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VENICE
IMMERSIVE
FUTURE-PROOFING PRODUCERS:
SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION
OF PRODUCTION COMPANIES AND IP



Contents

1. Introduction 6

2. Executive Summary 6

3. Who’s Who 8

4. The Opportunity 10

5. Key Issues and Needs 11

6. Challenges and Suggested Solutions 12

- 6.1 A Critical Shortage of Skilled Producers and Business Leaders 12
- 6.2 A Lack of Producer-Focused Training 14
- 6.3 Insufficient Support for Development and Scaling of IP 17
- 6.4 A Disconnect Between Producers, Distribution, Venues and Funding 19
- 6.5 A Lack of Producer Networks 20

Future-Proofing Producers

Shaping the Next Generation of Production Companies and IP

By Liz Rosenthal

A report summarising a discussion held to identify the skills, support and collaborations needed to help producers build sustainable businesses and robust IP within the immersive sector.

Hosted by CIIIC on 7 September 2026, during Venice Immersive 2026, at the 83rd Venice International Film Festival.

CIIIC organised this session because the next phase of the IX (Immersive Experience) sector calls for international collaboration, especially in talent development. From CIIIC's role in strengthening the Dutch IX field through research, labs, innovation and talent development, we aim to connect Dutch expertise with international partners. One of our goals is to jointly develop programmes for education, reskilling, upskilling, and talent mobility within the EU. By embedding knowledge sharing and skills development in the IX ecosystem, we ensure long-term impact across Europe and beyond. This session delves into what would be needed in training and skills development for producers to become future-proof.



1. Introduction

Producers are the connective tissue of any media production. They are the ones who develop and translate a creative idea into a viable IP and business: securing finance, assembling and leading teams, navigating rights and distribution, and holding a long-term vision for an IP long after the initial creative spark has faded.

