandem had received all the information, they began designing layout options / folder structures for the front page. Once they had an agreed structure for the website they were able to commence coding and pagination and re-design the site. The ultimate cost of the website re-design was somewhat greater than the value of the Talent Voucher with Cox Power Architects covering the difference.

5.2.4 Conclusions

Without the MyCreativeEdge directory, Cox Power Architects felt they would not have been aware of inTandem and would have found it difficult to know where to start in their search, beyond their immediate locale. They felt it was of great benefit to be able to scan a number of profiles quickly purely on a 'first impression' basis before drilling down into their own sites for more detail.

The benefits Cox Power Architects will gain from their new website are:

- Ability to sell their services: The new website reflects the services they offer—in particular the creative design content of their architecture.
- Ability to sell their location: The new website content turns their peripheral location into an advantage. The link between their site and their MyCreativeEdge profile embeds their website in the creative sector and allows them to sell their location in Westport as a place of innovation and creativity.
- Reassure clients: Their new website is more manageable and enables them to update content more frequently which reflects their ability to keep up to date with current regulations and architectural design.
- Attract clients: Their ability to put useful information for the general public on the site in the News section draws people to the site. Users (in time) will become clients, expanding their business.

- Improve export: Approximately 40% of their turnover is from international web-based services. The new site allows them to consolidate and expand their export market. Their website has become a portal for communication.
- Improve visibility: Web optimisation has improved search ranking and allows for increased domestic and international traffic which will (in time) lead to new clients.
- Increase their turnover and employees: They have a good international base and their premises can accommodate twice as many employees. Given the availability of well qualified personnel in the region they can quickly respond to any increased workload arising from increased work generated through the site.

They found inTandem very professional and a pleasure to work with and are very pleased with their new website.

See more at www.coxpower.ie and www.intandem.ie



Fig. 7: Cox Power Architects website home page (www.coxpower.ie) designed by inTandem

5.3 David Sandberg with Trickfabriken

A Talent Voucher was provided to David Sandberg (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) to assist with the development of digital environments and effects for the movie 'Kung Fury' and its trailer.

Trickfabriken AB (Skellefteå, Västerbotten, Sweden) worked with David Sandberg to produce shots of different environments such as a police station and the top of a Miami skyscraper.

5.3.1 Assignment

'Kung Fury' is an over-the-top action comedy written and directed by David Sandberg and produced by Laser Unicorns, Lampray and Salmon Fox. The movie features: arcaderobots, dinosaurs, nazis, vikings, norse gods, mutants and a super kung fu-cop called Kung Fury. During an unfortunate series of events the Chief of Police in Miami is assassinated by the most dangerous criminal of all time; Adolf Hitler, a.k.a. Kung Führer. Kung Fury decides to travel back in time, to Nazi Germany, in order to kill Hitler and end the Nazi empire once and for all. Kung Fury is a visually spectacular action comedy that has its foundation in 80s cop movies.

Most of the short film has been shot already and when David Sandberg applied for a Talent Voucher he was looking to fund the post-production phase. One outlet that they were going to utilise is crowdfunding, through a site called Kickstarter.com. Kickstarter allows people to donate and participate in various projects ranging from art and design to film and video. It is a fairly new way of funding creative projects and he felt it was perfect for Kung Fury. He wanted their Kickstarter campaign to be accompanied by a trailer, which they had been working on for the previous couple of months.

As Kung Fury takes place in a variety of exotic locations; 1980s Miami, Asgard and Germany in the 1940s to name a few, and with a limited budget to work with, they had to shoot most of the scenes against a greenscreen backdrop. This meant that they had to recreate these environments digitally. For the release of the Kung Fury trailer there were several environments and visual effects (VFX) shots to be made. They applied for a Talent Voucher to assist with this.

5.3.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

With the help of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher they were able to hire and collaborate with Simon Tingell, founder of Trickfabriken, a VFX studio based in Skellefteå, Sweden. Trickfabriken were responsible for five VFX shots. Three shots set in a police station environment and two on top of a Miami skyscraper.

5.3.3 Implementation

Trickfabriken used Nuke to composite these shots in a 3D environment. For the police station, several police extras were shot against a greenscreen. These were then keyed and composited within the scene. One challenge they faced was that the 3D office rendering looked too clean and new. So dirt, small cracks and subtle texture differences were applied to add realism. 3D animated palm trees were added outside to give the scene more depth and movement. Using a rendered z-pass also allowed for a realistic depth of field / bokeh effect that are often seen in film cameras.

