

# Living Labs Case Studies

## Hunt Museum Living Lab

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# 1. An introduction to your organisation

1.1 The Hunt Museum is situated in the city of Limerick in the West of Ireland. It houses an extensive collection of over 2,000 artefacts ranging from Neolithic to modern times. Established from the personal collection of John and Gertrude Hunt, the museum showcases works of art, antiquities, and decorative objects, including pieces by Picasso and Renoir. The museum is a private entity operated by The Hunt Museum Trust, a registered charity. It is not a public entity but serves the public interest by making its collection accessible to the community and visitors, providing educational programs, temporary exhibitions, and hosting various cultural events. The museum's operations are supported by a combination of ticket sales, donations, and funding from various sources.

The building is the old customs house and is situated on the river Shannon.

There are 15 members of staff spanning Collections management, Education, Marketing, exhibitions, workshop assistants, operations management, project managers and community engagement personnel. There are up to 7 in-house volunteers and 4 volunteer gardeners, as well as a cohort of 50 docents.

## 1.2 Context and Need for the Living Lab Project.

The Hunt Museum has an active relationship with local communities, often in a staccato manner due to funding opportunities, resulting in an on-off engagement between the museum and community. The Hunt Museum began with an idea inspired by a Limerick-based company called Humanli. Humanli works to help corporates make a lasting positive impact with communities in need across Ireland. The Hunt Museum was interested in making a partnership with a corporate to use their CSR budget to solve a museum need or problem, involving a local community or many local communities in a project that could be sustained over time.

In order to identify a starting point, The Hunt Museum team assessed the organisation's strengths and weaknesses:

**Strengths:** The Hunt Museum had an already established pattern of collaboration with local corporates; having successfully collaborated twice before on creating sculptures inspired by museum objects for the Museum in a Garden with local engineering companies Arup and Takumi.

The Hunt Museum is also placed well in the city centre of Limerick city and is a popular cultural landmark, well-known for its unique collection and educational programmes.

The museum also celebrates an on-going relationship with the local community on King's Island- a neighbourhood adjacent to the museum rich in local culture and

history, but one of the most socio-economically challenged neighbourhoods in the city.

Weaknesses: The Hunt does not have an ongoing relationship with potential funding partners once a project has finished. Historically, a corporate agrees to fund a project or exhibition, and the relationship ends once the exhibit has been completed. The Hunt team does not have the capacity or resources to commit to consistent business development, however, it is clear that corporates are receptive to working with the museum to create something of mutual benefit to both the museum and the corporate and surrounding communities.

- [Please link the final version of your Canvas here.](#)

### 1.3 Other relevant background information.

Activities at the Hunt Museum had already been experimenting with participatory practices before and in tandem with the RECHARGE project timelines, in the co-creation of resources for visually impaired people with the 'Seeing Without Sight', project funded by the Irish Heritage Council as well as engaging working groups in the delivery of an autism-friendly museum experience, funded by ReThink Ireland.

## 2. Why become a RECHARGE Living Lab?

### 2.1 Describe why you wanted to adopt a participatory practice to solve your challenge.

What The Hunt Museum is hoping to achieve with the participatory practices as tested in RECHARGE is an on-going community project sustained over many cycles, where all stakeholders are active agents in decision making and output delivery.

The RECHARGE Model that the Hunt Museum chose to test was the **CSR cultural heritage community model**: This business model fosters meaningful, long lasting connections between museums, active communities, and socially responsible companies. It engages companies to use their CSR programmes in innovative ways to benefit museums and their communities. By facilitating collaboration, this model develops innovative products and services that meet local needs. The Hunt Museum identified anti-social behaviour in the Hunt Museum Garden as a challenge to solve using participatory practices.

The Hunt Museum focused theme for 2023 was Climate. The Hunt Museum in a Garden was the perfect place to develop an initiative focused on biodiversity, looking to create spaces in the garden for people to make use of, to increase footfall and reduce the anti-social behaviour that takes place there.

The Hunt Museum building is the old Customs House, on the River Shannon. The Museum opens into the garden, which is along the river. This garden is an open public space that does not close its gates at night, resulting in antisocial behaviour in the garden making the garden unsafe for the public walking at night, making it vulnerable to vandalism to the greenhouse, and there is often evidence of abuse of illegal substances in public view in the mornings.

2.2 List the objectives you identified for your Living Lab and describe how you have achieved them, using this table:

Objective	How have you achieved the objective
<p>Engaging a corporate into the working of the museum for the longer term to give it a more fulfilling, quantifiable and longer term result from their CSR programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Subcontracting Humanli to create the connection between the museum and local corporates</li> <li>● Inviting a number of engaged corporates to a co-ideation workshop with a view that one or more will participate in a project into the future</li> <li>● Co-creating a project to test the model with at least one corporate over a sustained period of time</li> </ul>
<p>Development of a deeper, more engaged relationships with the local community, to take pride in their cultural heritage so that they become part of the volunteer fabric of the museum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community participants actively engaged in co-creation activities</li> <li>● Community participants feeling like they are active agents in the outcome of the project</li> <li>● Community feel empowered to be active protagonists in the development of further project ideas in following iterations</li> </ul>

### 3. Data collection

KPI identification was completed in a number of iterations, with a number of participants. The Living Lab team (3 people) developed a workshop and strategically invited 2 other members of the Hunt Museum’s Collections Management and Education & Outreach teams to participate in the workshop to develop KPIs for the weaving willow project. The Economic KPIs were then shared with Cook Medical and reformed/edited from the results of that consultation.

