

INSIGHTS REPORT  
UPDATED MARCH 2018

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# BUILDING A LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR CREATIVE HUBS

Created in partnership by



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# CREATIVE HUBS ARE PIONEERS!

Creative hubs are part of a worldwide movement, supporting creative communities to collaborate, create and thrive. They do this through extensive entrepreneurial activities, convening, sheer hard work and determination.

We (Nesta, British Council, Hivos) set out to get a better understanding of how these exciting enterprises are built, managed and sustained, and how we can help them to prosper.

During our research, we worked closely with hub networks and communities to uncover insights and inform the development of a new learning offer. These networks provided their knowledge and experience, and Nesta's role was to help facilitate, capture and synthesise these insights from both emerging and established hub leaders. We would like to thank all those who participated in our workshop sessions and gave their time to be part of this project.

This short report covers the key insights we uncovered through our practical research, the methodology we used, and our proposed learning offer.

It was written by Georgina Innes, Lynsey Smith, and Sonja Dahl, and designed by Diana Hidalgo.

Thanks to Arthur Steiner, Glen Mehn, and Isobel Roberts for their additional support.

# CONTEXT AND APPROACH

## HOW DO WE DEFINE A CREATIVE HUB?

A space, either physical or virtual, that sustainably supports creative entrepreneurs and people to come together, collaborate and thrive.

## WHY NOW, WHY HUBS?

Creative hubs are increasing in number and rapidly becoming an important player in supporting creative communities globally. DeskMag has estimated that 1.2 million people worldwide are based in coworking spaces, and that's just one form a creative hub can take. The opportunity for impact is huge, and there are currently no learning offers that cater directly to the needs of a creative hub leader. With this as one of the central principles, our aim was to better understand the life cycle of creative hubs. We knew that by getting closer to the needs, challenges and skills gaps amongst the hub communities, we would learn more about the common and shared problems facing creative hub leaders at the start of their journey. This would then help inform the development of learning offers to support them.

## WHAT WE DID

We took a user-focused approach to the research and held a series of workshops and interviews in a number of locations in order to better understand hub leaders' learning needs and expectations. In parallel we conducted desk research and a review of existing support materials.



## WHO WE COLLABORATED WITH

### Co-creation workshop, Creative Hubs Forum, Bangkok, 11th October 2017

We designed and delivered a 1-day workshop, exploring hub journeys and needs, to uncover possible gaps for us to fill. The participant group consisted of 21 established hub leaders from Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. Key regional stakeholders from British Council and Hivos also attended.

### Impact workshop, Afrilabs Hivos Co-working Summit, Cairo, 18th October 2017

Impacts and outcomes were identified in Bangkok as a key area of interest, and so we ran a short session in Cairo exploring these themes with creative hubs. We were keen to understand in more detail how the hubs in the room approached measuring their impact. The participant group consisted of 70 hub leaders and advocates from across the African continent.

### Interviews, Cairo, 18th October 2017

Utilising Hivos' network of creative hubs across the African continent, we carried out 12 interviews with participants at the Co-working Summit, asking a series of questions to get closer to their journeys and needs.

### Creative hubs journey workshop, Abuja, 4th December 2017

The British Council has embarked on a two-year programme to support the development of creative hubs across the West African region. As part of the kick-off week, we delivered a 1-day workshop exploring the hubs' journeys to date, and how they could better support each other as a network. The participant group consisted of 25 hub leaders from Senegal, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

### Insights from the European Creative Hubs Network

Over the last two years the British Council has been developing a programme with a consortium of creative hubs, with the aim of strengthening connections, collaborations and support of hubs across Europe. Some of the outputs of this project (insights, research, mapping) will be used as resources to build on and consider as we develop our offer.



# WHAT WE LEARNED

## A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUB LEADER AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

### Approach:

Working in small groups, our hub leaders brainstormed around the key characteristics that make a hub leader and community

### Key insight:

Whilst it was clear that every hub leader who participated in our research has their very own set of characteristics, challenges and enablers, it also became apparent that there were a significant number of shared drivers and characteristics between the hubs and their leaders too.

### Key principle:

The learning programme we develop must promote the development of leaders and communities with these characteristics in mind.

