

Making Sense of Multisensory

Findings from the CoSTAR Multisensory Tour around Four UK Regions





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▲ Above and previous page: Sharing experiences and exploring multisensory practice through peer discussion.

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CoSTAR National Lab

CoSTAR National Lab is one of the core delivery hubs within the CoSTAR Network, a £75.6 million investment by UKRI delivered by The Arts & Humanities Council to support innovation-led growth in the UK's creative economy. Led by Royal Holloway University, the CoSTAR National Lab is delivered via a series of industry and research partnerships including; Pinewood Studios, Disguise, BT, Magnopus, University of Surrey, Abertay University and the National Film and Television School. The National Lab collaborates, innovates and experiments across the UK's

screen and performance sectors, supporting UK creative companies to innovate and grow ethically, sustainably and inclusively. The research is supported by Arts & Humanities Research Council, Grant Ref: AH/Y001060/1.

We are grateful to all the creatives who attended a CoSTAR Multisensory Tour session during summer 2026 and generously shared their time and insight in support of this project.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the CoSTAR Network Labs – Screen Lab, Realtime Lab, Foresight Lab and Live Lab – for hosting workshop sessions and supporting their delivery across the UK. Their collaboration, local expertise and commitment were instrumental in coordinating activity and engaging creative communities in each region.

About CoSTAR National Lab Inclusive User Futures

The Inclusive User Futures team supports CoSTAR's mission to develop technologies designed around people, embedding human factors, user preferences, accessibility and social justice into the creative tools and workflows of the future.

Our team brings together expertise from cognitive, perceptual and social psychology, sociology, inclusive design and human-computer interaction.



▲ Multisensory design prompts and workshop tools were used to explore how different senses can shape audience experiences during a Multisensory Tour session.

What is Multisensory Experience

We use the term *multisensory experience* to describe creative work that intentionally engages (or dis-engages) multiple senses, such as sight, sound, touch, movement and smell, shaping how audiences encounter stories, spaces and interactions.

About our Multisensory Tour

Inclusive User Futures is leading a major strand of work focused on multisensory experience. Drawing on several years of research, we have built knowledge about how the senses work, what audiences want, which types of experiences resonate most strongly, and the technologies that make them possible.

We translated this knowledge into a workshop for creatives and delivered six sessions across the CoSTAR Network in June 2026, taking place in Wakefield, Edinburgh, Belfast, London and online. A total of 124 people attended, including creatives, technologists, designers, producers, business developers, and organisations creating or investing in experiential work across live performance, XR, installations, games, themed entertainment and exhibitions.

This hands-on, three-hour workshop brought people together to explore our new [Multisensory Hub](#), an open-source, interactive resource featuring multisensory ideas, references and design prompts. Through collaborative design activities, participants applied insights from the Hub, leaving with a practical framework, a multisensory concept developed during the workshop, approaches for creating more accessible experiences, and new cross-disciplinary connections.

We also asked participants what they needed to support their multisensory practice. This report brings together what they told us.

About this Report

This report provides a snapshot of perspectives on inclusive multisensory design from across the UK creative sector. Its findings are based on the conversations and reflections of the 124 workshop participants and are not intended to represent the sector as a whole. Instead, we hope it serves as a starting point for further conversation, reflection and action towards more inclusive multisensory futures.

Executive Summary

The CoSTAR National Lab's Multisensory Tour was delivered across six sessions in June 2026, taking place in Wakefield, Edinburgh, Belfast, London (with both morning and afternoon sessions) and online. A total of 124 participants attended the tour.



▲ Participants at Ulster Studio (Belfast), listening to a presentation from the Inclusive User Futures team and exploring approaches to inclusive multisensory experience design.

This report presents findings from the last workshop activity and the post-workshop survey. The survey received 73 valid responses, representing a 59% response rate, and included both closed-ended and open-ended questions, providing quantitative and qualitative insights into participants' experiences and perspectives.

What We Found

The Multisensory Tour primarily attracted experienced practitioners, with 83% of respondents already familiar with multisensory approaches and 67% actively working beyond traditional visual and audio modalities. The workshops were very well received, with 99% of respondents rating them as at least *somewhat useful*, including 71% who rated them as *very or extremely useful*. These findings suggest that the programme successfully engaged an established community of practice while providing relevant and valuable insights to support their ongoing work.

While many participants expected the workshops to influence their future practice, the findings suggest that implementation remains constrained by practical challenges. Nearly two-thirds of participants (66%) reported that they were likely to make changes as a result of the workshop, but financial and infrastructural barriers continue to limit wider adoption. The cost of equipment was the most significant challenge, as identified by 78%

of respondents and ranked as the primary barrier by 68%, while access to appropriate equipment and specialist venues was also a common concern (57%).

The findings also highlight a need for stronger evidence and evaluation frameworks. Relatively few respondents (16%) felt *very confident* in demonstrating the value and impact of multisensory work, indicating demand for practical tools and resources that can support engagement with commissioners, partners and funders.

Future interest is concentrated around embodied forms of multisensory practice, with *movement and proprioception* (74%), and *touch and haptic experiences* (67%) emerging as the highest priorities. This highlights a growing appetite for creative experiences that move beyond predominantly visual and auditory engagement.