Certain data was collected by counting numbers of participants attending the workshops, and the number of workshops themselves.

Data collected about participant’s feelings towards the skills development or the edutainment factor had to be collected in a creative way. Due to the fact that we had to ensure that people at all levels of literacy could have their voices heard, data collection methods like surveys were not going to harness the information we needed. Instead, we set one question per workshop eg “did you learn something new?” and set out two buckets next to the words YES and NO respectively. This was a much friendlier and successful way to capture the value to the participants. Similarly at cook Medical we measured the feelings from the workshops with before and after pictures, where participants were asked to stand on a sliding scale of smiley faces/emojis on the floor, depending on their mood. This captured a ‘before’ picture of participants on various places on the scale, and an ‘after’ picture of smiling participants bunched together on the ‘happiest’ side of the scale.

Other data collected was from numbers of biodiversity friendly objects made eg number of living willow sculptures in prominent gardens (Hunt & Cook), number of birdfeeders made (community participants contributed photos of their ‘birdfeeders in the wild’ in their gardens, hanging on trees etc.

Other data is collected by number of reactions to social media posts.

Impact	KPI	Measurement Criteria	Target Numbers/ How is the data collected?	Was this KPI met? If not; why? Any other comments.
Social	Local Communities regain heritage skills and sense of belonging to the museum.	Number of workshops  Numbers of community attendees of willow weaving workshops	8 workshops delivered  20 people per workshop  Second Iteration: Repeated participation from 20 King’s Island Community Members in creating the walking trail	<b>Yes - 12 workshops</b>  Yes - on average this was the case with open workshops, some community workshops were tailored.  <b>Yes</b>

		Numbers who feel they have gained a new heritage skill	Participants vote YES for the question "did you learn something new today"  1 community-made object displayed at Hunt or Cook site  Second Iteration: 1 community-made sculpture planted in green spaces on King's Island	<b>Yes.</b>  <b>Yes 2 community made objects were displayed</b>  <b>Yes 5 were made in 2025</b>
<b>Economic</b>	CSR hours contribute directly to a museum project while improving the wellbeing of their workforce, the local community and the environment.	Living Willow sculptures are in position  Company willow weaving workshops contribute to staff happiness reducing absenteeism, improving staff retention  Second iteration: SISK contribute 10+ CSR hours	2 willow structures in Cook Medical Grounds  80% of participants vote with more smiley faces at the end of the workshop than they did at the beginning.  SISK social impact report dashboard  3 more Hunt	<b>Yes</b>  <b>Yes (100%)</b>  <b>Yes</b>  <b>No- not in this</b>

		Cook Living Willow CSR partnership is maintained over 3 years	sculptures built in areas around Limerick city in 2024	iteration, Cook had to pull out of the partnership New Partnership with SISK began on 30th Sept 2024
			3 more in 2025	Yes - 5 more sculptures (with SISK)
<b>Environmental</b>	Museum actively seen as contributing to local climate targets.	<p><i>Based on Limerick city biodiversity plan:</i></p> <p>Facilitated construction of woven willow roosting platforms, bat and a variety of bird nest boxes and insect 'hotels' throughout the City</p> <p>Second Iteration of the Living Lab: "Promote the use of the City Parks and open spaces as recreational and wildlife amenity areas."</p> <p>Enhance the</p>	<p>20 birdfeeders made through willow weaving workshops</p> <p>3 new willow sculptures planted in open spaces to promote biodiversity and engagement with objects created with natural materials</p> <p>1000 willow</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>5 new willow sculptures planted in Local green spaces on King's Island</p> <p>Yes 1100</p>

		<p>biodiversity of Limerick City for future generations and to educate and promote the importance of Limerick City's biodiversity for all.</p> <p>Raise awareness, general interest, and knowledge of biodiversity through a variety of media.</p> <p><a href="https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/limerick_city_biodiversity_plan_online.pdf">https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/limerick_city_biodiversity_plan_online.pdf</a></p>	<p>withies planted between Cook and Hunt 2023 planted</p> <p>Second Iteration: 500 withies</p> <p>50 responses to Hunt Museum social media posts about the Willow Sculptures or Biodiversity.</p>	<p><b>planted</b></p> <p><b>Yes, 600 withies planted in 2025</b> <b>No results for 2024</b></p> <p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><b>Second iteration: yes</b></p>
<b>Organisational</b>	The reputation of the Hunt Museum as an innovative and inclusive organisation is enhanced.	<p>Living Willow replicas of museum objects in the garden</p> <p>Number of requests by communities for repeat willow weaving</p>	<p>4 museum objects have been sculpted in Willow</p> <p>80% of participants answer YES to question "would you do this again?"</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><b>Second iteration +1 more in the garden</b></p> <p><b>Yes</b></p>



		workshops by participants.		
		Requests by other companies to work with Hunt Museum and their CSR budgets.	2 companies have approached the museum for future CSR projects.	<b>Yes</b>
		Increased number of Volunteers for the Hunt Museum	3 new garden volunteers 3 in year 2	<b>Yes</b>  <b>Yes a steady stream of gardener volunteers and a new paid staff member (seasonal gardener)</b>

## 4. Your Living Lab Activity

### 4.1 First iteration: Jan 2023 - August 2023

#### Co-ideation phase

Here we needed to identify who could help us achieve the task of co-designing this living lab using the CSR participatory business model. The three corners of the triangle are museums, Communities and Corporates with CSR budgets.

