مجلس دبي للإعلام
DUBAI MEDIA COUNCIL

Dubai Media Retreat

Future-Proofing Dubai's Media Ecosystem

Across media platforms, our global and regional partners have not only helped grow an industry — they have helped tell a story of ambition, creativity, resilience, and possibility.

H.E. Mona G. Al Marri

Executive Summary

The Crisis did not simply create a regional security concern; it exposed structural vulnerabilities across Dubai's media and creative economy. Advertising campaigns slowed as brands shifted into risk-management mode. Digital media became a battleground for sentiment, rumor, reassurance, and public confidence. Film and production companies faced cancelled or delayed shoots, insurance constraints, travel concerns, fragmented approvals, delayed payments, and rising costs. Gaming was less dependent on physical movement, but still exposed to investor hesitation, regulatory ambiguity, talent gaps, and regional competition.

Dubai's media ecosystem demonstrated resilience. The city's infrastructure, safety, public-sector accessibility, global connectivity, multicultural talent base, and strong entrepreneurial energy remained major strengths. Yet the crisis showed that resilience cannot depend on general confidence alone. It must be built deliberately through financial continuity systems, clear governance, crisis communication infrastructure, operational simplicity, talent retention, and a stronger local creative economy capable of generating trusted narratives and exportable intellectual property.

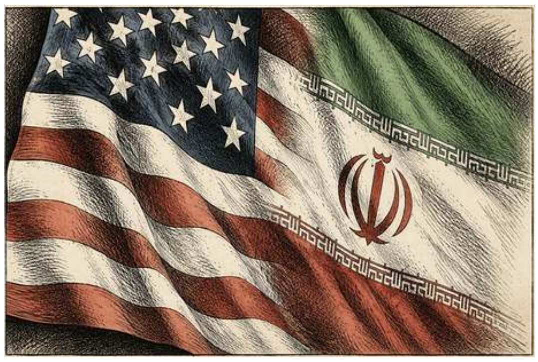
Across sectors, the strongest conclusion was that many of the vulnerabilities revealed during the war already existed before the crisis. The war amplified them. It turned slow permits into lost production confidence, weak communication into community uncertainty, delayed payments into business survival risks, supply chain dependence into operational disruption, and imported talent reliance into workforce fragility.

The retreat therefore points to a strategic shift for Dubai. The next stage of media ecosystem development should not be framed only as growth. It should be framed as resilience-driven growth: growth that can withstand disruption, protect confidence, retain talent, support businesses, and keep Dubai visible and credible during regional instability.

The report identifies six cross-sector priorities. First, Dubai needs crisis communication infrastructure that is fast, multilingual, community-based, and trusted. Second, the media economy requires financial continuity mechanisms that protect SMEs, freelancers, agencies, creators, production vendors, and startups during shocks. Third, operational systems must become simpler and more integrated, especially where approvals, permits, regulations, and public-sector interfaces affect business continuity. Fourth, every sector needs stronger representation and formal channels for government-industry consultation. Fifth, talent development must be treated as resilience infrastructure rather than only workforce development. Sixth, Dubai's global narrative must be protected through authentic storytelling led by institutions, businesses, residents, and creators.

Strategic Context: Why the War Changed the Conversation

Before the crisis, Dubai's media ecosystem was already moving through structural transformation. Advertising was being reshaped by AI, creator-led campaigns, and experiential marketing. Digital media was expanding through influencers, multilingual content, and platform economies. Film and production activity was benefiting from Dubai's infrastructure, location diversity, safety, and accessibility. Gaming was emerging as a strategic future sector aligned with youth culture, digital entertainment, esports, and intellectual property creation.



The war changed the operating environment because it affected the invisible foundations on which media industries rely: confidence, movement, trust, financing, insurance, information flow, and reputation. Media companies do not function only through creativity. They depend on predictable permits, stable travel routes, client confidence, timely payments, safe locations, insurance coverage, audience trust, and talent availability. When geopolitical instability disrupts these foundations, even strong sectors can become vulnerable.

The key insight is that the crisis did not affect every sector in the same way. Advertising felt the impact through brand caution, tourism confidence, logistics, and reputation. Digital media felt it through misinformation risk, multilingual communication gaps, and narrative dependency. Film and production felt it through operational stoppages, insurance constraints, travel uncertainty, permit complexity, and cashflow pressure. Gaming felt it through its role as a potentially resilient digital sector, but also through the need for clearer regulation, stronger incentives, and better ecosystem coordination.

This report therefore treats the war as a stress test. It does not suggest that every structural issue was caused by the war. Rather, the crisis revealed which issues become dangerous when the ecosystem is under pressure.

| Cross-Sector Crisis Findings

Several findings cut across all sectors. The first is that uncertainty can be more damaging than disruption itself. Companies can adapt to a clear restriction, budget shift, or operational change. They struggle when information is unclear, inconsistent, delayed, or fragmented. This was especially visible in discussions around crisis communications, permit changes, censorship procedures, business continuity guidance, and international messaging.

The second finding is that creative businesses often operate with limited resilience buffers. Many agencies, production companies, freelancers, creators, and startups depend on project-based cash flow. When clients pause, payments delay, or travel becomes uncertain, the financial shock spreads quickly. A future-proof ecosystem must provide mechanisms that protect continuity without removing market discipline.

The third finding is that operational friction becomes a crisis multiplier. During normal periods, a slow permit process or unclear approval path is frustrating. During a geopolitical shock, it can determine whether a production continues, a campaign launches, or a company loses a client. Simplification, transparency, and single-window platforms, therefore, become resilience tools.

The fourth finding is that Dubai's reputation is an economic asset. External narratives during conflict can affect tourism, investment, client confidence, and consumer behavior. Protecting Dubai's narrative cannot depend only on official announcements. It requires a distributed trust ecosystem involving creators, residents, businesses, community leaders, and multilingual media networks.

The fifth finding is that talent retention is crisis resilience. A sector that depends heavily on temporary or imported talent is vulnerable when travel, confidence, or competing markets shift. Local and resident talent pipelines, internships, academies, guilds, professional associations, and long-term visas are not only development measures; they are continuity measures.

1. Advertising

Pre-War Industry Landscape

Before the war, Dubai's advertising sector was one of the region's most dynamic media segments. The city served as a regional headquarters market for major brands, agencies, outdoor operators, luxury retailers, tourism campaigns, and digital-first businesses. The sector benefited from Dubai's ability to combine infrastructure, consumer diversity, tourism visibility, event activity, and entrepreneurial culture.

Advertising was already evolving before the crisis. Traditional campaigns were increasingly blending with creator-led content, digital performance marketing, experiential activations, outdoor media, AI-assisted creative development, and data-driven audience targeting. Dubai's diverse resident population and tourism economy gave advertisers access to a rare mix of local, regional, and international audiences.

At the same time, several vulnerabilities existed below the surface. The sector was highly sensitive to business confidence, tourism perception, supply chain costs, media platform changes, and client budget cycles. Outdoor and experiential advertising depended on permits, materials, installations, logistics, and timely approvals. Agencies and SMEs often operated on project-based cashflow. The crisis did not create these vulnerabilities; it made them more visible.

Crisis Impact

The US-Iran war affected advertising first through confidence. Brands became cautious about launching campaigns during uncertainty, particularly when public sentiment, tourism activity, and consumer behavior became harder to predict. Some clients delayed decisions, paused campaigns, or reduced spend. For agencies and SMEs, this translated quickly into cashflow stress.

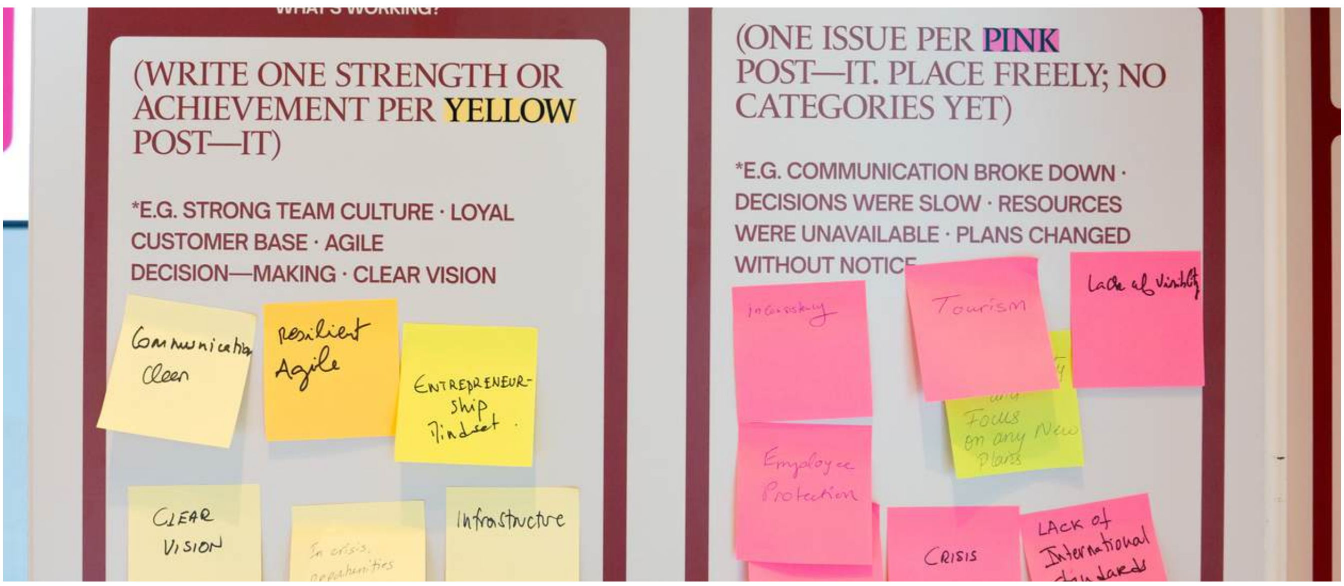
The crisis also affected the operational side of advertising. Outdoor campaigns, installations, experiential activations, and event-linked campaigns were exposed to logistics disruptions, rising transport costs, delayed materials, and uncertainty around permissions. The sector's dependence on imported materials and physical execution meant that disruption in shipping, routes, or supply chains could immediately affect delivery timelines.

Reputation was another major impact. During war, external narratives can shape perceptions of safety and stability. Because advertising is closely tied to tourism, real estate, retail, events, and investment confidence, negative sentiment around Dubai directly affects campaign appetite. The sector recognized that Dubai requires more authentic and multilingual reputation infrastructure during crises.

Positives Identified

The advertising sector entered the crisis with important strengths. Dubai was seen as innovative, evolving, collaborative, entrepreneurial, and fast-moving. Setting up businesses was perceived as relatively smooth compared with many markets. The city's infrastructure, international connectivity, government ambition, and public-private coexistence were seen as important enablers.

