



# Your Business in STEAM

**PHASE 3: GROWTH &  
MARKET ENTRY**



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# INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on reaching Phase 3 of your FabConnectHer entrepreneurship learning! In **Phases 1 and 2**, you explored your motivations, developed your business idea, built your Minimum Viable Product, and laid the foundations for a viable STEAM venture. Now it's time to take your business to the world.

**Phase 3** is all about growth and market entry. It is the stage where preparation meets opportunity. You will learn how to craft a compelling brand story that communicates who you are and why your innovation matters, develop sales strategies that connect with your target audience, and explore the funding landscape to access the financial resources your business needs to grow.



## By the end of Phase 3, you will understand how to:

Build a brand identity and story that reflects your values, your innovation, and the change you want to create.

- Develop practical sales strategies tailored to your STEAM product and learn how to build lasting customer relationships.
- Explore funding opportunities, from grants and loans to investor pitches, and gain the confidence to secure the resources your business needs.

This phase will equip you with the tools, confidence, and strategies to step into the market and share your innovation with the world. Let's get started!

You begin to see the shape of the business you were meant to build.

## Duration

Each module or activity is designed to take approximately 2-4 hours to complete. However, the time required may vary based on how in-depth you wish to explore, experiment, and refine your approach. This allows you to work at your own pace and engage with the content to the extent that best suits your needs.

## Materials

You will need basic materials such as paper, pens, sticky notes, and digital tools for brainstorming, mind mapping, and designing. Some activities may also require access to the FabLab, where resources like 3D printers, prototyping tools, or other relevant technologies can support your work.

## FabLab Connection

The FabLab provides a practical, hands-on environment that is perfect for enhancing your customer relationship strategies. In this module, you can use the FabLab to create engaging prototypes, interactive feedback tools, or personalized customer experience displays. Whether you're crafting quick prototypes to test customer engagement ideas or building detailed interactive setups to enhance your customer journey, the FabLab supports your efforts to transform creative concepts into meaningful customer interactions.



# Unit 08

## BRANDING AND STORYTELLING FOR STEAM ENTREPRENEURS

Future Female Innovators In STEAM



# Branding and Storytelling for STEAM Entrepreneurs

## Introduction

In the competitive world of STEAM entrepreneurship, branding is how your work becomes recognisable. It is the practical art of shaping how people understand what you stand for. A strong brand helps others see the intent, care, and craft behind your innovation and why it matters.

For many women founders, branding becomes a process of alignment: ensuring that the story the world sees reflects the reality of their work. In STEAM fields, where technical skill can easily overshadow the human story, a well-crafted brand restores balance. It makes space for both rigour and empathy, the data and the drive, the experiment and the emotion that sparked it.

In this unit, you will:

- Recognise how personal identity, values, and lived experience shape a brand's tone and story.
- Design a brand narrative that connects your innovation to its human or environmental purpose.
- Learn to use visual, digital, and emotional language in harmony.
- Develop the confidence to share your story with clarity and authenticity — whether in a pitch, post, or prototype.

Through practical activities and hands-on experiences, you will gain confidence in your ability to position your brand in the market and connect with your audience in meaningful ways. By the end of this unit, you will have a coherent brand identity and the storytelling skills to communicate your vision with impact.

## Understanding the Foundations

A brand is far more than a logo or a colour scheme. It is the complete experience people have when they encounter your work. It is the feeling, the recognition, the trust that builds over time. For STEAM and fab lab entrepreneurs, your brand is how you communicate the value of what you create to the world.

### A Brand is Made Up Of:

- **Brand Purpose** — The reason your business exists beyond making money. Why does your work matter? What problem are you solving? For fab lab entrepreneurs, this is often rooted in making technology accessible, sustainable, or community-driven.
- **Brand Values** — The principles that guide every decision you make. These should be authentic to who you are. Values like openness, collaboration, sustainability, and empowerment are common in the maker community.
- **Brand Identity** — The visual and verbal elements that make you recognisable: your logo, colour palette, typography, photography style, and the tone of voice you use in all communications.
- **Brand Story** — The narrative that connects your personal journey to your business. Why did you start? What challenges did you face? What drives you forward? Your story is what makes your brand human and relatable.
- **Brand Promise** — What people can consistently expect from you. This is the trust contract between you and your audience, whether that is quality, innovation, education, or community.

When all of these elements work together, they create something powerful: a brand that people remember, trust, and want to support.

# Women-Led STEAM and Maker Brands

## Let's look at branding in action in Electronics, Design and Education

*These women founders have built globally recognised brands in the maker, electronics, and design technology spaces — each directly relevant to fab lab entrepreneurs.*

### LITTLEBITS

*Founded by Ayah Bdeir | New York, USA*

Ayah Bdeir, an MIT Media Lab graduate and open-source hardware advocate, created littleBits, colour-coded magnetic electronic modules that snap together. The brand transformed STEAM education for millions of children across 70+ countries, winning over 150 awards including Toy of the Year. 40% of littleBits users are girls (four times the STEM average). The brand's playful, colour-coded visual system makes complex electronics feel approachable and creative. Bdeir was named one of BBC's 100 Most Influential Women.



**FIND OUT MORE:** [The complete littleBits library of STEAM and Coding lessons](#)

*Source: ayahbdeir.com | BBC | EdSurge*

### CANVA

*Founded by Melanie Perkins | Sydney, Australia*

Melanie Perkins launched Canva at age 19 with a mission to democratise design. Today Canva is valued at over \$40 billion with 125+ million monthly users across 190 countries. Canva succeeded because it taps into psychological principles of empowerment and instant gratification:

- **Simplicity Bias:** People gravitate toward tools that are intuitive. Canva removed the barriers of professional design software.
- **Control & Autonomy:** Users could drag and drop, experiment, and feel in control — no design degree required.
- **Instant Gratification:** Canva allowed anyone to create stunning graphics in minutes, giving immediate satisfaction.
- **Community Building:** By offering free templates and a freemium model, Canva nurtured trust and loyalty before monetization.

Perkins was rejected by over 100 investors before securing funding. The brand's gradient teal-to-purple identity and joyful interface prove that complex technology can feel simple and accessible — a lesson every fab lab entrepreneur can learn from.

[Watch Canva's rebranding story](#)



**FIND OUT MORE:** [The Untold Brand Story of Canva: From Struggles to Global Success - Web Doc Marketing](#)

*Source: canva.com | Forbes 'Self-Made Women' List*

### MAKERGIRL

*Founded by Elizabeth Engele & Julia Haried | USA*

MakerGirl was born when two undergraduate students asked 'What bothers you?' in an entrepreneurship class. Their answer: too few girls in STEM. MakerGirl runs 3D printing workshops for 7–10 year old girls, teaching CAD design, fabrication, and the stories of women in STEM. With a mobile 3D printing lab reaching rural communities and a bold pink-and-purple brand identity, MakerGirl has inspired thousands of girls to see themselves as makers and creators.

*Source: makergirl.org | Deloitte | 3DPrint.com*



# Women-Led STEAM and Maker Brands

Spotlight on makergirl brand <https://makergirl.org/>



## Strong Name with Immediate Meaning

"MakerGirl" combines:

- Identity (Girl)
- Action (Maker)

It is:

- Memorable
- Self-explanatory
- Empowering

## Keywords to describe the logo itself

- Bright
- Playful
- Accessible
- Non-intimidating

## MakerGirl feels:

- Welcoming
- Achievable
- Fun

## Our Vision

Every girl is a MakerGirl - a girl who lives and dreams as an unstoppable force, saying "Yes!" to challenges of the future

## Let's get technical - Visual Identity Strength: Font and Colour

### 1. Typography: Rounded, Friendly, Human-Centred

The MakerGirl logotype uses a **rounded, sans-serif style** with soft edges and playful proportions.

#### What this does:

Removes any sense of technical intimidation. It feels approachable for younger audiences

Signals creativity over precision. There is no rigidity, no sharp geometry, no corporate feel.

**Strategic effect:** The font makes STEM feel human, accessible and participatory

### 2. Lowercase Styling: Intentional Informality

The use of **lowercase lettering** ("makergirl") is a deliberate choice.

#### What this does:

Reduces hierarchy and authority barriers. Feels inclusive and peer-led and it aligns with maker culture and grassroots innovation

**Strategic effect:** It communicates: "You can belong here" rather than "You need qualifications to enter"

### 3. Colour Palette: Bright, Multi-Coloured, Non-Hierarchical

The logo uses a multi-colour palette across the wordmark: Pink / red tones, Orange, Yellow, Teal / blue. Each letter carries a different colour.

#### What this does:

Signals diversity and inclusion visually, It reinforces creativity and experimentation

Avoids a single dominant identity - there is no "main colour" controlling the brand.

### 4. Psychological Impact of Colour

The palette is carefully positioned between:

Playful (youth, creativity)

Energetic (action, making)

Positive (confidence, encouragement)

Importantly, it avoids:

Dark or heavy tones

Overly "tech" blues/greys

Gender stereotypes in a simplistic way

Yes, pink is present, but it is balanced within a broader spectrum, which prevents it from feeling limiting.

### 5. Visual Rhythm and Movement

Because each letter changes colour, the logo creates a sense of movement, a feeling of building or assembling and visual interest without complexity. It mirrors the idea of assembling parts → creating something new, which aligns perfectly with maker culture.

# Naming Your STEAM Brand

## Strategies for Choosing the Right Name

Choosing the right name for your business is a critical branding decision. You need a good name, a creative tagline, and an available domain name. Here are approaches that women in STEAM have used successfully:

### Founder's Name

Using your own name puts your personal stamp on the business and builds a legacy. The strength: authenticity and ownership. Consider whether you need a descriptive addition to help people understand what you do.

### Action + Identity

Combine what you do with who you serve. MakerGirl combines 'Maker' (action) with 'Girl' (identity). It is memorable, self-explanatory, and empowering. WeMake signals community and fabrication in two syllables.

### Values-Based

Names built on ethics and purpose: Fairphone tells you exactly what the brand stands for. This approach works powerfully when your brand is purpose-driven.

### Geography or Origin

A location-based name can signal where you are rooted and the community you serve.

### Get the Details Right

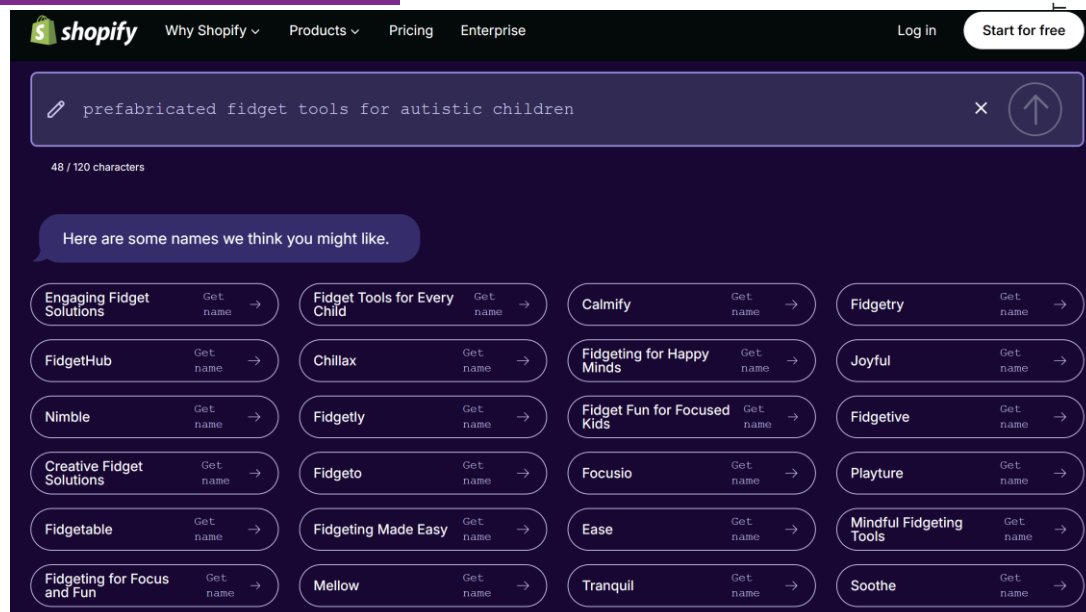
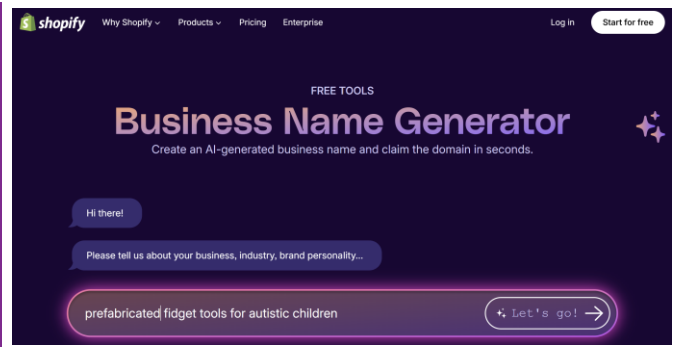
Choose brand colours with intention — there is a science behind colour psychology and how it influences perception. Ensure your visual identity (logo, fonts, colour palette) is consistent across every platform. Tell your brand story through images: photos of yourself, your workspace, your making process, what inspires you.



## Activity:

Use a business name generator (like Shopify's free tool) to brainstorm ideas, then test your top three with peers in your network.

<https://www.shopify.com/ie/tools/business-name-generator>



# Building you Brand Identity

## Visual, Verbal, and Experiential Elements

Your brand identity is the tangible expression of everything your brand stands for. It is what people see, hear, and feel when they interact with your business. Getting this right means your audience can recognise you instantly and understand what you offer.

### Visual Identity

- **Logo** — A simple, memorable mark that represents your brand. It should work at any size, from a business card to a banner at a maker faire.
- **Colour Palette** — Choose 2–4 colours that reflect your brand personality. Bold and energetic? Calm and trustworthy? Your colours communicate before your words do.
- **Typography** — The fonts you use consistently across all materials. A clean, modern typeface signals professionalism; a hand-drawn style signals creativity and warmth.
- **Photography and Imagery** — The style of images you use: workshop shots, product close-ups, team photos. Consistency in imagery builds recognition. Nothing beats original photography.

### Verbal Identity

- **Tone of Voice** — How you sound in writing and speech. Are you technical and precise? Friendly and encouraging? Your tone should feel natural to you and welcoming to your audience.
- **Key Messages** — The core things you always communicate: your mission, your difference, your invitation to participate or buy.
- **Storytelling** — Weaving your brand values and founder journey into everything from social media posts to investor pitches.

### Brand Touchpoints

Every interaction someone has with your brand is a touchpoint: your website, social media, packaging, email signature, the way your fab lab or workshop space looks and feels, your presence at events, and even how you answer the phone. Consistency across all touchpoints builds the trust that turns first-time visitors into loyal supporters.

Let's look at some examples in the next pages.....

# More inspiration - Women-Led STEAM Brands

## This time Fab Labs, Textiles and Sustainable Electronics

### 1. FABTEXTILES / FABRICADEMY

FABTEXTILES



Anastasia Pistofidou, Barcelona, Spain. Greek architect, co-founded FabTextiles at Fab Lab Barcelona in 2013, then Fabricademy in 2016, a global textile and technology academy distributed across fab labs. Her work shows how digital fabrication can shift fashion from mass consumption to customised, local, open-source production:

**Brand identity:** A clean, geometric wordmark with subtle industrial cues that signals precision, fabrication and a contemporary, tech-driven textile identity.