Considerations that needed to be taken by the Hunt Museum at this time were numbers of people, the readiness of these people to enter into co-creation, as well as the amount of time available to this chosen group of participants against the museum's ideas/corporates ideas/community's ideas.

Hunt held two workshops: meeting firstly with museums and corporates, and secondly with representatives from the chosen corporate partner, the Hunt RECHARGE team and the communities chosen by the museum to work with for this pilot.

The co-ideation workshop at the Hunt Museum included representatives from local corporates with CSR budgets, and representatives from Irish Museums. As mentioned above, we decided to have an online value session with museums before the first co-ideation workshop. In tandem with Humanli's efforts to enlist the local corporates, a communication went out to the Irish Museums network via IMA, and an online value proposition session was organised for the 9 museums that signed up to participate. This online session aimed to extract the value that museums can bring to the commercial world. This was achieved by asking several strategic questions that facilitated discussion around the benefits of CSR to corporates, museums, and communities, skill sets and knowledge museums can offer to companies, and a reflection on real-life examples from each museum on where these skills and knowledge have been applied in the museums. Leading on from that was an on-site co-creation workshop, led by the Hunt and CLab. The participants included corporates invited as a result of Humanli's networking activity and the museums that had participated in the online value session.

Co-ideation workshop:

**Where:** Onsite at The Hunt Museum, Feb 10th 2023 Co-ideation workshop with CHIs and Corporates

**With whom: (who participated)**

In attendance:

From RECHARGE:

Úna Hussey, Jill Cousins, Simon Thompson, Emma Twomey **HUNT**

Karl Daly, Fiona Craughan **HUMANLI**

Ragnar Siil **CLAB**

**7 CHIs:**

Photo Museum Ireland

Donegal Railway Museum

Independence Museum

Irish Emigration Museum

National Print Museum

Archimedes Discovery Centre

National Council of Ireland

**8 Corporates:**

Earnst & Young

Holmes O'Malley Sexton

EDC Engineers

Takumi

Optel Group  
Arup  
Cook Medical  
Apple

#### Main goals:

- To engage local corporates in the RECHARGE project and taking one corporate from ideation stage through a full iteration of the testing of the CSR cultural community model and further sustained into the future.
- To emerge from this day of co-ideation with one or many ideas for a project that can move forward to test the CSR cultural community model; co-ideated by the workshop activities of the day.

#### Agenda:

10.00	Arrival - Coffee/Tea/Scones
10.15	Opening of the workshop - Aim of the day & round of introductions.
10.30	Introduction to RECHARGE Project and role of the Hunt Museum and Humanli
10:45	Plenary Session
12.45	Lunch
13.15	Case-studies: Previous examples where and how the Hunt Museum has co-created with companies (Takumi, Arup/ESB)
13.30	Ideating Living Lab Projects in break-out groups
14.30	Presentation of project ideas and discussion on possible implementation of selected pilot initiatives.
15.00	Next steps for the RECHARGE Living Labs - application of participatory business modelling, involving relevant communities.
15.30	End of the workshop and a tour of the Hunt Museum Collection

#### Activities:

- Plenary session - workshop in groups to brainstorm how CSR brings value to all three points of the triangle can bring to a partnership (Museum, corporate, community)
- Case study presentation of museum experiences of using CSR programmes with a walk in the garden to show participants the results of those partnerships (sculptures in the Museum in a Garden)

- Ideation of living lab projects for the Hunt Museum

#### Methods:

- Group brainstorming
- Case study presentation
- Ideation in small groups

#### Tools:

- Visuals and BM canvas
- Laptop and screen
- Three big tables and chairs

#### Outputs:

Three strong ideas emerged from the need to use the garden space sustainably to enrich the community and benefit both locals and visitors.

#### Prototype phase

Internally the team decided that “Weaving Willow” was the most practical project to focus on within the RECHARGE time constraints, and on Friday 24th Feb Karl from Humanli sent the brief to Laura at Cook Medical to review.

**On Wednesday the 1st March** Hunt team met with Cook Medical team to discuss the project. Both parties were very excited; and Cook Medical took the project to their higher-up manager for approval.

By **Thursday 2nd March** cook came back with a thumbs up for the project.

Willow needs to be planted early in the year so ordering the Willow at this stage was crucial.

**9th March** Hunt team take a site visit to Cook Medical for a comprehensive tour of the grounds and to see Cook Medical’s own medical device exhibition. The visit gave the Hunt team a much deeper understanding of the work that Cook Medical does and the culture that the company cultivates towards employee and community wellbeing.

