

The logo for FuseBox24 is centered on a solid orange background. It features the text "FuseBox24" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background is decorated with two sets of parallel, diagonal lines in a slightly darker shade of orange. One set of lines runs from the top-left towards the bottom-right, and another set runs from the top-right towards the bottom-left, creating a dynamic, geometric pattern.

# FuseBox24: Project findings



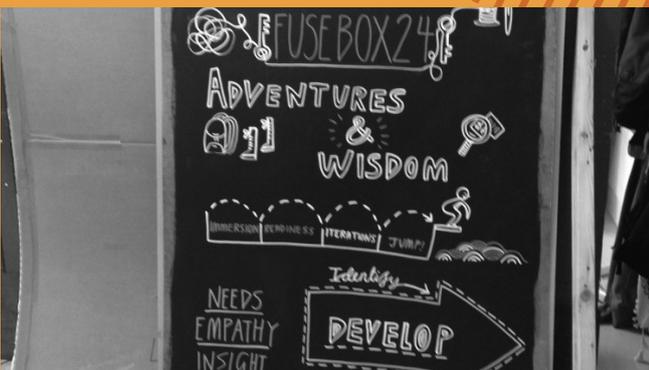
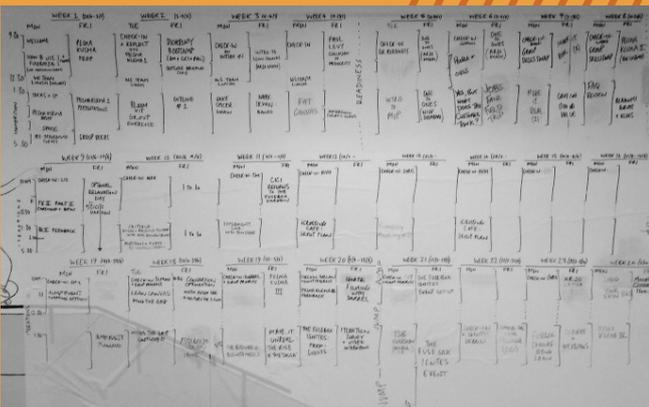
Following on from the findings of the Brighton Fuse report, the FuseBox24 project examined in further detail the conditions necessary to accelerate innovation in the Creative, Digital and IT (CDIT) sector, a strong and growing part of the UK economy.



The FuseBox24 project found that CDIT innovators:

- Trade in ideas and content, but tend not to worry about protecting intellectual property – open innovation and collaborative approaches dominate.
- Often as sole traders or micro-businesses need shared spaces in which to collaborate with others to develop ideas.
- Need support, capability and new tools to enable them to get the most out of collaborations for sustainable innovation.

The FuseBox24 findings demonstrated that arts, humanities and design approaches are highly effective in meeting these needs.



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The businesses and their stories appear on pages 6, 7, 16, 17, 28 and 29.

## Project Team

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### Principal Industry Partner

Phil Jones, Wired Sussex, Brighton

### Research Fellow

James Byford, University of Brighton

### Artist in Practice

CiCi Blumstein

## Contributors



University of Brighton



# Executive summary

This report comes at a time when innovation in the Creative, Digital and IT (CDIT) sector is at the forefront of national agendas. There are new challenges for building 'local innovation communities' as part of the next stage of the development of the UK digital economy, already one of the strongest markets in the world and valued at more than £100 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Current focus includes harnessing big data solutions and creativity in the growth of the Internet of Things (IoT) where data flows connecting people with their physical environments open up possibilities for new services and products. People-centred approaches have been recognised as core to these developments.<sup>2</sup>

The FuseBox24 project, led by University of Brighton in collaboration with Wired Sussex in Brighton, has addressed these areas directly through a radical experimental 24-week business development programme.

The starting point was to challenge conventional wisdom about innovation and how it happens in the ideas-fuelled and fast-moving creative and digital economy as opposed to the industrial economy. This included recognition of the speed of change and potential in this new economy and that sustained and flexible innovation fit to match its possibilities is now vital.

## INNOVATORS NOT INNOVATION

The solution adopted was to focus on innovators rather than innovation. The path taken was informed by the findings of the Brighton Fuse, which emphasised the power of creative arts fusion with technology and business to fuel innovation and accelerated business growth in the new economy.<sup>3</sup>

The two questions driving the project were:

1. How are innovators made in a creative and digital economy?
2. How can the fusion of creative arts and design with business and technology help accelerate their development as innovators and their businesses?

Taking the findings of Brighton Fuse to the next stage, FuseBox24 integrated arts, humanities, design and business perspectives and approaches to produce a new form of business support programme and shape the tools used within it.

This fusion made possible a comprehensive people-centred approach linking innovation directly to the market, customers and audiences, and focused on:

- Innovators as individuals.
- Innovators as collaborators.
- Innovators as customer-oriented.



'Businesses only rarely innovate in isolation, and often draw in information and knowledge from external parties. This happens via skilled people; collaboration with other firms (most often, customers and suppliers); and cooperation with universities and non-university institutes that engage in research and problem-solving. The conduct of innovation is not only becoming more distributed, but it is also displaying signs of increased complementarities: inputs to the innovation process complement one another so that the total is more than the sum of its parts.'<sup>4</sup>

## BUSINESS VALUE AND ARTS, HUMANITIES AND DESIGN

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FuseBox24 has demonstrated the business value of arts, humanities and design by:

- Creating new businesses. Starting with a group of participants with ideas and supporting their development as innovators, resulting in 10 businesses emerging.
- Establishing a radical new model of business support that embeds creative arts and design thinking in innovators to make them robust and sustainable.
- Building an innovation toolkit that can be applied in other contexts.

This report sets out the detail of these three dimensions as well as the main lessons learned. These fall in four main areas:

1. The value of collaboration in accelerating innovator and business development grows for individuals as creative arts and design approaches and tools help them to access and benefit from it.
2. Capacities for innovators to make the most of a collaborative innovative space such as the FuseBox at Wired Sussex are dependent on tools that facilitate different ways of working together.
3. Collaborative work to accelerate the creative transformation of ideas is valued more highly by innovators than protection of their individual ideas.

4. Customer focus is enhanced by a dual learning process which simultaneously concentrates on the inside (innovator development) and the outside (the market).

## RESEARCH-INNOVATION MODEL

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The research context of FuseBox24 ensured that the aims of the programme could be systematically pursued and its success assessed in ways that could inform future policy and business agendas. Survey methodology throughout the different stages of the programme was also drawn on in real time so that the innovators' experiences could report changes to it as it progressed.

A new form of interdisciplinary team engaging research, creative arts and design, business and technology expertise, and a flexible mode of teamwork, have produced a new research-innovation model. The fusion concept – in this context relating to contrasting forms of expertise – draws attention to the importance of the methods we use to bring about innovation as much as the resulting innovations themselves. Interdisciplinary communication and engagement within the team led to new forms of learning about how to work together. This signals the need for new forms of open knowledge-exchange processes across different areas of expertise and orientation as high priority for research and policy to stimulate new kinds of innovation.

# Introduction

## FUSION

The idea of fusion – combining arts, humanities and design skills with technology expertise – as a major driver of the CDIT sector in the British economy is increasingly becoming part of the innovation lexicon.

This report marks the latest stage of research into fusion funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and presents the findings of a one-year FuseBox24 business support programme research project working with start-ups and innovators to understand better what fusion is and how it works.

The report presents the team involved in the project, the design and format of the business support programme, and the combination of creative arts and business tools developed and tested, as well as the basis for their success in developing fused business innovation.

Its evidence, based on the experiences and responses of the participants, has a number of major implications for:

- The ways policy supports innovators at all levels, national to local, including through Innovate UK's national and local Catapults.
- Extending fused approaches into research and education across creative arts and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) in relation to innovation.
- Understanding of place-based drivers of communities of innovation through university, business and local economic

development linkages as well as arts and culture.

The AHRC Brighton Fuse project reported headlines last year that creative skillsets and approaches were major drivers in the CDIT sector in the Brighton area of the south of England with 48% of entrepreneurs being arts, design and humanities graduates.

The research found that two-thirds of CDIT businesses were fused – and that the higher the level of fusion the greater the volume of innovative outcomes. Superfused businesses, where the deepest integration of creative and technology skills occurs, demonstrated most velocity.

While Brighton's CDIT firms grew faster than the local economy and 10 times faster than the British economy, fused businesses grew at more than twice that speed and superfused ones even faster.<sup>5</sup>

## INSIDE FUSION

So how do we get deeper inside the fusion process so that it can be grown and enhanced actively through education, innovation and business practice and policy?

This was the fundamental challenge stimulating this research project, which took the business, research and creative arts partnership approach of Brighton Fuse into new practice-based experimental territory.

This involved a 24-week business support programme based at the FuseBox, home of Wired Sussex in Brighton, and

designed on fusion principles, engaging creative arts and design approaches and techniques.

Participants were recruited on the basis that taking part in the research (surveys and individual reflective video interviews) at key stages through the programme was an integral part of their commitment.

This approach explicitly addressed the collaborative emphasis of the Brighton Fuse findings about accelerated innovation and business growth through superfusion.

While networking and contacts were shown to be central to fusion businesses in general, superfused businesses in particular identified such processes as useful for socialising and feeling part of a community.<sup>6</sup>

The 14 recruited participants reflected an even mix of creative arts, design, STEM and business backgrounds with 60% educated to degree level and 40% to MA/PhD.

The participants and their active interest and engagement with the fusion issues being researched positioned them as key collaborators in the project.

The aim was research on innovators, with innovators, for innovators.

## THE FUSION CHALLENGE

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We are at the beginning of addressing the fusion challenge, as points raised in a recent Creative Skillset report suggest:

‘The discussion and debate around the

concept of fusion and its implications for the creative media industries is hindered by the lack of clear and agreed definitions. Fusion itself means different things to different people and the creative media industries are often defined by differing terms. Just as fundamentally, the “problem” of fostering the skills required to thrive in the midst of fusion has not been defined.’<sup>7</sup>

That report’s findings interestingly mirror Brighton Fuse findings in highlighting digital native businesses, notably computer gaming, as placing fusion centrally to competitive advantage, but also note that disruptive cycles are key to other more traditional businesses, including in content creation.

‘These are struggling to pin down what fusion implies in order to know how best to respond and with which strategic and tactical tools. This inertia is dangerous and the lesson seems to be “just respond”, see how that goes and then respond again. This might be as simple as getting business leaders and the workers they lead out into a bigger, wider world to make connections and share experiences with a different set of peers that aren’t defined by an industry or a sector but by a common curiosity about what fusion might mean.’<sup>8</sup>

Such assessments indicate the need for more systematic work on fusion and tools and techniques that can easily be adopted towards it.

This was the starting point for the FuseBox24 project and the formation of the project team.

## Business outcomes

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The business outcomes from FuseBox24 were in three main areas:

- Proof of concept and taking a product to market.
- Collaborations among participants.
- Recruitment.

### 1. Proof of concept and taking a product to market:

- Loop.coop launched their first product, Looptopia, at an event within the Brighton Digital Festival, which was a sell-out at the FuseBox.
- Hexology launched their first online/offline engagement campaign during the Brighton Digital Festival.
- MakerClub were awarded a feasibility grant of £76,000 by Innovate UK and also recently raised an additional £10,000 via Indiegogo crowd-funding.

### 2. Collaborations among participants:

- The Spark Festival was devised and run by MakerClub and Long Run Communications.
- Collide Hackathon (Long Run Communications, Adam Gill).
- Sustain Debate (Brighton Fashion Week and Long Run Communications).

### 3. Recruitment:

- 50% of the businesses have hired people, including through the Wired Sussex intern programme – Adam Gill Projects, CrowCreation, Loop.coop, MakerClub and Metta Eggs.

These outcomes relating to the business ideas and propositions ran alongside journeys leading to significant personal and innovator development. These are detailed on orange 'Business stories' pages throughout this report.



## Business stories

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### Adam Gill Projects

#### **FROM NHS CONSULTANT TO DESIGN-LED HEALTHCARE INNOVATION**

Adam's core interest was around enabling participation and engagement in healthcare commissioning and delivery, largely within the NHS. He envisaged creating user experiences with mobile technology for target audiences of patients, management and GPs within local clinical commissioning groups where he has relevant professional experience, credibility and access in order to be able to test and learn.

At the end of the programme Adam had tested different ways of facilitating engagement and participation. He used learning about his own creativity through drawing and making activities that led him to explore his own ideas about design and how to communicate his vision and core offering better.

Through Wired Sussex he engaged an intern graphic designer who helped him articulate his core problem-solution framework and test it with known target audiences and others in adjacent markets. He also discovered the value of remaining grounded whilst also aiming high. Amongst his reflections on his 24-week journey, Adam was full of praise for his peer group and how they helped him regain focus when he felt close to burn-out, and identified the buzz of forming a working relationship with an inspirational mentor that he thought he would never be able to engage.

'So in a way there's been an apprenticeship in the NHS and now it's about solutions design in the wider sector. It seems to me to be a bit more collaborative around providing some of the solutions which have been quite theoretical in practice, but they seem to sync with some of the wider visions which I didn't expect them to.'

Founder: Adam Gill  
[www.adamgill.com](http://www.adamgill.com)

### MakerClub

#### **BUILDING A LEARNING PLATFORM AND NETWORK TO TEACH 3D PRINTED ROBOTICS**

Coming into the programme, Carduino was a 'simple kit for building and programming a fully functioning remote controlled car, controllable via a smartphone'. It was intended to help you learn and develop the knowledge and skills needed to create, programme and construct your own inventions.

After 24 weeks, Simon had grown a team and, after deeper insights gained from working closely with the target audience of young people, rebranded as MakerClub. Research and development remains a core focus and has enabled new products beyond the Carduino to be developed and tested.

A recent Innovate UK research and development grant will help the team conduct further market research, as did the collaborative event, The Spark Festival, created with fellow FuseBox24 participants Long Run Communications to learn more about young people and learning. MakerClub has also successfully gained crowd-funding through [indiegogo.com](http://indiegogo.com) and achieved significant publicity via [Wired](http://Wired), [The Guardian](http://The Guardian) and [forbes.com](http://forbes.com).