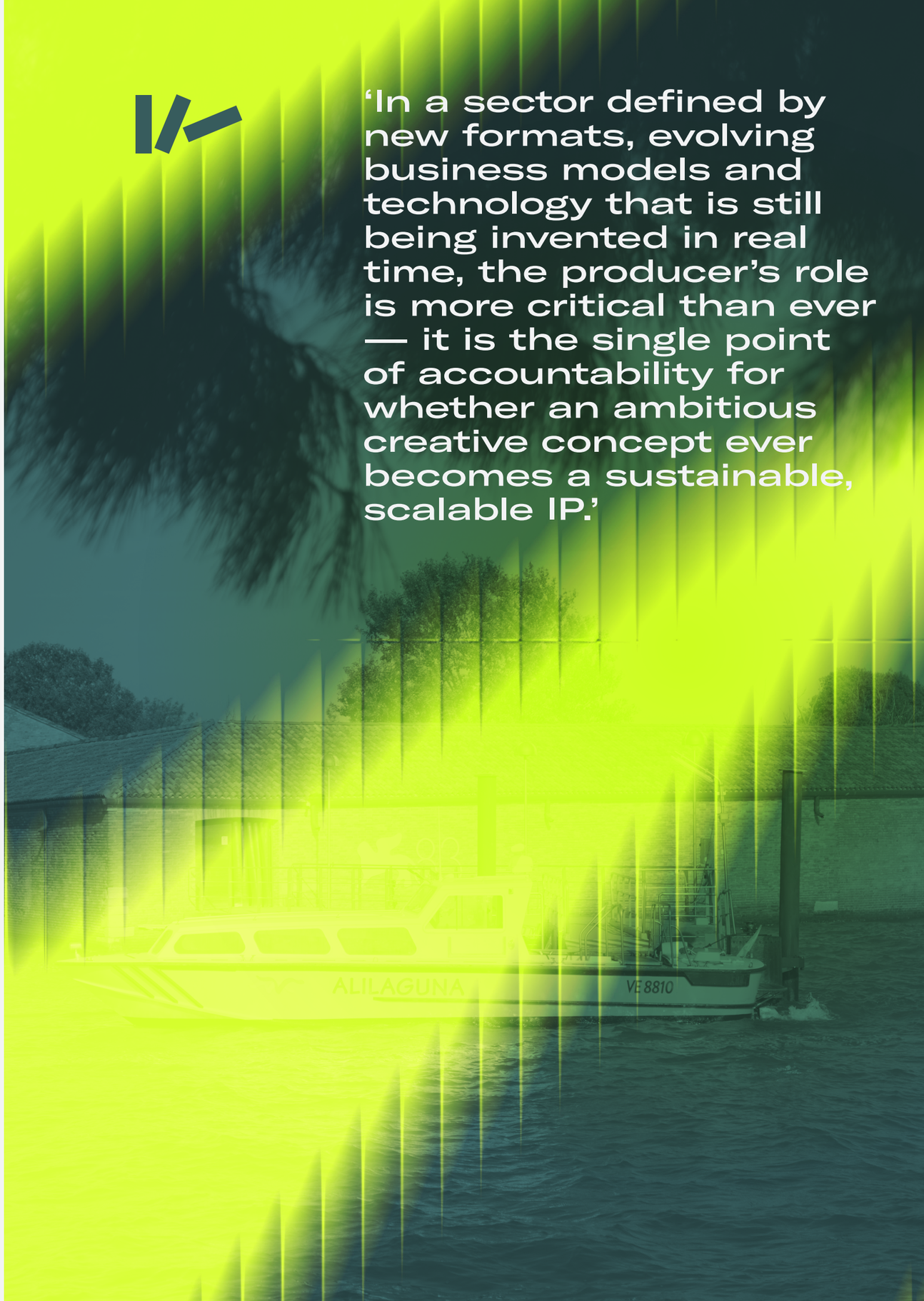
In a sector defined by new formats, evolving business models and technology that is still being invented in real time, the producer's role is more critical than ever – it is the single point of accountability for whether an ambitious creative concept ever becomes a sustainable, scalable IP. A thriving immersive sector depends on a thriving producer community; without one, the other cannot exist.

The goal of this working lunch discussion was to bring that community into direct conversation – to identify, together, the skills, support and collaborations needed to help producers build sustainable businesses and robust IP within the immersive sector.

2. Executive Summary

The immersive sector's creative and technological maturity has outpaced the ecosystem needed to turn that creativity into sustainable businesses and enduring IP.
The five issues set out are not independent – they compound. A producer trained only in prototype-stage creative development, funded only project-by-project, with no one to broker venue partnerships and no peer network to learn from, will find it difficult to build productions that scale, or a company that can endure.

The recurring solutions point in the same direction: fund strategy and development work, not only delivery; build slate- and company-level funding rather than one-off project grants; create active brokering between producers, venues and financiers rather than leaving relationships to chance; and enable producers to create a genuine, funded community in which to share knowledge, data and experience, as sister sectors like film and television already do.



3. Who's Who

The discussion session brought together 18 international industry professionals ("Participants") made up of producers, trainers and funders from the IX sector. The session was moderated by Liz Rosenthal.



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4. The Opportunity

The immersive sector is a key driver of the experience economy, generating compelling new revenue streams and creating significant spillover knowledge and value across different industry sectors. These powerful new formats are playing an important role in expanding existing IP or creating new ones.

The global market for immersive entertainment was valued at US$133.6 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach US$473.9 billion by 2030 (ResearchAndMarkets, “Immersive Entertainment – Global Strategic Business Report,” April 2025). It is no longer an experimental niche but a rapidly scaling industry, with IP and businesses attracting investment from across multiple sectors.

The most commercially viable driver of the immersive sector is location-based entertainment. Immersive experiences now compete directly with film, live events, music, museums and games for audience time and spend.