The sector also benefits from the presence of global brands and agencies, which gives Dubai both market depth and international visibility. Its multicultural environment allows advertising campaigns to be tested across languages, communities, and consumer segments. The positive baseline is therefore strong: Dubai has the ingredients of a regional creative and advertising hub. The crisis showed that the next step is resilience, not only growth.



What Broke Down

Financial stability became one of the most urgent concerns. Businesses with limited reserves were exposed when clients delayed spending or sponsorships were discontinued. Participants stressed that crisis periods quickly create anxiety around salaries, job security, freelancer payments, and continuity. This was particularly acute for startups and SMEs that do not have the balance-sheet strength of larger agencies or outdoor operators.

Stakeholder inclusion also broke down. Industry voices were not always part of decisions early enough, creating the impression that companies were learning about changes after decisions were made. In a crisis, this weakens trust and produces avoidable friction. The sector needs structured mechanisms that allow major operators, SMEs, startups, brands, and government entities to communicate before and during disruption.

Logistics and supply chain issues became a third pressure point. Campaign materials took longer to arrive, costs rose, and the lack of diversified routes created vulnerability. Outdoor media and physical activations were particularly exposed because they depend on timing, approvals, installation, and materials. Even locally manufactured items can depend on imported raw materials.

The sector also confronted a reputation challenge. Dubai's authenticity and image were affected by external narratives, reducing confidence among some clients and international stakeholders. Industry voices emphasized that Dubai needs to tell its own story through credible, human, and locally grounded narratives rather than relying only on global media interpretation.

Talent retention was another concern. The advertising sector needs more homegrown talent, specialized jobs, and stronger internship pathways. In a crisis, international talent may leave or become harder to attract. A sector dependent only on imported expertise becomes fragile when mobility and confidence are disrupted.

Clustered Challenges

Cluster	What the crisis exposed	Why it matters
Financial resilience	Campaign pauses, delayed spending, discontinued sponsorships, weak SME cashflow, salary anxiety, and limited reserves.	Advertising firms are project-based and confidence-sensitive; without buffers, a short crisis can create job losses and business closures.
Stakeholder inclusion	Industry stakeholders felt insufficiently included in decision-making and crisis planning.	Advertising is operationally complex; government decisions need industry input to avoid unintended consequences.
Logistics and supply chains	Material delays, cost inflation, route vulnerability, raw material exposure, and installation disruption.	Campaign delivery depends on movement of materials, permits, and timing; disruption can trigger client loss.
Reputation and narrative	Negative external narratives weakened confidence and reduced willingness to spend or promote Dubai.	Advertising depends on perception; reputational stress affects tourism, retail, events, and investor confidence.
Talent and homegrown capability	Need for local talent, specialized roles, internships, and stronger retention systems.	Embedded talent makes the sector more resilient during travel disruption and global uncertainty.

How Might We Questions

Challenge area	How Might We question	Why this matters for resilience
Stakeholder inclusion	How might we include advertising stakeholders earlier and more systematically in crisis-response decisions?	Early consultation improves trust and helps government understand operational consequences before decisions are implemented.
Financial resilience	How might we protect agencies, SMEs, freelancers, and employees when campaign spending freezes during crisis?	Continuity mechanisms reduce layoffs, business failures, and loss of creative capability.
Logistics	How might we ensure campaign delivery can continue when shipping, materials, or transport routes are disrupted?	Advertising delivery depends on reliable logistics; alternative routes and supplier visibility improve continuity.
Reputation	How might we strengthen Dubai's global confidence narrative using authentic voices from the city?	Trust is stronger when residents, businesses, and creators communicate lived experience, not only official reassurance.
Talent	How might we build homegrown advertising talent so Dubai remains creatively competitive during future disruptions?	Local and resident capability reduces reliance on imported expertise and strengthens long-term ecosystem resilience.

Strategic Solutions

1. Advertising Crisis Coordination Council

What it is. A standing sector council should be created to connect Dubai Media Council, relevant economic entities, outdoor media companies, agencies, brands, SMEs, logistics providers, and platform representatives. The council would not replace existing regulators; it would create a practical consultation and coordination mechanism for crisis periods and quarterly resilience planning during normal periods.

How it would work in Dubai. The council would maintain a live map of sector risks, coordinate updates during instability, review the impact of proposed measures on campaigns and outdoor media, and provide rapid feedback from the market. During a crisis, it could issue operational guidance, align public-private messaging, and help identify urgent bottlenecks affecting campaign execution.

Realism check. This is realistic because it requires governance coordination more than major capital expenditure. It can begin as an advisory council under Dubai Media Council and later evolve into a formal sector resilience forum.

Benchmark logic. Leading crisis-ready industries often maintain sector coordination groups that provide fast feedback to government during disruption. The relevant benchmark is not a single global advertising council, but the broader model of public-private resilience coordination used in tourism, aviation, and emergency management.

Practical phasing. Launch within 90 days as a council with clear terms of reference; run the first crisis simulation within six months; publish annual sector resilience guidance.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Dubai Economy and Tourism; Dubai Chambers; major agencies; outdoor media operators; SME representatives; logistics and platform partners.	1. Advertising Crisis Coordination Council	Very High	Medium

2. Advertising Business Continuity and Employee Protection Framework

What it is. The advertising sector needs a continuity framework that helps firms withstand sudden campaign freezes. This could include reserve guidance, crisis liquidity support, payroll stabilization, freelancer protection, and insurance-backed continuity tools.

How it would work in Dubai. The framework should be tiered. Large agencies and outdoor operators could be encouraged to maintain continuity reserves or insurance coverage. SMEs could access subsidized crisis insurance, emergency liquidity windows, or short-term payroll support during officially recognized disruptions. The aim is to prevent immediate layoffs and preserve delivery capacity until market confidence returns.

Realism check. The full framework is high effort because it requires financial design, legal clarity, and private-sector participation. It can be piloted through voluntary insurance pools and SME support schemes before any regulatory requirements are considered.

Benchmark logic. Crisis support mechanisms for creative sectors internationally often combine grants, payroll support, insurance, and liquidity tools. The realistic lesson for Dubai is to design targeted continuity tools rather than open-ended subsidies.

Practical phasing. Start with a voluntary continuity toolkit and insurance feasibility study; pilot SME liquidity support; evaluate whether larger companies should adopt reserve guidance.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation or DGHR; Dubai Economy and Tourism; banks; insurance providers; SME support entities.	2. Advertising Business Continuity and Employee Protection Framework	Very High	High

3. Dubai Authentic Storytelling and Reputation Resilience Program

What it is. Dubai needs a coordinated storytelling program that protects confidence during crises by using credible resident, entrepreneur, creator, and business voices. This responds directly to concerns that external narratives can undermine the city's reputation and discourage advertising, tourism, and investment activity.

How it would work in Dubai. The program would curate multilingual stories about businesses, residents, creators, and companies that continue operating in Dubai during crisis. It would include short documentaries, creator-led explainers, international media kits, community-led content, and sector-specific success stories. It should avoid over-polished institutional messaging and focus on credibility, humanity, and lived experience.

Realism check. This is realistic because Dubai already has strong content production capabilities and existing communication channels. The key challenge is editorial discipline and coordination, not technical capacity.

Benchmark logic. City reputation campaigns internationally increasingly use residents and entrepreneurs rather than only official spokespeople. During crises, trusted messengers often outperform institutional messaging with skeptical audiences.

Practical phasing. Launch a pilot campaign around "Dubai continues" stories; build a roster of multilingual creators and business voices; expand into a standing reputation resilience program.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai media Council; Government of Dubai Media Office; Dubai Economy and Tourism; advertising agencies; creator networks; business councils; community ambassadors.	3. Dubai Authentic Storytelling and Reputation Resilience Program	High	Medium

4. Advertising Logistics Resilience Program

What it is. Advertising campaigns, especially outdoor and experiential work, depend on materials, printing, structures, transport, installation, and permits. A logistics resilience program would map critical dependencies and create alternative routes, suppliers, and contingency procedures for crisis periods.

How it would work in Dubai. The program would identify priority materials and services, build vendor databases, create emergency import alternatives, map locally available substitutes, and coordinate with transport and port authorities where relevant. It would also help SMEs access shared supplier networks to reduce cost exposure.

Realism check. This is realistic if positioned as a coordination and visibility program rather than a government-run supply chain. It can begin with mapping and voluntary supplier registration.

Benchmark logic. Business continuity planning in event, advertising, and tourism sectors commonly includes supplier mapping and alternative route planning. Dubai can adapt this to media operations.

Practical phasing. Begin with a supply chain risk map for outdoor and experiential advertising; create a preferred emergency vendor database; integrate guidance into crisis playbooks.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Dubai Chambers; logistics providers; Dubai Municipality; outdoor media operators; port and transport authorities; private suppliers.	4. Advertising Logistics Resilience Program	High	Medium to High

5. Homegrown Advertising Talent and Global Internship Program

What it is. The sector needs a stronger talent pipeline that develops local and resident talent rather than relying primarily on imported expertise. The program would combine internships, graduate placements, agency rotations, strategic creative training, AI skills, and international exchange opportunities.

How it would work in Dubai. The program should link universities, agencies, brands, and government. It should include paid internships, creative strategy training, media planning, AI advertising tools, account leadership, and specialized tracks for Emiratis and long-term residents. International students could also be attracted to Dubai through short-term placements, turning Dubai into a talent magnet.

Realism check. This is realistic as a phased program because it can begin with a small cohort and expand based on employer demand. The main requirement is employer commitment to paid placements and mentorship.

Benchmark logic. Creative hubs that successfully retain talent typically connect education directly to industry. Dubai’s advantage is its large base of agencies and brands, which can be mobilized as training partners.

Practical phasing. Launch a 50-person pilot internship cohort; add AI advertising and strategy modules; expand into a permanent Dubai Advertising Talent Program.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; universities; major agencies; Dubai Culture; Dubai Economy and Tourism; private employers; international advertising networks.	5. Homegrown Advertising Talent and Global Internship Program	High	Medium to High

6. Advertising AI Readiness and Trust Standards Program

What it is. AI is changing advertising by automating content generation, media optimization, personalization, and campaign testing. The sector needs a practical AI readiness program that improves productivity while protecting trust, disclosure, quality, and creative value.