**17th March** Willow sculptures planted at the Hunt Garden

#### Activities:

Planting living willow sculptures/structures

#### Tools:

Willow withies and space

#### Outputs:

4 Living Willow sculptures inspired by Hunt Museum objects in Hunt garden

1 living willow stent sculpture at Cook Medical

1 living willow fence at Cook Medical

### Co-creation phase

**April 5th: Onsite Co-Creation Workshop for RECHARGE, to further develop the project to test the participatory business model with identified local community members and Cook Medical.**

**Where:** Hunt Museum

**With whom:**

In attendance:

- 3 members from the Cook Medical team
- Representatives from St. Gabriel's (a school for special needs)
- Transition Year coordinator
- Principal from St. Mary's National School
- King's Island Community
- 3 Willow artists
- Hunt Museum Living Lab team
- Humanli representative

### Main goals:

To make a list of objects that the community was interested in making from willow, and voting on the top choices.

### Agenda:

9.30	Workshop Part 1: Presentation of Sculptures with a coffee.
10.00	Aim of the day with a short round of introductions <b>Una</b>
10.15-10.30	A short presentation on the project <i>Weaving Willow!</i> 10 mins - where did the idea come from?  5 mins for Cook Medical
10.40-12.00	Workshop Part 2: session in groups / Workshop session World Cafe
12.00-12.15	Tea & coffee break with scones/buns
12.15-12.45	Prioritisation project ideas in a plenary session
12.45-13.15	Workshop Part 3: Based on the project ideas from plenary session: co-create a 12 month project.
13.15 approx	Finish

### Activities:

Walk in the garden to see willow sculptures

Presentation of Weaving Willow so far

Brainstorming Workshop

### Methods:

World Cafe with willow artists presenting the possibilities of objects to be made in willow

### Tools:

Willow pieces

Canvases printed on paper

Coloured pens

Flip chart

Stickers

### Outputs:

Objects voted on

Community partners engaged and on board

Workshops planned

### Testing phase

12 willow weaving workshops

**Where:** Hunt Museum and Cook Medical

**With whom:**

- Young people from St. Gabriel's (school for special needs)
- King's Island Community (families and children)
- Limerick locals wanting to learn new skills and create something beautiful to take home
- Cook medical employees
- Migrants bringing skills from their home countries
- Adult group from Brothers of Charity
- Tourists to the museum
- Willow artists
- Local youth theatre group

### Main goals:

- Bring a cultural heritage skill to communities, Greater exposure of existing Irish traditional craft skills
- Increase in visitor and tourism numbers,
- Brand of the Hunt Museum extended city and county wide via its living willow replica objects
- Promotes the museum as forward-looking and engaged with climate and biodiversity issues

- Increased community engagement and therefore volunteers and potential removal of the cost of vandalism behaviour.
- Planting of intangible heritage
- Environmental and biodiversity impact
- Returning to forgotten craft skills
- Creating opportunities for physical activities
- Mindfulness and wellbeing

**Activities:**

Using willow and the craft of willow weaving to learn about biodiversity and a cultural heritage craft and developing traditional craft making skills.

**Tools:**

Willow withies and space

**Outputs:**

- 2 bird feeder making workshops
- 2 willow lantern making workshops
- 2 day long workshops with a group of young people from St Gabriel’s school - resulting in a willow sculpture on display in the Hunt Museum Garden for August 2023
- 3 willow weaving workshops for employee wellbeing at Cook Medical
- 1 day long (split into 2 workshop times) creating community made pig replica
- 1 re-weaving community training workshop for upkeep of the planted willow sculptures

**8 Willow structures:**

- 4 Living Sculptures of Hunt Museum Objects in the Garden
- 2 community built sculptures exhibited in the Hunt Museum - made by St.Gabriel’s school and the community who attended the Much Dubh (pig) workshop
- 1 Stent sculpture at Cook Medical
- 1 willow fence at Cook Medical

**4.2 Second Iteration: August 2024 - Sept 2025**

**Co-ideation**

**Workshop- 30th September 2024**

**Where:** The Captain's Room, The Hunt Museum

**With whom:** 11 participants, from local organisations - Limerick Civic Trust, Paul Partnership, SISK, Limerick Youth Service, The Hunt Museum

**Main goals:** To co-ideate the next iteration of the Hunt Museum Living Lab.

**Activities:**

Agenda:

9.45-10.00	Arrivals, tea & coffee
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10.00-10.30	Introductions and a brief explanation of the RECHARGE project and our Weaving Willow work to date (take a walk to look at our living willow sculptures in the Hunt Museum in a Garden)
10.30-10.45	Back in the Museum- an explanation of the workshop plan
10.45-11.00	Refreshments and bathroom break
11.00-11.45	'World Cafe' style brainstorming session in groups
11.45-12.15	Plenary session to discuss the ideas developed in the brainstorming session
12.15-12.30	Next steps identified

**Tools (including digital):** Laptop and screen, tables covered in brown paper, Sharpie markers.

**Outputs:**

- A variety of community-rooted themes—such as equine history, fishing, willow weaving, and boatbuilding—were proposed to engage young people, especially those at risk of anti-social behaviour. These themes draw on local heritage and interests to foster positive involvement.
- Strategies were identified to engage both younger and older youth. Flexibility, ownership, and drop-in models were emphasized for older participants, while junior girls were noted as particularly receptive. Outreach efforts must expand beyond schools and established youth services.
- Success depends on partnerships with local schools, community groups, artists (e.g., willow specialists), and intergenerational participants. Expert input is needed for elements like willow care and fishing practices to ensure sustainability and skill-sharing.
- The project must remain rooted in community benefit and avoid being overshadowed by external organizations or similar initiatives
- One project idea was chosen to continue the test of the RECHARGE CSR Model.
- A list of potential green spaces in the community for planting, a list of community stories to link to sculptures
- Contributions to a timeline for the first draft of an action plan

