Crucible

Overview of the Labs
(Activity during Labs, between Labs and beyond the Labs)

Crucible is designed to introduce researchers to new ways of thinking and working, with the ultimate goal of creating long-term shifts in attitudes towards collaboration. Each session challenges participants, taking them out of their comfort zones and opening their eyes to new working practices. At the end of the programme, the researchers have a chance to work together on proposals to bid for funding for projects that support Crucible's aims.

Each of the Lab programmes is designed to develop and challenge thinking in a particular area with the use of structured and facilitated sessions, guest speakers and more informal opportunities:
• Lab 1 Overview: Looking outwards – working with non-academic communities.
• Lab 2 Overview: Interdisciplinarity and grand challenges – working with researchers from other disciplines.
• Lab 3 Overview: innovation skills, creativity and enterprise.
• Lab 4 Overview (optional): Dedicated time and opportunity to work on collaborative proposals.

The activities in each Lab help researchers to challenge their own understanding, attitudes and experience of each area and to work with and learn from other researchers.

Formal, allocated, time and informal opportunities during the Labs assist in the process of networking, building relationships and fostering a collaborative approach between researchers.

The time between Labs (4-8 weeks) is equally important in the collaborative and development process. It is a time for participating researchers to think about the experience they have had and see how it may change their behavior back in their workplace. They may also explore ideas and links they found as a result of the Lab activities and continue the networking and collaboration with other participants where they take the lead themselves. In some ways, one of the most important things about having a gap between Labs is the opportunity to bring the group back together several times. We have found that this continuation of the programme over a period of time helps to normalize the relationships that develop between the groups and allow them to become permanent. It avoids what can happen in other conferences or training courses where the event is seen as a break or holiday and people met are quickly forgotten with no long-term impact.

At the end of each of the Labs participants are encouraged to continue networking before the next Lab. This is done through the creation of online networks, wikis, email contact lists or face-to-face networking where possible. Participants themselves often drive this and they are strongly encouraged to take the opportunity to strengthen the community formed during the Labs.

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What happens after the first three Labs?

Depending upon budget and preference you can provide participants with the opportunity to apply to attend a fourth Lab which is a dedicated time for groups to work together on their collaborative project proposal for seed-corn funding with minimum facilitation or input. Participants need to put a proposal together to attend a fourth Lab and inclusion is selective; the objective of the proposals they are working on is that they will be submitted to a Crucible funding panel for scrutiny.

At the end of the third Crucible Lab (where no 4th Lab is part of the programme) a similar process happens less formally. Participants are encouraged to form small, collaborative groups to bid for seed-corn funding for their project directly to a panel brought together by the programme leader. Free time is allotted in Labs 2 and 3 for such discussion but the majority of this work is done outside the Lab environment and is directed and driven by the participants themselves (where a 4th Lab is not being directly organized for the group).

Running a 4th Lab and Lab 4 and grant administration documents are available for programme leaders and administrators.

This section

The contents of this section are for use by Lab facilitators and Lab organizers to structure the programme and have the resources available to run the Labs.

Each section has a landscape oriented document that provides the overview for Lab facilitators and Lab organizers to use together to ensure that the physical resources, videos and guest speakers are available at the right time in the programme. Where there is a specific PowerPoint presentation this follows the relevant landscape oriented document.

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