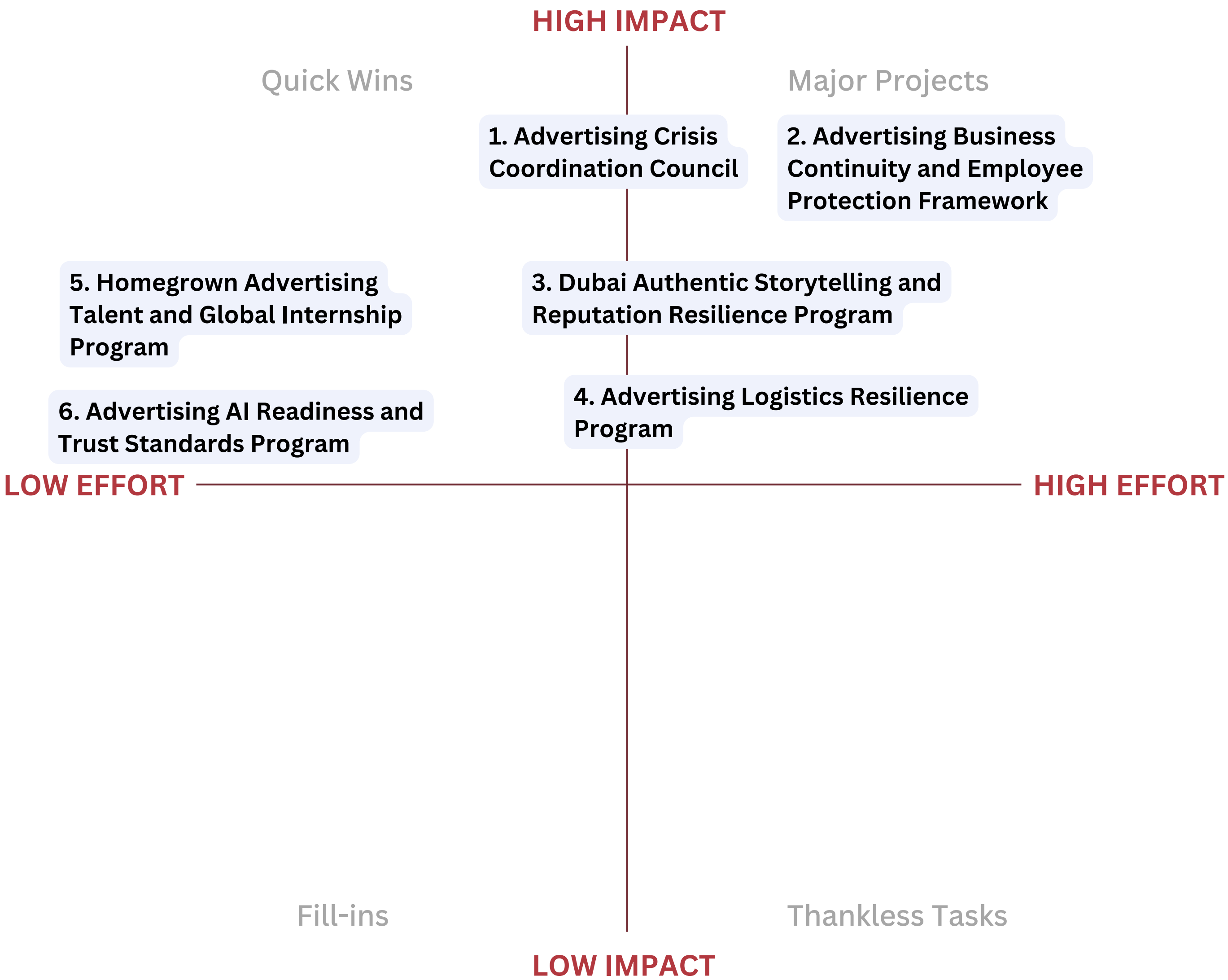
How it would work in Dubai. The program would provide training for agencies and brands on responsible AI use, disclosure standards, data privacy, generative content review, and ethical personalization. It could also support experimentation labs where agencies test AI tools in controlled environments.

Realism check. This is realistic because it can be launched as voluntary guidance and training before regulation. It also aligns with Dubai's wider technology ambition.

Benchmark logic. Advertising markets globally are already debating AI disclosure, synthetic content, and consumer trust. Dubai can become a regional leader by setting practical standards early.
Practical phasing. Publish voluntary AI advertising guidance; run sector training; create an AI advertising lab linked to agencies and universities.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; technology companies; agencies; universities; data protection and consumer protection bodies; platform partners.	6. Advertising AI Readiness and Trust Standards Program	High	Medium

Impact vs Effort Matrix: Advertising



2. Digital Media

Pre-War Industry Landscape

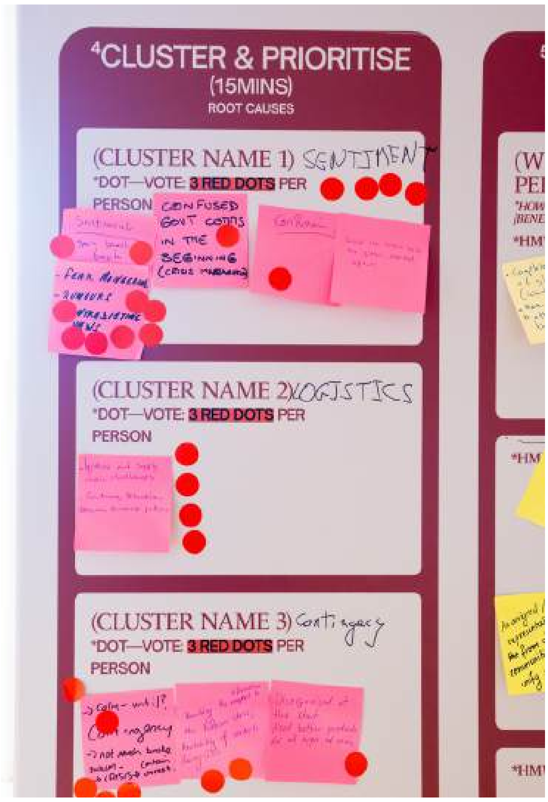
Before the war, Dubai's digital media ecosystem was expanding through creators, influencers, podcasters, social publishers, platform-native content, multilingual communities, and AI-assisted production. The city had become one of the region's strongest creator economies because of its high digital adoption, international population, brand density, and platform visibility.

Yet the sector also carried structural vulnerabilities. Creators depended heavily on global platforms and algorithmic visibility. Digital publishing was fragmented. Monetization remained unstable for many independent creators. The city's multilingual communities were highly active online, but there was no sufficiently integrated system to communicate with them during a crisis. These vulnerabilities became highly visible during the war.

Crisis Impact

The war transformed digital media into both a vulnerability and a resilience asset. On the vulnerability side, uncertainty and negative sentiment spread quickly. Businesses and residents looked online for guidance, but communication was not always clear enough in the early stages. Some communities did not receive timely information in their own languages. Blue-collar workers and non-Arabic/non-English-speaking residents were especially exposed to information gaps.

On the resilience side, digital media offered a powerful way to restore confidence. Trusted resident creators, community leaders, multilingual publishers, and sector voices could explain developments, reduce panic, counter misinformation, and communicate Dubai's stability in ways that official statements alone cannot always achieve. The crisis showed that Dubai's digital media ecosystem should be treated as part of the city's resilience infrastructure.



What Broke Down

The first breakdown was communication clarity. During the early stage of the crisis, businesses and residents needed precise information about the nature of the emergency, whether special protocols applied, and what actions they should take. Where information was unclear or delayed, uncertainty grew.

The second breakdown was multilingual reach. Dubai is a global city, but crisis communication must reach communities in the languages and formats they actually use. If workers, residents, and communities do not receive timely information, misinformation fills the gap.

The third breakdown was narrative control. Dubai remained exposed to external narratives from global media, social platforms, and unofficial commentary. Without a coordinated local media community, the city's story can be shaped by others during instability.

The fourth breakdown was contingency planning. Businesses and creators lacked practical crisis playbooks. They needed guidance on what to do during attacks, power disruption, transport disruption, event cancellation, supply chain delays, or public fear.

Clustered Challenges

Cluster	What the crisis exposed	Why it matters
Crisis communication	Unclear early communication, limited guidance for businesses and residents, and inconsistent information flow.	Clear information reduces panic, supports business continuity, and protects trust.
Multilingual reach	Information did not consistently reach all communities, especially laborers and non-English/non-Arabic audiences.	Dubai's resilience depends on all communities receiving timely trusted guidance.
Narrative resilience	External narratives shaped perceptions of Dubai during instability.	Reputation affects tourism, investment, advertising, events, and global confidence.
Contingency readiness	Businesses lacked practical playbooks and war-gaming scenarios.	Preparedness reduces decision delays and improves continuity.
Creator and platform dependency	Trusted local creators were not fully organized into a crisis communication infrastructure.	Creators can carry messages with credibility if mobilized before crisis occurs.

How Might We Questions

Challenge area	How Might We question	Why this matters for resilience
Multilingual communication	How might we build a trusted multilingual crisis communication ecosystem that reaches all major communities in Dubai?	A city with a multinational workforce needs communication systems beyond Arabic and English.
Trusted messengers	How might we activate resident creators and community ambassadors to communicate verified information during crisis?	People trust voices they recognize; community messengers can reduce panic and misinformation.
Narrative control	How might we strengthen local publishing capacity so Dubai is not dependent on external narratives?	Local media voices help protect confidence when global narratives become negative.
Preparedness	How might we create emergency media playbooks for businesses, creators, and communities?	Pre-defined protocols reduce confusion during future shocks.
Confidence restoration	How might we use digital media to restore investor, tourism, and consumer confidence after geopolitical disruption?	Digital storytelling can accelerate recovery if coordinated and credible.

Detailed Strategic Solutions

1. Dubai Multilingual Crisis Media Network

What it is. Dubai needs a standing multilingual crisis communication network that can distribute verified information quickly to the city's major communities. The network should include official channels, resident creators, community publishers, employer communication systems, and trusted community representatives.

How it would work in Dubai. The network would maintain pre-approved message templates, translation workflows, verified WhatsApp/social/community channels, rumor-response protocols, and a directory of trusted voices. During crisis, it would distribute clear guidance on safety, business continuity, travel, services, and government instructions.

Realism check. This is realistic because Dubai already has strong media, government communication, and community networks. The main requirement is pre-crisis organization, not new infrastructure from scratch.

Benchmark logic. Crisis communication benchmarks show that trusted local and multilingual communication is essential in diverse cities. The practical lesson is to pre-build networks before misinformation spreads.

Practical phasing. Begin with the top language communities and priority worker groups; pilot verified message distribution; expand to a city-wide crisis media network.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Government of Dubai Media Office; emergency authorities; community organizations; employers; creator agencies; multilingual publishers.	1. Dubai Multilingual Crisis Media Network	Very High	Medium

2. Resident Creator Ambassador Program

What it is. A formal resident creator ambassador program would identify credible creators and community figures who can communicate Dubai's messages during crisis in native languages and culturally relevant formats.

