

CREACT4MED Mapping: Best Practices

Application Number: BP_59

1. Basic info*	
Email Address	info@iculture-eg.org
Title of the Best Practice	iCulture Creative Industries (iCCI) online platform
Name of the Applicant	Heba Saeed and Riham Arram Heba Saeed and Riham Arram
Is the BP a registered legal entity?	Yes, I will send the certificate of registration by email
Website	http://icci.iculture-eg.org/
Country	Egypt;
Subsector	Arts and culture (cultural heritage, gastronomy, visual arts, performing arts, leisure and recreation, crafts);
Category	a) Cultural and creative entrepreneurship;
Year of establishment and duration	11/17/2022
Target group of the BP	<p>The target users of the iCulture Creative Industries (iCCI) online platform includes young, independent artists and creative industries practitioners. This includes singers, musicians, poets, writers, handicraftsmen and women, painters, drawers, fine artists, and photographers. These young artists are seeking opportunities to perform their talents to wider audiences. The platform aims to empower and support these artists by providing them with capacity building in their respective fields. It also facilitates connections between artists and industry professionals, allowing them to participate in cultural and artistic live events organized by the platform. These events provide opportunities for the artists to perform in public and gain exposure for their talent. The platform organizes consecutive festivals specifically designed for young artists in various creative fields. These festivals offer physical platforms for artists to perform, network with peers, and gain experience within the creative industries.</p> <p>Additionally, the online platform serves as a space for artists to display examples of their creations and connect with potential sponsors and industry professionals. By participating in the iCulture platform, young artists can gain recognition for their work and access valuable resources and support within the creative industries.</p>
1. Best Practice Characteristics	
Problem Statement	<p>Through the iCCI platform, the number one problem that it aims to solve is the lack of visibility and opportunities for young independent artists and creative industries practitioners in live events. Many talented artists struggle to connect with industry professionals who can help them grow their careers such as producers, sponsors and donors.</p> <p>The platform aims to solve this problem by facilitating networking and collaboration through live events. It serves as a bridge between artists and industry professionals, offering networking opportunities and connections to potential sponsors.</p> <p>Through live events, networking opportunities and capacity building, the platform helps artists gain new skills and knowledge to further enhance their artistic abilities. It opens doors for artists to gain exposure, collaborate with other creatives and access opportunities for performances and exhibitions.</p> <p>This not only gives them the opportunity to perform in public but also increases their chances of gaining exposure and attracting potential sponsors and industry professionals, enabling them to thrive and succeed</p>

	<p>in their artistic careers.</p> <p>The platform consists hence a tool to collect an updated database of creatives, analyse it in a way permitting to organize a suitable event incorporating similar and value- related creative industries and create for the suitable live event for several artists from different backgrounds. Networking internally between them and externally with audience will help capacitate them also with new skills and knowledge.</p>
<p>Mission Statement & Value proposition</p>	<p>iCCI platform is dedicated to empowering and providing exposure for young independent artists in various creative fields, including singing, music, poetry, writing, handicrafts and fine arts. Our organization serves as a platform to connect these artists with industry professionals, sponsors, and donors, ensuring that their talents do not go unnoticed.</p> <p>Through our dedicated online platform, artists can showcase examples of their work to a wide audience. This virtual space provides a place for industry professionals to discover new talent and for artists to gain recognition and support from their peers. It offers a gateway for artists to connect with potential collaborators and mentors, fostering a community of support.</p> <p>In addition to our online platform, iCulture organizes consecutive festivals throughout the year. These live events provide opportunities for artists to showcase their talents in public, participate in training and rehearsals and learn from industry experts. The festivals serve as gathering points for artists from various disciplines, offering valuable networking opportunities and constructive feedback.</p> <p>We also recognize that financial limitations can hinder the growth and progress of young independent artists. As part of our ongoing second phase, iCulture plans to offer orientation workshops that guide emerging creatives on funding opportunities in the MENA region. We provide information on applying for grants, securing financial support and navigating the codes and regulations of each opportunity. By doing so, we aim to remove financial barriers and ensure that artists have the resources and opportunities to develop their skills, create their businesses and bring their creative projects to life.</p> <p>Ultimately, iCulture seeks to foster a supportive environment where young artists can flourish and reach their full potential. Through our initiatives, we contribute to the growth and development of the creative industries by empowering the next generation of talented artists.</p>
<p>Results and growth</p>	<p>The iCCI platform took a multi-faceted approach to address the lack of visibility and opportunities for young independent artists in live events. By creating an online space for artists to reach industry professionals, sponsors, and donors, thus improving their visibility. The platform also organized the iCCI festival, which served as a hub for artists to network, perform, exhibit their work and connect with industry professionals and potential collaborators. Through these initiatives, the platform aimed to provide opportunities for artists to grow and succeed in the creative industry.</p> <p>The success of the iCCI platform in tackling the initial issue can be measured using three KPIs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Artist Participation: The number of artists actively participating in the platform and the festival. This KPI reflects the platform's ability to attract and engage emerging artists. In the first year of

