

Space Accelerator Impact Report

Contents

03	We're on a mission
04	The Team, The UKSA Space Accelerator
05	Business Horizons Series
06	Leo Programme
07	Meet the Entrepreneurs
08	Building Industry Value, Community
09	Sparkathon, Profile
10	The Future



We're on a mission to open up space

In March 2021, The UK Space Agency, along with space industry experts from The University of Strathclyde and business growth experts Entrepreneurial Spark, set out to run a business acceleration programme for high potential entrepreneurs.

A thriving startup ecosystem is a hallmark of growth in any sector, and especially so the space sector where commercialising innovation is so central to progress. This accelerator set out to inject further pace and momentum into the business of space in the UK, and create a virtual network centred around ambitious entrepreneurial growth.

Entrepreneurs have a massive role to play in generating an inclusive economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and mobilising them in the Space sector has the potential to deliver this recovery across the whole of the UK.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said: "Many entrepreneurs and businesses don't currently realise the opportunities that space presents to them. We're determined to raise awareness and present those opportunities to as many businesses as possible to make space more accessible in order to grow the space industry. This is a world-class programme of free support, delivered virtually, reaching every corner of the UK. Now is the time for action and our partnership is there to support space entrepreneurs every step of the way".



"Our ambitions for this programme were to reach out to new space entrepreneurs and help them to take the first steps in growing their space businesses – wherever they were located in the country. The strong relationships that have been established through this programme will help these companies deliver jobs and growth across the UK".

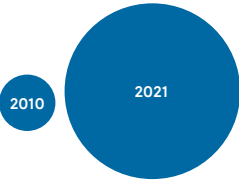
Colin Baldwin
Head of Growth Strategy at The UK Space Agency

"The space sector is ripe with opportunity, and as the UK recovers from the Covid pandemic this new support programme will bring in diverse ideas and talent to realise that growth opportunity".

Catherine Mealing-Jones
Director of Growth at The UK Space Agency,



UK Space Agency inspires and leads the UK in space, to benefit our planet and its people



SPACE HAS TRANSFORMED INTO ONE OF THE UK'S FASTEST GROWING SECTORS, TREBLING IN SIZE SINCE 2010



THE UK SPACE INDUSTRY NOW EMPLOYS CLOSE TO 42,000 PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

£15 BILLION

INCOME GENERATED FROM THE UK SPACE INDUSTRY



EVERY YEAR THE GOVERNMENT, VIA THE UK SPACE AGENCY, WANTS TO ACCELERATE THAT GROWTH

The Team



The UK Space Agency

The UK Space Agency plays an important role in delivering the UK Government’s space agenda, supporting a rapidly growing sector and seeking to increase our global footprint in the space economy.

“Our aim is to develop and deliver a world class programme of business support that is accessible to growing Space companies and entrepreneurs wherever they are in the UK.”

Portia Bircher, Local Growth Manager, Business Support, UK Space Agency



Entrepreneurial Spark

Entrepreneurial Spark has helped over 10,000 business owners to think differently about how they can grow their business and are experts in creating environments that support an entrepreneurs rapid growth.

“A practical approach to how to develop a business, combined with access to experts who can guide success are hallmarks of this programme. This is coupled with a holistic focus on supporting truly sustainable businesses to ensure that the space sector can provide new long-term secure employment right around the country”.

Mike Stephens, CEO, Entrepreneurial Spark



The University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde has a solid track record in successfully hosting UK Space Agency incubator programmes, and has the largest academic space cluster in Europe, offering deep engagement with industry and academia.

“This programme allows us to engage with the amazing start-ups and businesses that are becoming interested in the opportunities that the space sector can enable in their respective sectors, all of which supports the growth of what is an exciting and rapidly expanding UK space sector.”

Dr Steve Owens, Knowledge Exchange Fellow, University of Strathclyde

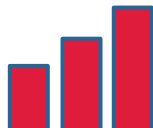
The UKSA Space Accelerator

The Space Accelerator was designed to enable entrepreneurs at any stage of the growth cycle and for all backgrounds to take advantage of UK Space Agency support. The offer was entirely virtual, enabling us to reach deep into communities and unearth new participants to the space landscape. The unique activities of the accelerator were:



Business Horizons

A series of 8 live broadcast events to stimulate new ideas and discussion



The Leo Accelerator

An intense growth programme for 30 high-potential entrepreneurs



Industry Value

Building lasting networks and impact around these programmes to drive a culture of returning to growth

Between these three pillars of support there was a way for everybody to engage, from early stage entrepreneurs through to scale-ups, we created inclusive opportunities to participate. This created a broad and diverse network in line with UK Space Agency’s mission to open up space for more people.

