CURATING INNOVATION

AN EVALUATION OF MEDIA SANDBOX 2010

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JUNE 2011

EXECUTİVE SUMMARY

Digital and creative industries are identified by Government and market analysts as among the UK's strongest growth sectors. Growth is driven by innovation, which in turn is largely driven by the micro-enterprises that proliferate in these industries. Yet, focused on generating short-term revenue through client work, these tiny firms often lack the time, resources and contacts necessary to transform early-stage ideas into marketable prototypes that will ignite significant business growth. Media Sandbox, an R&D commissioning scheme delivered in Bristol by Watershed's iShed, meets this need through providing time, space and money for the structured experimentation and focused risk-taking that enable creative businesses to achieve their potential. More than simply investing in good ideas, Media Sandbox curates innovation.

Media Sandbox is a meticulously produced scheme that offers digital companies rare breadth and depth of support to research, develop and trial innovative ideas using new technologies. With community, connection and communication at its heart, Media Sandbox fosters the conditions under which innovation flourishes. The result is a suite of new digital products and services that intrigue and delight, and have social, cultural and commercial applications beyond their immediate markets.

What sets Media Sandbox apart is the richness of a programme that offers benefits stretching beyond money. For established enterprises and start-ups alike, funding affords an essential opportunity to focus on ideas that they have put aside whilst generating short-term revenue through client-led work. Yet the real value of this scheme is in the full suite of support offered: business advice, a peer community, profile and promotion, legal advice, expert facilitation, and connections with industry leaders.

In 2010, Media Sandbox supported seven new projects under two strands, B-Open and Pervasive Experiences. B-Open gave digital companies access to newly released open data in order to develop innovative services, applications and interfaces. Pervasive Experiences supported groundbreaking ideas using senses and sensors to create new models of digital interaction, putting mobile, wireless and sensory technologies at the heart of experience design.

Sculpting with Scent, Moksha

Biofeedback in Gaming, Remode

Time and resource to research, experiment, play and ultimately to develop new products is crucial if a business is to grow in any significant way. In Sandbox, investment in R&D is supported by intensive business and legal mentoring to maximise the value of intellectual property. The scheme not only offers a chance to develop great ideas but with a focus on practical, commercial outcomes, it also enables the IP on those ideas to be retained and potentially exploited. For agencies operating in the creative services arena, where IP is regularly given away to clients, this is an essential step in achieving competitive advantage in the market and establishing new business models. The upshot, long term, should be stronger, more sustainable, and market responsive businesses achieving their potential for growth.

This year's increased emphasis on business development alongside the creative innovation process has been extremely beneficial, achieving a deft balance between applying commercial focus where needed whilst allowing plenty of space for experimentation. Companies have been supported to spot market potential, identify revenue streams, and explore business models. This commercial direction means that all seven projects have completed the programme with a clear sense of next steps and routes to market.

Community is at the heart of the Media Sandbox ethos: knowledge sharing and networking are hardwired into programme design, fostering professional relationships founded in trust. Especially for firms used to working under non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), the ability to hone ideas through open dialogue with other successful, creative businesses is invaluable. The relationships are equally important for participants' core business and look likely to be sustained beyond the scheme, with firms already passing business to each other.

The community also includes a panel of expert advisors who offer technical, commercial, and market advice and introduce projects to industry leaders. Mentors push, challenge and support teams to refine their ideas and raise their ambitions. Key to start-ups getting connected quickly to the wider industry, the advisory panel is equally valued by established firms, serving as an expert group with whom ideas can be tested, refined and validated.

Operation Sonic Boom,
Mutant Labs

Underpinning Media Sandbox is an understanding that innovation demands risk and, often, failure on the route to achievement. Paradoxically, it is this freedom to fail that has engendered success. Given room to explore in a supported environment, all seven projects have arrived at a point where they have a tangible early-stage product to take forward beyond the end of the scheme. This progress is facilitated by the Sandbox team achieving equilibrium between formal processes and informal opportunities for serendipity. There is just enough freedom and just enough structure for ideas to take flight.

As much as it challenges the companies it supports, iShed challenges itself each year to innovate in its delivery of Media Sandbox. This year, working with a local authority on the B-Open strand was entirely new territory for iShed. It was fresh ground too for Bristol City Council, one of the first local authorities to open up its data to innovators. Naturally this threw up difficulties, especially in obtaining the right data, coded in a usable way, within the right timeframe. The Council and commissioned businesses treated these hindrances as points of learning. This lead to creative breakthroughs and three projects that demonstrate that information not only is beautiful but also can be fun, useful and accessible. Whilst the projects draw on Bristol data, the lessons and the innovations have potential wide application in other localities, nationally and internationally.

In Bristol, one of ten UK Innovation Hotspots identified by NESTA, a number of conditions exist that foster successful innovation. The city is characterised by a high concentration of closely-located micro-enterprises, a cluster of talent with an appetite for creative and technological risk taking, a supportive infrastructure, experienced intermediaries, and a local authority with a vision for a digital, connected city. Above all, there is a spirit of collaboration that contrasts with more intensely competitive places. It is no surprise that Media Sandbox has flourished in the city.

The programme has supported seven sparky, talented companies to take a chance on new ideas, develop and retain IP, investigate new markets, build relationships with industry leaders, and raise their profile nationally. The concrete result is a collection of innovative new products and services that have serious commercial and public value potential.

Expertly delivered and attracting national attention, Media Sandbox feels like a scheme that has matured. Over the past three years, the programme has gathered momentum as it has grown in confidence and profile. It is now ready to expand and take another leap in ambition and scale, with scope to expand nationally or even internationally.

Annie Warburton, May 2011

You can watch a recording of the Final Showcase is online at
www.dshed.net/media-sandbox-2010

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İNTRODUCTİON

Whether exploring open data or investigating new interfaces with digital technologies, Media Sandbox commissions are playful, inventive and yet uncompromising in their focus on creating products and services with practical applications that make life a little bit better. Diverse in their interests, what links this year's projects is lively curiosity matched by a disciplined approach to R&D. This evaluation tells the story of how expert support from iShed has supported seven talented teams to transform sparks of ideas into working prototypes in just a few months.

1.1   BACKGROUND TO MEDİA SANDBOX

Media Sandbox supports digital companies to research, develop and trial innovative ideas using new technologies. Providing smaller firms with resources, advice and time to turn new ideas into working prototypes, the scheme connects creative talent in Bristol and the South West with leading technology companies and content commissioners. Now in its third year, Media Sandbox has supported 19 projects in total, including seven in 2010.

Media Sandbox seeks to

- bridge a gap in the UK media market, giving small, agile producers an opportunity to develop early-stage ideas;
- support companies to make time to take risks and develop ideas;
- deliver innovation to market;
- encourage strong networks between participants, content producers, clients and commissioners; and
- share knowledge as widely as possible through events, online and in print.

Media Sandbox is originated and produced by iShed, part of Watershed. Media Sandbox 2010 was delivered in association with Bristol City Council and Connecting Bristol's B-Open initiative and is a Creative Industries iNet programme, supported by South West Screen, ERDF and The South West Regional Development Agency. Media Sandbox is based at Bristol's Pervasive Media Studio, a multi-disciplinary lab also managed by iShed and Watershed. The studio is host to a community of artists, creative businesses, technologists and academics exploring and producing pervasive media content, applications and services. Further information on Media Sandbox partners is provided in Appendix Two.

In 2010, Media Sandbox commissioned seven projects across two themes, B-Open and Pervasive Experiences.

B-Open Ideas Lab,
Watershed

B-OPEN

B-Open gave three digital companies access to newly released open data in order to develop innovative services, applications and interfaces. Through such initiatives as Connecting Bristol, Bristol City Council has been a pioneer and advocate for the positive influence of digital technology on public engagement. The Council supported the B-Open commissions and opened up access to data in order to drive forward its vision of a creative, smart, green and connected digital city.

B-Open was open to projects with a Bristol-based lead partner.

PERVASIVE EXPERIENCES

Under the Pervasive Experiences theme, Media Sandbox put out a call for groundbreaking ideas that dovetail mobile, wireless and sensory technologies with engaging content and context. The call sought projects that explore and exploit emerging opportunities to put web, mobile and projection at the heart of experience design. Emphasis was on the development of rich, new methods of interaction with digital technologies.

