



**a creative
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CREATIVE HOTSPOTS:

**A MODEL FOR BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS
THROUGH ESTABLISHED CREATIVE EVENTS**

SUMMARY: THE CREATIVE HOTSPOTS MODEL

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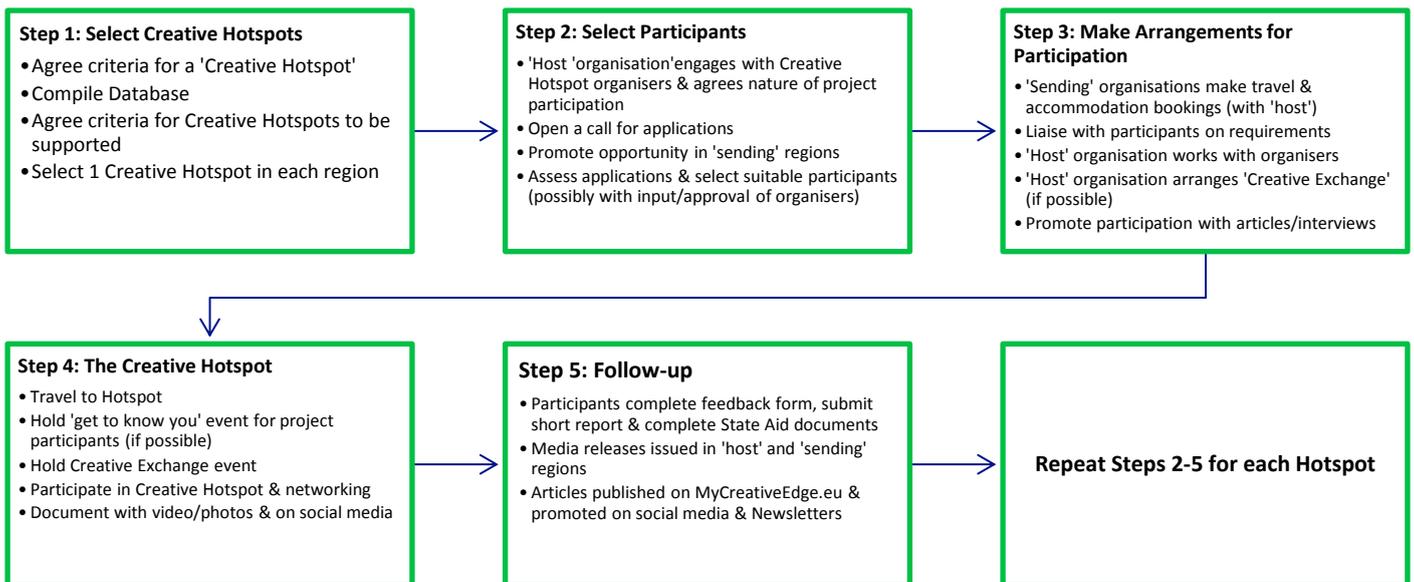
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SUMMARY: THE CREATIVE HOTSPOTS MODEL

The transnational, EU co-funded 'a creative momentum project' developed and implemented 'The Creative Hotspots Model' during 2015-2017. The aim was to facilitate face-to-face transnational networking and knowledge exchange among creative sector entrepreneurs, while strengthening the creative sector ecosystem across Europe's Northern Edge.

A 'Creative Hotspot' is a general term used by the project to describe an established creative or cultural industry event (conference, festival etc.) which takes place in one of the partner regions. The 'Creative Hotspots Model' selected one 'Creative Hotspot' in each of the five partner regions and then selected and financially supported a number of relevant creative professionals from the other partner regions to travel to, and participate in, each of these Creative Hotspots. The aim was to stimulate transnational networking, create opportunities for possible collaboration and bring an added international dimension to existing creative sector events in the partner regions. The diagram below illustrates the Model.