For the Miami skyscraper scene, they built an entire 3D rooftop scene that Kung Fury was then composited on to. Plastic tape was attached to the ends of the actor's bandana to mimic wind

direction. A camera was digitally animated to simulate a backwards tracking shot. Even though the shot is very dramatically lit and rendered, almost cartoony in appearance, it still looks very believable and they feel it worked out great in the end.

5.3.4 Conclusions

David Sandberg feels this project was a great way for himself and Trickfabriken to get to know each other and where their qualities lay. With a film like this, where almost every single shot is a VFX shot, it is essential to structure the work in a way that is feasible for all artists involved, wherever in the world they might work from. With the Talent Voucher, they were able to test out a new workflow for the first time during the production of this movie. It has laid the backbone and foundation of how to structure and streamline their post-production pipeline with artists from other cities.

He feels it has been a great learning experience and a pleasure to collaborate with Trickfabriken and hopefully they can continue their collaborative efforts in future.

In December 2013 the **Kung Fury Kickstarter campaign**, using the trailer, was launched with a goal of raising US\$200,000. There was huge interest in the campaign and **it ultimately raised US\$630,019 from over 17,000 backers.**

See more at <https://www.facebook.com/laserunicorns> and <http://trickfabriken.se/>



Fig. 8: VFX shots of a police station developed by Trickfabriken for Kung Fury

5.4 Donegal Designer Makers with Shaun Egan Photography

A Talent Voucher was provided to Donegal Designer Makers (Donegal, West of Ireland) for photography of the craft products of members of the network. Twenty-five individual craft makers and designers had their products professionally photographed by Shaun Egan Photography (Donegal, West of Ireland). These images will be used to produce a new craft trail brochure for the county and will link with place-based tourism marketing. The photographs will be available to the makers and the network for other promotional material.

5.4.1 Assignment

Donegal Designer Makers (DDM) is a network of 25 professional studio makers based in Co. Donegal, Ireland. Chaired by their creative lead Hannah McGuinness, the network represents a variety of craft disciplines. These include textiles, ranging from traditional hand weaving to the most contemporary in fashion knitwear, as well as leading jewellery designers, furniture makers, basketry, ceramicists and print makers.

As they are based in a large county with a busy tourist industry, and after discovering that this is a growing sector of interest for people visiting the county, they were keen to produce a very high quality printed brochure which includes a craft trail. This would allow the public to visit individual makers' studios. They applied for a Talent Voucher for professional photography of products, makers and lifestyle shots for this brochure. They would cover the design and print cost of the brochure from other resources.

5.4.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

When approved for the Talent Voucher, their first step was to contact photographers from MyCreativeEdge who were close enough for it to be feasible for them to undertake the assignment. They set them a brief and received quotes from two very reputable photographers featured on the site.

5.4.3 Implementation

After discussion with the members of the network, they decided to split the work and use one photographer for product shots and one for lifestyle shots based in Co. Donegal and also in DDM's new retail outlet in Ardara. It was decided that makers' portraits were not feasible due to the work commitments of makers.

Shaun Egan was chosen to do the product shots and the 25 makers sent their work to his studio with a brief. A standard background and format was agreed beforehand to ensure a sleek look throughout the publication. The full value of the Talent Voucher was required for this part of the work.

As DDM represents 25 makers who were in their busiest time of year in the run up to Christmas, it was difficult to work within the timescale and for all makers to get their work ready in time.

Paul McGuckin was selected to undertake the lifestyle shots with direction from DDM's creative lead Hannah McGuinness. As she was not available until January, and to allow time for appropriate curation of the lifestyle shots, these photo shoots could not happen within the timescale or the Talent Voucher budget. It was agreed to undertake these in 2014 and that they would be paid for by the network. This meant the publication of the craft trail brochure was planned for Q2 2014.

5.4.4 Conclusions

DDM will ultimately have a very professional, high quality publication with a lot of images of product. Taking on the lifestyle shots independently means that they can take the time needed to make the shots something that really works for them. DDM feels that liaising with the two photographers has been great as they were both very enthusiastic about getting it right for the network and also showcasing their own work as well as their county.

Twenty-five individual makers now have access to images of their work which can be used for PR and submissions. For new members this is the first time they have had their work photographed professionally, thanks to the support from *Creative Edge*.