01

### What things motivate a hub leader?

- The value they create
- Social impact
- Cultural impact
- Collective learning
- A supportive community
- The big picture
- Community improvement
- Learning & being challenged

02

### What is the most important role of a hub?

- Inspire
- Advocate
- Incubator
- Catalyst of creativity
- Connect people
- Educate
- Social & creative inclusion
- Change maker & influencer
- Act as a platform for creativity

03

### What are the most important values of a hub?

- Being open
- Being diverse
- Being supportive
- Being collaborative

04

### What makes a good hub?

- Location/space
- The value
- Experimental environment
- Being driven by your values

# STAGES OF GROWTH

## Approach:

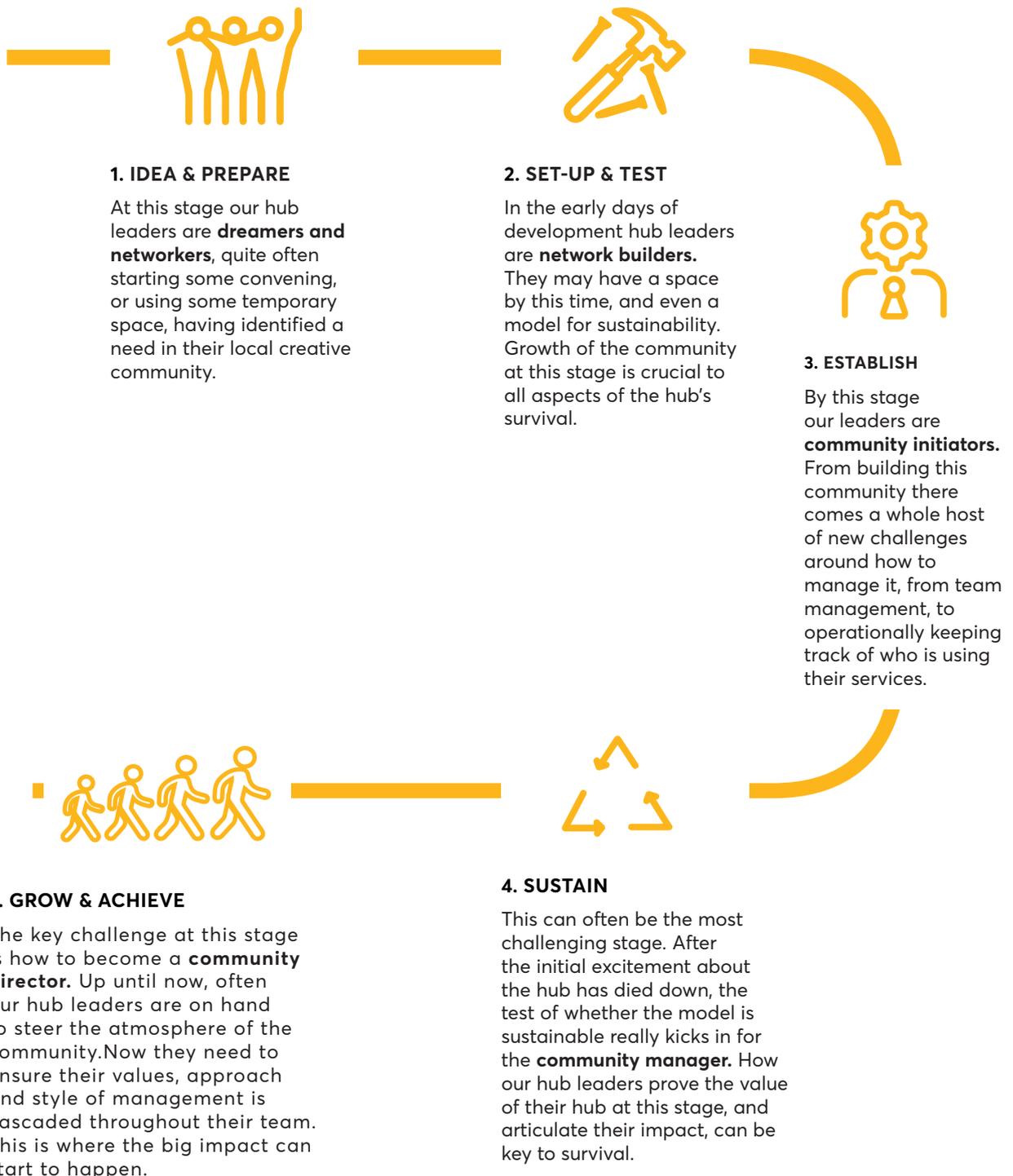
We explored the different stages of growth of the hub and their leaders using a series of exercises related to the journey of the hub.