This strand was open to applications from projects with a lead partner based in the South West region: Bath, Bristol; Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole; Devon, Plymouth, Torbay; Gloucestershire; Somerset; or Swindon, Wiltshire.

From 48 applications, seven projects were selected. Across both strands, projects were selected on the following criteria: response to the theme, originality, fit of the project to the applicant's current business, openness and rigour of approach, quality of content, feasibility within budget and timeframe, value of the project to its audience, impact, legacy and contribution.

The team taking forward an idea is as important as the idea itself. Projects were selected not only on the quality of the proposed technological or content innovation, but also on the team's ability to apply the learning to their business beyond the individual project. The selection process also sought to 'curate' a community, achieving a balance of sparky companies with a range of experience and expertise.

The Media Sandbox development phase ran from September to December 2010, culminating in a February 2011 project showcase. Each commissioned project was awarded £10,000 seed funding and a structured R&D programme that offered:

- the opportunity to focus intensively on development of a new idea;
- a structured 'innovation lab' process, including seven group events (work-in-progress gatherings, industry salons and advisor workshops);
- a peer community of potential collaborators for current and future projects;
- promotion through a national PR campaign;
- mentoring from a panel of media industry advisors;
- business, legal and technical advice and support; and
- studio space at Watershed's Pervasive Media Studio.

An advisory panel of industry mentors contributed to the work-in-progress, salon and showcase events and mentored individual projects to develop ideas, talent and routes to market. The panel comprised:

Julie Dodd,
Public Zone

Dan Efergan,
Aardman Animations

Gavin Henderson,
Television and Media Consultant

Dan'l Hewitt,
Digital Media Advisor

Richard Hull,
Calvium

Tim Scott,
*Department for Culture,
Media and Sport*

Alex Stanhope,
Technology Strategy Board

Dr Sriram Subramanian,
University of Bristol

Peter Swain,
AlwaysOnMessage

James Touzel,
TLT LLP

Nicole Yershon,
Ogilvy

1.2 THE COMMISSIONS
B-OPEN
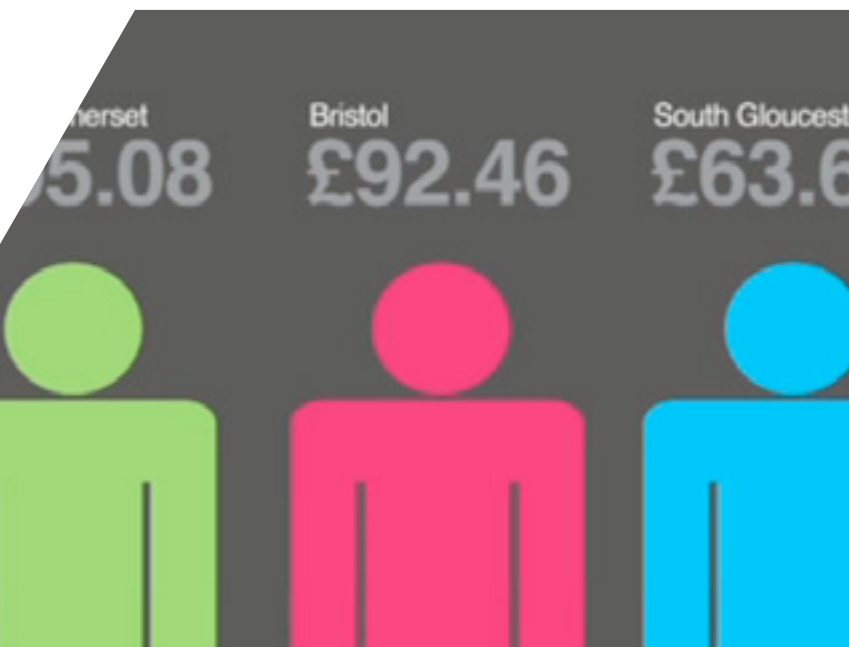
DELIB:
I HEART MY CITY

Through its Media Sandbox commission, digital democracy firm Delib sought to develop a data visualisation tool that reveals how council spending influences happiness at a local level. The aim is to communicate in a personal, localised way the relationships between quality of life metrics and spending on, for example, parks, environment, childcare, sanitation and maintenance. By making data relevant to individuals, work underway through the I Heart My City project transforms understanding of public spending impact.

www.delib.co.uk

MOBILE PIE:
BLOSSOM BRISTOL

Blossom Bristol is a phone-based game in which players plant virtual crops that thrive or wither depending on such environmental factors as weather, temperature and air quality. Drawing on open data sets and pioneering the use of Facebook Places in gaming, the game encourages players to engage in real world local issues in a fun way, which in turn fosters social change. The first version of Blossom Bristol is already on Android Market.

www.mobilepie.com

OVERLAY MEDİA:
HİLLS ARE EVİL

The Hills are Evil project developed a solution for those with restricted mobility – wheelchair users, cyclists, skateboarders, the elderly or people with pushchairs - to plan accessible routes using digital maps. A dynamic map overlay helps people identify optimal routes to suit their circumstances, taking into account gradients, road surfaces and steps. Rather than create a new mapping platform, the project developed a set of tools that could be integrated into existing mapping solutions and that facilitates crowdsourcing of information on terrain.

www.overlaymedia.com
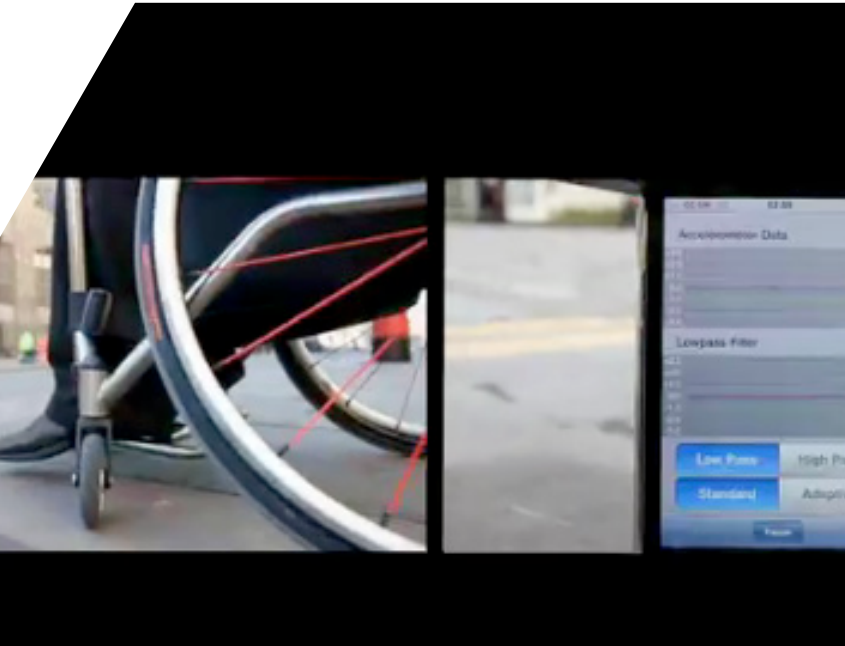
PERVASİVE EXPERİENCES

MOKSHA:
SCULPTİNG WİTH SCENT

Tackling that most neglected yet powerful of senses, Moksha's ambition is no less than to 'create a new design language of smell'. Contemporary life is saturated with visual and audio stimuli: scent offers a new and potent form of communication. Moksha used their Media Sandbox commission to rapid-prototype a new scent delivery mechanism using smart objects and to explore the potential of narrative in pervasive media contexts. Their project, embedding story and scent in tech-enabled experience design, has a range of applications in museum, visitor experience, retail and commercial contexts.

www.wearemoksha.com

MUTANT LABS:
OPERATION SONIC BOOM

In Operation Sonic Boom, Mutant Labs built a framework that enables developers to create games using non-verbal, abstract sounds ('vocal gestures') as the primary input method. Alongside the framework, Mutant Labs has developed a suite of mini-games to be released on iPhone and iPad that show off the power and fun of voice-controlled games. With a focus on abstract sound rather than speech recognition, the interface transcends language and cultural barriers, with potential applications in speech therapy and vocal coaching, as well as levelling the playing field for gamers with physical disabilities.

