

Module 2: Understanding Design Innovation

Introduction:

Design innovation seems very easy to define, simply put this is when a designer makes changes to a product in order perhaps to create variety, improve the utility, develop new markets, or reduce waste. For creative, craft and artisanal businesses it might seem that design innovation would not be important, producers may feel that to innovate could dilute or damage their craft heritage or traditions or devalue their skills.

However, the UK Crafts Council finds that innovation is critically important in helping crafts to survive and thrive and this module is designed to help creative, craft, and artisan small businesses begin to think about how they can innovate while remaining faithful to the traditions of their practice.

According to the UK Crafts Council, innovation in craft refers to the evolution of technique, discovery of new materials and application of new tools. Innovation through craft refers to makers facilitating or catalysing innovation elsewhere. It concerns the spill-over effects of craft into other industries. This definition is also applicable to artisan and creative sector and provides the basis of the learning materials in this module.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the module learners will

- Have an overview of the design innovation process.
- Have created an example of potential design innovation for their own business using the Cascade Design Innovation Planning template.
- Have learned about a range of options for funding larger-scale innovations.

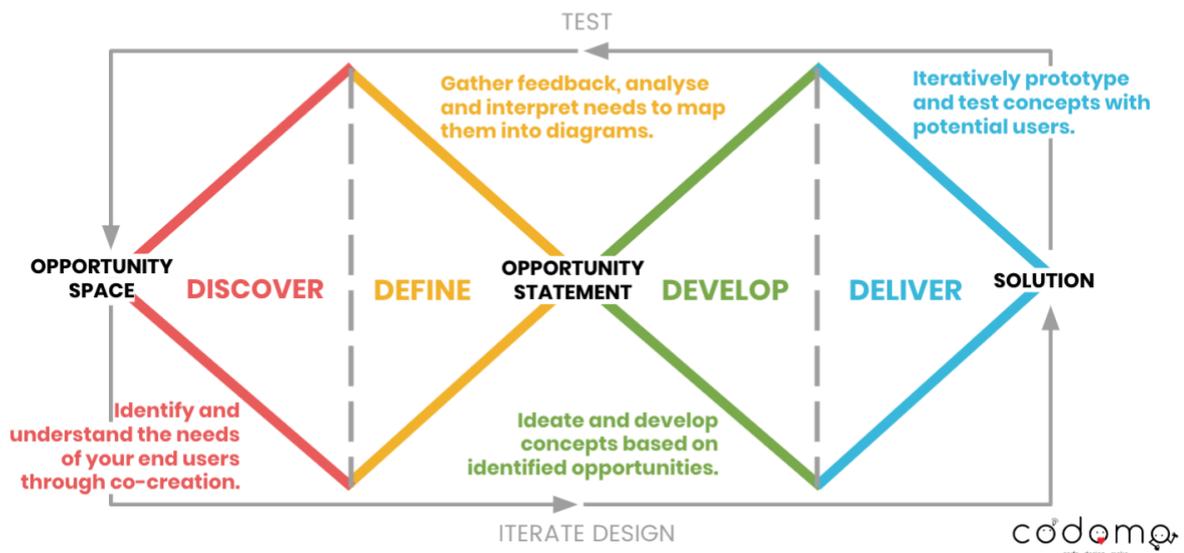
This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Design Innovation Processes:

Creative, craft and artisan innovation is not new, it has been happening for centuries, often as the result of serendipity. The original discovery of glass is likely to have occurred by accident, as fires were lit on sand. The colouring of glass was known by the Egyptians and Romans, who made small objects of coloured glass. But the innovation by craftsmen in the Middle Ages combining lead and coloured glass to create stained glass windows containing complex images, was a creative innovation that changed the way churches looked and brought biblical stories to life for an illiterate population. Nowadays we see contemporary artists further innovating with stained glass, the work of [John Piper](#) for example, has been described as ‘painting in coloured light’, and involved working closely with architects, artisan glass makers and many other creative partners to push the boundaries of stained glass in new directions.