## Key insight:

Key themes and areas of content started to emerge, as illustrated in the figure below, but central to all the journeys was the communities that they build, serve and support to succeed. Having originally defined the journey in three stages, we found that five stages of growth was more appropriate.

## Key principle:

A learning programme needs the flexibility to respond to each of these 5 stages.



# KEY ACTIVITIES

## Approach:

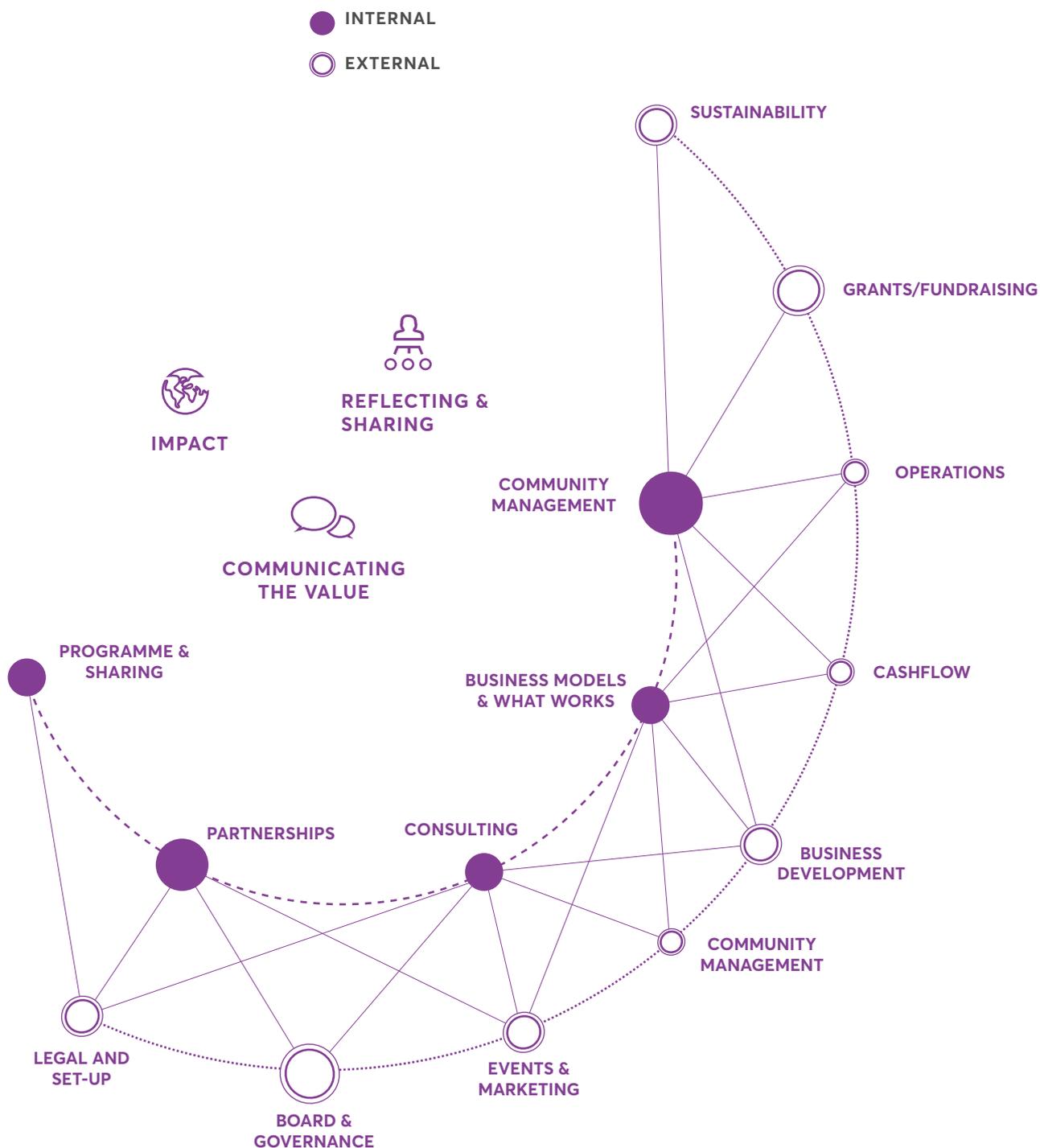
Codifying the key activities involved in running a creative hub was important in order for us to get closer to learning needs of leaders, and the potential content we could develop to support them.

