BRITISH COUNCIL

Creative Spark

Higher Education Enterprise Programme



Answering tomorrow's challenges today



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Creative Spark at a glance

countries

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the United Kingdom

partner institutions engaged

132



transnational creative enterprise higher education partnerships

> Supported for 4-5 years

> > Over



participants reached

Welcome

How to read this report



Introducing Creative Spark: Empowering the Creative Economy through Higher **Education Enterprise**

For over eight decades, the British Council has been at the forefront of international cultural relations. Our expertise lies in managing collaborative teaching, development, and research programmes. We take pride in our ability to initiate and facilitate international higher education programmes, which foster connections and collaboration across borders and generate new opportunities. This lies at the heart of our British Council mission.

Creative Spark, a pioneering five-year programme aiming to foster creativity and entrepreneurship in Central Asia, Ukraine, and the South Caucasus region, is a fine example of such an approach. Founded on partnerships between the UK and seven other countries, the programme supported new international collaborations, cultivated entrepreneurial skills, and promoted the expansion of the creative economy.

The three fundamental focus areas for the Creative Spark programme were:

- > Facilitating Collaborative Partnerships.
- > Empowering through Education, and
- > Embracing English for Entrepreneurship.

With the aim of strengthening the creative economy and establishing a network of creative educators, the initiative forged over 50 partnerships between the UK and Wider Europe region. These alliances consisted of universities, colleges, youth organisations, and businesses that collaboratively developed academic curricula, imparted essential business skills to students, and produced pioneering research on creative entrepreneurship.

Creative Spark has demonstrated remarkable success, benefiting from a significant investment of over five million pounds over five years. The programme's diverse range of activities included an eagerly anticipated annual pitch competition, the Big Idea Challenge, which encouraged young people to develop an innovative 'startup' and present it to the world.

We are all pleased to present the final report, which provides a comprehensive overview of the success of the programme, its impact, and the springboard it has provided for future collaborations and opportunities.

Joanna Burke CMG British Council Regional Director Wider Europe Region

You can find the **main findings of the report** beginning on page 20. The main findings cover the impact of Creative Spark: for institutions; at a system level; for the UK; and for individuals. The chapters on findings for institutions and at a system level also include learning sections which can be found at the end of these chapters.

In each section we have outlined what Creative Spark stakeholders delivered, pulling out the main themes from across the partnerships, as well as key examples. These chapters bring the programme to life and show how change has been achieved. We have highlighted key examples of good practice throughout the report in case study boxes, and key figures in 'in numbers' boxes (see below).

A summary of the main findings can be found on page 4, and on the first page of each section.



BIC	Big Idea Challenge
EEUK	Enterprise Educators UK
HE	Higher Education
WE	Wider Europe
TNE	Transnational Education





Creative Spark's impact: an overview

What impact did Creative Spark have on institutions?

Improved enterprise education

Creative Spark successfully funded and facilitated partnerships to **improve their enterprise education**. Partnerships effectively shared expertise and worked together to:

- > Deliver new enterprise curricula to build students' entrepreneurship skills.
- > **Build staff capacity** in pedagogical methods for enterprise education, including research-led teaching.
- Generate awareness of the importance of enterprise education and creative entrepreneurship among institutions leadership.

193 new courses or modules developed.

189 train the trainer or educator training activities delivered to a total of 4,623 attendees.

92% of UK partners said their partnership had improved the quality of HE in their partner's institution.

3 in **4** partnerships said that their partnership had supported institutional system change or reform in their institution.

New creative and enterprise hubs

Creative Spark effectively supported partnerships to develop creative and enterprise hubs through the programme. Some of these new hubs successfully supported businesses to develop revenue and profit.

Between 12 and 23 partnerships worked on hub development in different programme years.

Businesses supported via Creative Spark incubators generated:

£1,936,970 of revenue.

£475,196 of profit.

Bespoke creative hubs training delivered to 51 Creative Spark stakeholders, including a 6-week online training course and 5-day study visit to the UK.



