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Guide for the design and implementation of relevant initiatives such as the Creative Online Hackathon

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I. Introduction

During the implementation of the Digiport project, the project partnership organized and ran the Digiport Creative Online Hackathon. The idea of holding this initiative was inspired by the culture of running hackathons, as a way to create innovations in many different fields. The methodology for organizing and conducting the Digiport Creative Online Hackathon was based on the basic rules for organizing a hackathons, but was adapted according to the project goals and objectives.

With this guide, we want to share with you our idea for a Hackathon by presenting our experience of organizing and conducting the Digiport Creative Online Hackathon and then provide you with a summary of the main steps and the most important guidelines for organizing a successful and efficient Hackathon.

We hope this will build on your knowledge of the topic and inspire you to organize new and even more creative hackathons.

II. Shared experience

1. Digiport Creative Online Hackathon

The main objectives of the Digiport Online Hackathon was to allow many CCS professionals/artists, on the one hand, to develop and enrich their skills in entrepreneurship and digital skills, and on the other to create their own pop-up shops through which to promote and disseminate their work and reach their target groups.

The Digiport Hackathon went through two phases:

A. IGNITE phase. This is the phase where participants went through the innovative training course on digital and entrepreneurial skills developed by the DiGiport project and available within the DiGiPORT online platform. Through the theoretical and

practical materials included in the training modules, participants developed their knowledge and skills in subjects such as selecting and evaluating an idea and turning it into a project, planning and prioritizing the steps to implement it, securing resources, managing finances and dealing with difficult situations. They also had the opportunity to enrich their knowledge in digital marketing, digital content creation and digital identity management, how to protect personal data and privacy in a digital environment, etc.

The IGNITE phase started with an introductory meeting in each partner country to present the project, the training course modules and the benefits of going through them for each participant. Time was taken to introduce the participants, as well as for discussion and deciding which of the training topics were of interest to each of them. Participants had between 6 and 8 weeks to go through all training course or through the parts of it, learning the theoretical information in detail and testing all the practical exercises and activities included. At the end of this phase, participants gave their feedback on the functionalities of the DiGiPORT online platform by filling out evaluation questionnaires.

B. ELEVATE phase:

During this phase, at least 4 CCS professionals / artists from each partner country had the possibility to design and develop their digital pop-up shops, hosted and promoted through the DiGiPORT online platform.

Throughout the whole duration of the Creative Online Hackathons coaches, mentors and relevant experts engaged by project partners at a national level were available to provide CCS professionals/artists continuous support and guidance as well as valuable feedback and insights for the improvement of their digital pop-up shop projects.

2. Participants in DiGiPORT Creative Online Hackathons

Two main groups of participants took part in DiGiPORT's creative online Hackathon:

CCS professionals/ artists - people who are new to the sector or who are just developing their skills in the field.

Mentors, coaches and relevant experts in the field who had two roles:

- To accompany the participants during the first phase of the hackathon (IGNITE phase).
- To provide CCS professionals/artists with continuous support and guidance, as well as valuable feedback and insights to improve their digital pop-up shop projects. Mentors were required to have good communication skills, knowledge of entrepreneurship and/or digital skills, knowledge of marketing and possibly experience in setting up and running pop-up shops to provide the necessary technical and professional support to the participants during the second phase of the online Hackathon.

3. Steps in organizing and running a DiGiPORT Creative Online Hackathon

Step 1. Selection of participants

To gather participants for the Hackathon, all possible channels to disseminate the were used. To reach the maximum number of potential participants, social media posts were published, organizations' websites were used, or specific CCS professionals or mentors were contacted via email or direct contact.

A registration form was also created to collect information about CCS professionals, part of which was as follows:

- Full name
- Email address
- Job title
- How did they learn about the event
- What attracted them to join the Online Hackathon (open question)

The main criteria for selecting relevant professionals could be various, in our case, it was young and inexperienced CCS professionals and artists with economic barriers, educational difficulties, geographical barriers.

