



MyWorld

# Enabling the West of England's Creative Economy



UK Research  
and Innovation

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# Director's Welcome

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MyWorld is a new creative hub, built on the production and technology strengths of the West of England's creative cluster. Its aim has been to foster collaboration across creative sector and technology organisations - regionally, nationally and globally - to pioneer new ways of telling stories, new ways of engaging audiences, new media formats and new ways of understanding user experiences. With a £30m investment from the UKRI Strength in Places Fund (SIPF), combined with significant industry investment, MyWorld is part of a UK-wide experiment to explore and evidence the power of devolving significant R&D funding to regions and sectors.

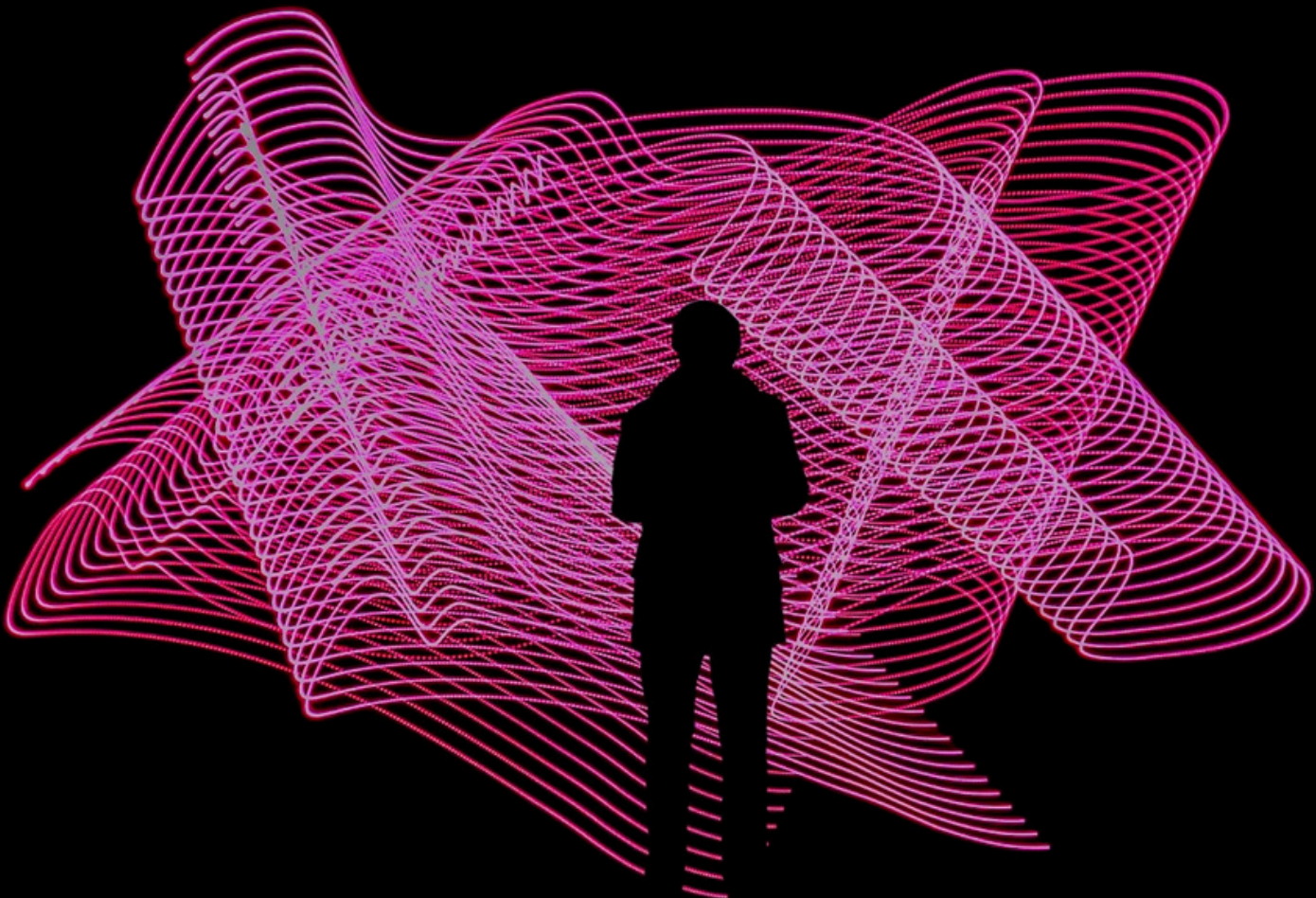
The creative sector is unique in terms of its scale, co-dependencies and dynamics and, I believe, particularly benefits from devolved R&D funding. When funds are managed locally by trusted entities, this facilitates long term strategic planning, combined with the agility to respond quickly to changing regional and sector priorities.

This booklet describes our integrated approach to catalysing innovation and investment via the MyWorld ecosystem. The programme has already demonstrated impact on the West of England's creative economy: it has successfully embedded a culture of R&D in businesses across scales, supported innovation and research translation, delivered inclusive training, and created new regional partnerships with global reach, all fuelling growth.

Statistics, of course, do not reflect the personal impact that MyWorld has enabled through linked scholarships, fellowships and support for small businesses, or indeed its impact on regional and central government planning.

I hope you enjoy reading about MyWorld and, of course if you have any questions or want to join us, please get in touch.

**Professor David Bull, MyWorld Director**



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# The Story So Far

The UK is a major player in the global creative sector, with our creative industries contributing some £124bn annually to the UK economy and employing 2.4m people. Our local creative-technology cluster plays an important part in this success, employing some 36,000 people in 8,600 businesses with a GVA of £3.5bn. Our local creative industries are pre-eminent in natural history filmmaking, animation, documentary and live performance, with strengths across games, extended reality and automation. Our universities in Bath and Bristol are at the forefront of research across the creative sector, spanning the disciplines of engineering, science and art with expertise across content acquisition, storytelling, immersive formats, audience understanding and content delivery.

The excellence of the West of England's creative cluster is underpinned by collaboration across disciplines, across sectors and across production, delivery and consumption. It is predicated on its people and their enthusiasm to experiment and embrace new technologies, on its strengths across academia and industry and on its co-location within a burgeoning technology sector.

MyWorld builds on 12 years of regional investment by UKRI through programmes such as AHRC KE REACT Hub, The South West Creative Technology Network and UKRI/AHRC Creative Clusters Bristol and Bath Creative R&D programme. These programmes have established a rich ecosystem of creative technology collaboration across academia and industry.

**“Our core focus is regional but our aspirations are international - to make the West of England a global leader for creative technology R&D.”**

Professor David Bull,  
MyWorld Director

## MyWorld's Partners

**WATERSHED**

**BRISTOL  
OLD VIC**

**LUX  
AETERNA**

**AARDMAN**



BATH SPA  
UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF  
**BATH**



University of  
**BRISTOL**

**UWE  
Bristol** | University  
of the  
West of  
England



**CATAPULT**  
Digital



OPPOSABLE  
GAMES



esprit  
Film and Television

# £39.2m

additional funding  
leveraged to the  
West of England



## 404

businesses  
supported

## 244

businesses  
trained

## 371

jobs  
created



## 3366

learners



## 243

academic  
outputs



2021

2025

2027



# What is MyWorld?

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MyWorld is a six-year creative technology R&D programme, funded by £30m from UKRI's Strength in Places Programme (SIPF), complemented by aligned co-investment from MyWorld's regional partners and international collaborators. MyWorld is one of the first seven programmes supported and is a flagship for the creative sector.

The programme builds on the creative production and technology strengths of businesses across the Bristol and Bath region combined with the internationally leading academic reputations of our universities. Its aim is to create a world-leading collaborative environment with innovation at its core. By fostering new relationships across technical R&D and experimental creative production, it has built regional collaborations with global reach, bringing major benefits to an already vibrant creative cluster, fuelling inward investment and growth.

MyWorld's approach is predicated on the Discover, Build, Learn triptych:

**DISCOVER:** Access to pre-market trends in technology via research in our partner Universities, exposing businesses to early stage research, and academics to industry challenges.

**BUILD:** Accelerating product and process prototype development through access to innovation funding, support and experimental studio facilities.

**LEARN:** Access to MyWorld skills training, creating a talent pool through short courses, with partners across academia, industry and government.