5.4.5 What happens next

Paul McGuckin will do the final lifestyle shots. DDM will employ a graphic designer to work on the brochure layout, both print and online versions. They will link in with Fáilte Ireland (the Irish tourism authority) to make sure the map used in the publication is the most appropriate. The brochure will then be printed and distributed and they will also have an online version.

See more at <http://www.donegaldesignermakers.com/> and <http://shaunegan.com/>



Fig. 10: Photo of Hannah McGuinness bracelet taken by Shaun Egan



Fig. 11: Photo of Rathlin Knitwear jumper taken by Shaun Egan

5.5 Kulturstorm with Elisabeth Widmark

A Talent Voucher was provided to Kulturstorm (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) to develop six illustrations to reflect the core values of the organisation. The talent who developed the illustrations was Elisabeth Widmark (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden).

5.5.1 Assignment

Kulturstorm is a non-profit association working in the cultural field. Their focus is on kids and youths with limited access to the cultural life of Umeå and Västerbotten county in Sweden. Kulturstorm applied for a Talent Voucher to have six illustrations prepared for their upcoming method book. The assignment consisted of a series of illustrations to the following specifications:

- 3 full page illustrations: digital painting
- 3 small pencil sketches of three characters

The three full page illustrations were to illustrate the following core values of their association:

- Mentoring
- Outreach
- Longsightedness

The three pencil sketches were to be based on the characters in the full page illustrations, but did not have to follow the above core values.

5.5.2 Implementation

Immediately after learning they had been granted a Talent Voucher, Kulturstorm contacted Elisabeth Widmark who was their first choice when they wrote the application for the Voucher. An initial meeting was held on 8 October where they invited Elisabeth and presented the details of the assignment. She agreed to the terms of the assignment and they decided on a deadline of a month for a first draft of all the illustrations.

On 8 November there was a follow up meeting where they got to see and discuss Elisabeth's first draft of sketches and were given the opportunity to provide feedback. They decided on a deadline of 20 November for completion of the assignment. On that day there was a final meeting where Elisabeth delivered and presented the final results of the assignment. Kulturstorm received the illustrations in both paper and digital format.

5.5.3 Conclusions

Kulturstorm were very pleased to have hired the chosen talent for the assignment. Her portfolio on MyCreativeEdge gave them a full picture of her work and talents, and they found it easy to contact her through the contact information provided on the site. The only negative was possibly that the illustrator was new to the business, and did not have a full insight concerning invoicing matters, but it all worked out in the end.

For Kulturstorm, as a small association almost without any long term financial support, the Talent Voucher provided a unique chance for them to hire an illustrator for an assignment for the very first

time. Since they were so happy with the outcome of the assignment, they will probably use the same talent for future similar projects.

They found it relatively easy to get in touch with staff at MyCreativeEdge when questions arose concerning the Talent Voucher. The only thing they could have wished worked better was a faster response to their e-mails.

See more at <http://kulturstorm.se/> and <http://www.elisabethwidmark.se/>



Fig. 12: Initial sketch of illustration for Kulturstorm by Elisabeth Widmark



Fig. 13: Photo of final illustration developed for Kulturstorm by Elisabeth Widmark

5.6 Leitrim Design House with David Knight Photography

A Talent Voucher was provided to the Leitrim Design House (Leitrim, West of Ireland) network of craft and design makers for professional photography of makers with their products. David Knight Photography (Roscommon, West of Ireland) took photographs of 22 craft makers who are members of the network with their products. Images have been used for new retail point of sale material, cards for distribution and a 2014 calendar for sale.

5.6.1 Assignment

Leitrim Design House is a retail gallery at The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim and also acts as a network for craft and design makers in the county and as a facilitator of supports for members. They applied for a Talent Voucher to commission a photo shoot of Leitrim makers to form the centre point of their next promotional campaign. The assignment was to build a bank of images to be used as follows:

- Images for general promotion for both the Leitrim Design House and the individual makers consisting of soft copies for web, social media, e-letters, digital screen within shop etc.
- Print promotion to improve merchandising within the Leitrim Design House; tent cards as point of sale within the Leitrim Design House retail gallery; cards to accompany product when sold; and calendars for promotion and sale.

They wished to use head and shoulder images of the makers as part of this campaign to help tell the story of the product; to introduce the maker to the consumer and to educate the consumer about the individuality of Irish craft.

They saw that the benefits for the Leitrim Design House would be:

- Increased awareness among the general public of the value and skill of local artists and makers.
- The building of a high quality image bank for further use in promotion both for the Leitrim Design House and for the individual businesses involved in the project.
- The strengthening of the network due to this promotion being an added benefit of membership.
- Increased sales of Leitrim product through the cards and calendars.
- Improvement in the visual merchandising within the shop.