The selection of mentors, coaches, relevant experts was based on their experience in the field of creativity as well as their knowledge in entrepreneurship and digital skills.

Step 2. Introductory meeting

This meeting had several main objectives. The first goal was to bring together the participants and present the project, objectives and the benefits of each module included in the training course. The second objective was to provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and each other. The third objective was to distribute the modules among the participants, to reflect and discuss how the modules and competencies presented could nourish their professional lives and how they could use it later.

The remaining parameters of the meeting were open - how to hold it (online or face to face), when (specific dates), the length of meeting... It was important to include the key elements fulfilling the main objectives of the meeting.

Below you can see a sample meeting agenda, which we used as a basis for developing an introductory meeting agenda:

Time	Activity	Aim
10:00	Arrival / Welcome session	Give the time to arrive or connect if online and create a welcoming atmosphere
10:10	Presentation of the program and introduction to the project	Participants understand what is coming and why and how the training they are about to take part in was created
10:30	Icebreaking activities for introducing and getting to know participants and mentors	Participants and mentors get comfortable with each other's to assure a good collaboration during the training
10:50	Brief presentation of each of the training modules and the platform	Participants discover the platform and the modules they'll be able to choose, and understand which competencies they can develop thanks to them

11:30	Q&A	Participants have a space to ask their questions about the modules
11:40	Presentation of the organisation of the hackathon (everything available on the platform, the forum, timeline, experts support, etc)	Participants have a clear understanding of what is going to happen in the next weeks
11:50	Q&A	Participants have a space to ask their questions about the organization of the hackathon
12:00	Group discussion about their respective interests for the competencies presented for their professional practices	Participants have a space to reflect on why there are getting into this training and what it will bring them
12:20	Group discussion of the training modules and selection of a minimum of 4 modules that each participant will complete	
	Next steps & Wrap-up	Participants have a clear picture of what will happen in the next weeks and an opportunity to share a last word or needs

Step 3. Going through the training course/ IGNITE phase

The DiGiPORT online platform with an open online course, was designed to equip CCS professionals/artists with the necessary skills which to allow them to enhance their resilience and economic/business sustainability in Covid-19 similar crises.

The online training course is composed of two main modules. **The first Entrepreneurship Module** contains 7 topics:

Modul 1. Spotting opportunities

Modul 2. Valuing ideas

Modul 3. Self-awareness & self-efficacy

Modul 4. Mobilising resources

Modul 5. Financial & economic literacy

Modul 6. Planning & management

Modul 7. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk

Digital competences module focuses on providing CCS professionals / artists with the Level 4 of DigComp 2.1 relevant skills and competences along with the necessary knowledge and skills that to allow them to use and exploit the DiGiPORT online content platform (PR2) and create their own digital pop-up shops within the platform. The topics in this module are as follows

Modul 8. Evaluating data, information and digital content (Information and data literacy)

Modul 9. Digital Marketing

Modul 10. Collaborating through digital technologies

Modul 11. Managing digital identity

Modul 12. Developing digital content

Modul 13. Copyright and licenses

Modul 14. Protecting personal data and privacy

During the introductory meeting, after getting acquainted with the whole training programme, each participant had the opportunity to choose at least 4 training modules - two from Entrepreneurship competencies and two from Digital competences - to go through, depending on their needs for developing specific skills and knowledge in any of the listed topics and areas. Of course, participants also had the option to go through the entire training course.

Each SCC professional/artist registered on the DiGiPORT platform as a participant in the online course and then had between 6 and 8 weeks in which to familiarise themselves in detail with the theoretical information, practical exercises and activities of each of their chosen modules. At the end of each module, he/she completed the corresponding quiz to

verify what he/she has learned. Throughout this stage, participants had the opportunity to interact with other participants through a dedicated forum, part of the online platform, to discuss questions that arose related to a specific module, provide additional information, to discuss ambiguities, and to enrich the overall experience of the participants.