These three successful formats demonstrate the range of projects in the sector:

- ABBA Voyage generated an estimated £1.4 billion in wider UK economic impact between May 2022 and May 2024 (Sound Diplomacy) – total spending by attendees on tickets, hotels, food and transport. The show’s own company turnover was £104.3 million in 2024.
- teamLab Planets in Tokyo welcomed over 2.5 million visitors between April 2023 and March 2024, earning the Guinness World Record for the most-visited museum dedicated to a single art collective. teamLab now operates around a dozen permanent or long-term exhibitions worldwide, spanning Japan, Singapore, Macao, the Gulf and beyond – illustrating a genuinely exportable exhibition model.
- Excurio, the French studio behind the Immersive Expeditions format, has scaled its multi-person immersive VR experiences to 30+ venues across at least 17 countries as of 2026, spanning Europe, North America and Asia – illustrating a licensable, exportable production model.

A new creative and commercial ecosystem is emerging at the intersection of entertainment, technology and the experience economy. The convergence of real-time game engines, spatial computing, extended reality, large-scale projection mapping, new capture techniques and AI is enabling new formats that move fluidly across physical and digital environments – creating new ways to engage audiences, build and extend IP, generate revenue and reach global markets.

Realising this opportunity depends on producers being equipped to meet it.

Immersive art and entertainment is a distinct creative category, with financing structures and distribution models still taking shape in real time.

5. Key Issues and Needs

A short survey was shared with participants prior to the session, alongside a briefing document, to guide discussion and create a productive foundation for brainstorming. Four key questions were asked:

1. Immersive art and entertainment is a distinct creative category with its own formats, production processes, financing structures, distribution models, and revenue pathways. In your view, what are the biggest challenges immersive producers are facing?
2. We need producers who can develop, finance and deliver immersive projects that scale beyond festival premieres and evolve into enduring IP capable of reaching diverse audiences and markets. What skills and training do we need to enable immersive producers to become future-proof?
3. What specific training formats (e.g., workshops, courses, mentorship programmes) and which providers or organisations are you aware of that could support immersive producers in developing the skills needed?



4. Drawing from your own unique expertise, what specific topics would you like to see addressed during the roundtable?

The analysis of responses gathered through the questionnaire, combined with the briefing document (itself researched through prior interviews with international producers), highlighted five critical challenges facing the IX producer sector:

- A critical shortage of skilled producers and business leaders
- A lack of producer-focused training
- Insufficient support for development and scaling of IP
- A disconnect between producers, distribution, venues and funding
- A lack of producer networks

Each is set out below, drawing together a summary of the discussion, the briefing interviews and the questionnaire responses gathered from participants ahead of the Venice session.