'We have grown an awful lot, sort of growth as myself personally and as a business and the team. So we've got a lot more answers than we've ever had before.' (Simon Riley)

Founder: Simon Riley  
[www.makerclub.org](http://www.makerclub.org)

# FuseBox24 team

## FUSING RESEARCH, BUSINESS AND ARTS EXPERTISE

The FuseBox24 project sought to operationalise the findings of Brighton Fuse through an experimental business support programme, and this entailed a fused approach from the outset in constructing the team.

The arts and digital innovation sphere is already a dynamic sector in the UK in both practice-based and research terms, and its work has explored much critical terrain relevant to how we think about the CDIT sector and how it can be further developed.

Rohan Gunatillake of Sync, Scotland, pointed out in an article in *The Guardian* last year that their experiments had led them to a framework that was 'practice-led, process-focused and people-centred'.<sup>9</sup> While this focus was on arts, the approach has much synergy with starting points for the FuseBox24 project.

John Dovey, director of Bristol-based REACT, one of the AHRC's four Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy, has stressed the importance of relationships and contexts for building and sustaining them.

'We've always argued that REACT's value is in the network of people, places, businesses and ideas we curate, and that the long-term impact of REACT will be in the quality of the ongoing relationships that we broker, which will in turn produce new projects, new products and stronger businesses. We believe that to maximise these benefits

we have to spend a lot of time looking after the relationships that constitute the value-producing network. The relationships between academics, businesses, creatives, technologists and artists that make up REACT consist of people enacting value. They do stuff together that they find valuable. They share know-how, they inspire one another, they develop trust, they find a common creative language, and they offer one another challenges or support. They also learn new skills, develop new dispositions and ways of seeing the world. They get new insights and creative excitement.'<sup>10</sup>

So while the FuseBox24 project has developed directly out of the findings of Brighton Fuse, it is also informed by and part of a growing sphere of experimentation and research work linking creative arts, technology and business, contributing to understanding of innovation and fusion in CDIT.

New models of working emphasise the need to explore and increase understanding of how inputs from creative arts, business and technology can best combine to develop new services and businesses within CDIT.<sup>11</sup> The emphasis here is on practice and process – new team-working methodologies to enhance the approaches and insights these different sectors bring to innovation and entrepreneurial business models in creative and digital economy.

This challenge was central to the methodology adopted for the FuseBox24 work.



## THE TEAM

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The foundation of this project was the building of the team and working practices and to define as clearly as possible what each area of specialisation would contribute. Due to the experimental nature of the work, this was drafted at the outset and developed through discussion and reflection throughout the different stages of the project.

There needed to be substantial clarity from the outset about the different roles and inputs and processes that would be adopted to ensure these would work in combination as effectively as possible.

Four clear areas of expertise were identified – business, technology, creative arts and research. These were represented by different members of the team who also featured overlapping skillsets and interests across the four areas:

### **Business**

Phil Jones (managing director of Wired Sussex) who is interested in skills and the digital economy, digital as an enabler of businesses and social groups, and innovation strategies, and was a partner in Brighton Fuse.



### **Technology**

James Byford (research fellow) who has a background in digital business and entrepreneurship, an MA in Design Studies from Central St Martins and was part of the Brighton Fuse research team.



### **Creative Arts**

CiCi Blumstein (artist in practice) is a practising installation and performance artist, choreographer and filmmaker, interested in using the artist-innovator approach to support and creatively challenge start-up businesses.



### **Research**

Gillian Youngs (project lead and Professor of Digital Economy at University of Brighton) who undertakes policy and practice-related research on creative and digital economy and has a background in business and media.



# Research-innovation model

The FuseBox24 research-innovation experimental model was developed with three main objectives:

1. **To further Brighton Fuse research by deepening what is understood by fusion across creative arts and technology to fuel innovation in the CDIT sector and beyond.**
2. **To contribute to a more systematic framing of creative arts into business innovation by combining research with business and artistic practice approaches and methods.**
3. **The development of a radical programme of business support for CDIT start-ups resulting in a toolbox of techniques piloted successfully and available for adoption towards innovation in the wider creative and digital economy.**

## DIGITAL AND CREATIVE ECONOMY TRANSFORMATIONS

While the Brighton Fuse project was centrally focused on the CDIT sector, the FuseBox24 research-innovation model was designed to address innovation processes within the wider digital and creative economy, where transformations are impacting business and public and private services at all levels, from small to large-scale, and including corporate and government sectors. In these circumstances, fresh perspectives on innovation and paths towards it are needed in pervasive economic and social terms.

‘Core to digital transformations and disruptions are totally new articulations of macro and micro level patterns and framings of social processes and interconnections across them. The increasingly high degree of complexity represented by these changes is self-evident and inevitably testing for theory and practice, for knowledge and policymakers, and for social agents of all kinds (profit and non-profit driven) across political, business and cultural sectors.’<sup>12</sup>

If we accept that in many ways the ‘earlier industrial world has left us with conceptualisations of innovation unfit for purpose’ in the new digital conditions, then we are facing the challenge that the realm of innovation itself demands new forms of innovation, new approaches and methodologies, new modes of cross-sector insight and team-working, new ways of fuelling



innovation through models that draw on possibilities from different skillsets and integrate them effectively with the practical means of achieving them.<sup>13</sup>

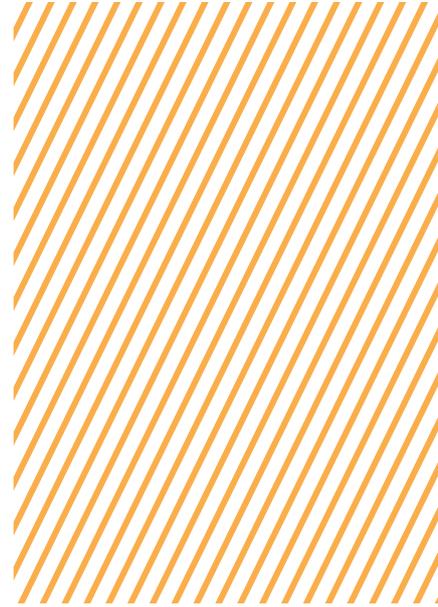
The fusion concept helps us to address such areas and draws attention to the methods we use to bring about innovation as much as the resulting innovations themselves. Inevitably in this context the need for new forms of open knowledge-exchange processes across different areas of expertise and orientation are a high priority. As a recent Design Commission report on Designing the Digital Economy argued in relation to recognising designers as critical agents able to mediate between people (users), places and technology.

'...just as technologists would do well to align their practice with that of designers, the design sector should move out of its comfort zone and seek to engage with the possibilities allowed by the digital economy. We are at an important moment when design can reposition itself as a critical tool to both drive and critique the development of the application of technology.'<sup>14</sup>

The FuseBox24 project is sited firmly within this new open knowledge-exchange terrain and includes the exploration of design as a means of helping to harness the systematic offerings of a research approach to achieve a more transparent fusion of business, creative arts and technology approaches.

A main aim of this new model is to provide an evolving toolbox of methods contributing to sustainable processes of innovation through the development of innovators who are:

- Resilient in individual and collaborative ways.
- Able to draw flexibly on knowledge and insights across creative, business and technology domains.
- Self-reflective, critical and oriented towards the lean business customer-centred mode.
- Focused on harnessing support and resources from networks near and far.
- Alive to the creative possibilities of different kinds of lab and test environments, including in real-world customer and market settings.
- Capable of continuous iteration to evolve, improve and pivot innovation.



## **BUILDING RESEARCH-INNOVATION RELATIONSHIPS**

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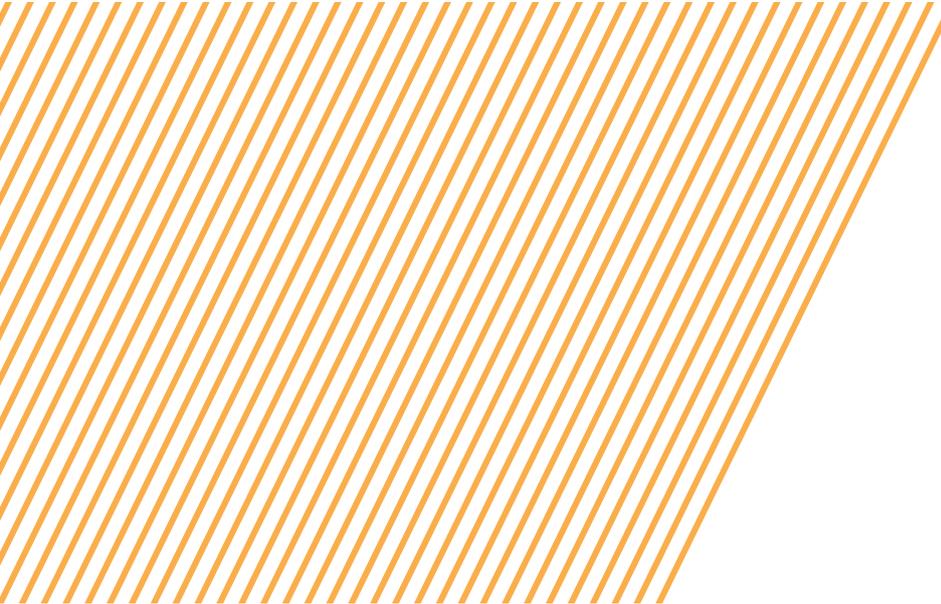
The FuseBox24 project was established on the basis of strong relationships that already existed and were continuously being developed across Wired Sussex, its team and networks, the CDIT sector and networks in the Brighton area and beyond and the university sector. This partnership model was key to developing a common understanding of the project's tangible goal of fusing innovators from the ground up. Brighton Fuse findings also placed this work in the wider economic context, contributing to understanding of the convergence of urban regeneration and economic development with the growth of the CDIT sector as highlighted by Phil Jones, managing director of Wired Sussex.

## **FUSEBOX LIVE LAB**

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The physical environment of the FuseBox in New England House was central to the concept of incubating the innovators in a common space and over time through shared learning experiences. The emphasis is on an open innovator environment which facilitates seamless and diverse forms of individual and collaborative work and mentoring, while representing an identifiable collective space where different kinds of creative and business-development group activity take place. The continuities and flexibilities in space and time are important here to fusing the individual and collaborative dimensions of FuseBox24 and its varied creative and business approaches to disruption and new learning. The programme maintained an inside/outside dynamic in its structures and activities, forging a strong link between innovator development and market engagement outside the FuseBox.

The lab-like environment of the FuseBox was functionally and conceptually informed by Brighton Fuse research including its findings on the importance of place-based networks and business community-building in supporting innovators and innovation. The FuseBox, including the Wired Sussex team, gave the sector space and opportunity to function in new more flexible and horizontal ways of working that more vertical hierarchical models attached to the industrial era, including Higher Education (HE), cannot yet easily facilitate.



Incubator models traditionally recognise the importance of designated space and access to relevant expertise and communities. FuseBox24 experimented further by drawing on best practice from HE, creative arts and design, and business to:

- Foreground disruption and learning over a specified timeframe (24 weeks) and in a clear structure informed by pedagogic techniques around aims and objectives to ensure learning and transition stages are clear from the outset.
  - Feature a varied programme week by week incorporating different kinds of individual, group and collaborative work with expert inputs from mentors throughout to ensure that the different forms of learning across all of these could be fused in agile and real-time ways.
  - Benefit from an established and expert team of Wired Sussex staff based in the FuseBox and focused on welcoming people into the space as well as ensuring that those who use it get the most benefit out of it on a day-to-day basis.
  - Designate the lab as a creative and maker space as much as a tech one with activities emphasising flows across these different ways of experimenting with, thinking through and testing propositions.
  - Feature creative arts inputs and perspectives as embedded elements of the business development work as well as features of the FuseBox space itself.
- Locate the programme activities outside in the market and with customers as well as inside the FuseBox to actively strengthen the links between innovator development and customer awareness.

Initial learning from Brighton Fuse findings and the FuseBoxAmp one-month experimental start-up support programme in 2013 provided the knowledge base for FuseBox24 and its structure.

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## ONE-YEAR PROJECT: FOUR STAGES

**Stage 1:**

Getting started: six-week sprint to launch the proposition (January/February).

**Stage 2:**

Recruiting participants and contributors and integrating research focus (March/April).

**Stage 3:**

Running the programme and adapting content based on feedback from participants (April/September).

**Stage 4:**

Analysis of full participant feedback and presentations of findings (October/January).

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## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

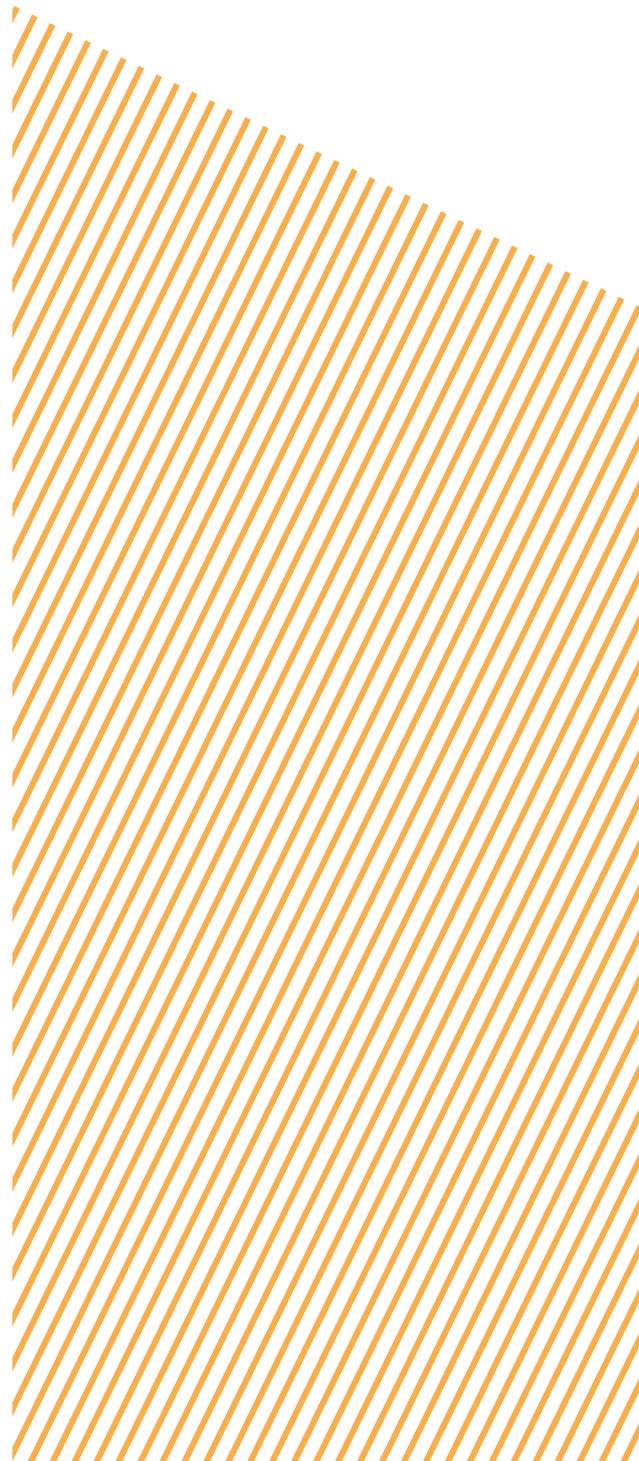
The research was a fused dimension of the programme as a whole, as well as the offer to participants and the generation of the research framework. This was designed to contribute to iterations of the programme in action research mode and produce overall findings and a toolbox of successfully piloted methods for further testing and adoption in the CDIT sector and beyond.