Step 4. Completing questionnaires to evaluate the Digiport online platform and Hackaton

Relevant structured questionnaires were developed in order to acquire useful feedback from participants, focusing on evaluating various features of the DiGiPORT online platform and the usefulness of the Hackathon.

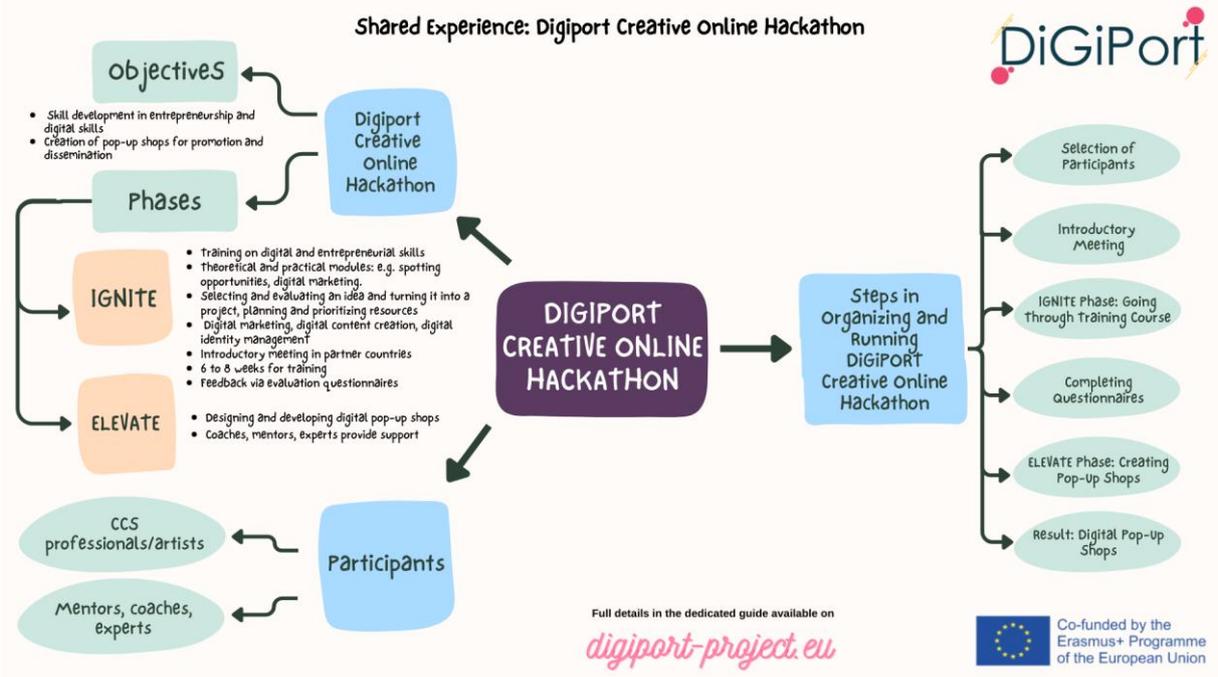
As a summary of the IGNITE phase, optionally the partners had the opportunity to hold another online meeting with the participants and mentors to summarize the experience, share their impressions of the training modules, and clarify the details regarding the upcoming phase of creating the pop-up shops.

Step 5. Creating pop-up shops/ ELEVATE phase

As discussed in the first part of the guide, each hackathon involves selecting the best ideas or teams. After feedback from people in the arts, the project partnership decided that the Digiport Creative Hackathon would not be competitive, so there would be no selection of winners to develop their own pop app shop.

Accordingly, the second stage of the Online Hackathon was conducted on a voluntary basis: each participant who passed the IGNITE stage had the opportunity to develop their own pop-up shop with the help of the mentors. The participant had to declare his/her willingness for participation to the partner organisation during the second online meeting at the end of the first stage (if one was held in the respective country) or by contacting the project coordinator. The partner organisation was tasked with allocating which participant would work with which mentor. Support by the mentors could again be provided through all possible channels - forum, social networks, email, face-to-face conversations, etc.