## Key insight:

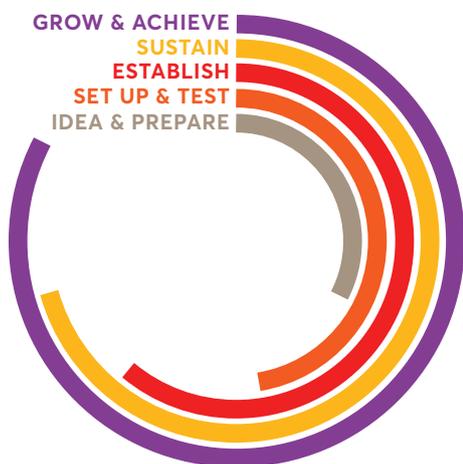
This visual displays the key activities involved in running a hub. Some of these are external considerations, others are internal, and others, such as communicating the value, exist in both spheres. These need to be considered from both an internal and an external perspective.

## Key principle:

The insights from this exercise will form the basis of the content areas we can develop with our learning programme.



# USING THE JOURNEY TO UNLOCK SKILLS GAPS



## Our approach:

We worked with all of the hub leaders on a layered journey map, which charted the development of their hub and highlighted both positive and negative moments. By clustering the insights gained from these maps, we have summarised the key challenges and enablers at each stage of growth.

## Key insight:

This exercise uncovered a huge variety of experiences: highs, lows, enablers and blockers. No two hub journeys are the same.

## Key principle

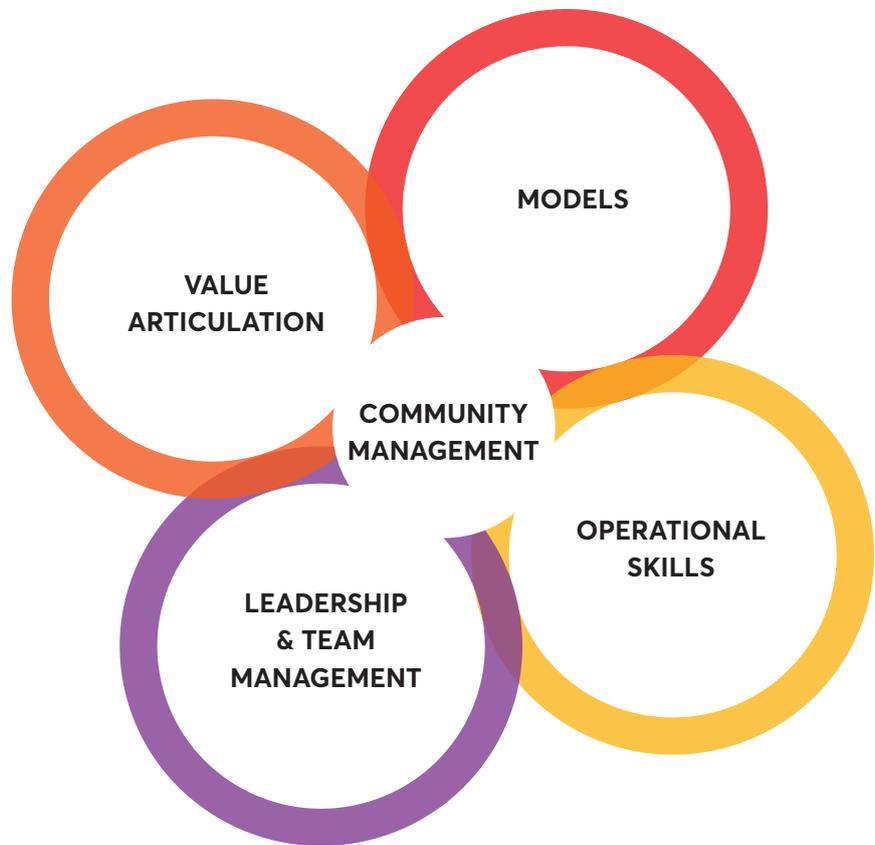
Creating a journey map is a useful exercise for hubs, which we will explore further in our learning offer.

