The UK’s only creative-business incubator for designer-makers is using the Creative Employment Programme to support its studio-holders through the process of taking on their first employee and growing their micro-businesses.

Cockpit Arts applied for CEP funding on behalf of a consortium of 22 studio-holders to create 11 paid internships and three apprenticeships for unemployed young people, shared across their London studios.

Cockpit Arts produces an annual research report into the growth of the 170 micro-businesses housed within their incubators. The reports show that designer-makers that take on additional employees demonstrate higher growth rates than their counterparts.

Background

Cockpit Arts provided in-house business coaching to help participants to identify specific skills or growth-gaps within their businesses. This enabled the businesses involved to create job opportunities in areas where there was a genuine need for support, such as greater making capacity, marketing and social media.

Key facts

- CEP grant awarded was £35,200
- Size of company is micro businesses (1– 8 members of staff)
- Located in London (Holborn & Deptford studios)
- Art form: Contemporary Craft designer-makers

Business support
Benefits of a consortium

Accessing the Creative Employment Programme funding as a ‘consortium’ enabled the designer-makers to share employees across two or more of their micro-businesses, drastically reducing the risk both financially and in HR terms.

By sharing employees there is greater potential that one of the participants will be able to generate enough growth to take on the young person as full time employee.

The intern or apprentice also benefits from the opportunity to expand their professional network across more than one business and learn a wider range of skills.

Staff development

Cockpit Arts saw another benefit of working in a consortium because of an increased potential to attract external investment.

A series of three workshops looking at Team Insights, Performance Management and Coaching & Feedback skills have been developed specifically for Cockpit Arts by the Learning and Development Corporate Banking Division at Royal Bank Scotland (RBS).

RBS will train the designer-makers directly but will also develop worksheets and run a ‘train the trainer’ programme to ensure there is a lasting legacy of recruiting and developing young talent across the contemporary craft sector.

Testimonial

Imogen Gray is the Business Information Manager at Cockpit Arts:

“The Creative Employment Programme has already had a big impact at Cockpit Arts. It has allowed many of our studio HOLDERS to take the leap into being an employer for the first time with reduced risk.”

“We hope it will demonstrate that taking on employees has real benefits long term and help to change the legacy of unpaid work experience in the arts.”

“Although it’s been greatly rewarding watching the programme unfold it hasn’t been without its challenges. Many of our studio-HOLDERS have never written a job description or interviewed someone before, let alone set up a PAYE system or written a contract. Obviously as an incubator we are set up to deal with these challenges, but I can imagine that it might be more challenging for designer-makers without this network of support.”
“Creative & Cultural Skills has been incredibly helpful in supporting our application and we are really pleased that it’s now all coming together. We already have four young people in the studios and they’ve already added a lot of value, both in their skill sets and their personalities.”

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Creative & Cultural Skills gives young people opportunities to work and learn in the creative industries. We want to ensure that employers benefit from a skilled generation of talent and continue on a course of economic growth.

Our network of industry and education supporters – the National Skills academy for Creative & Cultural – is open to those who are committed to the provision of high quality creative education and training, apprenticeships and careers advice.

Together we’ve created over 3,500 Creative Apprenticeships in the UK since 2008. Creative & Cultural Skills is the National Provider for the Creative Employment Programme.

Visit www.ccskills.org.uk for more information.

The Creative Employment Programme is a £15m fund provided by Arts Council England to support the creation of traineeships, formal apprenticeship and paid internship opportunities in England for young unemployed people aged 16-24 wishing to pursue a career in the arts and cultural sector.

Positions created will be in a wide range of disciplines, from technical to administrative roles, provided they are located in England and fall within the Arts Council England’s footprint of: Music, Dance, Theatre, Literature, Visual Arts, Contemporary Craft, Combined Arts, Carnival, Circus, Galleries, Museums, and Libraries.

Visit www.creative-employment.co.uk for more information.