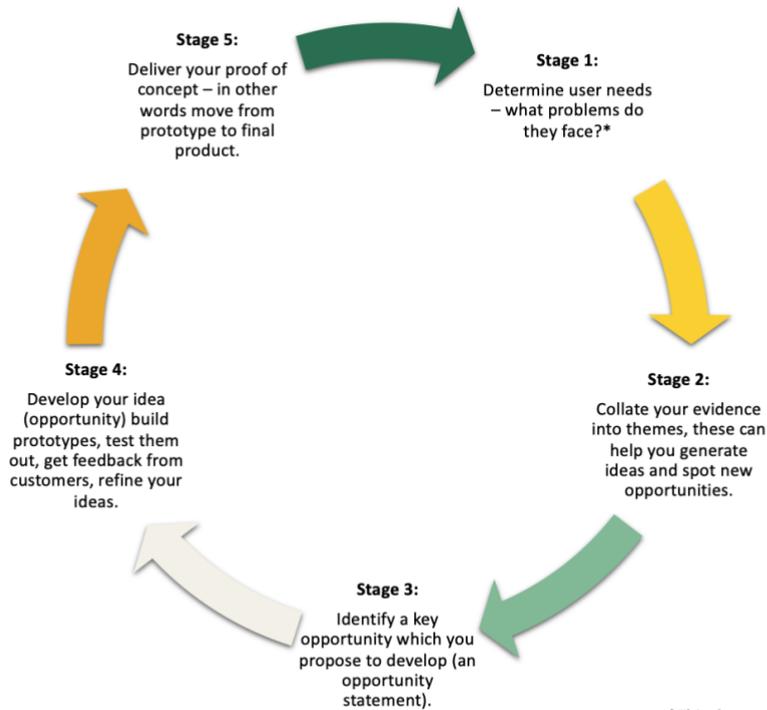
Models of design innovation processes

Double Diamond Design Framework



The Codomo model of design innovation offers us a way of visualising the stages of design innovation. It breaks down the process into stages and demonstrates the continuous nature of innovation through the use of arrows around the diamonds.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



*This does not have to be market research, chatting to customers, looking at trends on social media or reading trade journals can all provide ideas.

You may seek help at any or all stages of this process, as it can be difficult to innovate by yourself. Your local university or college will offer advice and support. They may involve students to help you with research, prototyping, reviewing and other aspects of innovation, often for no charge.

Unpicking the design innovation process:

Collaboration is often important in developing innovation in the craft sector. Joining existing networks or creating new networks can help with this. The internet makes it easier to find collaborators to work with. A case study collected by KPMG for the UK Craft Council shows the innovation developed through collaboration, exploring the partnership between a weaver and a tile manufacturer.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Case Study 1: Case study adapted from KPMG 2016, p.6

Ptolemy Mann is a commercially successful contemporary textile artist and designer known for her unique, colour-rich hand-woven artworks and textile designs. Ptolemy's knowledge of colour, developed through long-established weaving practice, has generated significant value added in other sectors. One example of Ptolemy's diversification of her craft-based work is her collaboration with Johnson Tiles, an established UK tile company. Although not a ceramist, Ptolemy recognised the way in which her understanding of colour and pattern, developed through weaving, could translate into product design. She used this skill and understanding in her collaboration with Johnson Tiles to renew its 'Prismatic' range of tiles.

Craft skills bring a different way of thinking and a different way of problem solving, and the approach of craft practitioners to innovation and problem solving is complementary to more technical STEM skills. This can help to generate innovation in new areas.

Case Study 2: Case study adapted from KPMG 2016, p.6

Product Innovation is also important, and the case of Oluwaseyi Sosanya's development of 3D weaving provides an example of how this can work.

Oluwaseyi Sosanya, a craft practitioner with an engineering and materials science background, has effectively combined these skills in one of his principal developments, a 3D weaver. The loom is specially designed for weaving structures with unique properties.

Sosanya reported that he has been approached by a number of firms, both UK and international, recognising the commercial application of his 3D woven fabrics – in sectors including health, architecture, aerospace and clothing. The economic value from such collaborations could be significant. Moreover, the transfer of knowledge between Sosanya and his collaborators could result in greater economic benefits through knowledge and innovation spill-overs.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Activity: Research (150 words, 20 mins)

The above two case studies show how working with others can help with design innovation. Conduct some research online to find people who work in a similar area to you, and find out what design innovations they have developed. List these innovations and use them to help you assess where you could innovate, they might fall into some of the categories in the table below. Remember, small innovations can be as important as large ones.

Product innovations	
Process Innovations	
Organisation Innovations	
Marketing Innovations	

Case Study 3:

Poodle owner and artist Sarah joined a Facebook group to network with other poodle owners. Seeing photos of all the different poodles and identifying how much poodle owners enjoyed poodle-related merchandise inspired her. She began to create watercolour illustrations of poodles, often with short, inspirational quotes. She asked the page owner for permission to share the illustrations to the group. Over the course of a year, she has developed a significant new stream of income, selling prints, Christmas cards, calendars and cotton bags featuring her illustrations to other poodle owners.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Activity: Research (20-30 mins)

Identify four Facebook groups which reflect your interests (either personal or related to your business or business idea). For each group you identify, find several ways in which you could innovate your product or service to suit group interests. Record your ideas below:

Facebook Group 1	<p>Name of group:</p> <p>Ways you could use this to innovate:</p>
Facebook Group 2	<p>Name of group:</p> <p>Ways you could use this to innovate:</p>
Facebook Group 3	<p>Name of group:</p> <p>Ways you could use this to innovate:</p>
Facebook Group 4	<p>Name of group:</p> <p>Ways you could use this to innovate:</p>

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Innovating in your creative, craft or artisan business:

Some academics consider creative, craft and artisan businesses have to overcome barriers to innovation. These are identified as

- Poor awareness of opportunities and communication with others, it is important to build networks and talk to people across a range of activities.
- Funding: gaining funding can require perseverance, building links (for example, with Universities) and even taking risks.
- Business skills: Many creative, craft and artisan makers would like to further develop their enterprise skills and lack experience, so they are unable to fully commercialise ideas.