The recruitment process explicitly identified academic research as integral to the radical nature of the programme. Participants were therefore signing up to be active in the research process and its results to inform future development of business innovation, as well as taking part and benefiting from the programme in terms of their own development and business ventures. Research was designed to complement the four-stage structure of the programme and its business and individual and collaborative ethos.

Two main research methods were adopted, the first an online survey completed by participants at the outset and at the end of each of the programme stages, with questions designed to explore their own sense of how they viewed themselves as innovators and how this was being challenged, supported and developed through the process of the programme (appendix – survey questions). The responses were used iteratively during the programme to steer its structure and activities as

closely as possible to the identified needs of the participants as well as for the overall findings of the research. The second method was short video interviews at the end of each phase of the programme designed, along with the surveys, to contribute to the self-reflective and critical development of innovator skills.

The research framework was developed as part of the experimental radical model through detailed collaborative team discussions and combining business and design drivers with systematic qualitative research priorities. Ethics approvals for the research process and informed consent from the participants was gained through the University of Brighton Research Ethics and Governance Committee structure and procedures. Analysis of the findings was led by the project lead and research fellow and drew on insights from extensive discussions involving all members of the team on different aspects of the programme and the participants' experience of it.



## Business stories

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### CrowCreation

#### **FINDING A NICHE BY ACTIVELY LISTENING TO WHAT CUSTOMERS NEED AND WANT**

Chris had a really clear plan entering the programme.

'I want to offer fixed price website and marketing packages specifically for service-based businesses. My goal initially is develop a strong marketing message via my own website and develop a repeatable process of delivering these packages to clients so that I can scale my business very quickly, perhaps via a franchise model.'

After 24 weeks, his journey took him to a place he had not expected, with some very deep learning about business, particularly about customer needs and the value of being part of strong professional networks. After discovering what customers really thought of his marketing materials, Chris pivoted and found a niche where he could gain deep market insights – that of serviced accommodation providers. Whilst still boot-strapping, CrowCreation has also benefited from an intern under the Wired Sussex programme.

'I've got to know you guys really well over the last six months or so and I've really appreciated what it's given me from a personal point of view to be connected to lots of other people on a similar journey to me. Professionally I've really realised the value of being connected as well with Wired Sussex and getting all this inspiration from everybody and what they're doing and it's definitely sent me off in completely different directions to what I would have gone in previously, so I'm happy myself with my direction.' (Chris McCrow)

Founder: Chris McCrow  
www.crowcreation.com

### Hexology

#### **SENSE TESTING FOR A GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY LAUNCH**

Arriving at the FuseBox as EoID, Darrel was on a mission to 'create a digitally enriched world' through a technology toolkit that would enable others to create means of embedding digital information in objects and places.

With seed funding in place, the virtual team had begun the process of developing an online platform, an Android app and a small portable low-energy bluetooth device acting as an iBeacon, RFID and NFC reader and a mobile sensing probe as functional prototypes. Thus the FuseBox24 programme was viewed by Darrel as a means of raising awareness of his proposition and serving as a base on which to conduct a Kickstarter crowd-funding campaign.

The programme helped identify many areas for improving the proposition, and by the end of final phase, Hexology was piloting its first online and real-world adventure during the Brighton Digital Festival. As CEO, Darrel was Kickstarter-ready, as he put it, and had learned much about clarifying and articulating his vision, and in the process developing a brand experience.

'...having gone through a very robust process of testing and developing my team and products, my countdown has now begun and my job has transformed. I understand that an entrepreneur's primary job is to lead; from being a builder and developer at grassroots to being a pilot and strategist. And with my new role it feels like the start-up agenda has changed. I'm starting a global promotion, I'm Kickstarter-ready and will be exhibiting at Appsworld 2014 at the O2 in London.'

Founder: Darrel Butlin  
www.hexology.co

## Long Run Works

### UNLEASHING THE COLLABORATIVE INNOVATOR WITHIN

Guy Pattison came to the programme with a clear purpose – to create a new communications consultancy focused on long run opportunities.

‘A long run opportunity is an innovation in the way we live, work and play that creates deeper value today and grows across generations. So for example, this might be a new idea, technology or business model that helps tackle a challenge such as resource efficiency, climate change, urbanisation, ageing population, etc.’

After an epiphany during the Hemingway Challenge activity early in the programme, Guy found a strong sense of identification with the rebel innovator within rather than the entrepreneur he entered as.

He went on to strike up a series of effective collaborations with other members of the team, including Brighton Fashion Week, GoodMoney and MakerClub. In addition he ran a successful Collide hack weekend at the FuseBox with help from Adam Gill, and drew much inspiration from the fused arts and business activities which he found helped him to design new tools of his own and also gave him a reflective framework for what he described as ‘looping back’, and checking in on his real purpose and motivation, something he had not experienced before in a professional context.

Working with a part-time virtual team, his next major milestone is the full-time appointment of a creative director partner who was due to start in early January under the rebranded name of Long Run Works.

Founder: Guy Pattison  
[www.longrun.today](http://www.longrun.today)

## Goodmoney CIC

### FINDING THE STARTING POINT FOR SOLVING A GREAT BIG PROBLEM

Dan and Mick arrived at the FuseBox with a vision for tackling part of the complex challenge of the failing financial system, specifically at the local business level. The lean ethos of the programme helped them identify an appropriate starting point and pivot towards a minimum viable product ready for testing in the form of a voucher for local independent traders.

‘Participating in the FuseBox24 programme has helped us develop our ideas into a sound proposition that creates real value for local businesses and the wider community. Goodmoney CIC is more than Dan and Mick. It has six other directors providing oversight and guidance and assistance. The UK spends nearly £5 billion a year on gift cards and gift vouchers, but local businesses don’t get much of a look-in, as most of the money goes to high street chains. We now have a great opportunity to change that by diverting a chunk of this spend to local businesses. When we have a network of local businesses accepting Goodmoney Gift Vouchers, we’ll help them collaborate in other ways, such as by swapping goods and services.’ (Dan Webb)

Founders: Daniel Webb and Mick Taylor  
[www.goodmoney.co.uk](http://www.goodmoney.co.uk)

# FuseBox24 business support programme

## GETTING STARTED: DEVELOPING THE PROGRAMME

Managing the complexity of the inputs of the team was the first major challenge in designing the programme as a whole to ensure it worked effectively to fuel the dual purposes of business development and research to further creative arts-technology fusion in CDIT.

Research and pedagogic insights were used throughout, with the aim of producing a more systematic understanding of creative arts-technology fusion and specific tools which could be generally adopted beyond the life of the project and in diverse settings to help stimulate new innovation and acceleration in CDIT.

Business was the starting point and main ethos, so Phil Jones was the key driver at the project launch stage in establishing vision and purpose.

The conceptual framework to achieve these goals was established by Phil Jones as:

### Needs:

Innovators are supported and challenged to reflect on their own needs by developing reflective skills which lead to deeper understanding of their own needs and guide their start-up ambitions. Needs are about innovators moving from their superficial needs (more cash etc) to a more developed and dynamic understanding of what they require to progress. They also refer to recognising others' needs and developing business models which mutually reciprocate.

### Empathy:

Innovators are supported and challenged to develop observation and listening abilities that enable them to understand and connect themselves and their start-up propositions with the needs of the communities and markets with which they are engaging.

### VISION:

'An internationally recognised place in Brighton where a radically different way of supporting new business ideas in the digital sector happens. An entrepreneurial laboratory.'

### PURPOSE:

'To create a place where post-industrial business entrepreneurs can be supported and can support each other, where the value of knowledge and practices from arts, humanities and design are meshed with technology and which is powered by the sector itself.'

**Insight:**

Innovators are supported and challenged to explore their personal goals and start-up business ideas through eliciting feedback, reflecting on it and using it to iterate their start-up propositions. Insight is about the innovation itself and the process of realising it, creating a methodology which foregrounds the rigour, knowledge and focus that turning idea into innovation requires.

These were based on learning from Brighton Fuse and the pilot project for innovators and start-ups run at the FuseBox in summer 2013, the FuseBoxAmp, the purpose of FuseBox24 being 'needs, empathy and insight made tangible. This is the difference between the programme succeeding or failing'.

**DESIGNING THE PROGRAMME:  
FUSING ALL SKILLS**

From this point the design process involved everyone in the team in particular aspects of the project. As the designer and programme lead, the research fellow took the central role here, working in contrasting ways with the other three team members. Phil Jones drove the overall rationale and aims, and the project lead acted more as a research consultant at this stage, offering pedagogic guidance on the structure of the programme and the research methods to be applied, with the artist in practice working creatively with the research fellow on approaches and content.

As part of this process, the core research question was identified as: 'How are innovators made in the creative and digital economy?'

The combined insights of the team signalled a number of key elements for the design of the programme, as well as the shaping of the research tools:

- The importance of the programme as a voyage for the participants and the role of narrative to carry them through that voyage.
- Clarity about different stages on the voyage and stimulating critical reflection on those stages to achieve accelerated development for participants.
- Drawing on the foundation concepts of needs, empathy and insight as filters for

checking participants' progress through the programme.

- Fluidity and flexibility in the content to focus on small as well as big things to drive innovative thinking.

Key team working practices included:

- Use of a shared online notebook by the research fellow and artist in practice to exchange in developed ways on the shape of the programme, including to address the latter's point that: 'Naming things in a creative way is really important.'
- Open discussion sessions between the research fellow and project lead about the developing structure and orientation of the programme and research tools appropriate to it.
- Show-and-tell work with the Wired Sussex team and software exploration by the research fellow to consider working methods on the programme.

The conclusion was that the emphasis would be on an ethos of peer-based collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, and that available software tended to be too linear to make it suitable as a method of delivery. The mode instead would be primarily face-to-face in and beyond the FuseBox setting. To this end the main framework for the programme was two activity days on Mondays and Fridays with FuseBox sessions (additional content) added on nine alternate Wednesdays through the programme.

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

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Following a basic design approach, and blending business and pedagogic insights, it was decided to divide the 24-week programme into four phases:

- **Immersion**
- **Readiness**
- **Iterations**
- **Jump**

The aim was to follow an iterative loop of discover, develop, deploy, reflect on feedback, repeat the process etc.

The Immersion and Readiness phases would serve as the core discovery framework to provide participants with the central competences to put to use in the Iterations phase before they exited the programme in Jump mode, able to repeat the iterative learning process in their future trajectory with the resilience gained from all they had learned. Adopting the 'threshold concepts' approach enabled a less-is-more perspective, encouraging self-directed learning and breakthroughs.<sup>15</sup>



## DRIVING PRINCIPLES

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Five driving principles of the programme informed by the team as a whole developed at the design stage and beyond:

### 1. Agile:

Timing was always tight and learning had to be quickly harnessed and tested.

### 2. Lean:

The reality of the lean start-up culture and its customer-focused systematic approach to business was central.<sup>16</sup> This was often referred to as 'boot-strapping' by Phil Jones. The programme was able to draw upon the sector's generosity of time given free.

### 3. Iterative:

In conjunction with agile and lean approaches, learning was constantly under review and the programme changed weekly as new content was added or resequenced as appropriate.

### 4. Fused:

Not just in terms of creative arts, technology and business, but through leadership and practice, and individual and collaborative ways of working and devising methods within the team and with the input of participants' feedback.

### 5. Visual:

An important focus on sense-making through the use of visual means whenever possible.

## ORIENTATION

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The programme was oriented towards the relationship between the individual innovator's development and that of the group and the sector they were becoming part of through participation in the programme. 'Adventures and Wisdom' was chosen as the title of the venture to reflect the dual learning process. Adventures are individual and group learning experiences delivered through workshop activities and field activities, and Wisdom represents story-telling activities, coaching and mentoring sessions. Focus was given to the interaction across these as part of the development of innovators with sustainable future paths who can reflect, problem-solve and create as they experiment and learn.

Design meetings identified three key orientations as the second stage of thinking about how to achieve these aims:

### Inside/outside:

The need for the programme to operate outside as well as inside the FuseBox to enable the sense of the business in direct relation to external networks, the customer and the market.

### Content, processes and activities:

The importance of thinking about overall content of the programme in terms of links between different processes and activities.

**Challenge and collaboration:**

Developing an environment and approaches in which challenge was increasingly familiar and anticipated by the participants, and drawing on collaboration as part of this process, as well as addressing challenges.

Creative arts inputs to focusing on these areas were pivotal, and this was the path through which the artist in practice's contribution became integral to the design of the content and its delivery. This established a basis of layering and texturing through the three areas of orientation to facilitate learning spirals through connected concepts and approaches.

One major practical outcome was two core tools:

1. The pecha kucha format (20 slides shown for 20 seconds each) as a core format for disciplined, rigorous performance and sharing of material by participants.
2. The lean canvas (whiteboards on wheels) allowing participants to work iteratively on the development of their business model in accessible, visual and mobile ways. This single visualisation of each business made it understandable inside the group and to external contributors who had suggested its use.