*The proposed Storytelling Sculpture Trail project at this stage:* Beginning at the Hunt Museum garden, meandering through and King's Island and finishing at the Opera



Centre; this trail will feature willow sculptures that tell the stories of the area's rich cultural and historical heritage, particularly its connection to fishing and the River Shannon. Developed in partnership with/by the local community, the sculptures will depict objects tied to local legends and the Hunt Museum collection, with potential stories including 'The Banshee at the Handball Alley' and 'The Battle of the Tail Race'. Intergenerational groups will collect and record these stories, which can be accessed via QR codes at each sculpture. The project emphasizes community co-creation, with local children, parents, and local storytellers contributing to the narrative and design process. Ultimately, the trail will connect people to the island's past, fostering a deeper sense of place, heritage, and shared skills.

### **Co-ideation Workshop 18th October**

**Where:** Opera Centre site hosted by SISK

**With whom:** Total Participants = 6

Sisk = 2

Hunt Museum = 2

King's Island Community Member = 1

Limerick Civic Trust = 1

### **Main goals:**

1. To recap on the identified green spaces in the King's Island area and make a list of who to contact for permission to plant there.
2. Make a list of areas of dense willow and make a plan to explore potential for coppicing with community members

**Activities:** Brainstorm around a table using post-it notes for documentation of the conversation

**Tools (including digital):** Post-its, markers, laptop for taking notes, table and chairs..

### **Outputs:**

- One list of green spaces in the locality and names of people against them to be contacted
- Two parallel timelines in the action plan identified and confirmed by all participants
- a plan for a walk around the river on Monday 4th November 2024 to identify the potential for coppicing

### **Co-creation**

#### **Workshop - 11th December 2024**

**Where:** The Hunt Museum

**With whom:** 25 participants in total

Paul Partnership family group (all from King's Island Community) = 10 adults, 9 children

King's Island Community member = 1

SISK =1

Hunt Museum staff = 2

Hunt Docent volunteer =1

Willow Artist = 1

**Main goals:** 1. to identify 4 local stories to tell as part of the storytelling walking trail, and 2. to identify Hunt Museum objects that lend themselves to being planted out of willow, that feature in or complement the stories

**Activities:** Around a table covered in brown paper, the group drew pictures or made lists of their favourite local myths/legends/stories and voted on the top 4. A Hunt Museum docent gave the group a tour of the collection, prioritising objects that referred to or were linked to the stories. The Willow artist took notes of what the community wanted, so that plans for the sculptures could be drawn up.

**Tools (including digital):** Brown paper, pens, treats for the children.

**Outputs:** 4 stories and 4 objects were chosen by the community for planting out of willow in early 2025

### Testing phase

#### **A series of willow sculpture planting sessions to create the willow walking trail**

**Where:** Hunt Museum in a Garden, St. Mary's Island Gardens, St. Mary's Cathedral garden, St. Mary's church garden, Widow's Alms green space

**With whom:**

- King's Island Community members with Paul Partnership (families and children)
- SISK employees
- Willow artists
- Hunt Museum docents and Friends of the Museum

**Main goals:**

- Bring a cultural heritage skill to communities, greater exposure to existing Irish traditional craft skills
- Increase in visitor and tourism numbers in the locality Hunt Museum brand is extended city and county-wide via its living willow replica objects
- Increased community engagement and therefore volunteers, and potential removal of the cost of vandalism behaviour
- Increase in community pride and the storytelling heritage of the locality
- Planting of intangible heritage
- Environmental and biodiversity impact
- Creating opportunities for physical activities
- Mindfulness and wellbeing

**Activities:** 5 willow planting days in green spaces across the King's Island locality

Tools (including digital): Willow withies and planting space

Outputs:

### 5 Living Willow sculptures:

- 1 Willow fish to represent the story of the Battle of the Tailrace in the Hunt Museum in a Garden
- 1 Willow beehive at the widow's alms next to the King's Island community beehives
- 1 Thomond Bridge sculpture at the St Mary's Island Gardens to represent the story of 'Drunken Thady & the Bishops lady'
- 1 living willow replica of the O'Dea Crozier, a religious object at the Hunt Museum planted in the Cathedral Garden
- 1 living willow replica of the Arthur Chalice housed at the Hunt Museum, planted in St. Mary's church garden

4.3 How did you identify your stakeholders? Do you think the living Lab methodology assisted you in developing meaningful relationships with stakeholders? Describe how you maintain these relationships.

The Hunt Museum Living Lab engaged a diverse range of participants through a multi-faceted outreach strategy. The initial stages of stakeholder engagement were carried out across three platforms. Recognising the absence of a dedicated business development role within the museum—someone able to conduct direct outreach or engage new corporate stakeholders—the team partnered with *Humanli*, a local social value enterprise. Humanli, which maintains a platform that connects businesses with charitable organisations, provided the necessary expertise and network to facilitate corporate engagement on behalf of the Living Lab.