The findings primarily reflect the views of practitioners and creative organisations already engaged with, or interested in, multisensory work. As a result, we report a strong indication of current sector priorities and challenges but provide more limited insight into the perspectives of funders, commissioners and other decisionmakers who shape innovation and investment across the wider ecosystem.

Multisensory Workshops – key findings

CoSTAR National Lab · June 2026 tour · n = 73 respondents

71%

found the workshop very or extremely useful



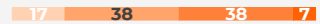
66%

are likely to change their practice



83%

already have multisensory experience



78%

name budget or equipment cost as a barrier



74%

most want to develop movement & body



73

responses across all 6 workshop locations



How CoSTAR National Lab is Taking this Forward

The findings highlight a clear opportunity for CoSTAR National Lab to accelerate the development and adoption of multisensory practices by addressing key challenges related to skills, evidence and sector connectivity.

In response, the Inclusive User Futures team has identified three priority areas for future activity: building practitioner capability through training and practical resources; strengthening peer learning and collaboration through networking; and creating opportunities for experimentation and

evidence generation. While the first two areas are being explored as part of CoSTAR National Lab's future development, activity is already underway to support experimentation through the launch of the [Inclusive Multisensory Experience R&D Funding Call](#), which opens alongside the publication of this report in autumn 2026.

Together, these initiatives aim to reduce barriers to adoption, strengthen the evidence base for multisensory experiences, and support a growing community of practitioners exploring new forms of creative engagement.

▲ Multisensory Tour headline findings at a glance.



▲ Participants at Edinburgh Futures Institute engaging with insights from the Inclusive User Futures team on multisensory design, value and inclusion.

Methodology

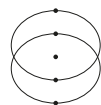
The Multisensory Tour delivered workshops between 11 and 24 June 2026 across the UK.



▲ Conceptual representation of multisensory engagement through light, touch and interaction. | Photo: Cottonbro

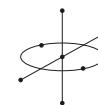
Data collection

The research undertaken as part of the tour was reviewed and approved by Royal Holloway's Ethics Committee. The findings presented here draw upon two key sources:



Collaborative reflection activity

During the workshop's closing activity, 124 participants engaged in a collaborative reflection exercise focused on identifying barriers and opportunities related to their multisensory practice. Participants first reflected in small groups and then discussed their perspectives with the whole room, allowing themes to emerge through collective deliberation. The resulting contributions formed a dataset for qualitative analysis.



Post-workshop survey

Participants were asked to complete a post-workshop survey administered online via TestXR.org immediately after their workshop session. A total of 75 workshop participants responded to the survey, which consisted of four sections: an introduction, workshop feedback, practice and barriers, and participant demographics. Survey responses were analysed alongside data from the collaborative reflection activity to provide complementary individual and group perspectives on barriers and opportunities in multisensory experiences.

Data analysis

Quantitative survey data were summarised descriptively. Open-ended survey responses were analysed alongside data collected through the collaborative reflection activity.

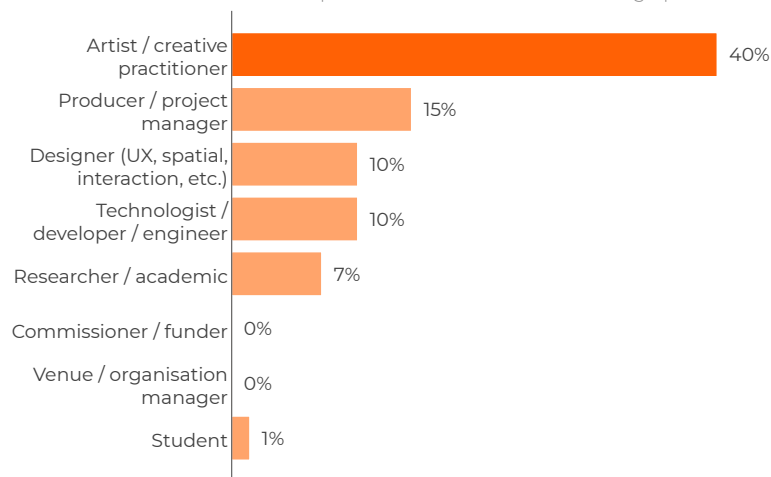
All qualitative data were digitally transcribed. An inductive thematic analysis approach was used, with codes developed through iterative review of the data rather than from a predefined framework. Codes were refined and grouped into themes and subthemes, which informed the findings presented in this report.

About the Workshops

124 participants attended the Multisensory Tour sessions, representing a diverse range of organisations or as freelance practitioners. 73 survey responses were received across all sessions, ensuring the findings reflect perspectives from across the tour.

Who took part? Roles

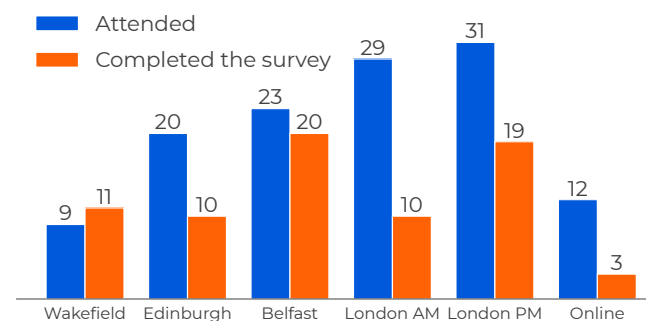
n = 68 respondents who reached the demographics section



▲ Roles held by survey respondents across the creative sector.