**THE FUSEBOX24 PROPOSITION**

The proposition was developed as two key interlinked benefits:

- 24 weeks of radical business support with two key elements – support from thought-leaders and practitioners across, arts and business and technology.
- 24/7 access to the FuseBox. The programme was marketed through FuseBox24.co.uk with Wired Sussex social media networks generating attention, followed by recruiting participants and contributors, and integrating research focus.

A minimum viable product test of the programme with the Wired Sussex community generated positive feedback from potential participants and contributors. It also enabled deeper work by the team on areas such as:

- **Content:**  
What form would the support take?
- **Delivery:**  
How would learning be facilitated?  
What modes and formats of delivery?
- **Assessment:**  
How would participants assess their progress?

The distinctive aspect of the programme relating to the research element meant that contributors were asked to see the research as integral to the programme as a whole, and this was tested as a proposition with potential participants at a recruitment event with a positive outcome.

As the design process continued to deepen, the knowledge-exchange relationship between the artist in practice and research fellow became pivotal, with much sharing of resources from the former to the latter to stimulate thinking about and shaping of components of the programme.

The conclusion from the team was that the programme would in broad terms be people focused with inside dimensions (individual participants and group work and sharing, and access to the Wired Sussex team) and outside inputs (business and other contributors offering a rich mix of storytellers, practitioners and mentors). The artist in practice offered the model of a garden to provide context for continued awareness of inside and outside connections.

The main tools used would be:

- Weekly group check-ins on progress with the research fellow/artist in practice and Phil Jones initially, and then just among the participants.
- Lean canvas for working on and sharing propositions.
- Pecha kuchas for delivering progress and exchanges within the group.
- Adventure activities as practical learning experiences.
- Wisdom opportunities to gather knowledge from others' stories.

#### **The Immersion phase focused on:**

- Full immersion in the context and aims of the programme.
- Establishing the individual and collaborative orientations of it.
- Exploring and setting up the space and sharing among the participants and their business ideas.
- Establishing the structure of communication and contact, including weekly check-ins.

#### **The Readiness phase focused on:**

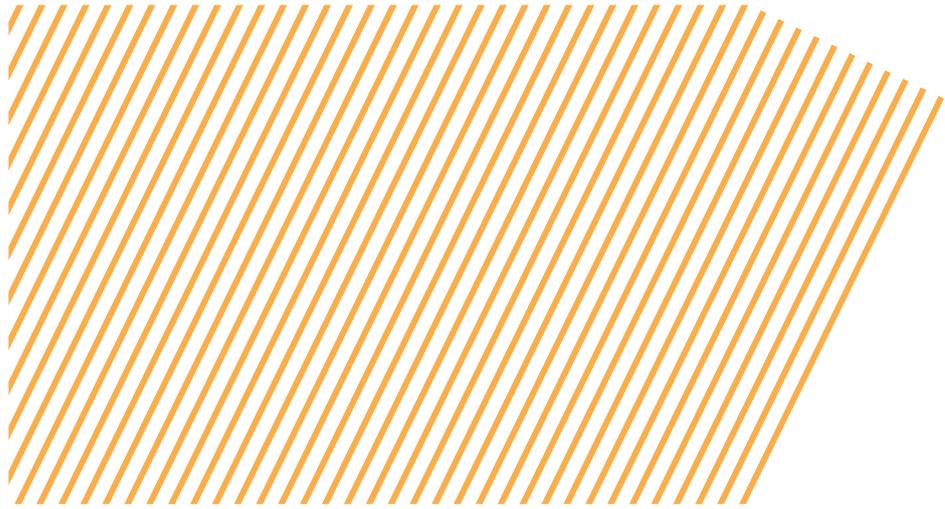
- Giving dimension to individual propositions over four weeks.
- Deepening understanding of individual needs.
- Identifying stakeholders and gatekeepers (knowledge, skills, resources).
- Capturing and expressing the business ideas on lean canvas.

#### **The Iterations phase focused on:**

- 12 weeks of taking the individual/group and the proposition to stakeholders and gatekeepers.
- Iterating with the lean canvas as part of this process.
- Availability at the whiteboard for developments and discussion.

#### **The Jump phase focused on:**

- Preparation for exiting the programme through the FuseBox Ignites event.
- Operationalising the business in a new space/context.
- Engagement with the Brighton Digital Festival.



## 'ADVENTURES AND WISDOM' THROUGH THE PROGRAMME

In addition to the primary modes of Adventures (activities) and Wisdom (storytelling) through the programme, one-to-one sessions were an important part of the reflective development process engaging insiders and outsiders. The variety of input from different sectors and backgrounds was pivotal here. Feedback from participants flowed after each activity session on Mondays and Fridays and also at the end of each phase through the research survey and short video interviews.

The spiralling learning model was facilitated through responsive and agile mechanisms informed by the interim research results and the critical reflection of programme leaders to iterate the programme as it progressed. This was demonstrated by the amendments to the schedule on the FuseBox wall and online at FuseBox24.co.uk. Email was a safety net for ensuring all participants received updates on changes to the schedule. Survey data showed that the preferred means of communication among participants was face-to-face and one-to-one and small/peer groups before any digital means.

### Some key activities

The participants were given the opportunity to attend dozens of activities over the 24 weeks. The following activities are highlighted to illustrate the variety and range of innovative approaches taken, often individually fusing arts, design, business and technology.

#### **Bloom sculpture kit exercise:**

Originally commissioned for the Cultural Olympiad, the bright pink, 500-piece sculpture kit, designed by the Brighton-based Phoenix Gallery, was used to encourage physical movement and collaboration in the FuseBox space with the engagement of Wired Sussex colleagues. This full-afternoon exercise led to some participants going beyond the activity to co-create in designing fashions from the sculpture parts with the artist in practice. It was the first activity that got the group working together to create and build on each others' work and also to explore the concept of empathy.

*'There has been a range of experiences that have highlighted empathy, particularly the activities like Bloom.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

#### **Dichotomy boot-camp:**

An early-stage morning session to open up the main themes of the programme and begin a process of separating innovators from their innovations. Phil Jones, the artist in practice and the research fellow each shared material as presentations to the group which illustrated core concepts that they would personally revisit and explore

during the programme. None of the team knew what the others would be sharing. The implicit trust and respect were important and set the tone for the programme. Whilst the formats of the presentations were naturally idiosyncratic, they revealed many shared and complementary perspectives amongst the delivery team. The boot-camp was highly effective in establishing a deeper level of connection within and between the delivery team and the participants.

*'The challenge [in this session] forced out a change in approach and subsequent reflection revealed true motivation.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

#### **Hemingway Challenge (For sale: baby shoes, never worn):**

This afternoon session within the Immersion phase required participants to work in groups taking a six-word proposition into the public arena of Pavilion Gardens during the last Friday of Brighton Festival. Devised to give artistic licence, the basis of the challenge was to elicit feedback from the public. Roles were played to perform, ask questions and capture feedback. A highly effective exercise that proved pivotal for at least one participant in changing his approach to his overall proposition. It was also designed to build on the discovery learning spiral by helping participants separate themselves from a proposition early in the programme.

*'It's all about my purpose and passion and that means taking on and disrupting the communications industry . . . [T]he insight I had was brilliant because it was on the streets of Brighton doing a task, the Hemingway*

*task with a bit of cardboard and you know, something totally alien and it worked, it happened.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

#### **Draw with Jake Spicer:**

Another early Immersion phase session, this life drawing exercise was effective for most in identifying and exploring inner creativity. Some participants had not drawn since childhood and found 'flow' as a result. The exercise was conceived as a means of adding a human dimension early on, as Jake's core focus is on supporting the development of life drawing skills. He has discovered these help interface-design professionals make more human-centric design decisions.

*'Insights around business that have been really useful have come from life drawing, I learned how to bring creativity a little bit more into what I do. I really touched that place and feel more confident in doing that so it's a massive insight about my needs as well.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

#### **Lean canvas introduction:**

This was delivered with local businessman Arjo Ghosh and reported by many participants as useful for opening up the idea of business model development planning being an open iterative process. The choice of an external businessman to deliver this session was important in giving this element legitimacy as a core tool in the programme.

*'...a clear and concise talk that explained the lean canvas in a way that made it immediately relevant to our business. Great having a local business success story to inspire.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

**Fat canvas:**

This collaborative exercise was designed to enable the group to fill in the gaps in their lean first iteration canvases with five-minute contributions enabling each business to receive an iteration from each participant. Its timing was significant in that it was delivered after the introduction to the lean canvas session and thus embedded the use of the tool, its terminology and format within the group and space. The 10 whiteboards on wheels were thus populated and available for critique with further mentoring visits from Arjo Ghosh and others from the business community. The exercise was also useful in enabling each participant to reflect on inputs from each of the other participants where some group sessions ending in plenary limited the diversity of feedback.

**Collusion of mediocrity:**

This challenging workshop session with Paul Levy from CENTRIM, University of Brighton, was delivered at a pivotal point in the programme. The rigour of the feedback among the participants on their business propositions was addressed, and it was intended to serve as a means of establishing a contract between the participants at the end of the second Readiness phase. It was highly valued in survey results and served as a reality check to draw out honesty and the need to avoid collusion and take the opportunity to critically push forward individually and collectively.

*'... it was about how to live and work honestly, made me realise how important feedback was.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

**Collaborative sharing wall:**

Within the Readiness phase, the chairing of the weekly check-in session was given over to rotation amongst the participants. Within such a session participants discussed the idea of swapping skills and as a result the collaborative sharing wall developed as a co-creative dimension of the programme as participants became more proactive in identifying the need to help one another and not let the programme just happen to them.

**What does the customer think?:**

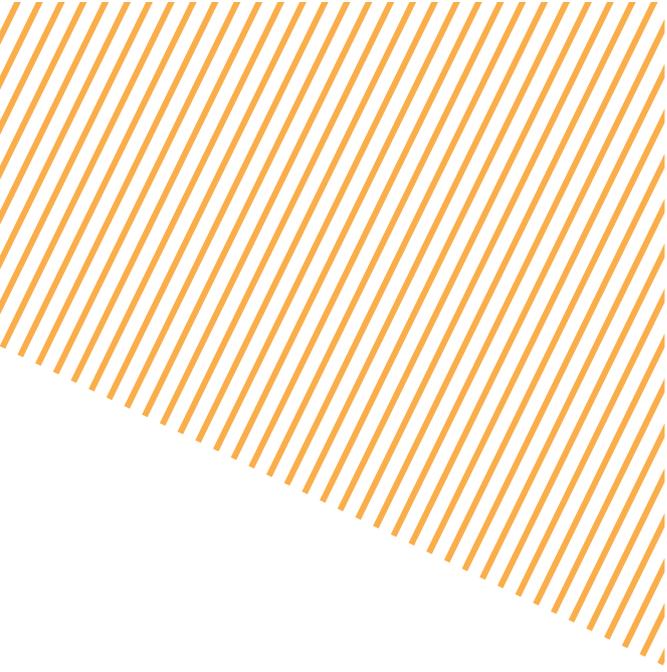
This exercise in the Readiness phase was designed to reflect the increased need for customer focus which developed through the programme. As focus was given to the relationship between customer, product and team in the Readiness phase, this exercise contributed to greater clarity on separation of innovator from the business idea. Participants gathered a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and shared their findings with the group. One participant reflected on this being the most pivotal insight from the programme.

*'The insight is really that I'm trying to offer something that I want and not what the customer really wants to buy . . . So that's the main insight for me, I really need to figure out what the customer wants and what they're going to pay for that's going to make it really worth my time to really invest in building this thing.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

**Make-it-real sessions:**

As part of customer focus work in the Readiness and Iterations phases, these sessions engaged participants in making



ideas tangible through physical artefacts, exploration and performance. The research fellow and the artist in practice collaborated to devise sessions as light, fun and exploratory, deliberately taking participants some way outside their comfort zones. A variety of recyclable materials was gathered by participants and junk modelling resulted. Participants were encouraged to work up ideas that had initially emerged from feedback in the FAQs and develop tangible expressions.

*'The practical making activities – it is good to think in alternative ways.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

#### **Role of critique:**

A number of the participants openly challenged each other to develop more critical feedback after the Paul Levy collusion session and the second pecha kucha presentations which some felt were not served by a critical feedback framework. The research fellow invited the project lead to give the participants the opportunity to explore different functions of critique and contrasts in responses to it, ways of delivering critique and developing critical self-reflection. This resulting head, heart and hands model was tested effectively outside the session in pairs.

*'It's great that we're all here and wanting to do things but I think we have to be honest about feedback we're giving each other and there has to be a structure to that as well so that people expect to get negative feedback and critical feedback and don't take it personally because that's why we're here.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

## Business stories

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### Loop.coop

#### **FINDING COMMUNITY TO COLLABORATIVELY GROW THE FUTURE OF MUSIC-MAKING**

Richard and Beth moved to Brighton at the beginning of 2014 seeking to immerse themselves in the creative community with whom they planned to collaboratively build a gasified music production web app. The FuseBox24 programme enabled them to quickly find the empathic support they had been looking for to develop what was, to them, a precious idea, Loop.coop.

With their minimum viable product emerging as an interactive music-making tool for exploring virtual sonic landscapes, the Brighton Digital Festival provided the backdrop for the Looptopian Launch Party at the FuseBox, featuring collaboration with the artist in practice.

‘At the end of September we had the launch party which was insanely hard work but really successful and sold out and really opened our minds about what to do with the potential for events for people that want to come and explore, that’s really exciting.’ (Beth Walker)

‘... [it] goes back to this thing of community building, it’s positive and validating – we’re on the right lines, working with people and there is a real thing there that people love.’ (Richard Plastow)

In little under a year in Brighton, Loop.coop is realising the creative ambitions of its founders and growing, with plans to recruit an events coordinator and a community manager in early 2015.

Founders: Richard Plastow and Beth Walker  
[www.loop.coop](http://www.loop.coop)

### Metta Eggs

#### **MAKING THE ART OF GIFTING WORDS TANGIBLE, DIGITAL AND SOCIAL**

On entering the programme, Libby brought an umbrella concept of Sharing Gratitude and a specific manifestation of it in the form of Metta Eggs, which she describes as a unique gift experience. Like others drawn to the programme, she sought community and collaboration, mentoring and focus, to harness her enthusiasm and ideas into a more clearly defined proposition. It was also important for Libby to develop a business proposition professionally in a supportive environment beyond herself at home with the support of her life and business partner, Graeme.