	 <b>IDEA &amp; PREPARE</b>	 <b>SET UP &amp; TEST</b>	 <b>ESTABLISH</b>	 <b>SUSTAIN</b>	 <b>GROW &amp; ACHIEVE</b>
<b>ENABLERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks</li> <li>• Other stakeholders</li> <li>• Identifying a gap</li> <li>• Convening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks</li> <li>• Other stakeholders</li> <li>• Internal audience</li> <li>• External funders</li> <li>• Cultural value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational identity</li> <li>• Partnerships/support</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Reflect on business model</li> <li>• Management skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaling</li> <li>• Reflect on business model</li> <li>• Reputation</li> <li>• Opportunities to scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership/support with stakeholders</li> <li>• Comms/social media</li> <li>• Good financial management</li> <li>• Profitable enterprises</li> <li>• Strength in ecosystem</li> <li>• Wider local community support</li> </ul>
<b>THE JOURNEY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support movements happening within local community</li> <li>• Establish market need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Connections</li> <li>• Understand the landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community management</li> <li>• Learn fast</li> <li>• The business model adapts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain</li> <li>• Start to understand the impact</li> <li>• The business model works</li> <li>• Further funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services and programmes</li> <li>• Opportunities to collaborate/network</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Operations</li> <li>• Begin to see long term benefits to community</li> </ul>
<b>CHALLENGES SKILLS GAPS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for funding</li> <li>• How to communicate what you do</li> <li>• Business structures</li> <li>• Networks</li> <li>• Admin and comms</li> <li>• Financial planning</li> <li>• Research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing community</li> <li>• Non-profit vs. non commercial</li> <li>• Business structures</li> <li>• Admin and comms</li> <li>• Financial planning</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• HR &amp; people management</li> <li>• How to evaluate your impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having a clear vision</li> <li>• Comms with stakeholders</li> <li>• Service design</li> <li>• Training for a variety of positions</li> <li>• External factors (e.g. unreliable government)</li> <li>• How to manage data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust within the community</li> <li>• Lack of resources (money troubles)</li> <li>• Community management</li> <li>• Profit</li> <li>• Retaining team members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting business models</li> <li>• Learning from failure</li> <li>• How to talk about impact</li> <li>• How to grow the community</li> <li>• Systems and processes at scale</li> </ul>

# LEARNING NEEDS

Our approach:

We worked with the participants to convert some of the challenges faced by hubs into skills gaps and learning needs. This exercise helped us to identify a broad selection of key needs, all directly linked to the life cycle of the hub.



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## 1. VALUE ARTICULATION

- Fundraising
- Impact
- Communications

## 2. MODELS

- Business models
- Sustainability
- Finance models

## 3. OPERATIONAL SKILLS

- Team roles
- Legal options
- Managing space (physical or virtual)