How it would work in Dubai. Ambassadors would receive briefings, verified information kits, crisis communication training, and escalation channels. They would not simply repeat official messages; they would contextualize information for their communities, explain what it means, and humanize Dubai's stability and resilience.

Realism check. This is highly realistic and can begin quickly. Dubai already has thousands of creators and community voices. The key is selection, trust, training, and coordination.

Benchmark logic. Public communication during crisis often works best when official information is reinforced by trusted community intermediaries. For Dubai, this is especially important because of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Practical phasing. Create an initial roster of 50 to 100 trusted voices; provide crisis communication training; activate in simulations and real incidents.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Government of Dubai Media Office; creator agencies; community organizations; social platforms; business councils.	2. Resident Creator Ambassador Program	High	Low to Medium

3. Dubai Media Crisis Playbook and War-Gaming Program

What it is. A media crisis playbook should define how Dubai's media ecosystem responds to geopolitical disruption, misinformation, infrastructure disruption, airspace closure, supply chain interruption, or sudden reputational attacks.

How it would work in Dubai. The playbook would include communication protocols, roles and responsibilities, escalation workflows, platform coordination, rumor response, crisis FAQs, business continuity guidance, and templates for sector-specific messaging. Annual war-gaming exercises would test scenarios before the next crisis occurs.

Realism check. This is realistic if scoped as a practical operating manual rather than an overly complex emergency doctrine. Dubai already has strong institutional capacity; the media ecosystem needs a dedicated layer of preparedness.

Benchmark logic. Simulation-based planning is widely used in security, aviation, energy, and crisis management. Applying it to media resilience would make Dubai more prepared than many competing creative hubs.

Practical phasing. Draft the first playbook within six months; conduct a tabletop exercise; revise annually based on lessons learned.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; The Executive Council; Government of Dubai Media Office; emergency management authorities; DMI business councils.	3. Dubai Media Crisis Playbook and War-Gaming Program	Very High	High

4. Dubai Local Media Community Platform

What it is. Dubai needs a structured local media community that brings together expat creators, resident publishers, multilingual storytellers, and community-based content producers. This should not be a single government website; it should be a coordinated network of trusted local publishing voices.

How it would work in Dubai. During normal periods, the platform would promote Dubai success stories, business resilience, cultural integration, and community confidence. During crisis, it would distribute verified information, counter rumors, and amplify authentic local narratives across languages and communities.

Realism check. This is realistic as a network model. A centralized platform alone may feel institutional; a coordinated creator-publisher ecosystem is more credible and scalable.

Benchmark logic. Cities increasingly rely on distributed digital communities for civic trust. Dubai's multinational population makes this model especially relevant.

Practical phasing. Start with a curated network of multilingual creators and publishers; build editorial standards; connect to crisis communication protocols.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Government of Dubai Media Office; creator agencies; community publishers; private platforms; brand partners.	4. Dubai Local Media Community Platform	High	Medium

5. Regional Upfronts and Media Confidence Forum

What it is. A Dubai-based regional upfronts event would bring broadcasters, publishers, platforms, agencies, buyers, and brands together to present content plans, advertising inventory, audience insights, and market confidence signals after disruption.

How it would work in Dubai. The event would help restore advertising and media-market confidence by showing that the ecosystem remains active, organized, and investable. It would also create a recurring business platform for the regional media economy.

Realism check. This is realistic because Dubai has strong convening power and event infrastructure. It can begin as a focused B2B forum and expand into a regional media market.

Benchmark logic. Upfronts are widely used in mature advertising markets to align advertisers and content owners before buying cycles. Dubai can adapt the model for regional confidence-building and business recovery.

Practical phasing. Launch a pilot after the next major content buying cycle; combine with audience data, crisis recovery insights, and platform presentations.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; broadcasters; publishers; agencies; media buying groups; platforms; Dubai Chambers; and possibly DICM.	5. Regional Upfronts and Media Confidence Forum	High	Medium

6. Local Content and Platform Investment Framework

What it is. A recurring idea was that global streaming and digital platforms benefiting from UAE audiences should contribute to the local production and creator ecosystem. This could be explored through partnership-first mechanisms rather than immediate hard regulation.

How it would work in Dubai. The framework could encourage platforms to fund local labs, training programs, commissions, creator grants, or co-development initiatives. A regulatory approach may be complex, so the first phase should prioritize voluntary commitments, co-funded programs, and public recognition for platform investment.

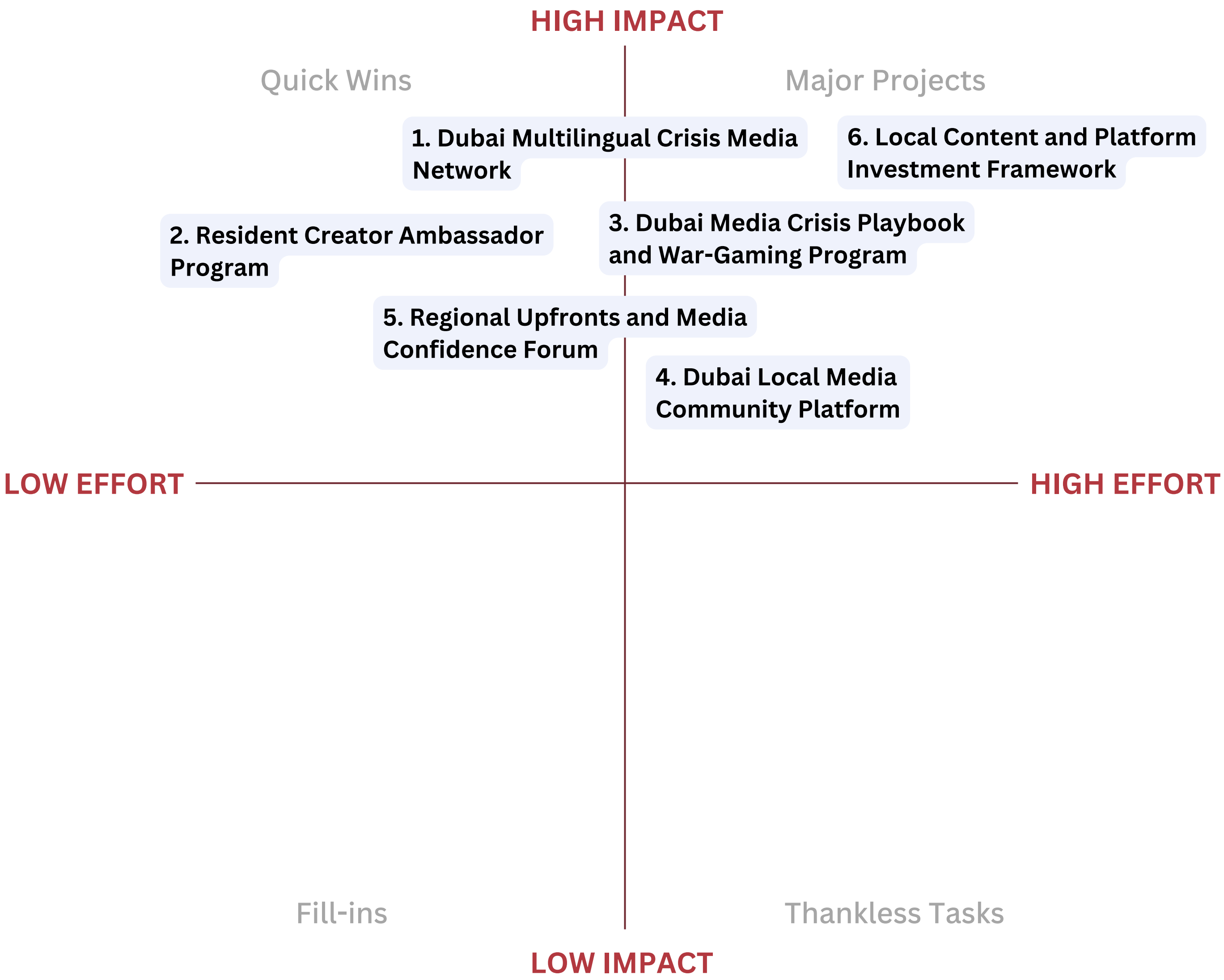
Realism check. This is realistic if phased carefully. Mandatory revenue contributions would require federal-level legal assessment; voluntary local content investment partnerships are more immediately achievable.

Benchmark logic. Several markets use platform investment obligations or negotiated local content commitments. Dubai can begin with partnership models before considering formal requirements.

Practical phasing. Begin with platform roundtables; secure voluntary commitments; evaluate legal feasibility for longer-term frameworks.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; global streaming platforms; digital platforms; broadcasters; production companies.	6. Local Content and Platform Investment Framework	High	High

Impact vs Effort Matrix: Digital Media



3. Film & Production

Pre-War Industry Landscape

Before the conflict, Dubai's production ecosystem was widely recognized for its strong physical foundations. The city offered safety, accessibility, diverse locations, strong hospitality infrastructure, international connectivity, multicultural crew, and an attractive lifestyle for creative professionals. Production companies saw Dubai as dynamic, ambitious, promising, adaptive, and capable of becoming a larger global production hub.

However, the sector also carried longstanding structural issues. These included lack of rebates, fragmented permits, inconsistent location access, delayed payments, weak procurement understanding, limited production financing, lack of film insurance, workforce standardization gaps, expensive equipment, underdeveloped original storytelling, and the absence of a formal producers' voice. The crisis exposed these issues with force.

Crisis Impact

The war affected film and production more directly than most sectors because production depends on physical movement, client confidence, crew travel, insurance, locations, permits, equipment, and cashflow. When regional security concerns increased, productions faced cancellations, postponements, travel issues, insurance difficulties, client indecision, and cost inflation.

International productions became more sensitive to risk. Local production vendors faced cashflow stress when clients delayed payments or reduced budgets. Freelancers and crews became more vulnerable because project-based work can disappear quickly during instability. The war also increased the importance of communication from government entities: when rules, permits, script approvals, or procedure changes are unclear, uncertainty becomes a commercial risk.

Positives Identified

The sector's positive baseline is strong. Industry stakeholders identified world-class crew, passion, teamwork, trust networks, international expertise, government accessibility, diverse locations, geographic centrality, safety, open culture, multicultural talent, agility, transparency, and strong physical infrastructure. These strengths are real and should be protected.

The strongest opportunity is the combination of Dubai's location diversity, government proximity, global credibility, and international lifestyle appeal. If combined with stronger financing, representation, and operational simplicity, these strengths could position Dubai as both a filming destination and a center for original content and IP development.

What Broke Down

Financial friction was one of the clearest breakdowns. Production companies highlighted delayed payments, unfavourable client expectations, budget cuts, lack of financial support for local vendors, insurance barriers, late or non-payment, and weak procurement understanding of how production cashflow works. Production is not a commodity service. It requires upfront commitments, crew payments, location deposits, equipment bookings, and scheduling certainty. When procurement treats it like a standard low-cost service, the ecosystem becomes fragile.