Coming out of the programme, Metta Eggs has emerged clearly as the focal point of its founders’ attention with much progress made in identifying marketing inputs from customer-centric approaches to specific tests of packaging and price points. With positive customer feedback gained throughout tests during the programme, marketing is moving forward through partnership conversations and through personal financial investment to enable the hiring of a marketing coordinator and design and coding expertise.

‘...the point is the whole thing has to flow, it is a business and it needs money flowing through it. I’m all for social outcome but unless there’s a strong commercial engine then we can’t help anybody. Just looking for that flow that it’s all happening at a pace and in a way that we can handle as the team grows.’ (Libby Davy)

Founder: Libby Davy  
[www.mettaeggs.com](http://www.mettaeggs.com)

## MumPower

### LEAN LESSONS IN CREATING A MULTI-SIDED PLATFORM BUSINESS MODEL

'MumPower aims to unleash the untapped potential of hundreds of thousands of UK mums who want to work but need to fit around their childcare responsibilities. The current norm in this area is still quite outdated, focusing on part-time work and job shares.'

Tim's solution to this problem was to explore a task-based service staffed remotely by mums. During the course of the programme, he found that whilst mums were keen to sign up, it was harder to persuade businesses to engage in the process of outsourcing tasks. A series of minimum viable product tests enabled Tim to keep his lean operation moving forward, although he recognised the need to bring a partner on board to keep motivation and momentum going.

Exiting the programme, MumPower is potentially one spoke to a hub that sells the task-based approach, but could deliver services via other flexible groups, such as students, within the wider labour market. To that end, a new name is in development and alternative models involving recruiters are under consideration, no doubt to be tested under lean conditions.

'In summary I've learned a lot from the Brighton Fuse approach. I have my own ideas about how to integrate design and art into my future going forwards that I wouldn't have six months ago. So it's been a very positive experience for me personally.' (Tim Williams)

Founder: Tim Williams  
[www.mumpower.co](http://www.mumpower.co)

## Brighton Fashion Week

### GROUNDING THE FOUNDERS: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON CAPTURING THE VALUE A NETWORK CREATES

Although it has been established for five years, Brighton Fashion Week is very much a showcase event that needs a business model to make it sustainable. With that in mind, Lizzy Bishop and her partner Alex Thirlwell joined the programme. They faced the difficult timing challenge of exploring the potential models that their enterprise might take whilst preparing to deliver on commitments made to Brighton Fashion Week 2014.

Lizzy and Alex experienced individual and collaborative development during the programme and found a range of collaborators, within the group, through the project team and Wired Sussex staff. These collaborations led to some innovations in Brighton Fashion Week events, notably the Sustain Debate supported by peer Long Run Communications, and also to some deep learning for Lizzy and Alex personally and professionally.

'Now that Brighton Fashion Week is over I can reflect [and] look at all the value I have created and turn it into a business plan where [we'll] capture the value.' (Lizzy Bishop)

'It's been a curious, interesting and insightful experience as we're a random bunch of people, doing our thing and I find that interesting most because it's a collaborative thing as well. We're doing it now – it's amazing what you can do when you're with all these interesting people with all these skills you don't have. This collaboration is key.' (Alex Thirlwell)

Founders: Lizzy Bishop and Alex Thirlwell  
[www.brightonfashionweek.com](http://www.brightonfashionweek.com)

# Individual/collaborative business acceleration

**A major outcome of the FuseBox24 programme was the direct contribution of creative arts, business, technology and research synthesis to achieving individual and collaborative forms of development that produced business acceleration.**

**The innovator-centred focus of the research methodologies – surveys at the beginning and end of the programme and at the end of each phase – provided a reflective context for the participants to interrogate their own capacities in sustained ways as the programme progressed, as well as how their evolution related to the collaborative possibilities stimulated by its structure and activities.**

**The formation of the main research tool, the survey, on the basis of the three founding principles of the programme – Needs, Empathy and Insight – appeared to provide participants with clear signposting towards the transformative touch-points for their self-reflective development through the programme.**

The results of the qualitative research indicate that the dual path of individual and collaborative strategies provides a highly robust format for innovators to:

- Identify, expand and strengthen their own reflective and critical sense of themselves as innovators.
- Draw on individual and collaborative resources to evolve and pivot their business propositions.
- Assist in separating individual innovators from their own business propositions in order to achieve the necessary productive critical distance to interrogate them successfully.

These results indicate that the relationship between the development of the individual innovator and the individual innovator operating in a collaborative context is central to the acceleration process and points towards new ways of supporting not just the commercial but the holistic development of enterprising, innovative and creative people.

*'My major insight about the programme, that it's just the being on the programme, the spirit, the esprit de corps, that everyone wants each other to succeed, that drives you, and for me the motivator that I've been looking for ... for five years. That's what I've found, that ethos.'*

*'Knowing that other people are interested in my start-up has given me permission to focus on it, and devote all my time/resources on it.'*

*'Because this is an interesting and wholly developmental programme – more so: experience ... and considering the core values which the programme builds from – needs, empathy, insight – this has been valuable'*



*to the nth degree in more than just start-up businesses (in my mind). I've found it has had relevance and given strong grounding in various situations, projects, tasks, ideas, relationships ... life, basically, and so, that freedom I speak of – you get what you give... and I think I've at least given attention to have learnt a thing or two to my gain and development as an individual and perhaps an "innovator"...*

*'Sharing the space with others – being surrounded by like-minded people facing similar challenges makes me feel more legitimate as an entrepreneur.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

## **GROWTH TOWARDS VISIONARY, COLLABORATIVE LEADERS**

A second major finding of the research results was the growth of the participants' sense of themselves as visionary and collaborative leaders through the experience of the programme.

When asked about their self-perception as innovators at the beginning, participants primarily responded as pathfinders, visionaries and collaborators.

As the programme progressed, their sense of themselves as visionaries and leaders grew. While the identity of pathfinder became less important, that of collaborator endured, averaging as the second most important descriptor overall.

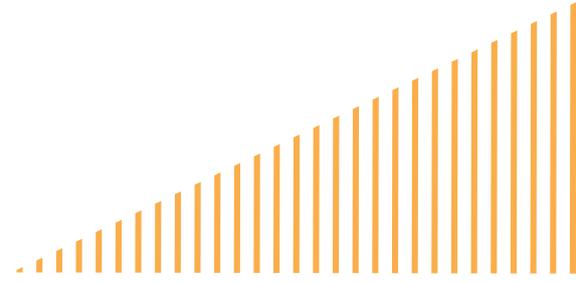
Many will find it interesting that wealth

creator scored at the bottom of self-perception through the programme, and even though this is a small qualitative study the finding may suggest further research and policy attention is required in this area, including in terms of what motivates innovators and entrepreneurs beyond the obvious goal of wealth creation. It could well be related to the changing nature of innovation in the creative and digital economy, where product and service transformations are as necessary within public and non-profit sectors as within commercial ones, and the new possibilities for business models to creatively blur or cross the boundaries between such sectors.

## **FOCUS, CLARITY AND FLEXIBILITY**

Our third major finding was the direct and significant contribution of creative arts to achieving greater focus, clarity and flexibility in participants over the course of the programme. This was the case equally in relation to individual evolution and goals as innovators as well as business propositions.

We can think of this in terms of internal and external focus. Internal focus took the form of greater self-awareness, grounding and the capacity to separate oneself from the business proposition in development. Participants reported greater clarity about both professional motivation and purpose and gave strong evidence to indicate improved external focus in the form of deeper understanding of customers, in terms of their needs, preferences and desires.



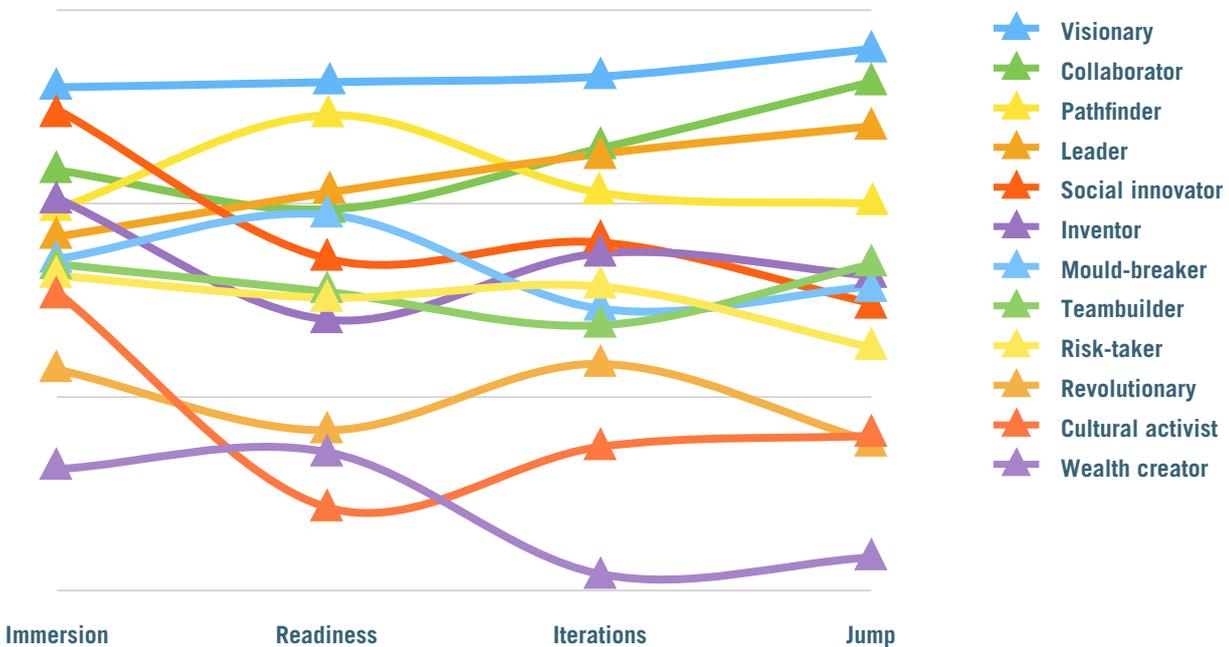
The design of the programme, and notably the structure of its inclusion of creative arts approaches, emphasised continuous and intense movement across individual and collaborative inputs to aid development. This can be viewed as aiding the flexibility, robustness and sustainability of innovative capacities to draw on internal and external resources, and to integrate the dynamics of both towards accelerated increase in focus and clarity. The alignment of internal and external focus was aided through the use of particular tools and activities, notably the use of the lean canvas throughout and the pecha kucha format presentations in each phase. As key

elements of the design structure, these emphasised the combined significance of internal reflection on critique, integrated with external feedback from the project team, the peer group and external contributors to the programme.

In this way the programme emphasised that an environment focused on continuous dynamics of individual and collaborative reflection, feedback and participation is equally important on personal and business levels to deepen insights, develop empathy and identify needs of the individual, the business, the peer group and the customer.

Reflectivity was encouraged and

**NEEDS: SELF-PERCEPTION AS INNOVATOR**



supported from the recruitment stage, and the needs, empathy and insight foundation was useful for capturing this focus at the end of each phase of the programme. Participants indicated connections between their own and group development in areas such as clarity, signalling the significance of the individual/collaborative framework.

*'We have grown an awful lot, sort of growth as myself personally and as a business and the team. So we've got a lot more answers than we've ever had before and we're a lot clearer.'*

*'I've been forced to apply focus, vision and commitment. In the process I've gone from a wide position to a narrow one and I've identified the starting points to run pilot projects and evolve case studies. So I've shifted now from the development of tools to the creation of culture and that culture is to be sustainable and the challenge lies in timing of the launch, because all must work in harmony: the product must be stable, the team needs to be ready and to achieve this I now feel that I'm ready to start up.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

Aligned to this, participants were asked how they would make their proposition a success, and the overall top-ranking factors were asking questions and visualising the problem.

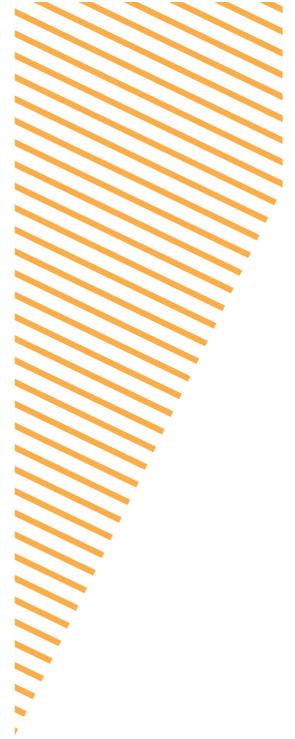
The programme provided the space and time to enable wide-ranging flexibility to develop within and across individual and collaborative journeys. Individual innovators valued access to collaborators more highly than any other aspect of the programme, and many spent time working between their own propositions and supporting others.

Encouraging collaborative work from the early stages was designed to generate a level of empathy that it was hoped would extend out towards the sector and towards customers. For some this was a distinctive element attracting them to the programme and a motivator for enrolling.

*'That term empathy really drew me into the programme. Something I've always wanted to find in a work environment a bit more. There's loads of empathy in the group compared to any group I've been involved with. There's a lot of kindness and consideration and as we get to know each other more, we can empathise more. I think we need to find a way to translate that into the business because there's sort of understanding the people around us and also to understand the person we're creating this for.'*

*'Well, I think we're a very empathetic bunch. Everyone's very lovely and talks to each other and it's nice seeing everyone going through their own journeys. I think a really lovely time was when we were out doing our ideas with the sign and I remember [another participant] having this moment of revelation in his mind and I think we all felt that with him and I kind of had my own little mini one too there and it felt really connected. I think everyone's kind of going through that journey and you're not alone and we're connecting with that and it's really lovely.'*

*'There has been a range of experiences that have highlighted empathy, particularly the activities like Bloom and the walking round town with the Hemingway story, because I've noticed empathy for myself in giving myself what I needed in that exercise because it was a bit of a challenge at times, but also empathising with members of the public and also with my co-team members, and kind of*



*empathising with the rest of the group because, as I see it, that shared empathy is empathy for self as well in our own journey and our own developments.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

As participants came to know each other more, they used the scaffolding of the programme’s core tools, such as the weekly check-in, and the open programme schedule which adorned the central wall of the FuseBox studio, and devised their own Offers/Requests/Thanks wall during the Readiness phase. The act of committing this to the wall indicated that the participants were forming and norming as a team with commitment to each other’s success.