www.mutantlabs.com
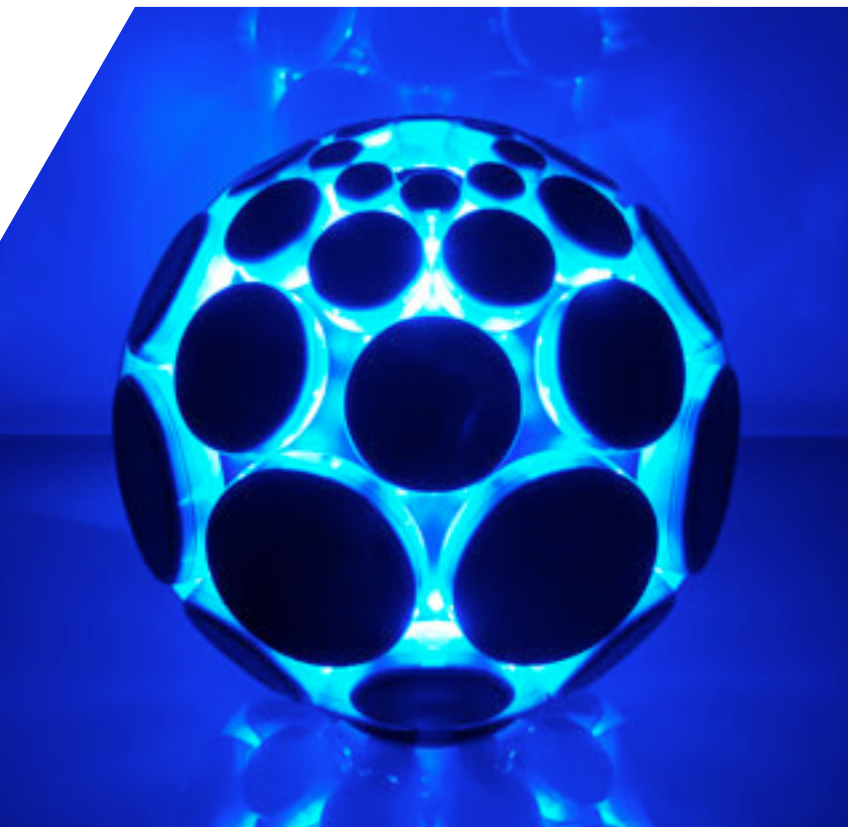
NU DESINE:
ALPHASPHERE

nu desine's AlphaSphere is an electronic musical instrument that uses pressure sensitive smart materials to offer contemporary musicians a new way of interacting with sound. The AlphaSphere melds the physical, tactile qualities of a traditional instrument with the creative possibilities of computer-based music. The Media Sandbox commission supported the team to research smart materials, pervasive technologies and interaction design to develop a prototype playable instrument aimed at both professional and amateur markets.

www.nu-desine.com

REMODE:
BĪOFEEDBACK ĪN GAMĪNG

Intrigued by how biometrics might enhance game play, Remode have investigated integration of heart rate monitors into active gaming. The team used their Media Sandbox commission to research and build a proof-of-concept playable demo that maps heart rate changes into game play. Combining technologies in innovative ways, Remode have tested and proved the potential for biofeedback to evolve videogame experiences.

www.remodestudios.com
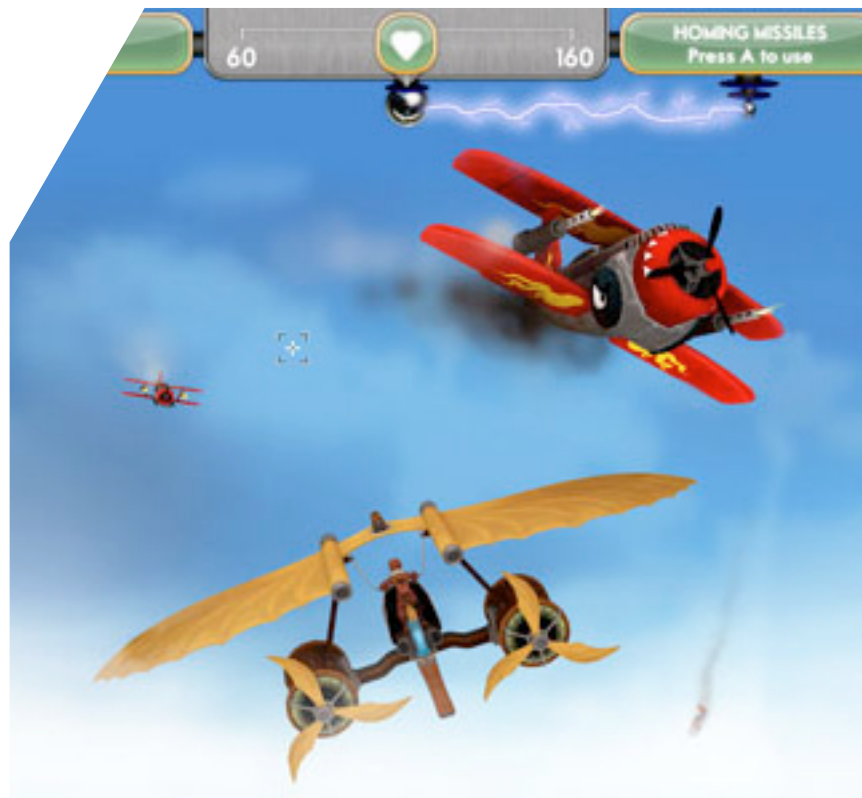
Short descriptions do scant justice to the richness of each individual project, but in focusing on cross cutting themes this evaluation does not include in-depth project case studies. A richer evocation of the individual projects is provided by the short documentaries on each of the commissions at DShed, Watershed's online showcase:

www.dshed.net/media-Sandbox-2010

1.3 EVALUATION APPROACH

This evaluation tells the story of development and discovery among the seven Media Sandbox projects, illustrates the collaborative R&D process, and articulates the creative and commercial impact of such an approach.

Aims

The evaluation seeks to:

- understand how a structured 'innovation lab' process supports small producers to take risks in developing early-stage, ground-breaking ideas;
- explore how the project has fostered networks between content producers, mentors and commissioners;
- examine the creative and commercial impact of a collaborative, peer learning model, supported by business, legal and technical advice;
- assess how Media Sandbox has enabled participants to deliver innovation to market;
- gauge the extent of knowledge-sharing beyond the immediate beneficiaries; and
- identify opportunities for development of the scheme.

Rather than present a case study on each project, findings are analysed thematically to provide an overview of common experiences, discoveries and learning across Media Sandbox as a whole.

A qualitative approach has been used to draw out key learning on innovation, collaboration, use of new interactive and pervasive technologies, IP development, structure and process, community peer learning, and future opportunities from the perspectives of project teams, the advisory group and iShed's delivery team.

Methods

Data was collected using the following qualitative methods:

- 21 semi-structured interviews with 16 Media Sandbox participants: commissioned companies, iShed team and industry panel members;
- documentary analysis of project literature, blogs, Twitter feeds, and films;
- observation of salon workshops, community events and final showcase.

Data has been categorised and analysed thematically. Themes in the report are illustrated by anonymised quotes from interviews with participants, mentors and the iShed team. *Quotes cited in the report are from interviews with the commissioned project teams, except where otherwise indicated. All interviewees are listed in Appendix One.*

2

2.1 MORE THAN MONEY: A SUITE OF SUPPORT

'It's given us exactly what we need to make something happen – structure, time, money, and a network.'

There's no denying that a £10,000 grant is welcome. Money buys companies much needed time away from client projects to devote to research and development of their own IP. Cash made these seven innovation projects possible. It is absolutely clear than none would have got underway without initial seed funding.

Although investment may be a trigger for innovation, and often was the initial attraction for participants, what sets Media Sandbox apart is the richness of a programme offering benefits that stretch beyond "here's the money: get on with it". The real value of the scheme is the full suite of support offered: business advice, connections with commissioners and industry leaders, a peer community, profile and promotion, legal advice, expert facilitation, and the forging of connections: getting those ideas in front of people who might help take them forward.