Permits and approvals were another major breakdown. The sector described delays, understaffing, unclear procedures, fragmented script approvals, lack of clarity on rule changes, opaque content guidelines, and separate requirements across emirates and entities. During crisis, these issues become more damaging because producers need certainty quickly.

Specialized production services, such as drone filming, can become commercially unviable during crisis periods when airspace restrictions or tightened approvals prevent operators from using equipment they had already invested in. For freelancers and companies that depend on aerial filming, this turned a regulatory restriction into an immediate income loss.

Location access and semi-government coordination also created friction. Producers need to work with master developers, municipalities, semi-government entities, and location owners. Without standard contracts, transparent fees, and clear response times, filming access becomes unpredictable.

Talent and crew sustainability emerged as a major vulnerability. Local talent left to find work elsewhere, crew rates lacked standardization, freelancers lacked protection, and the sector lacked guild-like structures or formal representation. The crisis reinforced the need to professionalize the workforce.

The sector also acknowledged a storytelling gap. Dubai has been used as a location, but there is still insufficient Dubai-originated film, series, and original IP. Future-proofing requires developing stories, writers, producers, and creative confidence—not only servicing external productions.

Clustered Challenges

Cluster	What the crisis exposed	Why it matters
Government support and incentives	No rebate, weak grants, limited local vendor support, insurance gaps, and lack of crisis incentives.	Production decisions are highly cost-sensitive; without support Dubai loses competitiveness.
Permits and approvals	Fragmented permits, two-body script approvals, opaque content guidelines, slow rule changes, and unclear procedures.	Operational uncertainty discourages international productions and creates local delays.
Locations and master developers	Semi-government fees, unclear location costs,inconsistent access, and weak master-builder interface.	Locations are central to production; unpredictability can derail shoots.
Payments and procurement	Delayed payments, poor procurement understanding, lack of rate cards, and freelancer exposure.	Cashflow is survival infrastructure for production companies and crews.
Talent and crew standards	Talent leaving, no guilds, inconsistent rates, limited training, and weak career pathways.	A resilient production ecosystem needs stable, professional, and fairly treated crews.
Storytelling and visibility	Absence of Dubai productions, limited script development,weak local IP, and need for festivals/markets.	Long-term competitiveness depends on content creation,not only service production.

How Might We Questions

Challenge area	How Might We question	Why this matters for resilience
Single-window operations	How might we create one transparent producer-facing system for permits, script approvals, locations, and fees?	A single interface reduces confusion and increases confidence during normal and crisis periods.
Financial resilience	How might we protect production companies, freelancers, and vendors from cashflow collapse during disruption?	Without payment and financing support, production capacity disappears quickly.
Industry voice	How might we give producers a recognized advisory role in policy and crisis-response decisions?	A formal industry voice improves policy design and communication.
Competitiveness	How might we introduce incentives, rebates, insurance, and co-production tools that keep Dubai competitive?	Producers compare destinations by cost, risk, speed, and support.
Professional standards	How might we professionalize crew categories, rates, contracts, and talent pathways?	Professional standards protect workers and improve production quality.
Storytelling	How might we position Dubai as a creator of original stories and IP, not only a filming location?	Original content creates cultural value, exports, and long-term industry identity.

Detailed Strategic Solutions

1. One-Stop Producer Platform

What it is. Dubai should establish a single producer-facing digital platform that integrates permits, location access, script approvals, fee transparency, document submission, and production guidance. The goal is not only digitization; it is operational predictability.

How it would work in Dubai. Producers should upload documents once, see all required approvals, track timelines, receive alerts on rule changes, access location costs, and manage script approvals through one workflow. Even where multiple authorities remain involved behind the scenes, the producer experience should be single-window.

Realism check. This is high effort but realistic because Dubai already has advanced digital government infrastructure. The main challenge is institutional integration and data/process alignment across entities.

Benchmark logic. Film-friendly jurisdictions often compete through fast, clear, single-window production facilitation. The best lesson for Dubai is to simplify the user experience even if multiple authorities remain involved internally.

Practical phasing. Begin with permits and location information; add script approvals; then integrate fees, incentives, insurance guidance, and crisis updates.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Dubai Media Regulatory Office; NMA or relevant federal media authority; DFGC; Dubai Municipality; DET; master developers; free zones.	1. One-Stop Producer Platform	Very High	High

2. Dubai Producers Association and Advisory Seat

What it is. A formal producers association would give production companies a recognized voice in ecosystem development. It should include a representative seat or formal advisory relationship with the relevant film and production authorities.

How it would work in Dubai. The association would consult on permits, payment practices, incentives, crisis response, location issues, crew standards, procurement problems, and industry communications. During crisis, it would serve as a rapid feedback mechanism between government and production companies.

Realism check. This is realistic if producers themselves lead membership and governance, while government recognizes the association as a formal advisory counterpart. The risk is legitimacy; membership criteria must ensure broad representation rather than dominance by a few companies.

Benchmark logic. Mature production ecosystems often have producer guilds, associations, or industry councils that provide policy input and professional standards. Dubai can create a locally appropriate version without importing a union model wholesale.

Practical phasing. Form a founding committee of producers; define membership tiers; secure advisory recognition; hold quarterly government-industry meetings.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; Production companies; potentially an independent foundation or registered industry body.	2. Dubai Producers Association and Advisory Seat	High	Medium

3. Production Payment Code and Procurement Reform

What it is. A Production Payment Code should establish fair payment expectations, procurement education, standard contract clauses, upfront payment norms, escalation mechanisms, and rate guidance for production services.

How it would work in Dubai. The code would help clients and procurement teams understand that production requires upfront commitments for crew, equipment, locations, transport, insurance, and permits. It would discourage auction-style procurement that undermines quality and sustainability.

Realism check. This is realistic if introduced first as a code of practice rather than immediate hard law. It can later evolve into stronger enforcement tools if voluntary adoption fails.

Benchmark logic. Late-payment codes and creative industry payment standards exist in several markets. Dubai can adapt the concept to production cashflow realities while respecting local commercial law.

Practical phasing. Publish a voluntary code; train procurement teams; create standard clauses; monitor late-payment patterns; assess legal escalation options.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; Dubai Chambers; legal authorities; procurement bodies; producers association; major clients and agencies.	3. Production Payment Code and Procurement Reform	High	Medium

4. Production Incentive and Crisis Support Framework

What it is. Dubai should develop an incentive framework that combines long-term competitiveness tools with crisis support mechanisms. This could include rebates, grants, local vendor support, insurance facilitation, rent relief during crisis, fee waivers, and internship-linked subsidies. The framework should also account for specialized production services that are disrupted by crisis-related restrictions, e.g. drone operators.

How it would work in Dubai. The framework should reward behavior that builds Dubai's ecosystem: local hiring, use of local vendors, training interns, post-production spend, local storytelling, and international promotion of Dubai. During crisis, temporary support could help productions continue rather than cancel.

Realism check. This is realistic only if phased. A full incentive requires budget allocation and economic modeling. Crisis support tools and fee waivers can be piloted earlier while the broader incentive model is designed.

Benchmark logic. Production incentives and film funds are now standard competitive tools in many film hubs. Dubai does not need to copy another jurisdiction exactly; it should design a targeted system tied to local ecosystem value.

Practical phasing. Start with fee waivers and local vendor grants; model rebate economics; pilot incentives for selected productions; expand based on ROI and sector impact.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; Government of Dubai Media Office; creator agencies; community publishers; private platforms; brand partners.	4. Dubai Local Media Community Platform	High	Medium

5. Location Access and Master Developer Framework

What it is. A standardized framework is needed for filming in locations controlled by master developers and semi-government entities. Producers need predictable fees, standard contracts, response timelines, and clear escalation channels.

How it would work in Dubai. The framework would create approved location contract templates, published fee ranges, location contacts, and a central interface through the producer platform. It would reduce negotiation uncertainty and prevent shoots from collapsing due to unclear requirements.

Realism check. This is realistic because it can begin with a small group of priority locations and developers. It does not require a total system overhaul before benefits appear.

Benchmark logic. Location-friendly production hubs often maintain searchable location databases and standardized access procedures. Dubai can extend this to master developer coordination.

Practical phasing. Identify top filming locations; negotiate template contracts; publish location database; integrate requests into one-stop platform.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; DET; Dubai Municipality; master developers; semi-government entities.	5. Location Access and Master Developer Framework	High	Low to Medium

6. Production Insurance and Risk Facilitation Desk

What it is. The war exposed the difficulty of obtaining insurance for productions during regional instability. A production insurance facilitation desk would help producers understand available coverage, connect with insurers, and structure risk mitigation plans.

How it would work in Dubai. The desk would not need to become an insurer. It could coordinate with brokers, insurers, banks, and government entities to clarify requirements, advise on crisis coverage, and identify gaps where government-backed guarantees may be needed for strategic productions.

Realism check. This is realistic as a facilitation service first. A government-backed guarantee scheme would require more study, but information and coordination can begin immediately.

Benchmark logic. Film commissions in competitive markets often help productions understand local insurance, bonding, safety, and risk requirements. Dubai can formalize this support as part of its production services.
Practical phasing. Start with insurance guidance notes; create insurer directory; host producer-insurer roundtables; assess need for a crisis guarantee product.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; insurance brokers; insurers; banks; production companies.	6. Production Insurance and Risk Facilitation Desk	High	Medium

7. Film Schools, Talent Labs, and Crew Standards Framework

What it is. Dubai needs a structured talent framework that includes film schools, short courses, apprenticeships, crew classification, rate benchmarks, mentorship, and mandatory internship pathways where appropriate.

How it would work in Dubai. The framework should support Emirati talent, long-term residents, freelancers, technical crew, writers, producers, editors, and production managers. It should connect training directly to active productions so learning becomes practical rather than theoretical.

Realism check. A full film school is high effort, but short courses, labs, internships, and crew classification can begin quickly. A phased model is more realistic than launching a large institution immediately.

Benchmark logic. Successful production ecosystems invest in both formal training and on-set apprenticeships. Dubai can combine international partnerships with local production placements.

Practical phasing. Begin with crew classification and short labs; pilot paid internships; develop partnerships with international film schools; evaluate a Dubai Film Academy model.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; Ministry of Education or KHDA; universities; production companies; producers association; private training providersDubai Media Council; DFGC; Ministry of Education or KHDA; universities; production companies; producers association; private training providers	7. Film Schools, Talent Labs, and Crew Standards Framework	Very High	High

8. Dubai Film Festival, Market, and Storytelling Development Program

What it is. Dubai needs stronger market visibility and original storytelling infrastructure. A film festival and market should not be only an event; it should become a business platform connecting producers, writers, buyers, streamers, distributors, investors, and students.