Attendance and survey responses, by workshop

124 attendees on the final invite list; 73 completed the workshop-feedback section.



▲ Session attendance and survey responses across the six Multisensory Tour sessions.

Who Attended

The programme primarily engaged practitioners and creators working across the UK's creative and cultural sectors. Individual creative practitioners accounted for the largest respondent group (40%). The **Who took part?** chart shows the diversity of roles represented across the wider cohort. No commissioners or funders completed the survey, meaning the findings largely reflect practitioner perspectives rather than those of organisations responsible for commissioning or investment decisions.

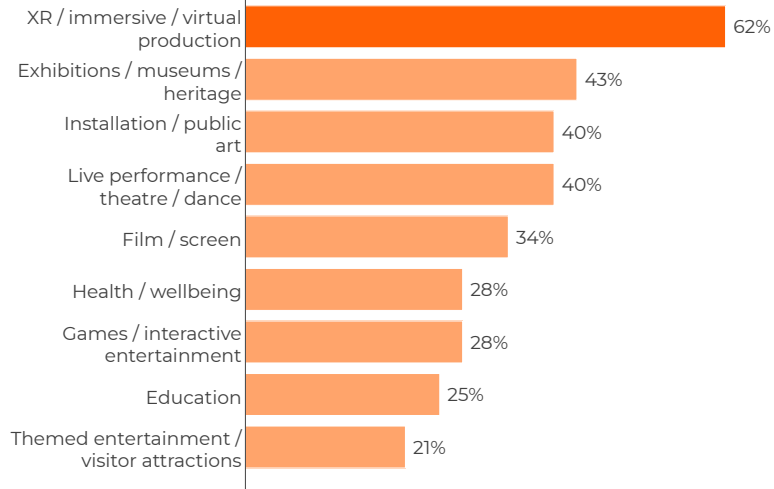
Respondents worked across a wide range of creative sectors, reflecting the inherently cross-disciplinary nature of multisensory practice; this is presented in the **Which sectors people work in** chart (see in next page). While *XR*, *immersive* and

virtual production represented the largest area of activity, participants also came from sectors including *museums and heritage*, *public art* and *live performance*. This shows the increasingly cross-disciplinary nature of multisensory practice and suggests that interest in the topic extends across a wide range of creative contexts.

The demographic profile of respondents highlights both strengths and limitations in the survey sample. Nearly one-third (31%) reported having a disability, reflecting strong engagement from audiences with lived experience relevant to inclusive design. However, ethnic diversity was more limited, with 83% of respondents identifying as *White*. These factors provide important context for interpreting the findings and identifying opportunities for broader future engagement.

Which sectors people work in

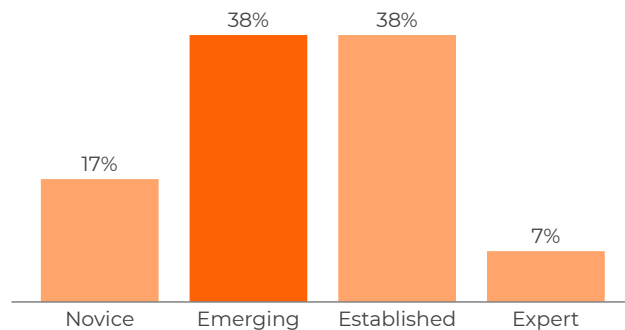
n = 68. % working in each sector (multiple allowed).



▲ Survey respondents identified with a broad range of sectors, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of multisensory work.

Experience level with multisensory work

n = 69 respondents. Novice = new to it; Expert = deep, sustained expertise.



▲ Self-described experience levels in multisensory practice among survey respondents, illustrating the diversity of practitioner backgrounds.

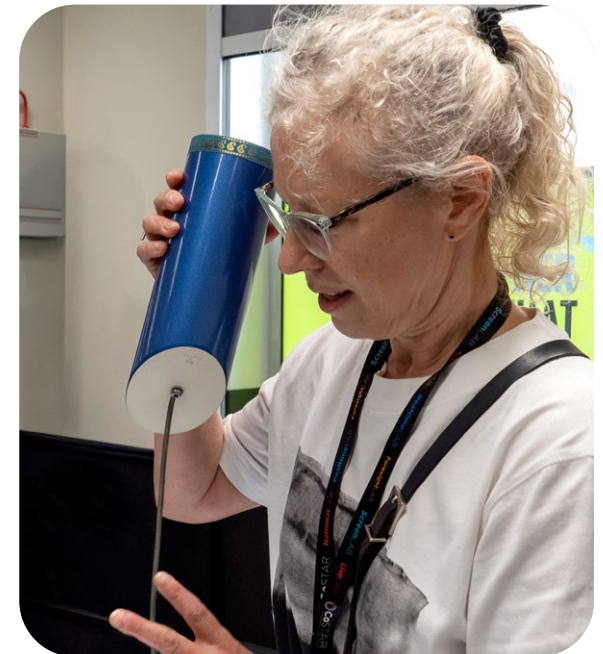


▲ Above and below: Participants shared meaningful multisensory objects from their personal lives.

