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BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

STEAMhouse Phase 1.5 Info Pack

Version #3
April 2021



Welcome to STEAMhouse

Powered by Birmingham City University in partnership with Eastside Projects, and funded by the European Regional Development Fund, STEAMhouse is a place for creative thinking, innovation, prototyping, making and business development.

STEAMhouse is a space to experiment, test and develop new knowledge. At the project's heart are five key principles:

- Conversation
- Exploration
- Collaboration
- Openness
- Newness

Our big mission is to support entrepreneurs, sole traders, companies, and individuals to develop new ideas and prototype products and services. We do this by bringing science, technology, engineering, mathematics and the arts together in one place.

The STEAMhouse Phase 1.5 programme is open to sole traders and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with a focus on four sectors:

- Creative & Digital
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Health & Life Sciences
- Low Carbon

Each month we select up to 20 applicants to become members of our programme. Becoming a member gives you access to exclusive online events, bespoke technical and business support, remote prototyping facilities, and a wide network of existing members, academics and business links, at no cost to you.

Until early 2022 the majority of STEAMhouse's offer will be delivered online and remotely. In Autumn 2021 we move from our site in Digbeth into a new purpose-built building on BCU's main City Centre Campus which will open in early 2022. At this point members will once again be able to access our well-equipped makerspace which provides facilities and equipment to support prototyping and making in a wide range of digital and physical media and materials.

What's on Offer

Membership on the Open, Product and Research strands lasts for 12 months.

STEAMhouse's fully funded offer is currently being delivered entirely online. By becoming a member of STEAMhouse you benefit from free access to our programmes, equipment and expertise including:

- Free access to skilled technicians who can provide support and training to help you

translate ideas into prototypes and products. This includes 1-2-1 support and access to our informal TechCafe meet-ups every Monday (4–5pm) and Friday 11am–12noon.

- Free workshops, many of which blend live sessions and online, self-paced learning, run by our technical team and industry experts and focused on building the knowledge you need to make and develop projects, products and prototypes. Including workshops in digital software including Fusion 360, Blender, Illustrator, Z-brush and Unity, short courses in Biomaterial development and physical making like laminating wood, or casting and mouldmaking.
- Free, tailored business support – Business Planning, Action Planning and a wide range of STEAM sprints (Design Thinking workshops) and STEAM Lab; skills development sessions and masterclasses led by industry experts.
- 1-2-1 mentoring, coaching and support.
- Regular opportunities to take part in networking and knowledge sharing events like VR Birmingham, Maker Monday and the annual STEAM Conference.
- Grants of up to £2,500 which members can apply for once they have completed a minimum of 12 hours support. These grants support prototyping costs, including buying materials and include compulsory specialist IP and commercialisation advice.
- Expert support and the opportunity to develop research interests with STEAMhouse Academics.

STEAMhouse also opens the door to a wide range of other support provided by Birmingham City University, including knowledge exchange programmes, access to graduate talent, the [STEAMincubator](#) and other business support services through [BCU Advantage](#).

Who we Support

To be eligible for our fully funded programmes you must:

- Be self-employed or a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) of between 1 to 250 employees. You can be a start-up or an established business, and can be a self-employed sole-trader, partnership or limited company.
- Provide either a UTR number (for self-employed sole traders) or a Company Registration number when you apply.

We primarily work with enterprises who are registered within the GBSLEP region which covers the following locations:

- Birmingham
- Bromsgrove
- Cannock Chase
- East Staffordshire

- Lichfield
- Redditch
- Solihull
- Tamworth
- Wyre Forest

If you are based elsewhere in England and think you have a project, product or service which could benefit from STEAMhouse's support, you are still welcome to make an application.

