Connect XR: A Pathway for XR Health & Wellbeing Solutions
StoryFutures & Dept. Health RHUL

SME Brief

StoryFutures and the Department of Health Studies Royal Holloway, University of London invite creative companies with experience of storytelling using immersive technologies in the health and wellbeing sector, to take part in a ground-breaking Research & Development (R&D) collaboration. This initiative explores the role that next generation technologies can play in enhancing people's lives through piloting an innovation pathway that enables the development and implementation of scalable opportunities for XR in health and wellbeing solutions, using social prescribing models, in the community.

On offer for the winning company is a £30,000 cash R&D award, supported by in-kind support from StoryFutures and the Dept of Health, Royal Holloway University of London. The shortlisted company will be invited to take part in an open innovation pathway which will provide companies with access to key stakeholders in the health sector and leading-edge research and user testing to inform the development and delivery of scalable and fit for purpose XR in health and wellbeing solutions. The company will be expected to further develop, deliver, and test an XR in health solution within public libraries by November 2023.

Read more below and **apply here, by midnight on 7th July 2023**

Background

There is a growing UK XR in healthcare sector, driven by forward thinking NHS Trust Innovation Units, innovative creative XR SMEs and world leading UK research. Novel collaborations and trials are demonstrating the potential value and cost savings to be gained from the application of XR in healthcare and the impact on and improvement to people's lives. Delivering therapies remotely via VR can be 2-3 times cheaper than traditional

rehabilitation, cut wait times, improve engagement, and reduce the likelihood of symptoms exacerbating (The Growing Value of XR in Healthcare in the UK 2021). This, coupled with increasing levels of investment and innovation, is seeing unprecedented levels of interest in and growth of the use of XR in mental health and wellbeing.

'The Growing Value of XR in Healthcare in the UK' report (2021), supported by Audience of the Future, NHS, HEE and MindTech, indicated that research and development of XR in health is hampered by a fragmented ecosystem and the lack of opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. The principal recommendation from the report is the creation and support of an XR in healthcare development framework to enable an end-to-end pipeline, from design to test, scale and spread of successful new models of care. Central to this recommendation is collaboration from the key stakeholders with the ability to support delivery, ensuring that the right mix of expertise, research, insight, and talent are at the heart of innovation to co-create an XR in healthcare ecosystem.

The StoryFutures Connect XR programme will work with the successful SME to pilot and test an innovation pipeline and pathway for XR in healthcare applications from development into implementation in community settings.

Innovation opportunity

StoryFutures is looking to support an SME to test a health and wellbeing innovation pipeline, which uses story and XR (VR, MR, AR) to improve the quality of life, health and wellbeing in audiences to:

- Use the unique power of XR, storytelling and immersion to create meaningful and impactful health and wellbeing solutions which are designed and developed by the right research and audience testing expertise, by the best of the UKs XR creative content industry.
- Work locally with users, on experiences that improve connection to self, community, and place, that may help address social or health issues and stigmas that are generating a sense of disempowerment or isolation.
- Collaborating with libraries, to provide ease of access to interventions, using social prescribing models to bring health and wellbeing support outside of the clinic and into the community.
- Developing social prescribing models which place XR mental health and wellbeing solutions in line with existing provision.

A cash award of £30,000 is available to develop and audience test an XR in health and wellbeing pilot to complete by November 2023. This is an R&D commission, so it is expected that the winning company will also make internal in-kind commitments to the prototype

and work with the StoryFutures' and Royal Holloway, University of London's (RHUL) Department of Health research team throughout the development and production period.

Shortlisted SMEs will be given access to StoryFutures' audience insights team, RHUL's Department of Health research team and two stakeholder sandpits where guidance and insight from key stakeholders in the health sector will inform the project's development and the innovation pipeline for future implementation.

The opportunity for SMEs

The Connect XR programme will be of particular interest to SMEs who:

- Have an XR in healthcare solution in development or near to market and need additional R&D funding to conduct later stage R&D.
- Are looking for guidance from experts on user insight and generating early learnings from testing with diverse audiences, to implement changes to get to market.
- Require access to expertise from academic and health sector experts, primary and community care sectors, social prescribing teams, or health economic evidence to further develop their project.
- Would benefit from project and business development support for the wellbeing and health sector markets.