The brief was 'makers with their product' so that the association between maker and product was very clear to the end consumer. This would provide a higher profile for the maker and promote the Leitrim Design House through distribution of this PR material.

5.6.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

Leitrim Design House looked at the creative talent directory on MyCreativeEdge and identified David Knight Photography and his company Willow Design & Publishing as highly suitable to carry out this project due to their in-house skills and resources.

They selected David Knight because he has a very good reputation as a photographer. They had previously worked with him through his company Willow Design & Publishing and were familiar with his work. Under the Voucher they also contracted Willow Design & Publishing to print tent cards, cards for distribution and calendars.

5.6.3 Implementation

A studio was set up in the Dock Arts Centre in Carrick-on-Shannon and the 22 makers travelled there for the photo shoot. This took place over two long days from 8.30am-8.00pm. After the photo shoot Leitrim Design House were sent a link to all images and they selected the ones for use in point of sale material and the calendar.

5.6.4 Conclusions

Leitrim Design House sees this project as something they would like to repeat with another group of makers. It was very successful and as a spin off it allowed the individual makers time to meet and network together. It also gave the Leitrim Design House staff an opportunity to meet with makers and order product for the shop and plan for upcoming events. This is something that could be very easily repeated to further build the image bank and it has sown the seeds for future work with David Knight and Willow Design & Publishing. They feel that he performed an excellent job and delivered very high quality images that they are extremely happy with. His attention to detail was superb and he made everyone feel very much at ease. They now have extremely good images of the 22 makers involved.

As part of the assignment they also encouraged all the makers to sign up to MyCreativeEdge and distributed brochures to all of them.

See more at <http://leitrimdesignhouse.ie/> and <http://www.davidknightphotography.com/>



Fig. 14: Photo of Leitrim Design House artist Brigid Birney by David Knight



Fig. 15: Photos of the Leitrim Design House calendar in situ in the retail space alongside products featured in the calendar



5.7 Lucky Star Music with Hanna Karlzon Illustration & Design

A Talent Voucher was provided to Lucky Star Music (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) to develop artwork to help promote their new interactive entertainment product Lucky Star Karaoke. Hanna Karlzon Illustration & Design (Umeå, Västerbotten, Sweden) developed the artwork and the resulting artwork reflects the combination of ideas from both companies.

5.7.1 Assignment

Lucky Star Music, based in Umeå, Sweden is in the process of launching a new interactive entertainment concept 'Lucky Star Karaoke'. Their aim is to encourage more people to experience the joy of singing. Lucky Star Karaoke is all about having fun and getting to know each other in a relaxed environment. In order to promote this concept, they saw the need for a stunning piece of artwork to go with the spirit of the Lucky Star Karaoke concept.

The assignment was to create an exclusive artwork to promote Lucky Star Karaoke. They wanted to work closely with the artist to ensure that the message of a joyful and fun activity was communicated. It was also important that the style of the artwork was in harmony with the rest of their imagery, for example their company website.

5.7.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

They had already noted that Hanna Karlzon (Hanna Karlzon Illustration & Design) is a skilled artist and they thought that her style would be right for them. The co-operation with her was very smooth. They felt she was very attentive to their ideas and needs while at the same time preserving her own style and typical design element.

5.7.3 Implementation

There were two meetings between Lucky Star Music and Hanna Karlzon during the project period which ran through October and the beginning of November. The first meeting consisted of discussing the concept of Lucky Star Karaoke and what they wanted the illustration to communicate. They also talked about where the illustration would be used: in printed material and on the website. It was decided that Hanna would make different versions of the illustration, which looked the same but were suited for different uses.

The second meeting was to look at some sketches that Hanna had done. This time they discussed the looks of the people in the illustration, colour choices etc. In between meetings they had continuous contact by e-mail where Hanna e-mailed different versions of the illustration to show the direction she was going in. Lucky Star Music had the opportunity to come up with suggestions concerning things like colouring, background, details in people's facial expressions etc.

Through this close collaboration they reached a result which is satisfying both for them as clients and for Hanna as an artist. Through these meetings and continuous contact by e-mail Lucky Star Music have had the opportunity to co-create a wonderful illustration consisting of people who are singing happily.

5.7.4 Conclusions

Lucky Star Music had a very clear image of what they wanted to achieve by using their Talent Voucher to hire Hanna Karlzon and get an exclusive artwork for their new karaoke concept. They believe that this goal has been very well achieved.