operation, the platform attracted 270 artists who created profiles and uploaded their work. The first festival also saw participation from 20 artists.

2. Audience Engagement: The level of engagement and interaction between artists and the audience. This KPI assesses the platform's effectiveness in connecting artists with wider audiences and fostering meaningful interactions. Artists on the platform received over 1000 views, comments and shares on social media channels. The first festival attracted an audience of 400 attendees who actively engaged with the artists through performances, exhibitions and panels.

2. Opportunities: The opportunities received by artists through the platform. This KPI evaluates the platform's ability to provide exposure and opportunities for young creatives. Several artists showcased on the platform and participated in the festival received recognition from industry professionals. Moreover, collaborations between artists and industry professionals during preparations and rehearsals were facilitated through the platform, leading to opportunities for growth and development.

The ICCI platform has successfully organized and conducted a total of 5 events and workshops since its establishment in November 2022.

- Inauguration event: ICCI platform organized an inauguration event where they presented and introduced a diverse group of talents such as handcraft artists, singers, musicians, writers, poets, and painters. This event was attended by notable professionals and public figures including Dr Gamal Al Shaer (Famous Egyptian poet), Dr Mohamed Al Sawy (former Minister of Culture), Mr Tamer Farag (Actor and scenarist), and leaders from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. The event received considerable media coverage, increasing the talents and the platform's visibility and publicity.

- Christmas Bazar 2022: ICCI platform organized a Christmas Bazar in downtown Cairo. The event provided a platform for ICCI talents to showcase and sell their handcrafted products, attracting a diverse audience and generating revenue for the artists, as well as storytelling and musical performances.

- iCulture Lounge Festival: ICCI platform organized its first festival edition, providing artists with opportunities to showcase their talents in public. The festival also included training sessions, rehearsals, and learning opportunities from industry experts. This event served as a hub for artists from various disciplines to connect and network, and it offered valuable feedback and guidance.

- Spring Market Event: ICCI platform organized an event targeting handcrafted individuals who could sell their products to foreigners in Cairo. This event served as a market for

	<p>local artisans to showcase and sell their handcrafted products.</p> <p>- First edition of the iCulture Art Salon: This monthly event, with the slogan "bring your talent with you," aims at promoting and showcasing the talents of young artists to social media audiences. The event serves as a platform for emerging artists to gain visibility and recognition.</p> <p>These events demonstrate ICCI's dedication to promoting and nurturing diverse talents across various artistic domains.</p>
<p>Strategy to be financially sustainable</p>	<p>The iCulture creative industries platform operates on a business model that relies on a combination of funding and subscription fees to ensure financial sustainability over time.</p> <p>Initially, the platform was created in 2022 with financial support from the European Union. This funding allowed the platform to develop and launch its services, offering opportunities for young creative artists to showcase their work to a wider audience and industry professionals.</p> <p>During its first year of operation, the platform chose to provide its services free of charge. This approach helped to attract a large user base and build a reputation within the creative industries community.</p> <p>In the second phase of its plan, the platform aims to introduce different subscription packages for its users. These packages will offer various benefits, such as participation in the annual festival and orientation workshops. The workshops will provide guidance on different funding opportunities in the MENA region, including information on application processes, tools and regulations. By providing access to these resources, the platform aims to support artists in securing funding for their projects and further establishing their careers. This personalized support can be a valuable resource for artists looking to navigate the creative industries and develop sustainable income streams.</p> <p>By diversifying its revenue through subscription fees, grants and funding opportunities, the iCulture platform aims to achieve financial sustainability over time. This approach ensures that the platform can continue to provide its services and support to the creative community in the long term.</p> <p>In conclusion, the iCulture creative industries platform has managed to secure financial sustainability by leveraging initial funding, attracting a user base through free services and introducing subscription packages to generate revenue. This combination allows the platform to continue offering valuable support and opportunities to young creative talents in the region and expand its services.</p>