For members of the advisory panel, the experience of Media Sandbox is a reminder of the importance of a connected infrastructure to support innovation, regardless of whether the R&D is funded through public or private resources. Such breadth and depth of support is rare among innovation initiatives:

'Other funders are just "here's the money, we'll see you later", whereas Sandbox is working with you, they actually care about what you're doing, they are with you every step of the way. They actively take an interest because they want it to succeed as much as you do. Everyone is really motivated about all the projects – lots of energy around. It wouldn't have been like that if they'd just given us the money and sent us off, and told us to come back having produced something.'

'There are lots of commissioning schemes that chuck the money at projects and see them at the end. You miss a massive chunk of the value if you do that. The value is in the sense of community, rootedness and involvement, rather than money in, project out.' (iShed Producer)

Media Sandbox work in progress event, Pervasive Media Studio

Ideas are crystallised through intense curation and development of community, crucial to small, often isolated firms. This level of care, structure and nurturing of ideas was often far more than what companies had expected at the outset, but was what they most valued by the end.

'The level of curation of the ideas and the structured process are what set it apart.'

'What's made it is that it's tied to a kind of community. That makes you feel more part of an infrastructure rather than just receiving some money and going off and doing something by yourself. Being able to meet other people either at a similar stage or more established in the industry, realising that they believe in your project too and feeling people want you to succeed, it feels very genuine.'

2.2 COMMUNITY: OPENNESS AND CONNECTIONS

'It would be nothing like as good if you weren't all pulled together at various points – you have that shared energy'

Community is at the heart of the Media Sandbox ethos: connections and relationships are hardwired into programme design. The scheme is suffused with tools and approaches that facilitate networking, knowledge sharing, and communication in workshops and through social media.

Even though the 2010 projects were split between two themed strands, B-Open and Pervasive Experiences, the sense is that the projects formed a cohesive, integrated group. Those familiar with previous editions observed that in 2010 the Media Sandbox community was particularly strong, and for several participants it was the 'best thing' about the scheme, as important for the more established as the newer companies:

'Being part of the group has been useful. Because we're an established business, not graduates, to be taken right out of the work environment and do something really different that is exploratory, to have the time and the freedom to do it, is really good. It allows our company to develop knowledge in different areas that we wouldn't have the time or the money to do otherwise. So being in this environment is really useful.'

Media Sandbox work in progress event, Pervasive Media Studio

The development of trusted professional relationships fosters the openness and communication vital to creating good ideas, for some a major attraction for getting involved in Sandbox: 'Throughout the process – we've found answers to lots of things through asking questions and feedback.'

'One of the big things we wanted to do was to learn about being open and communicating.'

For those companies used to working under NDAs in particular, the ability to inform the design process through open dialogue with other successful, creative businesses is an invaluable boon:

'I find if we're open we get more feedback. It's way more valuable to speak to people about it than holding your cards close to your chest and missing the chance to realise something that could be so much better.'

Ideas are refined through dialogue and testing them out with peers.

'Just the discipline of having to explain your project several times to various people during the commission was critical. Having to explain it to someone else means that you understand it yourself better.'

Ladbury PR with advisor
Richard Hull, Calvium

Open discussion with expert advisors was equally important:

'We've had loads more people feeding back on the ideas. It prevents us being closed off, bringing in outside opinion – and it's people who are the right people to get the feedback off, the experts. A real opportunity for us, that we didn't have before, to get really sound advice from someone who knows what they're talking about.'

The combination of brand new start-ups, recent graduates and more established businesses is positive. The sense among interviewees is that, in part, the vibrancy and dynamism of the group is down to this mix of experience. These are all very small companies, so the rare opportunity to be exposed to diverse creative working methods has been invaluable.

Participants also welcomed the chance to input into others' ideas. The process helped them clarify their own areas of expertise, knowledge and interest and build understanding of where their perspective might shed new light on another's work.

Interviewees suggest that this process could be enhanced by inviting them to run short presentations on their companies' work outside of Media Sandbox. This would foster greater understanding about each other's backgrounds, business models and markets and clarify the potential for future partnerships. Mentors, in turn, have highlighted the potential value of running a workshop focused specifically on exploring opportunities for collaboration beyond current projects.

Companies based in Plymouth appreciate the opportunity to get 'on the radar' and be aware of opportunities in Bristol. Relationships have been strengthened through project blogs as well as regular trips to Bristol over the three-month development period. Bristol-based companies equally valued the geographic spread and opportunity to forge business connections and friendships with peers elsewhere in the South West.

'In terms of breaking into the Bristol market – that's been really big.'

*'We didn't have a network in Bristol before.
We weren't aware how much was going on there.
We've been getting more work through this –
good timing.'*

The connection with the Pervasive Media Studio was valuable in further extending the network and in providing access to specialist technical or creative expertise.

Media Sandbox work in progress event, Pervasive Media Studio

The relationships created through the scheme are important not only for the projects in hand but also for companies' core business and look likely to be sustained beyond the three-month intensive R&D phase. Already companies are passing business to each other, with the value of one contract equal to that of the commission itself, one of the many ancillary benefits of the programme:

'It's been really good for us as a company. I'm really pleased we did it. We didn't realise the benefits it would have in terms of other work and networks.'

'We think being involved will increase the value of our business. It sets up contacts, introduces us to different teams. It gives an 'in' to sell products across our business. There is commercial value in that.'

2.3   A CATALYST FOR IP (INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY)

Media Sandbox is a catalyst for established enterprises and start-ups alike. For several teams, the scheme has afforded an opportunity to devote time and resources to developing an idea that has had been put to one side while the company focused on client projects that bring in short-term revenues. Again, it is not just the money but what the money allows. It has been an opportunity and an impetus to work on something that exists in seed form but needs time and resource to be developed into a tangible proof-of-concept.

Final Showcase: Operation Sonic Boom, Mutant Labs

'Without Media Sandbox [this project] would never, ever have happened. It's something I've talked about doing but we'd never have been able to get it going. It's the sort of project that once it's up and running it's very easy to see why it could be successful. But that first initial push to commit the time and resources that's necessary to make it a success? We wouldn't have been able to afford that.'

'It's given us the ability to set aside time to develop the idea. That's impossible as a small business when you're focusing on paying the rent, with growing pains as you balance bringing in new work and taking on staff. It would have been impossible to get a risky project like this off the ground. It would not have happened. We would not have done it.'

'We'd wanted to do this project for ages, but it's such a high risk thing, we haven't been able to afford to do anything this innovative. This has been a good opportunity to prove ourselves right or wrong.'

What the data looks like.

We have been using the data from the West of England LEP partner councils: Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset (BANES), South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. The aim is to compare and contrast the information to highlight similarities and differences amongst the four organisations in the hope to identify interesting narratives from these trends.

One of the biggest challenges we found when looking at the data, were the discrepancies between the councils' data. North Somerset and South Gloucestershire councils had been producing data since April 2010, whereas Bristol has data from August and BANES only produced the December data by the end of January deadline. This meant our study was limited to the December dataset. The 4 councils have also all published their data in different ways. Within the 40,000 rows, Bristol have the least contextual information with 3 untitled description columns. BANES and North Somerset had the most detail but both used internal key coding systems that were not immediately clear what they referred to. This means that it's hard to make meaningful and scientifically valid or accurate reading in the Bristol data.

Known council taxi data
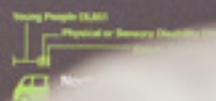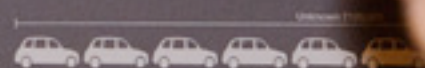
Final Showcase:
I Heart My City, Delib

This company did prove itself right and has produced a prototype that it can take forward to investors. Whilst such support is important for more established firms to invest in developing IP, it is even more crucial for new businesses. Media Sandbox has given two start-ups, one led by ambitious recent graduates and the other experienced, successful professionals, vital momentum.

Crucial to that momentum, is the Sandbox understanding, discussed in more detail in the next section, that innovation requires experimentation and that in turn entails risk of failure if something valuable is to come of it:

'It's given me the time to do R&D and to fail. That's the key thing: to be able to fail and fail really hard and there to be no fall out from it. When you're ambitious and want to be commercial you want to force things through and get a result and do it quickly. [Media Sandbox is] a chance to just explore an idea. I want absolutely to get something really good out of it but to be truly innovative you do need to try things and have room to fail.'