They feel that one of the most interesting things about the project is that, even though they knew what they wanted, they could not have imagined what the end result would look like. They feel this is the thrill of working closely with a truly creative artist, like the one they had the opportunity to employ. They feel that she has managed to translate their general concept of the joy of singing into a very appealing and unique picture. Hanna also managed to adapt the illustration to make it fit with the general imagery on their website. This means that they can use it in many different ways, both on the website and in printed material.

The only thing that they would have liked to change in the process was the short time scale in which it had to be done (completion date was only six weeks after they were granted the Talent Voucher). They think that future projects involving Talent Vouchers or the like would benefit from a longer period of time in which the work can be done. Even so, they are still very happy with the process and the luxury of being able to work with a professional artist without having to worry about the cost.

See more at <http://luckystarmusic.se/> and <http://www.hannakarlzon.com/>



Fig. 16: Work in progress by Hanna Karlzon for Lucky Star Music



Fig. 17: Final illustration by Hanna Karlzon for Lucky Star Music

5.8 SunSää with Jaakko Posti

A Talent Voucher was provided to SunSää (Rovaniemi, Northern Finland) to produce promotional photography to help support SunSää's weather reactive advertising software. The Talent Voucher enabled SunSää to commission photographer Jaakko Posti (Rovaniemi, Northern Finland) to produce a series of photographs which will provide a ready-made photo gallery to assist SunSää's customers develop their adverts.

5.8.1 Assignment

SunSää Travel is a weather reactive software tool for companies working in the travel industry. With SunSää Travel companies can promote their products when they are at their best. SunSää can be used on webpages or in digital signage. For example Rovaniemen matkailu ja markkinointi Oy is using SunSää in travel information. They have a digital screen in the window at the tourist information office. The screen tells tourists what is the best activity to do today and tomorrow. The suggestion is based on the weather forecast, so on a sunny day it will tell people to go outdoors such as on a reindeer safari or snowmobile safari and then on a rainy day it will suggest going to a museum or spa.

The assignment was to shoot photos which can be used in adverts that SunSää is managing. To make it easy for clients to start using SunSää Travel, they wanted to have a photo gallery that their customers could use to make their own adverts. The photos would also be used for SunSää's own promotional purposes.

5.8.2 Process and reason for selecting the talent

Jaakko Posti was selected because of his skills. The company had seen a lot of his previous photos and felt his style was just right for SunSää products. Jaakko had done a lot of outdoor shoots so was the right talent for this job.

5.8.3 Implementation

SunSää used the Talent Voucher for photographer Jaakko Posti to shoot pictures for the SunSää Travel product. While all of the photography could not be completed by the time the claim needed to be submitted, they were happy to make payment in advance.

5.8.4 Conclusions

SunSää feels that the Talent Voucher was a great way to make SunSää a better product and more attractive to clients. SunSää would not have had the possibility to hire a photographer for this without the Talent Voucher.

See more at <http://sunsaa.fi/> and <http://www.jaakkoposti.com/>

6 Performance and Key Lessons

How the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme has performed in terms of its original objectives is examined here. A number of lessons can also be learned from the experience which may be useful for any future implementation of this or similar schemes. These lessons have emerged from the project partners' experience in administering the Scheme as well as the participants' experiences.

6.1 Performance in meeting objectives

- o **Inter-disciplinary collaboration:** Ultimately the objective of the Scheme which was most successfully met was promoting collaboration across creative disciplines. The Scheme provided an opportunity for creatives from different disciplines to collaborate for the benefit of both – architects with photographers or web designers, directors with post-production companies, craft makers and software developers with photographers, digital music businesses and cultural organisations with illustrators.

The eight completed assignments represent a **broad range of examples of how different creative disciplines can collaborate on projects** such as photography of creative products, illustration of creative ideas, web design for creative services and visual effects to achieve a creative vision.

- o **Experience for emerging talent:** One of the main issues for the Scheme related to a broader issue for the MyCreativeEdge website. The website has a section called Creative Showcase which was intended to feature profiles of creative businesses and freelancers who provided creative products and services; and a second section called Employ a Creative which was intended to be a 'talent bank' where new emerging talent seeking employment could create profiles to showcase their portfolios. When a new member creates their profile they can select which section to be featured in or can choose to be in both. The option to be in both was intended for new talent seeking employment but who were also available to work freelance.

