rsa spark

creativity changes tomorrow

RSA Spark is designed to help **everyone, everywhere**, find their creativity, **igniting ideas into action** to change tomorrow.

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Creative communities

How might we make creative education and careers accessible to everyone, everywhere?

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What might the future look like if we achieve this mission?

No matter where they live, every person can enjoy amazing arts and cultural opportunities close to home. Arts and culture education and careers are open to everyone, not just the lucky few.

In education, creativity is learned from a young age and is as important as reading, writing, and maths. Parents and schools see these skills as essential for growing up, helping society and nurturing our planet. Art classes, music or textile lessons, digital and virtual reality workshops all help us practice creativity every day, and gain skills in the real-world.

As students look for careers, they find a creative sector that welcomes them and values their diverse backgrounds. Jobs in the arts are stable, financially rewarding and offer many opportunities for growth and flexibility.

The arts are respected as an important part of our culture. Seeing them as necessary for a happy society, governments and businesses invest in the creative industries, with big budgets and long term commitment. Local people are proud to see their own cultures represented within this space.

We recognise how arts and cultural activities can help people and places heal from trauma. Every community has easy access to art programmes that improve mental health and bring people together. Creative skills are also used to tackle climate change and environmental challenges. Artists, architects and designers lead the way in creating eco-friendly materials, circular products and services that centre people and planet. This shows how important creativity is for a better future.

In this world, culture and creativity are a right for everyone, seen as essential in education, community well-being, and environmental care.

Background to the brief

The creative sector includes many different activities like architecture, design, publishing, music, fashion, performance, and fine arts. It also covers modern fields like video games, coding, and virtual reality (VR). These areas show how colourful and exciting the creative sector is.

Nowadays, people working in this sector can face challenges. Many are freelancers who have unstable jobs, making it hard to have a steady income. Pressures on government funding for cultural and creative sectors, compared to other industries, results in less money available to nurture creative people and projects. In schools, there is a strong focus on 'hard' skills like reading and science, while creative skills do not get as much attention. This can stop kids from developing their creative thinking talents and enjoying careers in the arts.

There are significant efforts being made globally to increase representation within the arts and cultural sector. We need women, disabled, and LGBTQI+ people, as well as people from all countries and ethnic backgrounds, to participate equally.

This is because we know creativity can really help communities. Art therapy and creative experiences can support people living with difficult situations, such as migrating from their home or dealing with conflict. Through cultural activities, we can feel closer to the natural world and learn to take care of it. The creative sector has a lot to offer society. By recognising and supporting the arts, we can create more jobs, help communities become healthier, and take better care of our environment.

Inspiration for you when answering the brief

This brief welcomes ideas that bring together arts and the environment, beautifying our world while protecting nature. Crea-tech, blending creativity and technology, combines art, design, and digital innovation to create new experiences and solutions. According to a Nesta report, it has the potential to revolutionise our interaction with art and nature.

The intersection of the economy and creativity, as studied by the UK's Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, shows how powerful this combination can be. One idea they are exploring is linking universities across the North of England to offer multi-organisation degrees.

Another innovation might be to create professional development and competency frameworks for creative professionals to ensure their continuous growth and excellence. Projects can also consider how to help people apply creative skills in the real-world to build their portfolio and confidence for employment.

Public investment in creative skills, like Venezuela's El Sistema program, highlights the benefits of nationwide support for the arts. Another example is the Universal Basic Income trial for artists in Ireland. Imagine if artists reimagined the economy through the lens of feminist economics – they could bring about profound change.

Some places have already started thinking in these new ways:

Fundación Mi Sangre (Colombia) uses art and music to empower youth and promote peace and social change in Colombia.

Children supported by Fundación Mi Sangre.
Photo: fundacionmisangre.org

Arterial Network Shirika program.
Photo: Arterial Network Shirika website

Arterial Network (Africa) strengthens the arts across the continent by supporting artists, promoting cultural policies, and enhancing regional collaborations.

Creative New Zealand provides funding and resources for Māori and Pasifika artists to promote cultural diversity and creativity in New Zealand.