2. Impact (please complete at least 3 of the 6 sub-sections)

<p>Economic significance</p>	
<p>Replicability and upscaling</p>	<p>The replicability potential of the iCCI platform is high as its core principles can be applied to other settings and sectors. The possibilities for adaptation include expanding into different creative fields such as dance, theatre, fashion, or film, and even exploring opportunities in other industries such as technology or design.</p>



	<p>To successfully replicate the iCCI platform, certain conditions should be met. There needs to be a pool of talented independent artists in the target setting or sector who can benefit from the platform. Additionally, there should be a demand for connecting these artists with industry professionals, sponsors and donors in order to support their growth and development. Adaptation will also require understanding the cultural and contextual differences of the new setting or sector to ensure the platform is relevant and effective. Adjustments may need to be made to the platform's features and functionalities to meet the specific needs of the target audience. For example, a different user interface or additional features may be required to meet the unique requirements of dancers or fashion designers.</p> <p>Prior to large-scale adoption, as we have done in the implementation of iCCI platform, it is advisable to conduct a small pilot scale implementation of the platform. This will allow for testing and validating its effectiveness in the new setting or sector. The pilot phase can help identify any challenges, gather feedback from users and make necessary adjustments to ensure the platform's success on a larger scale. It also provides an opportunity to assess the scalability of the platform and its ability to handle increased user traffic and engagement.</p> <p>In conclusion, the iCCI platform has great potential for replicability and upscaling in other settings and sectors. With appropriate adaptations to meet specific needs and conditions, the platform can effectively empower and support independent artists in various creative fields.</p>
<p>Employment generation</p>	<p>iCCI established a total of 13 connections and collaborations since its establishment in November 2022. These collaborations led to the creation of job opportunities, these connections include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connecting 7 handcrafted artists with the French community in Cairo to participate in their bazars throughout the year. - After the first edition of the iCulture Lounge Festival, a group of 5 singers was able to connect with media and newspapers. This led to collaborations with various cultural entities such as the Cultural Development Fund, Al Sinary House, and Alexandria Bibliotheque. - Additionally, after the first edition of the iCulture Art Salon, one religious vocalist who was promoted by the iCCI platform on social media received an offer to participate in a theatre performanc
<p>Inclusiveness</p>	<p>iCCI platform is dedicated to empower young independent artists between the ages of 16 and 40 of both genders in various creative fields, hence, the proportion of youth involved in the platform is more than 90%. Currently, 60% of the artists registered on the platform are young females. We encourage and promote equal opportunities for female artists to showcase their work and engage with industry professionals, 8 young female artists participated in the festival out of 20 young independent artists.</p> <p>Our inclusive approach extends to migrant artists. We actively encourage and welcome artists from diverse backgrounds, including migrant, to participate in the platform. Approximately 10% of the registered artists on our platform are migrant artists. Additionally, 2 migrant artists participated in the festival out of 20 young independent artists.</p>



	<p>Moreover, the location where the iCCI platform is implemented is another aspect of inclusiveness that we consider. While the platform operates in the capital city, we recognize the unique challenges that artists outside the capital face. Therefore, we strive to reach out and engage with artists from underserved communities, ensuring that the platform is accessible to artists regardless of their geographical location.</p> <p>We believe that creativity knows no boundaries and that talent resides in every corner, that's why 4 young independent artists from cities of Egypt participated in the iCCI festival. By doing so, the festival celebrated diversity, promoted social integration and ensured that artists from these areas have equal opportunities to showcase their talents.</p> <p>Lastly, participatory processes are integral to the iCCI platform. We encourage participatory processes by actively involving artists in decision-making processes. We facilitate open dialogues and focus groups to gather input and suggestions from those directly involved by our initiatives. We believe that involving diverse perspectives in our decision-making processes leads to more inclusive and impactful outcomes.</p> <p>To gather input and suggestions directly from the artists involved in the festival, we facilitated open dialogues and focus groups prior to the preparation period of the festival.</p> <p>For each of the three focus groups, namely musicians and poets, writers and storytellers, and fine arts, three open dialogue sessions were conducted. These sessions were conducted both physically and virtually, allowing for maximum participation and inclusivity.</p> <p>During these dialogues, artists were given the opportunity to share their previous experiences; to enable us to evaluate their skills, and discuss any weaknesses may have identified. The aim was to collaboratively identify and address any areas that needed improvement in preparation for the festival. For example, some participants in the musicians group expressed a lack of experience performing in live events and facing the audience. In response, strategies were developed to address stage fright and confidence-building techniques. Similarly, the fine arts group consisted of individuals who had never participated in an exhibition before and were unfamiliar with the process of preparing their art for display. In these dialogues, they were able to learn from each other's experiences, as well as receive guidance and advice from industry professionals, to enhance their exhibition readiness. The feedback received from the artists during these dialogues allowed us to develop more inclusive and impactful training programs, tailored to the specific needs and preferences of each focus group.</p> <p>By engaging in these open dialogues and focus groups, the iCCI platform ensured that the voices and needs of participating artists were heard and addressed. This collaborative approach not only fostered inclusivity but also led to more informed decision-making and preparation for the festival.</p>
Social impact	
Innovation	<p>The iCCI platform has successfully leveraged the power of technology and the internet to provide innovative solutions to the challenges faced by young independent artists. By creating an online platform, iCCI has</p>

