



REACT Alumni support Brief for design and delivery of services – July 2014

Background

REACT funds collaborations between arts and humanities researchers and creative companies. These collaborations champion knowledge exchange, cultural experimentation and the development of innovative digital technologies in the creative economy.

REACT is one of four Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to develop strategic partnerships with creative businesses and cultural organisations, to strengthen and diversify their collaborative research activities and increase the number of arts and humanities researchers actively engaged in research-based knowledge exchange. The AHRC Hubs foster entrepreneurial talent and stimulate innovation.

REACT is a collaboration between the University of the West of England, Watershed, and the Universities of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter.

REACT began funding collaborations in 2012, and has so far supported 45 collaborations (our Alumni projects) through the key theme areas:

- Heritage Sandbox: <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/heritagesandbox/>
- Books & Print Sandbox: <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/books-and-print-sandbox/>
- Future Documentary Sandbox: <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/future-doc-sandbox/>
- Objects Sandbox: <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/objects-sandbox>
- Play Sandbox (forthcoming): <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/play/>
- Strategic Fund: <http://www.react-hub.org.uk/other-projects/>



In Touch – part of Objects Sandbox, a collaboration between Bristol University and Kinneir Dufort.

Delivering results

As REACT nears the end of its penultimate year, it is an appropriate time to move some of our support from R&D and ideas generation to the sustainability and growth of our flagship projects, those with impact potential strong research partnerships and the capacity for growth. We aim to focus on maximising the impact that our projects are able to make. Our question is how can we take the projects we have developed and ensure that they make a significant difference, for business partners, for users and for academic partners?

More than 60% of the creative companies REACT has funded are microbusinesses, which reflects the shape of the Creative Economy as a whole. The microbusiness sector of UK PLC is extremely significant, but is often dynamic/fluid in nature, driven by creativity and invention rather than business growth and structurally 'invisible' to investment programmes.

The Sandbox method is a generative process and its major emphasis is on the delivery of a prototype rather than business readiness (although business development is undertaken alongside the three month R&D). Because of its speed and the emphasis on collaboration, at the end of a Sandbox the projects are often still at an early-stage in the R&D process – demonstrating potential but with significant gaps in confidence and market awareness.

The Sandbox programme is delivered by Watershed, whose experience is in supporting multi-disciplinary R&D in the creative technology space. Supporting the projects through their next stage of growth is a new challenge, and we are keen to learn from those with experience in this space and avoid reproducing expertise that already exists elsewhere.

REACT is therefore looking for a partner to help design and deliver a new programme of support for eight projects from the REACT alumni. The scheme must be designed to be beneficial to micro-businesses and their academic partners working in the creative economy. It must support them to develop their business to exploit the product or service they created through REACT, whilst understanding and being sympathetic to their challenges of articulating the impact of University research.

Projects will span the areas and themes that REACT has supported and will be looking for support across business planning and development, investment advice, routes to market, customer acquisition and delivering impact.

Criteria for funding projects

To qualify for funding, REACT alumni will need to demonstrate that:

- there is economic potential in their product, platform or service
- they are ready as a company to take the project forward
- there is a meaningful academic collaboration from a REACT partner university, although this does not necessarily have to be the same person as their original collaboration.

There is up to £400,000 to support eight REACT alumni projects. This funding will be used to support both academic and company time and to buy in developers/specialists needed to create a market-ready product. This amount does not include the design or delivery of the programme.

Additional challenge areas

REACT is funded by a UK Research Council, AHRC, who support world class research and post graduate training, and as such they do not explicitly support business development. AHRC does however, support academic and creative businesses to collaborate and maximise the impact of academic research on the UK economy and society.. At the ideas and the prototype stage of projects, we have repeatedly proven the value

of academic thinking and content. Our research challenge is to articulate these benefits when small companies move on to growing and scaling their first phase projects.