*Source: [fabtextiles.org](http://fabtextiles.org) | [Fab Lab Barcelona](http://Fab Lab Barcelona) | [textile-academy.org](http://textile-academy.org)*

#### The Challenge

In the early 2010s, the fashion and textiles industry was one of the world's most polluting. Digital fabrication labs had transformed product design and prototyping, yet textiles remained untouched by the maker movement. Anastasia Pistofidou, a Greek architect working at Fab Lab Barcelona, saw an opportunity to bridge this gap, bringing the open-source, community-driven ethos of fab labs to the world of fashion and materials.

#### The Brand Strategy

Pistofidou built FabTextiles as a research lab and creative community, not a traditional fashion brand. The visual identity blends warm terracotta and teal with craft-meets-technology imagery — woven patterns alongside laser-cut textiles, hand-dyed fabrics next to 3D-printed garments. Every project is documented and shared openly, reinforcing the brand values of transparency, sustainability, and knowledge sharing.

#### Key Branding Lessons from FabTextiles

- Build your brand around a community. FabTextiles grew through the global fab lab network rather than traditional marketing
- Document and share everything. Open-source principles create trust and attract collaborators worldwide
- Bridge worlds. The brand's power comes from connecting digital fabrication with traditional craft, technology with art
- Let your values shape your visual identity. The warm, handmade aesthetic reflects a commitment to sustainability and human-centred design
- Scale through education. Fabricademy, the distributed textile academy, became the brand's most powerful growth engine

#### The Result

FabTextiles has evolved into Fabricademy, a global educational programme running across fab labs in dozens of countries. Pistofidou has led EU-funded projects including shemakes.eu (empowering women in tech) and Remix el Barrio (circular design with local communities). The brand demonstrates that in the fab lab world, the most powerful branding is rooted in open knowledge, community, and purpose.

# More inspiration - Women-Led STEAM Brands

## 2. WEMAKE

Zoe Romano, Milan, Italy. Philosopher turned craftivist and digital fabrication strategist. Co-founded WeMake in 2014, one of Milan's first makerspaces, focused on open design, wearable tech, and local fashion manufacturing. Previously communication strategist at Arduino (2013-2017). WeMake connects local fashion brands with digital fabrication, using open-source technology to enable small-batch, community-driven production.



**Brand identity:** A bold, modular wordmark with strong geometric structure that evokes fabrication, machinery and engineered precision within a contemporary maker identity.

Source: [wemake.cc](http://wemake.cc) | *Women of Wearables* | *Maker Faire Rome*

## 3. FAIRPHONE

Eva Gouwens (CEO 2018-2023), Amsterdam, Netherlands. Dutch business leader who scaled Fairphone into a profitable sustainable electronics brand. Modular, repairable smartphones using conflict-free and recycled materials. Previously scaled Tony's Chocolonely to market leadership. Named UN SDG Pioneer 2023. The brand proves sustainable electronics can be commercially viable.



**Brand identity:** A clean, modern wordmark paired with bold green signalling that conveys transparency, sustainability and ethical tech with clarity and confidence.

Source: [fairphone.com](http://fairphone.com) | *UN Global Compact* | *Silicon Canals*

## Reflect: Choose one brand to explore: MakerGirl, WeMake, FABTEXTILES, Fairphone

### 1. First Impression (10 seconds).

Without overthinking:

What is your immediate reaction?

Does this feel like something you would explore?

### 2. Notice:

Colours: what mood or feeling do they create?

Font and style: friendly, technical, bold, creative?

Overall look: open and inviting, or more expert and specialised?

### 3. Meaning: Reflect:

What values is this brand communicating?

Who is this brand designed for?

What kind of person is expected to belong here?

**4. Personal Connection:** Would you engage with this brand?

What would make it feel more relevant or accessible to you?

### Your takeaway

Write one sentence: *This brand makes me feel...*

# Branding for Your Persona Type

## How Each Persona Approaches Brand Building

Each of the five Beta Tech persona types brings a different strength to branding. Understanding your persona helps you find the brand voice and strategy that feels most authentic to you.

- **INNOVATORS** Your brand strength is vision. You are driven by what technology can do, and your brand should communicate that forward-looking energy. Think bold, clean, tech-forward visuals. Your brand story centres on the future you are building. Like Fairphone, your brand can prove that innovation and values work together.
- **SOCIAL IMPLEMENTERS** Your brand strength is purpose. You are motivated by making life better for people who have been left out or overlooked. Your brand should lead with impact — real stories, real change. Think warm, human imagery and an empathetic tone. Your brand connects a clear mission to an everyday action people can take.
- **CREATIVE MAKERS** Your brand strength is craft. You bring artistic flair to everything you create, and your brand should reflect that making process. Think textured, handmade aesthetics alongside digital precision. Like FabTextiles, your brand can bridge traditional craft and cutting-edge technology with a visual identity that feels both artisanal and innovative.
- **EXPLORERS** Your brand strength is curiosity. You thrive at the intersection of disciplines, and your brand should reflect that sense of discovery. Think unexpected combinations, layered imagery, and a voice that invites others on the journey
- **DOERS** Your brand strength is reliability. You are practical, hands-on, and results-driven. Your brand should communicate trust, quality, and a can-do attitude. Think clean, functional design that shows your work in action. Like WeMake, your brand builds credibility through visible results and a community that sees you deliver.

## Branding activities based on your persona type

Innovators: Create a Vision Brand Board	Social Implementers: Your Impact Story	Doers : Your Credibility Portfolio	Creative Makers: Your Process Brand	Explorers : Your Cross-Pollination Map
<p>Create a one-page brand board that captures what you are building. <b>Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A one-sentence purpose : <b>We exist to</b></li> <li>• 3 words to describe your brand personality (e.g. bold, precise, creative)</li> <li>• A colour palette (3–4 colours) and one line on what each colour represents</li> <li>• A short descriptor (30 seconds): what you do and why it matters</li> <li>• One visual reference that inspires your approach</li> </ul>	<p>Write a short brand story (200 words)</p> <p><b>Cover:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the person or community your work serves?</li> <li>• What was life like for them before your solution?</li> <li>• What changed because of what you created?</li> <li>• What is your call to action — how can others get involved or benefit?</li> </ul> <p>Pair your story with a simple visual: a photo, sketch, or diagram that shows the human impact of your work.</p>	<p>Create a one-page portfolio that shows what you can do.</p> <p><b>Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos or sketches of 3 things you have made, built or fixed</li> <li>• A short description for each: what it is, who it is for, what problem it solves</li> <li>• One short testimonial or piece of feedback</li> <li>• Your brand promise in one sentence:</li> <li>• “When you work with me, you can expect...”</li> </ul>	<p>Your process is your story do show how you create. <b>Document your process:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture 5 stages of making something (from first idea to final result)</li> <li>• Add a short caption to each stage (1–2 sentences)</li> <li>• Define your visual style: colours, textures, materials</li> <li>• <b>Create:</b></li> <li>• A mood board (physical or digital)</li> <li>• A short tagline that captures your work</li> </ul>	<p>Explore where your ideas connect across different fields.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw two overlapping circles. In one, write your main STEAM discipline. In the other, write a second, unexpected field you are interested in or curious about.</li> <li>• In the overlapping space, list three ideas, products or opportunities that could emerge from combining both areas.</li> <li>• Write a short ‘brand manifesto’ (5–7 sentences) explaining why this combination matters and what it makes possible.</li> </ul>

# What is story telling in STEAM?

Your brand is what people see. The brand is visual.  
Storytelling is your voice. Your storytelling is how they understand you.  
Your brand attracts attention. Your storytelling turns that attention into engagement.

It is how you explain your work, shape perception and make your value clear. In STEAM, many women are doing important, technical work. Storytelling helps others quickly understand:

- what you do
- why it is relevant
- how they can engage with it

This is what builds:

- visibility
- credibility
- trust
- opportunity

## What Strong STEAM Storytelling Looks Like

Storytelling brings your work to life. People respond better to clarity and meaning. Strong storytelling is focused and specific.

- **A clear need:** *What is not working, missing or needs improvement?*
- **A defined action:** *What are you specifically doing about it?*
- **A real outcome:** *What changes as a result?*

## Make Your Work Stand Out

To communicate effectively:

- Be clear about the problem you are addressing
- Show how your approach is different
- Link your work to real-world impact
- Keep your message focused and direct
- Clarity creates recognition.  
Recognition creates opportunity.

## A Simple Structure You Can Use

- *I saw that...*
- *So I developed...*
- *This improves...*
- *This enables...*

### Weak Example

*I work with digital fabrication and sustainability.*

### Strong Example

*I use digital fabrication to reduce material waste in product design, helping create more efficient and sustainable production methods.*

## Where you will use storytelling

- Your portfolio
- Social media
- Presenting your work
- Applications and funding proposals
- Working with clients or collaborators

## Go deeper, some great reading....

- [Start with Why – Simon Sinek - Leadership Training & Employee Development Platform - The Optimism Company](#)
- [20 examples of strong brand storytelling \(updated 2025\) - Toast Studio](#)
- [Design Kit](#)



# Unit 09

## MASTERING SALES STRATEGIES FOR STEAM PRODUCTS

Future Female Innovators In STEAM

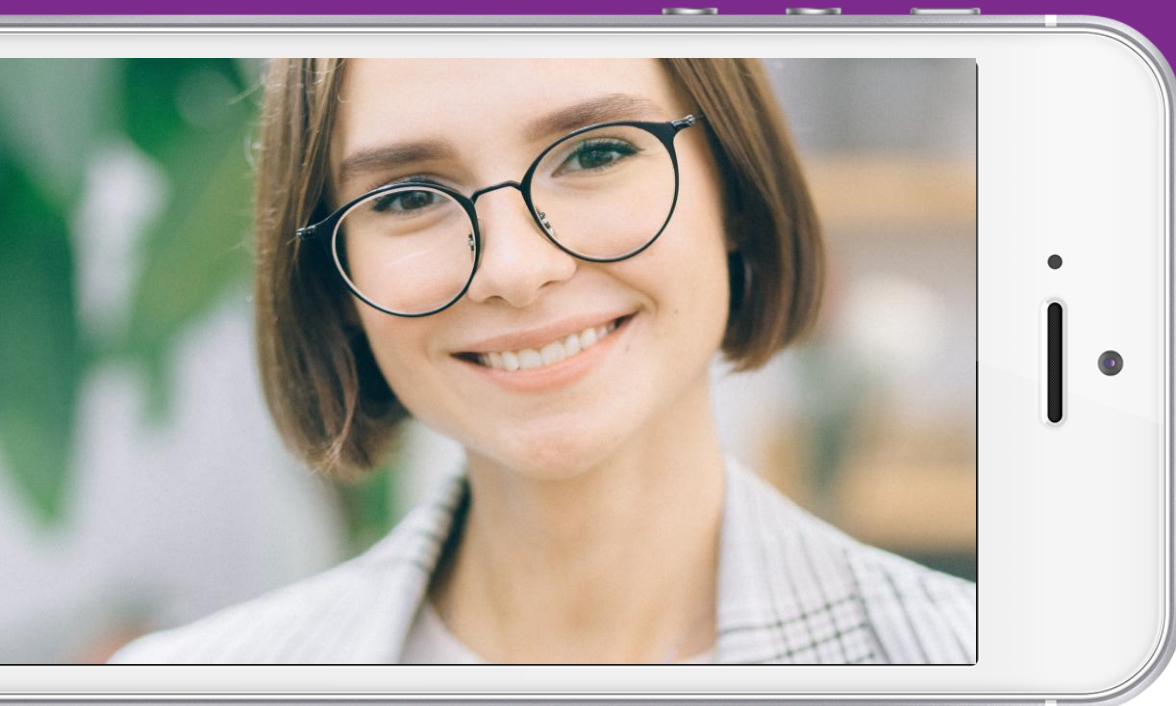


# Mastering sales strategies for STEAM products

Sales strategies are essential for successfully bringing your innovative STEAM products to market. Unlike traditional sales approaches, selling STEAM products requires a nuanced understanding of both the technical aspects of your offerings and the needs of a diverse audience. This module will guide you in crafting tailored sales strategies that not only highlight the unique benefits and technical features of your products but also resonate with your target market.

In the fast-evolving landscape of STEAM fields, your sales strategy must go beyond listing product features. It's about storytelling, creating connections, and demonstrating how your product solves real-world problems. This unit covers the foundational elements of effective sales, including identifying your target audience, developing key messages, and selecting the most suitable sales channels.

By focusing on these dynamic sales techniques, you will learn how to craft compelling narratives that capture your product's value and differentiate it in a competitive market. This unit is designed to provide practical, actionable insights that cater to the unique characteristics of your STEAM business, helping you establish a strong market presence and drive sales success. Whether you are launching your first product or refining an existing sales approach, this unit will equip you with the skills needed to connect with your audience and turn interest into action.



# Set the Scene: Creative Women and Sales

## Do creative women find it hard to sell their own work, and why?

Before we get into the mechanics of sales, it is important to acknowledge that creative women selling their own work face a particular set of circumstances. Some are structural, some psychological, some cultural.

Selling tends to be harder for creative people generally, but there are some specific layers for women worth understanding clearly and separating fact from bias matters here.

### The Universal Creative Challenge

Before getting to gender, research is clear that selling your own creative work is genuinely hard for everyone. We love this article - [Why pricing your creative work is mostly a battle with yourself | Creative Boom](#). Pricing creative work combines the vulnerability of creative output with the awkwardness of money, seasoned with imposter syndrome, which is why so many creatives end up undercharging, over-explaining, or caving the moment a client raises an eyebrow.

**The core issue?** Creative works are deeply personal expressions. Each piece is infused with ideas, emotions, and hours of hard work, and that emotional connection makes it genuinely challenging to assign a monetary value. And crucially, the numbers are rarely the problem. It's psychology. The narratives creatives carry quietly sabotage pricing decisions: "people won't pay that," "they don't see the value."

### The Creative Mind and Selling has a Specific Tension?

Creative people actually have real strengths in selling, particularly in the early "inspiration" stage, when a buyer is gathering information and open to new ideas. The difficulty comes later: once a buyer has decided to act, their psychology shifts toward worry about what might go wrong and the creative person's instinct to keep inspiring can create conflict rather than reassurance. Great insights in [winwithoutpitching.com/insights/impact-of-creativity-on-selling](http://winwithoutpitching.com/insights/impact-of-creativity-on-selling). This is a structural mismatch between how creative minds work and what the later stages of a sale requires.

### And does Gender come into Play ?

Research across behavioural economics and labour markets shows that women are more likely to hesitate in negotiation and self-promotion, and to assess their readiness more conservatively. And so, we have built this unit to empower you to sell as boldly as your ideas deserve.

## What Sales Actually Is

Sales is the process of connecting the right person with something that solves a real problem for them.

Many people associate sales with pressure, persuasion or convincing someone to buy something they do not need. This perception is outdated and unhelpful. For creative people, it can create hesitation and disconnect from the value of their own work.

At its core, sales is about clarity:

- understanding who your work is for
- communicating what it does
- making it easy for someone to say yes

## The One Thing That Makes Sales Easier

Belief in your product. Everything else, the pitch, the price, the follow-up, flows from genuinely knowing that what you have made has value. When you are clear on that, selling stops feeling like asking and starts feeling like sharing.

## Selling a STEAM product

A STEAM product creates value through what it enables.