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND TEAM MANAGEMENT

- Governance structures
- HR procedures
- Team management

# PROPOSING POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

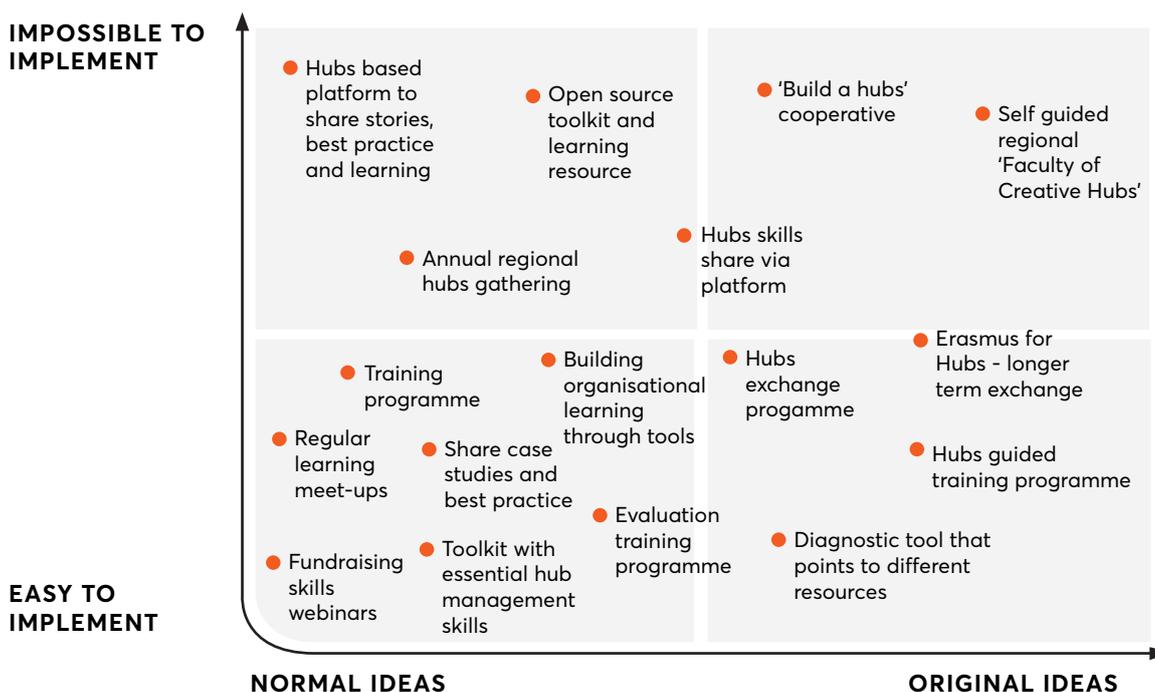
## PROBLEM DEFINITION:

Emerging creative hub leaders need a way to collaborate, share learnings and access support because they are often under-resourced, working in isolation and lacking in opportunities to develop their skills

We started out with the aim of creating something specifically for emerging hub leaders, but we found that due to the often organic growth of hubs, established leaders would also greatly benefit from an opportunity to pause, reflect and learn. Having a variety of experience levels participating in a learning programme will also enhance peer learning and exchange.

## What could possible solutions be?

Participants of our co-creation workshops engaged in some rapid ideation around what possible solutions to support hubs would look like, outlined in the diagram below. These can be loosely grouped into four categories:





## THE BIG IDEA

### WHAT IS IT?

Having carried out the exploratory workshops with key stakeholders and reviewed the type, nature and level of support already in existence for the growing global community of creative hubs, we believe there is an opportunity to develop a more holistic approach to supporting the development of hub leaders and the sustainability of their business models. Building on the stages of growth of both hubs and their leaders, we have considered where our collective effort could be best placed to respond to the needs of hub leaders at each stage.