Creative New Zealand team. Photo: The Digital Store UK

Meet the mission partner
The Marketing Trust

The Marketing Trust (the operating name of the Chartered Institute of Marketing Charitable Trust) is a UK-based charity founded in 1978. The Trust promotes education, training and research into the art and science of marketing and provides grants to individuals and organisations for projects that advance those skills. By fostering professional development, supporting research, and promoting innovation within the industry, the Trust strengthens the sector's overall growth and effectiveness.

The Marketing Trust are long-term partners of the RSA, having collaboratively funded design challenges, as part of the RSA Student Design Awards, for 25 years. This Brief has been devised in collaboration with the Creative Corridors work of the RSA. Creative industries have been showing consistent growth over the last decade in the UK, and there is a wealth of evidence that shows the benefits of culture and creativity for local communities and individuals. Inspired by that progress, Creative Corridors is an initiative that explores how investment in the cultural and creative sectors can be harnessed on a larger scale, and across different geographic locations, to strengthen its economic and social impact.

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The RSA Student Design Awards (supported by The Marketing Trust). Photo: The RSA website

Share your idea!

We are excited to see your (team's) idea come to life and encourage you to share it with others via the RSA Spark Awards platform. By posting your idea, you will receive a digital badge and feedback from the Mission Sponsor and other innovators. You will also gain access to other opportunities including invites to meet the Sponsor sessions, our annual Festival and more!

To post your idea, go to the RSA Spark platform and make your way through the submission form (platform goes live January 2025).

A submission invites you to upload:

- An introduction to you, your team and what inspires you to take positive action

- A more specific question you have been answering with your work e.g. how might we make the local health centre in Leigh Park better serve holistic community needs?

- The research and work you have done so far

- How you have listened to, and learnt from, others

- Your idea and how you think it could be implemented

- What impact you want to have and how you will track your progress

- What you want to do next and what help you would like

Get support and recognition

All participants who want to be recognised for their learning can gain a 'digital badge' for working on this brief. A digital badge is an official way to show universities, employers, your team, friends and family that you have gained specific skills.

In addition, as part of the RSA Creative Corridors initiative, there will be opportunities for a few participants (subject to availability) to present their work to key stakeholders from a diverse range of creative industry backgrounds.

By participating in an RSA Spark learning journey you can receive three badges for each learning journey. These are at different levels depending on how your progress.

RSA spark 11-17

RSA
Get inspired for a mission
Level 1: Engage

RSA
Learn on a mission
11-17 years
Level 2: Participate

RSA
Create for a mission
Level 3: Demonstrate

RSA spark 18+

RSA
Get inspired for a mission
Level 1: Engage

RSA
Learn on a mission
18+ years
Level 2: Participate

RSA
Create for a mission
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How to approach this brief

You can choose to respond to this brief individually or as a team. In responding to this Mission brief, you have an opportunity to tap into and grow 10 life skills or 'capabilities' that are key when innovating in ways that positively impact people, places and planet.

You can find out more about these capabilities here.

There is also more information about how to develop these capabilities within the RSA learning journeys. You can sign up for these learning journeys via the RSA Spark platform.

Examples of what you can consider and develop for each capability are provided in the table below.

Citizenship

- What makes you a great change-maker?
- Why are you passionate about this project?
- How is your approach making things better for people now and in future?
- Is your idea hopeful and exciting?
- How are you using materials in smart ways that care for the planet and all life?

Collaboration

- How will you get thoughts and ideas from people with different backgrounds to yours?
- Who is part of your team and how will you manage working together?
- Who is already working in this space that you can learn from and partner with?

Communication

- How are you using your voice – and the voice of others – to tell the story of your idea?
- How are you listening to other people?
- In what different ways can you share your thoughts and ideas (in writing, pictures, games…)?

Care

- How have you thought about and listened to people who might need the most help?
- What would animals, plants and other natural things make of your idea? How can you have them included?
- How will you listen and learn from people and nature in a kind way?