An experienced audience

The Multisensory Tour attracted a highly experienced audience. More than four in five respondents (83%) reported being beyond *novice* level, as shown in the **Experience Level with Multisensory Work** chart, and 67% already work beyond vision and sound in their practice, with a further 24% intending to do so, as presented in the **Do you already work beyond vision and sound?** chart (see in next page).

These numbers suggest that participants were seeking to deepen and extend existing expertise rather than gain a basic introduction to multisensory design, highlighting a need for advanced resources, methods and opportunities for experimentation.





▲ Capturing barriers, opportunities and practical actions for multisensory work.

From interest to action

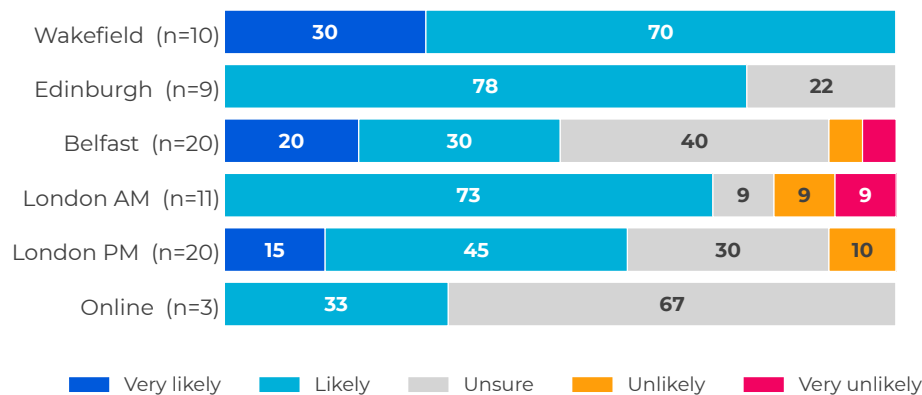
The workshops were received positively across all locations, with 71% of respondents rating them as *very* or *extremely useful* and a further 27% rating them as *somewhat useful*. Given the high level of multisensory experience among participants, these findings suggest that the programme delivered value to practitioners who were already actively engaged in the field.

While participants responded positively, they were more cautious about the extent to which the experience would change their future practice.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (66%) reported that they were *likely* or *very likely* to make changes as a result of the workshop, while 26% were *unsure* and 8% considered changes *unlikely*. This suggests future support should focus not only on raising awareness, but also on helping practitioners apply multisensory approaches in real-world contexts. Variations across workshop locations are shown in the **Likelihood to Change Practice** chart.

Likelihood to change practice, by location

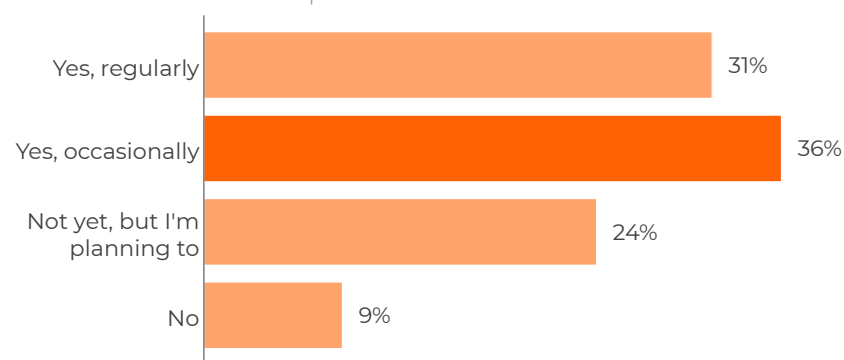
Bars show % within each location; numbers are percentages.



▲ Reported likelihood of adopting changes to practice after the workshop, segmented by location.

Do you already work beyond vision and sound?

n = 70 respondents.



▲ Extent to which participants already incorporate senses beyond vision and sound into their work.

Barriers What holds practitioners back

Headline Barriers

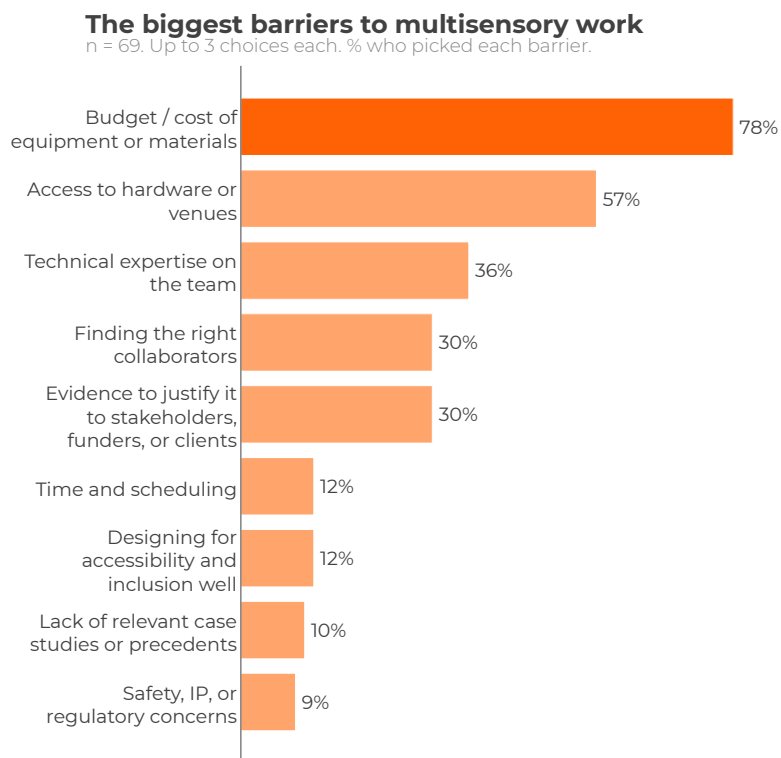
- Cost remains the most significant barrier to delivering multisensory projects (78%).
- Access to the right hardware, equipment and venues continues to be a major challenge (57%).
- Many organisations lack the technical skills and expertise needed to deliver this work (36%).
- Finding suitable collaborators and specialist partners can be difficult (30%).
- Making the case to stakeholders, funders and clients remains a persistent hurdle (30%).