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## The MyWorld Ecosystem: A model for devolved R&D funding

To maximise the benefits of devolved R&D funding, MyWorld has created a globally unique and cohesive ecosystem that is responsive to regional and sector priorities, supporting long term strategic planning alongside flexibility and agility in the context of sector dynamics. Our structure is built on the Discover, Build, Learn triptych and recognises the dependencies across the Creative Continuum. We believe that this structure, managed by a trusted regional entity is a model for future devolved R&D funding in the sector. It embodies three interconnected layers:

### Foundation Platforms

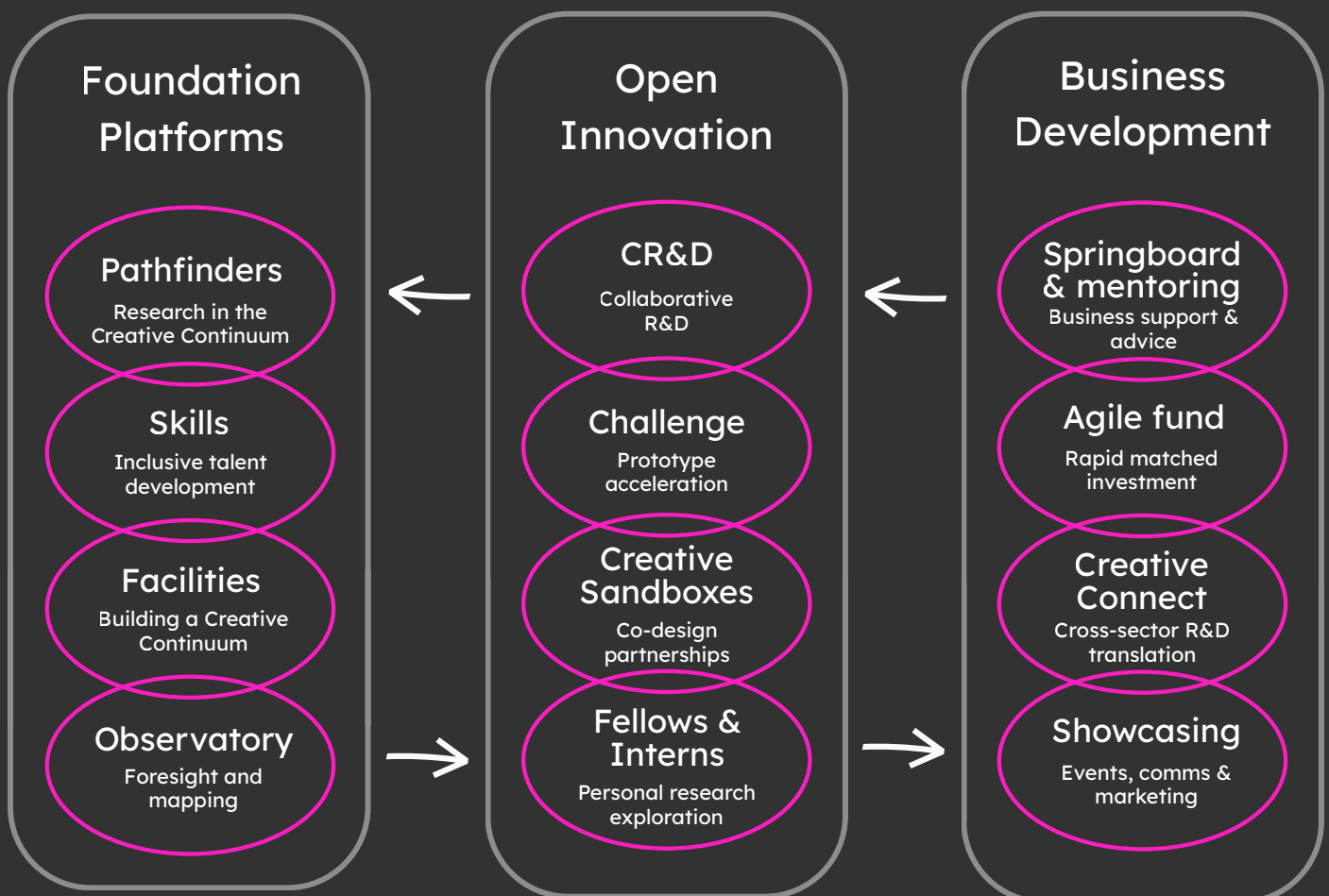
Comprising four key components that together support collaborative research and training and underpin research translation. Challenge-driven creative technology research via the Pathfinder programme has driven innovation, national and international collaboration and investment. Key research themes in Intelligent Content Creation and Production, Perceptually Optimised Delivery and Interactivity, Audience Understanding and Fair Creative Economies are complemented by a series of Experimental Productions. These are supported by major investments in new state of the art Facilities, hosted at our universities, that embody the principles of the Creative Continuum. A portfolio of Skills Training activities, that exploit MyWorld facilities, have been co-designed to address and anticipate sector skills needs. Finally, foresight activities conducted through the MyWorld Observatory enable us to understand industry and technology directions, to shape our programme priorities and to assess the impact of our interventions.

## Open Innovation

A portfolio of secondary funding competitions that build on (and inform) our foundation platforms to foster collaborative R&D, taking account of regional as well as sector priorities. Themed according to strategic challenges (such as AI), these have widened and eased access to collaborative R&D funding for both businesses, universities and individuals. Our various interventions have supported concept development and R&D transformation via group-based Creative Sandboxes (12 sandboxes, 3 months, up to £45k), through to large scale Collaborative R&D (12 projects, 12-18 months, £200k+match). Our Challenge Call projects (18 projects, 16 weeks, up to £50k) provide highly focused and mentored support for prototype development and acceleration, while our Fellowships and Internships (17 awards, 3-9 months, up to £20k) are enabling individuals to explore new concepts and build business skills.

## Business Development

MyWorld's longitudinal support mechanics (acceleration, exploitation, mentoring) have been seamlessly integrated into our ecosystem to foster commercialisation of MyWorld innovations - enabling rapid translation of R&D prototypes into products and their marketing. Our Springboard Fund facilitates business advice and interventions that enable access to new markets, while our Agile Fund enables businesses to unlock opportunities for growth or international collaboration that raise regional profile through matched funding. The Creative Connect programme, supported by Innovate UK and delivered by Digital Catapult in collaboration with the University of Bristol has supported 3 new projects that translate MyWorld IP into new domains or use cases. Extensive support for Showcasing MyWorld impact at major events such as SIGGRAPH, SXSW and BEYOND and at local technology festivals is also available.