Expanded networks and internationalisation

Creative Spark **facilitated a large expansion of partner institutions' networks at a local, national and international level**. New connections brought notable benefits to participating institutions:

- > Enhanced staff capacity and student learning through connections with industry.
- Increased knowledge sharing, collaboration and networks through connections with likeminded institutions.
- Raised local profiles and new sources of funding through connections with local government and stakeholders.

2,605 total new connections made:

- > 1,114 within country.
- > 465 with other Creative Spark countries.
- > 420 with the rest of the world.

403 educators took part in study visits in Years 2-4 of the programme.

84% and **86%** of WE and UK partners, respectively, said their partnership would continue beyond Creative Spark.

91% of WE partners said partnerships with national partners were likely to continue beyond Creative Spark.

Gender parity and some holistic approaches to inclusion

All partnerships wanted to be inclusive, where activities were "open to all" and some made specific efforts to understand and adapt to the needs of different groups. Some partnerships took a **comprehensive and holistic approach to inclusion** with representation and accessibility considered in the materials produced and events held. In some cases, barriers to entry were deeply embedded cultural norms or infrastructural and beyond the scope of the partnership. As with other areas, but perhaps even more, inclusivity must be appropriate and responsive to the context.

82% of participants agreed that people of all backgrounds are respected and valued in Creative Spark activities.

75% of participants thought Creative Spark activities were sufficiently advertised and had enough information to encourage diverse participation.

79% of participants felt that Creative Spark training materials were accessible to all, regardless of gender, disability, social status, or location.

71% of participants said they could relate to the role models, speakers and trainers and they represented the diversity of society (in terms of gender, disability, social status).

Partnerships focused on different aspects of inclusion:

- > 68% on sex or gender.
- > 45% on rural or hard to reach areas.
- > 19% on socioeconomic status.

What impact did Creative Spark have on the UK?

Creative Spark brought notable benefits to the participating UK institutions including:

- > Expanded networks and institutional experience of working in the WE region, opening the door to future collaboration and funding opportunities.
- > Staff gained experience in collaborating internationally, bringing professional and academic benefits.
- Improved enterprise education at participating UK institutions including new pedagogical processes, curricula development and adapting to working in cross-cultural settings.

71% of UK partners said Creative Spark has created significant wider benefits for them, their colleagues or students, or their institution.

They identified these benefits as:

- > Increased knowledge sharing.
- > Better cultural understanding of the partner country.
- > An expanded network.

82% of UK partners felt that their partnership was mutually beneficial.

91% of participants (students and staff) reported an improvement in their knowledge of the UK creative industries and business environment.

What impact did Creative Spark have at a system level?

National British Council teams and Creative Spark partnerships successfully delivered sustained engagement of key stakeholders over the five years – fostering a sense of community and creating opportunity for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

By creating these opportunities the programme facilitated the formation of new networks that will be key in continuing the programmes impact on fostering a more supportive environment for the creative economy, such as the Georgia Enterprise Educators Alliance and the Quality Practice Framework in Uzbekistan.

Through providing a dedicated resource Creative Spark has also contributed to an understanding of the creative industries as a consolidated policy area, and the role of enterprise education within this. Key policy and decision makers took part in:

30 roadmap meetings, with over 2,263 attendees including 54 national decision or policy makers.

103 one to one meetings organised by British Council teams to engage Creative Spark institutions leadership; key national stakeholder to secure support for Creative Spark initiatives; and on country-UK relations.

93 Creative Spark activities organised by the British Council and by partnerships, such as the Big Idea Competition judging panel, roundtable discussions with local government and industry stakeholders, the meetings of new initiatives or work councils.

96% of partnerships felt they had contributed to greater engagement including new cross-sector dialogue or stronger networks.

73% of partnerships felt they contributed to political and policy influence including increased political access; creative economy and entrepreneurship are referenced in policy documents/political priorities; change in policy positions; change in legislation or regulation.



What impact did Creative Spark have on individuals?

The programme was successful in reaching students, alumni, young entrepreneurs, and educators with training on entrepreneurships skills, interpersonal skills, confidence, and leadership. Through attending these events, participants were able to build their personal and professional networks. The programme also successfully increased participants English language abilities, confidence, and interest in the UK.

A flagship activity of the programme was the Big Idea Challenge, developed in collaboration with London Metropolitan University. This 60 second pitch competition was delivered across the seven Creative Spark countries each year with national and regional winners. Over **2,600 teams took part** in the competition over the five years.

