

## **NEW PARTNERSHIP LAB, FUSION BY DIAGEO, WILL HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL CELEBRATION**

**[LONDON, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023]** - Today, Diageo launches a new partnership lab, 'Fusion by Diageo', that will identify leading innovators to co-develop the next generation of digital products that will elevate consumer experiences.

To complement Distill Ventures' focus on early-stage start-ups which are building the next generation of drinks brands, Fusion is designed for growth-stage technology companies to work with Diageo to develop digital concepts which go 'beyond the bottle'. By combining Diageo's strategic innovation pipeline and brand-building expertise with cutting-edge technologies and ideas from external pioneers, the programme will help Diageo shape the future of social celebration.

**Mark Sandys, Diageo's Chief Innovation Officer, commented:**

*"Innovation is a crucial part of our growth ambition and Fusion enables us to partner with some of the world's most pioneering companies to accelerate the future of celebration together."*

The theme for the first cohort is 'Celebrate at Home', with participants set to explore new frontiers in how people unwind, experiment, and entertain in their own spaces. Diageo is particularly excited about the potential to harness the latest technology to create highly individualised experiences for the home; whether using AI to hand-pick product recommendations, or the latest VR and AR technology to transform a living room into a 20,000 person music arena, where everyone has a front row seat.

### **The Programme**

The 13-week programme will start in January 2024, and Diageo is now accepting applications to identify 15 companies for the first cohort. Participants will gain access to Diageo's industry expertise and consumer insights, alongside external speakers and coaching, to help develop consumer-focused, digital concepts. Chosen participants will have already launched digital products in market, and have secured sufficient financial runway via venture funding or alternative means.

The programme will be split into two phases, the first involving broad concept ideation and the second a refinement of the concept. The second phase will conclude with an in-person 'Demo Day', where Diageo will select up to five concepts to progress to a post programme pilot stage. During this post-programme 'build' stage, selected participants will be offered an opportunity to enter a commercial relationship with Diageo, and given the support required to co-develop, validate, refine, and launch new products in market.

**Guy Middleton, Global Breakthrough Innovation Director, added:**

*"Our portfolio consists of some of the most iconic brands in the world and it is our job to ensure that our brands remain at the forefront of social celebration. The Fusion*

*Partnership Lab allows us to build and explore the consumer experience of tomorrow in collaboration with some of the best entrepreneurs.”*

Diageo plans to scale the programme and run future editions, each focused on a different priority area for the business. All participants will become Fusion by Diageo alumni, a growing community of pioneers redefining how we ‘celebrate life, every day, everywhere.’

For more information about the programme and the application process, visit [www.fusionpartnershiplab.com](http://www.fusionpartnershiplab.com). The deadline for applications is 24 November 2023.

**- ENDS -**

**Notes to Editors:**

**About Diageo**

Diageo is a global leader in beverage alcohol with an outstanding collection of brands across spirits and beer categories. These brands include Johnnie Walker, Crown Royal, J&B and Buchanan’s whiskies, Smirnoff, Cîroc and Ketel One vodkas, Captain Morgan, Baileys, Don Julio, Tanqueray and Guinness.

Diageo is a global company, and our products are sold in more than 180 countries around the world. The company is listed on both the London Stock Exchange (DGE) and the New York Stock Exchange (DEO). For more information about Diageo, our people, our brands, and performance, visit us at [www.diageo.com](http://www.diageo.com). Visit Diageo’s global responsible drinking resource, [www.DRINKiQ.com](http://www.DRINKiQ.com) for information, initiatives, and ways to share best practice.

Celebrating life, every day, everywhere.

**About Founders Intelligence**

Fusion by Diageo is being delivered with Founders Intelligence, the venture-focused consultancy acquired by Accenture. Founders Intelligence bring deep experience driving corporate and start-up partnerships, an outstanding venture network and long-standing experience designing and running innovation programmes to ensure start-ups are given the support and exposure they need to succeed.