Underlying Challenges

- Teams face ongoing challenges securing funding across development, testing and delivery.
- Building the necessary skills, knowledge and expert partnerships remains a significant challenge.
- Teams can struggle to demonstrate the benefits of multisensory approaches to decision-makers.
- Accessibility, inclusion and cultural sensitivity require careful planning and expertise.
- Technology integration, maintenance and obsolescence create ongoing operational pressures.

Barriers

What holds practitioners back when creating multisensory experiences



▲ Survey respondents' perceptions of the main barriers they face when creating multisensory work.



▲ Participants at Production Park (Wakefield) examining how different senses interact to shape audience experience.

Resource and infrastructure barriers

The survey findings suggest that practitioners primarily experience multisensory work as a resource challenge. Cost was the most significant reported barrier, followed by *access to suitable hardware, venues and infrastructure* as shown in **The Biggest Barriers to Multisensory Work** chart.

Qualitative responses reinforced these findings, highlighting difficulties accessing suitable venues, funding and physical resources for developing and delivering multisensory experiences. These barriers are deepened by wider sector structures, policies, incentives and risk cultures.

Sector readiness remains limited. Participants noted that venues, partners and funders often lack the confidence, language and frameworks needed to support multisensory projects effectively.

Operational concerns such as maintenance, hygiene, health and safety requirements, staff training and scalability further increase the burden on practitioners. As a result, organisations may be reluctant to invest in or experiment with multisensory approaches, limiting opportunities for innovation and slowing the wider adoption of these practices across the sector.

“

If you've got a talent gap and you're trying to get funding, often there's a problem in accessing the funding.

Workshop participant, Belfast

“

How do you get funding when you don't know what you're going to build?

Workshop participant, London

“

There's a difficulty in communicating what the experience might be in text form, especially for bids.

Workshop participant, Online

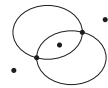
“

Tech goes out of date too quickly!

Workshop participant, Belfast

Knowledge, expertise and capability barriers

Although resource constraints dominate the survey rankings, qualitative data revealed substantial capability challenges beneath the surface.



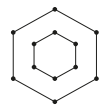
Areas needing support

- specialist knowledge
- multisensory design skills
- technical know-how
- familiarity with emerging sensory technologies



Resources that remain difficult to access

- training opportunities
- expert advice
- relevant evidence
- professional networks



Technical expertise and resource constraints

- integrating multiple technologies
- managing hardware constraints
- maintaining systems
- keeping pace with rapid technological change

These challenges suggest that successful multisensory practice depends not only on access to equipment, but also on the skills and support structures required to use it effectively.

During the sessions, the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing were constantly highlighted as mechanisms for addressing these challenges.



▲ Conceptual representation of the interplay of space, movement, touch and proprioception within an immersive environment.
| Photo: Filipp Romanovski

“

There are so many benefits to taking an inclusive-first approach that are beneficial to ALL audiences. I've been surprised that almost a decade in advocating it's often not front and centre in the delivery processes.

Workshop participant, London

Creative and experiential design barriers

Accessibility and inclusion emerged as one of the strongest themes in the qualitative responses despite attracting relatively little attention in the survey ranking questions. **The Biggest Barriers to Multisensory Work** chart shows that only 12% selected *accessibility and inclusion* as one of the biggest barriers overall (see in page 12), yet respondents discussed it extensively when invited to describe challenges in their own words.

Participants highlighted the complexity of designing experiences that work across diverse sensory, physical, cognitive and cultural contexts while remaining psychologically safe. The most commonly reported inclusive design challenges included *supporting blind and low-*

vision audiences, avoiding sensory overload or overstimulation, fragrance sensitivities and mobility-related access requirements.

This pattern suggests that accessibility may be underrepresented in closed survey questions because practitioners tend to frame barriers initially in terms of resources and infrastructure. However, when discussing the realities of designing and delivering multisensory experiences, questions of inclusion, safety and user diversity become much more prominent.

Rather than a separate challenge, accessibility appears to be a core design consideration that cuts across all stages of multisensory practice.

38%

Respondents reported challenges both in *supporting blind and low-vision audiences and avoiding sensory overload and overstimulation* (38% each).

30%

Respondents reported challenges both in *addressing fragrance sensitivities and meeting mobility-related access requirements* (30% each).



“

We need finding champions of accessibility to support project during development.

Workshop participant, London

▲ Participants at Stewart House (London) discuss inclusion and accessibility challenges, using a multimodal access card to reflect on diverse audience needs.