Your role is to **define that value clearly and communicate it in the sales and marketing process in a way others can use to make a decision.**

## Sales is a Conversation

The best sales happen when two people are genuinely exploring whether something is a good fit. Your job is to show up with curiosity, about who the other person is, what they are trying to achieve, and how your product might serve that. When you approach it that way, the pressure disappears. It becomes a conversation, not a performance.

# The Foundation of Sales: Features vs Benefits

When you are passionate about your STEAM product, it is natural to want to talk about all its features — the technical specifications, the materials, the innovation behind it. Your customer, though, is focused on something different: what will this do for me?

## Features Tell. Benefits Sell.

A feature describes what your product is or does. A benefit explains why that matters to the customer. Strong sales messaging bridges the two. Some examples

Feature	Benefit
Our educational tool uses 3D-printed components.	Children learn by building and holding real objects, making science tangible and exciting.
Made from 100% recycled materials	You can feel good knowing your purchase reduces environmental impact.
Open-source design files included	You can customise, adapt, and make it truly yours, and share improvements with the community

Many of you will be too young to remember the Apple iPod, launched in 2001 before streaming and smartphones. This small device changed how people carried and listened to music, driven by one of the clearest value messages in marketing.



**And the clearest benefit ever which does not even mention the technology. It's benefit was used as its tagline and is still iconic ....**

**1,000 songs in your pocket**

## Activity: Your Features and Benefits in 3 Steps

1. List four features of your product or service.
2. For each one, write the corresponding benefit from your customer's perspective.
3. Then ask yourself: which of these benefits matters most to my ideal customer? Lead with that in your sales messaging.

**Remember: People buy solutions to their problems and fulfilment of their desires. Your technical prowess matters but frame it in terms of the difference it makes.**

# Understanding Buying Behaviour

Once your value is clear, the next step is understanding how people make decisions. Sales happens through a sequence of moments. At each stage, people focus on different things. Understanding this allows you to:

- communicate the right message at the right time
- focus on what matters to the customer in that moment
- avoid overwhelming or confusing the decision

Stage	What the Customer is Thinking	What You Must Communicate	How You Show It (Actions)
<b>Early stage – the focus is on awareness building</b> The customer first discovers your brand, through direct communication from you, via social media, a maker fair, word-of-mouth, or a web search.	“This is interesting. What is it? Why does it matter?”	Your goal: make a strong first impression. Share what sets your STEAM product apart. Use engaging visuals, behind-the-scenes content, and the story of why you started.  Share the idea, the relevance, explanation and the possibility	Use strong visuals, short explanations, and clear messaging. Show the product is accessible, problem solving and new.
<b>Middle stage – the focus is on consideration. The customer is comparing your product alongside alternatives. This is your time to build trust.</b>	“Could this work for me? How does it compare? Is it worth exploring?”	How it works, where it fits, and why it is a strong option.	Provide examples, use comparisons. Show how it performs best, explain the value, and focus on what matters for success behaviour.
<b>Decision stage – the customer is ready to buy. Make the process smooth, secure, and straightforward. A complicated checkout loses customers.</b>	“Am I confident this will deliver? What exactly might I get?”	Clear outcomes, value, and next steps.	State the result clearly. Make the process simple. Provide reassurance through specific delivery, support, or guarantee. E.g. you can expect x and it includes y.
<b>Build the relationship – the focus is on loyalty and advocacy</b>	“Was this a good decision? Do I trust this? Would I choose this again or recommend it?”	Ongoing value, reliability, and connection.	Follow up and stay visible. Provide support, updates, and continued value. Invite feedback and create opportunities for engagement: encourage sharing, referrals, and repeat use.

You can see that as customers move through the buying process, their focus changes:

- At the beginning, they are curious and open
- In the middle, they are comparing and evaluating
- At the end, they are deciding and managing risk
- And post sale, relationship building/generating loyalty is the focus.

This is why one sales message is not enough. What works at the start will not work at the decision stage. However, many creators stay in “inspiration mode”:

- explaining ideas
- sharing possibilities
- showing process

This works well early in the journey, but needs to evolve.

# The 7 Steps in the Sales Cycle

Sales follows a clear sequence. Each step has a purpose, and each one builds on the previous. When you understand the steps, you can stay focused, communicate clearly and guide the process with confidence.

Steps	What you need to establish	In practice
1	<b>Identify Your Buyer [Prospecting]</b> <b>Know who your work is for. You are looking for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people or organisations with a relevant need</li> <li>• context where your work fits</li> <li>• a reason for them to engage</li> </ul>	Define your target user. Identify where they are – online, networks, communities. The most specific you are about them, the better you can reach and sell to them.
2	<b>Start the Conversation [Initial Contact]</b> <b>Create interest and open dialogue. This is about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introducing your work</li> <li>• making it easy to engage</li> <li>• sparking curiosity</li> </ul>	Start introduction and focus on connection Visual or tangible Clear, simple explanation
3	<b>Understand the Need [Discovery]</b> <b>Understand what matters to them. Learn:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their priorities</li> <li>• what they are trying to achieve</li> </ul>	Ask focused questions Listen carefully Clarify what success looks like for them
4	<b>Present your Value [Solution]</b> <b>Show how your work fits their need. Now you connect:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what you offer – to what they need</li> </ul>	Set your value statement Tailor your message to their context Show how it works in practice
5	<b>Address Questions [Handling Concerns]</b> <b>Build buyer confidence. At this stage, people want:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarity</li> <li>• detail where needed</li> <li>• reassurance</li> </ul>	Answer directly Provide examples or proof Keep explanations clear and relevant
6	<b>Agree the Outcome [Closing]</b> <b>Move forward</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is where a decision becomes action.</li> <li>• Focus on commitment</li> <li>• Confirm expectations</li> </ul>	Propose a clear next step Keep it simple Example: “Let’s start with a test / pilot / order”
7	<b>Build the Relationship [Follow-up]</b> <b>Create ongoing and future value.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain customers after the decision.</li> <li>• Focus on continuity</li> </ul>	Check in and support use Share updates or ideas Create opportunities for repeat engagement

Within the 7 step process, two steps have a direct influence on outcomes: handling objections, and closing the sale. These are the moments where questions are clarified, confidence is established, and a decision moves into action. For this reason, the next sections focus on these steps in detail, providing practical approaches, language and techniques you can apply to support clear, confident decision making.

## Turning Concerns into Confidence - Handling Objections

When a potential customer raises a concern or pushes back during a sale, this is an objection. Objections are a natural part of the sales process. They mean the person is engaged and thinking seriously about your offer. Handling them well builds trust and often leads to the sale.

- **Listen First:** Let the customer finish speaking.
- **Understand:** what is really behind their concern before you respond.
- **Show empathy and acknowledge** their point.

### Four Techniques for Women in STEAM

#### 1. The Pushback Technique

Be assertive (never arrogant). If the customer has a misconception, gently correct it. ‘I can appreciate you might think that, but we actually offer volume discounts for community orders.’ This corrects the statement while respecting the customer.

#### 2. The Reframing Technique

Redirect the conversation positively. ‘That’s precisely why our service saves you money. We streamline everything into one efficient, affordable solution.’ You turn the objection into a reason to buy.

#### 3. The Justification Technique

Acknowledge the concern and justify it. ‘Yes, the initial cost is higher, but our product lasts 30% longer than alternatives, so you actually save money and reduce waste over time.’ Focus on value, quality, and sustainability.

#### 4. The Pre-Emptive Technique

Address the objection before the customer raises it. ‘You might find this is a bigger investment than expected — let me show you our flexible payment plan and what previous customers say about the return.’ This puts you in a position of confidence.

Technique	How It Works and When to Use It [Customer Signal]	Example
<b>Pushback</b>	Assertively correct a misconception.	“We actually offer volume discounts for community orders”
<b>Reframing</b>	Turn the objection into a reason to buy	“That’s precisely why our service saves you money”
<b>Justification</b>	Acknowledge concern, justify with value	“Costs more upfront, but lasts 30% longer”
<b>Pre-emptive</b>	Address it before they raise it	“You might find this a bigger investment — here’s our plan”

# Closing the Sale

## Techniques for Confident Selling

You have built rapport, demonstrated value, and handled objections. Now you need to ask for the sale. Many women founders find this the most challenging step, so here are four proven techniques:

### 1. The Assumptive Close

Proceed as if the customer has already decided to buy. 'I'll put you down for the starter package and we can adjust as your needs grow.' This works because confidence is contagious.

### 2. The Conditional Close

Set an appealing condition. 'If we include the workshop training, does that give you everything you need?' 'If I can arrange a flexible payment plan, would you like to go ahead today?' This is based on the exchange principle: I solve your concern, you commit.

### 3. The Bonus Close

When you are almost there, offer something extra. 'Because you are one of our first community supporters, I'll include a free customisation session.' This exceeds expectations and creates delight.

### 4. The Customer Reference Close

Use the endorsement of a satisfied customer. 'Here is feedback from a maker who used our toolkit at her fab lab last month, would you like to hear about her experience?' Third-party credibility is powerful, especially in the maker community where word-of-mouth matters.

### **Calls to Action**

Every customer interaction should end with a clear next step. Use powerful verbs: Book now, Download here, Reserve your place, Order today. Make it specific and easy. Show (share a direct link or phone number) rather than just telling. And always, always ask for the sale.

Strong closing is about recognising where the customer is and choosing the right approach in that moment.

Technique	When to Use It [Customer Signal]	Moves the Conversation Forward
<b>Assumptive Close</b>	The customer is engaged, asking practical questions, or discussing terms/details	Moves the conversation forward naturally and builds momentum
<b>Conditional Close</b>	The customer has a specific concern or requirement. "If we include onboarding support, would that meet what you need?"	Linking your offer directly to their need and supporting commitment.
<b>Bonus Close</b>	The customer is close to deciding and needs an extra reason to act now. "I can include a customisation session to get you started."	Adding value and creating a sense of opportunity.
<b>Customer Reference</b>	The customer is looking for reassurance or proof. "A similar client used this last month. would it help to see how they applied it?"	Building confidence through real experience and credibility

***'Don't celebrate closing a sale. Celebrate opening a relationship.'***

**Patricia Fripp** emphasising the real value of a sale is what happens next — continued use, trust, and future collaboration.

# Women in STEAM: Sales Approches

## Learning from Makers Who Sell

Across Europe, women entrepreneurs in STEAM are building thriving businesses through smart, authentic sales strategies. Here are approaches that work in the maker and fab lab world. Let's look at our examples from earlier.....

### **Sell Through Making**

Many successful women in STEAM sell by demonstrating their process. Anastasia Pistofidou (FabTextiles) grew her brand by documenting and sharing every project openly. The making process itself becomes the sales tool. When people see the craft, innovation, and care behind your work, trust follows more naturally.

### **Sell Through Community**

Zoe Romano (WeMake, Milan) built her makerspace's reputation by connecting local fashion brands with digital fabrication. Sales grew through community partnerships, collaborative projects, and word-of-mouth from satisfied clients. For fab lab entrepreneurs, your community IS your sales channel.

### **Sell Through Purpose**

Eva Gouwens scaled Fairphone to profitability by making the brand's ethical mission central to every sales message. Customers bought because they believed in the purpose. If your STEAM product addresses a real social or environmental challenge, lead with that purpose in your sales conversations.

### **Sell Through Education**

Ayah Bdeir (littleBits) and Elizabeth Engele (MakerGirl) both built sales through educational experiences. When your product teaches, inspires, or empowers, the sales conversation shifts from 'buy this' to 'join this movement'. Workshops, demos, and educational content can be your most effective sales strategy.

## Activity: Your Sales Approach

Reflect: Which of these approaches, making, community, purpose, or education, feels most authentic to your persona type and your brand? You can then build your sales strategy around that strength.

## Selling Through Your Strengths: Adapting Your Approach

By now, you have learned:

- how to define the value of your work
- how customer interest moves through buying processes

The next step is understanding how you sell.

No matter what, the bottom line is that PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE. Your natural strengths should shape how you communicate, what you emphasise, and where you feel most confident.

These strengths are powerful. They help you connect, explain and engage. At the same time, each strength aligns more naturally with certain stages of the buying process. To sell effectively, you build on your strengths and expand your approach across all stages.

## Let's review our Beta Tech Personas in Sales (Deep Behaviour + Impact)

### How Your Persona Shapes Sales Conversations

In Phase One, you learnt about the power of identifying your Beta Tech Persona and it really comes into play in the sales process in terms of

- how you open a conversation
- what you choose to explain
- how long you stay on a topic
- what you assume the customer needs

This directly affects:

- 👉 what the customer understands
- 👉 how confident they feel
- 👉 whether they move forward

# Persona Behaviour in Sales

Each Beta Tech persona brings a distinct way of approaching sales. This is visible in how you open conversations, what you focus on, and how you explain your work. These patterns influence how your value is understood and how customers respond. The table below outlines how each persona typically shows up in sales, the experience this creates for the customer, and where additional clarity is needed to support decision-making.

Persona Type	How You Naturally Sell	Customer Experience	Where It Slows Decisions
<b>Innovator</b>	Leads with ideas, possibilities and future applications. Expands the conversation and introduces multiple directions.	Interest and curiosity. Sees potential and new opportunities.	When clarity is needed and focus is reduced.
<b>Social Implementer</b>	Leads with purpose, impact and meaning. Connects work to real-world challenges and values.	Trust and alignment. Connects with the purpose behind the work.	When outcomes are not defined in practical terms.
<b>Creative Maker</b>	Focuses on process, materials and how something is made. Explains detail and craft.	Appreciation and interest. Sees quality and care.	When process replaces outcome and value is not stated clearly.
<b>Explorer</b>	Connects ideas across fields. Shows multiple uses and possibilities. Expands thinking.	Curiosity and new perspective. Sees flexibility.	When the message lacks focus and no single benefit stands out.
<b>Doer</b>	Focuses on function, use and results. Explains how it works and what it does.	Clarity and practicality. Understands usefulness.	When relevance is not established early.

Strong sales builds on your natural approach and adds what supports clear, confident decisions. To be effective across the full sales cycle, you build on this by adding what supports clear understanding and confident decisions. The table below shows what each persona naturally emphasises, what to add to strengthen your message, and how to express this clearly in practice

Persona Type	What You Emphasise	What to Add	Upgrade Your Language
<b>Innovator</b>	Ideas, possibilities, future potential. You open conversations and expand thinking quickly.	Define one clear use case and state a specific outcome early. Bring focus to the conversation.	“The key result is...” “In practice, this delivers...”
<b>Social Implementer</b>	Purpose, impact, meaning. You build connection and show why the work matters.	Translate impact into practical, visible results. Make outcomes concrete and measurable where possible.	“This results in...” “This improves...”
<b>Creative Maker</b>	Purpose, impact, meaning. You build connection and show why the work matters.	Translate impact into practical, visible results. Make outcomes concrete and measurable where possible.	“This gives you...” “This results in...”
<b>Explorer</b>	Process, materials, creation. You show how something is made and highlight quality	One clear benefit and simplified message	“The main benefit is...” “This is most useful when...”
<b>Doer</b>	Function, usability, results. You explain how it works and what it does.	Context and relevance at the start	“This is useful because...” “This matters when...”

# Unit 10

## BUILDING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

*why they stay, return, and advocate*

Future Female Innovators In STEAM



In the competitive world of STEAM entrepreneurship, the ability to effectively sell your products and maintain strong customer relationships is crucial for success. This unit will equip you to build lasting connections with your customers.