In parallel, the museum collaborated with the Irish Museums Association (IMA) to reach out to museums nationwide. This partnership enabled broad communication about the workshop and allowed interested institutions to engage with the project via an established professional channel.

These outreach efforts were further strengthened by the museum's longstanding community network, which has proven to be a significant asset throughout both iterations of the Living Lab. The Living Lab has collaborated with a variety of local groups, including St. Gabriel's School for children with special needs, Limerick Youth Theatre, and the King's Island community, located adjacent to the museum in Limerick City, with whom the museum maintains a particularly close relationship. The sustained and meaningful relationships the museum has cultivated over the years have been crucial to the success and continuity of the Living Lab initiative.

The Living Lab methodology was instrumental in developing meaningful relationships with a wide range of stakeholders. Its participatory and collaborative

approach provided a structured but flexible framework that enabled the Hunt Museum to engage corporates, community groups, and cultural institutions in a co-creative process. By involving stakeholders directly in the ideation and implementation phases of the project, the Living Lab fostered a sense of shared value, shared ownership, and mutual investment in the outcomes.

These stakeholder relationships are maintained through continuous engagement, transparent communication, and the leveraging of long-standing community ties. The museum builds trust through consistent collaboration, involving partners in ongoing activities such as workshops, co-design sessions, and community events. Formal partnerships, such as those with Humanly and the Irish Museums Association, are sustained through mutual benefit and regular interaction. At the community level, the Hunt Museum nurtures relationships with local groups—including the King’s Island neighbourhood—through years of direct involvement and co-developed programming. This ongoing commitment to relationship-building has been essential to the resilience and success of the Living Lab.

#### 4.4 Describe any unforeseen challenges that have occurred in your living Lab activities. How did you solve these?

One of the key challenges was encountered during the first year of the Hunt Museum Living Lab. The partnership with the corporate was integral to supporting our participatory co-creation process with engaged community groups, and it formed the foundation of our experimental CSR model within the Living Lab. However, towards the end of the summer, the corporate partner had to withdraw from the project. Consequently, the team had to reinitiate the search for a new corporate sponsor interested in supporting the project for its social impact and alignment with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) or CSR objectives. This process took several months and relied heavily on the museum’s existing networks and relationships cultivated through the initial participatory work. Eventually, a new corporate partner was secured, enabling the launch of a second iteration of the Living Lab, although this transition required considerable time and effort.

## 5. Output(s) and impact

### 5.1 Describe your Living Labs' output(s) here.

#### 13 Willow structures:

- 4 Living Sculptures of Hunt Museum Objects in the Garden
- 2 community-built sculptures exhibited in the Hunt Museum

- 1 Stent sculpture at Cook Medical
- 1 willow fence at Cook Medical
- 1 Willow fish to represent the story of the Battle of the Tailrace in the Hunt Museum in a Garden
- 1 Willow beehive at the widow's alms next to the King's Island community beehives
- 1 Thomond Bridge sculpture at the St Mary's Island Gardens to represent the story of 'Drunken Thady & the Bishops lady'
- 1 living willow replica of the O'Dea Crozier, a religious object at the Hunt Museum planted in the Cathedral Garden
- 1 living willow replica of the Arthur Chalice housed at the Hunt Museum, planted in St. Mary's church garden

### **12 willow weaving community workshops:**

- 17th June 2023 - 2 Willow Bird Feeder workshops
- 9th & 10th Aug 2023 - young people from St Gabriel's Circle Sculpture
- 15th Aug 2023 - 3 Employee Willow tray workshops at Cook Medical
- 16th Aug 2023 - 2 Willow Lantern Workshops
- 17th Aug 2023 - 2 Demonstration workshops and a whole day community Muc Dubh sculpture building
- 18th Aug 2023 - Sculpture re-weaving demonstration by willow artist for community volunteers

### **5 Community willow Planting sessions:**

- 5th Feb 2025 - Thomond Bridge sculpture at the St Mary's Island Gardens
- 12th Feb 2025 - Fish in the Hunt Museum Garden
- 12th March 2025 - Beehive at the Bee Museum at the Widow's Alms
- 20th March 2025 - willow replica of the O'Dea Crozier housed at The Hunt Museum, in St. Mary's Cathedral garden
- 15th April 2025 - willow replica of the Arthur Chalice, housed at The Hunt Museum, in St. Mary's church garden

### **To come:**

- SISK to coordinate 5 stories related to the willow object being recorded with local voices, and signs at each sculpture with a QR code linked to Hunt website where the recordings of the stories will be housed
- This becomes a willow sculpture storytelling trail across the King's Island Community
- A storytelling trail launch event party linking the Hunt Museum Garden to the King's Island growing space
- Drone video footage of the launch event/walking trail to be used to market the experience and tell the story of the making of the trail

5.2 Please write a brief description of the value that your Living Lab created for your organisation and community.

The Living Lab brought significant value to the Hunt Museum and the local community by promoting traditional Irish craft skills, increasing cultural engagement, and enhancing the museum's visibility across the city and county. As well as the additions to the Hunt Museum in a Garden and the Muc Dubh community-made sculpture from the first iteration of the project, one key outcome was the Storytelling Sculpture Trail, which will run from the Hunt Museum garden through the locality to King's Island community growing space. This trail features willow sculptures co-created with the community, depicting stories tied to local myths and legends,, fishing heritage, and the River Shannon, as well as interesting local facts about historical religious object replicas. Stories are accessible via QR codes and were collected by intergenerational groups, encouraging participation from children, parents, and local storytellers.

