

GEELONG'S CREATIVE SPACE

Proposal for a co-working, training, collaborative space

Purpose

To outline a proposal for a co-working, training and collaborative space to be managed as a social enterprise in partnership with local not for profits: Entrepreneurs Geelong Inc and Creative Geelong Inc.

Key Benefits and Social Impact

Creating a focal point and a sense of place for local not for profits Creative Geelong Inc and Entrepreneurs Geelong Inc is vital to ensure ongoing collaboration and enterprise capability building in a time of optimism and opportunity for Victoria's growing second city. Geelong's future as a creative and innovative city needs to be supported, and this co-working space would aim to ensure that the whole community is taken on the journey to new economic growth through events, training and programs.

- A range of 'for profit' micro, like-minded businesses have indicated interest in being anchor tenants in the space. These tenants would cover the rental costs of the premises.
- Potential spaces in the Geelong CBD are being considered but final decisions will be made based on quantum of anchor tenants and what buildings are available at the time of project commencement. At minimum, 200m² would be required.
- Based on research into successful co-working spaces, the space would need to:
 - have ground floor level access to ensure ease of use for people with a disability
 - be near public transport (in walking distance of Geelong train station for telecommuters)
 - be a suitable and appealing space for creative industries to ensure sustainability (i.e. heritage / amenity)
 - have access to public parking
 - be close to cafes
 - flexible and open floor plan

Vision for long term social impact

While the short term focus for the social enterprise is to be based out of the CBD location, over the next three to five years, Entrepreneurs Geelong and Creative Geelong would look to support the development of co-working spaces in other locations in the region. This would include targeted areas of disadvantage as identified by the GROW Project

According to GROW's research, programs, initiatives and employment opportunities need to be placed in areas of disadvantage to have significant impact on addressing long-term disadvantage.

Situation Analysis

The Geelong region is in the process of transitioning to an economy that is less reliant on heavy manufacturing industries. Manufacturing will continue to provide employment opportunities in the region but it is important that the region redefines itself to create new economic and employment opportunities. There is an immediate need to create pathways into new sectors for current jobseekers and also to help the community and those from disadvantaged groups understand where they are likely to find sustainable employment and work opportunities into the future.

Creative Geelong Inc and Entrepreneurs Geelong are two not for profits that have been formed to raise awareness of the new world of work and support future job creation in the region. Growth and awareness of opportunities in creative industry sector is not currently a part of the local, everyday economic narrative. There are several projects being planned to increase this awareness including the development of a comprehensive environmental scan of the creative industries sector in the G21 region, in partnership with the Geelong Region Local Learning Employment Network.

Since 2011, Jennifer Cromarty, founder of Creative Geelong Inc, has been advocating for a shared space for people to meet, work and collaborate in central Geelong. Her paper in 2011 – ‘Hot House for Geelong’ – was met with initial interest from the City of Greater Geelong and the Geelong Chamber of Commerce as a way to activate vacant shops in the CBD and to re-purpose for a new generation of business in the knowledge economy. In the years following, Jennifer’s thinking resulted in her ideas being explored further in her Rural Communities Supporting Creative Industries: Opportunity Paper published in 2013/14 and funded by Regional Development Victoria through Rural Councils Victoria (attached to submission). These exercises have demonstrated a deep level of research and local engagement over the years, providing a strong platform for the concept outlined in this paper.

In 2016, several members of the Geelong community have continued to build on and support the idea that Geelong’s future lies in innovation, entrepreneurship, creative industries and collaboration. With the establishment of Creative Geelong Inc and Entrepreneurs Geelong in 2015, there has been a level of determination and dedication to see some action in moving Geelong towards a creative and entrepreneurial future. Having a co-working space is part of supporting that future.

The Opportunity for a Co-Working, Collaborative Space

The concept for a co-working space in Geelong isn’t new. However, this paper outlines an approach that has a clear social impact and an economic wellbeing focus. In this model, the space would be managed via a social enterprise. The core activities in the space would support emerging commercial businesses with a focus on professional and creative services and will cultivate a business ecosystem that promotes Geelong’s future as a creative, ‘smart’ city needing support through enterprise skills capability building, training and collaboration with the whole community.

Using a social enterprise structure will clearly demonstrate a commitment to investors and the community that any profits made from the activities in the space (through training, programs, projects and events) would be put back into the co-working initiative with the purpose of driving ongoing capability building and build the profile of Geelong as a 'creative city'.

This space would host or develop an environment for the following activities:

- Provide a focal point for creative industries and entrepreneurship in the G21 region for strategic thinking, planning and project development
- Incorporate professional services tenants to support the rental needs of the premises and provide administration and diversity of advice and support to the community
- Activating building/s and space for entrepreneurs including artists, makers, producers and designers to meet, collaborate and exhibit works on a day to day basis
- Provide outreach to young people in the Geelong community interested in entrepreneurship and the creative industries as a career path (reference: YouthWorx 2.0 program: a Melbourne-based youth media enterprise that assists homeless or 'at risk' young people to become media trainees, producers and broadcasters with an aim to reconnect them with learning and employment opportunities)
- Support community development and greater inclusion of CALD groups, older people, people with disabilities in the digital economy through short workshops (1-2 hours)

This space is not about 'desks' – it's about a place where people who care about their community can come together to contribute. It's about people who want to make an impact to other people's lives. It's about bringing people together from different disciplines to encourage collaboration and new business building. Its long term sustainability will hinge on getting people who have shared values about Geelong's creative potential. People who access the space would participate, promote and develop the program of events and activities together.

By placing all of these elements together in one space, will provide an energy and sustainability to the creative industries precinct and encourage collaboration among, industry, stakeholders, networks, government and community.

Examples of co-working spaces that include a social enterprise / social impact element include:

AUSTRALIAN

<http://www.spacecubed.com/en> – Perth WA, Newcastle NSW

Spacecubed is a Social Enterprise, designed to support 20,000 Entrepreneurs by 2025. Our collaborative spaces, entrepreneurial hubs, programs and events move people from ideas to action. Our community is tackling some of the big social, environmental and economic challenges of our time.

<http://canvascoworking.com.au/> – Toowoomba, QLD

At Canvas Coworking Inc we are passionate about building the startup ecosystem in the region...connecting entrepreneurs, designers, developers, hackers, makers, hipsters, creatives, mentors and investors! We are a not-for-profit incorporated association, our goal is to support those who want to turn their ideas into reality!

<http://cowsnearthecoast.2pihosting.com/about/> – Bega, NSW

The CoWS Near the Coast co-working space also houses the Mat-Sci-Tec Form, where local ICT industry mentors work with school liaison groups to encourage teachers and students to take a fun approach to Maths, Science and Technology, and build interesting and exciting projects.

INTERNATIONAL

<http://frankfurt.socialimpactlab.eu/EN/community> – Frankfurt, Germany

Supporting social entrepreneurs, social start-ups, co-workers and young people with a migration background on their way to becoming self-employed.

<http://www.impacthub.net/> – global social impact movement

What we need from our creative industries community

Creative Geelong Inc and Entrepreneurs Geelong Inc are pursuing government funding to support key elements of the social enterprise.

This includes funding for:

- Initial fit out including design and fixtures for internal spaces
- External signage
- Initial project coordination
- Set up of the social enterprise structure
- Engagement with key stakeholders, tenants and sponsors

What we from the local creative industries community is support to:

- Help co-design the space
- Use the space for 'hot desking'
- Be an anchor tenant on a permanent basis (limited)
- Develop capability training programs
- Attend events in the space

We'd love to hear from you, so please email us on hello@creativegeelong.com.au or message us on the Facebook page with your expression of interest.