effectively connected artists with industry professionals, breaking down traditional barriers and eliminating the geographical limitations that often restrict the reach of independent artists. This innovation enables artists to gain exposure and recognition beyond their local communities, opening doors to new opportunities and collaborations. It also allows industry professionals to easily discover and connect with emerging talent across the country and MENA region, providing a platform for potential partnerships and mentorship.

Moreover, iCCI platform provided an innovative solution to the financial constraints that many young artists face and seeks to address this challenge by offering workshops on funding opportunities in the MENA region. Through these workshops, artists are provided with information and guidance on how to secure financial support and navigate the often complex funding landscape. This empowers artists with the necessary knowledge and resources to pursue their creative projects, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of the creative industries. Overall, through its innovative use of technology and strategic initiatives, the iCCI platform has effectively addressed the challenges faced by young independent artists. By providing a virtual platform, organizing live events, and offering workshops on funding opportunities, iCCI empowers artists with the necessary exposure, support and resources to thrive in their respective creative fields.

Environmental sustainability

3. Challenges and lessons learned

Challenges

The implementation of the iCulture creative industry platform faced challenges for different stakeholders involved.

Usability for potential users: One of the challenges the implementation of the platform faced was 'how the potential users such as beneficiaries of artists, industry professionals and collaborators will navigate the platform'. The platform addressed this by curating a diverse range of creative talents and providing a user-friendly interface for easy navigation and exploration. By showcasing a wide variety of creative disciplines, the platform attracted and engaged different users, thus facilitating connections and collaborations within the creative industry.

Another challenge was 'how the platform artists will gain visibility and reach a wider audience'. The platform addressed this by providing a dedicated space for artists to showcase their work and connect with professionals. The free charge services offered initially helped attract artists to the platform. Additionally, the implementation of the annual platform-organised festival provided a physical platform for artists to showcase their talents and gain recognition.

Financial sustainability was a key challenge for the organizers of the platform. The platform initially relied on EU funding to kick-start the project. In the first year, the platform operated on funds provided by the owners and provided services for free charge.

However, to sustain the platform in the long term, they needed to develop a viable business model. To address this, the owners plan to introduce different subscription packages for the artists and other users, to create a revenue stream to ensure long-term financial sustainability. These packages would provide access to various activities and services, such as