Building strong customer relationships is essential for the success of any business, but it's especially critical in the STEAM fields, where trust, loyalty, and a deep understanding of customer needs can set your business apart. Unlike one-time transactions, developing lasting relationships with your customers ensures repeat business, positive word-of-mouth, and a stronger brand reputation. In the dynamic world of STEAM, establishing trust and maintaining clear, ongoing communication with your customers can be a game-changer.

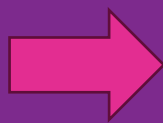
### What is Customer Relations?

Customer relations involve deliberate efforts to connect with clients/customers and build positive, long-term relationships. It's about engaging with customers on a deeper level, creating loyalty that keeps them returning and advocating for your brand. Strong customer relations help retain existing customers, attract new ones, and drive business growth by consistently meeting customer needs and exceeding their expectations.

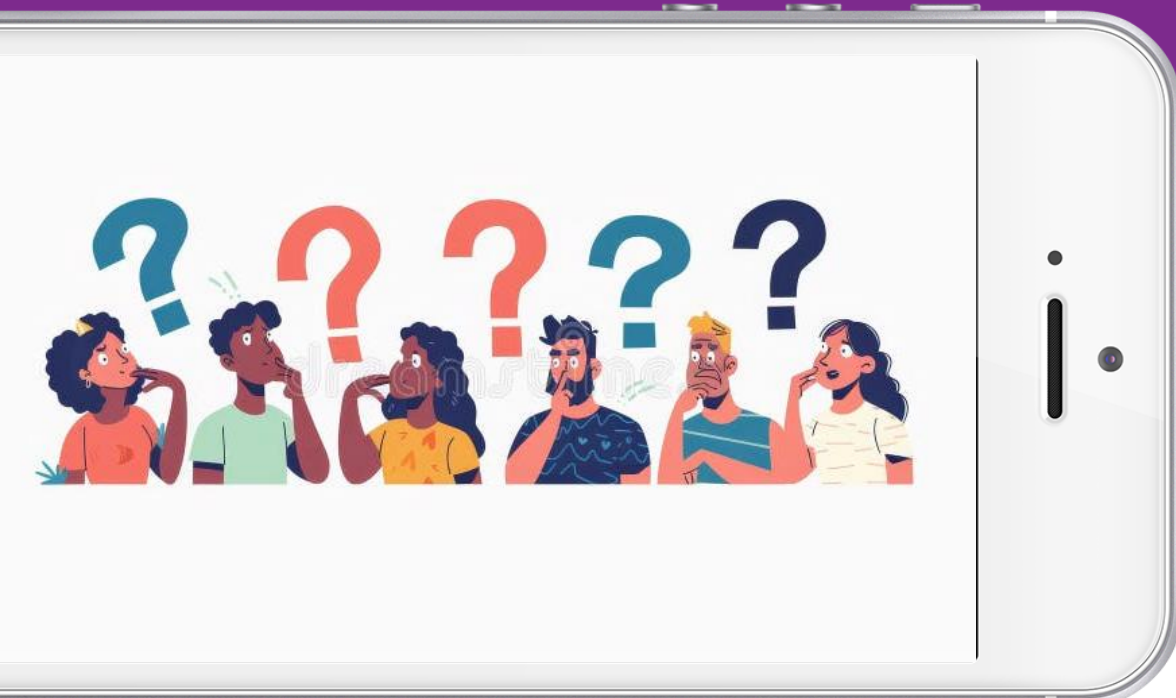
### What Changes After the Sale

At the point of sale, the customer has made a decision. From this point forward, they are assessing:

- whether the decision was correct
- whether the value is real
- whether the experience matches expectations
- whether they would return or recommend



**IMPORTANT** - This evaluation happens quickly and often silently.



# The Post Sale Reality

Strong relationships in STEAM environments are not created through a single interaction or message. They are built through a pattern of behaviours that users experience over time. These behaviours shape how reliable, useful and engaging your product or service feels in practice. Each interaction either strengthens or weakens the relationship. When users receive consistent delivery, timely support, continued value and personalised engagement, they are more likely to continue, explore further and recommend the experience. When these are missing, engagement becomes fragile and short-lived.

Customer Thinking	What Is Behind It	What You Must Do
“Was this a good decision?”	Risk and uncertainty	Support first use, reinforce value early and clearly
“Do I trust this provider?”	Reliability and consistency	Deliver exactly as promised
“Would I use this again?”	Experience and ease	Make continued engagement simple
“Would I recommend this?”	Reputation and confidence	Create a positive, shareable experience

Many businesses lose value in the moments immediately after a purchase, when customer expectations are highest and attention is strongest. A lack of timely follow-up, unclear onboarding, or a confusing first-use experience leaves customers uncertain and disengaged. When early interactions feel disjointed or unsupported, confidence drops quickly and the perceived value of the product or service weakens.

Slow responses, inconsistency, and an absence of continued engagement compound the issue. Instead of building momentum, the relationship stalls. These gaps introduce friction at the exact point where trust should be strengthening, turning what could be a positive experience into one that feels transactional and forgettable.

## Relationship Drivers

Strong relationships in STEAM environments are built through repeated, visible behaviours. Each interaction shapes how reliable, useful and engaging your product or service feels in practice. When users experience consistency, responsiveness, continued value and recognition, they are more likely to continue, explore and recommend. When these are missing, engagement becomes fragile and short-lived.

Driver	What It Means in STEAM	What Strong Practice Looks Like	Impact on Users
Consistency	Reliable tools and delivery	Clear instructions, stable experience	Builds confidence
Responsiveness	Timely support and communication	Quick replies, accessible help	Maintains trust
Added Value	Continued learning and use	Tutorials, updates, new applications	Deepens engagement
Recognition	Acknowledging progress	Feedback, showcasing work	Builds motivation

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## Critical Engagement Moments

Not all moments in the user journey carry equal weight. In STEAM contexts, certain interactions directly shape confidence, capability and continued engagement. These are the moments where users decide, often quickly, whether to continue or step away.

### 1. First Use

This is the point where users test both the product and themselves. They are asking: *Can I do this? Does this make sense?* If the experience is unclear or too complex, confidence drops quickly. If it is guided, simple and achievable, it creates immediate progress and a sense of capability.

**Focus:** make the first step clear, supported and achievable. Confidence grows through supported use. Trust is built in how you respond at key moments.

### 2. First Challenge or Error

This is where doubt appears. Users encounter something that does not work as expected or feels difficult. A fast, clear and supportive response builds trust and reinforces confidence. A slow or unclear response creates frustration and can stop engagement entirely.

**Focus:** respond quickly, solve clearly, reduce friction

### 3. First Success

This is a key moment where users see results from their effort. It confirms that the product or process works. If this moment is reinforced, it builds motivation and momentum. If it is ignored, the impact is reduced and engagement may not continue.

**Focus:** acknowledge success and guide the next step

### 4. Ongoing Use

At this stage, users are forming habits and deciding whether continued engagement is worthwhile. Without new value or direction, interest can fade. With clear progression and new applications, engagement deepens.

**Focus:** provide new uses, ideas and progression

### 5. Return Interaction

This is the moment where users decide whether to come back. The experience must feel easy, relevant and worthwhile. If re-engagement is difficult or unclear, users disengage. If it is simple and rewarding, loyalty begins to form.

**Focus:** make it easy and valuable to return

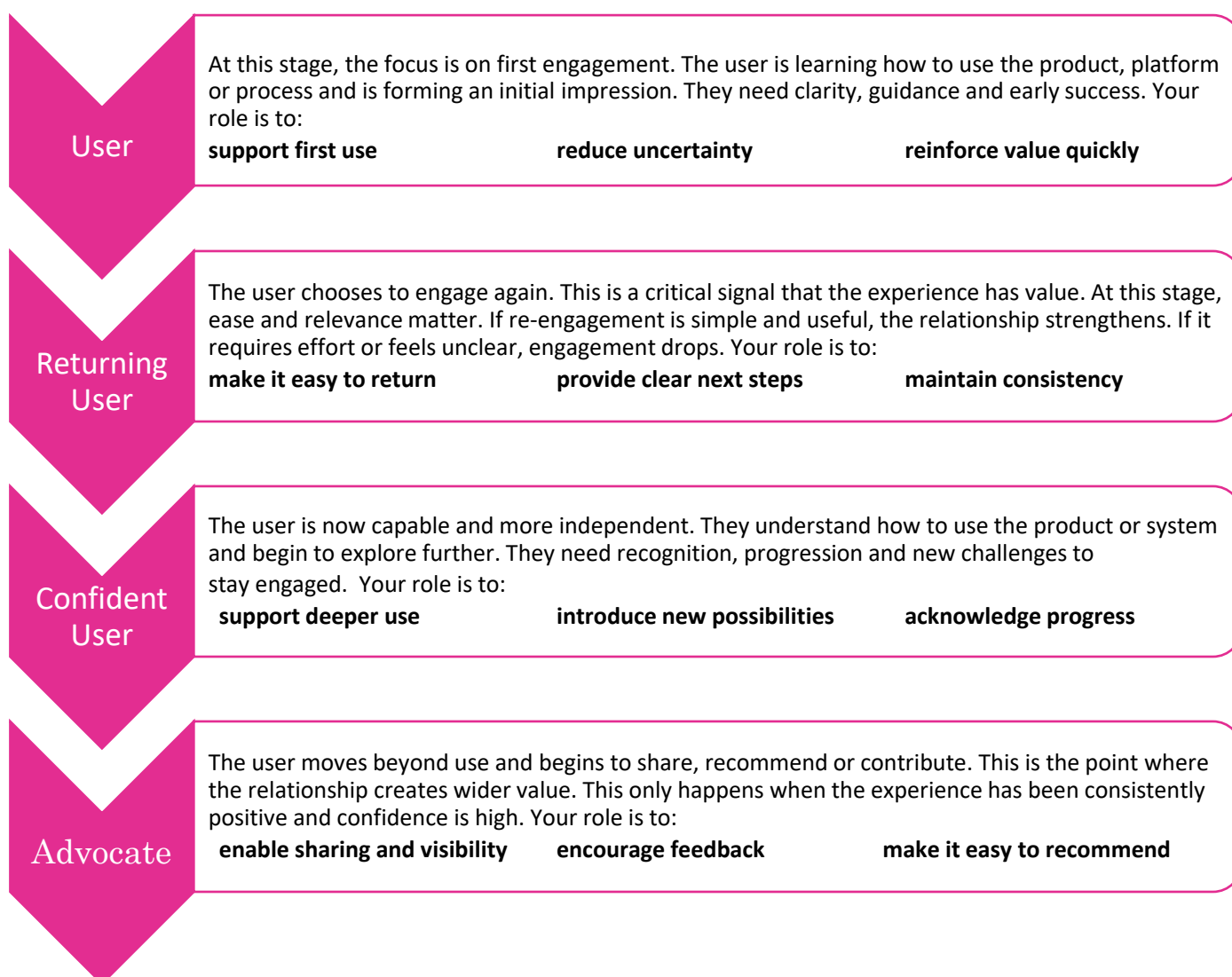
# From User to Advocate

## How Relationships Develop Over Time

In STEAM contexts, relationships evolve through experience, not a single interaction. Each stage reflects a deeper level of confidence, capability and connection. Users move forward when their experience is:

- clear
- supported
- valuable
- easy to continue

In every STEAM environment, you are working with users at different stages of engagement, from first use through to active advocacy. Understanding approaches to each is essential:



# Unit 11

## FUNDING YOUR GROWTH – GRANTS, INVESTMENT AND SMART FINANCING

Future Female Innovators In STEAM



# Accessing funding and resources

## Introduction Supporting What You Have Built

Securing funding and resources is a critical step in launching and scaling any business, especially for women entrepreneurs in STEAM fields. Your idea now carries weight. It has been shaped through testing, refined through feedback, and brought into contact with real users or customers. What begins to matter at this point is not only how the business grows, but how that growth is supported in a way that is both deliberate and sustainable.

Funding sits within this space. It is often treated as a milestone, something to reach for once everything else is in place. In practice, it functions as a **means of strengthening what is already working**, allowing you to build with greater focus, extend your reach, and make decisions with more confidence.

At the same time, many early-stage businesses move towards external funding before their core offer has fully settled. In these situations, funding can introduce pressure, expectations, or complexity that the business is not yet ready to absorb, particularly where revenue models, customer demand, or delivery processes are still evolving.

This is often seen in practice. A maker may invest in advanced equipment before consistent orders are in place, creating financial strain rather than growth. A digital product founder may seek investment while still refining their core user experience, resulting in resources being spread too thinly across development and expectation. A socially-driven initiative may secure grant funding tied to outcomes that are not yet fully defined, making delivery more difficult than anticipated.

These examples are not uncommon. They reflect a simple reality: **timing matters as much as access**. The work you have done in previous units already provides a strong foundation. Your brand has clarified your message. Your sales activity has demonstrated interest and engagement. Funding builds on this foundation, supporting your ability to move forward with greater structure and intention.

In this unit, you will explore how to recognise the funding opportunities that align with your business, how to present your work clearly and convincingly, and how to take practical steps towards securing the resources that will support your continued development.

### In this unit, you will:

- develop an understanding of the different funding options available, including grants, loans, and investment routes, and how each aligns with different stages of business development
- strengthen your ability to present your business clearly within funding contexts, particularly where applications or proposals require a structured and well-articulated case
- build confidence in communicating your work to potential funders or investors, ensuring that your value is understood in both practical terms and in relation to future potential

This Unit will provide the tools and insights needed to access the funding and resources that can propel your STEAM business forward. Let's explore how you can secure the financial backing to bring your vision to life!



