**Games Lab Leeds**

**Overview**

2016 onwards sees the release of consumer technology that creates new exploitable marketplaces for independent game studios. This includes Virtual Reality (Occulus Rift etc) and wearable tech.

The GamesLab Leeds project will give investment and support to help games companies in the Leeds City Region develop, manage and commercialise innovative games (which they can own) and enable the region to develop first mover advantage in emerging games technologies.

The programme addresses principal barriers that restrict innovation and growth in the video games industry. The project is aimed at SMEs & startups (incl. graduate) wanting to commit resources to research and development of new gaming technologies, with a view to commercialise or adapt them for their own IP (games) across all platforms (incl. mobile, tablet, PC, console – & especially emerging tech).

**Timescale**

The project will be delivered over a 3-year period, with delivery activity commencing from June 2016, and concluding in March 2019.

**Who Will Deliver It**

The project will be delivered by Creative England, a national agency with wide experience supporting innovation and growth in the games sector.

Creative England is uniquely placed to deliver this project having successfully completed 2 ERDF GamesLab programmes in the South West and West Midlands, during 2013 and 2014 respectively.

**Who will benefit from the project**

GamesLab is open to all SMEs producing games-related products and services in the Leeds City region. Specifically, the programme is most beneficial for, but not limited to, the following:

* Games companies with high growth potential
* Start-up companies which have spun out of Universities and other Academic and/or Research Institutes
* Work-for-hire companies that provide development services within the games industry on a contract basis, but do not develop their own IP
* Digital product/service providers who are keen to move into the game space through innovation and research of their existing talent base.

Also eligible would be more established game developers. Often, these companies have a a wealth of in-house talent and experience which could make huge advancements in the area of gaming innovation and research, but are often unable to commit resources due to pressure from commercial deadlines. The support provided by GamesLab would provide the stimulus for such companies to further in-house research and also collaborate with Start-up SMEs in the region.

**The specific activities that will be undertaken as part of the project**

GamesLab is open to all SMEs producing games-related products in Leeds City region. Activities will include;

**Grant funding**

Games companies will be invited to propose games/IP development ideas seeking funding from GamesLab. Funding will be awarded in the region of £5k-£10k to support the development of beta prototyping and principle research and development. The strand of funding will be aimed at Start-ups and work-for-hire companies.

A second strand of Funding will be awarded in the region of £10k-£30k for the development of more sophisticated prototypes, leading to new IP generation, with a preference for emerging technologies (VR, Wearable Tech, New-gen devices etc).

GamesLab will appoint a small panel of business / games industry consultants to work with the funded companies on a one-to-one basis

**Non-financial support**

Not all business issues need to be solved with money. In fact for many businesses, their challenges are not financial, they are knowledge-based. So businesses which are not receiving funding but require business management skills can still access the support of the GamesLab programme through a series of group masterclasses

These masterclasses may cover (although not limited to) the following topics:

* Turning a service into a product
* Identifying and exploiting your assets and IP
* Understand and convert opportunities in emerging tech and sectors
* Development planning
* Marketing, building consumer interest and generating sales
* Access to finance, investors, publishers and distributors