The project aims to increase visitor numbers, support local tourism, and strengthen community pride and identity. It also created opportunities for physical activity, mindfulness, and environmental improvement through biodiversity-focused planting. The Living Lab encouraged volunteerism, potentially reduced vandalism through community ownership, and offered a meaningful way for local businesses to contribute through their CSR programmes.

Other Impacts include:

- A significant reduction in anti-social behaviour in the garden.
- The Greenhouse in the Hunt Museum Garden was re-branded as the Community Green House, and has had plant swap events, is used regularly by the community to store plant before transferring them to the Island Garden growing space. The greenhouse is also the 'office' of the seasonal Hunt Museum gardener, a new role at the Hunt since the beginning of the Living Lab.
- The community took ownership of a sculpture that they decided they wanted, and the local primary school made a willow horse sculpture.
- Willow Horse and willow Much Dudh in St. Patrick's day parades on King's Island every year since the Living Lab began.
- CSR Model was adopted by the Tidy Towns in 2023
- Ownership and enthusiasm from the community during the interim period without a corporate partner; continuously following up and using language that implied ownership eg " what are **we** doing next with the willow project?"
- The second iteration was geographically focused in the King's Island community, and with this focus on a smaller locality, it resulted in stronger connections within a small network, for example:
  - A conversation at a willow planting session between a Limerick Youth Services coordinator and a Hunt Museum staff member resulted in a local person getting a job in the newly re-opened Hunt cafe

- A meeting between Limerick Youth Service and SISK staff members at a community planting session has resulted in a potential work experience or apprenticeship programme for young people from King's Island
- A King's Island community member sent a local journalist to interview the participants of a planting session about the Living Lab and the storytelling trail. This resulted in a video shared throughout city and county-wide social media channels. The community member and journalist met each other that morning on King's Island, walking their dogs.

### 5.3 Reflect on your initial objectives and approach towards impact areas relevant to you. Would you design your desired impact the same way today?

The initial impact areas were effective and well-aligned with the goals of the project. The structure provided a strong framework that supported both the planning and delivery stages, while also enabling meaningful, engaging, and sometimes participatory approaches to measuring outcomes. This framework also helped to clarify priorities and facilitated communication of the project's value. While the core impact areas remained consistent in subsequent iterations, I made minor adjustments to the KPIs to better reflect the evolving nature of the work and its specific context. Overall, I would design the desired impact in much the same way again.

### 5.4 Living Lab self-assessment and level of satisfaction with its achievements.

Objectives	Result description	Achievement level (scale of 1-5)	Sustainability level (1-5)	Internal Impact level (organization) (1-5)	External Impact level (community) (1-5)
Engaging a corporate into the working of the museum for the longer term to give it a more fulfilling, quantifiable and longer term result from their CSR programme	Humanli brought on board to create the connection between the museum and local corporates. 8 engaged corporates attended co-ideation workshop. Cook Medical became project partner. Project was co-created with Cook and Community that lasted one cycle.	3	2	4	4

<p>Development of a deeper, more engaged relationships with the local community, to take pride in their cultural heritage so that they become part of the volunteer fabric of the museum.</p>	<p>Community participants were actively engaged in the co-creation of the project output. Community participants are feeling like they are active agents in the outcome of the project, and as a result of this they feel empowered to be active protagonists in the development of further project ideas in following iterations - in fact they continued parts of the project themselves in the community</p>	4	4	4	4
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**Achievement Level:** Where 1 is Poor: The objective was not met. The outcomes fell significantly short of expectations, with minimal or no progress made.

And 5 is Excellent: The objective was fully met or exceeded. All expected outcomes were achieved with high quality and effectiveness.

**Sustainability:** where 1 is Low: The result has minimal potential to continue. It is unlikely to be sustained or evolved beyond the first iteration without substantial changes or support.

And 5 is Very High: The result has very high potential to continue. It is likely to be sustained and adapted for future iterations with little to no additional support required.

**Internal Impact :** where 1 is Low: The result had minimal or no impact. It did not significantly affect the system of the organization, its procedures, activities and approaches.

And 5 is Very High: The result had a transformative impact on the organization. It profoundly affected the system of the organization, its procedures, activities and approaches.

**External Impact :** where 1 is Low: The result had minimal or no impact. It did not significantly affect the intended community..

And 5 is Very High: The result had a transformative impact. It profoundly affected the intended community, creating significant positive change.

## 6. Iteration

The Hunt Museum Living Lab came to a swift halt at the end of the summer of 2023 because the corporate partner had to leave the project. Eventually, as a result of networking and reaching out to local corporates another corporate partner joined the Living Lab in August 2024 to launch the second iteration of the Lab in September of that year. As a result of reflections and lessons learned outlined below, the second



iteration of the Lab began again in the co-ideation stage of the workflow, but the difference was that the challenge to be addressed remained the same. At the first co-ideation session, the floor was left open to any ideas and to any changes the community wanted to make, however, it was agreed that the Willow project would continue, with a new purpose and re-focus.