Key areas underpinning the aims of the support:

- ✓ **Impact**
- ✓ **Engagement**
- ✓ **Connectivity**



Business Horizons Series

Business Horizons was a series of eight one-off live events covering diverse topics from building innovative business models to looking at industry developments and future forecasting to entrepreneurial mindset and behaviours.

Alongside the live events participants had access to;

- A pre-event toolkit that they could directly apply to their own business.
- Topic insight and live Q&A with experts during the event.
- Live acceleration – each week a business joined and could take advantage of live interaction and advice, helping them to apply the theory of the session to their business.
- Follow-up peer Action & Connection sessions to help entrepreneurs take any next steps with their business.



Participant Feedback

"I liked the refreshing honesty and vulnerability shown during these sessions".

"It's boosted my confidence and made me much clearer about who I am and what do I stand for".

"It had an immediate impact on me making changes in my business and helped me make sense of the next steps in the context of the pandemic".

"Content was so relevant, practical and actionable".

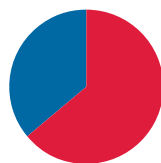
"The events became a haven for people looking to/talking about the future rather than worrying about the day to day".

"It inspired me. I nearly gave up. Seeing other people overcoming challenges and hearing stories helped me keep going. Knowing there were like-minded people out there going through the same thing".



46
EXPERTS

LIVED EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHT
FROM 46 EXPERT PANELLISTS AND
ENTREPRENEURS ACROSS ALL 8 EVENTS



GENDER SPLIT
36% FEMALE VS 64% MALE

8

EVENTS IN TOTAL

39%

OF PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED
AS COMING FROM AN ETHNIC
MINORITY BACKGROUND

1225

SIGN-UPS
ACROSS ALL 8 EVENTS



51% OF PARTICIPANTS WERE
NEW TO THE SPACE SECTOR

Leo Programme

Leo was a 10-week programme for 31 high-growth, high-potential entrepreneurs, selected through a rigorous application process which examined their mindset as well as their business model. The programme of support was designed to inject pace and build connections in the industry and for the entrepreneurs to emerge with momentum and clarity over their strategy and business model.

The Leo Programme was delivered entirely virtually, enabling us to reach into communities across the whole of the UK and connect clusters of activity together. This created greater collaboration opportunities and inclusive access to businesses who are not currently near a major space cluster.

Leo Participants had access to;

- 1 - 1 fortnightly enablement
- The opportunity to take part in targeted activities and workshops
- Access to a range of academics and industry specialists.
- A community of like-minded entrepreneurs in the space sector

“Before the programme, I was in the very early stages of the business with little idea about a way forward for the business. I now have a clear roadmap and goals, I have a strong network to help, funding options, and more confidence in the future success of the business”.



Leo Accelerator

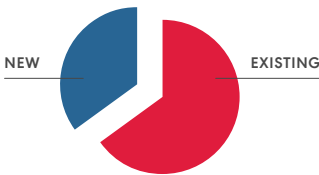
Impact - Engagement - Connectivity

31

BUSINESSES HAVE TAKEN
PART IN THE LEO PROGRAMME



GENDER SPLIT
29% FEMALE VS 71% MALE



35% OF THESE BUSINESSES CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TO BE 'NEW' TO THE SPACE SECTOR VS 65% WHO ALREADY CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TO BE 'EXISTING' IN THE SPACE SECTOR AND WANTED TO ACCELERATE GROWTH WITHIN IT

“For me there is a high fear of doing it wrong, but this programme has shown me that there is no 'defined' right when starting a business. The sense checks the experts and network has given has really helped”.



“Now we ARE a business. Before we had a product, but this process has given us the confidence we are a credible business”.



