

The Foundry Digital Media Hub

What is required?

FORM is requesting \$12.33 million to develop Western Australia's first fully integrated digital media hub as part of Midland Atelier based in the historic Railway Workshops in Midland.

The Foundry Digital Media Hub will nurture innovation, learning, entrepreneurship and creative expression for digital media practitioners including gaming, animation, graphic design, web-development, music, film and 3D development. The Hub will facilitate the growth of employment opportunities in this important industry as well as broader economic development and community outcomes associated with the application of digital media in other industries and the community.

The Hub is designed to be a connected blend of real-world and virtual environments where digital media practitioners from across WA can converge (both physically and on-line) with other industry sectors and the community to access resources, share knowledge and inspire outcomes. The Hub will facilitate applied experimentation, learning, creativity, research, innovation and artistic expression using digital media technologies.

The development of The Foundry represents Stage 4 of the development of Midland Atelier Project; complementing the other creative and trans-disciplinary design studios developed or in progress for Midland Atelier including the Pattern Shop centre for furniture and object design (Stages 1 and 2) and the Aboriginal Creative Development Studio, to be housed in the original Elements Shop (stage 3). Located only 17 kilometres from the Perth CBD at the gateway to regional Western Australia, the Midland Atelier aims to nurture a higher level of innovative design, creative skill and relevant networks to support innovation in key industries, such as mining and resources.

The Hub will be a central part of the creative industries centre, housed in the distinctive, historical Railway Workshop setting at the heart of the growing Midland community as it renews its role as a vital regional gateway. It will provide an important platform for cross-fertilisation across the disciplines within the Atelier and into other industries, cultivating greater innovation. The adaptation and fit-out of approximately 2,300 sqm within the currently un-renovated Foundry building will provide unparalleled access to specialised equipment, co-working spaces, learning environments and other facilities that will support outcomes in digital media. This environment will operate alongside a gallery, retail spaces and studios for jewellery, metal, public art and large and small scale design and production.

Equally importantly, the virtual components of the Hub will include a globally connected knowledge, collaboration and services network that can provide WA's community of digital media practitioners from both urban and regional areas with a platform for access to training, education, knowledge and other tools to facilitate growth.

The project is already partially funded; the principal partner is the State government's Midland Redevelopment Authority (MRA) that has committed \$20 million worth of physical infrastructure to the Railway Workshop buildings, with over \$40 million invested to date in the overall Railway Workshop site. Initial plans have been developed for The Foundry and the anticipated build time once funding is confirmed is estimated at 12 months.

Why a Digital Media Hub?

Digital Media is an industry of rapidly increasing global importance both in its own right as well as in its role as a key enabler for many other industry sectors. Digital Media forms a core element of the ICT industry and includes the production and integration of graphics, audio, text, video, and animation elements. Examples of digital media technologies and content include gaming, animation, graphic design, web-development, music, video, film and 3D development.



building a state of creativity

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With predicted workforce challenges in WA, the Hub provides an opportunity for the State to increase productivity and participation in the workforce. In line with the Federal Government's investment in the National Broadband Network, the Hub will facilitate the development of applications and content to leverage and add value to this network, setting WA at the forefront of the global digital media industry.

Through its extended reach built upon connectivity and services, the Hub will not only provide benefits to Midland itself, but also to the Perth Metropolitan Area and Regional Western Australia to enable all areas to engage with the digital media industry and to benefit from it; both from community and economic development perspectives. The Hub will also enable WA to leverage other government investments such as the \$80 million Pawsey Centre which includes iVEC. iVEC supports researchers in Western Australia with supercomputing services, petabyte storage, online research collaboration tools, and visualisation expertise. The more localised government investments in Midland including the new Health Campus and GP Super Clinic as well as Landgate and the WA Police communications, forensics and traffic operations facilities also present significant opportunities for the Hub to provide digital media services to these organisations and their associated industries.

Between 2009-10 and 2016-17 employment in the Information media and telecommunications industry in Western Australia is expected to increase by around 2 per cent per annum. This is significantly above the national employment growth (expected to grow by only 0.7 per cent per annum in this industry in the forecast period.¹)

The Foundry Digital Media Hub will provide a base for high level Digital Media companies and practitioners that demonstrate excellence (or show the potential for excellence) in their field of work. It will provide a range of services, linkages and support that will nurture innovation, creativity and growth. Developing this Hub will support the growth of a high-tech industry to create locally developed products, services and Intellectual Property in the Digital Media industry. The outputs from the hub will enhance innovation, leadership and growth potential in the State's key industries including the creative industries (including gaming), mining and resources sectors, health, manufacturing and transport and storage.