“
I’d love to keep in conversation with the Inclusive User Futures team as a sounding board for access and inclusion as well as looking at more meaningful long-term collaboration on what inclusive multisensory experiences look like.

*Workshop participant,
Wakefield*

The evidence gap: A barrier across themes

Alongside funding and infrastructure challenges, respondents reported difficulties demonstrating the value of multisensory work. 30% identified evidence for stakeholders, funders or clients as one of the main barriers to practice, as shown in **The Biggest Barriers to Multisensory Work** chart.

Confidence in demonstrating the value of multisensory work was generally moderate rather than high. The **Confidence in demonstrating the value of their work** chart shows that most respondents expressed at least some confidence, but relatively few reported being highly confident in making the case to stakeholders, funders or clients.

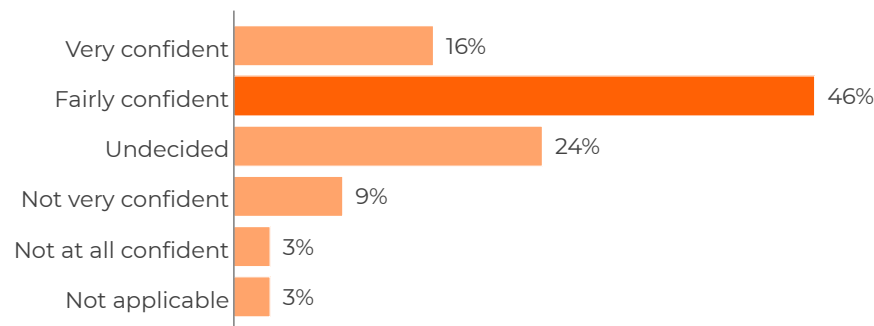
These findings point to an important evidence and translation gap. Practitioners appear able to articulate the potential benefits of multisensory work, but often lack the frameworks, benchmarks, case studies or evaluation methods needed to communicate those benefits convincingly to external stakeholders.

Addressing this gap may represent a relatively efficient intervention compared with solving broader funding and infrastructure constraints, positioning CoSTAR National Lab to play an important role through evidence generation, knowledge exchange and practical guidance.

Practitioners describe funding and infrastructure as the barriers they encounter first, but the qualitative data suggest that confidence, capability and evidence are the barriers that often determine whether multisensory work succeeds.

Confidence in demonstrating the value of their work

n = 70 respondents.



▲ Respondents' confidence in communicating the wider value and impact of multisensory experiences.

30%

Respondents identified *evidence for stakeholders, funders or clients* as one of the main barriers to practice (see **The Biggest Barriers to Multisensory Work** chart).

Opportunities

What people need to advance multisensory practice

Multisensory Community

Opportunities to connect

Opportunities to connect with other professionals emerged as one of the most frequently identified needs across the data.

Many participants describe a need for opportunities to connect and collaborate with people beyond their immediate discipline or sector. Responses frequently highlight networking events, community gatherings, and better access to relevant people, expertise and specialist skills, suggesting a demand for greater support in identifying collaborators, partners and project opportunities.

Participants also emphasise the importance of a connected multisensory community that supports ongoing interaction rather than one-off engagement. Such a community would enable collaboration, knowledge exchange,

shared learning and project development over time, with particular demand for infrastructure and mechanisms that help overcome the fragmentation currently characterising parts of the multisensory ecosystem.

Mentorship and shadowing opportunities are also consistently highlighted. Participants emphasise the importance of access to mentors with multisensory expertise across different disciplines, specialist areas and stages of project development.

What is CoSTAR National Lab doing?

A number of respondents identified a role for CoSTAR National Lab as a connector and ecosystem hub, helping to reduce siloed working and support structured collaboration, diverse networks and collective ideation. We have started to address this need through the creation of a [CoSTAR Multisensory mailing list](#), and we are investigating further possibilities for supporting community networking in the future.



▲ Practitioners exchange ideas and experiences while exploring sensory props during a Multisensory Tour workshop.

“Unfortunately, the system itself is siloed and very segmented. We need a driving force that unites, a platform for both builders and ideators to meet and start collaborations.”

Workshop participant, London

“A growing community that can be called on for questions, advice, shared ideas. A safe space for this would be great!”

Workshop participant, Wakefield

“Bringing together stakeholders from other disciplines.”

Workshop participant, Belfast

Multisensory Community

Opportunities to collaborate

Beyond networking, participants frequently express a desire to collaborate on practical projects and shared creative activity. Responses highlight the importance of hands-on opportunities to work together, experiment and develop ideas through making and doing.

Participants describe a range of practical collaboration mechanisms, including opportunities to form teams, develop projects collectively, access specialist expertise and move ideas through testing and delivery. Many respondents also express an interest in direct engagement with researchers and research teams, reflecting a desire to strengthen connections between research, industry and creative practice.

Research collaboration is commonly linked to user testing, pilot projects, evaluation and validation activities. Several participants emphasise the value of involving researchers throughout the design and development process rather than only at specific project stages.

Responses also highlight the importance of support for individuals, freelancers and small organisations, who may face greater barriers to accessing funding, facilities and specialist expertise than larger, established organisations. Project and practitioner directories are frequently suggested, including searchable databases of projects, technologies, expertise and project leads that could help facilitate collaboration across the sector.