**Examples of offers:**

Web app development, WordPress development, branding, proof-reading, website copy, mirror for business ideas.

**Examples of requests:**

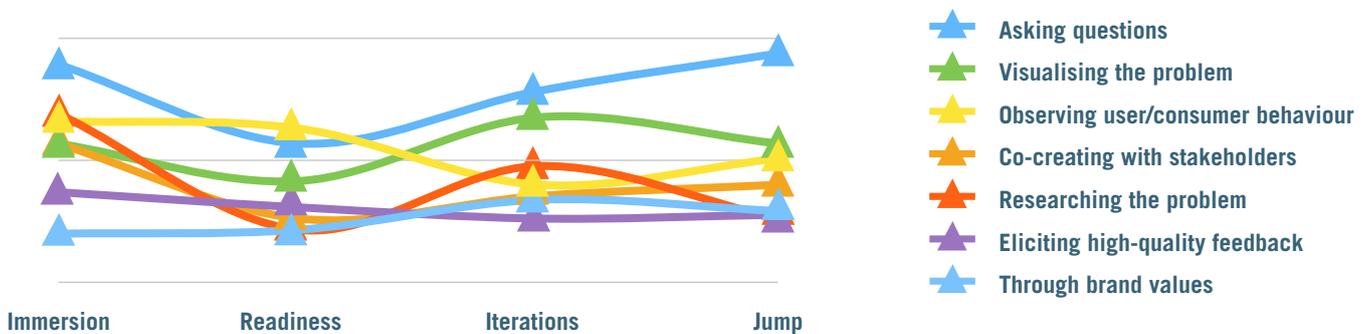
Website feedback, introductions to accountants, profit and loss forecasting help, tips for running hacks (hackathon events), contacts – small business owners and parents.

**Examples of thanks:**

Thanks for: one-to-one session, being a critical friend, introductions, advice.

*‘What we’ve pulled off, the collaboration blows me away. People’s dedication and belief ... Everywhere I see all the value I’m creating. Everything I’ve learned from this course/ programme, I see it. Completely different*

**HOW DO YOU SHAPE YOUR PROPOSITION?**



*picture, new thoughts, new attitudes, thinking outside of Brighton. Massive insight into the needs of others, my empathy with them and how I'm so grateful and how I need to help them and myself and take everything and try to turn it into something ... Huge insight into me as an individual and what I'm capable of and huge insight beyond Brighton and the bigger picture...*

– FuseBox24 participant

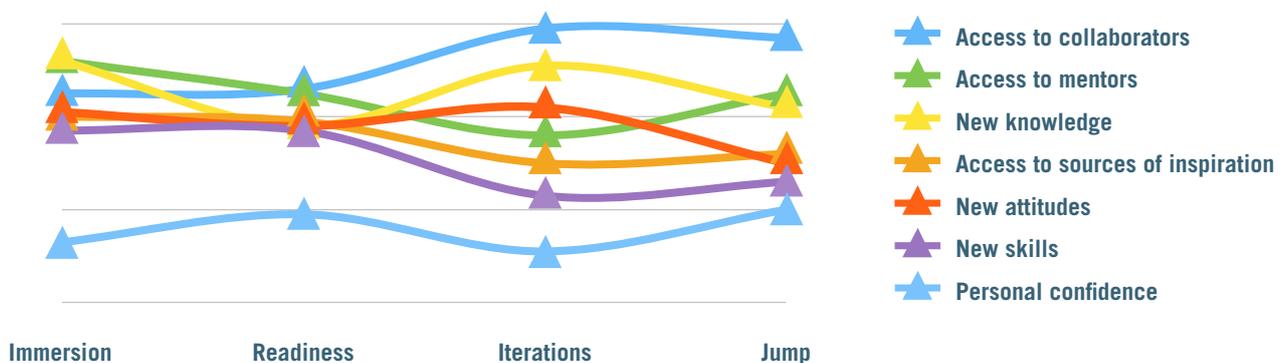
In addition to the team innovation of the Offers/Requests/Thanks wall, modes of interaction designed into the programme were also replicated outside the formal programme structure. For example, participants began to have one-to-one co-mentoring sessions with each other, specifically seeking to share expertise and build upon the trusted collaborative

support ethic that grew within the programme. This may be one reason why the anticipated value of access to mentors dropped during the middle two stages of the programme as reported through survey data.

One participant, in reflecting on the fusion he personally gained, explained how the arts approaches in particular had benefited him in very practical ways by visualising his proposition so people could engage with his proposition in a creative physical way:

*'So myself, not at all artistic, my background is very scientific, and although some of these [artistic interventions] have been massively outside of my comfort zone over the course of the programme, some of them have been very*

## PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS OF VALUE FROM FUSEBOX24 PROGRAMME



*useful. So this is our magic problem-solving machine. Six months ago I would never have done this at that type of event [Ignites] and the important thing for us was that it's not just a gimmick, we actually got more business because we did this. We had follow-up saying I loved the imaginative way that you were presenting yourselves, it really helped us engage from a business point of view.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

Other participants reflected on the value they gained from the collaborative ethos as a source of inspiration for how they will shape their organisation's innovation culture going forwards:

*'Cooperative, co-working culture. The willingness of the participants and organisers to give time and thought to others' ideas and the collaborations that have sprung up etc has been brilliant, this is definitely something we'd want to bring to the [our] team as we grow.'*

– FuseBox24 participant

## VALUING DIVERSITY AND NEW CONNECTIONS

The participants valued each other and the diversity of new connections made throughout the programme. Connections within the group became stronger leading to collaborative relationships extending as far as joint activities to learn more about the specifics of a particular audience, including in The Spark Festival. This event was run in October just after the end of the programme but devised during the Jump phase by two of the participant companies. Although their businesses

operate in completely different industry sectors, their shared interest in how young people learn enabled them to run a well attended event successfully.

In other cases, the diversity of backgrounds and interests of the participants and contributors was in itself of great importance in opening up possibilities from the purely instrumental to wider perspectives.

*'So the first thing about the programme is that it's exposed me to you guys and the all-sorts collection of individuals that we are. So it's broadened my mind by meeting and sharing experiences with people that I wouldn't normally interact with, definitely not in this context so it's been very interesting to see the different types of individuals that are out there, the different types of approaches and one of the main themes, obviously the artistic side of it.'*

*'This month we have made a conscious effort to help one another with contacts, as well as trying to connect to other people through outside the FuseBox. This has made a big difference to our options, as we have met great designers/teachers/developers etc, so hopefully we can now next month convert this into action and progress.'*

*'The FuseBox sessions have led to meetings with a number of really useful people in our sector.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

‘Too many business support models have been designed for a pre-digital world and these days appear less and less appropriate and effective.

‘This research points to a radically new approach which integrates important learning from the arts and design sectors, not only in the content of the support programme, but in its form as well.

‘It challenges many existing assumptions about how innovators should be supported and how really useful value is added to the economy.’

– Phil Jones  
Managing Director, Wired Sussex

# FuseBox24 – a new ToolBox for innovation

The Fusebox24 ToolBox features a combination of approaches and tools reflecting the integration of business, research and creative arts resources and influences tested during the project. Our case is not that in their individual forms these approaches and tools are entirely new or never previously tested. It is rather that the specific fusion of them in this project and the participants' articulation of the value of that fusion offers signposts to new ways of supporting innovators and innovation that is grounded more firmly in combined reflexive creative business skillsets.

## PEOPLE

The central focus of Fusebox24 on innovators points to the first key approach of the programme in being people-centred consistently through its design, its research strategy, its structural emphasis on links across individual and collaborative development, and the orientation of its main techniques and tools of engagement.

The collaborative dynamic and explorative character of the group of participants in committing as individuals to the programme was mirrored equally in the nature of the project team, drawing on an experimental applied mix of research, business and creative arts expertise, as well as in the wider community of supportive experts from academia, business and arts, both practitioners and thought leaders who were engaged.

This multilayered commitment to the open, individual and shared learning of the adventures and wisdom journey can be viewed as the firm foundation on which all the experimentation in the programme was undertaken, involving:

- Learning by doing: group activities as learning experiences providing inspirational access to tacit knowledge and skills development.
- Reflection and development: knowledge and skills shared by insiders (programme leaders and peers) and outsiders (external community).



Tools that are useful to support:

- Visioning and giving dimension to ideas and plans.
- Reflection and connection.
- Challenging and disrupting linear thinking.

*'Access to a community of peers has given us the motivation and support to push the idea on, having people believe in us has been immeasurably valuable!'*

– FuseBox24 participant

its acceleration.

The key approaches are located within a map defined by three core functions as follows:

- Challenge and disrupt.
- Support reflection and connection.
- Enable creation, iteration and articulation.

## INTERTWINED SPIRALS OF LEARNING

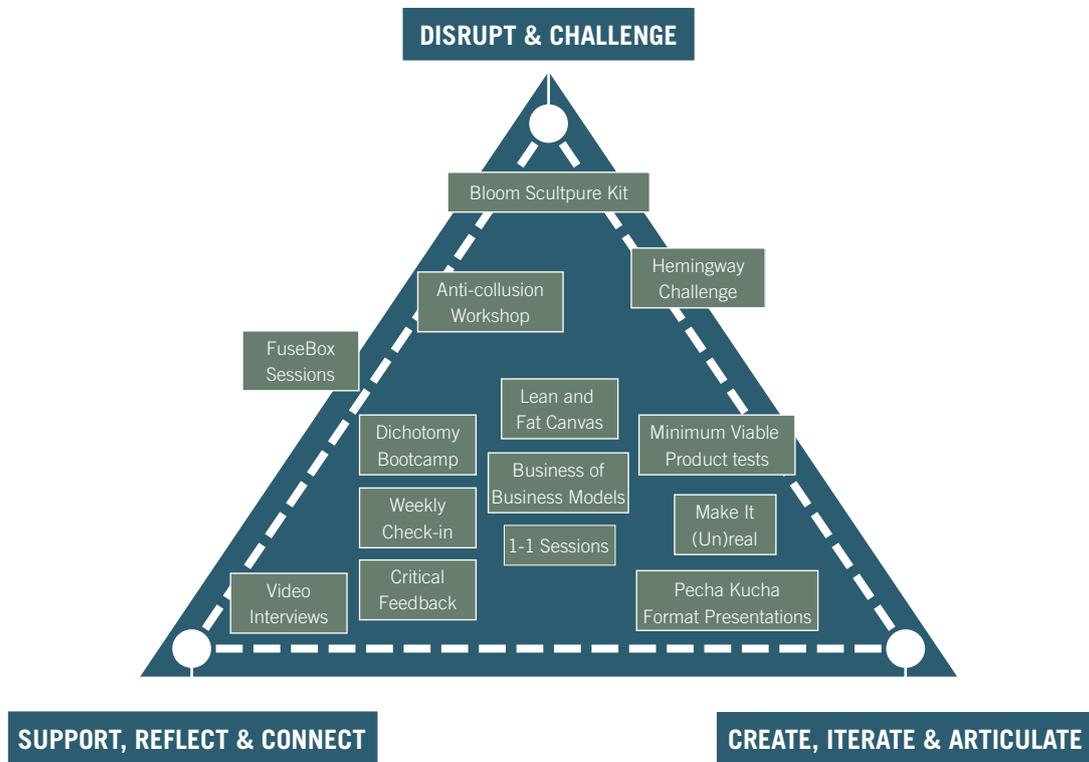
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The ToolBox features two intertwined learning spirals facilitating innovator development and business acceleration:

**The Visioning Spiral** is concerned with the development of purpose, motivation and articulation of individual and business visions. This is supported by learning experiences and knowledge focused on Ends.

**The Discovery Spiral** is concerned with testing and learning in a supported and collaborative group and real customer context focused on Means.

The design of the programme and the structure of the four phases of Immersion, Readiness, Iteration and Jump was aimed at stimulating and supporting these two spirals of learning, working around and through one another in progressive ways. This intertwined experience contributed to the robustness and sustainability of the innovator development process as well as



### TOOL 1: PECHA KUCHA FORMAT PRESENTATIONS

Format and requirements: delivering 20 visuals of 20 seconds each, ideally on a large screen in a social space with drinks and snacks (see pechakucha.com). Give an hour to briefing, a half-day session to delivery, a couple of hours to feedback.

The pecha kucha presentations in each of the programme phases proved a highly effective means of synthesising learning for individuals and for sharing with the group, in turn facilitating connection and collaboration.

The tool serves both Visioning and Discovery learning spirals and enables participants to grow many skills and personal confidence through reflection, visualisation, performance and feedback.

Survey data showed it to be among the most valued aspects of the programme by participants.

*‘Having regular check ins like the pecha kuchas gives us all an opportunity to reflect.’*

*‘Those pecha kuchas earlier in the week were really good. Seeing how everybody else has been through similar experience and where we started and where we are now, pretty incredible really, how everybody’s business is transformed and just seeing everybody else go through that and recognising that’s really normal, takes the pressure off quite a bit because sometimes you think you’re just fumbling around trying to get stuff done and you keep having to change your business idea and adapt it. But everybody’s been identifying the same thing and so I’ve been empathising with that.’*

– FuseBox24 participants

### TOOL 2: FUSEBOX BUSINESS CANVAS (LEAN & FAT)

The format of large whiteboards on wheels was adopted with an introductory session, follow-up one-to-ones and group sessions to iterate and fill in gaps collaboratively.

This single-image business planning visualisation tool is both a design approach focused on the iterative process and a means of dynamic communication, including with external stakeholders. The tool encourages flexible engagement at individual or group levels. Its communicative currency also has the strength of wide familiarity with it, including in commercial and educational usage.

The commonly used ‘lean canvas’ model evolved during the programme through collaborative exercises into the equally important ‘fat canvas’ model, where quick iterations of canvases were created with thinking about gaps in propositions.