As a result, at least 4 participants from each partner organisation developed their own digital pop-up shops, hosted and promoted through the DiGiPORT online platform.



III. How can you organize a hackathon?

1. What is a hackathon?

Hackathon is a combination of the words “**hack**” and “**marathon**” and was originally an event for IT specialists that were coding or hacking within an intense period of time. Hackathons originated in the hacker culture, which arose at MIT in the early 1960s with the idea of working on projects in a collaborative way and sharing labour. It wasn't until the late 90s that hackathons became more common in the programming world and programmers would get together to work on a particular software or hardware project.

Nowadays hackathons are held in many sectors outside the IT sphere and are based on the idea of collaborating to solve problems. A hackathon encourages creative thinking and leads to new and innovative concepts, ideas, and prototypes thanks to collective thinking. The most creative hackathon ideas bring together a group of people with similar interests and complementary skills into the same space. They work together, giving them room to try out new ideas that they can't accomplish on their own. The aim is to design, build and present the most innovative solution to a problem, and then pitch a final concept, prototype or presentation to the stakeholders.

In its nature, it is a time-specific competitive or collaborative event with the end goal of building proofs of concept and viable products in an attempt to solve a previously defined problem (or to create an innovation).

Hackathons are an innovative way of teaching and learning – peer learning, active learning. The participants learn a whole range of other key competencies, the soft skills of team work, problem-solving skills, online etiquette, etc. They have some clear advantages over traditional innovation management processes. They are inclusive, agile, promote multidisciplinary collaboration, and have shorter innovation cycles that are better suited to addressing fast-changing consumer demands.

Along with generating new ideas and future proofing a business, hackathons help de-risk product development, improve employee engagement and retention, find excellent talent, enable customer focused innovation and engagement, accelerate the speed of

innovation and problem solving, enhance collaboration between teams, bring about cost savings through R&D, and build community, brand, and leadership.

2. How to Organize a Hackathon in 6 Steps

Hackathons come in many different shapes and sizes, although their essential elements are the same. The entire process of organizing a hackathon, marketing the event, driving registrations, ideating, and creating prototypes typically takes 30 to 40 days.

Here are 6 steps to organize a Hackathon:

Step 1. Define the hackathon objectives

In order for a hackathon to be successful, you need to have a clearly defined objective. Without clear objectives, it is not possible to provide participants with clear direction. A clear objective gives also organizational direction. If you know what problem you're trying to solve, you can organize the event around finding a solution to this problem.

There are few key objectives that hackathons are known to deliver results for: crowdsource ideas or solutions for innovation, speeding up product launches, testing, training and internal engagement, Finding new talent and marketing or employer branding.

Step 2. Prepare the event

Once the final objectives are clear, the next step is to prepare the event.

This is accomplished by completing 5 main tasks:

2.1. Defining the correct format for your hackathon.

Based on their objective, you may either choose to conduct the hackathon internally (internal hackathon) or keep it open to the public (external hackathon). Apart from internal and external, hackathons can also be offline or online. Additionally, hackathons can be demography-based or targeted at specific groups of professionals, hackathons dedicated to a cause or industry-specific hackathons. Depending on whether the event is participant-focused or output-focused, different types of hackathons are conducted for

solving problems, altruism, branding, recruitment, product feedback, engagement, and so on.

Your task is to choose the most suitable format for your hackathon and how long it will be - 24/36/48 hours or longer.

2.2. Venue

Deciding where you are going to hold your hackathon needs some work.

You need to zero in on the right location once you know how many participants are likely to be there. You'll need enough space to seat your participants, others, and place the equipment. So, arrange for chairs, banquet-style, circular, or rectangle tables depending on what you want it for—hacking, workshop, eating, etc.

The venue must be easily accessible via public transport and with provisions for the differently abled, elevators, spaces to relax and sleep.

Perhaps the most important of all, fast, secure, and reliable wi-fi for hacking and connecting all devices is the primary point on the venue checklist.