Goals

The R&D objectives of the Connect XR programme are to better understand:

1. The opportunity for XR and storytelling creative content experiences in improving health and wellbeing outcomes.
2. How viable and scalable social prescribing models can be used to deliver high quality, robust XR in health and wellbeing solutions in libraries, with a clear pathway through development to implementation.
3. Audience engagement measures that draw on the opportunities of immersive to offer richer insights into how audiences' attention, emotion, and behaviour responses help deliver healthcare outcomes.
4. The role and value of community assets such as libraries in social prescribing of XR health and wellbeing experiences.

Eligibility

- You must be a Small to Medium Enterprise (SME), with less than 250 staff.

- You must confirm your understanding of the Connect XR R&D commission, with a production budget to enable the development of an audience-facing prototype.
- You must agree to the reporting terms of our funder, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and that non-commercially sensitive insights will be published in industry and academic reports as part of the research collaboration.
- Applicants are expected to demonstrate a track record in XR creative content production and experience in, or an evidenced rationale for, working with the health sector in XR health and wellbeing solutions.
- We welcome project proposals in priority application areas in mental health, wellbeing and pain management solutions. Please note, this project will not support a clinical trial.
- Projects already in development, which require further co-creation and audience testing opportunities, new R&D on pathways from development to implementation, a dependency on audience research and health economics to support future growth, are in scope.
- Companies should make clear in their application form where their strengths and experience lie, and in which areas they feel they would most benefit from support.
- The successful SME must be available for the first sandpit event on 25th July (the event will be relevant for creative, technical, and business growth leads).
- Please note that this opportunity is open to SMEs across the UK as part of the Creative Industries Clusters Programme Demonstrator funding.

Assessment

Applications will be judged against the following criteria:

- Track record
- R&D opportunity
- Research collaboration, including any potential ethical implications
- Audience insight requirements
- Company robustness

Please apply here by midnight on 7 July

Key dates

Call opens: 16th June

Calls closes: 7th July, midnight
SME selected: week commencing 17th July
First sandpit: 25th July
Second sandpit: November date tbc

Summary of terms for winning SME

The below provides a summary of the terms for the company that wins Connect XR.
The company (Winning SME) will be provided with a £30,000 R&D award as well as in-kind support from stakeholders. The award is outside the scope of VAT - no VAT is chargeable on the award.

The Winning SME will be asked to sign the detailed contract with StoryFutures in order to secure for that SME certain IP rights in the results of the collaborative work. The principles of that contract are as follows:

- The Winning SME will retain IP ownership of the results of the prototype developed, granting both StoryFutures' higher education partners (Royal Holloway, University of London and the National Film & Television School) licences to use the IP for the purposes of the partnership.
- StoryFutures will own the audience testing data and methodology and is able to use the same to further the purposes for which it has been funded.
- The SME agrees to abide by the Funder's funding conditions and reporting requirements, which includes appropriate credit for the project, monitoring and evaluation reporting. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of a final cost report on final delivery and an ongoing light-touch reporting requirement over the following 5 years. The Funder is the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1FL.
- The Winning SME will grant access to the IP it acquires to the StoryFutures R&D team for the purposes of the partnership.
- StoryFutures will supply researcher time to support the Winning SME in their development of audience testing, including a report on audience insights.
- A detailed milestone agreement, including final project KPIs, will be made at the point of awarding the collaborative R&D contract.
- At the point of delivery, the Winning SME shall provide a technical instruction manual and relevant training to partners on how to install the prototype for future use for showcasing.
- The Winning SME must provide its own in-kind contribution to the collaboration over the course of the collaboration in the form of staff-time,

sacrificed margin, reduced day-rates, facilities or other. We will work with the Winning SME to guide them in this process.

● No overhead, production fee or margin can be charged against this R&D collaboration agreement.

Connect XR Schedule for SME

Month	Deliverables
July	Issue contracts & project start
August	Prototype development
September	Prototype development
October	Complete prototype development Prototype testing in library: user testing, audience research
November	Complete research and finalise deliverables Implementation & distribution sandpit
December	Project completion and dissemination