# DISCOVER: Challenge Driven Research

£21.4m



Funding  
Leveraged

93

Businesses  
Supported

Jobs Created in  
secondary funded  
businesses



177



International  
Partnerships  
23



61

New Production  
process/  
products/  
commissions

Awards, prizes and  
prestigious lectures

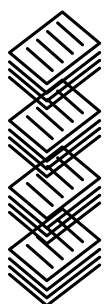


28



40

University - Industry  
Collaborations



229

Academic  
Outputs

Industry Research Partners

Tencent 腾讯

NETFLIX

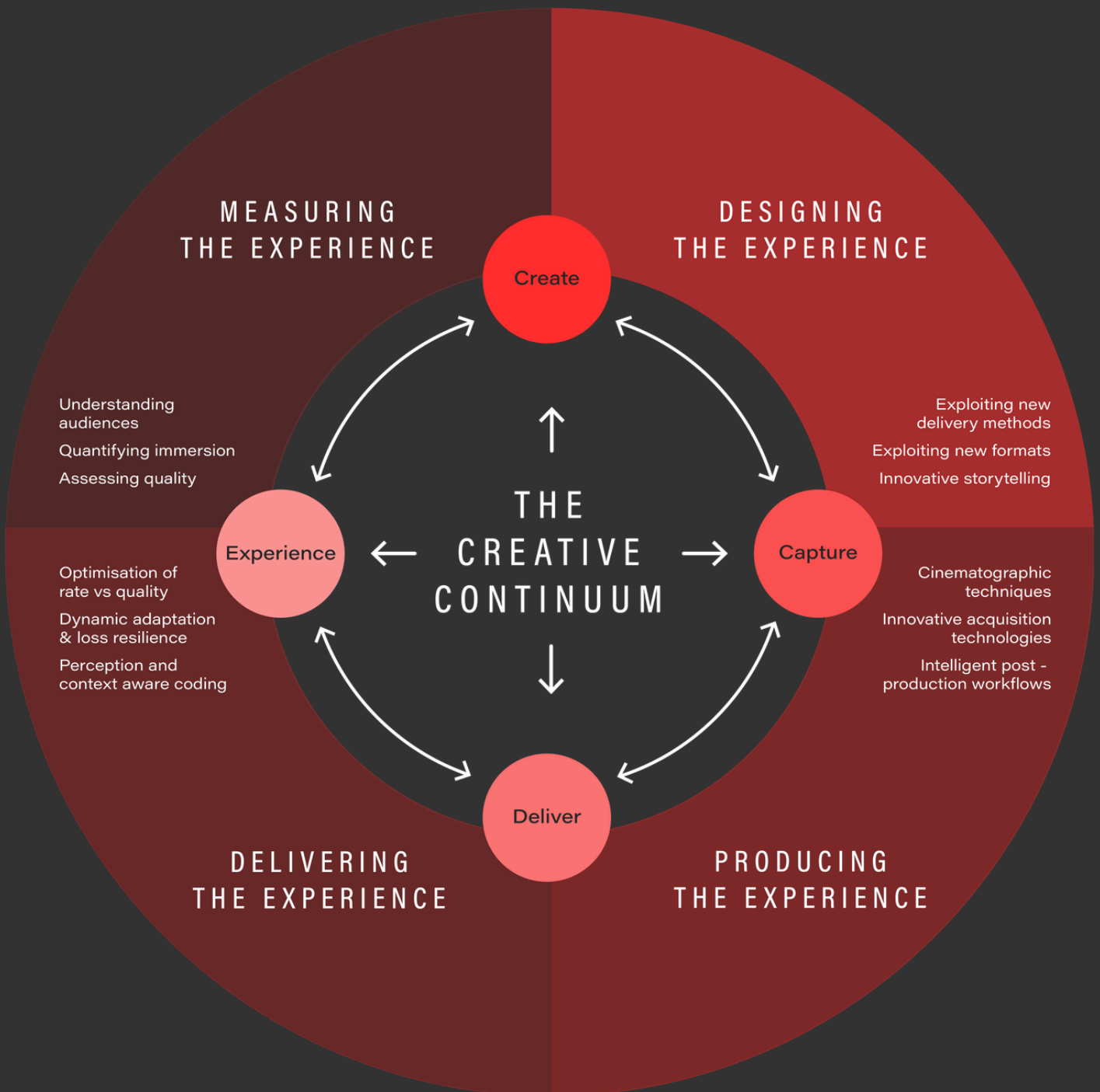


B B C

prime video

# Pathfinder Research

MyWorld's research is focused on the inter-related areas of content creation, delivery and consumption – the Creative Continuum. This focus allows us to drive innovation across all stages of the content lifecycle.



# Pathfinder Research

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## Intelligent Content Creation and Production

Addressing spatio-temporal computing challenges which enhance interactions between the physical and digital worlds, enabling new forms of storytelling through new media frameworks, employing advanced AI-enabled capture and rendering processes for volumetric content, developing new cinematographies and intelligent production workflows. This research has driven collaborations with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

## Perceptually Optimised Delivery and Interactivity

Solving the challenges of media delivery through innovations in high-bandwidth low-latency network designs that exploit media cloud-based infrastructures and network-edge processing, and in content compression. Our researchers lead the world in the application of deep learning methods to create efficient codecs, winning multiple international awards in collaboration with Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Tencent and contributing to future MPEG and AoM standards.



## Audience Insights

Developing tools to better understand audience engagement. New quantitative methods that facilitate a continuous real-time assessment of user experience have been developed within MyWorld that fuse human biometrics such as eye movements and heart rate to assess moment by moment real time immersion.

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## Fair Creative Economies

An important strand of MyWorld's research is addressing key issues in the creative economy. Together with industry partners, we are investigating new business models and forms of governance that can enable a sectoral shift toward more collective and mutual modes of business organisation that will benefit the creative industries across the UK.

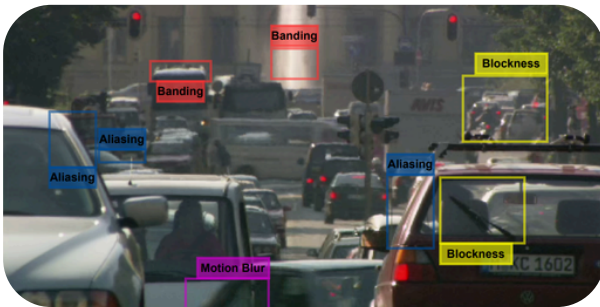
# Research Impact

## Filming in Challenging Conditions

Filming in extreme environments such as low light, underwater, or through atmospheric turbulence can pose major filming challenges. In collaboration with companies like BBC and Esprit Films, MyWorld has developed AI-driven tools based on 3D neural networks that enhance visibility and accelerate post-production. These tools have transformed traditional workflows in the natural history filmmaking sector and have been recognised with awards from major conferences including SIGGRAPH Europe.



## Intelligent Video Delivery



MyWorld has created a global impact through award-winning research into intelligent video streaming. Working with Netflix, we have developed perceptually optimised media delivery methods adopted by the Alliance for Open Media and contributing to AV2 standardisation. With Amazon Prime Video, an AI system for intelligent video artifact detection has significantly enhanced video quality monitoring. With BT, our research on neural video coding offers state of the art compression efficiency with low complexity.

## The Nomadic Node



The Nomadic Node is a portable “5G-in-a-box” solution developed within MyWorld to enable real-time media applications and immersive experiences. Offering rapid deployability and flexible coverage, it supports a wide range of AI-driven applications. It has been showcased at across the world, including at OFCnet 2024 in San Diego where, in collaboration with Nephelie Technologies, it demonstrated real-time transmission of volumetric images across the Atlantic.

## Optimising Engagement



MyWorld researchers have developed state of the art methods that enable continuous monitoring of audience responses using the latest biometrics technology. These neuroscience insights have been used to validate and refine creative concepts for both live and recorded content. Working with Bristol Old Vic, Aardman and St Georges Bristol, this has demonstrated the commercial potential of integrating audience understanding into the media production process.

# Experimental Productions

Experimental Productions are the storytelling heart of MyWorld. Collaborations between academia and industry have tested MyWorld's R&D "in the wild". These productions do not just showcase our work, but they also highlight issues, both technical and ethical, enabling us to drive knowledge and iterate solutions.

## The Grinning Man

An immersive VR experience based on the hit musical, The Grinning Man. This experience was adapted by Aardman Animations and MyWorld's Audience Insights team, using existing data from a previous motion-captured performance by The Imaginarium. The character responds directly to the user, validating mechanisms to make static motion capture interactive inside VR.

## Inside: The Childhood of an Artist

A multisensory virtual reality biography of American artist Judith Scott, presented by Trial and Error Studio in association with Bristol Old Vic and MyWorld. Blending motion and volumetric capture with vibrohaptic, thermal, and olfactory inputs, this new form of biography transports audiences, telling a moving story of love, separation, and resilience.

## Virtual Production at Model Scale

An investigation by Aardman Animations into how virtual production can be used at 'model scale', within their stop-motion pipeline, while retaining the hand-made craft that they are globally renowned for.

## RENO

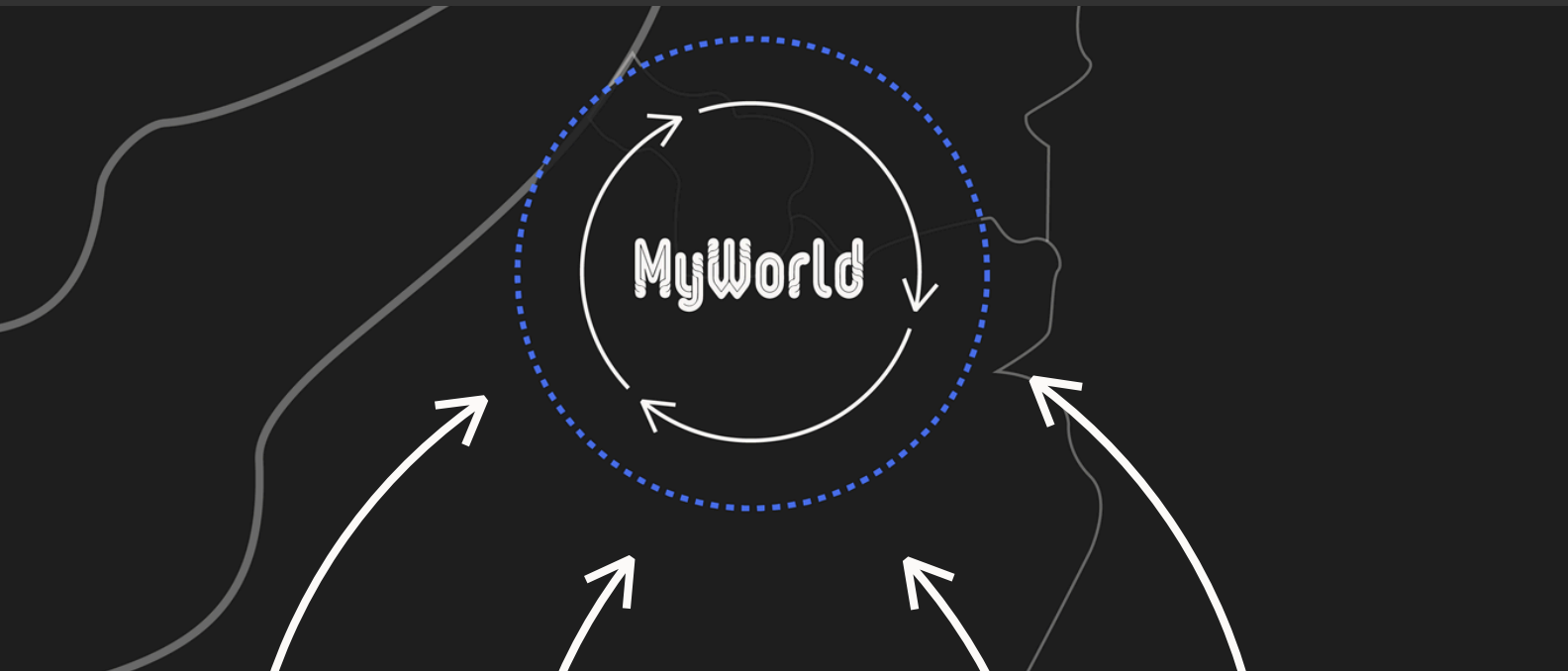
A futuristic sci-fi short by Lux Aeterna that explores humanity's relationship with artificial intelligence, pushing the boundaries of how emerging technologies integrate into film workflows, both practically and ethically.

## Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead

A collaboration between Bristol Old Vic and MyWorld's Audience Insights team, investigating physiological audience responses. Measuring both in-person audiences and live-streamed audiences, the creative team used data to inform night-by-night editorial decision-making, resulting in increased immersion.



MyWorld's partner facilities provide an unrivalled capability, supporting research, collaborative R&D and training. What makes this offering truly unique is the interconnectivity, with four facilities of such a complementary nature all located in the West of England.



## The Sheds

Co-funded by MyWorld and a Research England RPIF award, The Sheds offer a globally unique combination of technology, embracing the Creative Continuum, specialising in real-time acquisition, virtual production, live distribution, an XR suite, audio-visual gallery and audience understanding via the Smart Cinema.

## The Bridge

Separately funded by AHRC, comprising a virtual production capability, fabrication support for prototyping, an immersive technology suite with VR and AR systems that can be integrated with the robotic, manufacturing and performance technologies on offer.

## Newton Park Studios

A focus on training and use by creative practitioners for R&D, comprising a multi-camera TV studio with gallery, plus a smaller studio, both of which can be linked to one of two audio control rooms, nine video edit suites and a small viewing theatre. Key equipment includes an immersive audio suite with 360 sound recorders, inertial motion capture suits, lidar scanners and a Vanishing Point virtual production system.

## CAMERA

A face/body light stage and photogrammetry rig to facilitate the capture of cinematic quality datasets; A 4D volumetric capture Stage enabling dynamic capture capabilities, virtual camera paths and editing to create immersive and visual effects; a virtual production stage supporting work on the next generation of production and visual effects pipelines.

# BUILD: Enabling Infrastructure

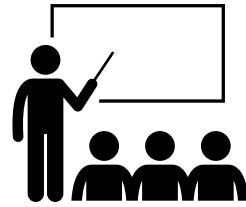


# LEARN: Training the Next Generation

404



Unique businesses receiving support

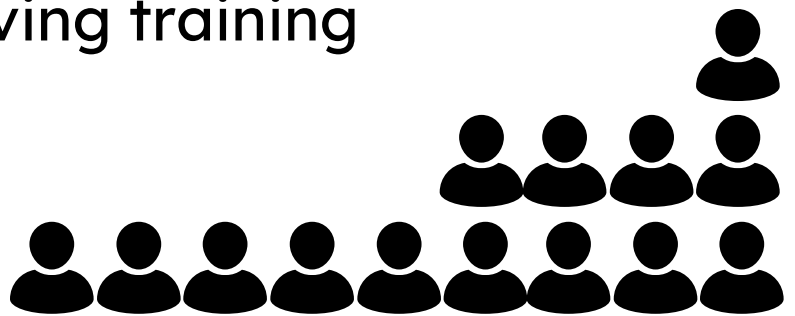


244

Unique businesses receiving training

Unique learners receiving training

3366



22

Short Courses Offered

Academic Courses linked to MyWorld

36



To address critical sectoral needs within the West of England, MyWorld has developed an ambitious skills programme to build a talent pipeline of individuals with the knowledge to understand and embrace technical advances and to be future leaders in the sector. Using the vast skills and experience of MyWorld's partners, we're able to offer short, skills-based courses alongside academic qualifications. This is not only creating a workforce ready to advance the sector, but one which is more diverse and inclusive. MyWorld's skills programme includes:

### **Immersive Arts and Technologies Masters Programmes**

MyWorld's MSc and MA programmes have been co-designed with industrial partners to meet a growing skills-gap demand and are closely associated with excellent cutting-edge research and facilities within MyWorld. These courses attracted 74 new learners from some 800 applicants.

### **Virtual Production Skills Bootcamps**

These courses in Unreal and Sony VENICE 2 were funded by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and delivered in collaboration with Gritty Talent, MARS Academy and Sony. They attracted 56 new learners from 156 applicants, with 11 sponsored by 7 employers.

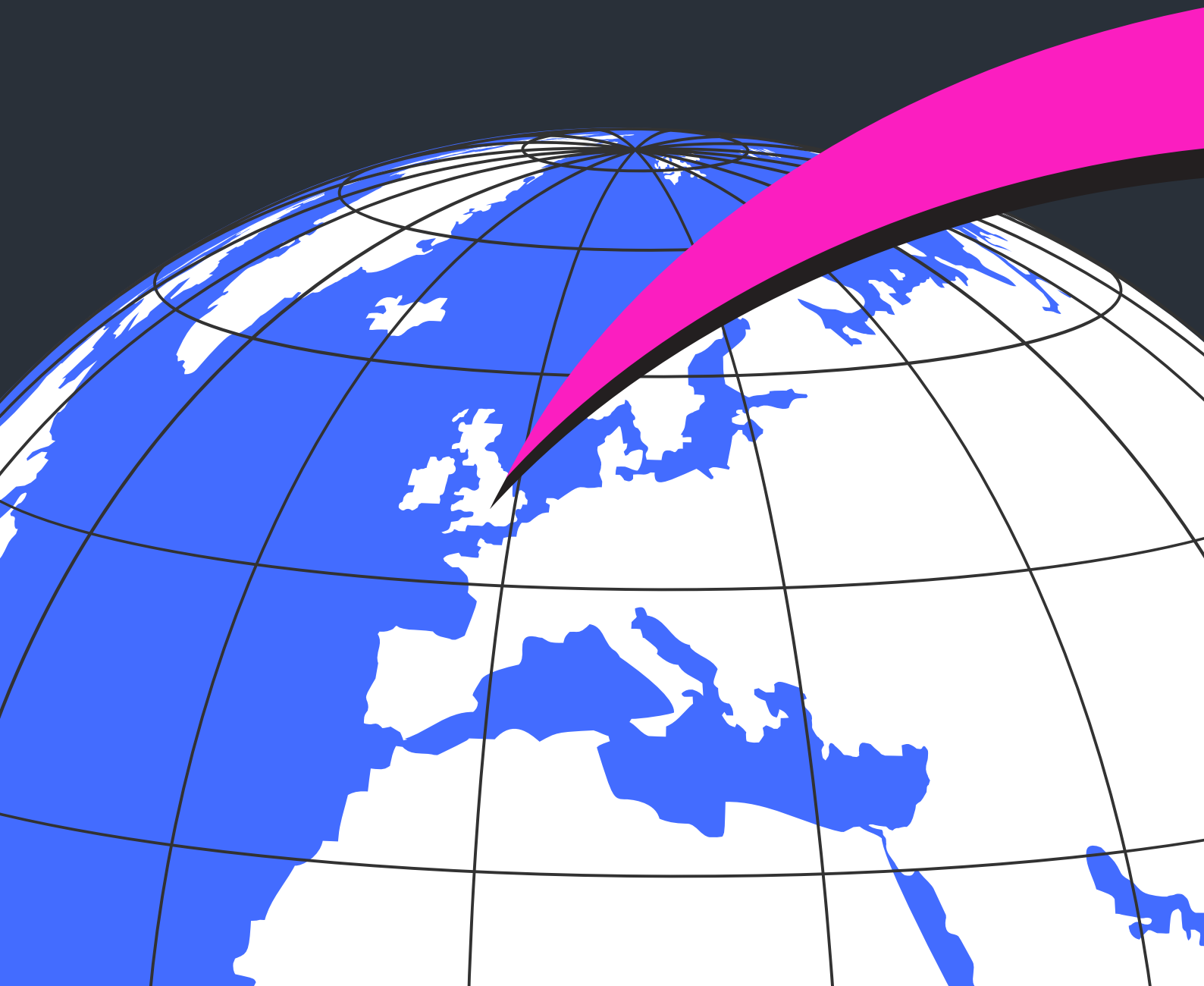
### **Unity Game Development Course**

As part of the EPSRC-funded Black Mentors initiative, MyWorld delivered a free training course on Unity game development, aimed at inspiring and empowering young people from diverse backgrounds. This unique opportunity allowed young people to delve into the world of game design and development.