	<p>participation in the annual platform-organised festival, orientation workshops on funding opportunities, and consultation services for funding proposals.</p>
<p>Lessons learned</p>	<p>One of the main takeaways from the first year of operation is that the rehearsal and capacity building provided by ICCI to its beneficiaries and users before live events proved to be advantageous. These opportunities enabled young independent artists to enhance their skills and capabilities. Therefore, it is important to increasingly offer these opportunities to young artists in order to improve and refine their skills. By doing so, the platform will attract top talent and provide higher-quality content.</p> <p>A number of 10 capacity building and rehearsal sessions were conducted for the musicians and poets group by industry professionals (Musical composer and arranger Mr. Sherif Al-Wasimi - Music Factory for artistic production and distribution and Mr. Mounier Al-Wasimi, former Head of the Musicians Syndicate)</p> <p>Through these sessions, the musicians received valuable guidance and mentorship, which proved to be instrumental in refining their talents. They learned techniques for improving their vocals, stage presence, and overall presentation. They also gained insights into the music industry, including tips on songwriting, arrangement, and distribution.</p> <p>The poets also learned how to effectively deliver their poems to captivate and engage the audience. They were taught the importance of tone, rhythm, and emotion in their delivery, improving their overall poetic expression and how to present their poems in a professional manner, moving beyond just writing them. They learned techniques such as voice modulation, pacing, and the use of body language to convey the emotions and messages in their poetry.</p> <p>The impact of these sessions was significant. The young singers who had never faced an audience before were able to overcome their stage fright and gain the confidence to perform in front of a live crowd. They learned techniques to improve their vocal skills, control their breath, and deliver captivating performances. The poets, on the other hand, learned how to effectively present their poems in a professional manner, incorporating tone, rhythm, and expression to captivate the audience.</p> <p>In the case of the writers and storytelling group, 2 reading sessions were conducted to help them to refine their presentation skills to deliver the concept and theme of their books better. In addition, two further sessions were conducted to gain insights into how to engage the audience through storytelling. These sessions were dedicated to prepare how to present glimpses of their work to audiences through a young storyteller.</p> <p>For the fine art group, the two sessions conducted with professionals provided guidance on how to effectively showcase their artwork in the exhibition. They learned about proper display techniques, framing, lighting, arrangement and presentation styles that would enhance the overall impact of their artwork on viewers. This not only enhanced the visual impact of their works but also boosted their confidence in exhibiting their art to a wider audience.</p> <p>These capacity building and rehearsal sessions played a crucial role in preparing the artists for the Festival. They not only helped them improve their skills and talents but also ensured that they were well-prepared and ready to face the audience. The sessions empowered the artists to deliver high-quality performances and exhibitions, contributing to the overall</p>

success of the festival.

The impact of these sessions will extend beyond the festival as well. The artists shall continue to apply what they learned in future performances and projects, elevating their careers and establishing themselves as talented artists in the industry. By continuing to offer similar opportunities, iCCI can attract and support top talent, contributing to a thriving creative community.

Another significant lesson is the need to invest more in marketing in order to effectively reach the target users and audience. This should involve not only utilizing social media platforms but also leveraging other online advertising channels. This is crucial for creating a strong brand presence and consistently engaging with the community.

The main lesson learned is the importance of expanding activities and events beyond the capital city. This will provide opportunities for young creatives who may not have access to the same resources as those in the capital city. By organizing events, workshops, and networking sessions in different locations, talents from remote areas can be discovered and given opportunities to showcase their work and participate in live events. This approach also promotes cultural diversity and inclusivity within the platform.

During the first phase of implementing the platform, efforts have been made to reach out to various cities outside the capital city of Egypt. One of the key activities implemented was social media advertising to raise awareness about the platform and its opportunities. Through this targeted advertising, four young independent artists from different cities of Egypt were able to participate in the first edition festival of the iCCI platform. By giving these artists the opportunity to connect and collaborate with industry professionals and peers in Cairo, the impact of reaching beyond the capital city became evident. The artists were able to showcase their talents, gain exposure, and make meaningful connections that can potentially lead to further opportunities and growth in their careers. To further expand the reach of the platform and ensure artists from underserved areas have equal opportunities, future plans include conducting festival editions outside the capital city. This decision aims to bring the platform's activities directly to artists in their own areas, eliminating the need for them to travel long distances to reach industry professionals and donors.

While the specific locations for these future editions are still under investigation, efforts have already started to increasingly target artists from different cities of Egypt through social media advertising. The platform hopes to attract more participants from underserved areas and provide them with equal access to opportunities and resources.

Moreover, as part of our best practices, we are actively seeking collaborations with local community organizations and cultural centers in these cities. By partnering with established institutions, we can tap into their networks and engage with the local artistic community more effectively. This grassroots approach not only helps us reach a wider audience but also builds long-lasting relationships and fosters a supportive environment for artists outside the capital city.

The impact of reaching audiences and artists beyond the capital city goes beyond just showcasing their talent, it will enable us to discover unique perspectives, artistic styles, and cultural expressions that may be specific



	to these regions. By providing equal opportunities for artists from all parts of Egypt, we contribute to a more inclusive and diverse cultural landscape and strengthen the cultural identity of the country as a whole.
4. Demographic Information	
Is the organization led by a woman?	Yes
What age is the lead of the organization?	Over 35 years old