▲ Conceptual illustration of multisensory practice, where light, space, texture and atmosphere combine to create richer audience experiences. | Photo: Fausto Hernandez

What is CoSTAR National Lab doing?

The CoSTAR Inclusive User Futures team has launched a [funding call focused on Inclusive Multisensory Experience](#). Collaboration with researchers is a central component of this programme, supporting stronger connections between research and creative practice.

“

The biggest difference would be ongoing support to experiment beyond the workshop itself. Access to facilities, technical expertise and collaborators would make multisensory practice much more accessible for us as independent creatives. I'd also love to see support for prototyping and audience testing, so ideas can be refined and developed into experiences that have real creative and public impact.

*Workshop participant,
Online*

Multisensory Resources

“

The relation between sensing, affect and emotion as it helps understand why creating multisensory experiences is so important to the future of multi modal experiences.

Workshop participant, Wakefield

“

More educational workshops around how to use multisensory approaches.

Workshop participant, Belfast

Advancing multisensory knowledge

Continuous learning emerges as a clear need, with participants recognising that multisensory practices, technologies and research evolve rapidly and require ongoing skills development. Several participants specifically request guidance on the effective application of multisensory design principles. Others identify a need for stronger business cases and evidence of impact, including return on investment, audience value, scalability and commercial viability.

Interest spans both scientific theory and practical application. Participants seek knowledge related to areas such as psychology, cognition and emotion, alongside guidance on design principles, sensory combinations and personalisation. Responses suggest a demand for resources that translate research and theory into practical methods, workflows and development processes that can be integrated into existing practice.

Hands-on learning is also consistently emphasised. Participants express a preference for opportunities to learn through experimentation, prototyping and real-world application rather than through theory alone.

Participants highlighted the need for greater access to knowledge, resources and support to help advance multisensory practice. This includes scientific, theoretical and practice-based expertise, increased visibility of existing work and technologies, and better access to funding, facilities and business support.

What is CoSTAR National Lab doing?

The Inclusive User Futures team has developed the [Multisensory Hub](#), which combines theoretical and practical knowledge relating to multisensory experience design. Some key information from the Hub is also being translated into a set of open-source *Multisensory Design Cards*, enabling people to access and use the resources independently in the near future.

These resources were showcased during the Multisensory Tour. They were designed to support learning, experimentation and connection. Following the tour, the programme has been made available for delivery on demand and has since been delivered at events including The Big Thing in September 2026.

Multisensory Resources



A list of past and current multisensory projects, with the ability to get in contact with the people who ran them.

Workshop participant, Belfast

Showcasing good practice

Participants seek access to examples of past and current multisensory projects to better understand effective practice and the application of specific technologies.

Many respondents express interest in case studies that demonstrate proven approaches, practical lessons and project outcomes. They are interested not only in what was created, but also how and why multisensory experiences were developed, and what impact they achieved.

Technology-focused information is also frequently requested. Participants would like greater visibility of the hardware, software, tools and methods used in multisensory experiences. Several respondents



▲ Above and below: Visual sensory props used during the workshops. Kaleidoscopes transform light and reflection into intricate, ever-changing patterns.

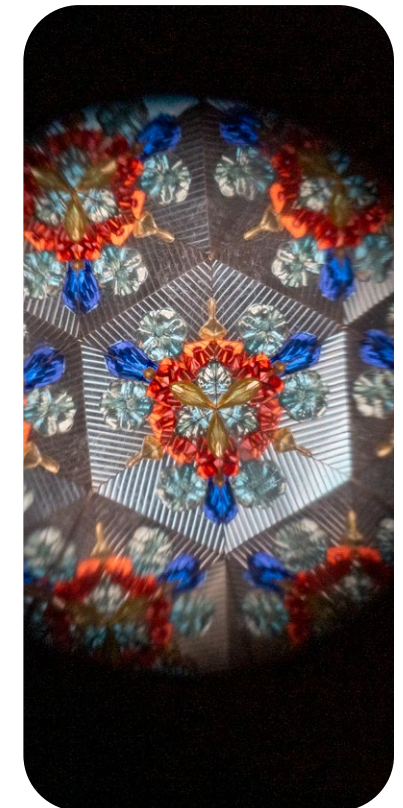
suggest the creation of a technology directory containing information on providers, costs, capabilities, access routes and previous use cases.

At the same time, participants express a desire to share their own work and expertise. This aligns closely with the theme of community building, supporting skills visibility and helping practitioners identify relevant expertise and potential collaborators.

What is CoSTAR National Lab doing?

The [Multisensory Hub](#) contains a range of case studies selected to demonstrate different approaches to engaging multiple senses, including examples that use sensory modalities in unexpected and innovative ways.

Since exploring the results presented here, the Hub has been expanded to include more technology-focused content, with plans to release this content on future iterations.



Multisensory Resources

“

We require small bits of funding, access to kit or spaces, technical advice, production support, and routes into working with researchers, venues or festivals would all help. For independents, it is often the gap between *‘this is an interesting idea’* and *‘this can be made real’* that is hardest.

Workshop participant, Edinburgh

Beyond access to knowledge, examples and networks, participants identify practical barriers to developing and scaling multisensory work.