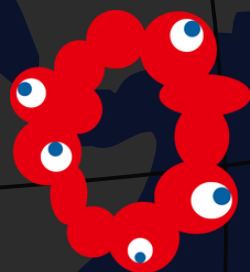
### **MyWorld Scholarships**

- Each year, MyWorld offers scholarships for postgraduate taught degree programmes linked to the creative technology industries. The scholarships are for those from under-represented backgrounds, with scholars benefitting from financial aid and MyWorld's connections to industry and academia.

# Global Reach & Impact



**SIGGRAPH 2025**  
Vancouver+ 10-14 August



To drive additional investment and international partnerships MyWorld has delivered marketing and event activity at key geographies where decision makers and potential partners from target industries can be engaged. This has not only driven awareness for the programme and region but has also enabled companies supported by MyWorld to raise their international profile.



Presented and showcased  
in USA, Canada and Japan

Presented to over  
3,000 people at SIGGRAPH

775+ visitors from 350+  
companies at SXSW '24  
Including: Apple, Canon,  
EPIC Games, Mattel,  
NVIDIA, Sony, Disney

OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN

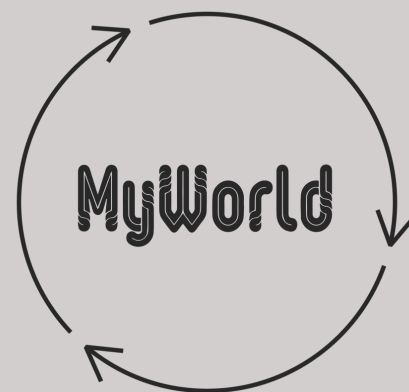
**EXPO**  
2025

**SXSW**®



MYWORLD'S

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# Creating a Culture of Research, Development and Innovation

## Aardman Animations

Aardman Animations has created iconic, globally beloved characters for over 50 years. Despite this success, Aardman are facing the same problem as many creative organisations: the costs of production are going up, while the pay from commissioners stays the same. These rising costs per minute are particularly detrimental in stop-motion animation, which is inherently time-consuming.

To create financial sustainability, new technologies must be utilised within the business. This poses an obvious challenge. How can you embed innovative new technologies in an organisation that is world-renowned for its hand-made ethos? Can Aardman combine the physical and the digital, while keeping material practice at the core of what they do?

In their work with MyWorld, Aardman investigated exactly that, receiving funding, a research fellow, and access to facilities and networks over the course of 13 months. The dedicated R&D team interviewed over 40 stakeholders to identify what digital tools could be most helpful in the pre-production process, before conducting experiments into how virtual production technologies can be implemented on a 'model scale'.

“At the very beginning there was hesitation, especially around VR headsets and being in a digital world, that is so alien to someone who is used to using their hands”

Georgia Hope, Aardman Animations

Crucially, these stakeholders were kept engaged throughout the process. The R&D unit was located on the studio floor, amongst ongoing productions, so crew members could look behind the curtain and engage with the practicality of what was being created. Regular demonstrations and feedback sessions were held to allow continued iteration of tools that were intuitive and fit into the stop-motion crew's traditional practices.

This transparent structure of R&D was key to showing the creatives at Aardman how technologies can be used to enhance creativity rather than overshadow it. The approach of demystifying technology has reassured stakeholders, built confidence, and enabled teams to increase production density while maintaining the artistry of their craft.

Importantly, this project has successfully shown how R&D can be a powerful tool to respond to changing market conditions, helping Aardman stay agile and future-focused. As a result, Aardman has continued conducting R&D beyond their project with MyWorld, embedding a lasting culture of innovation across the organisation.

“Without MyWorld, we wouldn't have approached a traditional and structured form of R&D. MyWorld being a catalyst and the desire for change happening internally, allowed us to set up a new R&D unit.”

Dan Efergan, Aardman Animations

# Creating a Culture of Research, Development and Innovation

## Lux Aeterna

Creative practitioners have always adapted to new tools, but the rapid development of generative AI is challenging many industries in ways that feel both groundbreaking and unsettling. Lux Aeterna, an award-winning, Bristol-based VFX company, are amongst many whose business will be affected by such emerging technologies.

Working with MyWorld, Lux Aeterna created a short film, RENO. In making this film, they experimented with how these emerging technologies can be used practically, efficiently, legally, and ethically within their workflow. MyWorld provided funding and high-end production technologies and facilities which were instrumental in RENO's production.

Most impactfully, MyWorld enabled a partnership between Lux Aeterna and Dr Cobus Jooste, Intellectual Property Law expert at the University of the West of England, to explore the legal and ethical implications of using these tools. The team will publish a report to share knowledge gained with creative industry practitioners, academics, and policy makers alike.

“These tools have sprung onto the creative industries very rapidly, so every creative organisation is trying to figure out what it means for them, how they should be using them, if they should be using them. This tries to get to the bottom of a lot of those questions.”

James Pollock,  
Lux Aeterna

Such knowledge sharing is crucial to creating a culture of R&D with industry-wide benefits in this period of technological uncertainty. Since the start of the project, the RENO team have spoken at many influential events, including AI panels at Westminster Forum, The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and the British Film Institute. Across these events, the team has shared their early findings with over 1500 industry practitioners, policy makers and invited audience members, continuing these essential conversations and embedding an open research culture.



# Creating a Culture of Research, Development and Innovation

## Bristol Old Vic

The rise of streaming services and at-home entertainment has had a devastating effect on live performance venues. World renowned theatre and production company, Bristol Old Vic, has been exploring live streamed performances as a new distribution method and revenue stream. This presents a huge opportunity to reach audiences that are switching to at-home entertainment, as well as new, diverse audiences who may not have previously attended the theatre.

In partnership with MyWorld's Audience Insights research team, Bristol Old Vic were provided with funding to investigate how scientific data could be used to inform creative decision making, to maximise audience engagement when watching a theatre show via live stream. Using MyWorld's technology, biometric data was gathered from those watching a performance of Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead, both in the theatre, and over a live stream.

**“The way that we designed it, the access to the kit, to the facilities, and to the other stakeholders, they’ve come about because we’re partners on the MyWorld project, and they have enabled these productions to take place”**

**Giles Chiplin, Bristol Old Vic**

By identifying where the two groups differed, the film team could spot the moments in the live stream where the audience's attention was fading. This measurement continued for 3 successive livestreams, with the creative team making data-driven changes to the live stream each night, which ultimately resulted in a more engaged audience.

Enabling these kinds of partnerships between industry and academia can remove the guesswork which so often happens when conducting creative R&D. By allowing data to be part of the production process and inform decision making, creative businesses can confidently and effectively establish new products and revenue streams.

These are just three of the 404 trailblazing companies which MyWorld has supported in conducting R&D. Through providing funding, network, and facilities, MyWorld has removed barriers to conducting valuable R&D, and grown a bold and productive community of practice in the West of England region. This has resulted in over £38M of additional investment to the region, indicative of lasting economic growth.



JAMAL SPACEYK WAVY

HAN

HKAYTC CST04

NMRK

PEACHES

OLLIE

DOLLY



# Open Innovation Funding

## Condense

The UK's creative technology industries are at a critical juncture. Emerging fields such as volumetric video, cloud-based virtual production, and real-time rendering have the potential to transform entertainment, and sectors as diverse as education, sport, and health.

Many SMEs, despite having world-class expertise, often lack the financial runway to scale these breakthroughs into commercial products. With global markets for virtual live events projected to reach \$85 billion, international platforms are moving quickly to dominate. Without targeted support, there is a real risk of many UK businesses being outpaced by larger international players who can absorb these costs.

Devolved R&D funding is key to addressing this challenge. By placing resources and decision-making at a regional level, funding can be more agile and responsive in a fast-changing market. It enables creative businesses to improve their product capabilities, reassures stakeholders, and supports commercial growth. As a result, devolved R&D funding underpins a sustainable pipeline of innovation that safeguards regional economies, generating a competitive advantage for the UK on the global stage.

Founded in Bristol in 2019, Condense has developed the technology to capture and live-stream real-world content into virtual spaces. Volumetric video can be streamed into unique virtual venues, creating brand-new immersive experiences and revenue streams through ticketing, sponsorship and merchandise. Fans join events as live avatars, interacting with each other, and artists, offering global connection, community and engagement. Since 2019, they have become deeply embedded in the West of England's creative technology ecosystem.

Moving into Watershed in 2022 to establish the world's first studio for streaming live events into the metaverse, Condense offered the creatives of Bristol and beyond a unique opportunity to engage with fans across the globe, and new, younger audiences who are spending more and more time in these game-like environments. With these incredible capabilities, it's no surprise that Condense raised £5M of seed funding from a range of high-profile investors such as BBC, Skepta, and Rio Ferdinand.