## Background information and additional resources

To support your learning and help you dive deeper into the concepts covered in the modules and activities, we've provided a selection of background information and additional resources. These materials will give you a solid foundation in key topics, enhance your creative processes, and guide you in effectively using the FabLab tools. Explore the following resources to enrich your experience:



Explore the following resources to enrich your experience:

Explore EU funding options: [Financing and Funding Archives – Wegate](#)

The power of storytelling when attracting investments: [The Power of Storytelling When Attracting the Investment Your Business Needs](#)

Your Europe for investment options in your country: [EU funding programmes - Your Europe](#)

Grant writing: [Want to apply for a grant for your startup? Write it yourself | Sifted](#)

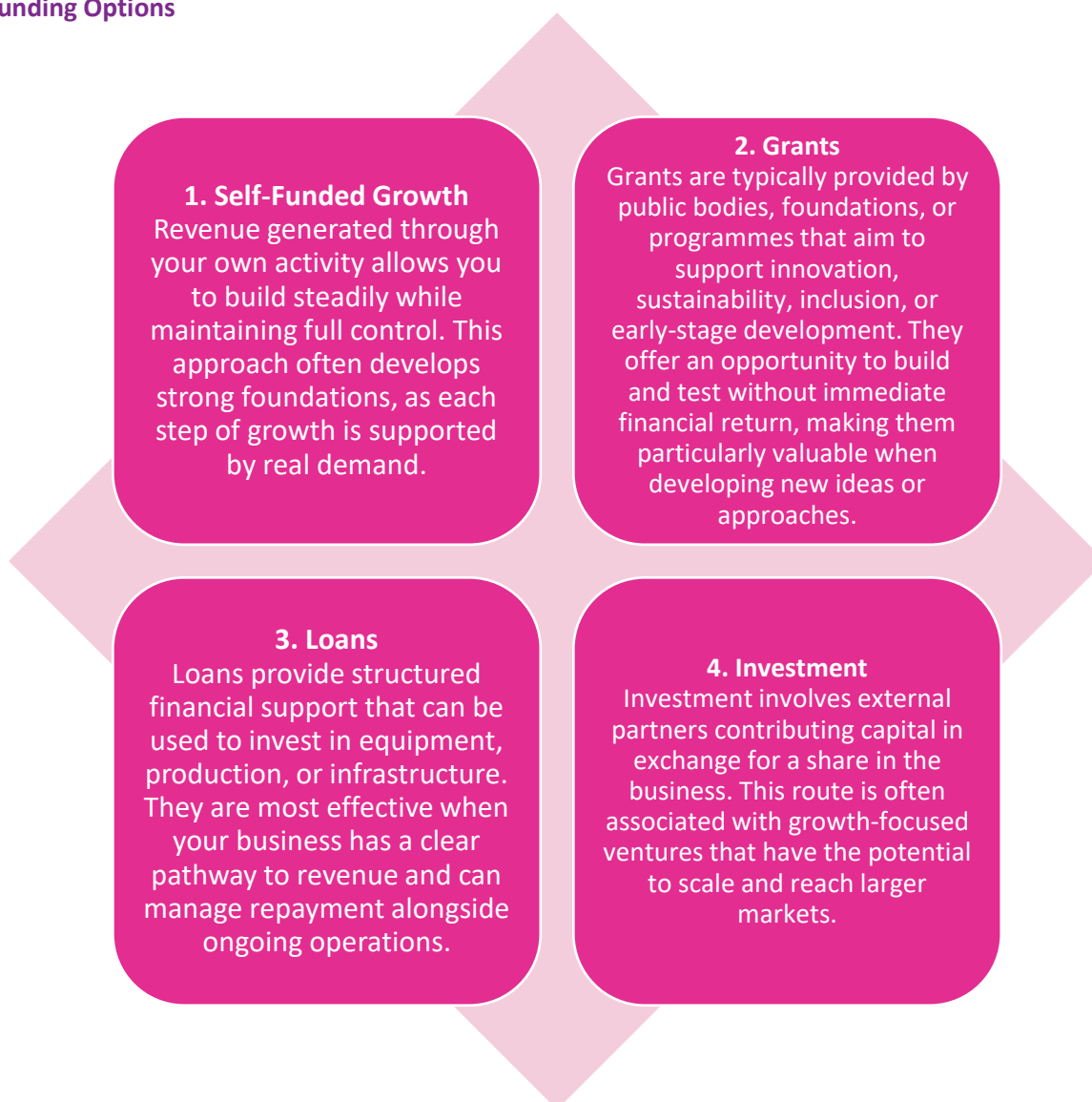
Grant writing for women in tech: [Grant Writing for Women in Tech: How to Secure Non-Dilutive Funding? | Women in Tech Network](#)

# Understanding Funding as Part of Your Business

## Understanding Funding as Part of Your Business

Funding becomes most effective when it is understood as part of how your business evolves, rather than something separate that happens alongside it. Different types of funding support different kinds of progress. Some create space for experimentation and development, allowing ideas to be tested and refined. Others enable expansion, supporting increased production, wider reach, or entry into new markets. Some prioritise innovation or social impact, while others focus more directly on commercial growth.

## Core Funding Options



What matters is not the range of options available, but the alignment between the support you seek and the stage your business has reached. A well-matched funding decision strengthens your position. It allows you to move forward with clarity, rather than stretching your focus across too many directions.

# Recognising When Your Business Is Ready

## Funding Readiness Checklist

Before pursuing funding, take some time to assess whether your business is in a position to make good use of it. Funding works best when it strengthens something that is already functioning, rather than trying to compensate for what is not yet in place.

Use the checklist below to review your current position:

- You want to grow your business:** You are ready to develop your work further, whether that involves expanding your offer, increasing your reach, or building capacity beyond what you can currently sustain.
- Your offer is clear:** You can describe what you provide in a way that others understand quickly, including who it is for and why it matters.
- There is evidence of demand:** You have secured orders, paid work, or firm commitments that show people are prepared to act. Expressing interest here is not enough, you need to see the €€ signs.
- You have experience of delivery:** You have begun delivering your product or service, even at a small scale, and have a realistic sense of what it takes in terms of time, effort, and resources.
- Your next step is defined:** You are clear on what additional support would enable you to do next, and how that step builds directly on what is already in place. You have costed and recosted your next steps – what do you need to grow the business? When do you need it?
- You have capacity to manage funding:** You are in a position to manage the practical requirements that may come with funding, including timelines, reporting, or external expectations.



If most of these statements feel accurate, your business is well placed to begin engaging with funding opportunities in a focused and effective way.



If several areas remain uncertain, this is useful insight. Strengthening these aspects first often makes the process more straightforward and increases the likelihood that funding will have a meaningful and well-directed impact.

# 1. Self Funded Growth (bootstrapping)

Self-funded growth, often referred to as *bootstrapping*, means building your business using your own resources, combining personal investment with income generated through early activity. This usually begins with savings, income from other work, or small amounts of revenue, and develops as those early returns are reinvested to support the next stage of growth. Decisions are made based on what you can afford to invest and what the business is already proving in the market.

## What this looks like in practice

- You use personal savings to develop your first product or prototype
- You cover early costs (materials, software, tools) yourself
- You run small production batches, using sales to fund the next run
- You take pre-orders or deposits before committing to larger production
- You use income from other work to support the business in early stages
- You delay major spending until demand is consistent



Bootstrapping works well where your offer can be developed in stages and where you are willing to test, adjust, and build gradually. It is often the most effective way to establish a business before introducing other forms of funding, as it creates the evidence and clarity that those funding routes rely on. The strength of this approach lies in control and clarity. You are not required to meet external targets or timelines, and decisions remain closely tied to what is happening within the business. This often leads to stronger foundations, particularly in the early stages, as growth is built on evidence rather than assumption.

At the same time, the limits are also clear. Progress can be slower, particularly where development requires significant upfront investment or where scaling depends on capacity that cannot be funded through revenue alone. There is also personal exposure, as your own money and time are directly involved, which makes prioritisation more important.

## Works well when..

your offer can be developed in stages and where you are willing to test, adjust, and build gradually. It is often the most effective way to establish a business before introducing other forms of funding, as it creates the evidence and clarity that those funding routes rely on.

## Example

A product designer invests a defined amount of personal savings to produce an initial run, sells that batch through direct channels, and uses the income to refine the design and increase production. Over time, consistent sales allow for investment in better tools, with each step justified by actual demand rather than projection.

# 1. Self Funded Growth (example)

**Case Study:** [Julie Deane](#) CBE is a British entrepreneur best known as the founder of [The Cambridge Satchel Company](#). Starting with only £600 from her kitchen in 2008, she turned the business into a global fashion brand championing British craftsmanship and manufacturing.

**Early life and founding story:** Deane, originally from Swansea, Wales, studied at Cambridge before qualifying as a chartered accountant. She created The Cambridge Satchel Company with her mother to fund her children’s schooling. Combining thrift and ingenuity, she designed, photographed, and marketed leather satchels inspired by traditional British school bags. Her self-coded website and direct outreach to fashion bloggers sparked viral success.

**Growth and recognition:** Within a few years, the brand grew into a multimillion-pound enterprise, selling in more than 120 countries and employing over 140 people. Collaborations with designers such as Vivienne Westwood and Comme des Garçons placed the satchels on international runways and in TV shows including *Gossip Girl* and *The Good Wife*. Deane’s commitment to UK-based production led her to open a factory in Leicester in 2011.

After steering her company through Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, Deane departed following its 2022 acquisition by [Compagnie Chargeurs Invest](#). She continues to speak internationally on entrepreneurship, resilience, and sustainable business growth. **READ MORE:** [Humble Beginnings: The Cambridge Satchel Company](#)



## Bootstrapping Through Your Beta Tech Persona

Self-funded growth places a strong emphasis on judgement, as decisions are made using your own resources and early income. Your Beta Tech persona influences how you approach this, particularly how you test ideas, manage risk, and decide when to reinvest.

Innovator	Social Implementer	Creative Maker	Explorer	Doer
You are likely to move quickly into new ideas and variations. In a bootstrapping context, the focus needs to stay on one clear application that can generate income, as multiple directions can dilute both effort and resources before anything is proven.	You are driven by purpose and outcomes. When self-funding, it is important to ensure that the work is supported by paying users or committed partners, so that impact is matched by financial sustainability.	You focus on quality and process. Bootstrapping works well here when pricing reflects the real cost of making, and when production is aligned with demand rather than driven by output alone.	You are comfortable working across ideas and possibilities. In this context, progress depends on selecting one direction and testing it through real sales, allowing learning to come from action rather than ongoing exploration	You move into delivery quickly. This is a strong advantage in self-funded growth, particularly where early sales can be generated, but it is important to ensure that time and resources are not spread too thinly across too many activities.

## 2. Grants

Grant funding is financial support provided by public bodies or programmes to carry out specific activities that align with defined priorities, such as innovation, enterprise development, sustainability, or skills. You are applying for support to undertake a clearly described piece of work within a framework set by the funder. This includes eligibility criteria, defined objectives, and conditions around how the funding is used and accounted for. In practice, this means the work must be planned in advance, with a clear link between what you propose and what the programme is designed to support. The funding is tied to delivery, and progress is usually evidenced through documentation, outputs, or reporting.

### What this looks like in practice

- **You apply to a specific and define funding call.** You identify a funding opportunity with specific priorities and eligibility criteria. The project you propose is shaped to fit that call, which may focus on innovation, enterprise development, sustainability, or job creation. This means aligning your idea with what the programme is designed to support, rather than describing your business in general terms.
- **You define a project that supports a clear stage of growth.** The funding is typically linked to a specific development step. This may include developing a new product, testing a service, purchasing equipment to increase capacity, or supporting the early costs of taking on staff. The key is that the activity is clearly defined and can be delivered within the funding period.
- **You set out outputs that can be demonstrated:** You need to describe what will be produced or achieved. This might include a working prototype, a completed pilot, a new production setup, or evidence of increased capacity. Outputs must be specific enough that they can be reviewed at the end of the project.
- **You plan the work across a fixed timeframe:** The project is broken into stages with clear timelines. This includes what will happen first, how the work progresses, and when key milestones are reached. The timeframe is set by the funding programme, and the work must fit within it.
- **You budget within defined funding rules:** Grants come with conditions on how funding can be used. Some programmes support equipment purchases, others focus on staff costs, training, or development activity. You need to understand what is eligible and structure your project so that costs align with these rules.
- **You document progress and provide evidence:** You are required to show what has been delivered. This includes reporting on activities, providing financial records, and demonstrating outputs such as completed work, pilot results, or increased production capacity.
- **You work within a national and regional funding landscape:** Funding opportunities vary significantly between countries and regions. What is available in one location may not exist in another, and eligibility can depend on location, sector, or stage of business. This makes it important to understand the specific supports available in your own context and to select opportunities that are relevant to your situation.

### Works well when..

your business has a clearly defined next step that requires structured support, such as developing a new product, testing a service in a real setting, investing in equipment to increase capacity, or supporting the early stages of taking on staff. Grant funding is particularly useful when growth requires a step that cannot be funded through day-to-day revenue alone, but where the outcome can be clearly defined and achieved within a project structure.

## 2. Grants

Grants are typically non-repayable funding. There are 4 key types.



### Government Grants:

These are offered by national, regional, or local governments and often target specific sectors such as technology, sustainability, or social impact. Government grants are usually competitive and require detailed reporting on how funds are used.



### Private Foundation Grants:

These grants are provided by private organizations or foundations and can be less formal than government grants. They often focus on specific causes or missions, such as supporting women in business or encouraging innovation.



### Corporate Grants:

Some large companies offer grants as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. These can be a good fit if your project aligns with their business goals or community outreach efforts.



### Research and Development Grants:

Particularly relevant for STEAM businesses, these grants support the development of new technologies, products, or solutions. They can provide significant funding but usually require detailed project plans and technical documentation.

Writing grants and securing funding through applications can be a game-changer for your STEAM business.

However, navigating the world of grants requires a strategic approach, attention to detail, and a clear understanding of what funders are looking for. Later in this unit, we will explore essential insights into grant writing, making the process less daunting and more accessible, no matter your level of experience.

**But first, an example .....**

## 2. Grant (example)

**Case Study:** [Sympoiesis | Iris van Herpen](#) is a Dutch fashion designer celebrated for pioneering the fusion of haute couture with science, art, and technology. Renowned for her sculptural, futuristic designs and early use of 3D printing, she has reshaped contemporary couture by merging traditional craftsmanship with experimental innovation.

**Early life and founding story:** After studying fashion design at ArtEZ, van Herpen interned with Alexander McQueen and Dutch artist Claudy Jongstra before launching her label in 2007. Her debut couture collection at Amsterdam Fashion Week used unconventional materials such as umbrella ribs, signalling her intent to treat fashion as an artistic experiment rather than a commodity. Her upbringing surrounded by nature and music continues to inform her organic, kinetic aesthetic.

**Growth and recognition:** Supported at key stages by Dutch public funding for the creative industries <https://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en/grants-issued/iris-van-herpen-transforming-fashion> Funding was linked to defined development activity and used to:

- develop new collections using innovative materials
- prototype and test fabrication techniques
- present work through exhibitions and international platforms

The work was structured within funding frameworks, with clear outputs in the form of completed collections and documented development processes. Alongside this, the business continued to operate through commissions, collaborations, and sales, allowing development and growth to progress in parallel. **Check out [Stimuleringsfonds](#)**



### Grants Approach for Your Beta Tech Persona

Grant funding requires you to define a project clearly, align it with external priorities, and deliver within a structured framework. Your Beta Tech persona influences how you approach this, particularly how you scope the work and present it..

Innovator	Social Implementer	Creative Maker	Explorer	Doer
Your strength is in new ideas and directions. Focus on one clearly defined project with outputs that can be delivered and demonstrated within the funding period	You are focused on outcomes and people. Ensure that the benefit of the project is clearly described, including who it reaches and what changes as a result	You bring depth and quality to what you produce. Make this visible by defining what will be created, how it will be made, and how it will be used or experienced	You are comfortable working across possibilities. Grant funding requires a single, committed direction, so selecting and defining one project is essential	You move quickly into action. Take time to structure the project clearly at the start, as delivery will be assessed against what is proposed.



## The grant writing process:

Writing a successful grant application involves several key steps:

- 1. Identify the Right Grant:** The first step is finding a grant that aligns with your business goals and project needs. Read the eligibility criteria carefully to ensure you qualify before investing time in the application process.
- 2. Understand What Funders Want:** Each grant has its unique criteria and priorities. Some funders might look for projects with high social impact, while others focus on innovation or sustainability. Tailoring your application to address these priorities is crucial.
- 3. Craft a Compelling Narrative:** Your grant application should tell a compelling story about your project. Highlight the problem your project solves, your approach, and the impact it will have. A clear, concise, and engaging narrative can set your application apart from others.
- 4. Include Detailed Plans and Budgets:** Grant applications often require detailed project plans, including timelines, key milestones, and a clear budget. Make sure your budget is realistic and aligns with your project goals, as funders will scrutinize how you plan to use their money.
- 5. Demonstrate Capability and Impact:** Show that you have the skills, resources, and plan to deliver on your project promises. Include any relevant experience, past successes, or partnerships that strengthen your application.

# Key Grant Agencies -

## Ireland (IE)

### Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

<https://www.localenterprise.ie> First point of contact for micro and small businesses. Feasibility, priming, and business development grants.