Composure

- Who might disagree with your idea and what would you say to them?
- Once you have an idea, have you shared it with people and asked them what they think?
- What's something that might be tough to do but that would make this idea even better?
- Am I asking big and important questions about the world?

Courage

- Who might disagree with your idea and what would you say to them?
- Once you have an idea, have you shared it with people and asked them what they think?
- What's something that might be tough to do but that would make this idea even better?
- Am I asking big and important questions about the world?

Critical Thinking

- Who might disagree with your idea and what would you say to them?
- Once you have an idea, have you shared it with people and asked them what they think?
- What's something that might be tough to do but that would make this idea even better?
- Am I asking big and important questions about the world?

Curiosity

- Who might disagree with your idea and what would you say to them?
- Once you have an idea, have you shared it with people and asked them what they think?
- What's something that might be tough to do but that would make this idea even better?
- Am I asking big and important questions about the world?

Creativity

- Who might disagree with your idea and what would you say to them?
- Once you have an idea, have you shared it with people and asked them what they think?
- What's something that might be tough to do but that would make this idea even better?
- Am I asking big and important questions about the world?

Change

- Did you test your ideas and make changes based on feedback?
- How will your idea keep changing over time so it becomes even better?

Toolkit

Representation in the Creative Sector by Gender

A study by the UNESCO (2018) showed that women are underrepresented in key creative roles in film, music, and media.

For example, only 7% of directors and 13% of screenwriters in the global film industry are women. In the music industry, women make up only 21.7% of all artists, 12.3% of songwriters, and 2.1% of producers.

Representation in the Creative Sector for LGBTQ+ Creatives

GLAAD's Studio Responsibility Index reported that in 2021, only 18.6% of major studio films included LGBTQ+ characters, showing a need for greater inclusion and representation in film .

Representation in the Creative Sector by Disability Status

According to the UK's Creative Diversity Network, only 4.5% of the workforce in the UK television industry identify as disabled, which is significantly lower than the 18% of the UK working-age population who identify as disabled.

Representation in the Creative Sector by Racial and Ethnic Background

The Creative Diversity Network (CDN) in the UK found that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals are underrepresented in the UK television industry. Only 13% of the workforce in this sector come from BAME backgrounds, compared to 14% of the UK population .

In the United States, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that minorities are underrepresented in arts occupations compared to their share of the overall workforce. For example, African Americans make up 9.7% of the arts workforce compared to 11.9% of the total workforce .

Feminist Economics

An approach to economics that emphasizes the importance of gender equality and considers how economic policies impact different genders. Reimagining the economy through this lens can lead to more inclusive and equitable economic systems.

Link to resource: https://artreview.com/why-the-artworld-needs-feminist-economics/

Workshops run by the PEC for the Northern Creative Corridors

Link to resource: https://pec.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Insights-from-the-Northern-Creative-Corridor-Workshops-Creative-PEC-Policy-Brief-July-2024.pdf

Creative Industries Council Information on crea-tech

Link to resource: https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/createch

Creative Access, UK

Creative Access provides opportunities for young people from underrepresented backgrounds to enter the creative industries through internships and training programs.

Glossary

Creative Economy: The part of the economy that involves creative industries and professions, such as art, design, media, and entertainment. It focuses on the value of creativity as a driver of economic growth and innovation.

Creative Sector: Encompasses all fields related to creativity and the arts, including but not limited to visual arts, music, performing arts, design, and digital media.

Competency Framework: A guide that lists the skills and knowledge you need to be good at a job or profession. It helps you organise what you need to learn and practice into clear categories, so you know exactly how to improve and succeed.

Freelancer: A person who works independently, often on a project-by-project basis, rather than being employed full-time by a single organisation.

Creative PEC (Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre): A UK organisation partnered with the RSA and Newcastle University. Using data, they study the impact of the creative sector on the economy and society. They promote policies that support creative industries.

Universal Basic Income (UBI): A model of social security where all citizens get a regular sum of money from the government to cover basic living expenses – without having to do any specific job or be unemployed.