How it would work in Dubai. The program should include script labs, Emirati and Dubai story initiatives, pitch forums, development grants, student showcases, local IP labs, and international buyer meetings. It should help Dubai move from production service destination to storytelling and IP hub.

Realism check. This is realistic if designed as a scaled industry market first rather than immediately trying to recreate a large global festival. A focused market can grow over time.

Benchmark logic. Festivals and markets in successful film ecosystems often combine cultural visibility with deal-making and talent development. Dubai should emphasize industry outcomes, not only red-carpet visibility.

Practical phasing. Launch a compact film market and script lab; add local storytelling grants; scale into a larger festival-market model once industry participation is stable.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; DET; cultural entities; broadcasters; streaming platforms; universities; private sponsors.	8. Dubai Film Festival, Market, and Storytelling Development Program	High	Medium to High

9. Co-Production Treaty and GCC Collaboration Track

What it is. International co-production treaties and GCC collaboration frameworks would allow Dubai-based producers to access international financing, soft money, markets, and creative partnerships. This directly responds to the need for financing beyond local budgets.

How it would work in Dubai. The track would assess target countries, identify legal requirements, coordinate with foreign ministries, and prioritize partnerships that unlock financing and distribution. A GCC framework could also improve regional competitiveness by allowing productions to move across Gulf locations with clearer support.

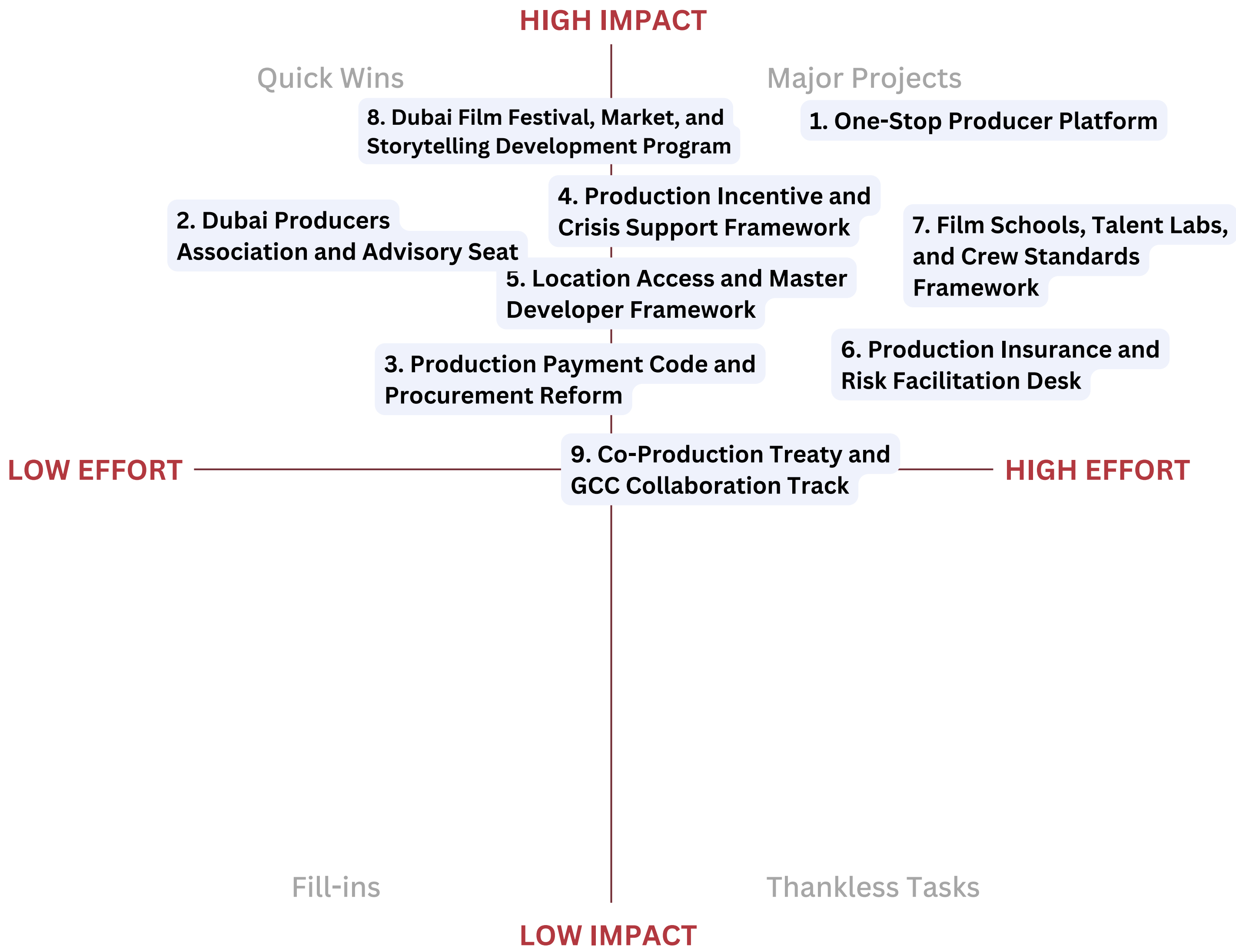
Realism check. This is realistic but long-term because treaties require government-to-government negotiation. Shorter-term memoranda of cooperation and market partnerships can begin earlier.

Benchmark logic. Co-production treaties are a common tool for enabling international film finance. Dubai can pursue a phased approach starting with priority markets and non-binding cooperation agreements.

Practical phasing. Start with feasibility study; identify top partner markets; sign cooperation MOUs; pursue formal treaties where strategic value is strongest.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; MOFA; DFGC; international film bodies; GCC partners	9. Co-Production Treaty and GCC Collaboration Track	High	High

Impact vs Effort Matrix: Film & Production



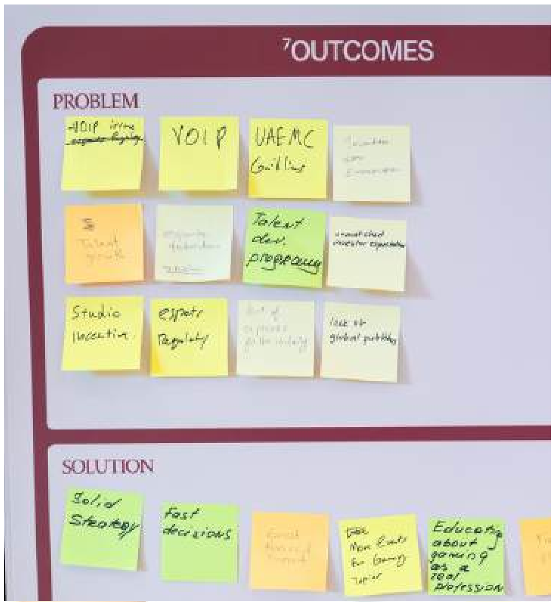
4. Gaming

Pre-War Industry Landscape

Before the conflict, Dubai's gaming ecosystem was emerging as a promising future industry. The sector was supported by youth engagement, esports interest, creators, streamers, strong infrastructure, startup energy, and Dubai's ability to attract international companies and talent. Gaming also aligned naturally with the city's broader digital economy ambitions.

Yet the ecosystem remained early-stage. It faced challenges around specialized talent, internships, university pathways, publisher attraction, gaming regulation, esports governance, funding mechanisms, VOIP/Discord access, indie developer support, and centralized ecosystem navigation. Regional competition from large-scale gaming investments created urgency even before the war.

Crisis Impact



The war reinforced the strategic value of digital industries that can continue operating when physical mobility is disrupted. Unlike film or experiential advertising, gaming is less dependent on travel, locations, and physical production. This makes it a potential resilience sector for Dubai.

However, the crisis also showed that digital resilience is not automatic. Gaming companies still need investor confidence, regulatory clarity, communication tools, talent, publishing access, and cost competitiveness. A studio can operate digitally, but it will not choose Dubai as a base unless the ecosystem is clear, affordable, connected, and internationally competitive.

Positives Identified

The gaming sector was described as maturing, growing, resilient, community-driven, and full of strategic potential. Industry stakeholders saw Dubai as infrastructure-ready, globally connected, collaborative, and attractive to international professionals. The city's quality of life, event infrastructure, digital connectivity, and regional position were viewed as important strengths.

The sector also benefits from alignment with youth culture and future media consumption. Gaming connects with esports, streaming, creator economies, digital communities, AI, virtual production, IP development, and interactive storytelling. It is not only an entertainment sector; it is a future media infrastructure sector.

What Broke Down

Talent was the strongest recurring concern. Dubai does not yet have enough structured pathways for game development, esports operations, publishing, narrative design, animation, monetization, community management, or gaming entrepreneurship. Without talent, incentives alone cannot build a sustainable ecosystem.

Funding and incentives were also major issues. Gaming companies need patient capital because game development can take time before revenue appears. Startups require rent support, salary support, prototype grants, fund matching, low-interest financing, and publishing support. Without these mechanisms, companies may relocate to better-supported ecosystems.

Access and communication also broke down. The sector needs more gaming events, clearer direction from government, better communication between authorities and industry, and practical solutions for VOIP and Discord-style communication tools that are essential for esports, community management, remote collaboration, and competitive play.

Ecosystem navigation remains fragmented. Companies need a centralized portal for registration, content approval, publishing support, visas, funding, events, and regulation. Indie developers also need special attention because they can create local IP with lower overheads but often lack marketing and publishing support.

Clustered Challenges

Cluster	What the crisis exposed	Why it matters
Talent	Limited university pathways, internships, game development courses, publishing expertise, and career recognition.	Gaming ecosystems cannot scale without specialized talent across creative, technical, and commercial roles.
Incentives	High setup costs, limited subsidies, lack of fund matching, and weak startup financing	Regional competitors are investing heavily; Dubai must be cost-competitive
Access	Need for more gaming events, better government-industry communication, VOIP/Discord enablement, and publisher access.	Gaming communities and companies depend on connectivity, visibility, and communication
Ecosystem	Fragmented regulation, lack of central portal, content approval uncertainty, weak indie support	Operational clarity attracts publishers, studios, investors, and developers.
Competitiveness	Dubai is attractive but risks losing companies to markets with stronger incentives and clearer strategies.	The sector's final concern is not interest; it is whether Dubai can become competitive fast enough

How Might We Questions

Challenge area	How Might We question	Why this matters for resilience
Competitiveness	How might we make Dubai a competitive gaming hub during geopolitical uncertainty and regional investment competition?	Gaming can be resilient, but only if Dubai offers clarity, cost competitiveness, and support.
Talent	How might we build a sustainable gaming talent pipeline through universities, internships, and industry placements?	Talent is the foundation of studios, esports, publishing, and local IP creation.
Incentives	How might we reduce the cost and risk of establishing gaming companies in Dubai?	Subsidies and financing can influence where studios choose to locate.
Regulation	How might we create clearer, faster, and more transparent regulation for gaming companies and publishers?	Regulatory clarity improves investor and publisher confidence.
Access	How might we improve access to publishers, events, communication tools, and gaming communities?	Ecosystem access turns isolated startups into scalable companies.
Indie support	How might we help indie developers create Dubai-originated gaming IP?	Local IP gives Dubai long-term value beyond hosting foreign companies.