Spotlight on the 2022 Grand Challenge Winner Kekalove Adaptive Fashion, who developed a line of inclusive and adaptive fashion, and were supported to launch their online website. They succeeded in having their awareness raising campaign reported in UK media.

65,508 participants including students, alumni, young entrepreneurs, and educators.

Over **2,600** teams representing 5,574 individuals took part in the Big Idea Challenge competition over the five years.

12 Big Idea Challenge winners were supported through a winner mentorship scheme to launch their ideas, and were generating revenue.

The partnerships

KAZAKHSTAN

Programme country institutions	UK institutions
Kazakh-American Free University	University of East London
Almaty Management University, Astana IT University, Almaty Technological University, Creative and Innovation Institute	University of Northampton
Kazakh British Technical University (KBTU), Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory	Henley Business School, University of Reading
L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University	Oxford Brookes University, University of Birmingham
Impact Hub Pilot Almaty, T. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts	Goldsmiths University of Lo
Narxoz University	University of Birmingham, Oxford Brooks University
PI Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System	Loughborough University
Kazakh-Russian International University, Baishev University	University of Lincoln
The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'Atameken', Kentau Multidisciplinary college, MSOPE Almaty College of Fashion and Design, Higher Trade and Economic College of Kazpotrebsoyuz	Capital City College Group

ARMENIA

Programme country institutions	UK institutions
American University of Armenia	Northumbria University
Armenian National Engineering Laboratories	Bayes Business School at City, University of London, Change School
Brusov State University	University of Essex, Change School
Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology	Aston University
National Polytechnic University of Armenia	University of Southampton
Simonian Educational Foundation (TUMO)	Norwich University of the Arts
Yerevan State University	Nottingham Trent University

Programme country institutions	UK institutions
Kyiv National Economic University, Germany, Frankfurt University, Pro-capital Investment Group, Ukraine	University of Reading
Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Odessa National Maritime University	University of Southampton
Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy (UEPA), Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (KhNUE), NGO 'Innovation Generation'	University of Bedfordshire
Lviv Polytechnic National University, NGO Tech Start-up School, BioUkraine, Agency of European Innovations	Kingston University
V.N. Karazin National University	Anglia Ruskin University, Reading University, Coventry University
Lviv National Academy of Arts, PPV Knowledge Network Ltd	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, Bureau of Research, Innovations and Technologies (BRIT), Ivano-Frankivsk Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IFCCI), Ivano-Frankivsk Women's Business Accelerator (IFWBA)	Coventry University
Donetsk National Technical University, Kharkiv Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education, National Pharmaceutical University	Kingston University, Goldsmiths University of London
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK), Lviv Polytechnic National University, NGO Tech StartUp School	Kingston University
Higher Educational Establishment of Ukoopspilka 'Poltava University of Economics and Trade', Co-Impact, Adult Educational Center of Poltava Region	University of Portsmouth

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Programme coun Georgian Technical Creative Georgia **Tbilisi State Acader Creative Solutions** Ilia State University

V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi **Business Technolog** Tsereteli State Unive Georgian National

Ivane Javakhishvili

Business & Technol

UZBEKISTAN

Programme cour

Tashkent State Tech Islam Karimov, Natio Design named after

Tashkent State Univ Center for Impleme (Ministry of Innovati

Uzbekistan State Ins Bonum Factum Galle **Development Found** Art and Design nam

Silk Road Internatio

The Academy of Pub President of the Rep University of Inform Tashkent Institute o

KYRGYZSTAN

Programme cour

Enactus Kyrgyzstan

Resource Centre in Crafts Support Asso Kyrgyz National Uni

Balasagyn, Technica American University

AZERBAIJAN

Programme country institutions

Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction (AzUAC

Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication Azerbaijan Agriculture University, Azerbaijan University of Eco University

Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC), Azerbaijan T University

ADA University, Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts

Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC), Baku Music

Khazar University

Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction, Atyrai

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try institutions	UK institutions
University	Keele University
	University of East Anglia
ny of Arts, Creative Georgia,	Advantage Creative
	University of the West of England
Tbilisi State University, State Conservatoire	University of Essex, Change School
y University	University of Reading
ersity, Creative Solutions, Jniversity SEU	Advantage Creative
ogy University	University of Westminster

try institutions	UK institutions
nnical University named after onal Institute of Fine Art and [,] Kamoliddin Bekhzod	London South Bank University, Change School
versity of Economics, Practical ntation of Innovative Projects ion), IT Park	London Metropolitan University
stitute of Art and Culture, ery, Arts and Culture lation, National Institute of Fine ed after Kamoliddin Bekhzod	Goldsmiths, University of London
nal University of Tourism	People 1st International, Queen Margaret university
blic Administration under the public of Uzbekistan, Tashkent nation Technologies	Change School, London South Bank, Goldsmith University of London, City, University of London
of Textile & Light Industry	University of Central Lancashire

try institutions	UK institutions
	Bayes Business School at City, University of London, Change School
Kyrgyzstan of Central Asian ociation (CACSARC)	Coventry University
versity named after J. al School of Innovation of y of Central Asia (TSI AUCA)	Middlesex University Higher Education Corporation

UK institutions
London South Bank University
Newcastle University
University of Greenwich
University of Kent
University of Greenwich (previously University of East Anglia)
Middlesex University Higher Education Corporation
University of Leicester

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About Creative Spark

The Creative Spark Higher Education Enterprise Programme ran for five years from 2018 until 2023 in seven countries of the Wider Europe (WE) region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.¹

Creative Spark is part of the wider British Council initiative <u>Going Global Partnerships</u> (GGP), which supports partnerships between universities, colleges, education policy makers, civil society organisations and industry partners in the UK and other countries. The aim of GGP is to build stronger, more inclusive, internationally connected higher education (HE) and technical and vocational education and training systems. This approach facilitates research collaboration, internationalises institutions, enhances student outcomes, and supports inclusion.

Creative Spark aimed to drive **enterprise and entrepreneurship skills training, support the development of the creative economy, and support HE reform**. In the longer term, the programme aimed to contribute to a more prosperous region through the support of UK expertise in education innovation and cultural partnerships.

The creative economy and enterprise education

The creative economy includes creative roles that take place in both creative and non-creative industries. There has been much debate in economic and policy circles on the definitions of creative industries and the creative economy as awareness of their contribution to the overall economy has grown – along with a desire to measure it. Though definitions differ across countries, broadly speaking, creative industries focus on specific industries that are understood as creative (e.g. the arts, design, film), and the creative economy is a wider term that includes creative roles in creative and non-creative industries.² A core component of both concepts is intellectual property, which is a core mechanism through which creativity generates wealth.

The complexity of defining the creative economy reflects the complexity of policy making in this area, as it is cross-cutting of multiple traditional policy areas (e.g. economic, education, industrial, cultural policy). Higher education, and specifically enterprise education, is an important component of a strategy to unlock the potential of the creative economy.



With recognition of the importance of the creative economy to economic growth, as well as its social and cultural value, has come an interest in its weaknesses and challenges. A review of the creative industries to inform UK Government strategy in 2017³ emphasised the increasing importance of this sector to the economy. It also presented common challenges to maximising opportunity in this area, including:

- > Talent pipeline and barriers to entry. The pipeline of suitable talent is hindered by a range of factors including a poor understanding of the jobs available, and a lack of understanding of the skills and formal pathways into the sector.
- Skills gaps, shortages and training provision. Employers frequently report shortages in non-creative skills such as management, human resources, finance, digital, and marketing.
- > Business leadership and management capabilities. There is often an underinvestment or lack of focus on these skills in existing education programmes which can hinder the development of the sector.
- > Business size and scaling up. Due to their typically small size, businesses struggle to support increased productivity and growth.
- > Financial access and investment. Access routes to financial support and business advice are not optimised, hindering the ability of businesses to source and obtain finance.
- Intellectual property and innovation. Protecting intellectual property is an increasing challenge and one which must be tackled in order to promote productivity, growth and general business security.

The UK's creative industries are increasingly being emulated to boost economic growth throughout Europe, North America, Asia and South America, where there is significant potential to unlock the power of the creative economy through young creative entrepreneurship. The British Council is at the forefront of championing this international creative economy.