If the hackathon is online it is important to choose a good platform where the teams will be able to work.

2.3. Setting your terms and conditions.

The terms and conditions should express all of the legalities and rules concerning the organizer and the participants. This includes time for the job, specific rules about judgement, submissions, permitted/forbidden technologies, intellectual property rules, consequences in case of a fraud, prize allocation, etc.

2.4. Creating a website and system for managing registrations.

Good organization includes the creation of a website through which it is easier to recruit and communicate with participants. Of course, this is not mandatory and the organization's website can be used.

The participant registration process can be implemented on the relevant website or by choosing an appropriate platform or creating a special questionnaire.

2.5. Creating a workback schedule.

Finally, it is necessary to define a schedule of milestones for you, the organizer, to complete before the event to make sure the hackathon goes perfectly.

Step 3. Design the event

Once you've finished the preparation work for your hackathon, you can start designing the event itself.

The steps involved in designing the event are as follows:

3.1. Come up with a theme based on your objective.

The first step in designing the event is to come up with a broad enough theme based on the objective you defined in step 1 above. Themes can be anything from boosting the visibility of a brand to creating a new startup to developing a new app for disaster management to designing a launch campaign.

An example of hackathon theme can be: "Improving the skills of cultural and creative sector professionals to deal with crises such as Covid 19"

3.2. Create challenges based on your theme.

Next, it is important to define the challenges based on the theme. The challenges should essentially be sub-themes of the hackathon's main theme that guide participants into creating the business solutions that the organizers are looking for.

An example of a challenge could be: "Imagine the future of art"

A well-defined problem statement will define your hackathon strategy. Focusing on the challenge during the event will require mentors in the form of managers, experts, or speakers to provide real-time feedback to guarantee solutions are designed keeping in mind the end user.

3.3. Define your judging criteria.

After you've established your theme and challenges, you want to define your judging criteria.

In this step, you should define the judging criteria based on the objectives defined in the first step. These criteria can be things like business potential, relevance to the theme, practicality, technical complexity, etc.

3.4. Put together the hackathon schedule.

Finally, after you've determined your objective, challenges, and judging criteria, you'll want to put together a schedule for your hackathon.

This is where you define the hackathon schedule from start to finish, which may consist of activities, workshops, coaching checkpoints, hackathon milestones, and deadlines.

A typical hackathon structure includes the following:

- Introduction. Most hackathon events start with a brief introduction of the event and its underlying theme.
- Rules overview. Following the introductions, the company organizing the hackathon explains the rules and regulations and codes of conduct to the participants.
- Product pitches. The attendees pitch their core product concepts and form teams based on their hobbies, talents and special interests.
- Collaboration on project ideas. Once the teams are established, the participants start collaborating and working on their projects.
- Presentation of a finished or unfinished product. After the project ideas have come to life, the team members present their final, and occasionally unfinished, products to the other participants.
- Judging and distribution of prizes. A panel of judges usually hands out prizes to the winning team or projects.
- Networking opportunities. At the end of the hackathon, there is a closing program that allows participants to pursue networking opportunities and recruit talent.

Step 4. Promote the hackathon

Recruiting participants has a massive impact on the outcome of the hackathon.

To promote the hackathon, you need to create an effective communication plan in which to use all possible communication channels - social networks, websites of organizations, e-mail, direct communication with participants, etc. You can create also the communication materials (press releases or email templates to use for outreach, or ad copy and images to be used for an ad campaign)

Successful promotion of the hackathon is the only way to ensure you'll be able to attract relevant participants.

Step 5. Inspire and train participants

If you want the hackathon to result in high-quality final projects, inspiration and training of participants and mentors is crucial. If you do this properly, you can also raise awareness about the event objectives and manage the expectations of your participants.

One way to accomplish this is through physical workshops. These aren't simply networking or training opportunities - workshops allow participants to get direct feedback on project ideas, which gives them an opportunity to refine their ideas before the main hackathon event. If the ideas are compelling, they'll attract quality team members, which will result in a better outcome in the end.