Detailed Strategic Solutions

1. Gaming Talent and Internship Placement Program

What it is. A structured gaming talent program should connect university students and emerging professionals with local studios, international placements, esports organizations, publishers, and technology companies.

How it would work in Dubai. The program would include subsidized internships, game jams, mentorship, studio placements, curriculum input from industry, and international exchange opportunities. Participating companies could receive limited subsidies in exchange for training local or resident talent.

Realism check. This is realistic because it can start as a pilot with a small number of universities and companies. The subsidy model should be modest and tied to training outcomes.

Benchmark logic. Gaming ecosystems such as those in Korea, Canada, and Saudi Arabia invest in education and training infrastructure. Dubai can adapt the model through industry placements rather than building everything from scratch immediately.

Practical phasing. Launch a pilot with 30 to 50 placements; add university course partnerships; expand into a larger gaming talent pipeline.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; universities; KHDA or education authorities; gaming companies; free zones; international studio partners.	1. Gaming Talent and Internship Placement Program	High	Medium

2. Gaming Company Subsidy and Cost-Relief Program

What it is. A cost-relief program would support new and growing game development companies through rent relief, salary support, setup subsidies, and tiered incentives based on company size, local hiring, and ecosystem contribution.

How it would work in Dubai. The program should be designed to attract both international studios and local startups. It should reward companies that employ locally, train interns, develop IP in Dubai, participate in events, and contribute to the local ecosystem.

Realism check. This is realistic if focused and tiered. It should not subsidize every company equally. Support should be tied to measurable contribution such as jobs, training, IP creation, or regional headquarters activity.

Benchmark logic. Regional competitors are using large-scale gaming investments and incentives. Dubai does not need to match spending one-for-one; it needs targeted incentives aligned with its strengths and cost structure.

Practical phasing. Start with a free-zone pilot; offer rent relief for qualified studios; add salary support for companies that hire and train local talent.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; free zones; economic development entities; investment authorities; private gaming partners	2. Gaming Company Subsidy and Cost-Relief Program	Very High	High

3. Gaming Fund-Matching and Low-Interest Loan Scheme

What it is. Gaming startups need patient capital. A fund-matching scheme would reduce investor risk by matching qualified private investment into promising Dubai-based gaming projects. Low-interest loans could support production milestones, publishing preparation, localization, and market expansion.

How it would work in Dubai. The scheme should be professionally managed and milestone-based. It should not fund ideas without commercial plans. Applicants should show prototypes, teams, budgets, market strategy, and IP ownership structures.

Realism check. This is high effort but realistic if scoped as a pilot fund rather than a large open-ended program. Risk can be managed through co-investment, milestones, and expert review panels.

Benchmark logic. Gaming funds in competitive ecosystems often combine public support with private capital to reduce risk and stimulate IP creation. Dubai can apply this selectively to high-potential projects.

Practical phasing. Run a feasibility study; launch a small pilot fund; require private matching; evaluate job creation and IP outcomes.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; investment entities; banks; venture capital firms; free zones; gaming publishers.	3. Gaming Fund-Matching and Low-Interest Loan Scheme	Very High	High

4. Centralized Gaming Portal

What it is. A centralized portal should help gaming companies navigate registration, content approval, publishing support, event approvals, visa information, funding opportunities, age rating, and regulatory guidance.

How it would work in Dubai. The portal would reduce friction for startups, publishers, esports organizers, and developers. It should include clear guidelines, application tracking, FAQs, contact points, and downloadable templates.

Realism check. This is realistic because it can begin as an information and application guide before becoming a fully integrated transaction platform.

Benchmark logic. Investor-friendly ecosystems reduce uncertainty by making rules visible and navigation simple. A portal is a practical first step toward gaming governance maturity.

Practical phasing. Start with a comprehensive information portal; add application tracking; integrate funding and content approval workflows later.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; media regulators; free zones; gaming ecosystem partners; technology providers.	4. Centralized Gaming Portal	High	Medium to High

5. VOIP, Discord, and Esports Communications Framework

What it is. Real-time voice communication platforms such as Discord and VOIP tools are essential to gaming, esports, streaming, remote development, and community management. Restrictions or uncertainty around these tools can reduce Dubai's attractiveness as a gaming hub.

How it would work in Dubai. A controlled framework could explore licensed, event-specific, sector-specific, or sandboxed access for esports teams, registered gaming companies, and approved events. The objective is to support industry functionality while respecting telecommunications and security requirements.

Realism check. This requires regulatory coordination, but a limited sandbox is more realistic than blanket liberalization. It can begin with registered esports events and licensed companies.

Benchmark logic. Competitive gaming ecosystems depend on real-time voice tools. Dubai can create a controlled model that supports industry needs while maintaining regulatory oversight.

Practical phasing. Pilot at approved esports events; expand to registered gaming companies; evaluate compliance and usage data.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; TDRA; telecom providers; esports organizations; gaming companies; regulators	5. VOIP, Discord, and Esports Communications Framework	High	Medium

6. Indie Developer Marketing and Publishing Support

What it is. Indie developers can create original IP with lower overheads, but they often lack publishing, marketing, localization, and distribution support. A targeted program would help small teams reach global storefronts, publishers, festivals, and investors.

How it would work in Dubai. Support could include marketing grants, storefront guidance, pitch preparation, localization assistance, legal/IP advice, and participation in international gaming events. The program should prioritize projects with Dubai or UAE-originated IP and commercial potential.

Realism check. This is realistic and relatively affordable compared with major infrastructure projects. It directly supports local IP creation and grassroots innovation.

Benchmark logic. Many gaming ecosystems support indie developers because small studios can generate high cultural and commercial impact. Dubai can use this approach to build original gaming identity.

Practical phasing. Launch annual indie showcase; provide marketing micro-grants; connect winners to publishers and international events.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; DFGC; free zones; gaming publishers; platforms; accelerators; private marketing partners.	6. Indie Developer Marketing and Publishing Support	High	Medium

7. Esports Governance and Event Support Framework

What it is. Dubai has strong event infrastructure, but esports requires clear rules around tournament hosting, prize pools, visas, team participation, sponsorship, streaming rights, and youth participation.

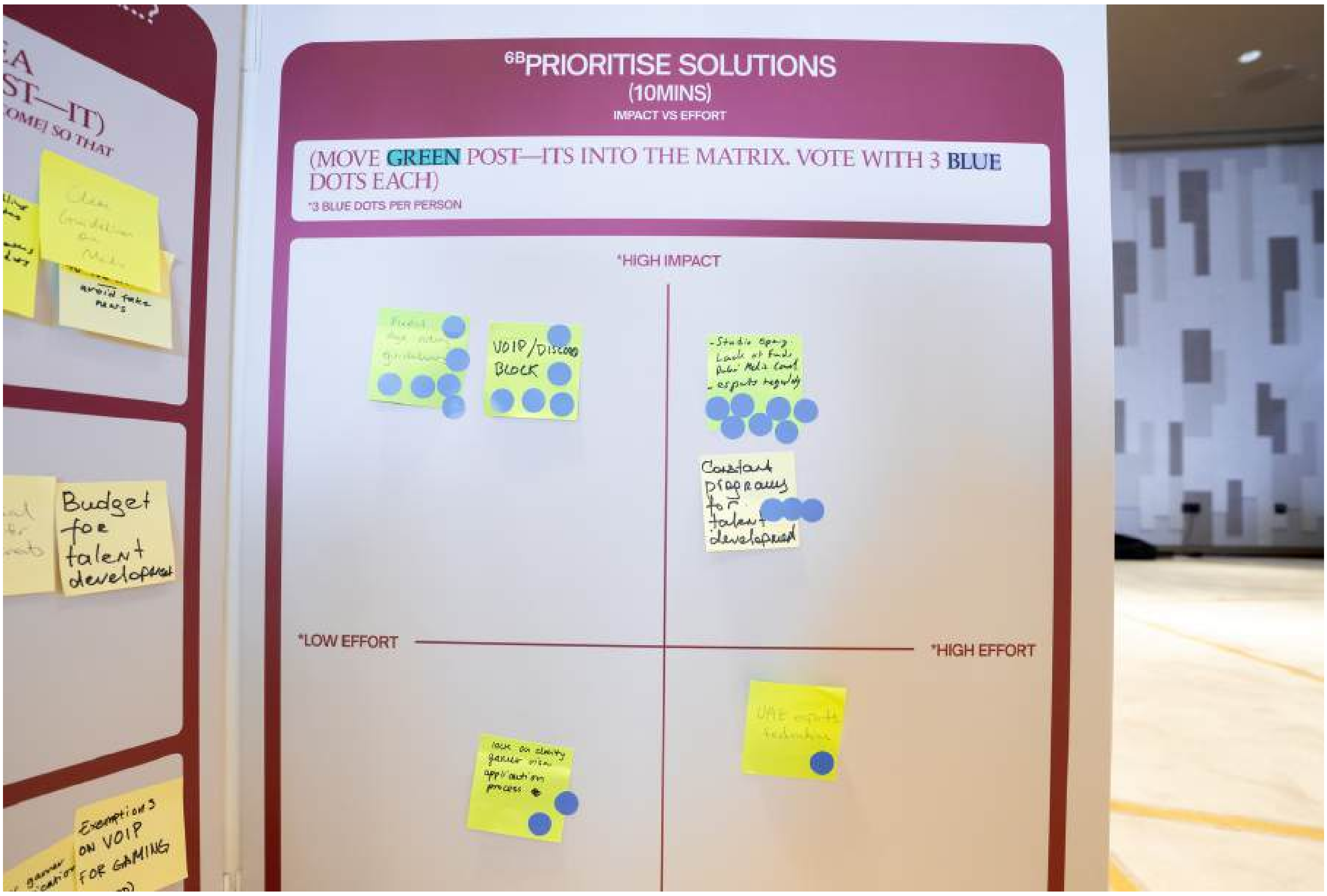
How it would work in Dubai. A governance framework would provide organizers with predictable requirements and enable Dubai to host more consistent events. It should also connect esports with tourism, hospitality, education, and youth development.

Realism check. This is realistic if developed as guidance first and regulation second. Event organizers need clarity more than bureaucracy.