The CASCADE project has developed learning materials to help creative, craft and artisan businesses with develop skills. These materials were created with people from the creative, craft and artisan sectors and have been tested and refined to make sure they will support you in building your skills and developing innovations.

Using the Cascade Design Innovation Planning Template:

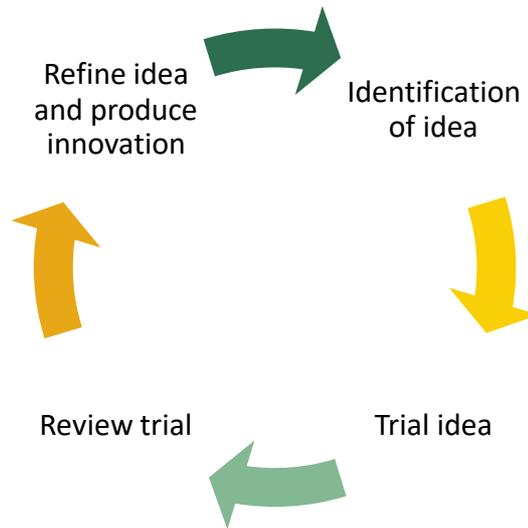
As you will have seen, significant innovations can be developed from serendipity (such as joining a poodle page), from partnering with other people (3D weaving), from feedback from customers (creating brightly coloured frames for art works, as an alternative to traditional wood), or from seeing a new idea in a different context and applying it to your area of work.

We have also identified that there are formal partnerships you can enter which may help you innovate, universities have mechanisms to support innovation, and these are often free. Working with students can bring a whole new dimension to your design innovations.

We have prepared a template for you to slot your ideas into, and provided some examples of how this might work in practice. Setting out an initial idea can often help you see how it

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

might develop. Small initial ideas can often lead to the most interesting and valuable innovations.



Activity: Fill in the template below (10-20 mins)

Initial Idea (jot down what you have noticed)	How can I develop this? (Does my observation lead to an opportunity?)
What feedback can I get to improve this?	How can I implement this?

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Sample filled in template:

Initial Idea (jot down what you have noticed)	How can I develop this? (Does my observation lead to an opportunity?)
<p>Hannah runs a curtain making, repair and alteration service, she is quick at machining and has equipment and space, and sometimes she is not busy with repairs. She also has left over materials and threads.</p> <p>Hannah spotted parents searching for ideas for original fancy dress costumes on her social media (for world book day, Halloween, nativity plays etc) and thinks there is a demand she can meet.</p>	<p>Next to her shop is a charity shop with clothes for £50p-1 an item. She decides to see if she can make fancy dress costumes using second-hand garments and her stock of left-over materials. She asks her friends on social media for some ideas for costumes and makes six outfits as samples.</p>
What feedback can I get to improve this?	How can I implement this?
<p>Hannah shows her products to friends and family with children aged 3-10. She gets feedback and finds there is demand for a wider variety of ideas for boys' outfits and for bespoke costumes. She checks out best-selling books and popular films, cartoons, and video games to get more ideas. She finds out people will pay between £25-35 for an original costume, and she can make up to two costumes in one hour.</p>	<p>She thinks the plan to use design innovation to expand her business is viable but needs to work out how to promote this. She decides to start with local selling groups and word of mouth while she builds up a stock of costumes.</p>

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Funding for Innovation in the UK:

There are [regular competitions](#) run by the UK government to help businesses fund innovation, such as the creative industries fund run by Innovate UK.

These awards enable

- Research and development of a process, product, or service
- Testing innovation ideas
- Collaboration with other organisations.

[Grants Online](#) provides details of innovation awards which small companies can apply to.

Other innovation funding is provided by Business Improvement Districts in the UK.

Innovation is also funded by universities and some charities.

Commercial funding for innovation could be provided by banks but you should first speak to an independent financial advisor before making any decisions about borrowing money for innovation. Other commercial funders include investment angels and crowd-funding platforms, but again, we would urge you to take independent financial and legal advice before using these sources of funding.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

References:

KPMG (2016) Innovation through Craft: Opportunities for Growth, available on [https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/documents/876/Innovation through craft full report 2016.pdf](https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/documents/876/Innovation%20through%20craft%20full%20report%20016.pdf) accessed on 10th November 2021

Both case studies can be found on page 6 of the UK Craft Council [report on innovation](#).

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.