



Members of Northumbria University's Creative Fuse North East project team

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## Business support to spark innovation

**Small businesses from the North-East are being invited to take part in fully-funded, action-packed creative workshops to gain a fresh perspective on opportunities and challenges, develop ideas for new products and services, and share experiences with other local businesses.**

'Get Ready to Innovate' is a high-intensity innovation support package delivered by Northumbria University's project team for [Creative Fuse North](#)

[East](#). Across three half-day workshops, businesses will be challenged and supported to see their organisation through different perspectives. Participants will also be offered the opportunity to receive a one-to-one innovation support session to develop a strategy for implementing the ideas explored within the workshops.

Nate Sterling, a Research Assistant in Northumbria's Creative Fuse team, said: "This innovation support package is perfect for anyone who has the seeds of a new idea for their business, for those who feel ready to grow their business but aren't sure where to start, or for those who are struggling to find the time to work on their ideas and 'passion projects'. Through design techniques and tools we will help each participating business realise their ideas.

"Our team of expert design-led practitioners will use a variety of tools to help small businesses and sole traders challenge their current thinking and generate new ways to create value.

"Each participating business or sole trader will have its own facilitators to guide them through the process during the workshops. Afterwards, each business will have an additional one-to-one session with our innovation experts to drill down deeper and focus on developing their ideas further."

During the first workshop, Northumbria University's experts will work with those attending to capture the basics of their business and explore initial ideas. The team will help attendees to look at their business with a fresh perspective and begin to look forwards. Participants will gain first-hand experience of taking a design-led approach to spark innovation and create new ideas.

The second workshop gives participants the rare opportunity to dream about the future and imagine 'what if...?' The third workshop explores which of the 'what ifs...?' might be feasible and how to put into practice the first sparks of an idea.

After completing the workshops, each business will receive a one-to-one session with Northumbria University's innovation team to reflect on key learning points and turn ideas into strategy.

One previous participant of the workshops said: "I wanted to let you all know

how much we valued the work you did. We have changed our process approach radically already. Thanks for all your support over the last few weeks. I feel we have taken a jump forwards and it's down to both the program you took us through and the gently challenging manner you all adopted."

The 'Get Ready to Innovate' workshops take place on Wednesday 28 February (9.30am to 12.30pm); Wednesday 7 March (1.30pm to 4.30pm); and Wednesday 14 March (9.30am to 12.30pm) at the Northern Design Centre in Gateshead. An additional three hours of one-to-one support will then be scheduled at a time convenient to each participant or participating organisation.

The fully-funded support package is available to SMEs, registered sole traders, micro-business and registered freelancers from the public, private, or voluntary sector within the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area: Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Northumberland, Sunderland, and most of County Durham.

For more information or to register for the programme, please email Dr Elena Gorman, Project Development Manager, at [northumbria@creativefusene.org.uk](mailto:northumbria@creativefusene.org.uk).

Creative Fuse North East, which runs until October 2018, is a partnership between Northumbria, Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside universities. It is a multi-disciplinary, multi stakeholder action research project which explores the social, economic and innovation value of the Creative Digital and IT (CDIT) sector in the region. Alongside this research strand, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts Council England and European Regional Development Funds are being used to support direct engagement with creative freelancers and SMEs in the sector, developing innovative collaborations and approaches and promoting economic growth.

Creative Fuse aims to encourage businesses to share best practice and adopt new innovative working practices to help the creative, digital and IT sector become more resilient and encourage growth, creating more and better jobs for the region. The project also looks at how skills in the creative, digital and tech sector can be used to stimulate innovation in many of the region's other key sectors.

[View embedded content here](#)

[Creative Fuse: Get Ready to Innovate at Northumbria](#) from [Creative Fuse North East](#) on [Vimeo](#).

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  - If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) or call 0191 227 4604.
  - Creative Fuse North East is a unique collaboration between all five universities in the North East of England: Newcastle University, Durham University, Northumbria University, the University of Sunderland, and Teesside University.
  - The project, which will run until October 2018, is a multi-disciplinary, multi stakeholder action research project which explores the social, economic and innovation value of the Creative Digital and IT (CDIT) sector in the region. Alongside this research strand, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts Council England and European Regional Development Funds are being used to support direct engagement with creative freelancers and SMEs in the sector, developing innovative collaborations and approaches and promoting economic growth.
  - Creative Fuse North East was launched on 1 December 2016 and



its aim is to ensure the CDIT sector in the region becomes more resilient, grows faster and creates more and better jobs in a sustainable digital economy.

- European Regional Development Fund - The project has received up to £892,638 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Department for Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for ERDF. Established by the European Union ERDF funds help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>
- Further information about Creative Fuse North East can be found on our website <http://www.creativefusene.org.uk>, or via Twitter @CreativeFuseNE

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