However in practice what occurred in many cases was that established creative businesses, when creating their profile, chose to be featured in both the Creative Showcase and Employ a Creative. This may have been due to an unclear explanation of the two sections, some confusion over the term 'Employ' as some businesses saw this as meaning to contract a business or because members simply wanted to be featured as widely as possible on the site. Whatever the reason it meant that many well established creative businesses were featured in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge. Being included in this section was the main criteria for talents to be selected under the Talent Voucher Scheme.

Also recruitment to MyCreativeEdge resulted in a much larger number of established businesses joining than emerging talent. Relatively few new talents were featured on the site when the successful applicants were selecting who to work with. Indeed less than 5% of the site's total membership is aged under 25 years.

This meant that **although one of the objectives of the Creative Edge Talent Voucher Scheme was to provide an opportunity for experience and portfolio development for emerging talent, in practice this only occurred in a minority of cases** (mainly those in Västerbotten). This was due to the small number of new talents to choose from and also the very important role of track record and previous experience in the businesses' decisions on who to select.

For any future scheme where experience and portfolio development for new emerging talent is the primary or sole objective, the criteria for the talent to be selected would need to be quite specific if only new emerging talent were to be contracted. For this to be effective and attractive for businesses there would need to be a sufficiently large pool of new talent available.

- **Innovation and product/service development:** The third objective of the Scheme was to promote innovation and product/service development, bearing in mind the quite limited time and budget available. Each Voucher made a **notable contribution to the development of the participants' business and some will have considerable long term benefits.**
 - The VFX for the Kung Fury trailer allowed David Sandberg to create an extremely effective 'pitch' for his Kickstarter campaign. This ran in December 2013 and raised US\$630,020 from 17,713 backers, well above the original target of \$200,000.
 - The photography of 22 craft makers in the Leitrim Design House allowed the development of new point of sale material, cards and calendars which enhance the visual material in their retail space and raise the profile of the craft and skill of the individual makers. It also provides the long term benefit of an image bank for the Design House and makers.
 - The illustration created for Lucky Star Music has been used extensively to promote their new product Lucky Star Karaoke.
 - A new, high quality responsive website has enhanced the online presence of Cox Power Architects allowing them to better present the breadth of their work and connect with potential overseas clients. Their internet search ranking has improved considerably with the new site.
 - Marketing and selling the new Sunsää Travel software tool has been made considerably easier by the availability of a ready-made photo gallery for potential clients. They would have been unable to offer this added benefit to clients without the Voucher.
 - The 25 members of the Donegal Designer Makers network not only have access to a bank of high quality product images but this work will feature in a new craft trail brochure which will benefit the tourism industry in the entire county.
 - Kulturstorm were able to commission original illustrations for the first time ever, allowing them to increase access to culture among children and young people who generally do not have such access.
 - Allan Curran Architects can now present the breadth of their work to potential clients clearly showing how their previous work has aged and developed over time – an important consideration.

- **Incentive to join MyCreativeEdge:** A secondary objective of the Talent Voucher Scheme was to act as an incentive to join MyCreativeEdge. In the initial promotion and marketing of the site in the three participating regions, the availability of the Talent Voucher Scheme was included as an added incentive to join the site. This was communicated to creative enterprises, students, and trade and industry associations.

It is not possible to judge exactly how important a role the availability of the Scheme had on recruitment to join the site, however several of the applicants to the Scheme mentioned it was the primary reason they joined. **By the deadline for applications to the Scheme (20 September), 240 creatives from the three participating regions had registered on MyCreativeEdge.** Exactly 1 in 10 of these applied for a Voucher.

6.2 Key lessons

- **Timing:** As the Talent Voucher Scheme was implemented through the MyCreativeEdge website, it could not be launched until the site went live. This happened in mid-June. The summer months however, were not the best time to be promoting the Scheme nor for applicants to be submitting applications. The original application deadline of 6 September needed to be extended until 20 September and if the deadline had been later it is likely there may have been considerably more applications. **The application period for any future such scheme should avoid the holiday/summer period.**

The timing also created problems for some of the assignments as in the case of Black Hole Studios where weather conditions and limited daylight meant their aerial photography assignment could not be completed. Also for the two craft network assignments, the run up to Christmas is a very busy period for makers.