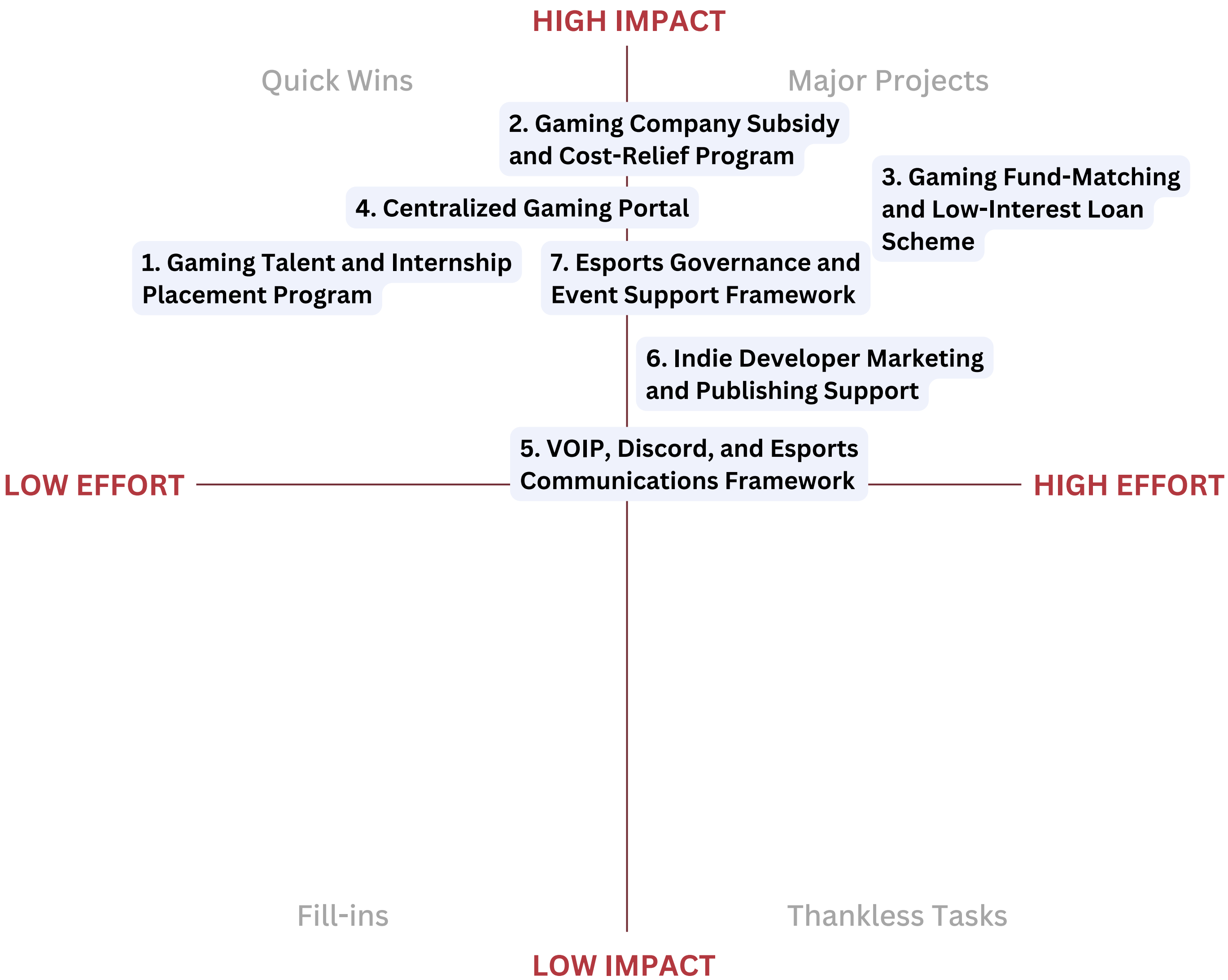
Benchmark logic. Leading esports hubs combine events, publisher relationships, player infrastructure, and tourism. Dubai already has event strengths; governance clarity would unlock more activity.

Practical phasing. Publish esports event guidelines; pilot a supported event calendar; create a publisher engagement program.

Potential custodians	Primary function	Impact	Effort
Dubai Media Council; esports federation or relevant bodies (Dubai Gaming committee); DET; event operators; publishers; venues; education partners.	7. Esports Governance and Event Support Framework	High	Medium to High



Impact vs Effort Matrix: Gaming



Strategic Roadmap for Future-Proofing Dubai's Media Ecosystem

The crisis showed that Dubai's media ecosystem must prepare before disruption occurs. The response should therefore be phased, practical, and realistic. Not every idea should become a major project immediately. Some interventions are quick trust-builders. Others require legislation, funding, inter-agency coordination, or long-term institutional development.

Phase 1: Immediate Stabilization and Trust Building (0-90 Days)

The first phase should focus on measures that reduce uncertainty quickly and show industry that the crisis has produced practical action. These include establishing sector coordination forums, creating communication protocols, issuing clearer guidelines, and launching small pilot programs that address the most visible pain points.

- Create crisis coordination councils for advertising, digital media, production, and gaming under Dubai Media Council leadership.
- Launch a multilingual crisis communication pilot using trusted creators and community channels.
- Begin regular newsletters or bulletins for production rule changes, permit updates, and crisis guidance.

- Publish initial guidance on production permits, script approvals, location access, gaming approvals, and creator communication during crisis.
- Run procurement and payment education sessions for clients and production buyers.
- Start pilot internship programs in advertising, production, and gaming.

Phase 2: System Integration and Financial Resilience (3-12 Months)

The second phase should move from trust-building to structural design. This is where Dubai begins building the systems that prevent future crises from producing the same weaknesses.

- Design the one-stop producer platform and begin with permits, location information, and script approval tracking.
- Develop feasibility models for advertising continuity insurance, production crisis support, and gaming subsidies.
- Create a Dubai Media Crisis Playbook and conduct the first war-gaming simulation.
- Form the Dubai Producers Association or equivalent advisory body with recognized consultation status.
- Launch the Resident Creator Ambassador Program across priority languages and communities.
- Create the first version of the centralized gaming portal and gaming sector guidance hub.

Phase 3: Competitive Ecosystem Building (12-36 Months)

The third phase should focus on competitiveness and long-term future-proofing. These initiatives are more complex but have the greatest potential to transform Dubai's position in the global media economy.

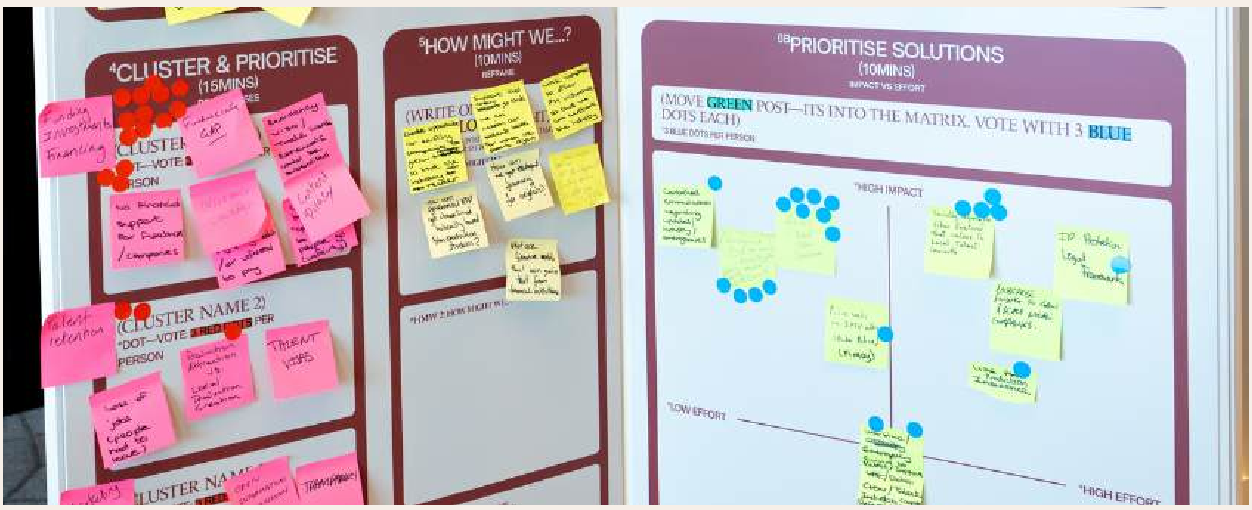
- Launch production incentive tools, local vendor support, and targeted rebate pilots based on economic modeling.
- Create a creator economy and local media investment framework with platform participation.
- Establish a Dubai film market and storytelling development program linked to script labs and local IP funding.
- Develop gaming fund-matching mechanisms and indie publishing support.
- Build long-term academies, labs, and training partnerships for film, gaming, advertising, and digital media.
- Explore co-production treaties, GCC media collaboration frameworks, and international market partnerships.

Recommended Governance Model

A realistic governance model should avoid creating too many new entities. Dubai's advantage is speed and coordination, so the preferred model is a light but formal structure anchored by Dubai Media Council and supported by sector-specific working groups.

The model should include a central Media Resilience Steering Group responsible for crisis readiness, strategic coordination, and implementation oversight. Under it, four sector working groups would focus on Advertising, Digital Media, Film & Production, and Gaming. Each group should include government, private sector, SMEs, freelancers or creators where relevant, free zones, education, and investors.

This model is realistic because it does not require immediate creation of a large new authority. It can begin as a coordination structure and evolve as needs become clearer.



Conclusion

The crisis exposed vulnerabilities across Dubai's media ecosystem, but it also clarified the path forward. The crisis showed that Dubai's challenge is no longer only attracting investment, productions, creators, agencies, and gaming companies. The challenge is becoming one of the world's most resilient media ecosystems during geopolitical uncertainty.

Dubai already has many of the foundations required for that role: infrastructure, safety, global connectivity, public-sector ambition, multicultural talent, and strong international visibility. What is now required is a deeper resilience architecture built around communication, finance, governance, operations, talent, and narrative confidence.

The ideas in this paper are rooted in the lived concerns of industry stakeholders. They are practical because they respond to actual pressure points: delayed payments, unclear permits, weak communication, insurance gaps, supply chain disruption, talent flight, VOIP constraints, lack of incentives, reputation risk, and fragmented coordination.

If Dubai acts on these findings, the crisis can become a strategic turning point. The city can strengthen its media ecosystem not only for recovery from the current disruption, but for long-term global competitiveness. The goal is not simply to return to pre-war conditions. The goal is to build a media economy that is stronger because it has learned from adversity.

> Dubai's media ecosystem is entering a new chapter — one defined by resilience, collaboration, and trusted storytelling. Together, we can build an industry that remains agile and globally credible in times of change.
>
> H.E. Nehal Badri

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