The Hub offers an opportunity to develop the infrastructure to support creative talent and a centralised space to engage that talent and creativity in Western Australia, demonstrating that opportunities for career paths are available within the State. Simultaneously, it offers a virtual platform for engaging practitioners throughout the State with the Hub, and into international networks as they are established.

Why Midland?

Midland is a strategically important location in Western Australia, situated at the nexus of major transport links and forming a gateway to Regional Western Australia and beyond. Just 16km from the Perth CBD, Midland forms part of the City of Swan and Perth's Eastern Region. The strategic importance of Midland has been highlighted by the Western Australian Planning Commission's Directions 2031 which identified Midland as one of ten Strategic Metropolitan Centres in the Perth and Peel Region.

Its strategic location has traditionally positioned Midland as a provider of services to both Perth's Eastern Region and Regional areas. With a number of significant investment projects either planned or underway and with the planned development and expansion of key industrial areas in the region, this role is set to continue. Midland is an area poised for growth. In particular investment projects across health, education, government, transport, defence and industrial development are setting Midland and the surrounding region apart as an exciting area of opportunity.

More specifically, the Railway Workshops provide a significant flexible space that is available and accessible.

¹ Department of Training and Workforce Development, 2010, *Western Australian Employment Trends and Prospects*, report, Department of Training and Workforce Development, Perth, Western Australia

The Window of Opportunity

The Hub is a response to research published by FORM in 2008 (*Comparative Capitals*). This was undertaken in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and PricewaterhouseCoopers and examined Perth's migration and education trends; levels of investment and entrepreneurialism; connectivity; and talent attraction and retention in comparison to other Australian cities. A key finding of the research was that the state loses more creative talent across all creative professions than it attracts. This means innovation, patents and R&D are also at risk because of the lack of suitable human capital and limited opportunities for transferral and cross-pollination of skills across industries. This revealed a clear need to develop a facility such as Midland Atelier, which can assist in retaining and developing creative talent in Western Australia, as well as enhance commercial opportunities for creative practitioners and related industries.

With the growing global connectivity that is enabling significant economic change across most industries, the establishment of the Foundry Digital Media Hub provides an opportunity to encourage innovation, industry competitiveness and economic prosperity both locally and regionally in WA. Given the global nature of the digital media industry and the fact that many other global cities are already competing aggressively in this space, it is important for WA to act now. If not, WA will miss out on the opportunity to grow an industry that is already recognised as an economic opportunity in other countries such as the US, Ireland, UK, and Spain.

The project aligns with the priorities of state and federal governments in particular the:

- *The Western Australian Government's Directions 2031 Strategy*²
The Strategy recognises Midland and the North East sub-region as a growing residential and employment hub for WA, and highlights the need for the region to develop an additional 42,000 jobs by 2031, of which 19,232 need to be knowledge intensive export orientated in nature.
- *The Department of Training and Workforce Development's Skilling WA*³
A Workforce Development Plan for Western Australia which predicts the state will require up to an additional 425,000 workers by 2017 (with a current predicted deficit of up to 150,000 workers) and a more diversified economy.
- *The Western Australian Government's Royalties for Regions Agreement*
Royalties for Regions is an historic agreement that underlines the State Government's long-term focus on regional development throughout Western Australia. Royalties for Regions objectives include; building capacity in regional communities, retaining benefits in regional communities; improving services to regional communities; attaining sustainability; expanding opportunity; and growing prosperity.
- *The Australian Government's Powering Ideas: Innovation Strategy*
The Strategy outlines a ten-year reform agenda to make Australia more productive and more competitive. It recognises that increasing the Country's capacity to create new knowledge and find new ways of doing business is the key to building a modern economy based on advanced skills and technologies.

To discuss this opportunity further, please contact:

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² Western Australian Planning Commission 2010, *Directions 2031 and Beyond: Metropolitan Planning Beyond the Horizon*, report, Western Australian Planning Commission, Perth, Western Australia

³ Department of Training and Workforce Development, *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia*, report, Department of Training and Workforce Development, Perth, Western Australia