This dual lean and fat canvas model proved a key part of the Discovery Spiral, with iterations, gap exercises and one-to-one sessions all helping to challenge assumptions. Survey data showed it to be among the most valued aspects of the programme by participants.

*‘Not having a business background, this way of working is a completely new concept to me. It has given us a manageable way to construct a business plan, and to get to the heart of a complicated idea. It’s also led to some key insights about the nature of our project, and to what extent it actually is a start-up business in*

*the traditional sense.'*

*'Good tool for showing up gaps and also for sharing with my own personal collaborators outside of the programme.'*

*'The other need was to have something like the lean canvas, where I could get it just out of my head and out of all these documents and on the page and on the whiteboard and to share that has been brilliant.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

### **TOOL 3: GROUPWARE**

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This tool features a suite of tools centrally engaging individuals and the group with the FuseBox space in creative and sharing-oriented ways. This suite includes the regular check-ins by participants on their progress, initially with members of the project team and then with just the participants themselves on a rotating basis. Feedback as part of this and other processes and continuous opportunities for critique are other elements. The anti-collusion workshop was noteworthy for the amount of disruption and debate it stimulated around issues of value and challenge as well as discomfort in use of critique, giving and receiving. This resulted in the addition of a follow-up session on the role of critique in academic and research environments and its importance to the development of self-reflective critical capacities as well as robustness.

Project team, individual and group use of the wall space in the FuseBox –

iterations of the programme, Sharing Wall – is another element enabling the Visioning and Discovery Learning Spirals. As part of the Discovery Spiral, a model of critique developed to facilitate more effective collaboration and to avoid collusion. Participants created the Sharing Wall where Skills were presented, Needs shared and Thanks given as part of this process.

The check-in tool was an anchor in the structure of the programme, serving multiple functions, including surfacing ideas and concerns and aiding facilitation of potential collaborations which the development of the Sharing Wall served.

### **TOOL 4: CREATIVE DISRUPTION**

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#### **(Bloom Sculpture Kit and Hemingway Challenge)**

This tool is rooted in using creative techniques to encourage more flexibility in collaborative attitudes and modes, in the first case of joint working on putting together a sculpture kit and off-shoot creative ideas around it, and in the second case of linking inside and outside, utilising the physical outdoors as the location of the market and customers through the Hemingway Challenge, capturing business propositions in six words to test them on the public.

These techniques served the Discovery Spiral to lead towards an informed, creative and confident customer focus and engagement. These exercises get

participants working and playing together, helping to build courage, resilience and collaborative bonding, as well as concentration on the exact nature of propositions as well as how to communicate them to the public.

The Hemingway Challenge led to threshold breakthroughs for some participants, while the sculpture kit exercise bonded the group and enabled collaborative innovation to be explored early in the programme.

*'So the clearest insight for me personally is just about being the innovator not the entrepreneur. So making sure that I don't slip into the me-too business just because there's a little less risk involved and it might be easier to secure income and clients etc. It's all about my purpose and passion and that means taking on and disrupting the communications industry... the insight I had was brilliant because it was on the streets of Brighton doing a task, the Hemingway task with a bit of cardboard and, you know, something totally alien, and it worked, it happened.'*

*'There has been a range of experiences that have highlighted empathy, particularly the activities like Bloom and the walking round town with the Hemingway story, because I've noticed empathy for myself in giving myself what I needed in that exercise because it was a bit of a challenge at times, but also empathising with members of the public and also with my co-team members, and kind of empathising with the rest of the group because, as I see it, that shared empathy is empathy for self as well in our own journey and our own developments.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

### **TOOL 5: MAKE IT (UN)REAL**

Disruptive group maker sessions utilising collected/donated recyclable/upcyclable matter (junk), stationery, glue, scissors, large amounts of cardboard, space to create a smorgasbord. Balancing the customer focus which is core to the Discovery Spiral, make it (un)real sessions are all about collaborative making and iterating. They can spiral from early stages of the programme to bond the team as well as helping to experiment and remove blockages in minimum viable product tests.

Many participants enjoyed the process, with a couple noting how much they had learned about themselves and their propositions, another having a breakthrough in terms of how he understood engaging with turning a service into a product.

*'I like to work and communicate in such a manner. I found it interesting how it gives insight into how we all think and communicate. Very interesting and with such a varied group it's especially insightful... It helped me, I think, identify something about myself as an individual...'*

*'The arts inspired activities – being regularly challenged to come out of comfort zone or head down desire to make rapid "linear" progress, being more self-aware and open, sometimes finding exciting new perspectives, insight and ideas.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

## TOOL 6: REFLECTIVE VIDEO ONE-TO-ONES

Short smartphone video interviews with participants at key stages of the programme to help develop reflective capacities and practice, which contributed to their formulation of distinctions between their needs and customer needs in particular, and helped develop empathy with themselves, the group and customers, as well as stimulating insights into a range of issues related to the programme itself, their propositions, processes, themselves and their teams. The use of this tool in addition to the survey combined the business and research modes of the programme and offered key marker points for participants to synthesise their experience and learning and reflect on it.

*'Coming in, I would describe myself as wanting to do something entrepreneurial. I'm now much more motivated by pushing boundaries and doing something genuinely new and useful.'*

*'Came in thinking this is about being entrepreneurial – main thing building the business. Realising that personal motivation is much more about being innovative. I'm not particularly strong on entrepreneurial. I have good contacts and relationships that can become strong commercial relationships but entrepreneurial business building side, less of a strength or purpose motivation, much more interested in doing what I can to unleash the innovator and bring in support to do the entrepreneurial business building.'*

*'Well actually, initially, right at the very beginning I thought the people on the programme were probably selected because*

*they're really quite astute, they've got quite wide-ranging experience and I thought that they were all conducive to that sort of open-ended question and answering. I have a background in mentoring as well so I'm quite used to asking questions according to what people tell me. But what was quite useful was for them to do the same to me. It teaches the teachers sort of thing. So actually other people without them realising it have acted as mentors to me, which has been invaluable.'*

*'But what is readiness? It's not a product and it's not a culture, it's achieving a condition, an optimum condition. And so having gone through a very robust process of testing and developing my team and products, my countdown has now begun and my job has transformed. I understand that an entrepreneur's primary job is to lead; from being a builder and developer at grassroots to being a pilot and strategist. And with my new role it feels like the start-up agenda has changed.'*

*'I just need to explore and talk to people and take opportunities.'*

– FuseBox24 participants

'This was an exciting adventure in terms of putting research into practice in new ways to further the fusion of arts, humanities and design in innovation in creative and digital economy.

'The aim was research on innovators, with innovators, for innovators. We are keen to share the lessons we have learned and believe they have much to contribute to new thinking about how innovation happens and how it can be supported.

'We want our findings to speak to as varied an audience as possible, including those in policy, business and research arenas.'

– Gillian Youngs  
Project Lead, University of Brighton

# Conclusions and policy recommendations

The FuseBox24 project has taken the findings of Brighton Fuse to the next level in demonstrating in detail how arts, humanities and design drive accelerated innovation and business creation in the CDIT sector.

FuseBox24's strategy was to focus on innovators and their development through an experimental and radical business support programme.

The FuseBox24 project found that CDIT innovators:

- Trade in ideas and content, but tend not to worry about protecting intellectual property (IP) – open innovation and collaborative approaches dominate.
- Often as sole traders or micro-businesses need shared spaces in which to collaborate with others to develop ideas.
- Need the support, capability and new tools to enable them to get the most out of collaborations for sustainable innovation.

The FuseBox24 findings demonstrated that arts, humanities and design approaches are highly effective in meeting these needs.

As well as expanding key findings of Brighton Fuse, the FuseBox24 project has taken them into new and wider terrain in relation to three areas:

1. Individual/collaborative frameworks for innovation.
2. The ToolBox approach to innovation.
3. A new research-innovation model.

This final chapter sets out key findings and their signposts for future research and innovation policy. These address business growth in the CDIT sector but they also contribute to wider thinking about innovation and how we stimulate it.

Our conclusions on these areas are based on the experimental and radical nature of the FuseBox24 programme of business support and the qualitative survey and video interview data on the participants' experience of it as well as its role in accelerating their development as innovators and businesses.



## 1. INDIVIDUAL/COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR INNOVATION

The FuseBox24 project found that CDIT innovators:

- Trade in ideas and content, but tend not to worry about protecting intellectual property (IP) – open innovation and collaborative approaches dominate.
- Often as sole traders or micro-businesses need shared spaces in which to collaborate with others to develop ideas.

Brighton Fuse findings pointed towards the importance of spaces and places for nurturing innovators, their communities of shared interests and learning, and flexible access to new knowledge and opportunities. Critical mass and access to diversity of expertise was identified as aiding cluster-level economies of scale and knowledge integration.

‘The growth of the Brighton creative and digital cluster was ... very organic. It exploited a mixture of hard-headed entrepreneurial talent with a strong focus on performance and a range of softer, more cultural features of the local environment.’<sup>17</sup>

These were important starting points for the FuseBox24 project which aimed to go deeper inside that picture and look at ways in which individual and collaborative working practices, aided by design and creative arts strategies, develop flexibility and robustness as well as capacities to be self-reflective, customer-focused and gain productive critical distance from business propositions.

The FuseBox24 programme focused on the qualities, actual and potential, of innovators within the Brighton creative and digital cluster and explored in granular and identifiable ways how individual and collaborative development can be mutually reinforcing and contribute directly to business acceleration, notably in relation to developing iterations of business propositions with strong customer focus.

The physical environment of the FuseBox in New England House was central to the concept of incubating the innovators in a common space and over time through shared learning experiences.

FuseBox24 findings highlight the importance of new kinds of incubator live lab space and innovator support programmes shaped by creative arts, business and technology fusion. These should prioritise:

- Open innovator live labs which facilitate seamless and diverse forms of individual and collaborative work and mentoring, while representing an identifiable collective space where different kinds of creative and business-development group activity take place.
- The designation of the lab as a creative and maker space as much as a tech one with activities emphasising flows across these different ways of experimenting with, thinking through and testing propositions.
- Diverse arts, humanities and design inputs and perspectives as embedded elements of the business development work as well as features of the lab space itself.

- Activities outside in the market and with customers as well as inside the lab space to actively strengthen the links between innovator development and customer awareness.
- Established and expert staff based in the lab and focused on welcoming people into the space as well as ensuring that those who use it get the most benefit out of it on a day-to-day basis.

FuseBox24 findings signal the dual power of collaborative and individual development in achieving business and customer focus and clarity. We assess this duality as central to the programme's success in supporting innovators as flexible, robust and sustainable in the development of their propositions.

The collaborative orientation built as the programme developed over the 24 weeks of its different phases. The programme provided the space and time that enabled wide-ranging flexibility to develop within and across individual and collaborative journeys. Individual innovators valued access to collaborators more highly than any other aspect of the programme and many spent time working between their own propositions and supporting others.

The Offers/Requests/Thanks wall initiated by the participants themselves is a strong practical symbol of the strengthening of the collaborative dynamic and its multifaceted nature, incorporating the need to offer assistance as well as to seek it and to have ways of recognising contributions

and their value.

Not only was the development of this wall evidence of the co-creation role of the participants themselves in the programme and its innovative tools, it was also a symbol of the complex ways in which space and creative inhabiting of it was fundamental to the programme.

The FuseBox and its open innovation orientation was at the heart of such possibilities but the focus of the programme on the individual participants and their collaboration meant that this could be understood primarily as context – as creative space connected to external mentors and networks, and somewhere to move out from towards potential customers and the market. The emphasis throughout was on making, shaping, individual and collaborative critical reflecting, testing, and remaking and reshaping.

## 2. THE TOOLBOX APPROACH TO INNOVATION

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The FuseBox24 project found that CDIT innovators:

- Need the support, capability and new tools to enable them to get the most out of collaborations for sustainable innovation.

The FuseBox24 programme has produced a ToolBox of tested strategies fusing creative arts, technology and business approaches which can easily be adopted and adapted in other contexts to support innovators of different kinds.

The tools are aimed to challenge and disrupt, support critical reflection and connection, including importantly with customers and the market, and enable and accelerate creation, articulation and iteration of propositions.

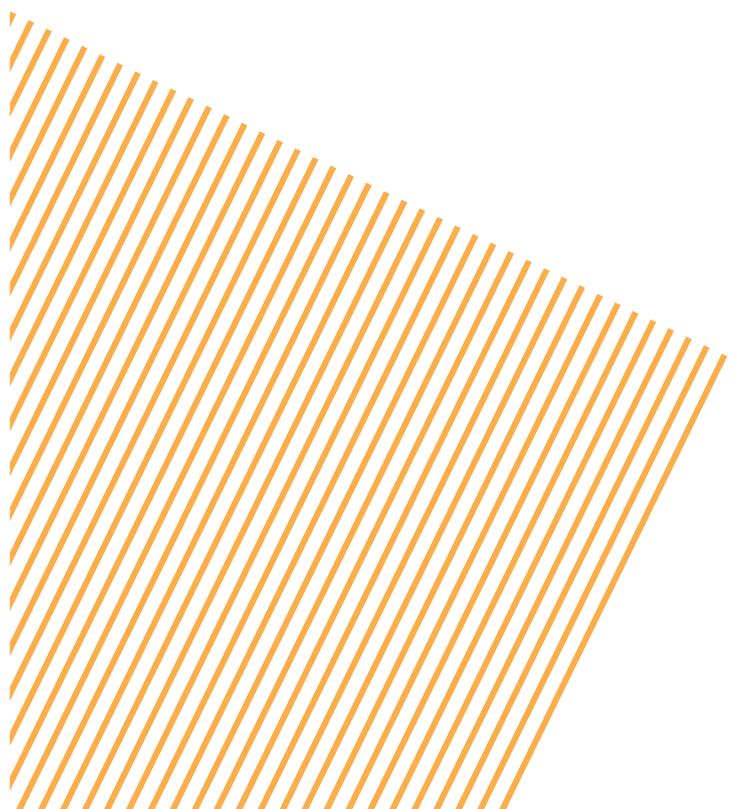
In focusing on innovators rather than single business ideas, the aim of FuseBox24 was to equip individuals with learning strategies that make them robust and sustainable innovators into the future.