### Enterprise Ireland

<https://www.enterprise-ireland.com> Growth and innovation funding for scaling businesses.

### Arts Council Ireland

<https://www.artscouncil.ie> Grants for creative practitioners, including project funding, development support, and production.

## Netherlands (NL)

### RVO – Netherlands Enterprise Agency

<https://www.rvo.nl> National agency for innovation, sustainability, and SME funding.

### KVK (Chamber of Commerce) <https://www.kvk.nl>

Advisory and access point to funding and regional supports.

### Creative Industries Fund NL (Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie)

<https://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl> Key funder for design, architecture, and digital culture projects, including development and research grants.

## Spain (ES)

### ENISA (Empresa Nacional de Innovación)

<https://www.enisa.es> Financing for SMEs and startups (innovation and growth stages).

### Regional Development Agencies (e.g. ACCIÓ – Catalonia)

<https://www.accio.gencat.cat> Regional grants for innovation, internationalisation, and enterprise development

### INAEM (National Institute for Performing Arts and Music)

<https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/inaem> Public funding for cultural production and creative work.

### ICAA (Film and Audiovisual Arts Institute)

<https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/areas/cine> Funding for audiovisual and film-based creative projects.

## Portugal (PT)

### IAPMEI

<https://www.iapmei.pt>

Main SME support agency for innovation, digitalisation, and growth.

### Portugal 2030 Programme

<https://www.portugal2030.pt>

Framework for EU structural funds supporting enterprise and regional development.

### DGArtes (Direção-Geral das Artes)

<https://www.dgartes.gov.pt>

National body for arts funding, supporting creation, production, and artistic development.

## Iceland (IS)

### Rannís – Icelandic Centre for Research

<https://rannis.is>

National and EU-linked funding for innovation and development.

### Business Iceland

<https://www.businessiceland.is> Export and business growth support.

### Icelandic Art Center

<https://www.icelandicartcenter.is> Supports visual artists and promotes Icelandic contemporary art internationally, including grants and opportunities.

## Top Tips to Engage Effectively

### 1. Stay Connected

Sign up to national and regional funding newsletters, agency updates, and sector bodies. Many opportunities are short window and lightly advertised. Early awareness gives a real advantage.

### 2. Show Up Where Decisions Happen

Attend information sessions, stakeholder briefings, and networking events. These are not just about the call details. They signal direction, language, and priorities that rarely appear fully in written guidelines.

### 3. Book an Exploration Meeting

Reach out early to the funding body or intermediary agency. A short exploratory conversation can sharpen your positioning, test relevance, and avoid misalignment before you invest time in development.

# Specific Funding for Women Entrepreneurs

Funding opportunities specifically for women are designed to address gaps in access, participation, and visibility within business and innovation ecosystems. These supports do not replace mainstream funding, but sit alongside it, offering targeted routes into development, growth, and leadership.

In practice, this funding often focuses on:

- increasing participation in entrepreneurship and innovation
- supporting women at early and growth stages
- strengthening access to networks, mentoring, and investment readiness

This can take different forms depending on the country and programme. In some cases, it is direct financial support through grants or awards. In others, it is structured programmes that combine funding with training, mentoring, or access to networks.

## What this looks like in practice

- Dedicated **women-led business grants or awards** at local or national level
- **Accelerator and development programmes** with funding attached
- **Innovation calls** with a focus on women founders or inclusive participation
- **Enterprise supports** prioritising or ring-fencing places for women-led businesses

Funding may be smaller in scale than mainstream programmes, but often provides:

- early-stage capital
- time to focus on development
- access to expertise and networks

## Examples of Women-Focused Supports

**EU Women TechEU Programme** [https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/programmes/women-techeu\\_en](https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/programmes/women-techeu_en)  
Supports women-led deep tech startups with grant funding and mentoring.

**Enterprise Ireland – Women in Business Supports** <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com>  
Includes targeted supports, mentoring, and funding pathways for women entrepreneurs.

**RVO (Netherlands) – Diversity and Inclusion in Innovation** <https://www.rvo.nl>  
Includes programmes encouraging women's participation in innovation and entrepreneurship.

**EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality)** <https://eige.europa.eu>  
Provides research and resources shaping gender-focused funding and policy.

## How to approach

Women-focused funding works best when it is used strategically alongside other supports. It can provide a strong entry point into funding, particularly at early stages, and can open access to networks and opportunities that support longer-term growth. At the same time, it is important to:

- assess how the opportunity aligns with your business
- understand what is being offered beyond funding
- use it as part of a wider funding pathway





## Pitfalls to avoid:

Grant writing can be challenging, and common pitfalls can easily derail your application.

One of the most critical errors is failing to follow the specific guidelines set by the grant provider; overlooking even minor details, such as missing documents or incorrect formatting, can lead to immediate disqualification.

Vague objectives and plans are another common issue; funders need clear, actionable steps that outline precisely what you will do and how you will achieve your goals.

Additionally, weak budget justifications often raise concerns; it's essential to thoroughly explain why each expense is necessary and how it directly supports the success of your project.

Avoiding these pitfalls by paying close attention to guidelines, providing specific plans, and justifying your budget can significantly increase your chances of securing funding.

# PERSONAS -Kickstart your grant proposals

Approaching a grant application becomes much more manageable when you work in a way that fits how you naturally think and operate. Your Beta Tech persona shapes how you generate ideas, structure work, and communicate value. Instead of forcing a single method, this section helps you start from your strengths and build a proposal that is clear, focused, and aligned with funding expectations.

Each persona approaches the starting point differently. Some begin with ideas, others with people, process, or action. What matters is turning that starting point into a clearly defined project with specific outputs, a realistic timeline, and a strong case for support.

The following sections show how to begin your grant proposal writing in a way that works for you, while still meeting the structure and clarity that funders expect

## Innovators

*As an Innovator, your passion for creative thinking sets you apart. Now, it's time to turn your vision into a compelling grant proposal that stands out. This activity will guide you through the initial steps of crafting your application, using the groundwork you've already laid in previous activities.*

### 1. Leverage Your Previous Work on Problem Identification

You've already explored the key problem your product or service addresses in earlier activities. Use this as a foundation for defining your project's core vision and objectives in your grant proposal.

- **How to Start:** Revisit your earlier work on problem identification and refine it into a concise statement for your grant proposal. Clearly articulate the problem, why it matters, and how your innovation addresses it. This will form the basis of your project's purpose section.

### 2. Connect Your Compliance and Funding Research

Link the compliance needs you identified earlier to the requirements of your chosen grant. Demonstrate that your project not only meets technical standards but aligns with the goals of the funding body.

- **How to Start:** Use the insights from your compliance mapping activity. Briefly outline how your project meets safety, ethical, and regulatory standards, showing funders that you're prepared and responsible.

### 3. Draft a Compelling Project Summary Using Your Vision Statement

Create a project summary that captures the essence of your innovation. Pull from your refined vision statement and highlight the unique aspects that make your project stand out.

- **How to Start:** Combine your vision, objectives, and compliance insights into a concise summary. Focus on what makes your project innovative and impactful. Keep it straightforward, engaging, and aligned with the grant's priorities.

### 4. Outline Proposal Components with a Focus on Innovation

Develop a detailed outline of your proposal, building on previous work to ensure all critical components are covered. This outline should include sections such as objectives, methodology, expected impact, and budget—all reflecting your project's innovative nature.

- **How to Start:** Use a template to structure your outline, reusing content where possible. Highlight your project's strengths, especially where your prior compliance and market research add value.

### 5. Expand on Your Budget with Justifications

You've already identified resources and compliance costs in earlier activities. Now, expand on this by creating a detailed budget section that justifies each expense. Show how every dollar contributes to the success of your project.

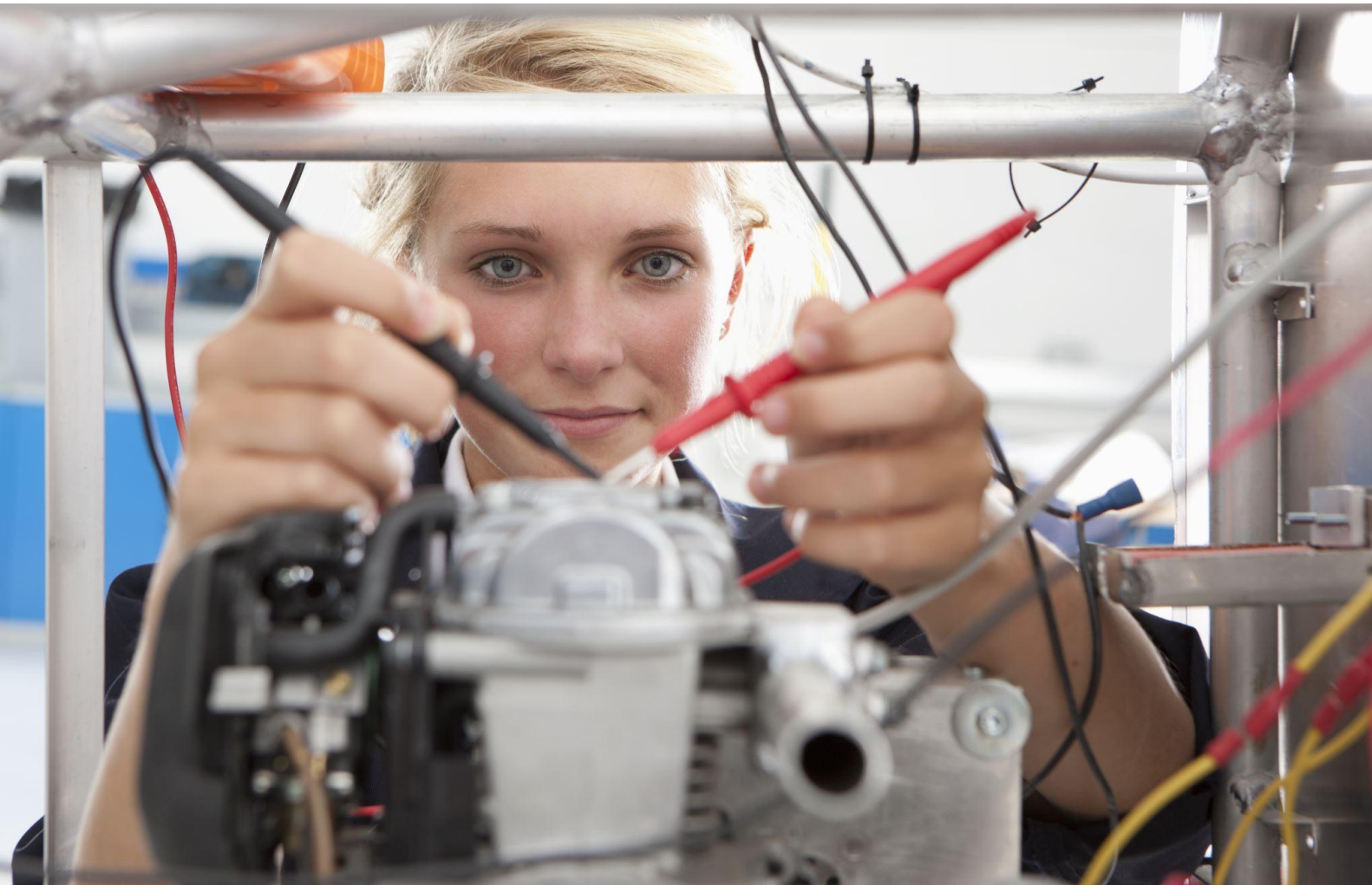
- **How to Start:** Use the budget framework you drafted earlier. Add justifications, making it clear how each expense is tied to achieving your project goals. Ensure your budget aligns with funding guidelines of the grant.

### Guiding Questions:

- *How can I build on my research to clearly define my project's objectives?*
- *What key compliance insights will strengthen my proposal?*
- *Is my budget both detailed and directly linked to my project's success?*
- *Who can provide valuable feedback on my draft?*
- *How does my proposal reflect my project's innovative strengths?*

### Outcome:

By connecting your work to date with these steps, you'll have a well-structured grant proposal draft that highlights your innovative approach, meets compliance needs, and resonates with funders. You'll be prepared to move forward with confidence, knowing your application is built on a solid foundation of research and strategic planning.



# Social implementers

*As a Social Implementer, your passion for making a difference can shine through in your grant applications. This activity will help you start writing a compelling grant proposal that highlights the impact of your socially driven project. You'll build on your existing research and focus on clearly presenting your mission, objectives, and the positive change your project aims to bring.*

## 1. Define the Core Purpose of Your Project

Start by clearly articulating the core purpose of your project, focusing on the social impact you want to achieve. Use insights from your previous exploration of your project's goals and the problem it addresses, but don't worry if it's not perfect yet—this is your chance to refine your ideas.

- **How to Start:** Write a short statement about what your project aims to accomplish and why it matters. Think about the social issue you're tackling and the specific change you hope to create.

## 2. Use Your Existing Research to Tailor Your Proposal

Now that you have a list of grant requirements from your previous activity, use this information to tailor your proposal. Focus on aligning your project's mission with the funder's goals, highlighting how your work meets their specific criteria.

- **How to Start:** Refer to the list of requirements you've already gathered. Match each requirement with a corresponding section of your proposal, clearly showing how your project addresses these criteria. Ensure your summary directly reflects what the funder is looking for, making it easy for them to see the connection.

## 3. Create a Detailed Project Outline

Develop a clear outline of your proposal, including key sections like your objectives, methods, impact, and budget. This outline will serve as a roadmap for your writing, making sure all critical elements are covered.

- **How to Start:** Use a simple structure with headings for each major section of your proposal. Under each heading, jot down bullet points or brief descriptions of what you will include.

## 4. Highlight the Impact and Benefits

Emphasize the positive impact your project will have on the community, especially how it addresses social needs. Be specific about the changes you expect to see and how you plan to measure success.

- **How to Start:** Write a paragraph explaining the impact of your project, focusing on who will benefit and how. Use real examples or scenarios to make your impact relatable and compelling.

## 5. Develop a Realistic Budget

Create a budget or use the one previously made that details the resources you need and how each expense supports your project's goals. Be transparent about why each cost is necessary, making it clear that every dollar is being used effectively.

- **How to Start:** List your project's main expenses and briefly describe why each one is essential. Include personnel costs, materials, and any other resources needed to bring your project to life.

### Guiding Questions:

- *What is the core social issue my project addresses, and why is it important?*
- *How can I show funders that my project aligns with their goals?*
- *What concrete impact will my project have on the community?*
- *Is my budget clear and well-justified?*
- *Who can provide constructive feedback on my proposal?*

**Outcome:** By completing this activity, you'll have a draft of your grant proposal that clearly communicates your project's purpose, impact, and needs. You'll be prepared to present your work in a way that resonates with funders, setting the stage for securing the support you need to bring your vision to life.

# Creative makers

*As a Creative Maker, your talent lies in combining technology and design, bringing innovative ideas to life with a hands-on approach. Writing a grant proposal might seem outside your creative comfort zone, but it's another opportunity to showcase your skills and vision. This activity will guide you through crafting a compelling grant application that reflects your unique project, using your creativity to make it stand out.*

## 1. Visualize Your Proposal as a Storyboard

Creative Makers thrive on visual thinking. Start by turning your grant proposal into a visual storyboard or mind map that outlines each key element: your project's purpose, objectives, and how it meets the grant criteria. This visual approach will help you see the bigger picture and ensure your proposal flows coherently.