The scheme has not only given companies the opportunity to develop great ideas, but, with a focus on practical, commercial outcomes, it has also enabled the IP on those ideas to be retained and, potentially, exploited. For agencies operating in the creative services arena, where IP is regularly given away to clients, this is an essential step in achieving competitive advantage in the market and moving towards a new model.

'The whole thing has been one of the most worthwhile things I've done in my career. Mostly because I didn't give it away to someone else. I've spent my career doing similar things, doing innovation things. We've worked on things where they've been really innovative and been really successful for the client and at the end of the day you just wave it goodbye. The reason it's been so rewarding is because I've kept hold of it.'

'Every time from the ground up you build something like this from scratch and end up giving away the IP. The really powerful thing for me in this is to retain that IP and have something that can be repurposed.'

Final Showcase: Sculpting with Scent, Moksha

Time and resource set aside to research, experiment, play and ultimately develop new products and services is crucial if a business is to grow in any significant way. In Sandbox, that process is supported with intensive business and legal mentoring to maximise the value of that IP. The upshot, long term, should be stronger, more sustainable, and market responsive businesses achieving their potential for growth.

'Things in the digital landscape are moving so quickly, it can be too easy to get wrapped up in things you're doing and lose track of changes taking place. It's essential for businesses to be flexible and responsive to change. Media Sandbox helps get companies thinking more broadly about their business and their sector. Not just focusing on the end of the month and then next month, a chance to pause, take a breath and pay some attention to what is happening in the market in their sector more broadly. ' (Advisor)

2.4 CREATIVE CONSTRAINTS: RISK AND SERENDIPITY

Underpinning Media Sandbox is an understanding that innovation demands risk and, often, failure on the route to achievement:

'Media Sandbox gives us a chance to do something that is quite high risk – it affords us an opportunity to research something that is probably higher risk than we could justify otherwise.'

'Whilst [the Sandbox team] actively want you take it forward, they accept that there's a risk that it could fail. I've never experienced this understanding with public money before. That's really refreshing. It takes the pressure off and that makes you better. That's not to be underestimated. It's particularly rare in the South West. There is risk aversion here. People don't understand that you can't grow something out of nothing, that you need to take risks and accept that failure will be part of that – and that that involves real money.'

Paradoxically, it is this freedom to fail that engenders success. Given room to explore in a supported environment, all seven projects have arrived at a point where they have a tangible early-stage product to take forward beyond the end of the scheme. Interviews with mentors and iShed reveal how impressed industry leaders are with how far projects have come:

Media Sandbox work in progress event with early model of AlphaSphere, nu desine

'You never know when you start out whether it's going to work or not or how far they're going to take it. They've all really invested in their ideas and drawn them together to that point where they can take them forward.' (iShed Producer)

'[What's most impressed me is] the quality of the projects. I've been blown away by how far reaching the projects are. The leap in all the projects from when I last saw them to now. And the nature of the ideas – how well formed they are, how far they've travelled. I expected things to be less concrete. That's been really impressive.' (Advisor)

Significant progress in projects has been facilitated by Media Sandbox striking a perfect equilibrium between open R&D and the pressure of having to produce something at the end, and between formal structured events and informal opportunities for serendipity. There was just enough freedom and just enough structure for ideas to take flight.

In turn, the project has changed the way that companies approach the R&D process:

'It's enabled us to be much more thorough in the way we research, explore and test ideas. That will influence how we approach projects in the future. We learned a new skillset and approach to R&D which is great.'

The freedom to try anything and risk success or failure was balanced by a structured innovation process that provided a framework for experimentation. Limits in money and time have set creative constraints enabling companies to explore wild ideas whilst producing tangible outcomes of public, social or commercial value. Businesses too have imposed their own focus to provide the boundaries that are essential to true inventiveness. All the companies set themselves clearly defined questions within the scope of the funding and timeframe.

'We've had so many wild ideas. It's been about trying to distill what is the core focus of the Sandbox project. It's quite easy to go off in ten different directions at once. It's about keeping the focus and making sure that we're working towards a definite goal.'

'It's a limited amount of money so you really have to get bang for buck. That is a creative constraint. A good challenge — keeps you focused.'

This balance of freedom and structure has led to concrete outcomes that can form the basis of a new cycle of innovation and exploration, not to mention draw in new business:

'This demo enables us to start a conversation. It could go in a lot of different directions from here, but what we've found [with commissioners] is that you need something to just get people interested and talking.'

2.5   BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In some ways, a project like Media Sandbox *could* happen in any city with a high concentration of creative businesses, but Bristol is where it *does* happen. It would be going too far to say that there is something quintessentially Bristolian about the project. Yet certain conditions exist in the city that are perfect for the success of an innovation scheme like Media Sandbox.

Bristol is characterised by a high concentration of micro-enterprises, a cluster of talent with an appetite for creative and technological risk taking, a supportive infrastructure, experienced intermediaries, a physical space in the Pervasive Media Studio, and a local authority with a vision for a digital, connected city and open to taking risks. There is also a spirit of collaboration that contrasts with more intensely competitive places:

'It seems like quite a Bristol kind of thing. People in Bristol aren't necessarily just out for themselves. There's a certain amount of collaboration in the city – people feel strongly about the community and the creative community. In that sense it could only be a product of Bristol. I couldn't imagine it happening in Soho somehow.'

If the city and the region are considered to have strengths in generating innovative ideas, the downside is that there is a perceived weakness in commercialising them. It could be said that it is a microcosm of the creative and digital sector in the UK as a whole: strong on inventiveness but weaker on capitalising on it.

This year, Media Sandbox met that challenge by introducing an increased emphasis on business development alongside the creative innovation process, one of the requirements of iNet funding. The scheme has always supported projects' commercial progress, but for the first time this year it has had a dedicated business advisor, Mark Leaver, focused on business development. Initially, the iShed team was concerned that too great a stress on commercial outputs might disturb or limit the development of very early-stage ideas. In fact, formalising business support has been extremely beneficial. The approach has paid off, achieving a deft balance between applying focus where needed whilst allowing plenty of space for innovation.

The iShed team and mentors have worked extremely hard to get each project in the best position possible to go forward after the R&D phase. Companies have been supported to explore market potential, identify revenue streams, and explore business models. This commercial focus has meant that all seven projects have completed the programme with a clear sense of next steps and routes to market:

Media Sandbox work in progress event

'Mark gave us a lot of insight into potential routes, where to take this afterwards and how to develop this into a longer term strategy for our business. It's been useful for us to see the possibilities that are at the end of it. It's broadened our viewpoint and given depth to our approach. We were very much focused on the project at hand and Mark helped us see that there was a whole other side to address.'

The relationship between the commercial and creative is dynamic. The sharp business focus has been key to formulating and focusing creative ideas:

'It's been very useful having the business input throughout the process, partly because that influences creative decisions. We have so many directions and angles that we'd like to explore, so shoring up a strategy for the business has given focus for the product. In a certain way, it will affect how we will approach the project. So it's been really useful having the commercial focus.'

In fact, from both commissioned businesses' and the advisory panel's perspectives, the benefits of working with a clear business goal in mind could be driven even harder in future iterations. There is a desire from the advisory panel in particular to push the commercial ambition, aspiration and confidence of participant companies yet further. The challenge is to achieve this while maintaining the qualities of openness, collaboration and experimentation that make Media Sandbox special.

2.6 MENTORS: CONTACTS AND CRĪTĪQUE

Advisors Dinner event, London

Media Sandbox is supported by a panel of industry advisors who offer technical, commercial, and market advice and introduce commissioned projects to major industry contacts. The mentors are there to push, challenge and support the teams to refine their ideas and raise their ambitions.

The advisory board act as ambassadors for projects and for Media Sandbox as a whole. Businesses appreciate how advisors supported them in tackling project challenges and identifying wider markets. For newer companies, in particular, the advisory panel is key to them getting connected to the wider industry. Advisor support is equally valued by more established firms, serving as a group of experts with whom ideas can be tested, refined and validated as well as opening doors to major commissioners.