- **Promotion/awareness:** A challenge with any new scheme is to make people aware of it and its purpose. Explaining the reasons for and objectives of the Scheme, to encourage participation, takes some time. This needs to be built into plans for promoting it. **It would have been beneficial to have had more time to promote the Scheme and raise awareness of its objectives during the application period.** This was also complicated by promoting the new website MyCreativeEdge at the same time and this may have led to the Talent Voucher message being lost to some degree.
- **Simple and short online application form:** **Incorporating the application form into MyCreativeEdge proved very successful in terms of administration.** As a member had to be logged in to complete the form the system could 'auto-fill' all of their contact details which reduced the time and burden involved in completing the application form. The automatic e-mail system, with each application e-mailed to the relevant regional administrator when submitted, also made the system quite straightforward to administer.
- **Business selects the talent:** In the initial planning of the Scheme it was decided that the selection of the talent that the business would work with would be left up to the businesses. This is somewhat similar to the approach taken by NESTA in the Creative Credits scheme run in

Manchester⁹ but differs from the Creative State North West programme in Ireland where a greater degree of 'match-making' was performed by the administrators.¹⁰

Under the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme the only criteria were that the talent be featured in the Employ a Creative section of MyCreativeEdge, that a talent could not accept more than one assignment and that they be able to invoice for the work on a freelance basis. It was the responsibility of the successful applicants to make direct contact with the talent and arrange all details of the contract and assignment. In a number of cases the applicants had contacted their preferred supplier before submitting their application.

This **'arms length' approach to selecting the talent greatly reduced the administrative burden** on the project partner organisations. Once the applications were evaluated relatively little oversight was required until the claims were submitted. In the meantime the only input required was responses to queries. This approach meant the **creative businesses awarded a Voucher had considerable freedom to choose the talent they felt was best suited to the assignment and their own business / working approach**. Though as noted above this meant many of them chose more experienced suppliers rather than new emerging talent.

One of the possible disadvantages of this approach is that a Voucher may be used to fund an assignment that would have occurred in any case between the same two businesses. That an existing working relationship would be subsidised and the Voucher would not encourage any new relationships or additional activity.

- **Duration of implementation:** The short time period for implementing assignments was the biggest problem expressed by participants. Again because of the Scheme's link to MyCreativeEdge, it could not be launched before mid-June. As all payments needed to be made and cleared in banks before the end of *Creative Edge* funding (31 December 2013), the timeframe for implementing assignments was short. Successful candidates were notified in early October and the deadline for submission of claims and reports was 22 November. This gave just under eight weeks for the assignments to be completed and for the creative talent to be paid. The deadline for claims to be submitted to partners was necessary to ensure they could assess the claims and issue the reimbursement to the company before the end of the project.

Ideally the timeframe for implementation of Talent Voucher assignments should be longer, perhaps six months. This would have provided additional opportunities and allowed greater flexibility in the assignments. For example in the case of Lucky Star Music they expressed the view that a longer period would have been preferable for their assignment and a longer period may also have allowed DDM to do some makers' portraits.

- **Invoicing:** As some of those contracted under the Scheme were emerging talent, issuing invoices for work may not be a familiar process for them. For many in the early stages of their career in the sector, the business skills needed for self-employment can be challenging. **It may be useful to**

⁹ See <http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/guide-creative-credits> for a guide to the Creative Credits pilot. This scheme awarded Creative Credits to SMEs from other sectors to contract creative suppliers.

¹⁰ See <http://www.creativestatenorthwest.com/>

provide some business mentoring to any new emerging talent participating in such a scheme.

- **Financial procedures:** For some of the partner organisations the process of issuing payment of the Talent Voucher was a new procedure. In one case the organisation had never issued such a payment before while for another all of their previous similar payments had been in the form of grants rather than reimbursements and previous recipients would not have had to prove they had already paid for the service. The issue of how these payments should be recorded in accounts also arose as did the issue of VAT and how it should be handled. Differences in VAT legislation between countries meant this was handled differently in each region. **The financial and accounting procedures required in the organisations administering such a scheme need to be considered in the early design stages.**

Annex 1: *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme Terms & Conditions