Supporting the development of inclusive multisensory experiences

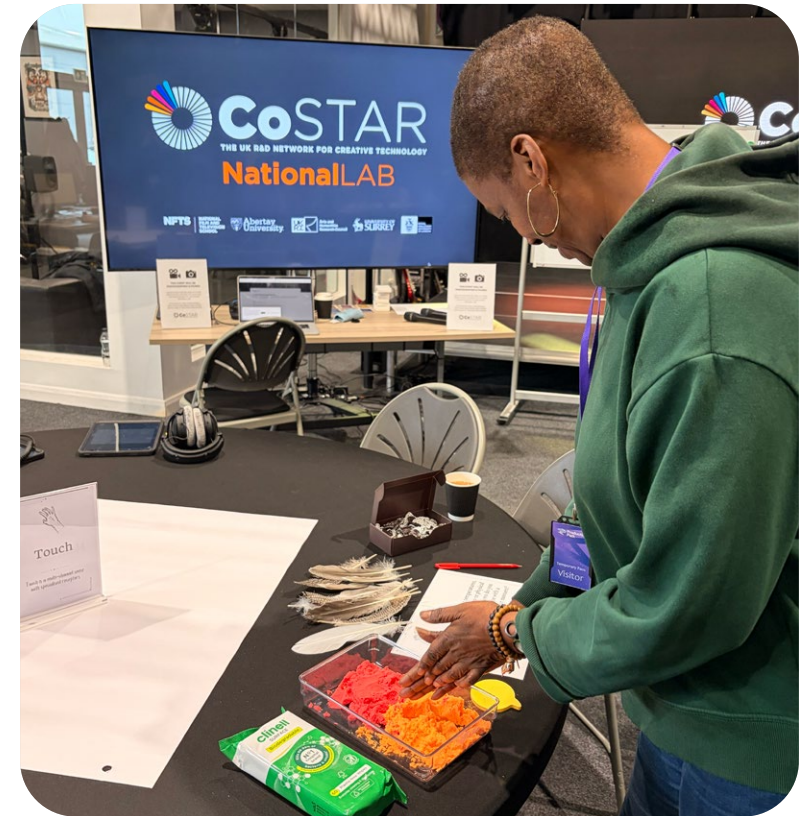
Access to funding is the most frequently cited need, particularly for early-stage research and development, experimentation and prototyping. Respondents also highlight challenges in progressing projects from initial concepts to funded, commissioned or commercially viable outcomes.

Many participants, especially independent practitioners and small organisations, emphasise the importance of access to equipment, facilities, laboratory spaces and testing environments. Alongside physical infrastructure, respondents express interest in development support such as mentoring, residencies and capability-building programmes that can help translate ideas into sustainable practice.

What is CoSTAR National Lab doing?

Respondents frequently position CoSTAR National Lab as an enabler and connector, helping practitioners navigate the multisensory ecosystem, build new partnerships and access expertise, facilities and opportunities. This role is reflected in the Inclusive User Futures team's wider activities, which support collaboration between research, creative and industry communities.

Alongside our Inclusive User Futures work, CoSTAR offers programmes such as Access Programmes and the Prototypes and Pilots Programme (PPP), providing routes for experimentation, testing and development, helping organisations translate ideas into practical outcomes.



▲ Participant exploring the touch-themed table, using sensory props to spark discussion about tactile perception.

What do creatives need to advance multisensory practice?

Priorities	Key Opportunities
Community	Networking, mentorship, collaboration, researcher connections, project and practitioner directories
Knowledge	Practical guidance, scientific insights, skills development, evidence of impact, hands-on learning
Examples	Case studies, proven approaches, technology showcases, visibility of existing work
Resources	Funding, equipment, facilities, testing environments and specialist expertise
Development Support	Residencies, mentoring, capability-building programmes and support to scale projects



▲ Open discussion sessions created space for participants to share new insights in multisensory work.

The Road Ahead

The Multisensory Tour findings suggest a growing and increasingly mature interest in inclusive multisensory experience design across the UK creative industries. While participants demonstrated strong engagement and a desire to further develop their practice, the findings indicate that continued adoption will depend less on awareness-building and more on addressing practical barriers to implementation.

Three priorities emerge from the results

- 1 **Stronger evidence and evaluation frameworks** to help practitioners communicate the value of multisensory approaches to funders, commissioners and decision makers.
- 2 **Greater access to shared resources**, including specialist equipment, testing environments and suitable spaces, reducing practical barriers to experimentation and innovation.
- 3 **Deeper capability development** through practical learning, peer exchange and ongoing collaboration. Plus building confidence in inclusive design across a wide range of audiences and contexts, rather than treating accessibility as a discrete or specialist area of practice.

Although the survey reflects the views of an engaged practitioner community, future research and engagement activities would benefit from broader participation from funders, commissioners and other decision makers whose perspectives influence the adoption of new approaches.

Overall, the findings point to an opportunity for CoSTAR National Lab to support the continued development of multisensory practice through evidence generation, shared infrastructure and community-led capability building, helping move the field from experimentation towards wider implementation across the creative industries.



▲ Conceptual vision of the possibilities ahead: creative experiences that move beyond traditional sensory boundaries to engage audiences in new and meaningful ways. | Photo: Poliromaa





Multisensory Workshops for Creatives

Wakefield · Edinburgh · Belfast · London
Summer 2026



Special Thank You

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