'Really about the bigger picture and introductions – at last feeling like we're established in an industry, feeling connected, part of something.'

'The advisory board was great. It's instrumental to the Sandbox – sort of an outer ring of people who take an interest. It gives you the impression that it's not just a self-contained inward looking project but outward looking, expanding out the knowledge.'

These outside eyes inspire teams to raise their game:

'They create a lot of interest in it. That feeds the projects to be more interesting. The focus on Sandbox inspires us to try harder. People are watching – we really want to make this the best we can.'

There is no question that the projects benefit from mentors' input, but the delight and pleasure in the advisory relationships is mutual. Mentors get involved not only because they take pleasure in sharing their experience and giving something back, but also because they are excited by exposure to a breadth of companies and ideas, and inspired by the high standard of work.

Attracting mentors from outside the Bristol and the South West also helps raise the profile of local businesses, as this advisor comment illustrates:

'For me, it's very important to come away from London. The creative scene in Bristol is amazing. There's an incredible cross section of platforms and disciplines here.' (Advisor)

This year, for the first time, Media Sandbox ran a specific advisors' event followed by a networking dinner. The formal-informal mix was particularly beneficial in consolidating relationships between project teams and mentors. A further event was held at Ogilvy in London in January, after the three-month intensive R&D phase. This again was positive, providing a change of scene and attracting a bigger turn out and more buy-in from advisors.

Mentors did support individual projects, but there seem to have been few in-depth mentoring relationships, despite a desire and even frustration on the part of some advisors to be more closely involved. Whilst a few of the mentors felt under-used, some projects also expressed a wish to have more formal and more regular contact with advisors.

Although mentors were briefed, some of those newer to Media Sandbox were unclear about their role:

'As an advisor, I'm not sure what I'm advising on. I'm well aware that a lot of what's here I'm not in a position to advise on at all (in terms of expertise) – and I'm not sure if the great teams doing these projects know which areas I should or shouldn't be involved in.' (Advisor)

These comments suggest that future iterations could benefit from a slightly more formalised mentoring process, clarifying the role of the mentors and linking them with particular projects. Some mentors have asked that Media Sandbox and projects demand more of them, involve them more closely.

Although the advisory panel was expanded during the run of the scheme, it would be worth considering in future having a larger, more flexible roster of mentors, some with specific sector expertise relevant to the projects. For example, this year it would have been helpful to have advisors formally on board with more in-depth knowledge of the videogames or music industries. Such a flexible advisory panel might be more logistically challenging, especially as specialisms cannot be predicted ahead of the project selection process, but is certainly feasible given iShed's breadth of contacts.

It should be no trouble attracting more advisors to get on board. Mentors themselves are unequivocal in their enthusiasm for their involvement in Media Sandbox:

Operation Sonic Boom,
Mutant Labs

'I'd really like [Media Sandbox] to continue, happen again. I would be happy to be an advisor again. It's great for participants, they made really good strides. It's a really good opportunity to show valuable use of public funding.' (Advisor)

2.7 OPEN DATA

Working with a local authority on the B-Open strand was entirely new territory for Media Sandbox. Likewise, it was new ground for Bristol City Council, one of the first local authorities to open up its data to innovators. Naturally this threw up challenges.

'The Council has a fantastic attitude of opening up the data but there was a logistic challenge [created by] never having done this before.'

Projects experienced frustrations in obtaining the right Council data, coded in a usable way, within the right timeframe. This was the case even though companies had checked before embarking on their projects that the data would be available. Not only were there delays and insufficient data, but also in some cases elements critical to the success of the project (e.g. location) were missing from data sets. Further on, inconsistencies were uncovered in data protocols across different years and across different Councils.

For its part, Bristol City Council worked hard to obtain and release the right data, and companies welcomed its openness to new ways of thinking. Despite the inevitable delays associated with working with such a large organisation, participants describe Council staff as 'incredibly supportive, incredibly open-minded'. Emphatically:

'The difficulties weren't to do with individuals – they were brilliant and tried hard.'

In true Media Sandbox style, hindrances were treated as points of learning both by the projects and the Council. Some companies worked round them, for example by using data from the wider West of England area. Others designed projects such that they could make use of whatever data was available, simply to get to proof-of-concept. All three succeeded in delivering successful outcomes that prove that information not only is beautiful but also can be fun and accessible. Although projects were built on Bristol data, the lessons and the innovations have potential wide application in other localities, nationally and internationally.

Within Bristol City Council, the B-Open projects have raised awareness in different departments of how mobile and digital technologies can create new ways of delivering services for citizens. This was extended when companies took part in a hack day at the Council to look at opening up data and build services off the back of the work undertaken in Media Sandbox. Relationships and trust have been built, with companies now in dialogue with the Council on future collaboration. Internally, with Directors of different Council departments attending the final Showcase, the project has shown the value of openness and flexibility as well as identifying the challenges to be overcome. Media Sandbox has also demonstrated the value to the Council of working with intermediaries, such as iShed, on innovation projects and the synergies of linking Council-led initiatives to broader schemes.

B-Open Ideas Lab,
Watershed

The teething problems associated with Open Data are by no means unique to Bristol. B-Open has generated valuable learning on how information can be collected, structured, and put together in a form usable outside local authorities. The project has helped Councils work out what they need to do if Open Data is to be usable and useful. Common data protocols would of course be extremely beneficial, and indeed essential if the immense potential of Open Data is to be realised.

The chance to work with Open Data was a positive draw for businesses to participate in Media Sandbox. The theme illustrates how Media Sandbox supports companies to experiment and take risks in emerging areas strategically important to their business. Beyond the learning inherent in this kind of boundary-pushing innovation, three extremely positive prototypes have been delivered. One is already launched on the Android Market, and another is being pitched to major digital players. In addition, involvement in the scheme has opened doors, with companies participating in Open Government Data Camp and Tea Camp in London.

2.8 PROFILE AND PUBLICITY: PR-PLUS

'The PR has been really good. Ladbury have done a cracking job. We have an interview in one of the magazines that we revere. It's taking us to another level in terms of what we'd have hoped to have achieved at this stage in publicity.'

The press campaign, orchestrated by Ladbury PR, has significantly raised the national profile of individual projects while also boosting awareness of Media Sandbox, iShed, the Pervasive Media Studio and the wider creative community in Bristol.

Press Coverage to March 2011:

Print and Online	**Broadcast**
Wired	*BBC Radio Bristol*
Edge	*– live coverage of Showcase event*
Develop	
Design Week	*BBC World Service: Digital Planet*
Bristol Evening Post	*– in depth report*
Evening Standard	
MintMag.com	

For Remode, profile has been raised further by the nomination of Remode's MD Ella Romanos for an Everywoman in Technology Innovator of the Year Award.

Firms particularly value the relevance of the press coverage to their commercial interests. Ladbury's knowledge of the digital sector means they have the right contacts to enable stories to be featured in the right context. This meant that publicity was more than just profile-raising for individual projects but has had ancillary benefits for companies' broader business strategies.

'There's been a lot of buzz around what we're doing, which is really good. It can be hard to generate that buzz yourself. Being part of this thing that is so widely recognised and having people talking about us is great: that then gives us a platform from which we can promote ourselves.'

The procedural generation

We visit the third Media Sandbox showcase to find out how the development programme is encouraging new game talent

We're standing in the middle of a crowded room shouting at an iPad. Those around us are unconcerned, but that's perhaps unsurprising when a sculpture created in scent and a new electronic musical instrument – dubbed an Alphasphere – number among the other attractions here. Our raised voice isn't down to (virtual) controller-hurling frustration, however, but a desperate attempt to stop the lander in developer Mutant Lab's *Sonic Moon* game from crashing into the planet's surface and exploding. While the craft's rotation is handled by the touchscreen, the thrusters respond to tone and volume – volume that inevitably rises when the embarrassed hush of our initial efforts fails to slow the descent sufficiently.