The following are the ‘Lessons Learned’ reported in October 2024, before finding a second corporate partner for the Living Lab:

- Ensuring the corporate decision maker is engaged from the beginning of the process
- Communication and follow-up is needed with all the initial co-ideators, particularly potential future stakeholders
- Always remember that building relationships takes time
- Finding better mechanisms to involve the community in co-ideation from the beginning

<p><b>Reflections from 2024:</b></p> <p><b>In the next iteration of testing this model, there are two changes the Hunt Museum is going to make to the workflow and stakeholder engagement:</b></p>	<p><b>Report in 2025:</b></p> <p><b>Were these changes made in the second iteration?</b></p>
<p>1. Taking the opportunity to co-ideate and co-create with the community and corporate together from the beginning, to enter into true grass-roots participation from the nascent stages.</p>	<p>1. YES. The first co-ideation workshop in the second iteration included Museum, SISK, and local community members</p>
<p>2. Making a strategic decision, that while maintaining an openness to other communities, to primarily engage the King’s Island Community. This community neighbours the Hunt Museum and has historically been a partner in many projects to date. This strategy is being put in place to ensure there is a long-term</p>	<p>2. YES. All Community members and community groups participating in the second iteration of the Living Lab are linked to the King’s Island Community: (all of these include children and families)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● St. Mary’s National School</li> <li>● Paul Partnership</li> <li>● Limerick Island Community Partners</li> <li>● Limerick Civic Trust</li> <li>● King’s Island Community</li> </ul>

<p>and sustained community relationship outside of project-based activities and outside of one person of contact in the museum (eg, a Community Manager), mitigating the risk of 'community burn-out' or future estrangement.</p>	<p>Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limerick Youth Service</li> </ul>
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In the second iteration of the Living Lab, the KPIs remained as they were, but updates to how these were measured needed to be made. These updates are shown in green text in the table above in section 3.

## 7. Reflection and conclusions

### 7.1 Please describe the added value of participatory practices according to your Living Lab experience

Participatory practices added significant value to the Living Lab by fostering deeper community engagement, ownership, and relevance. Involving local participants ensured that the project was rooted in the lived experiences, knowledge, and cultural identity of the community. This co-creation approach not only enriched the content and authenticity of the outputs, such as the Storytelling Sculpture Trail, but also strengthened relationships and trust between the museum and the King's Island Community. Participation encouraged pride, skill-sharing, and intergenerational exchange, which in turn contributed to stronger, more sustainable outcomes. It also enhanced the impact measurement process, offering qualitative insights that would not have been captured through top-down methods. The local community on King's Island has become empowered to take ownership of this project and, after the second Living Lab iteration, is now fully engaged in the possibilities to emerge in the next cycle.

### 7.2 Please summarise your Key Findings

- Sustained relationships with the community takes time and trust to build.
- Business development/ corporate engagement is time-consuming and requires a particular skill set
- CSR partnerships require the correct point of contact in the company to be on board, and need to have the vision of the value of a long-term partnership to be sustained

### 7.3 Inputs for future directions and new cycles (what will you do differently? What was the main lesson learned that you will not do again!?)

For future cycles, a key learning has been the need to plan more effectively for the time-consuming aspects of the process, particularly network engagement and the ongoing maintenance of community relationships. These elements are critical to project success but require dedicated time and resources from the outset. Another important insight is the necessity of ensuring that any corporate partners fully share the project's vision for value creation. Alignment on purpose and expectations is essential to maintain meaningful and productive collaboration. Lastly, we have identified the need to establish clearer mechanisms for involving the community in the co-ideation phase from the beginning. Early participation helps to embed local perspectives into the design and strengthens community ownership throughout the project lifecycle.

#### 7.4 Describe how you see the Long-term sustainability of your project and possibilities for scaling up

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project requires the value creation for all partners (community, Museum, Corporate), therefore resulting in:

- Community feeling empowered and therefore becoming active agents of change
- Corporate engaged in sustaining the project with their CSR programmes into the future with a multi-year plan
- Museum generating value from increased community activity and reaching strategic goals

#### 7.5 What recommendations would you give another similar organisation for potential replication of the Living Lab methodology?

It is essential to embed community participation from the earliest stages. Co-ideation should begin at the outset to ensure that the direction, content, and outcomes are meaningfully shaped by local perspectives and needs. Establishing and maintaining strong relationships with community networks throughout the process is fundamental. This requires dedicated time and resources, but it builds trust, fosters ownership, and contributes to more sustainable impact. It is equally important to engage partners who clearly understand and share the Living Lab's values around inclusive value creation. Alignment on purpose helps ensure productive collaboration and lasting outcomes. Additionally, the RECHARGE methodology benefits from a flexible, iterative approach. Future implementers should plan for adaptation, reflection, and feedback loops to respond to evolving community dynamics and opportunities. Successful replication relies on balancing structured planning with openness to co-created innovation, guided by the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and shared impact.

## 8. Appendices

- Humanli report
- Canvas - updated