6. Challenges and Suggested Solutions

6.1 A Critical Shortage of Skilled Producers and Business Leaders

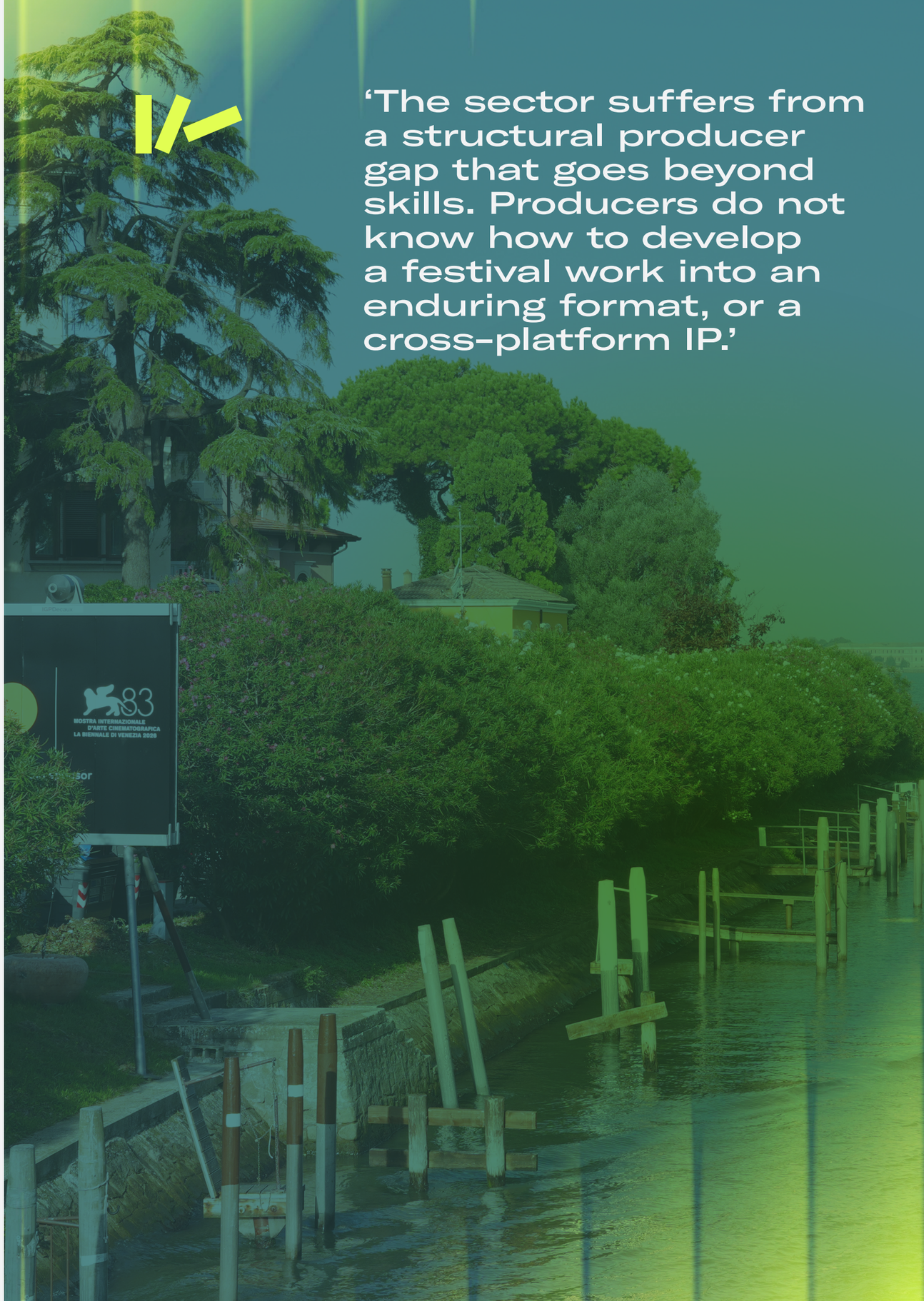
Challenges

Much of the work originating from independent studios and artists premiering at Venice Immersive and exhibited within the festival circuit is produced by independent artists and creative technologists whose experience lies in service work rather than in IP development, financing and long-term exploitation.

There is often a lack of producer knowledge around format development, financing, distribution pathways and audience engagement. Many of these festival projects are at pilot stage, lacking resources for future development, and are often produced without a distribution strategy or partners from the outset, limiting their commercial viability and impact.

As one interviewee put it, the sector suffers from “a structural producer gap that goes beyond skills”. Producers do not know how to develop a festival work into an enduring format, or a cross-platform IP.”

Recurring, specific skills gaps were mentioned: producers and their prospective collaborators frequently lack fluency in financing structures, financial and budgetary expertise,



dealmaking, negotiation and legal skills, and leadership and team-building skills. Knowledge of cross-border, cross-sector finance – public and private investment, co-production finance, tax credits – was repeatedly named as scarce. This illiteracy limits access to co-production and private investment.

Participants at the discussion were direct about the consequence: new producers "do not have skills based on strategy." Several linked this to how companies are structured day to day – producers are "working from project to project instead of building a company vision, diversifying across adjacent verticals to sustain the business, or developing cross-platform projects."