This is the third annual Media Sandbox showcase, a development programme focused on south-west England and created by iShed – itself an initiative started by the Bristol-based Watershed media centre. The programme seeks to encourage innovative technology companies to take risks and follow up opportunities by providing help to support research and development. This year, seven £10,000 commissions were awarded under two

projects, as well as access to industry advisors including Tim Scott, the senior policy adviser for videogames and film at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and Microsoft Labs

Edge magazine article

That buzz is already travelling beyond the UK. During the few months of evaluation research, Media Sandbox was being talked about at conferences and in presentations in Milan, Tokyo, Singapore, Belgium, and at SXSW in Austin, Texas. Cumulatively, as well as promoting the project and the companies it supports, this contributes to the image of Bristol and the South West as vibrant, interesting, innovative, and different – one of the core ambitions of the Creative Industries iNet.

Whilst Ladbury have done an excellent job of raising the profile of Media Sandbox and the projects, their input has extended beyond boosting press coverage. Participants and producers describe the firm as 'incredibly proactive' and 'exceptionally good.' A PR workshop run by Ladbury trained participants in practical skills to talk about and promote their work. The session enhanced understanding of the value of communication, and helped teams hone their messages. Though the major impact will be long term, the benefits are already tangible, with producers observing that teams have blossomed in the way they talk about their businesses.

Design Week website

This year's end-of-project Media Sandbox Showcase attracted a strong, mixed audience of industry representatives, commissioners and the general public. Giving the three-month research period a clear end goal and focus, the Showcase raises interest in the projects among industry leaders and influencers. Audience reaction was positive, with real energy and excitement in the room about the range of ideas and the potential impacts of the content and technologies developed by the commissions:

'A real breadth of people, not just those focused on technology, went away really buzzing about what technology could do.' (Advisor)

This year for the first time short films were made of each of the projects. Again, filming the projects brought a useful extra focus and supported companies in refining how they explain their projects. Screened at the Showcase and available online, the films provide a valuable promotional asset for both Media Sandbox and the commissioned companies: making ideas visible is an important part of the PR mix. The short films are available online at DShed.net

Other additions this year – the topical Open Data theme and the involvement of iNet – also boosted opportunities for promotion.

All in all, this mix has had strong results:

'I don't think we expected the amount of interest [in our project]. Everyone seems just to love it. There seems to be so much excitement around the project. It's really great.'

Map-maker: Ian Anderson can help people with mobility problems plot a course around Bristol

Top showcase for digital innovation

David Clensy
d.clensy@bepp.co.uk

A DIGITAL map that makes the streets of Bristol more accessible to wheelchair users was among the innovative new media prototypes unveiled at

To order picture, quote BRGC20110218B-003_C

Bristol Evening Post article

2.9   PRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

'The delivery's been fantastic – they've been working so tirelessly.'

'It's been a real privilege to be involved in it – one of the best run schemes that I've been involved in. It sets the bar really high for giving out public funds.' (Advisor)

There was universal praise for producer Victoria Tillotson's delivery of Media Sandbox, supported by coordinator Grace Denton, consultant Mark Leaver, and Clare Reddington, Director of iShed and the Pervasive Media Studio. Comments illustrate the esteem in which commissioned companies and the advisory group hold the iShed delivery team:

'Very professional.' 'Run very well.' 'Completely on top of it.'

'Organisation was really smooth – it was great'.

The depth of care and attention shown by the team and the energy and positivity they put in to make Media Sandbox an exceptional scheme did not go unnoticed:

'They clearly put a huge amount of work into making it a good experience.'

'They went to extra lengths to make it enjoyable for all the groups involved.'

For Bristol City Council representatives, the expert management of the scheme proved the value of running a project like this in partnership with an organisation that has credibility and connections within the digital sector.

The overall design of the scheme, its balance of work-in-progress meetings, individual project sessions, mentoring, pubic events, milestones, project films, blogs, PR and legal advice, was supportive and well structured. Those who have taken part previously in Media Sandbox observed how the structure has been refined and improved.

Individual workshops were also well put together, with useful content, appreciated by commissioned companies and the advisory panel. There were just a few very minor comments for improvement, the main one being to tailor some discussions and tasks more closely to the project themes (a few tasks did not seem fit with open data projects), a point acknowledged by the iShed team themselves.

To maintain momentum, projects felt that a post-Showcase recap or coda would have been useful to explore how to build on the interest raised at the event. Advisors too, and in particular Bristol City Council, felt that a post-Showcase 'handover' of projects would be helpful. A couple of other minor suggestions for improvement are to schedule the IP legal sessions earlier in the scheme and to set up a shared Google calendar to which participants can subscribe, in addition to the Basecamp project workspace. That comments for improvement are so slight is testament to just how well designed and delivered the scheme is.

In terms of structure, most participants felt that the three-month R&D period was spot on, even though a longer timescale would afford more time for ideas to percolate. In fact, many of the projects stretched to five months as they continued developing beyond the official end of the R&D phase and the Showcase two months later. However, three months was considered appropriate to the scale of funding. That timeframe allows enough time for ideas to flourish whilst not being off-putting in terms of taking time away from core business.

Though providing welcome resource to make the scheme possible, European funding via the Creative Industries iNet brought bureaucratic challenges. As one of the first iNet projects to launch, there were funding-related delays to the launch of the scheme (adeptly managed by iShed) and frustrations as new systems were worked out and then streamlined.

It is to the credit both of Victoria Tillotson and iNet Co-ordinator Verity Alexander that together they prevented red tape and administrative demands from detracting from the smooth running of the scheme. They found ways of making what might have seemed initially clunky, inappropriate bureaucratic processes fit the projects. From businesses' point of view, they made that part of the experience invisible:

'It's been stress-free... they did well to hide the wiring. It happens seamlessly. If it wasn't done so well our work would have suffered — it's the biggest compliment I can pay to them.'

3

NEXT STEPS

Over its three editions, Media Sandbox itself has continued to innovate and evolve its model. From the bullish advocacy for the project on the part of everyone involved, there is no doubt it should run again:

'It has to exist, it is essential.'

'Is it worth the investment? It's absolutely worth the investment - should be doubled year-on-year for the next five years to be honest.' (Advisor)

It is also clear that Media Sandbox needs to keep stretching and challenging itself to grow in ambition and scale. It will need to do so while working around current constraints in public funding, and without disrupting the qualities that make Sandbox great.

igfest by Slingshot (Media Sandbox 2008 participants)

The following points are not so much recommendations as questions for discussion, raised in interviews for this evaluation, to be considered as Media Sandbox plans its next steps.

Expand geographic scope: go national or international, taking the scheme to a much wider audience, but keep the close ties to Bristol and the South West to retain the sense of community, connection and rootedness.

Make new connections: explore the potential to develop relationships with a business school, MIT, Seedcamp or corporate sponsors, being mindful to ensure that agendas of new partners enhance, rather than detract from, the design and delivery of the scheme.

Raise commercial ambition: push companies a littler harder, boost their confidence and aspirations, step up focus on commercial outcomes.

Demand more of mentors: formalise and clarify the role of mentors, whilst retaining the fluidity of approach that works so well. Involve mentors more closely with individual projects. Expand the pool of potential advisors to include experts from different fields, as appropriate to projects' areas of interest.

Review the timescale: generally, three-months is felt to be the perfect amount of time, but there was a call from some mentors to extend the length of the project.

Hold a post-Showcase recap: bring everyone back together post-Showcase to explore how opportunities generated at the event can be exploited. Establish smooth handover of projects to partners who might take them on or involve them in other initiatives (e.g. in the case of this year, Bristol City Council).

Consider introducing competitive follow-on funding: follow-on funding would prevent businesses losing momentum at the end of the scheme as they turn back to essential revenue-generating client work. Some companies and mentors felt that a competitive element would get people even more focused on success and encourage more long-term thinking ('it would exponentially increase the chance of success'). Others, while seeing the benefits, were concerned that competition might disrupt the collegial, collaborative environment so characteristic of Sandbox.

Build an alumni community: informal crossovers already exist but there is an opportunity to strengthen and cultivate the network of businesses involved in Sandbox over the years. Potential collaborations and exchange of ideas could be fostered through an annual alumni event.

Track long-term impact: build the evidence base by tracking the return-on-investment and long-term success of all 19 projects and businesses supported to date. Evaluations such as the current one identify the immediate catalytic impact, but the real value is likely to be 3–5 years down the line, demonstrable through clear-cut financial analysis as well as research into social and cultural outcomes.

