



iMayflower

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Context

iMayflower is an ambitious project to build Plymouth's Creative Industries, with a focus on immersive and digital technologies. The project includes a £3.5 million grant from the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) - a programme from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Arts Council England designed to enable transformative culture-led economic growth and productivity.

iMayflower is a partnership between the University of Plymouth, Plymouth City Council, Real Ideas Organisation, Plymouth College of Art, Mayflower400, Destination Plymouth, Creative England and Crowdfunder UK. The consortium supports businesses and communities across diverse sectors including the Creative and Cultural Industries, Marine, Advanced Manufacturing, Health and Wellbeing and Tourism.

Funding and key activities

The project commenced in 2019 and will end in September 2023. In addition to the CDF grant, the project includes £2.5 million in match funding from partners. The University has invested over £190k HEIF in direct and indirect match funding to deliver iMayflower, create linkages with other funded KE projects such as the South West Creative Technology Network, Cultivator and Engaging Students in KE, and enable a wide range of activities, including:

- Capacity and capability to connect our world-class facilities for Digital Fabrication and Immersive Media with businesses, students and staff to develop innovative products, services and experiences.
- IGNITE Festival of Creativity and Digital Platform to showcase the creative talent of our students, connect them with employers and retain talent in Plymouth.
- iLead Creative and Cultural Leadership Development Programme to drive cross-sector collaboration and respond to city-wide challenges around Creative Placemaking, Immersive Futures and Sustainability.
- Innovative Placements Scheme to pair students and graduates with businesses to help accelerate research and development.
- Plymouth Startup Weekend to encourage and enable budding entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs to thrive.
- Upskilling, networking and awareness raising events and initiatives for staff and students; focusing on the inclusive use of digital platforms and improving interactions with businesses.



The Bridge

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Process and outputs

The University of Plymouth's role was to deliver the key activities outlined in Section A, working alongside Plymouth City Council and the other consortium partners:

Creative England

Are delivering a programme called Ideate Plymouth; providing mentoring, consulting and targeted business support for businesses who are using or looking to start using immersive technology, across diverse sectors such as marine, entertainment, education and medicine.

Plymouth College of Art

Are delivering the Smart Citizen Programme; opening the Fab Lab Plymouth to communities, supporting citizens to develop skills to design and make their own objects, products and artwork using digital fabrication and cutting-edge technologies. The programme includes a series of free events, workshops and training; creating unique opportunities for anyone interested in tech.

Crowdfunder

Are running an iMayflower crowdfunding campaign; helping creative digital ideas become a reality in Plymouth and the surrounding area. The programme provides an extra cash injection of £250 alongside the funds raised from the crowd. There's also one-to-one expert crowdfunding coaching to 10 of the best ideas.

RIO

Some key highlights of RIOs deliverables include:

- Working with partners to deliver the Illuminate Light festival
- Online workshops focused on Cities of Learning digital badges and a whole host of workshops around how social enterprises are helping young people to become the workforce of the future
- Launching the incredible Market Hall - a new digital innovation hub and home of the new 360° immersive dome; an incredible asset for the city.

Strategic Alignment

iMayflower delivers against a number of government priority areas, as well as the strategic objectives of RE-UKRI and OfS, including:

- Encouraging engagement and collaboration between researchers, government, industry and the public; catalysing world-class KE by connecting and working in partnership with diverse communities; developing an inclusive and high quality research and innovation ecosystem.
- Supporting the delivery of the UK Research and Development Roadmap; for example, through securing economic and societal benefits from research, supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups, enabling place-based growth and R&D.
- Ensuring that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers.

For more information on the outputs mentioned above, please visit:

<https://www.creativeengland.co.uk/ideate-plymouth/>

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/programmes/plymouth-creative-economy>

<https://illuminate-festival.co.uk/>

<https://realideas.org/event/badging-for-the-new-economy/>

<https://realideas.org/our-spaces/market-hall/>

Evaluation and Impacts

iMayflower has delivered significant societal, economic and student benefits, including:

- Increased quantity and quality of engagement with businesses, social enterprises and organisations in the voluntary and community sector, leading to increased growth, productivity and capacity for innovation.

- Growth in the number of staff and students participating in KE and the development of mutually beneficial, interdisciplinary projects, partnerships and collaborations.
- Alignment of HEIF funded activities with key enterprise and employability initiatives; bringing students from different disciplines together to work on real-world challenges and improve connectivity and dialogue with external organisations.

Evaluation

As a flagship national funding programme for DCMS, iMayflower has been subject to a national evaluation undertaken by Steer economic development consultants, and a local evaluation undertaken by Wavehill social and economic research. Both investigations have adopted a mixed-methods approach to review the management, implementation and delivery of the project and its activities and to determine the performance of iMayflower in achieving its overall aims and objectives and its overall socio-economic impact.

The interim evaluation reports have shown that iMayflower has been highly successful; delivering a significant proportion of the intended programme of activities and events despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, and demonstrating creativity and agility in restructuring others in response to the requirements of Covid-19. There have been some challenges and areas of learning from the delivery, for example, in relation to project management, governance and data reporting and sustainability, and the evaluations have yielded a number of actionable insights and recommendations through which to address these issues in the future.

From the perspective of the HE partner, the project has enabled essential capacity-building and talent investment; working with people long-term to build their careers whilst also enhancing the University's ability to deliver outreach and KE at scale. Internal connectivity and connection to the external ecology (project partners, creative and business networks, communities of interest etc.) has been significantly enhanced, and this has been capitalised upon to drive new collaboration opportunities. iMayflower has enabled the HE partner to keep track of emerging priorities (city- and region-wide) in order to ensure that future plans are aligned, responsive and

continuing to meet the evolving needs of project stakeholders and the creative community.

iMayflower has revealed that it's important to strike a balance between Experimentation on the one hand (testing new ideas and innovations) and Exploitation on the other - taking the things that work and embedding them in normal working practice.

The iMayflower team is striving to ensure that their approach to partnerships is more intentional and strategic, rather than reactive. It's important that relationships with partners are defined and balanced, to make sure they're delivering mutual value and understanding and that they're authentic in terms of trusting and respecting each other.

Finally, sustainability is the single biggest issue; how to keep the project going and move to increasingly efficient ways of working.

You can read case studies of some of the projects and activities supported via iMayflower here: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/business-partners/the-bridge/case-studies>

Additional Information

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/business-partners/the-bridge/south-west-creative-technology-network>

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/esif-funded-projects/cultivator>
<https://www.ignitefutures.co.uk/>