Over the next few years, Condense formed massive partnerships with BBC, Glastonbury and Universal Music. However, when seeking a second round of funding in 2024, they found that the landscape had massively changed. Condense's partnerships with large organisations were inherently slow-moving, meaning income did not come in a consistent schedule. This made it difficult to secure further funding in an investment landscape which favours low risk, consistent, quick monetisation.

This new technology is hugely complex, without a clearly defined, immediately profitable market. For Condense's business to become sustainable, more time and money was essential for them to construct this new market segment for themselves.

Working with MyWorld, Condense made several improvements to its technology and business.

# Open Innovation Funding

## Condense

### Improved product capabilities

Through the MyWorld programme, Condense were awarded funding to run 2 R&D projects with the University of Bristol. These Collaborative R&D projects were each 12 months in length and supported by Digital Catapult. The first pioneered advancements in volumetric video technology, enabling a more seamless virtual performance broadcast. The second utilised machine learning to increase visual quality, scalability, and efficiency in the technology.

These projects gave Condense the time and money to conduct R&D, which was crucial to streamlining their capabilities, refining their offer to investors, and lowering the costs of delivering high-quality virtual performances, ensuring the best service offering on the market and extending their runway.

Following their first project, Condense secured their game changing partnership with BBC. This partnership included a regular series of immersive live events for BBC Radio 1's New Music Show, as well as Rave Lounge, where 3000 people attended virtually.

In new technology companies, conducting R&D is key to staying competitive. This funding, ringfenced for R&D, assures that these projects can remain a priority amid times of financial uncertainty.

### Becoming investment ready

These R&D projects were conducted in collaboration with the cutting-edge expertise of University of Bristol's Visual Information Lab. Two academic papers were published as a result, boosting Condense's technological credibility with both investors and potential customers.

Additionally, as part of their second R&D project, Condense had developed IP, which they realised could be applied to generative AI. When Condense decided to refocus their work, to combat the changing market conditions, they used this IP to develop Layerhouse. This new app allows users to place real people in generative AI video, without the need for greenscreens or complex virtual production technologies.



“We realised that in some ways, our main product was too early to monetise sustainably, so until then, we needed to refocus on something we could monetise quickly.”

Andy Littledale, Condense

Layerhouse is a game changer for Condense. As a product, it creates a clear pipeline to generate recurring income, which will be essential in keeping their business sustainable and securing further investment to grow their incredible live event offering. This development would not have been possible without MyWorld’s support, both in developing IP which was applied to Layerhouse, and in providing Condense with the time and ring-fenced funding to continue innovating.

“If we can make a success out of Layerhouse, MyWorld will have contributed enormously to that. Not just in the IP that we developed to make it possible, but in providing a financial bridge between investment rounds.”

Andy Littledale, Condense

## Brand opportunities

Condense utilised MyWorld’s Springboard fund which enables recipients of MyWorld support to apply for small amounts of additional funding (with a rapid application decision process) to capitalise on unforeseen opportunities for boosting the reach, impact, or investment potential of products.

Their successful Springboard fund application enabled them to attend South by Southwest Texas in 2024, where they spoke on a panel, showcased their technology in the Immersive Futures Lab and connected with likeminded companies. This allowed Condense to connect with a high quality audience of hundreds, including some of the worlds biggest media and entertainment brands, and resulted in a further opportunity to speak at South by Southwest London in 2025.

Additionally, MyWorld has worked in close collaboration with Condense to add a state-of-the-art volumetric capture system to [The Sheds](#), and to share volumetric capture expertise between MyWorld and Condense’s technical teams. This volumetric capture system, developed by Condense through MyWorld’s innovation support, will form a key part of MyWorld’s integrated technology offering as part of its role as a globally unique facility, where art meets technology to drive innovation in the creative sector.

Through their work with MyWorld, Condense have improved their service capabilities, increased their technological credibility, and developed a new, instantly profitable product. This work was instrumental in supporting Condense’s R&D journey at a time when the investment landscape was particularly averse to new complex new technologies, to help them position themselves for investment and maintain their competitive advantage in the market.

# Open Innovation Funding

## Dhaqan Collective



Dhaqan Collective is led by Fozia Ismail and Ayan Cilmi. Their practice seeks to find ways to build imaginative futures that support Somali people in the region and across East Africa in resisting threats to cultural heritage. They are a feminist art collective of Somali women, centring the voices of womxn and elders in our community, and privileging co-creation and collaboration.

Dhaqan Collective were funded through the Watershed led sandbox funding call. They later received £3,960 from the Springboard Fund to enable their participation in Shambala Festival. Their success in this venture resulted in £70,000 of further funding as well as partnerships with notable artists who were able to amplify the work of Dhaqan Collective across their digital channels reaching an estimated 236,200 people.

# Open Innovation Funding

## Black Goblin

Black Goblin is an audio research and technology company focusing on creating innovative solutions that enable creatives to work with sound in a transformative and artistic-driven way. Thol is the company's debut product in development. It is a sound design suite that uses machine learning to generate custom and high-quality sound effects that perfectly match the image. Thol reduces costs and time-consuming processes, but most importantly, it allows creators to customise and retain full authorship.

Black Goblin were funded through the Digital Catapult led Challenge Call and later received £4,000 of Springboard funding. The funding allowed them to attend the Soundtech Accelerator Investor Showcase, an event co-hosted by our existing Danish VC, SoundInvest. This provided a crucial platform to pitch at the SOUND Pitch & Buzz event and interact with a pre-qualified group of 5-10 investors specialising in audio tech.

The trip was a strategic initiative to establish a foothold in Denmark as their entry point to the European market. They conducted business development meetings with major Danish post-production studios like Nordisk Film Production Audio Department and Dicientia Studios, and were able to onboard 2 of these studios for their now live private BETA.



# Black Goblin

# SXSW<sup>®</sup>L





# Research Fellowships

## Gabrielle Shiner-Hill

In recent times, rising costs have made research and development a poor short term value proposition for many businesses. This is especially true for early-stage R&D without an immediate plan for commercialisation. Without this fundamental speculative work however, there is no pipeline for pioneering new technologies, no route for new methodologies to be translated into industry use, and no way for the novel products of tomorrow to make it into our stores. Innovation is founded on inventive leaps, chance breakthroughs from unexpected collisions. It cannot thrive in a short term and cautious landscape.

While national funding can support this work, many of these opportunities lack the infrastructure necessary to provide support which is tailored to regional needs, support from sector experts with links to regional ecosystems, and to link up with existing regional and national strengths. This infrastructure ensures effective collaboration, with maximised impact and sustained growth.

MyWorld has taken this approach to ensure limited funding is spent strategically, with a lasting impact for individuals, organisations, and the region as a whole. The MyWorld programme has run many interventions for R&D and innovation at all stages. One of which is a Fellowship programme, delivered in partnership with Watershed's Pervasive Media Studio. Gabrielle Shiner-Hill is one of the fellows supported through this programme.

Gabrielle is a digital fashion and sustainability expert with over 20 years of experience, having worked with global brands such as Ralph Lauren and Burberry. Through MyWorld, Gabrielle was engaged as an Industrial Fellow to explore digitising the Bath Fashion Museum's 100,000-strong archive, using technologies ranging from £30,000 scanners to Lidar scanning via a phone. This enabled the museum to showcase its collection, despite limited space and budget, ensuring greater accessibility, preservation, and engagement. Following this, Gabrielle's post was extended to move the research closer to adoption by industry.

MyWorld's design and implementation of these fellowships has been integral to creating a lasting impact on Gabrielle as an individual, the associated organisations, and the region as a whole.

### Holistic support

MyWorld's delivery partner, Watershed's Pervasive Media Studio, supports Fellows with much more than just finance. Fellowship producers are responsive to the needs of each fellow and their host organisation, providing holistic support to allow both parties to meet their aims. As someone new to the region, Gabrielle had monthly meetings with her producer, Vanessa, to advise on her work and introduce potential local partners and collaborators.

Vanessa also supported Gabrielle with administration and paperwork, which typically comes in large volumes with public R&D funding. This support allows a wider range of companies and individuals, including those who might not traditionally engage with publicly funded R&D, focusing their efforts on what really matters- their work.

# Research Fellowships

## Gabrielle Shiner-Hill

“I found it really helpful because I’ve got huge amounts of documentation around what I’ve done, but I’ve not had that reporting pushed on me. It’s made me very productive.”

### Gabrielle Shiner-Hill

In her first fellowship, focused on asset production and public engagement, Gabrielle showcased at several events and workshops, including Bath Digital Festival and Bath Fashion Festival, successfully increasing collection access via digitisation.