The delivery partner for Alumni support, will also be expected to input into research by the REACT delivery team to address the following questions:

- How might we continue to encourage small creative businesses to engage with Arts & Humanities research in a sustainable way, beyond ideas development?
- What role should Universities play in supporting creative micro business partnerships and spin outs at and beyond start up phase?
- How can we contribute to robust and sustainable outcomes and avoid creating cultures of dependency?
- What is REACT best practice in producing impact for Universities through Creative Economy engagements?

A key legacy opportunity for REACT is to develop ways that Universities can continue to work with the talent based microbusinesses that they produce.

Specification

REACT is looking for a suitably qualified partner to help design and deliver the REACT alumni programme of support, which will begin from December 2014. Final programme design is anticipated to take place in October – November 2014.

The brief is to design and deliver a twelve month programme which is tailored to the business needs of each project. It is anticipated the programme should begin with the development of individual action plans for each company. The programme will blend individual meetings, group workshops and the purchasing of specific consultancy and services.

Where appropriate to more than one company, training should be delivered in a group format.

REACT alumni have identified their needs as including:

- To develop support opportunities for projects to make impact on users, markets and businesses.
- Financial modelling
- Legal advice
- Support with company structure and governance
- Board membership and key appointments
- Identification of routes to market
- Investment readiness
- Introductions/the setting up of meetings with potential customers, clients or investors
- Pitching and deck development
- Branding
- Ethical scaffolding and company culture
- To support projects in generating and collecting evidence of the impact of their projects by working with users, markers and stakeholders.
- To support the exploitation of academic expertise in research, analysis and ethics.
- To support the placement of postgraduate students in projects where appropriate.
- To contribute to the development of University business development expertise for developing impact in Creative Economy.
- To contribute to REACT's research report in Impact for the Creative Economy

Specific support may be delivered by external specialists, this should be indicated in the response to this brief.

At the end of the programme, REACT alumni collaborations should be ready for investment, ready to deliver the product, platform or service to their first customer or have a clear pathway to financially exploit the idea in an appropriate way.

The delivery partner for this programme will be expected to liaise with the REACT delivery team to ensure the best possible support for each company.

They will design and participate in the selection of the Alumni projects. They will also be required to report back regularly to the REACT delivery team on progress as the scheme is delivered.

The budget for delivery of this brief is up to £100,000 (this is separate to the £400,000 available for direct project funding). This includes fees for design and delivery plus the cost of facilitation, group training workshops, events, showcases and anything else included in the response to this brief.

REACT will invest additional funding in PR support for the Alumni projects.

Guiding principles

In partnership with current REACT alumni, we have also developed the following guiding principles for any programme we develop in this space:

- The programme should be flexible and tailored to the needs of project
- It should offer depth as well as breadth
- It should provide access to trustworthy advice
- Support should be constructively critical and feature check-ins, to ensure progress is being made against the plan
- The emphasis should be on project win not REACT KPIs

Responding to the brief

Please provide an electronic proposal that covers the following:

- Details of your organisation and any key sub-contractors
- Briefly outline your experience in business development/developing routes to market for creative technology products/services
- Details of your networks/contacts in the key REACT theme areas
- Demonstrate how your experience would enable you to successfully deliver the requirements outlined in this brief.
- Indicate how you would respond to the challenges of a) building sustainable academic collaborations with start-up businesses and b) the variety of industries and sectors that the projects will operate in
- Set out how you propose to undertake this work
- Set out all relevant costs associated with delivering this work
- Provide names, addresses and contact details for two referees with whom your organisation has worked in a related role during the last 5 years.

Final deliverables and KPIs for the programme will be developed in partnership with REACT.

Responses should be submitted by email to Clare Reddington, REACT Executive Producer, clare.reddington@watershed.co.uk by 1 October 2014.

Interviews will take place on 15 October 2014.

If you have questions/points of clarification on this brief please contact Alison Davis on Alison2.Davis@uwe.ac.uk or +44 (0) 117 3708878

Evaluation criteria

We will weight our evaluation of all responses as follows:

1. Experience of lead contractor - 40%
2. Proposed programme design – 40%
3. Value for Money – 20%