
University of Sussex

StartUp Sussex

Contact Details

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Model

Find, Fund and Support

Starting Point

The University of Sussex is new to the concept but has developed over the course of the StartUp Sussex Programme.

Delivery Structure

The Programme is the result of collaboration between the Careers and Employability Centre (CEC) <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/> and the Sussex Innovation Centre (SINC), a business-incubation hub at the University of Sussex <http://www.sinc.co.uk/home/index.html>

The structure of the Programme includes a range of inspiring entrepreneurship events and termly competitions. The CEC and SINC share responsibility for delivery and the competition. This includes hosting events and panels, as well as managing the application process. The Sussex Innovation Centre also delivered one to one mentoring, business support and hot-desking is made available for award winners.

Background on Delivery Team

The Delivery Team at Sussex has a passion for social enterprise and fostering the career-awareness possibilities of social entrepreneurship organisations and harnessing the strong drivers for social change that Sussex students, graduates and staff have for making a difference. The Team have expertise in entrepreneurship and innovation building, career development learning, employability, careers advice, facilitation of workshops, networking (to identify and build relationships with local social entrepreneurs and Sussex alumni who are social entrepreneurs), event management and website/social media skill-sets. Additionally the Team have an excellent understanding of students' and graduates' learning life-cycles, including the transition from university to employment (as the service offers 3 year after-graduation services), and is in contact with Sussex alumni and employer networks. The Delivery Team at Sussex also have a legacy of innovative approaches to business mentoring in knowledge-



based industries at the Sussex Innovation Centre. In a year when the Executive Director of the Sussex Innovation Centre has been recognised in the annual Queen's Awards for his efforts to promote innovation and regional businesses this was a good year to pilot and develop social enterprise with the HEFCE UnLtd team.

Delivery Approach

Crucial to the programme are the termly competitions for 15 x £2,000 awards over the year. Sussex has been delivering events and optional training, whilst handling applications through their website. Senior colleagues shortlist the applications, and applicants are then invited to a workshop on pitching to a panel. Ideas are then pitched to a panel and the applicants are notified the next day. The entire process takes about 4-6 weeks.

Did it go according to plan?

Sussex followed the implementation plan they initially set out.

Milestones

- Outreach was strong and effective.
- Role models/peer examples for social entrepreneurship are important

Partnerships

- Partnership with the SINC in putting together businesses and knowledge/expertise of what works best for commercial start-up and learning about social enterprise start-up.
- Product and design department links.
- Links were made with external agencies and exemplar speakers, including Sussex alumni.
- Other HEI partners on the Programme.
- UnLtd expertise that included; individual support, website, publications, conferences and the knowledge-resource network.
- Joint team learning for all staff in CEC and SINC.

Challenges

- Marketing wider opportunities and student/graduate/staff engagement.
- Importance of getting on board the University's Communications Division to support the range of coverage required to 'make a big noise' about StartUp Sussex.
- Delivery of projects and enterprises over busy periods – timing.
- Clarity of difference between social and commercial enterprises.
- Lack of time – key points across academic year.
- Administration time and staffing.
- It has been more difficult at Sussex to attract academic colleagues to engage with the social enterprise agenda to build upon research ideas (as other universities appear to have done as part of the UnLtd initiative this year). It was also difficult to foster engagement from other staff in the University and from an employability development perspective StartUp Sussex had to focus energy on the student and graduate population as a priority.

Achievements and Successes

- Local media coverage.
- Raising the profile of social entrepreneurship and extending the employability discourse into social entrepreneurship as a viable way forward at and after University.
- High profile role models and inspiring speakers
- Partnership between SINC and CEC which has fostered useful learning and synergies.
- Maintaining the momentum.
- Senior management support (Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a financial contribution to foster social entrepreneurship on campus, with strong engagement, endorsement and governance from the Director of Research and Enterprise).
- University of Sussex Student Union Support (President and Communications Officer promoting StartUp Sussex competitions via USSU twitter accounts).

Results

- 1,989 hits on website.
- 6 social enterprise winners (next competition in July)
- Additional funding raised from Student Union by one of the winning student teams

Outcomes and Impacts

- Raising awareness across university.
- Students engaging in the Programme.

Lessons Learned

- More time/funding is required for administration of the programme.
- Lots of support available externally, including government agencies.
- There is a need for more leadership training and team building opportunities.
- There is a need to introduce positive psychology/personal development to overcome internal psychological barriers and use of techniques from NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), alongside business mentoring and positive recent-graduate role-modelling could be extended.
- External mentoring is a valuable external resource.
- Students are excited by the concept and view it as an opportunity for them.

The Future

Sussex is in the process of developing a programme for next year, with a significant number of changes. These have been built upon whilst piloting with UnLtd and having reflected on the learning points from this year. Sussex wants their future applicants to focus on short, flexible pitches in the initial stages of application. The Team plan to build a training programme to 'scaffold' social enterprise learning and business skills development. It is intended that these scaffold-training workshops, alongside the development of a coherent supportive peer-group (who can establish creative learning relationships and move through a social-enterprise learning experience that enables their personal development, business skills and 'can do' attitudes with a 'mind-set resilience') to be put in place so that individuals emerge with clarity about social entrepreneurial effectiveness and go forward to the panel/pitching process with more clearly worked-up and tested-out proposals.