Solutions

- **Dedicated producer training and mentoring:** Invest in ongoing training and mentoring to grow a pipeline of producer-leaders, rather than leaving the discipline to be learned informally on the job. Bespoke business mentoring and coaching should be tailored to a producer or company's specific stage, not a one-off, one-size-fits-all course.

- **Paid, structured mentorship:** Fund mentorship within live productions to cover both a junior producer's salary and compensation for a senior producer's mentoring time – creating a genuine career pathway and transferring knowledge between generations.
- **Shared skill sets:** Recognise that not every skill needs to sit in one person – the full set a company needs (creative vision, financial literacy, company and management strategy) can be assembled through complementary collaborators and co-production partners, provided the roles are deliberately divided and filled.

- **Cross-sector recruitment:** Attract experienced producers from other sectors (film, TV, performing arts, games) to accelerate the pipeline, and build broader recognition for the IX sector.

- **Funder and policymaker education:** Build knowledge and awareness among funders and policymakers, correcting what one respondent called a "lack of awareness about what producers do and what is needed to build, grow and sustain production companies and IP."

6.2 A Lack of Producer-Focused Training

Challenges

Existing training is overwhelmingly skewed towards emerging creators and single-prototype or pilot creative development; several interviewees pointed to the same gap – a vacuum for mid-career and established producers, who need modular, flexible business upskilling rather than foundational, project-focused courses.

Creative Europe's MEDIA Programme, for example, funds 39 producer-focused training programmes for film and TV, and none for immersive or evolving media. Participants at the lunch confirmed this directly: there are effectively "zero programmes for immersive media or evolving media for producers" – the funding that does exist in IX is for artistic process and prototype development, and is creator-focused rather than building producers' strategic skills.

Training, funding and distribution pathways are also organised in silos by format (film/TV/XR), discouraging producers from thinking holistically about where an IP can grow. Public institutions were described as struggling to design holistic, cross-platform-ready programmes, because funding structures still require trainers and producers to "stick to one thing."

The range of producer skills gaps mentioned is broad: financing literacy, dealmaking and negotiation, production workflow, technical fluency the disruptive effect of AI on workflows, venue operations and ticketing, contracting to protect IP, pitch materials, business case studies and forecasts, finance literacy, international co-production rules, and the leadership and team psychology needed to manage creative, technology and cross-disciplinary teams under pressure.

Solutions

- **Position IX as a (potentially) strong economic industrym:** many decision-makers still misunderstand IX as a niche where no money is made, and this shapes what training and funding gets built. Training and knowledge sharing is needed for decision and policy-makers.

- **Career-stage design:** Design training for different career stages rather than one generic curriculum – a full foundational programme for emerging producers, modular upskilling for producers arriving from film/TV, business and strategy acceleration for senior immersive producers, and forward-looking education for the organisations commissioning and funding the work.

- **A range of IX producer-focused programmes is needed:**

    - Project-focused programmes that help build strategy around a business idea or IP.

    - Short, practical courses matched to the real skills gaps mentioned above.

    - Examples: Producer/business-focused models mentioned include Pixel Lab and CreativeXR (both no longer running), and CoSTAR's Evolve bespoke business mentoring and EIT Culture & Creativity's skills-based CPD courses.

- **Build training on established models:** Rather than reinventing from scratch, participants noted that a producer/business-focused Creative Europe course doesn't yet exist simply because nobody has



submitted one since Pixel Lab, which ran until 2016, and that established film-sector formats (EAVE, ACE, Eric Pommer) could be replicated with IX-specific programmes.

- **Open-source producer’s toolkit:** An open-source, continually evolving toolkit was proposed during the discussion session as a shared foundation that could sit above the format silos and support like-minded sharing across the IX sector and beyond. Key areas mentioned were project management and tools (i.e. Asana and Airtable), understanding technology workflows, working fluently with and incorporating AI into the production pipeline, budgeting, scheduling, and reframing the range of business skills as core producing rather than seeing business as a dirty word.