THE CREATIVE HOTSPOTS MODEL



The Model was implemented five times over the course of 'a creative momentum project' for Creative Hotspots in Mid-Sweden, South East of Northern Ireland, Northern Finland, North East of Iceland and the West of Ireland. In total 49 creative professionals from five regions were supported to participate in these five Creative Hotspots (the initial target was 37). Below is a summary of the main lessons learned from the experience of developing and implementing the Model. These may be useful for others considering implementing a similar approach.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **One Size Does Not Fit All:** A single 'Creative Hotspots Model' does not work for all creative sub-sectors, Events or organisations. The Model needs to be adapted and adjusted for each specific Creative Hotspot.
2. **Does 'Hotspot' have Meaning?** The term 'Creative Hotspot' was coined by the project and a set of criteria developed. However when compiling the database and trying to select the five Hotspots to support, the question arose if any of them truly met all the criteria for a 'Creative Hotspot'. Ultimately there were few options for events taking place in the partner regions that came close to meeting all the criteria for selection; the requirement for the event to mainly take place in English was a limiting factor in Nordic regions. One of the challenges of more remote and sparsely populated regions is the shortage of truly international 'Creative Hotspots'. The objective of the Model to help strengthen the international dimension of existing creative events in the partner regions should perhaps have received greater focus. One good example was Arctic Design Week which previously was held mainly in Finnish, but in 2017 took place mainly in English to attract a more international audience.
3. **Relationship with Creative Hotspot Organisers:** It takes considerable time and effort for the 'host' project organisation to engage with Hotspot organisers. It is important not to underestimate the commitment involved. The timescale required by the project (e.g. to promote opportunity, select enterprises, make bookings) means that event details are needed from organisers earlier than usual. If an event usually targets a local/national audience, the organisers may not be familiar with the needs of international participants. A previous relationship with organisers (e.g. Lapland UAS previously supported Arctic Design Week) can make it somewhat easier.
4. **Awareness of Event/Format:** If a small, unknown Hotspot is selected, this creates the double task of raising awareness of the Festival/Event, as well as promoting the opportunity to participate. Even if the event itself is not well-known internationally, if it has a well-known and established type of format (e.g. a Film Festival), this makes it easier for potential applicants to know what to expect and makes the appropriate target group very clear. Events with a higher international profile are easier to promote, but an aim of the project is to strengthen smaller events.
5. **Nature of Event:** Hotspots which are voluntary/community-driven and not run on a commercial basis can create some challenges in organising cooperation and participation. More input from the project partner organisations may be required. Such Festivals may operate with a limited budget and rely heavily on voluntary input which may lead to quite high expectations of participants. When working with event organisers with very specific ethos and values, it can be challenging to ensure that participation by the project meets these criteria (e.g. eco-friendly, sustainable, bottom-up ethos and values of the Urkult Festival, preservation of folk music ethos of Vaka Festival).
6. **Logistics:** Organising the logistics of participation takes considerable time and effort from both the 'host' and 'sending' project organisations. They need to have the human, organisational and financial capacity to liaise with event organisers, participants, service suppliers (e.g. freight company, hotels) and media. One of the most common problems was sourcing reasonably priced accommodation where all participants could stay in the same location. As many of the Hotspots took place during high tourist seasons this was very challenging and the groups had to be split, which reduced the chances for the transnational project group to connect. It is necessary to begin planning very early (a year in advance) to make provisional bookings before participants are even selected. Only for the Urkult Festival in Sweden could all participants stay together but

this was at a considerable distance from the Festival venue. A number of participants requested to bring family members, at their own cost, however this did create some additional logistical complications and may not always be appropriate.

7. **Suitability of Participants & Group Dynamics:** For some Hotspots it was difficult to judge who would be the most suitable participants. Sometimes participants who may not have been the best match for the event (e.g. stage of career, sector) were selected. It proved difficult to select the best matches, partly because of lack of information about the event and also because of low numbers of applications (e.g. for Digital DNA @ The Planetarium). As each partner organisation made their own selection from their region individually they were not aware of who was selected in other regions. Joint selection from across all regions might be useful to maximise the group dynamic and compatibility within the transnational group. It is also useful to select participants, not only for their own sake, but who have wider networks and influence across their sector in their home country/region.
8. **Clear Communication:** It is very important to maintain clear lines of communication between the Hotspot organisers, the 'host' country project organisation, the 'sending' country project organisations and the participants. It is easy for there to be miscommunication and lack of clarity if these lines of communication become confused.
9. **Networking & Creative Exchanges:** At most Creative Hotspots the majority of attendees are local and many already know each other and have existing relationships. It can be difficult for the international 'outsiders' to find opportunities to engage and network. Hotspots which include specific, structured networking opportunities as part of the programme (e.g. the Marketplace at Galway Film Fleadh, the Matchmaking at Arctic Design Week) are desirable. Organising a Creative Exchange event in advance of the Creative Hotspot, so that all the supported project participants can present their work and network with each other and the local industry, can be very beneficial and should be organised if possible. Promotion of the Creative Exchange locally in advance is important to attract attendees from local industry.
10. **Promotion:** Some participants reported a 'reputational bounce' for their business from having been selected to take part in a Creative Hotspot, they felt it gave them added credibility with clients in their home region. Promotion of selected participants in advance, during and after the Creative Hotspot is important to increase the profile of the participants, the Hotspot and the project.

The full report 'Creative Hotspots: A Model for Building Transnational Connections through Established Creative Events' can be downloaded from the [Knowledge Centre](#) on MyCreativeEdge.eu.





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