And have a focus on four growth sectors:

- Creative and Digital - includes businesses and sole traders across the creative industries including art, performance, design, architecture, gaming, immersive technologies.
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Health and Life Sciences
- Low Carbon

What we need from you

- You need to commit to at least 12 hours of STEAMhouse support, and complete simple end-of-project reports outlining the product or business development that has taken place with our support.
- We welcome enterprises with projects at all stages of development, from research and concept phase onwards, but you do need to come to STEAMhouse with an idea.
- Your proposal to STEAMhouse must develop your business in some way, whether by creating a new product or service or acquiring new skills or technical knowledge which you can apply to product development. We are not able to support businesses who simply want to carry on doing 'business as usual'.
- We are particularly interested in businesses who want their product or service development to be enabled by digital technologies. This does not mean you have to develop a wholly digital product – for example digital technologies might be used as a design tool or might be something you explore as one element of a more expansive R&D process.

Costs

STEAMhouse programmes are free to eligible enterprises as they are generously supported by ERDF, Birmingham City University and Eastside Projects.

How to get involved

We strongly recommend you attend a **Pre-Application Workshop** before applying. We run them every month - you can sign up on our events page [HERE](#)

To apply you need to complete an online **Registration Form**. You will find it on the JOIN page of our website [HERE](#).

The form asks for:

- Information about your business
- A short proposal (500 words max) which explains what you want to do at STEAMhouse, why you want to do it and how it will enable you to develop your business.

When making a decision we assess your proposal against the following areas. The strongest proposals address at least some of these questions:

- **Creative Potential:** How strong is the creative thinking? How creative is the idea? Is it underpinned by research? Is there evidence of track record and/or prior creative development?
- **Innovation Potential:** How innovative is the proposal? How likely is the business to innovate? Will new thinking or work emerge?
- **Concept Validity:** Is there evidence that users, customers or clients want the proposed product or service? Is there any market knowledge or analysis?
- **Digital Development:** What could the use of digital technologies enable? Has the business identified how digital processes could unlock new knowledge or innovation potential?
- **Business Development:** Is there a business vision? Has the applicant identified any business development needs?
- **Impact:** What is the potential impact of STEAMhouse's support on the business? Are there wider potential impacts on the sector/ across sectors/ society? Will the business contribute to STEAMhouse and its community?

Our selection panel meets each month to assess applications. Each month we recruit up to 20 new members across the Open, Product and Research strands.

The Strands

The STEAMhouse programmes are built around three strands which have been designed to support a range of sole traders and enterprises to build a bespoke programme from the suite of workshops, 1-2-1's and group support on offer.

Business support underpins all routes and members are encouraged to take a holistic approach, considering all aspects of their business as they prototype and develop their new product or service and take to market, whatever that product or market might be.

On the application form you will be asked to identify the strand you think best fits your proposal and business on the application form.

Product Strand – for businesses who want to prototype and develop new products or services. Membership lasts for 12 months. This route splits into two pathways:

- Production Space Pathway – for those who want to produce a physical prototype or product - members benefit from the entire suite of STEAMhouse support.
- Business Pathway – This is a flexible, bespoke support programme for businesses that already have an early or defined idea and are looking to take a service or product to market that does not require physical prototyping.

Open Strand – for artists, designer makers and other cultural producers who want to develop their business by producing new creative work or services. Membership lasts for 12 months.

- Open Strand members benefit from the entire suite of STEAMhouse support alongside specialist support led by [Eastside Projects](#).

Research Strand – for businesses seeking expertise and knowledge exchange support from BCU academics to aid their business research interests and understanding to assist innovation across three (not exhaustive) areas of academic support. Membership lasts for 12 months

- a) Academic knowledge for R&D purposes increasing innovation benefits,
- b) The application of that knowledge for enterprise benefits,
- c) Engaging users in technology assisted product and service solutions.

Challenge Strand - for any type of business classed as a small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) who wants to tackle a specific product, service, or social challenge.

- Challenge Strand members are supported through collaborative, creative and skills based workshops totalling 12 hours. The aim of the workshops is to help businesses understand the problem they want to tackle from multiple perspectives and uncover opportunities to create new projects, products or services that tackle the challenge. Workshops on offer include [STEAM Sprints, STEAM Labs and STEAM Challenge Events](#). Ideas generated in the Challenge Strand can be carried over into the Product or Open Strand to develop further with support from STEAMhouse.

If you have any further questions, drop us a line on steamhouse@bcu.ac.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!