### A connected region

MyWorld’s Fellowships are managed by experts with knowledge and experience within the regional creative technology ecosystem. Throughout her career, Gabrielle has primarily lived and worked in London. With no preexisting networks in the West of England, Gabrielle benefited hugely from the region’s interconnectivity. Capitalising on Vanessa’s expertise, Gabrielle was regularly introduced to potential collaborators in the region, including accessing equipment and technical expertise from CAMERA at the University of Bath and The Studio at Bath Spa University.

One of these collaborations was a partnership with Bristol-based Nephelie Technologies. Their technology was instrumental in the success of Gabrielle’s second fellowship, as it could digitise a garment in just 90 seconds. The efficiency of this technology was key to demonstrating the commercial significance of scanning and digitising fashion assets and allowed a potential partnership to be brokered with industry.

This is just one example of MyWorld facilitating new collaborations where mutually beneficial R&D can be conducted, costs lowered, and risks shared. The MyWorld programme has 13 partners and many touchpoints within the West of England’s creative technology industries, having supported 404 businesses. So far, MyWorld has enabled 133 business-to-business and business-to-university collaborations.

### Sustained impact

Across the programme, MyWorld’s funding pipeline supports a wide range of R&D, from exploration to commercial progression and beyond. MyWorld’s flexible model allows funding to be allocated to where it’s genuinely needed and evolves as those needs change.

Public funding can often mean applying to separate opportunities with narrow briefs. With MyWorld’s programme of support, Gabrielle could keep her momentum and build on her earlier work.

Remaining embedded in the regional ecosystem, Gabrielle moved her investigatory work closer to commercialisation by streamlining the digitisation pipeline with Nephelie Technologies, and demonstrating broader industrial demand for her work with the fashion and archiving industry.

Additionally, Gabrielle’s work has been the basis of applications for further investment into the West of England, such as the Bath Fashion Museum’s application to the Unlocking Collections grant, and a large institutional grant application by Nephelie Technologies, to digitise the UK’s fashion archives.

This sustained support is key for ensuring that there is a pipeline for the brilliant learnings from early, exploratory research to be translated into useful industry products and services. Having the scope to work collaboratively and continuously in this way is critical for allowing long-term impact in the region.

Alongside this, MyWorld's continued support has had a significant impact in transforming Gabrielle's career landscape. Gabrielle utilised the Springboard Fund, which enables recipients of MyWorld support to apply for small amounts of additional funding (with a rapid application decision process) to capitalise on unforeseen opportunities for boosting the reach of their work. Gabrielle's successful application enabled her to attend South by Southwest Texas, where she was invited to speak on the future of digital fashion, archiving, and the role of technology in reshaping how we create, store, and interact with fashion assets.

As a result of her continued work with MyWorld, Gabrielle can now present as an expert in this groundbreaking area, and plans to continue her work with the fashion museum.

**“There's been a whole new area opened up to me. I would never have had the opportunity otherwise.”**

**Gabrielle Shiner-Hill**

Through MyWorld, Gabrielle has successfully increased access to fashion archives and collections via digitisation, and demonstrated commercial relevance beyond her initial fellowship. This pipeline has effectively integrated emerging technology into the fashion industry, for a sustainable and innovative future. MyWorld's unique approach was instrumental in this, enabling a considerable, lasting impact for the organisations involved in this work, the West of England, and Gabrielle herself.







# Audience Insights

## St George's Research Concerts

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We live in a world where screen-based media is the way we entertain, educate, and inform ourselves, with the global TV subscription market alone estimated as \$158 billion. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a considerable shift in focus away from in-person entertainment to digital entertainment and the technologies that enable it. Live performance venues that were once cultural hubs are struggling to retain their pre-COVID attendance levels, losing out to newer formats, such as streaming. Many venues responded to declining in-person audience attendance by offering live and as-live streaming of their offerings. Whilst event streaming has shown steady growth, relatively little research has been done into whether it is truly a suitable substitute for the in-person experience. Are audiences missing out by staying at home?

Historically, the practice of audience research in the creative industries has relied on flawed, self-report-based methods, which at their best, provide limited insight, and at their worst, can be unreliable and misleading. This can lead to significant losses when investing in content that audiences do not connect with, or over-investment in new infrastructure for experiences that audiences have a limited appetite for (3D cinema, for example). Rigorous audience research, drawing signal from the noise of the ever-expanding range of audience data, can inform the creative industries; it can de-risk investment in entertainment, making it more likely to engage its target audiences and deliver innovative and captivating experiences for global markets.

MyWorld's Audience Insights research team works with creative organisations to conduct scientific audience research. Their robust approach has many benefits over the methods typically used in the creative industries.

### Reliable methods

In a review of 489 audience research studies, MyWorld's team found that the majority of studies use only self-report methods, such as questionnaires and interviews. While these methods provide useful insights, they rely on subjective reports, which are often biased and difficult to compare between participants. Further, studies have repeatedly shown that human memory is unreliable, and our retrospective opinions are disproportionately biased by the ending of a piece of content. MyWorld's Audience Insights team combine self-report methods with biometric technology to provide accurate, meaningful, moment-by-moment audience measures.

**“You have to be driven by the evidence. If you put too much weight in a borderline finding, you're investing time and effort in something that doesn't really make a difference.”**

**Dr Felix Carter,  
Audience Researcher**

# Audience Insights

## St George's Research Concerts

### Bespoke, real-world studies

It has been widely demonstrated that factors such as viewing environment and the presence of others have a significant impact on audience experience. To obtain accurate results, MyWorld works with industry partners to create research environments that closely match the genuine experience. In MyWorld's Smart Cinema, audiences see media in an industry-standard cinema. Remote sensors combined with wearable devices ensure participants don't feel overly observed and can enjoy the content. The team also takes a smaller-scale version of this set-up to real venues.

### Science-backed research

When researching audiences, companies often face pressure to show success and well-spent funds. This, combined with unreliable research methods, can lead to inaccurate insights and missteps in the creative process. MyWorld's research is underpinned by a robust and repeatable approach, documented, peer-reviewed and published in leading academic journals.



St George's, a world-class independent music venue at the heart of Bristol, is among those whose business has been affected by the post-COVID decline of in person events. Working with MyWorld's Audience Insights team, St George's set out to measure how audiences respond to live music and investigate if live-streamed concerts are a suitable substitute for the in-person experience.

Over two nights, the team conducted two research concerts in St George's hall. Each night attendees were randomly assigned to one of two groups upon arrival to the venue; one group watched in the hall, and the other watched a live stream in a nearby room. The team used portable sensors to measure heart rate synchrony across the two groups, a which has been repeatedly demonstrated in the field of psychology as a reliable marker of immersion in creative content. Alongside audience questionnaires, the heart rate synchrony analysis reliably showed that the in-person experience was more engaging than the live stream.

“Our main finding suggests it's worth paying to see live music, and now we've got research that really shows it, in a way that no other study has done.”

**Dr Felix Carter,  
Audience Researcher**

This study is the first of its kind, as no other research has done as tight of a comparison between groups. The strict experimental controls demonstrate that it is more than just the experience of being in a collective, or of being at a venue, that increases audience engagement. The increased engagement was purely due to being in the room with the performers.

“We want to use this to amplify locally, regionally, and nationally how important live events and venues like this are to our community and city.”

**Professor Iain Gilchrist,  
Research Co-Lead**

This work shows that there's something irreplaceable about coming together to experience live music, and a vital role for live entertainment venues in our increasingly digital world. The concerts picked up a considerable amount of press, including being featured on BBC online, and the BBC Breakfast Show.

These concerts also enabled crucial exploratory data collection. The research team captured a range of additional audience measures, such as thermal imaging and movement, which they will develop as part of their toolkit. Additionally, the concerts were recorded in a range of formats, including 3D video and spatial audio. Using this content, the team will investigate the difference that perceptual quality makes to an audience's experience, and which formats may be the future of live-streamed events.

The St George's research concerts highlight the unique value of live performance, not just as entertainment, but as a shared cultural experience that cannot be replicated digitally. By combining rigorous scientific methods with real-world settings, MyWorld's Audience Insights team is helping the creative industries make evidence-based decisions. This work provides a clear pathway to uncover how creative organisations can intelligently invest in content and technology that truly enhances their audience's experience.





# Skills and Training

## Skills Bootcamps in Virtual Production

The UK government has identified creative industries as a priority growth sector, contributing £124 billion to the UK economy in 2022, accounting for 5.7% of total GVA, and employing around 2.4 million people. To ensure this growth can be sustained and increased, we must cultivate a broad and diverse talent pool in the UK.

There is a growing mismatch between the skills of the current workforce and what employers in the creative sector say they urgently need. Development and upskilling is vital as the technical development intensifies; in 2023 the World Economic Forum states that almost a quarter of jobs (23%) are expected to change in the next five years.