If you're hosting an online hackathon, you can also have these workshops online.

Step 6. Make it fun

Hackathons are appealing because they're meant to be fun. They're a way for programmers, designers, innovators, and domain experts to use their skills for competitive fun rather than simply for work. A hackathon is something participants want to do rather than have to do.

The participants will attend if they are excited about the theme, but you can include these extras.

6.1. A quality prize pool

Having a high-quality prize pool that makes it possible for all, or most, of the participants to win something makes the event more attractive.

Prizes could be in the form of cash, job opportunities, internships, or chances of getting into accelerator programs or incubators.

6.2. Fun activities during the hackathon

Hackathons are intense, but that doesn't mean there isn't any downtime. After a day of hacking, sometimes participants will want to hang out with each other. Giving participants access to other fun activities (billiards, table tennis, board games, or video games) can be a good way to keep them entertained.

6.3. Capturing and sharing pictures and video

Sharing pictures and videos of participants and their work can be a great way to keep them engaged and provide them with recognition. If they see their photos on your Facebook feed, for example, they're likely to share it, which will increase the awareness of your event.

3. Conclusion

On the day of your hackathon, onsite management is key in making sure the final outcome of your hackathon is what you desire it to be.

Once your hackathon ends, it's not over. You then enter the post-hackathon phase, which consists of maintaining contact with your participants so they come back next time.

Organizing a hackathon can be undoubtedly frenzied. Although people find the idea of a hack fest immensely exciting, putting together a winning one requires scrupulous planning and resourcefulness. Often there are so many last-minute creases to be ironed out that the event could end up becoming a dismal, confusing mess.

As an organizer, you'll know that every time you conduct a hackathon, you'll come across new challenges that you put on your checklist for the future.



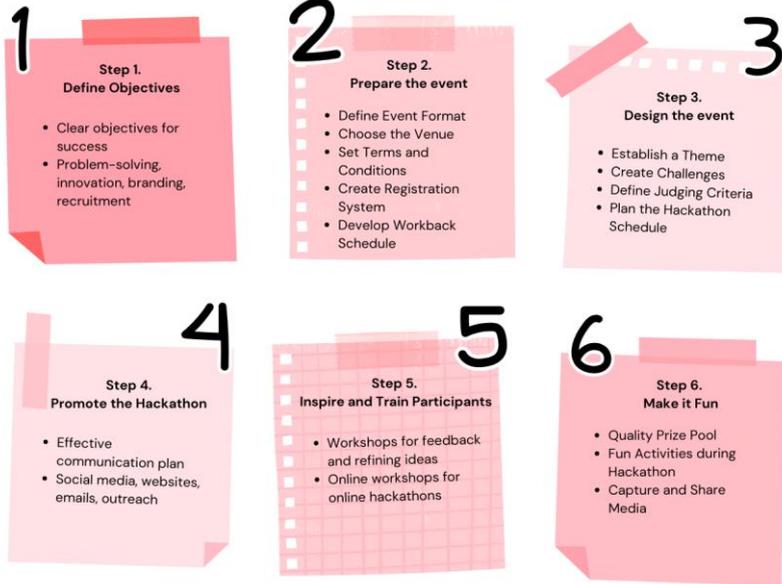
Organizing a Hackathon

Full details in the dedicated guide available on

digipart-project.eu



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IV. Guidelines for mentors

The work and support of mentors is an important part of every hackathon. Therefore, at the end of this guide we present a few guidelines that can be shared with mentors to facilitate their work with participants:

- The mentors' main role is to listen, encourage, motivate and share experience to support mentees. They create a relationship of trust and growth, where mentees needs are heard and supported.
- Mentors can start their meeting with participants by explaining their motivation to join the project and then show an interest in the participants' experience, skills and needs.
- One of the important qualities in the work of mentors is their authenticity, positivity and relaxation. It is important to be able to put yourself in the shoes of the participants and try to think what would be most beneficial for them, what would they need to know.

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