- **Cross-platform IP building:** There was a strong shared view that the sector’s future lies in developing and building IP and storyworlds across formats instead of focusing on a single XR format. Encourage cross-platform training formats. Brand building, understanding of audience trends and engagement strategy are core to strategically building a successful IP that could grow across platforms. Approaching existing IP holders to develop IX formats is another route.

6.3 Insufficient Support for Development and Scaling of IP

Challenges

A specific critique of how development funding is structured was almost unanimous among producers: research, development and production stages are routinely conflated by funders, with development funding often expected to produce something close to a distribution-ready project rather than fund genuine testing, prototyping and business-strategy work.

Participants at the lunch were direct about this: “there are so many elements of development that we’re not allowed to fund” – audience research, focus groups and market-data gathering typically fall outside what creative development funding will cover, even though understanding the market and defining a strategy should logically come before building a vertical slice, not after. As one participant summarised the risk: “everything becomes about the delivery or the concept,” leaving “no space for investing in the strategy and people that make the project viable.”

Funding is always structured project-by-project rather than around a company or a slate, making it impossible to sustain a team: “the up and down of project funding is exhausting,” and producers cannot build a long-term company strategy when financing arrives in short, disconnected bursts.

In IX there is no equivalent of the film

sector's data and valuation tools that let a producer benchmark one project against another – "we need market data" – which makes it hard for funders or investors to judge what works, which leads to a positioning problem: many decision-makers still see immersive as a niche with no money to be made.

Solutions

- **Fund development as development:** Understand the true costs of its different stages, and allow them to be included in development funding pots – genuine research, audience testing and business-strategy work, ideation and prototyping – without requiring a confirmed audience-facing deliverable or a locked-in list of future funders and exhibitors. Strategy needs to happen before prototyping

- **The CreativeXR model:** (Digital Catapult / Arts Council England) was cited approvingly as a template that packages an IP together with a working prototype, business plan and pitch materials, first-finance for development/production, bespoke mentoring, and financier introductions, rather than funding development in isolation from the path to market.

- **Slate-based funding:** Introduce programmes that let a company develop several projects at once (knowing some will fail), and that make it possible to retain a team over longer terms rather than months.

- **Market intelligence:** Build the market intelligence the sector lacks – shared data and benchmarks, on the model of film-industry/ TV data, so producers, funders and investors can compare value across very different immersive business models.

- **Impact measurement:** A sustainable model for impact measurement is needed. This would allow producers to systematically measure and demonstrate the value and impact of their projects to funding institutions and financiers, while also enabling the sector to develop broader and more diverse ways of defining and measuring success.

- **Early collaboration across areas of expertise:** A need to build stronger bridges between different industries and areas of expertise from the earliest stages of development. For example, involving researchers and relevant external experts from the beginning of a project could strengthen both the development process and the eventual impact of the work.

6.4 A Disconnect Between Producers, Distribution, Venues and Funding

Challenges

With location-based entertainment established as a viable distribution platform for immersive work, the disconnect between producers and venues was described repeatedly and concretely across the briefing interviews, the survey answers and the discussion group: many producers have to distribute their own projects – a different skillset and an operation that needs specific funding, almost impossible to come by.

There are very few distribution companies that are brokering relationships between producers and venues. Organisations and platforms that could actively broker relationships between production studios, venues and finance were cited as invaluable.

One producer had to reach out to 65 venues, had 30 reply, and ultimately showed the work at 7 – "a film producer doesn't go to every film theatre in the world to sell their film," and having to understand and market to every venue individually is not a sustainable part of a producer's job. There are no equivalent national or international distributors of IX content as there are for film, TV or the performing arts.