### THE APPROACH

#### 1. Assess the need

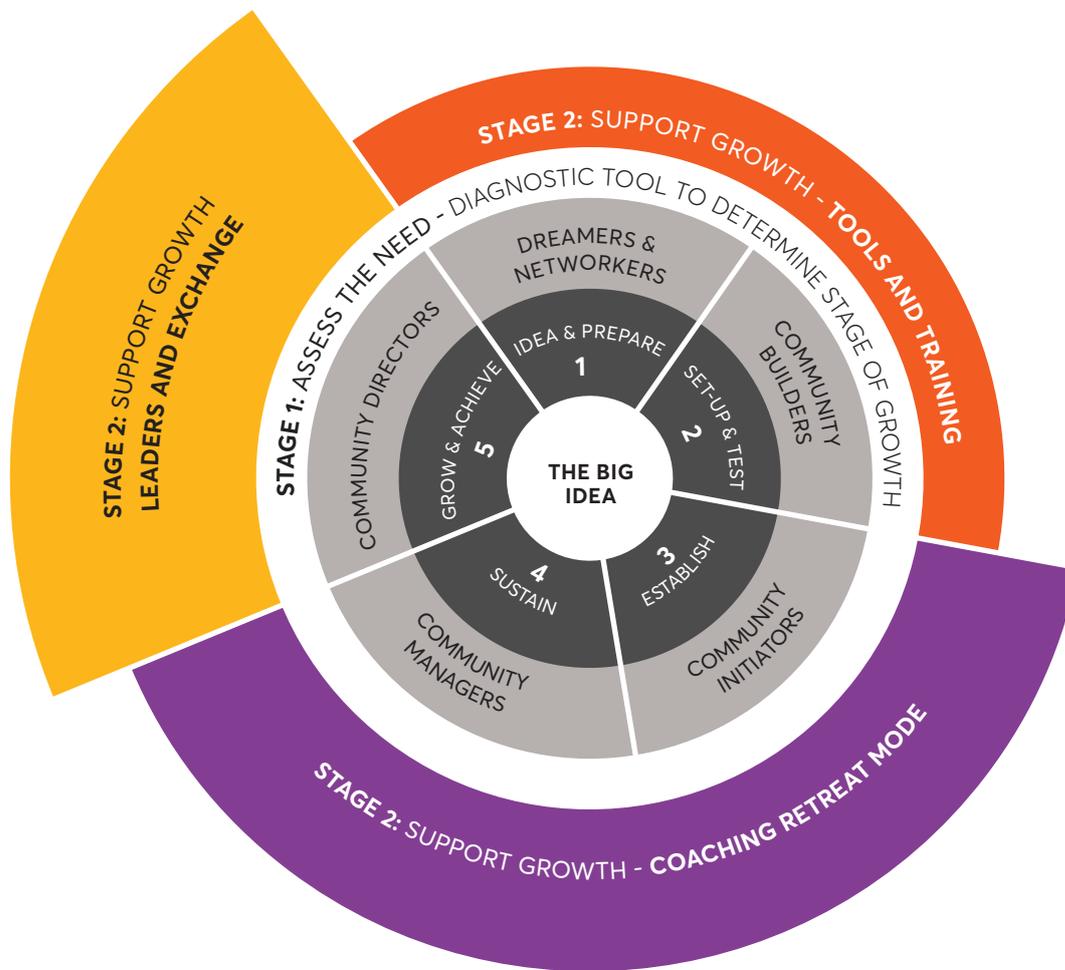
We will design an easy-to-use, quick diagnostic tool to assess the stage of growth of creative hubs. We will then be able to signpost them to relevant support materials, or opportunities to engage with local activities or networks that already exist. With users' consent, the data collected through this diagnostic can then be used to map and track creative hubs worldwide.

#### 2. Support growth

We will offer a variety of resources and opportunities that respond to the needs of hub leaders at different stages. These can be loosely categorised as:

- Tools and training
- Coaching retreat model
- Leaders and exchange

A more detailed breakdown of what this will involve is outlined in the next page.



**TOOLS & TRAINING**



**COACHING RETREAT MODEL**



**LEADERS & EXCHANGE**

	<b>NEED</b>	<b>TOOLS &amp; TRAINING</b>	<b>COACHING RETREAT MODEL</b>	<b>LEADERS &amp; EXCHANGE</b>
<b>NEED</b>	Support with the basic building blocks of running a hub	Support with the basic building blocks of running a hub	Space and time to delve deeper into the key areas of hub sustainability	Opportunities to develop as a regional leader in the hub space
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<p><b>Tools and training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toolkit providing practical support for the set-up of hubs for <b>dreamers and builders</b></li> <li>• Open access to 1-day training, led by <b>directors</b> in the local hubs community, hosted in their space or virtually</li> </ul>	<p><b>Coaching retreat model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 2-day coaching retreat, exploring key issues of sustainability and growth for <b>initiators and managers</b></li> <li>• Peer-led learning environment, facilitated by local <b>directors</b>, supported by the programme team and UK experts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leaders and exchange</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host and curate local hub leader forums and events</li> <li>• Applied learning guidance in convening and producing events to develop as a key actor in supporting your local community of hubs, across the full spectrum of development</li> </ul>	
<b>KEY CONTENT AREAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basics of setting up a hub: 'Hubs 101'</li> <li>• Business models</li> <li>• Value articulation and communications</li> <li>• Impact measurement and evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustaining and adapting your business model</li> <li>• Your hub journey</li> <li>• Managing a team</li> <li>• Board and governance</li> <li>• Assessing impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convening</li> <li>• Facilitating</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Horizon scanning of cutting edge of hubs</li> </ul>	

# NEXT STEPS

We will continue to refine the proposition of our learning programme for creative hubs with key stakeholders before moving into developing and testing it.