The tools – focused on individual and collaborative development, creativity and critical reflection in relation to business propositions, and the needs of themselves as well as others, including customers – are accessible and open.

The presentation of the FuseBox24 ToolBox is meant to be indicative rather than comprehensive. It signals the utility and strength of bringing multidisciplinary to innovation tools

emphasising intertwined Visioning (ends) and Discovery (means) Learning Spirals.

The FuseBox24 project took up the final challenge of the Brighton Fuse report that 'creating interdisciplinary integration is difficult but can be done'.<sup>18</sup>



### 3. A NEW RESEARCH-INNOVATION MODEL

The FuseBox24 project integrated research into every stage – development, execution and assessment. It ensured a new kind of systematic perspective on what the fusion across creative arts, business and technology, means in terms of its direct impact on shaping innovators and their capacities to develop in flexible, accelerated and sustainable ways.

The model's systematic approach facilitated a new form of granular lens on how fusion works in practice and for a specific group of people. The research dimension of the model was also an intrinsic part of its experimental nature. Academic research is often in the background of real-world activities but in this case it was explicitly constructed as being in partnership in the foreground.

The fused teamwork began from a largely blank sheet and, like so much of CDIT sector innovative work itself, proved its value through learning by doing. The project was a first pass at such teamwork and demonstrated the kinds of challenges it represents, including communication across different forms of expertise and insight, as well as understandings of practice, critique and reflection, and the varied roles of creating, making and doing.

The FuseBox24 research-innovation model demonstrates that research needs to be repositioned as an integral part of new paths towards accelerated CDIT development. This means more experimentation in where and how research takes place and greater orientation to and opportunity for co-creation with artistic, business and technological practice.

Our initial testing of the model has pointed to three clear conclusions:

- In order to examine in granular fashion what fusion is, how it happens, what its impact is and how it can be further stimulated, new forms of co-creation and team-building across research, business, creative arts and technology are needed.
- When we think about fuelling innovation in the CDIT sector we must think equally about research experimentation, insight and practice, as much as we think about the other areas of practice related to it.

Building in the research component as foundational to innovation work in creative and digital economy ensures that systematic findings can be made available to wider audiences in education and all sectors of the economy, public and private, which are undergoing or will need to undergo continuous change in the CDIT era.

The focus here is on innovation fit for purpose, whether it is for profit or non-profit, service or product, creative or artistic purposes, and achieving the right mix of inputs and expertise.

The lessons we now want to share are:

### 1. Innovators

FuseBox24 focused on innovators and their accelerated development and this informed its people-centred focus and ToolBox approach.

Thinking about people from the start was threefold – the participants on the programme, other innovators who could adopt the tools developed, and those for whom the innovations would be designed.

The choice to focus on innovators was intrinsic to the programme's radical and experimental approach as well as its research orientation to open up the fusion box and explore the how and the why of integrating creative arts, technology and business.

The people-centred focus also determined the individual/collaborative orientation of the programme, ensuring that participants were as much a resource to each other as drawing on the resources provided for them.

Crucial resources were people – mentors, facilitators, storytellers. Here again the programme was taking up the Brighton Fuse challenge which emphasised the importance of 'softer cultural' dimensions as well as strong networks in the CDIT sector.<sup>19</sup>

The fusion of design, creative arts, and business tools and approaches facilitated a mutually reinforcing dynamic across the individual and collaborative developmental aspects of the programme, with innovation in collaboration among the participants

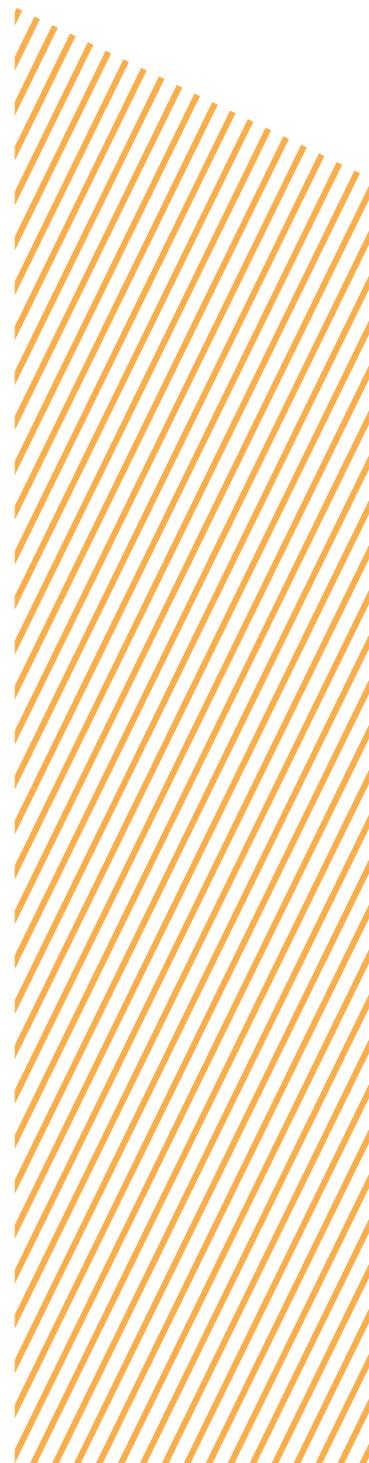
strengthening through the programme.

These processes enabled the development of a critical and reflective environment, collaborative as much as individual, which accelerated business clarity and flexibility, proposition testing, and customer awareness.

FuseBox24 required time and space for participants to work individually and creatively, to access each other and different kinds of expertise, and to be able to go beyond the FuseBox into the marketplace to encounter customers.

FuseBox24 findings indicate that institutional support for innovation may need to take more account of the importance of aiding time and space for experimental collaborative work to help create robust and sustainable innovators.

The FuseBox24 experiment indicates that while funding and support often focus firmly on individual innovations themselves, perhaps more attention should be given to supporting the collaborative development of the fused individuals who can sustainably and flexibly innovate and innovate again.



## 2. ToolBox24

The idea of a toolbox is a fairly simple and straightforward one. Everyone understands what a toolbox is and that we go to it for what we want at any particular time and leave what is not relevant to the task at hand.

This is its strength in the context of FuseBox24 findings and their potential application far beyond the confines of the CDIT sector.

Digital transformations are impacting on all aspects of life, work and leisure, health and wellbeing, business and social entrepreneurship.

Fused innovation is relevant in broad economic and social terms and should clearly be as accessible as possible to as many different audiences as possible.

The development of ToolBox24 is one of the steps along this road. The tools illustrate how arts, humanities and design approaches aid disruptive and creative thinking to fuel business innovation. The mobility of ToolBox24 is also a crucial part of its design.

While the setting of the FuseBox and its open innovation space was the location for the programme, the ToolBox24 that came out of it can be applied just as flexibly in other spaces. This is another step in taking innovation out of its usual boxes and categorisations (start-up, tech hub etc) into the wider economy and society.

It speaks to digital transformations more broadly as well as a wider audience of participants in innovation. It contributes to getting beyond the stereotype of the

young male business innovator to a more open sense of anyone, any age, anywhere, and for any purpose – micro to corporate company, charity or social enterprise, cultural or community group.

Pop-up innovation can be considered a radical notion and ToolBox24 offers resources for all kinds of businesses and institutions to think differently about how they support and further innovative practices and, equally importantly, make them more inclusive and open.

## 3. Research

FuseBox24 has demonstrated that research can play multiple practical roles in developing fused innovators in the CDIT sector.

We see this as a new and more action-oriented view of research than is understood traditionally, especially within the academy.

Just as innovators in FuseBox24 had to take their propositions outside the FuseBox to potential customers to test their value, so researchers need to go well beyond the academy to test in applied ways the value of their approaches to innovation.

FuseBox24's project methodology and research findings present fresh challenges for researchers as well as universities, and other institutions, including research funders and innovation bodies. These challenges involve stimulating and enabling new forms of partnership work integrating research in similar ways to FuseBox24's research-innovation model, which we see as just a beginning.

‘There was a spirit of personal and collective adventure – connecting the participants and the team iteratively designing and delivering the programme. “SeriousFun” one of the participants called it.

‘This felt to me like a taster of what future innovation in practice must be – in learning establishments, public services more widely and in businesses local and global – using and fusing the tools and methods from many areas of expertise, quickly learning what does and doesn’t work whilst developing a more grounded self and a clearer vision of the proposition in development.’

– James Byford  
Research Fellow

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# Appendix:

## Survey questions

### ABOUT YOU

1) Respondent identifier

### ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS/BUSINESS IDEA

2) Your business / business idea.

What is the legal status of your start-up business idea?\*

- Not yet established
- Private limited company
- Partnership
- Social enterprise
- Other

What is the focus and potential sectors your start-up business will operate in (e.g. retail, travel, financial services, creative industries)?\*

### ABOUT YOU AS AN INNOVATOR

3) What are you expecting to find most useful in this programme? Please rank in order of importance to you.\*

- Access to collaborators
- Access to sources of inspiration
- Access to mentors
- New attitudes
- New knowledge
- New skills
- Personal confidence

4) What 3 aspects or activities of the programme have been most useful and important to you so far and why? Please detail each as What: and Why: in the box below\*

5) How would you define yourself as an innovator? Please rank in order of importance to you.\*

- Collaborator
- Cultural activist
- Inventor
- Leader
- Mould-breaker
- Path-finder
- Revolutionary
- Risk-taker
- Social innovator
- Team-builder
- Visionary
- Wealth-creator

6) What gaps can you identify in your profile as an innovator with a start-up business idea? Please rank in terms of importance to you.\*

- Access to networks of expertise
- Brand
- Business model
- Finance
- Intellectual property knowledge
- Mentoring
- Sales and marketing skills
- Space
- Team
- Technology

7) What kind of communicator are you? Please rank in order of how these descriptions apply to you now.\*

- Active listener
- Articulate
- Confident
- Empathic
- Enthusiastic
- Evangelist
- Inspirational
- Lazy listener
- More conceptual

- More visual
- Natural
- Prefer speech to writing
- Prefer writing to speech
- Talk too much
- Through objects

8) How do you relate best to others? Please rank in order of your strengths.\*

- Face-to-face
- Large group
- One-on-one
- Online: Email
- Online: Skype
- Online: Twitter
- Online: Facebook
- Presenting to a gatekeeper
- Presenting to a public audience
- Small group
- Within a peer group
- Within large networks
- Within small networks

9) How would you characterise yourself in action? Please rank in order.\*

- Catalyst
- Collaborator
- Critical friend
- Enabler
- Facilitator
- Generalist
- Initiator
- Specialist
- Synthesiser
- Team member

10) What qualities do you consider as your strengths? Please rank in order of strength.\*

- Academic
- Analytical
- Creative
- Flexible
- Fun
- Instinctive
- Practical
- Pragmatic
- Reflective
- Serious
- Strategic
- Technical

11) What are your planning horizons? Please rank answers in order of importance to you.\*

- Just-in-time
- Long-term strategic (5-10 years ahead)
- Long-term visionary (25-50 years ahead)
- Medium-term (1-3 years)
- Short-term (quarter by quarter)

12) How do you shape your proposition? Please rank in order of importance to you.\*

- Asking questions
- Co-creating with stakeholders
- Creating new needs and wants
- Eliciting high-quality feedback
- Identifying consumer needs through focus groups
- Observing user/consumer behaviour
- Quantifying the opportunity
- Researching the problem
- Testing prototypes
- Through brand values
- Visualising the problem

13) How do you make your proposition a success? Please rank in order of importance to you.\*

- Clear brand and communications
- Effective plans and strategies
- Right resources in place (including financial capital)
- Right team members
- Supportive mentors
- Strong idea
- Testing and feedback
- Timing

#### **THE FOLLOWING WERE ADDED FOR THE ITERATIONS AND JUMP PHASE SURVEYS:**

As you prepare to enter the Jump phase of FuseBox24, reflecting on your experience over the last 20 weeks, what aspects of the programme, if any, will you carry forward into your business/organisation and why?\*

Reflecting on the many forms of support over the last 20 weeks, what aspects of the programme have been least useful to you and why?\*

#### **THE FOLLOWING WERE ADDED TO THE JUMP PHASE SURVEY:**

How would you describe the development mode of your current business idea?

- Idea still in exploratory mode
- Pre-start-up: Idea requiring further support and incubation
- Unfunded start-up: Idea in start-up mode without funding but with some trading
- Funded start-up: Idea in funded start-up mode

Who is involved in the current business idea? Please select all that apply.

- Still just me, the sole founder
- Co-founders
- Partners (including additional directors)
- Temporary functional roles (e.g. interns / volunteers)
- Employees in functional roles
- Advisor(s) (e.g. non-shareholders)
- Other

What financial value do you consider to have created with your business idea over the duration of the programme?

- No revenues generated yet
- Cumulative revenues between £0 and £1,000
- Cumulative revenues between £1,000 and £5,000
- Cumulative revenues between £5,000 and £10,000
- Cumulative revenues between £10,000 and £50,000
- Cumulative revenues in excess of £50,000

If no revenues have yet been generated, when do you expect to generate revenues?

- 0-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 12-24 months
- 24+ months

On a scale of 1-10 how likely would you be to recommend FuseBox24 to a friend or colleague?

1 is Highly Unlikely, 10 is Highly Likely\*

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'I am particularly interested in how my own rigorous approach of openness, experimentation, and improvisation can foster a radical and challenging, yet inclusive and inviting culture of creativity and innovation within a start-up business context.

'We quickly established an atmosphere of mutual trust with and among the participants which transformed into a tangible sense of courage and boldness.

'Notions of failure or success could sit side by side as interesting, equally desirable outcomes and, most importantly, valuable sources of learning. In short, we were all on the same journey.'

– CiCi Blumstein  
Artist in Practice

This report comes at a time when innovation in the Creative, Digital and IT (CDIT) sector is at the forefront of national agendas. There are new challenges for building 'local innovation communities' as part of the next stage of the development of the UK digital economy, already one of the strongest markets in the world and valued at more than £100 billion.

The FuseBox24 project, led by University of Brighton in collaboration with Wired Sussex in Brighton, and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), has addressed these challenges by integrating arts, humanities, design and business approaches to produce a new form of innovator support programme and shape the tools within it.