Impact on the Entrepreneurs



95% OF ENTREPRENEURS WHO TOOK PART IN THE LEO PROGRAMME WOULD RECOMMEND THE PROGRAMME TO OTHERS LOOKING TO START A BUSINESS IN THE SPACE SECTOR



53% IMPROVEMENT IN THE STRENGTH OF THE ENTREPRENEURS' STRATEGY

86%

RATED THEIR CONFIDENCE AND CLARITY IN THEIR 90-DAY PLAN AS 9/10 OR HIGHER



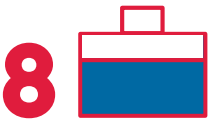
THE ENTREPRENEURS DESCRIBED THE LEO PROGRAMME AS
INSIGHTFUL, INSPIRING, USEFUL,
CHALLENGING, SUPPORTIVE

Impact on the Businesses

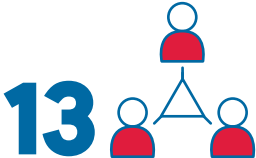
The acceleration for these entrepreneurs took hold very quickly. In the space of 10 short weeks:

£900k

OUR ENTREPRENEURS RAISED A COMBINED TOTAL OF £900K OF FUNDING DURING THE PROGRAMME



NEW JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED BY ENTREPRENEURS GROWING THROUGH THE ACCELERATOR



THE PROGRAMME ENABLED 13 ENTREPRENEURS TO SECURE NEW PARTNERSHIPS OR NEW SUBSTANTIAL CUSTOMERS

13

ENTREPRENEURS WERE INTRODUCED TO THE SPACE SECTOR THROUGH THE LEO PROGRAMME AND WILL REMAIN IN THE SECTOR, ADDING VALUE TO FUTURE ECONOMIC OUTPUTS

“Absolutely great experience! This is the first programme where I actually felt I've got the real support that made a difference to me in my business”.

Building Industry Value

Beyond the Business Horizons and Leo programmes, this accelerator set out to make a lasting difference to the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the space sector. Our aim was to connect more people in every region of the UK, foster collaborative relationships and remove the barriers to growth for startups in the industry. This will ultimately add value to both established and emerging clusters supported by UKSA.

We accomplished this in three ways:



01/Community

Building a community of likeminded entrepreneurs and stakeholders



02/Sparkathon

Tackling an industry challenge through the Sparkathon series



03/Profile

Raising the profile of a new group of space entrepreneurs



BUILDING INDUSTRY VALUE

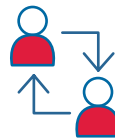


01/Community

Within the 3-month delivery window of the accelerator we created a vibrant online community of Space entrepreneurs and organisations prepared to support them. This is a place where people can come together to network, share resources and discuss pressing Space industry issues. We achieved:

- Over 120 members
- Over 400 member posts
- 42 useful resources, events and support offers shared

Within the Leo programme we worked on the mindset challenges faced by entrepreneurial leaders in collaborating with others. This led to:



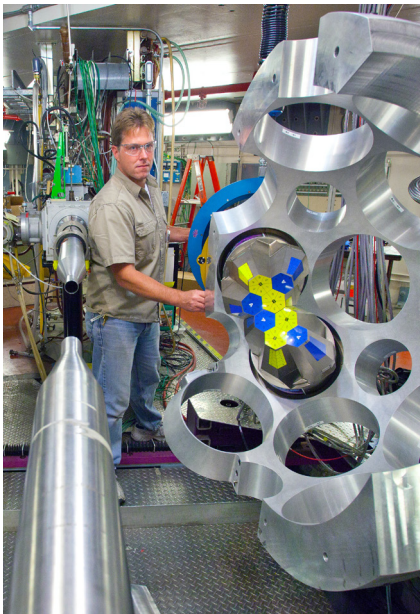
48%

ON AVERAGE THE ENTREPRENEURS ARE NOW 30% MORE LIKELY TO REACH OUT AND UTILISE THEIR WIDER NETWORKS DURING CHALLENGING TIMES THAN WORK IN ISOLATION

THE ENTREPRENEURS ARE NOW 48% MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE AND USE THEIR WIDER NETWORKS WHEN EXPLORING NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS

We also created opportunities for other support organisations in the sector to connect with both the Leo and Business Horizons participants to create quality engagements. The following organisations have supported the accelerator by running workshops, attending as guests during events or by providing mentorship support:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Satellite Applications Catapult | • UNOOSA |
| • Seraphim Space Camp | • Plus X Accelerator |
| • SET Squared | • Science & Technology Facilities Council |
| • Alden legal | • PwC |
| • UKSA | • Space Skills Alliance |
| • ESA BIC | • Boeing |
| • Dept for International Trade | • West of Scotland Knowledge Transfer Partnership |
| • ESA Business Applications UK Ambassador Network | |
| • Harper Macleod | |



BUILDING INDUSTRY VALUE

02/Sparkathon

Sparkathon saw the bringing together of 30 individuals from both inside and outside the space sector with the key objective being to unite them in solving an industry challenge. These events were designed with cognitive diversity in mind, attracting people from all across the UK and from many different backgrounds.