# WITH THANKS TO...

## **AFRICAN CONTINENT**

Delegates of the Co-working summit,  
Cairo, October 2017

## **EGYPT**

Designopia Zone

## **GHANA**

Ghana Design Network

hapaSpace

iSpace Foundation

MESH Ghana

Nubuke Foundation

Tentmaker Ghana Limited

## **INDONESIA**

C20

Code Margonda

Coworking Indonesia

## **MALAYSIA**

HOM Arts Trans

Kilang Bateri

## **NIGERIA**

360 CREATIVE INNOVATION HUB

Abuja Literary Society

Afrilabs

Afrinolly Space Creative Hub

Aiivon Innovation Hub Abuja

Creative Arts and Visual Imagery  
Centre (CAVIC)

Genesys Tech Hub

Open Space (James Ene Henshaw  
Foundation)

Roar Nigeria Hub / BoC Innovations

Startup Kano

TechHer

The Assembly Innovation Hub

Ventures Park

Wenovation Hub Initiative Ltd/Gte

WORKSTATION

## **PHILIPPINES**

Arete, Ateneo Creative Hub

98B Collaboratory

Pineapple Lab

## **SENEGAL**

AFRICULTURBAN

LIVES

## **SIERRA LEONE**

Sensi Innovation Hub Freetown

## **TAIWAN**

PunPlace

Yan-Cheng Arts & Culture (YCAC)

## **TANZANIA**

Mau Mau Collective

## **THAILAND**

Chiang Mai

Creative Chiang Mai Network

Office of Higher Education

Commission

Science and Technology Park,

Chiang Mai University

Design Centre (TCDC)

## **TUNISIA**

Cogite

## **UGANDA**

Design Hub

## **VIETNAM**

CreativeLab by UP

DNES, Danang

The Factory Contemporary Arts

Centre

Vietnam National Institute of Arts  
and Cultural Studies

## **ZIMBABWE**

Moto Republik

# WHO WE ARE

Creative hubs are integral to the service portfolio of the British Council and Hivos. Both organisations have a strong track record in supporting the development of global hub networks. The British Council has developed programmes such as the **European Creative Hubs Forum** and **Creative Hub Making Vietnam**, and launched resources such as the **Creative HubKit** and **Creative Hubs: Understanding the New Economy**. The British Council has also carried out mapping studies in Europe, **Vietnam** and **Taiwan** and recently commissioned hub mapping research in Southern Africa and Southeast Asia.

Similarly, Hivos programmes include Mideast Creatives, Age of Wonderland, Ubunifu in East Africa and R.O.O.M, a brand new programme in collaboration with the British Council. Hivos has also organised several Global Creative Hub meetings such as the Creative Hub Meeting in Southern Africa and the Coworking Summit.

Nesta, the innovation foundation, have a long history advocating for the creative economy and building learning programmes. This new programme builds on ten years of impactful delivery of the **Creative Enterprise Programme (CEP)**, in partnership with the British Council. Creative hubs exist to help support entrepreneurs to succeed and they offer important local provisions, be that through a space, network, practical support or an opportunity to learn. Nesta are keen to explore how to build the capacity of this increasingly important and impactful part of the creative economy growth.

# FURTHER READING

## Publications:

**Bi-Annual Creative Hubs trade magazine**

<http://creativehubs.eu/resource/echn-trade-magazine/>

## Research:

**Creative Hubs: Understanding the New Economy** - <http://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/blog/16/12/08/creative-hubs-lighthouses-new-urban-economy-new-re/>

## Toolkits:

**Creative HubKit** - <http://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/blog/15/06/28/creative-hubkit-made-hubs-emerging-hubs/>

**Creative Enterprise Toolkit** - <https://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/creative-enterprise-toolkit>

**DIY toolkit** - <http://diytoolkit.org/>



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