The skills-gap risk is particularly strong in the creative industries - 65% of 'hard-to-fill' vacancies in the creative industries attributable to skills shortages, compared with just 41% of 'hard-to-fill' vacancies across all sectors, which employers report as causing a significant delay in developing new products or services.

Given this challenge, training must be future-focused and developed in partnership with the organisations that understand the skills needed in the sector. To build a resilient talent pipeline across the West of England, creative technology training needs to be embedded at every stage, from entry-level learning to specialist development.

The Creative Industries face significant barriers to entry. Access to creative roles often depends on personal networks or having the financial means to work for free. This limits opportunities for those without existing connections or resources and narrows the range of backgrounds which are creating and innovating in the sector. Ensuring that a truly diverse group of people is supported to enter, thrive, and lead within the creative technology sector is essential to shaping a fair and representative future. Innovation cannot occur without a cross-pollination of different approaches, backgrounds, and methodologies. "New", "exciting", or "innovative" will not follow from the same types of people working together.

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MyWorld's Skills and Training Team uses academic and industry knowledge to nurture a diverse talent pool, providing the skills urgently needed by the growing local creative tech economy. Since January 2022, the MyWorld Skills and Training team have engaged 3366 learners and 244 businesses, supporting the region's creative technology talent pool, throughout all stages of development.

The quality and effectiveness of MyWorld's approach to training has been widely recognised, not just by our trainees but also through winning a national Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence in 2025. Its professionalism and impact on the sector has catalysed partnership with, and significant additional funding from, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority to deliver key parts of our region's skills strategy.

# Skills and Training

## Skills Bootcamps in Virtual Production

### A collaborative approach

MyWorld works closely with both industry and academia to understand emerging technologies, future skills needs, and the direction of the creative technology landscape. This ensures that the training delivered is directly applicable to real-world challenges and addresses industry identified skills gaps to reduce sectoral innovation timelines. Through MyWorld's cutting-edge facilities, equipment, and extensive network learners benefit from unparalleled access to expertise and resources and partners benefit from the best of talent in the region. Through this critical mass of knowledge and collaboration. MyWorld has created an industry-integrated training offer developing a future-ready workforce.

### A continuous pipeline

MyWorld's Skills and Training team has developed a broad range of educational opportunities, from scholarship schemes and Masters programmes to short courses and workshops. These span the full learning journey, from pre-career inspiration, to specialist industry training in cutting-edge technologies. Together, they empower learners at every career stage to build the critical skills the sector needs, and to continue this learning throughout their career, whether they're entering the industry, stepping into new roles, or advancing their specialist expertise.

### Holistic career support

MyWorld equips learners not only with cutting-edge technical expertise but also with the transferable skills essential for success in today's competitive job market. Recognising that entry into the creative technology industries often depends on personal networks or the ability to work for free, MyWorld actively works to close this gap by providing access to professional networks, industry experience, and paid work opportunities wherever possible. Through its extensive partnerships, MyWorld connects learners with relevant opportunities and offers sector-specific employability support such as CV writing guidance, mock interviews, employer meet-and-greet sessions, and networking opportunities.



Virtual production is a game changing development for the screen sector, bringing together physical and virtual worlds using the latest technology, and reinventing the way media content is created. The rapid uptake of this new technology means that the screen sector is facing a significant shortage of people with the skills and know-how of what Virtual Production is and how it works.

Using funding from the West of England's Mayoral Combined Authority, MyWorld is running Skills Bootcamps in Virtual Production to address this critical skills gap. Completely free of charge to the learner, the Skills Bootcamps are an accessible and invaluable method for individuals in the creative industries to grow their career through a combination of hands-on technical training, industry experience, and employability support.

**“It's been an absolute joy participating in the course, and the most I've ever learned in a small space of time. The course is expertly taught, the kit is top-notch, and I love the group work with such a diverse mix of people from different backgrounds.”**

**James Dalby,  
Skills Bootcamp participant**

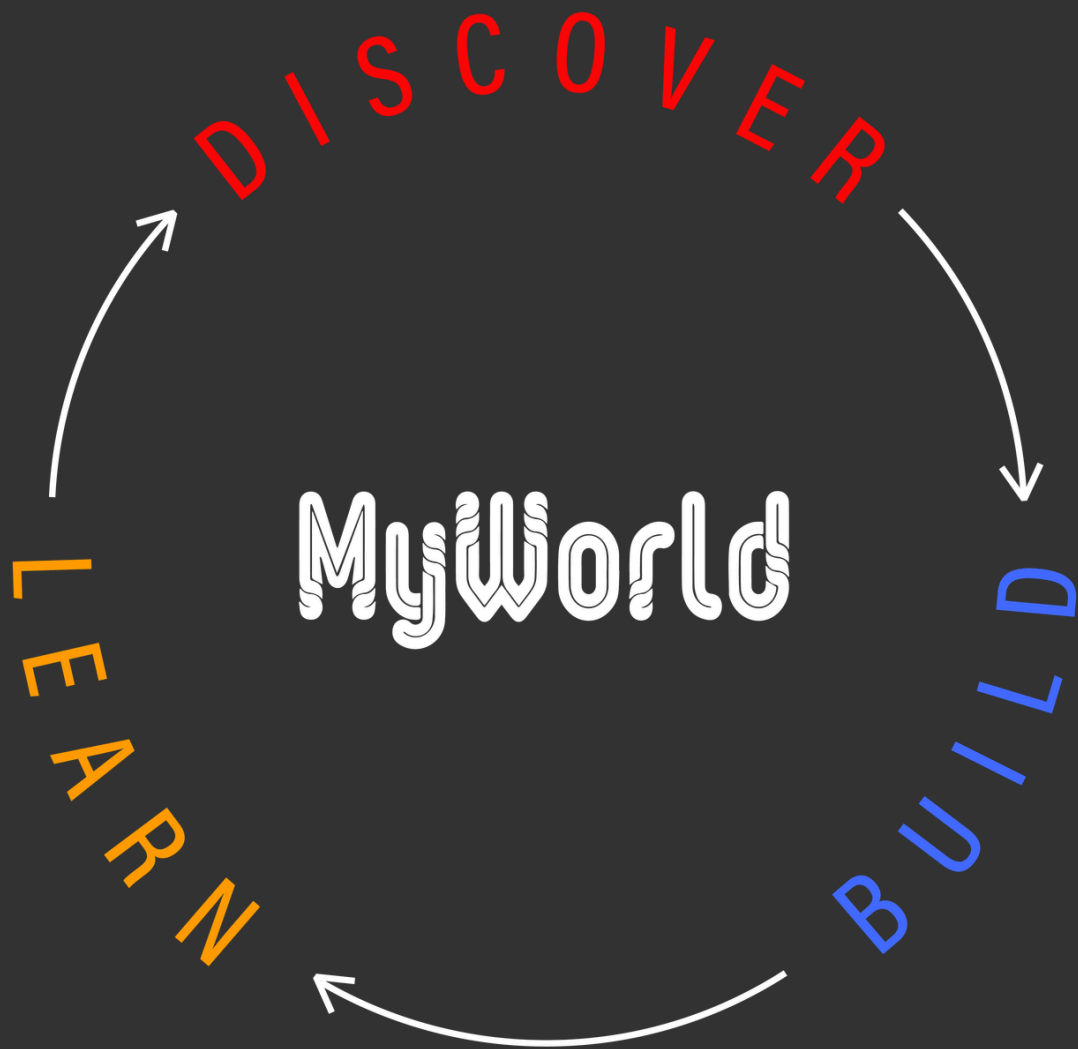
Crucially, these courses make use of MyWorld's facilities and network. Taking a collaborative approach to the Skills Bootcamps, MyWorld brought together a wide range of partners to deliver the best possible learning experience. Learners utilised MyWorld's £1.2 million Virtual Production stage, getting practical experience with state-of-the-art kit. This was alongside course delivery from industry-leading Virtual Production training providers MARS Academy, Bristol-based specialist talent and technology company Gritty Talent, and accredited trainers in Unreal Engine and Sony VENICE 2 cameras. This training team gave learners a truly unique offering.

Gritty Talent ran sessions on career mapping, communication and network building. They also brought in regional employers from MyWorld's extensive network to meet participants and conduct mock interviews. The quality of the learners and their training meant that two individuals were offered jobs from their performance at the mock interviews, which was not the intended outcome of the interview exercise.

The success of MyWorld's Skills Bootcamps is clear: within two months of completing the course, 75% of learners had either gained employment, taken on new responsibilities in their current role, or secured new client work as a direct result of their participation.

Alongside this, strong regional demand, with 156 applicants for just 56 places, has enabled MyWorld to secure funding to deliver additional Skills Bootcamps in 2025 and 2026.

These impactfully designed training initiatives are essential for the West of England's thriving film and television sector to fill detrimental skills gaps, and meet growing industry demand with world-class talent.



[www.myworld-creates.com](http://www.myworld-creates.com)



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