



## **Creative Communities Exchange June 2015: Fairmount Innovation Lab**

The [Fairmount Innovation Lab](#) is a placemaking project of the [Fairmount Cultural Corridor](#) being developed by [Artmorpheus](#) to incubate cultural entrepreneurs, foster workforce development, promote social innovation, and build a community of individuals who will work and share their expertise in creative industries, culture, technology and entrepreneurship by, with and for residents of the [Fairmount neighborhoods](#). The Lab launched its first creative Industries accelerator and workshops for the community and is currently working to develop more than 10,000 sf of affordable and collaborative workspace for artists, creative and social entrepreneurs.

### **About developing and implementing a new initiative**

- Before you invest a lot of resources, build the minimum viable product – validate it (Is that the right solution? does anyone care? can it be sustainable?)
- Most of the learning happens after you have built something.
- It's important to build a continuous feedback loop with your target audience (most only check in with their audience/customers at the start and end).
- Invariably you will make mistakes. Face them.
- Measure.
- Learn.
- When the model you envisioned needs to change, as it generally does, pivoting can result in a project that will grow beyond the initial dreams by re-imagining assets and talents, thinking more broadly about the "problems" it solves, and accessing growth capital to attain new high ground.

### **I. Establish relationships with Community Partners, Stakeholders, & Collaborators**

- Make sure you include community stakeholders and get their input in the project
- Present the idea at the outset; you should be planning with stakeholders not for them
- With a community based project, it's important to keep people informed as it evolves or there will be misunderstandings
- Establish a communication loop among partners and stakeholders
- Incorporate feedback from stakeholders but there will also be times when you'll have to push back

### **II. Identify Project Elements, Goals and Budget**

- If you are doing something new, rather than replicating an existing model, create a budget for a pilot (it's virtually impossible to know what the project will entail until you are underway)
- Assume that the project idea will evolve and that the budget will change as it evolves
- Plan on creating one or more jobs in the community; build operations expenses into the budget (management, admin, promotion)
- If you plan to rent space for a long time, get an attorney to create a favorable terms sheet in before you enter into a lease
- Design and branding are important – don't skip there.

### III. Call to Entrepreneurs for Accelerator

- Create a timeline
- Create an application and run it by a committee; make tweaks
- Create a web presence for the project (doesn't have to cost much)
- Leverage partnerships to disseminate info
- Hold info sessions in the community
- Create a diverse selection committee to get a range of perspectives and experience (also helps build awareness of the project)
- Develop selection criteria and a tool to help the selection committee understand how to judge applicants
- Provide the committee enough time to review the applications and ask questions
- Organize one in-person meeting with the committee to discuss and finalize accelerator participants
- Send out notifications to all (whether accepted or not)

### IV. Programming

- Decide what programs will be offered and identify resources
- Connect with potential program and resource partners
- Secure resources and develop agreements (co-branding, contracts, etc)
- Provide Lean Business Model training for accelerator participants
- Develop mentoring matrix for accelerator participants
- Schedule workshops for community

### V. Space for Artists, Maker and Creative Entrepreneurs

- Lay out space for accelerator participants, workshops and events
- Draft space guidelines
- Conduct research on member /cooperative model for the rest of the space
- Be sensitive to concerns and address them as they arise
- Develop cost psf financial spreadsheet (include % of common space & shared resources)
- Collaborate with community partners to organize and host additional informational meetings

### IV. Launch Event and Promotion

- Plan launch event for the project. Contract with local food entrepreneur(s) for refreshments.
- Create invitation list for key stakeholders
- Ensure media outlets have been notified
- Visual storytelling is important too – think about branding, plan staging and photo documentation
- Follow up with press and stay active on social media