- Applicants must be registered members of the MyCreativeEdge.eu website and be businesses operating in the Advertising & Publishing, Architecture, Arts, Crafts, Design, Digital Media, Fashion & Jewellery, Film & Video, Music & Theatre, Photography, Software & Gaming or TV & Radio sectors.
- *Creative Edge* Talent Vouchers are open to applicants based in the West of Ireland (counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway or Clare), Västerbotten region of Sweden, or Northern Finland (Lapland, North Ostrobothnia) only.
- Applications will be assessed by a panel of experts including *Creative Edge* project partners and independent evaluators. Where demand exceeds supply, applicants scoring highest will be awarded a *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher. The decision of the selection panel is final and non-negotiable.
- Written feedback on your application will be available on request, however no discussion regarding the score or the outcome can be entered into.
- A *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher must be used to contract a creative talent who is also a member of MyCreativeEdge.eu and featured in the 'Employ a Creative' section. They can be based in any of the three participating regions (West of Ireland, Västerbotten (Sweden) or Northern Finland).
- To be eligible to benefit from a Talent Voucher, a creative talent member must have the capacity to work on a freelance basis and to issue an invoice to the company for the work undertaken. They can only accept one assignment under the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme.
- The full value of the Talent Voucher (€2,000) must go to the contracted creative talent. Any other costs associated with contracting them (e.g. overheads) will be covered by the business.
- If there is any additional payment to the selected creative talent over and above the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher value, this is to be agreed directly between the business and the creative talent. The *Creative Edge* project has no involvement in or liability for any such arrangements.
- Payment of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher by the *Creative Edge* project to the business will be issued on completion of the assignment and the submission of a valid claim form. The claim form must be accompanied by the invoice submitted by the creative talent and proof of payment of the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher value to them. To receive payment, the claim form must be submitted by the deadline specified in the letter of offer.
- A short report on the assignment must accompany the claim. This is for internal use by the *Creative Edge* project partners and funders. A summary of the report will be made publicly available and any commercially sensitive information should be highlighted and it will not be included in the published summary.
- Successful businesses and selected creative talents must agree to participate in any reasonable requests to support the promotion of the Scheme or to share the results. For example, they may be quoted in a press release on the Scheme, or be asked to attend a workshop to discuss the results.
- A business receiving a *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher must be in possession of a valid tax clearance certificate.
- Any conflicts of interest must be fully disclosed to the *Creative Edge* project partners.

- The *Creative Edge* project partners reserve the right to cancel the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher offer unconditionally.

Annex 2: Example of a letter of offer to a successful applicant

Dear

We are delighted to inform you that (name of business) has been selected to receive a *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher. This voucher scheme is being funded under the Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) *Creative Edge* project. The (project partner name) is the project partner administering this Scheme in (region name).

The value of the Talent Voucher is €2,000 or the actual value of the payment made to the creative talent, whichever is lower. The Terms and Conditions of the Scheme are attached.

We will be in contact shortly to discuss the Talent Voucher but in the meantime the next steps are:

- You need to select a 'creative talent' who is featured in the 'Employ a Creative' section of the MyCreativeEdge website to undertake the assignment. Only talents who have indicated an interest (shown by a voucher icon on their profile page when you are logged in) are eligible. You are free to select a 'creative talent' from a region other than your own.
- Contact the creative talent directly to make arrangements to undertake the assignment. The specific details and conditions of how the assignment will be completed are to be agreed between yourself and the talent.
- Notify the (project partner name) of who has been selected and when the assignment will be undertaken. The (project partner name) will be in contact with you and the talent during the assignment to discuss progress.

On completion of the assignment:

- You pay the creative talent directly. The full value of the voucher must go to the talent with any overheads or other costs associated with the assignment (e.g. travel) covered by you.
- Submit your claim to the (project partner name) for the amount paid to the talent (maximum of €2,000) with proof of payment. The claim must be accompanied by a short report on the assignment (see below).
- All claims must be submitted on or before **Friday 22 November 2013** to ensure payment.
- The (project partner name) will issue payment to you to the value paid to the talent.

Creative businesses receiving a *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher are required to submit a short report (2-3 pages) on the assignment/project along with their claim for payment. Submission of this report is a necessary requirement for receiving payment. Reports should include the following details:

- Summary (half page of main points)
- Assignment – Description of what the assignment was
- Process and reason for selecting the talent
- Implementation – Description of how the assignment was carried out
- Conclusions – Positive aspects of the experience, any problems or issues that arose, suggestions for any future scheme

- Include at least one image to accompany the report.

Please note that summary details from the report will appear in an overall report on the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme which will be publicly available and published online. If there is any aspect of the report that you consider commercially sensitive please indicate.

Also you and/or the talent you contract under the Voucher may be requested to participate or be quoted in publicity material related to the *Creative Edge* Talent Voucher Scheme.

We look forward to working with you on this project and hope that the Talent Voucher will provide a real benefit for (business name) and the creative talent selected.

Kind regards



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Export platform: www.mycreativeedge.eu

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