- **How to Start:** Use tools like Canva, Miro, or even a large sheet of paper to sketch out your proposal. Include key points like the problem your project addresses, your innovative solution, and why it's valuable. Make it visually engaging with sketches, icons, or flowcharts that capture the essence of your idea.

## 2. Leverage Your Past Work to Strengthen Your Proposal

Use the work you've done in previous activities to refine your proposal. Look at the research, designs, and feedback you've gathered so far to build a strong case for why your project deserves funding. Highlight past successes and demonstrate how your project aligns with what you've learned.

- **How to Start:** Review your previous notes, designs, or feedback. Identify elements that align with the grant requirements and integrate them into your proposal. Show how your project builds on this foundation and the potential it has for impact.

## 3. Develop a Creative Budget Presentation

A standard budget can be dry, but as a Creative Maker, you can present it in a way that captures attention. Design an infographic or a simple visual representation of your budget that clearly shows how funds will be used effectively. This will not only meet the requirements but also stand out to reviewers.

- **How to Start:** Use tools like Excel for the initial calculations, then transfer your data into a visually appealing format. Highlight key costs, why they are essential, and how they contribute to your project's success. Make it clear, concise, and creative.

## 4. Make Your Proposal Interactive

If allowed by the grant guidelines, consider incorporating interactive elements into your proposal. This could be a QR code linking to a prototype demo, a short video presentation, or an interactive timeline of your project milestones. This approach will not only showcase your project but also make the review process engaging.

- **How to Start:** Identify what interactive elements would best represent your project. Create a short video, a clickable prototype, or an online gallery of past work. Link these to your proposal in a way that complements the written content.

### Guiding Questions:

- How can you visually represent your project's purpose and objectives to make your proposal stand out?
- What elements from your previous work align with the grant's requirements, and how can you highlight them effectively?
- How can you creatively present your budget to make it clear, engaging, and easy to understand?
- What interactive elements could you include to showcase your project in a dynamic way?
- Who can provide valuable feedback on your proposal, and how will you use their insights to improve it?

**Outcome:** By completing this activity, you will craft a grant proposal that not only meets the requirements but also reflects your unique creative approach. Your proposal will stand out by showcasing your vision and skills in a way that's visually engaging and compelling, setting you apart from other applicants.

# Explorers

*As an Explorer, you thrive on discovering new opportunities and enjoy learning through hands-on experiences. Grant writing might feel overwhelming, but with a bit of exploration and a clear path, you can effectively navigate the process. This activity will guide you in turning your curiosity and creativity into a strong, engaging grant proposal that captures your unique approach.*

## 1. Explore Funding Opportunities with an Open Mind

Begin by researching potential grants that align with your project or business. Look beyond the obvious options and explore unique funding sources that fit your innovative ideas.

- **How to Start:**

Use the research you've already done in the previous module on funding opportunities. Dive deeper into each grant's website, explore past funded projects, and identify which opportunities align with your interests. Make a list of your top choices.

## 2. Connect Your Project's Story to the Grant's Goals

Funders love to see a clear story that shows how your project aligns with their goals. Use your creative skills to craft a compelling narrative that highlights the unique aspects of your work.

- **How to Start:**

Review your project's purpose and the problems it addresses. Build on previous work where you've defined your project's impact, focusing on what makes it stand out. Write a short, engaging paragraph that ties your mission to the grant's objectives.

## 3. Visualize Your Project with Creative Elements

Use visuals to bring your project to life within your proposal. A well-placed graphic, diagram, or timeline can make your application more engaging and help funders understand your plan.

- **How to Start:**

Create a simple sketch, flowchart, or visual that outlines your project steps. Use tools like Canva or a whiteboard to bring your ideas to life. Include visuals that show your project's impact in a way that's easy to grasp.

## 4. Map Out a Realistic Action Plan

Develop a step-by-step plan that outlines how you will execute your project. Keep it clear and practical, but don't shy away from highlighting the creative aspects that make your approach unique.

- **How to Start:**

Use a roadmap format similar to the ones explored in earlier activities. Lay out your project phases and include key milestones. Highlight any creative or innovative methods you plan to use to reach your goals.

### Guiding Questions:

- *What funding opportunities align with your project's creative approach?*
- *How can you visually represent your project to make it engaging and easy to understand?*
- *What unique aspects of your project will capture the interest of funders?*
- *How can you use feedback to refine your proposal and strengthen your case?*
- *What practical steps will you take to execute your project if funded?*

By completing this activity, you'll create a grant proposal that not only aligns with your project's goals but also showcases your creative and exploratory nature. This approach will help set your application apart and make it memorable to funders looking for innovative, fresh ideas.

# Doers

*As a Doer, you thrive on hands-on work and straightforward approaches. Grant writing might seem daunting with all its paperwork and requirements, but with a clear and practical strategy, you can successfully secure the funding you need to take your business to the next level. This activity is designed to help you break down the grant application process into manageable steps that align with your practical mindset.*

## 1. Define Your Project's Key Practical Elements

Focus on the essential aspects of your project that align with the grant's requirements. Clearly outline what you need funding for and why it's important, highlighting the hands-on impact your work will have.

- **How to Start:**

Review the work you've done in previous activities, like your compliance checklist and project needs. Identify the specific parts of your project that require funding—materials, equipment, or other practical necessities. Be concise and focus on the “what” and “why.”

## 2. Build a simple and clear budget

Creating a budget doesn't have to be complex. List your essential costs and ensure each item is clearly tied to your project's goals. A straightforward budget helps reviewers see exactly where their money will go and how it will make a difference.

- **How to Start:**

Use a basic spreadsheet to list your key expenses, like tools, materials, or space rentals. Ensure each cost has a simple explanation, showing why it's necessary. Keep it practical—only include what's essential to get your project moving forward.

## 3. Write a Straightforward Project Summary

Avoid complex jargon and focus on clear, simple language. Describe what your project does, who it helps, and how it works. Highlight the practical, hands-on nature of your work, making it easy for reviewers to see the real-world impact.

- **How to Start:**

Draft a one-page summary that covers the basics: your project's purpose, the problem it solves, and why it matters. Focus on concrete actions and outcomes, avoiding overly technical terms or abstract concepts.

## 4. Create a basic timeline

Outline a straightforward timeline that shows the key steps of your project from start to finish. This helps funders see that you have a realistic plan to achieve your goals.

- **How to Start:**

Use a simple tool like a wall calendar, whiteboard, or digital planner. Plot out the major steps of your project and when they will happen. Highlight critical phases like setup, execution, and completion.

### Guiding Questions:

- *What are the essential, practical needs of your project that require funding?*
- *How can you simplify your budget to clearly show where the money will be used?*
- *What hands-on impacts of your project will resonate most with funders?*
- *How can you break down your project into clear steps that are easy to understand?*
- *Who can provide feedback on your application to make it even stronger?*

By completing this activity, you'll create a clear, practical grant application that reflects your strengths as a Doer. Your focus on straightforward, actionable steps will resonate with funders looking for grounded and realistic projects.

# 3: Loans (including Microfinance)

For a start-up STEAM business, loans come into play when ideas have moved into real production, testing, or delivery and there is a clear need to invest in order to move forward. Unlike grants, which support defined projects, loans are based on your ability to repay. This means your business needs to show that income is either already coming in or is directly linked to the investment you are making.

At this stage, the business is no longer just developing an idea. You are building prototypes, producing small batches, delivering services, or working with early customers. The challenge is often practical: you need equipment, materials, software, or time to fulfil demand and take the next step.

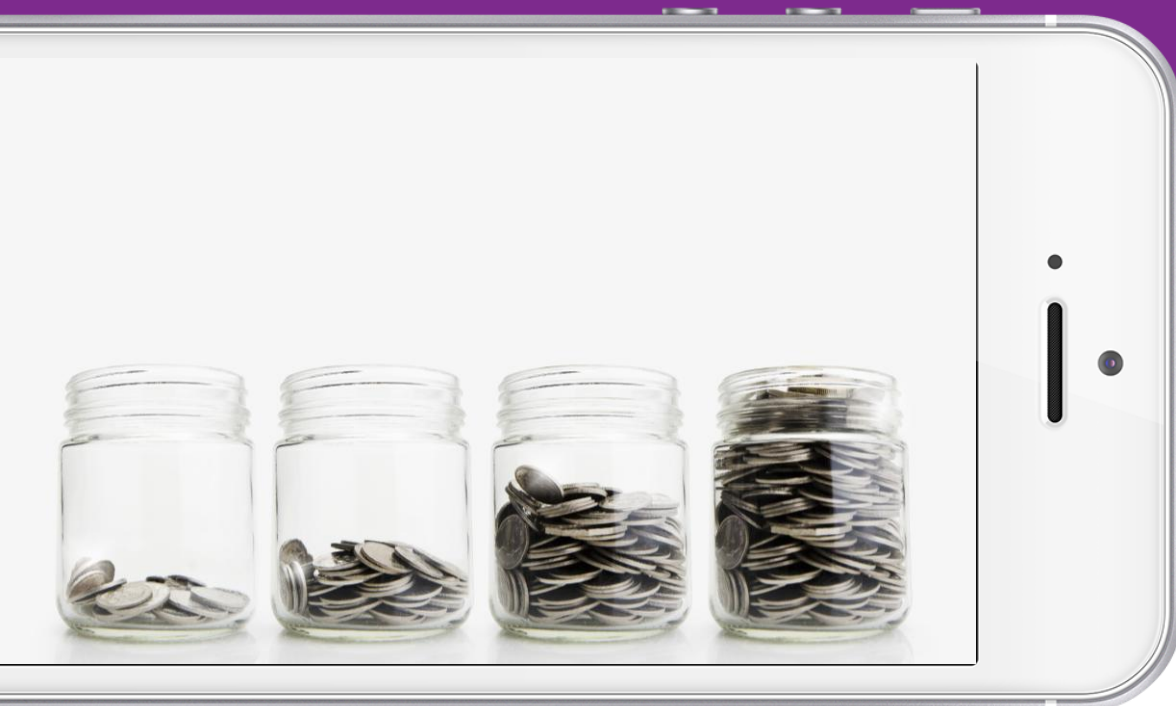
Loans allow you to make that step without giving away ownership, but they require discipline. Repayments are fixed, so the decision to borrow must be linked to activity that generates income or supports delivery in a clear and immediate way.

## WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

A STEAM-based start-up has developed a prototype and secured initial orders or commissions. The product works, there is demand, and the next step is to produce at a slightly larger scale. The business takes out a small loan to:

- purchase materials for production
- invest in equipment such as digital fabrication tools or specialised software
- cover short-term costs linked to delivery

This allows the business to fulfil orders, generate revenue, and move from prototype into consistent production. The loan is repaid through the income generated from this activity. In this context, the loan is supporting **actual delivery and transition into a functioning business model.**



# When Loans Make Sense for a STEAM Start-Up



## Loans are most relevant when:

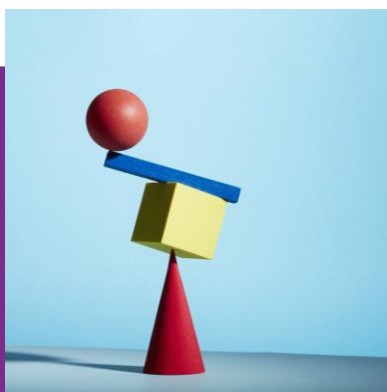
- you have **working prototypes or services already in use**
- there are **confirmed orders, commissions, or contracts**
- you need to invest in **tools, equipment, or production capacity**
- there is a **direct link between the loan and incoming revenue**



## They are less suitable when:

- the business is still experimenting with ideas, as repayment begins regardless of progress.
- your prototype is not yet ready for consistent production or delivery
- pricing is unclear or still being adjusted
- there is no predictable timeline for generating income
- development requires multiple iterations before it can be sold
- you are relying on future interest rather than confirmed orders

At this stage, taking on a loan can create pressure to move too quickly, which can affect the quality of your product or service and limit your ability to refine it properly.



## Be aware:

- loan repayments begin on a fixed schedule,
- regardless of whether the work leads to sales.
- interest increases the total cost of what you borrow
- missed repayments can affect your credit rating and access to future funding
- short-term cash flow pressure can impact decision-making
- borrowing can reduce flexibility, especially in early-stage development
- lenders will expect a clear plan for how the loan will be used and repaid

Taking a loan is a commitment that needs to be matched by real activity, clear planning, and confidence in your ability to deliver and generate income

# Types of Loans

Different types of loans serve different purposes. For a STEAM start-up, the key is to match the type of loan to a **specific need in the business**, rather than treating funding as general support. These loan types often work at different stages of your business, from early setup through to growth and expansion.

## Term Loans (3–10 Years)

Term loans are what most people think of as a “standard” loan. A fixed amount is borrowed and repaid over a longer period, typically between three and ten years, with regular repayments that include both capital and interest.

For a STEAM start-up, this type of loan is most relevant when the business has moved beyond early testing and is investing in longer-term assets or capacity.

**What this looks like in practice**

- purchasing high-value equipment (e.g. fabrication machinery, production tools, specialised hardware)
- fitting out a studio, workshop, or production space
- investing in infrastructure that will be used over several years
- expanding into a larger or permanent workspace

These are investments that support the business over time, rather than short-term activity

## Government-Backed Loans

Loans supported or guaranteed by national or regional agencies, making them easier to access for small businesses.

**What this looks like in practice:**

funding growth linked to job creation or innovation  
supporting expansion into new markets  
investing in digital or technical capability

**Why they matter:**

They reduce risk for lenders and can offer more favourable terms than standard loans.

## Short-Term Working Capital Loans

Loans designed to manage cash flow over shorter periods.

**What this looks like in practice:**

- buying materials in advance of payment
- covering costs while waiting for invoices to be paid
- managing gaps between production and sales income

**Key point:**

These are about keeping the business moving, not long-term investment.

## Microfinance Loans

Small loans (typically €500 to €25,000) designed for early-stage businesses that may not yet meet traditional banking criteria.

**What this looks like in practice:**

- purchasing a 3D printer, tools, or equipment
- funding a first production run
- covering setup costs for a workspace or studio

**Why it fits STEAM start-ups:**

Microfinance focuses on activity and potential rather than financial history. It is often more accessible and may include advisory support alongside the loan.

## Peer-to-Peer and Alternative Lending

Loans provided through online platforms or networks rather than traditional banks.

**What this looks like in practice:**

- accessing smaller amounts of funding quickly
- funding specific short-term needs

**Be aware:** Terms can vary widely, so it is important to review conditions carefully.

## Understanding Loan Terms

- Principal: the amount you borrow
- Interest rate: the cost of borrowing, expressed as a percentage
- Repayment period: how long you have to pay it back
- APR: the total annual cost including fees — always compare APR across offer
- Collateral: assets you pledge as security for the loan

# Free EU Tools to Support Loan Decisions

## Loan Repayment Calculators

### European Central Bank (interest context & rates)

[https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/key\\_ecb\\_interest\\_rates](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/key_ecb_interest_rates)

Useful for understanding current interest environments.

### European Investment Bank – Financial tools & SME support

<https://www.eib.org/en/products/mandates-partnerships/sme>

Not a calculator itself, but provides context and access routes to finance

### Your local banks / credit unions (recommended). For example

- Netherlands: <https://www.nibud.nl> (budgeting & loan tools)
- Ireland: <https://www.ccpc.ie/consumers/money-tools/loan-calculator>
- Spain: <https://clientebancario.bde.es> (Bank of Spain tools)

## Cash Flow Forecasting Tools

**European Commission** <https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/finance-funding> Includes guidance and links to financial planning tools across EU countries

**Enterprise Ireland** (templates section) <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/starting-a-business>

Practical downloadable templates including cash flow planning

**RVO** <https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/financiering> Funding guidance with links to planning tools and supports

## Break-Even & Costing Tools

**European Commission** <https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes> Links to business planning and financial tools across EU initiatives.