A distribution path or tour is rarely defined from the earliest stages of development, unlike theatre, film or TV, where the distribution platform invests early and de-risks the project for other investors. Where this does happen well, the model is instructive: one producer went directly to venue partners at the outset, with the venues taking on initial risk as development co-funders, before public production money was leveraged on the back of that commitment – "the venue gives us the end of the rainbow." But this remains the exception, brokered informally by individual producers rather than supported by any structure.

Venues are often unable to invest in unproven formats because of the risk, and many cultural and performing-arts venues are currently under financial pressure, making them reluctant to back something unfamiliar.

Solutions

Touring infrastructure: Build genuine touring infrastructure – cohorts of venues sharing learnings, equipment and skills so immersive work can be programmed as core content (as theatre, cinema and music already are), with venues involved from development rather than only at the exhibition stage.

- **Venue-directed funding:** Direct funding at venues to develop, commission and license projects, helping to de-risk development for producers. This would establish the connection with the audience and project development from the outset, and allow mechanisms for audience research, testing and strategic planning to be carried out with a "real" partner.

- **De-risking through venue** investment: Incentivising venues to invest in IP development de-risks production funding from public sources, and encourages private finance and partnerships.

- **Incentives to programme XR work:** The France 2030 programme offered many opportunities for venues to apply for innovation funding to set up programmes and spaces to develop and exhibit XR. However, participants felt that the speed of programme implementation and funding delivery has been too slow to be fully effective.

- **Distribution and sales funds:** Create funds to enable distributor/ international sales companies to emerge. A “middle” ecosystem needs to exist, and the responsibility should not fall on the production company.

- **New venue types:** Look beyond the arts sector for new venue types and partners – malls and other non-arts-facing spaces, property developers building new venues, and retail and public-facing spaces.

- Integration into major markets: A specific proposal from the briefing interviews is that major established markets (ie Cannes, Berlin, Venice) formally integrate cross-format/ immersive tracks, which would legitimise and de-silo the sector more effectively than standalone immersive events, since established producers and financiers from legacy media already trust and attend those markets.

6.5 A Lack of Producer Networks

Challenges

There is currently no structured way for producers to share knowledge, data or experience with one another.

At the discussion, participants were explicit about a lack of an international producer network or guild –and raised the open question of what form a community, knowledge-sharing structure or lobby group should take.

Several pointed out that other media and creative sectors all have producer guilds, lobbies and networks where industry intelligence is shared. Producer training organisations and networks in film – EAVE, ACE and others – have long included structured sharing of case studies, sales figures and licensing data among alumni/ members. No equivalent exists yet in the immersive sector.

Without an established international producer network or group, there is no centralised body of knowledge for the IX sector that can be used to advocate, lobby, or serve as a source of information for:

Policymakers and public funders: described as sometimes drawing conclusions about the sector from limited direct experience, shaping funding decisions without a full picture.

Many policy decisions were being informed by expertise in legacy media rather than knowledge of immersive and evolving media.

Producers from adjacent sectors: Film, TV and performing-arts producers exploring immersive formats often do not understand the sector or struggle to identify the right expertise, leading to disappointing results and reinforcing the perception of immersive as separate and difficult to work with.

Solutions

- **International producer community:** Establish a genuine community – variously framed as a network, an alumni structure, or a lobby/ representative group for independent producers – with funded capacity to run it, not just convene as a one-off activity.

- **Confidential data-sharing culture:** Build in the data- and case-study-sharing culture that film producer networks already have – sales figures, licensing data, benchmarks – adapted to the very different, still-forming business models in immersive.

- Pair this with continuous, trustworthy access to market intelligence and technology updates, since reliable data on the sector currently exists mainly in private, expensive forms that most individual producers cannot access on their own.

- **Curated networking and matchmaking:** Prioritise structured networking and matchmaking designed specifically to broker relationships with financiers, venues and cross-sector partners, plus producer-specific small-group sessions at markets and festivals around shared topics and challenges, rather than generic industry mixers.

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CIIIC oktober 2026 ©