4

CONCLUSION

'It really went to plan for us – everything we said we were going to do we did.'

Inevitably an evaluation such as this, researched during the scheme and immediately after its completion, can report only on immediate outcomes for the businesses taking part, but **the true benefits of Media Sandbox will be long term and extend beyond the direct beneficiaries.**

Some projects did indeed go exactly to plan. Yet there was no obligation that they do so. Throughout, both the production team and the participating firms have adeptly navigated the tension between experimental R&D and the imperative to produce something concrete. Those that had technical or other setbacks met those challenges with fruitful results, and all seven projects have a future life. Some are already out on the market, others will require more investment of time and money before they get there, but all have concrete plans for their next steps.

For some of the mentors the standout quality of Media Sandbox as an innovation scheme is these practical, tangible outcomes. This is all the more to its credit given the scheme's current modesty of scale.

Final Showcase: Operation Sonic Boom, Mutant Labs

Media Sandbox has supported seven projects to reach proof-of-concept and facilitated the establishment of two new start-ups, one of which has taken on six (part-time) staff. It has enabled seven sparky, talented companies to take a chance on new ideas, develop and retain IP, investigate new markets, build relationships with industry leaders, and raise their profile nationally. The concrete result is a suite of innovative new products and services that have serious commercial and public value potential.

Investment in the scheme goes far beyond the cash put in by funders. Everyone involved has invested huge amounts of time, energy and expertise into making Media Sandbox a success. Even in the short-term, there has been rich social, economic and cultural return on that investment. This evaluation has tried to capture some of those tangible and intangible benefits and go some way toward explaining how they have been achieved through a meticulously curated innovation process.

AlphaSphere, nu desine

Final Showcase:
I Heart My City, Delib

Media Sandbox feels like a scheme that has matured. Over the past three years, the programme has gathered momentum as it has grown in confidence and profile. It is now ready to expand and take another leap. The natural next step is for the scheme to expand nationally or even internationally.

'It's a worthwhile scheme, a brilliant opportunity.'

'Great scheme – very proud to part of it.' (Advisor)

APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEWEES

Thanks to everyone who took part in interviews for this report.

Ian Anderson, *Overlay Media*

Heather Craggs, *Delib*

Martin Darby, *Remode*

Richard de Lancey, *nu desine*

Julie Dodd, *Public Zone*

Hazel Grian, *Moksha*

Dan'l Hewitt, *Digital Media Advisor*

Stephen Hilton, *Bristol City Council*

Richard Hull, *Calvium*

Mark Leaver, *iShed*

Michael McCarthy, *Overlay Media*

Adam Place, *nu desine*

Darius Pocha, *Moksha*

Clare Reddington, *iShed*

Ella Romanos, *Remode*

Alex Ryley, *Mutant Labs*

Andy Sargeant, *Mutant Labs*

Alex Stanhope, *Technology Strategy Board*

Victoria Tillotson, *iShed*

Cath Wilcox, *Overlay Media*

Richard Wilson, *Mobile Pie*

Nicole Yershon, *Ogilvy*

APPENDIX TWO:
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Media Sandbox is originated and produced by iShed, part of Watershed, a cross art form organisation based in Bristol, UK.

Media Sandbox 2010 is a Creative Industries iNet programme. The Creative Industries iNet is led by South West Screen – part of Solutions for Business and funded by the European Regional Development Fund and South West RDA. The scheme is delivered in collaboration with Bristol City Council and Connecting Bristol's B-Open initiative.

About Watershed and iShed:

Watershed is a cross-artform venue and producer, sharing, developing and showcasing exemplary cultural ideas and talent. Based in Bristol, Watershed place no boundaries on its desire to connect with artists and audiences in the wider world. Watershed curate ideas, spaces and talent to enable artistic visions and creative collaborations to flourish. It produces work which cuts across film, music, theatre, design, visual art, and the creative and technology sectors. Examples include The Passion of Joan of Arc, Theatre Sandbox, and the Pervasive Media Studio's artist residencies.

Watershed

Opened in 1982, as the UK's first media centre Watershed exists in two distinct physical spaces on Bristol's historic harbourside. A Grade II listed building with three cinemas, a large, light and airy Café/Bar and flexible conference and events spaces. A second building, the Pervasive Media Studio, opened in 2008 and is a research and development space where creativity and technology meet.

www.watershed.co.uk

iShed was established by Watershed in 2007 to produce creative technology collaborations. iShed's portfolio of commissioning schemes, events, research and consultancy encompasses the arts and creative industries. Local, national and international partnerships with industry, artists and universities, enables iShed's support of talent and new ideas. iShed extends Watershed's impact by widening opportunities for creative engagement with technology, developing digital practice through a focus on open investigation and audiences. iShed openly shares all of its projects through work-in-progress blogs and showcase events; exchanging learning, knowledge and networks with local, national and international creative communities.

www.ished.net

'Watershed is more than just an arts cinema. It is at once a cultural centre, a business broker, a social networker, a research and innovation facility, a café/bar, and a cultural tourist attraction.' UK Creative Economy Programme

About B-Open

B-Open is one of the digital city projects being developed by Connecting Bristol in support of the 20-20 City Strategy. Its about openly sharing council/city data and working with local digital businesses and communities to create new applications and services that bring added value to citizens and help achieve greater connection with the city environment. Whether it's engaging with peak oil, climate change or the wider green agenda.

www.connectingbristol.org

About South West Screen

South West Screen is the development agency for the creative media industries in the South West of England. South West Screen is leading the Creative Industries iNet.

About Creative Industries iNet

Networking for Innovation (iNets) is a product within the government-funded Solutions for Business portfolio of business support. An iNet is a proven way of helping businesses to introduce new techniques and products, and find new markets, by giving them access to specialist information and research, and through sharing knowledge and expertise. There are five iNets planned for key business sectors in South West England: Aerospace and Advanced Engineering, BioMedical, Creative Industries, Environmental and Microelectronics. iNets South West are supported by £13.5 million of funding from the South West RDA and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), as well as delivery partner investments.

www.swscreen.co.uk

About South West RDA works for, and promotes, a modern, stronger and more resilient economy across South West England. Its work involves creating better jobs, successful businesses, more prosperous cities, towns and villages within an economy that uses less carbon.

About Solutions for Business (SfB) is a suite of targeted, publicly-funded products and services offering solutions to real business needs and tackling market failure. It includes: starting up, understanding finance, developing people, environment and efficiency, exploiting ideas, international sales and marketing and growing your business. By targeting public money at real business needs, it helps businesses create sustainable success.

About The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) helps stimulate economic development and regeneration in the least prosperous regions of the European Union (EU). Funding is targeted to meet three objectives set down by the European Commission (EC): Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and European Territorial Co-operation.

Report written and researched by Annie Warburton, March 2011.
www.anniewarburton.co.uk

APPENDIX THREE:
IMAGE CREDITS

Cover	Mutant Labs
2	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
3	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
4	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
7	B-Open Ideas Lab by Victoria Tillotson
9	Delib and Mobile Pie
10	Overlay Media (image by Geoff Taylor) and Moksha
11	Mutant Labs and Nu Desine
12	Remode
13	Work in progress event by Benjie Croce
15	Work in progress event by Benjie Croce
16	Work in progress event by Benjie Croce
17	Work in progress event by Benjie Croce
19	Work in progress event by Benjie Croce
20	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
21	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
22	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
23	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
24	Work in progress event by Victoria Tillotson
26	Work in progress event by Victoria Tillotson
28	Work in progress event by Victoria Tillotson
29	Advisors Dinner by Victoria Tillotson
31	Operation Sonic Boom by Mutant Labs
33	B-Open IdeIas Lab by Victoria Tillotson
35	Press cuttings: Edge magazine and Design Week
36	Press cutting: Bristol Evening Post
39	Igfest © SlingShot
41	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
42	Final Showcase image by Graham Burke
44	Watershed exterior by Toby Farrow

APPENDIX FOUR:
STAFF CREDITS

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Alex Stanhope, *Technology Strategy Board*
Dan'l Hewitt, *Digital Media Advisor*
Julie Dodd, *Public Zone*
Dan Efergan, *Aardman Animations*
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