



Digital R&D Fund for the Arts: Evaluation – Response from Arts Council England, Nesta and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Arts Council England, Nesta and the Arts and Humanities Research Council welcome the findings from Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy's evaluation of the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts. This programme represented a major commitment and investment from the partners to support experimentation with collaborative R&D processes across the arts and cultural, academic and technology sectors. The evaluation sets out the breadth and scope of the work undertaken and reflects on the impact of the Fund on both funded organisations and the wider landscape.

The report clearly shows that the programme had a major impact on R&D Fund participants, and a positive effect on the wider arts and cultural sector. Notable impacts focused on audience development through use of technology; networks formed through collaboration with new partners; and changes to business operations and working practices, particularly within arts and cultural organisations.

The Fund has acted as a demonstrator, providing unique insights into the ways in which researchers and technology companies can collaborate with arts and cultural organisations and engage in mutually beneficial knowledge exchange. All three fund partners remain committed in their ongoing work to supporting research and development within the arts and culture and across the intersections between academic and technology communities.

Follow on work to the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts

The Digital R&D Fund for the Arts in England came to an end in December 2015, however a number of follow-on activities involving the funders are in train:

- Arts Council England and Nesta have collaborated to create a follow-on Accelerator Programme, designed to provide intensive business-planning and investment readiness support to nine arts and cultural organisations who had participated in the Fund. This initiative responds to Tom Fleming's evaluation work, which identified that a number of the funded projects showed potential for further development, but would require additional investment.¹
- While Tom Fleming's evaluation covers many of the immediate and short-term outcomes of the Fund in-depth, there is less exploration of the intended longer term impacts. The AHRC will continue to track the academic outputs of the research partners, in order to more fully establish the impact of the Fund from the research perspective.

¹ See, <http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/accelerator-arts-supporting-projects-digital-rd-fund-arts>



- In 2017, Arts Council England and Nesta will repeat the Digital Culture survey, which tracked the perception, usage and impact of digital technology on the wider arts and cultural sector over the life of the fund. The 2017 survey will seek to gain insights into the longer term impacts that the fund has had on its participants.²
- Alongside the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts, the AHRC have funded Dr Elizabeth Lomas, University College London, to propose definitions of R&D in the arts and culture that can be used to inform public policy in an area which is conventionally restricted to science and technology. A report will be released in 2016 to showcase the research.

² See, <http://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/digital-culture-2015>