**Local Enterprise Office** <https://www.localenterprise.ie> Provides downloadable costing templates and financial planning tools.

**IAPMEI** <https://www.iapmei.pt> Includes financial management resources and SME toolkits.

## Microfinance & Loan Readiness Tools

**Your Europe** <https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/finance-funding/access-finance> Entry point to funding and financial tools across EU countries.

**European Microfinance Network** <https://www.european-microfinance.org> Resources, tools, and access points for microfinance across Europe.

**EaSI Programme** <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081> Information and access to microfinance providers and support structures.

## How to Use These Tools

Start with one tool in each category, test your repayment using a calculator and map your cash flow. Check your break-even point. This gives you a clear picture of whether a loan is realistic before making a commitment.

## 4. Investment



Investment brings external partners into your business, providing capital in exchange for a share in what you are building. Alongside funding, it introduces additional experience, networks, and perspective, all focused on supporting growth over time.

For a STEAM start-up, investment becomes relevant when the business is moving with confidence and there is clear potential to grow further. The focus expands from making and delivering into building a model that can reach wider markets, increase production, or develop at a larger scale.

Investment supports this next phase by providing the resources needed to grow faster and more effectively, while building the business with partners who are invested in its success.

### What this looks like in practice

A STEAM business has developed a strong product or service, with consistent demand and a clear customer base. The business is operating well, and the next step is to expand its reach and capacity. This may involve:

- increasing production beyond small batches
- entering new markets
- developing more advanced versions of the product
- building a team to support delivery and growth
- Investment is secured to support this phase. The funding is used to:
  - expand production capability
  - invest in product development
  - strengthen operations and delivery

In return, the investor becomes a partner in the business, sharing in its progress and future value.

### When Investment Makes Sense

Investment is most relevant when:

- your product or service is proven in the market
- there is clear and growing demand
- the business model can scale beyond your current capacity
- additional funding will accelerate growth
- you are ready to build the business with partners

### There are 4 main types of investment:

1. **Angel Investment** → early-stage/seed funding, individual investors
2. **Venture Capital (VC)** → larger funding/seed funding to scale the business
3. **Equity Crowdfunding** → many small investors via platforms
4. **Strategic Investment** → investment from a company/partner in your sector

Let's explore each in more detail ....

# Types of Investment .. Angel Investment

Angel investors are individuals who invest their own money into early-stage businesses. They often come from business, technical, or sector-specific backgrounds and bring experience alongside capital.

## What this looks like in practice:

An angel invests in your business at a point where your product is working and demand is visible, but growth is still limited by capacity. The funding might be used to: move from small-batch to consistent production, refine and develop the product further or bring in part-time or specialist support. In many cases, the relationship is direct and ongoing. Angels often:

- provide advice based on experience
- open doors to networks, suppliers, or customers
- act as a sounding board as the business grows

## Typical characteristics:

- smaller investment amounts
- early-stage focus
- closer working relationship with the founder

## Example: Early-stage angel support via EU networks:

EBAN

<https://www.eban.org>

Halo Business Angel Network

<https://www.hban.org>

## What this looks like in practice

A woman founder with a working prototype and early sales connects with her local angel network. She secures a small investment (€25k–€100k range typical) to move from prototype to small production, refine the product and build initial market traction.

## What Happens When You Receive Investment

### 1. Money Comes Into the Business (Not to You Personally).

Investment is paid into the company bank account.

- The company issues shares to the investor
- The investor transfers the agreed amount
- The business now has additional cash to operate

### 2. Ownership Is Shared.

In exchange for the investment:

- the investor receives a percentage of the company (equity)
- you retain the remaining share. **Example:** €50,000 investment → investor receives 10% → you retain 90%

The investor now owns part of the business

### 3. There Are No Monthly Repayments.

Unlike a loan, the investor's return is linked to success of the business. Typically, there are no fixed repayments and no set interest payments.

### 4. Investors Are Paid Back Through Value Growth

Returns come when the business increases in value. This happens in a few ways

- Future Investment Rounds** - new investors buy shares at a higher value and early investors' shares increase in value
- Dividends** - (less common early on) the business generates profit and a portion is paid out to shareholders
- Sale of the Business (Exit)** - the company is sold. Investors receive their share of the sale value **Example:** Investor owns 10% → company sells for €1M → investor receives €100,000

### 5. Timeframe

Investment is typically long-term: 3–7 years is common. Returns depend on growth over time. There is no immediate payback. The focus is on building value

### 6. Your Position as Founder

- You keep control of day-to-day operations (depending on agreement)
- You share ownership and long-term outcomes
- Your return comes from the value of your remaining shares

# Types of Investment .. Venture Capital

Venture capital is a form of investment used to **grow a business quickly and at scale**. For a woman in STEAM, it becomes relevant when your work has moved beyond making or early delivery and is showing the potential to reach **larger markets, higher volumes, or wider adoption**. At this point, the business is no longer limited to what you can produce or deliver yourself. The focus shifts to building something that can expand through systems, teams, partnerships and technology

## What this looks like in practice:

Venture capital provides the funding to make that expansion happen at pace. For a STEAM founder, this might look like:

- a product that has proven demand and can be produced at scale
- a digital platform or tool that can grow its user base significantly
- a process, material, or innovation that can be commercialised widely

Instead of growing step by step, venture capital allows you to:

- increase production or delivery quickly
- enter new markets sooner
- build a team earlier than you could through revenue alone

## Examples of VC investors specific to the creative sector: [30 Best Active Creative Industries Investors in 2025](#) .

Investment groups, such as [Great Stuff Ventures](#) and [The Angel Initiative](#), provide capital, mentorship, and networking specifically for female founders. These investors are interested in supporting businesses with innovative ideas and a clear path to growth.

**How Do You Apply for Investment:** You do not “apply” to venture capital in the same way as a grant. You **prepare, present, and engage investors**.

**1. You Prepare Your Core Materials.** Before approaching investors, you need a clear, concise explanation of your business. This is the foundation of all investor conversations. In practice, this means:

- a short **pitch deck** (10–12 slides) . **READ MORE:** [Top Pitch Deck Tips from Female Founders](#)
- a clear explanation of the problem you solve, your product or service, who your customers are, how you make money, what you need funding for. **READ MORE:** US based but very interesting real like pitches [Female-Founded Startups | Pitch](#)

**2. You Define What You Are Raising** - Investors expect clarity and focus.

Be specific about:

- how much funding you need (e.g. €200k, €500k)
- what you will use it for and what stage your business is at

**3. You Identify Relevant Investors.** You look for investors that match your business type and stage. Routes:

- early-stage VC funds
- angel networks (as a stepping stone)
- accelerator programmes that connect to VC. Examples include **Startup Lisboa** – <https://startupilisboa.com>, **Station F** – <https://stationf.co>, **NDRC** – <https://www.ndrc.ie>. These act as entry points into investor networks.

**4. You Make Initial Contact.** This usually happens through:

- introductions (strongest route)
- accelerator or programme connections
- direct outreach (email or platform submission)

You share your pitch deck and a short summary of your business. The first contact is about opening a conversation.

**5. You Pitch Your Business.** If there is interest, you present your business. This includes:

a short verbal pitch (5–10 minutes) answering questions on: market, customers, growth potential and use of funds. Investors are assessing clarity, confidence, and potential.

# Types of Investment .. Venture Capital

**6. You Enter Due Diligence.** If investors are interested, they review your business in more detail. This will include: financial information, customer data, legal structure. This stage confirms that what you presented is accurate.

**7. You Agree Terms and Close the Deal.** If both sides are aligned:

- investment amount is agreed
- ownership share is agreed
- legal documents are signed
- funds are transferred

**How Long It Takes:** Typically, 3–6 months but sometimes longer depending on complexity

## What Happens When You Receive Investment

**1. The Investment Is Paid Into the Company.** The business now has additional working capital to operate and grow.

- funds are transferred to the **business bank account**
- shares are issued to the investor
- ownership is updated

**2. The Money Is Deployed in Defined Areas.** The investment is used across specific cost areas, and each spend is linked to a defined business objective. Typically spans:

- hiring (staff, freelancers, technical support)
- systems (software, platforms, infrastructure)
- market development (sales, partnerships, distribution)
- operations (delivery, logistics, scaling activity)

**3. Costs Increase Before Revenue Catches Up.** With investment, the business begins to spend ahead of income.

In practice:

- salaries or contracts are committed
- tools and systems are put in place
- expansion activities begin

This is intentional — investment enables growth ahead of revenue.

## 4. The Business Tracks “Runway”

Runway = how long the investment will last.

- monthly costs are monitored
- spending is reviewed against available funds
- timelines are adjusted based on cash position

Example: €300,000 investment → €25,000/month → 12 months runway

## 5. Investors Monitor Progress

Investors expect visibility on how the business is progressing. This typically includes:

- regular updates (monthly or quarterly)
- tracking key metrics (sales, users, delivery)
- visibility on how funds are being used

This creates accountability and focus.

## 6. Growth Is Measured Against Milestones

The business works toward defined milestones such as: revenue targets, customer growth, product or service development, market expansion. These milestones shape what happens next.

**7. The Next Step Is Prepared Early.** Investment is one stage in an ongoing funding journey. Before the investment runs out, the business plans ahead:

- generating enough revenue to sustain itself
- raising further investment
- preparing for a larger growth phase

# Types of Investment .. Equity Crowdfunding

Equity crowdfunding is a way of raising investment by inviting a large number of people to contribute smaller amounts of money in exchange for a share in your business. Instead of relying on a single investor, you open up the opportunity to a wider group, often through an online platform that manages the process from start to finish.

For a woman in STEAM, this approach works particularly well where there is a clear product, a strong story, and the ability to communicate the value of the work in a way that others can quickly understand and support. It allows you to combine funding with visibility, and to build a base of people who are invested in your progress.

## Example: Equity Crowdfunding Platforms (EU)

**Crowdcube Europe** <https://www.crowdcube.eu>      **Seedrs** <https://www.seedrs.com>

## What This Looks Like in Practice

A founder has already developed a product and has begun to see consistent interest or early sales. The next step is to increase capacity, improve delivery, or reach a wider audience. Rather than seeking a single investor, she prepares a crowdfunding campaign that clearly explains the product, the opportunity, and how the funding will be used.

The campaign sets a defined target, for example €100,000, and offers a percentage of the business in return. Individuals then invest smaller amounts, often ranging from €100 to €1,000 or more, until the target is reached. Alongside the funding, the business gains visibility, attention, and a growing base of supporters.

## How the Money Flows and Is Returned

- The investment process is managed through the platform, which provides structure and ensures that both the business and the investors are protected.
- Once the campaign is live, investors commit funds through the platform. When the funding target is reached, the total amount is transferred into the business account, and shares are issued to the investors, often through a nominee structure that groups them into a single legal entity.
- Ownership is therefore shared across many individuals, each holding a small stake. There are no repayments or interest, as this is not a loan. Instead, investors are participating in the future value of the business.
- Returns are realised over time, most commonly through the growth of the company and a future sale. If the business increases in value, the shares held by investors also increase in value. If the company is sold, each investor receives their proportion of the sale based on their ownership.

## How Do You Apply?

The process begins with preparation rather than submission. You build a **campaign** that clearly communicates your business, your product, and your growth plan. This includes creating a pitch that is both visual and easy to understand, outlining how much funding you are seeking, and explaining how it will be used.

Once the campaign is launched on a platform, it remains live for a defined period, during which you actively promote it through your own networks, social channels, and contacts. Success depends on visibility and engagement. Founders who are able to communicate clearly and consistently tend to perform well, as the campaign itself becomes part of how the business is introduced to a wider audience.

## How It Operates?

Equity crowdfunding operates at the intersection of funding and communication. It requires you to present your business in a way that invites participation, rather than simply seeking approval. The process builds momentum through visibility, and the outcome is not only financial support but also a community of people who have a direct interest in your success.

## When It Works Well

This approach is particularly effective where the product or service can be easily understood and where there is a strong visual or narrative element. It suits STEAM businesses that are ready to expand and that can engage an audience through clear messaging and a compelling offer.

# Types of Investment .. Equity Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding campaigns by female founders have proven to be successful due to their unique strategies and approaches.

SILFIR, a sustainable fashion brand from Berlin, was raising funds to bring their sustainable, unisex, circular fashion suit to life. Silfir exceeded their original goal. Hannah, founder of Silfir, used a mix of email and social marketing as well as bringing in influencers and ambassadors to promote the campaign. She also attended many offline events in both the UK and Germany. **READ MORE:** [Silfir - Crowdfund360](#)



Watch the founder share her experience ....



Other excellent inspiration

[Crowdfunding Strategies for Female-Founded Products | Female Entrepreneurs](#)

# Types of Investment .. Strategic Investment

Strategic investment takes place when a company or organisation invests in your business because your work connects directly with their own products, services, or future direction. The investment supports growth, and it also creates a working relationship where both sides benefit through collaboration.

For a woman in STEAM, this often arises where your work connects to areas such as design, manufacturing, materials, digital tools, or applied innovation. Your business brings something distinctive. a product, process, or capability, and the investor recognises how this can strengthen or extend.

This creates a partnership where funding is combined with practical opportunities to grow.

## Example: Strategic Investment Through Industry Partnership



IKEA ran a startup programme IKEA Bootcamp, a programme designed to create engagement with up to 20 growth-stage startups. A world tour and a call for applications generated over 1100 applications from 62 countries and after an extensive selection process, 18 startups joined the programme in March 2019. In June, the start ups participated in the IKEA Bootcamp Demo Day where the startups and their IKEA sponsors presented their co-creations and pilots.

[Concluding the first pilot-focused IKEA Bootcamp programme - IKEA Global](#)

## What this looks like in practice

A woman founder develops a product, material, or design solution that aligns with how a larger company operates. Through a programme such as IKEA Bootcamp, she:

- works directly with the company
- receives support, mentoring, and access to expertise
- develops her product within a real industry context

This can lead to: investment, pilot projects, commercial partnerships and/or long-term collaboration

The industry link is key ensuring the business connects clearly to an industry need. This may include:

- a material that improves sustainability
- a product that fits into an existing retail system
- a digital tool that supports operations or customers
- a process that increases efficiency or quality

## STATION F

The world's biggest startup campus <https://stationf.co> with over 30 industry partnerships supporting start ups.

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FIGHTERS  
PROGRAM

FOUNDERS  
PROGRAM

Debut  
LAB

sanofi



Meta

Microsoft

LVMH

HEC  
PARIS

L'ORÉAL

CentraleSupélec

INSEAD

HUAWEI

BINANCE

## Final Word on Funding

There is no single route that fits every business. Each funding type supports a different stage, pace, and direction of growth. The strength lies in choosing the option that aligns with where your business is now and where you want it to go next.

For many women in STEAM, the journey builds over time. Early activity creates proof. That proof opens access to funding. Funding then supports the next stage of growth. Each step strengthens the business and expands what is possible. The most effective approach is intentional. You choose the route that fits your stage, your ambition, and the way you want to build your business.

# fab CONNECT her

Future Female  
Innovators In STEAM



Follow our journey



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