



University of Essex

University of
Kent

**CREATIVE
ESTUARY**

CALL OUT FOR CREATIVE AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONALS IN SOUTH ESSEX AND NORTH KENT

Applications are open for creative and cultural professionals to join a unique series of virtual Ideas Labs hosted by the University of Essex and University of Kent as part of [Creative Estuary](#).

Purpose

Creative Estuary has a vision to forge a new future founded on creative energy and innovation, along the length of the Thames Estuary. Stretching 60 miles along the North Kent and South Essex coastline, the Estuary has an unrivalled network of creative talent and expertise.

To make the most of the talent and expertise found across our region, we are developing new opportunities to encourage collaborative thinking. The University of Essex and University of Kent are planning four virtual Ideas Labs to take place in 2021. These facilitated events are designed to bring together a diverse group of academics, artists, technologists, businesses and cultural professionals to form project groups to explore culture-led solutions to contemporary issues we face across the Estuary.

Aims

The Ideas Labs aim to stimulate new and innovative ideas which:

- Develop interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborations
- Meet challenges identified in response to the themes
- Support diverse voices from a range of disciplines and backgrounds
- Generate fundable projects that will enhance the lives of those living, working and visiting the Estuary
- Generate insights to be shared at subsequent learning summits for wider audiences and stakeholders as part of the Creative Estuary programme.

In order to stimulate further collaboration and networking, small-scale seed funding will be made available on the final day of each Ideas Lab, which project groups will pitch for competitively. It is expected there will be approximately £40,000 available in total across the four themes, split equally across the Labs. Additionally, staff from both universities and the Creative Estuary team will be available to signpost participants towards other sources of funding beyond the Ideas Labs.

Please be advised this call is for applications to participate in the virtual Ideas Labs. It is not an application for funding. Participation in the Ideas Labs is not a guarantee of funding.

Focus

The first two Ideas Labs are open for applications, and are focused around the following themes:

- Our Wellbeing (across three half-days on 12th, 13th and 25th May 2021)
- Our Environment (across three half-days on 22nd, 23rd and 29th June 2021)

These themes are broadly defined to encourage bottom-up ideas and responses from all participants. There will be a virtual facilitated opportunity during the lead-up to each Ideas Lab for participants to meet, share ideas in response to the theme and begin to identify emerging areas for focus and collaboration.

Eligibility

- Participation is open to creative and cultural professionals. As an example, this includes (but is not limited to) artists, individuals working within cultural and heritage organisations, creative practitioners and technologists, and entrepreneurs.
- Participants must be primarily based in the Estuary region (South Essex and North Kent).
- Participants must anticipate being able to attend all sessions of their selected Ideas Lab.

Participation

The virtual Ideas Labs will by design bring together participants who would not naturally interact and engage with each other. Participants must be willing to be open to new and different perspectives, ways of working and developing new approaches.

Each Ideas Lab will comprise of approximately 24 participants. 10 participants will be academics from the University of Essex and University of Kent and 14 participants will be creative and cultural professionals, businesses and not-for-profit organisations with a strong connection to the Estuary.

Each Ideas Lab will have three half-day sessions taking place on separate days. Participants will need to be available for the three sessions. Additional time will be required for offline working.

To ensure that self-employed and freelance practitioners are not excluded from participating, a bursary of £300 will be available to each creative/cultural professional to participate in the Ideas Lab.

Selection criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Rationale and motivation for participating
- Potential contribution to the virtual Ideas Labs and selected theme

- Ability and/or experience in working collaboratively.
- Maintaining a good cross-Estuary balance

A team from University of Essex and University of Kent will select participants based on how they meet the above criteria and with a focus on creating a diverse, cross-disciplinary group of individuals/organisations for each Ideas Lab with good distribution from both sides of the river,

The team does not have any preconceived ideas about the composition of the Labs. We want the Ideas Labs to be representative of the communities across the Estuary and to reflect a wide range of views, skill and life experiences.

How to apply

Please complete our short [online application form](#). If you prefer, you can submit a video or audio application instead – follow the same link for details.

The deadline for applications is **Sunday 28th March 2021**.

We anticipate applicants will be notified no later than Friday 9th April 2021.

Please note, it will only be possible to apply for one of the open themes. If unsuccessful, you can choose to be notified when the next two Ideas Labs are announced.

If you would like to request this information in an alternative format, or for any other questions, please email ideaslabs@essex.ac.uk

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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

CREATIVE ESTUARY has a vision to forge a new future founded on creative energy and innovation, along the length of the Thames Estuary. The project is supported by The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and led by the University of Kent on behalf of a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations. They include the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent and Essex County Councils, the Greater London Authority, 11 local authority areas represented by Thames Gateway Kent Partnership and opportunity South Essex, South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN), University of Kent, University of Essex, Locate in Kent and cultural organisations Metal and Cement Fields. In early 2019 the University of Kent was awarded £4.3m from the DCMS Cultural Development Fund on behalf of the partners. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport funds the Cultural Development Fund which is administered by Arts Council England.