Opening up Space for more businesses is a key focus for the UK Space Agency, so understanding how the sector can be more accessible; hearing first-hand from those who have experienced this challenge; and learning more about how barriers to growth can be reduced naturally formed the theme for the two-day event.

The industry challenge: How can the Space industry collaborate more to break down intrinsic barriers to business growth and accelerate more opportunities for people and businesses both in, and attracted to the Space Sector?

Over 2 days teams explored the problem from different angles, making it tangible and understanding the full extent of the impact it has. They were taken through a creative process to help them to design innovative solutions at pace and used lean principles to go on to test their ideas. In true entrepreneurial style the teams then pitched their ideas back to a panel of expert judges.

"The whole event has been a breath of fresh air in the sense that everyone has been so open and collaborative. I think that SME-led conferences could be a way to 'give ideas a voice'".

The winning pitch

Team Resonate

"There is a gap for young people between showing an interest in space and being able to explore the sector and start to have an impact on the issues within it. We will build a group of charged, diverse and driven young ambassadors to bridge this gap as role models for other children in communities across the UK."

The winning team will now be taking forward their idea and pitching to the wider UKSA Education Team, the SA Catapult and SPAN (Space Academic Network), expanding on the problem and the vision for their solution and the impact this could go on to have in the sector.

While the innovative solutions and ideas which came out of the Sparkathon event were key outcomes, the benefits did not stop there.

100%

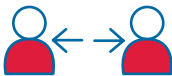
OF PARTICIPANTS LEAVING THE 2-DAY EVENT WITH A STRONG LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT HOW THIS CHALLENGE IS IMPACTING THE SECTOR



THE EVENT WAS DESIGNED WITH DIVERSITY IN MIND AND ATTRACTED 35% FEMALE PARTICIPANTS

70%

OF PARTICIPANTS WHO JOINED HAD EXPERIENCED THE PROBLEM STATEMENT FIRST-HAND AND WERE ABLE TO SHARE THIS AND BRING THE CHALLENGE TO LIFE



THE EVENT PROVIDED A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR DIVERSE NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION



ALL PARTICIPANTS HAD IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES WHERE THEY COULD PERSONALLY TAKE ACTION TO HELP BREAK DOWN SOME OF THESE BARRIERS, AND WERE MOVING AHEAD WITH INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION PLANS

40%

OF PARTICIPANTS CLASSED THEMSELVES AS 'NOT CURRENTLY WITHIN THE SPACE SECTOR'

BUILDING INDUSTRY VALUE

03/Profile

The launch campaign for the space accelerators featured all three partner organisations engaging with their networks to promote the opportunities of bringing on a diverse cohort, alongside an engaging social campaign to catch the eye of those within the sector and those in adjacent sectors. In total we achieved:

OVER 1/2 MILLION
IMPRESSIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



OVER 35,000
EMAIL OPENS



170 UNIQUE ITEMS OF
PRESS COVERAGE



This presence has increased awareness of the entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector and what UK Space Agency, Entrepreneurial Spark and University of Strathclyde are doing to support them.

This presence continues through the Business Horizons series. These events were designed to be re-used by future entrepreneurs and remain available to watch online. Making these events and the content within them evergreen is an important step in making the sector more accessible to those who do not have the privilege of accessing a space cluster nearby.

The Future


The Space Accelerator has helped hundreds of businesses to rebound from COVID, develop their mindset and create a pathway to success. We set ambitious goals and built new standards of inclusion for this type of programme. The lasting impact will be the community of likeminded people who are striving to create opportunities for startups (their own or others) in the Space sector.

UK Space Agency, Entrepreneurial Spark and University of Strathclyde are all deeply committed to driving up the success rate for entrepreneurs. This pilot has enabled us to learn how virtual accelerators can create impact in the Space industry in a post-COVID world, and we will be independently using the recommendations to shape future support.




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