The Creative Spark countries

In the WE region, as was the case globally, creativity/ culture and the economy were seen as two distinct fields and there was a poor understanding their potential to drive economic growth. There has been an increased awareness amongst the participating countries governments of the importance of this sector and the role HE plays in facilitating it. Specifically, there has been a shift in participating governments that HE institutions can do more to encourage entrepreneurialism in the creative sector and better meet the skills needs of the creative economy.⁴

The participating countries have varying political, socio-economic, and geographic contexts. A notable strength of the programme was that it provided a framework within which national British Council teams could operate and apply their knowledge and expertise in their country's policy environment and priorities, HE sector context, and economic sector development priorities.

For instance, the countries have very different sectoral make up, which impacts on the types of creative entrepreneurial activities that will be relevant nationally.⁵

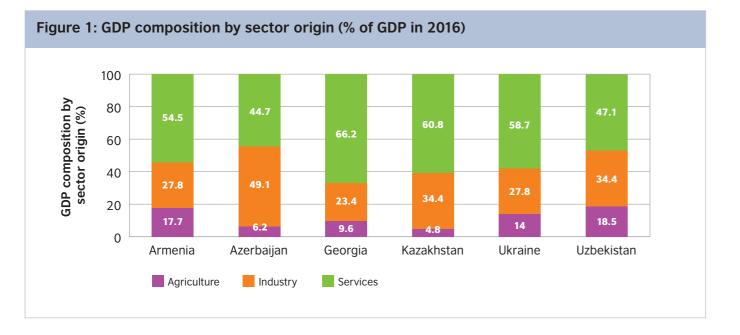
¹ The participating countries are part of the British Council's Wider Europe region (for further information see here). For the purpose of this report, we will refer to the participating countries as Wider Europe (WE) countries.

² For further discussion on the topic, see here.

³ Bazalgette, P. (2017) 'An Independent Review of the Creative Industries'.

⁴ British Council (2018) 'Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme'

⁵ British Council (2018) 'Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme'



The countries have very different rankings in the World Banks Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Starting a Business Index, implying very different regulatory and business culture contexts:⁶

Country	Ease of doing business index	Ease of starting a business index
Armenia	47	15
Azerbaijan	57	18
Georgia	9	4
Kazakhstan	36	41
Ukraine	76	52
Uzbekistan	74	11

- 7 British Council (2018) 'Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme'.
- 8 British Council (2018) 'Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme'

They have very different HE sectors in terms of types of institution and scale. For instance, in 2017, Azerbaijan had 20 HE institutions, including public and private institutions, Kazakhstan had 131 HE institutions including national, civil, private, international institutions. Ukraine had 8,881 HE institutions including academies, institutes, universities, colleges, and vocational schools.⁷

A review of the policy environment was carried out to inform the programme design.⁸ This review found that all participating countries had in place some sort of cultural strategy and that there was a growing interest and awareness of the economic potential of the culture and creative industries across the region. Specifically:

> The Armenian government was recognising the role and impact of culture in economic development. A large-scale government reform programme in the period 2017-2022, aimed at national sustainable development, included nine objectives for cultural policy, such as improving relevant legislation, increasing accessibility and proportionality, and certain sectoral focuses (cultural heritage, film, television, and social media).

- In Georgia, the Culture Strategy 2025 (approved in 2016), established Creative Georgia and Enterprise Georgia (business, invest and export divisions) to support the commercialisation of the creative industries and establish new entrepreneurial activity in the country, respectively. The Innovation and Technology Agency was established in 2014 to coordinate the innovation ecosystem.
- In Kazakhstan, the Concept of Cultural Policy, presented in 2014, demonstrated government recognition of culture as a key contributor to the economy. This policy included five mechanisms to improve competitiveness of the country's cultural sector including application of ICT technologies and development of creative clusters.
- In Ukraine, the Ministry of Culture established the Department of Cultural and creative industries in 2016 as part of the National Culture Strategy 2025. There were already hubs that encouraged collaboration between academia and industry. The Ukrainian Cultural Fund (2017) aimed to support organisations in the cultural sphere and reduce barriers to establishing a business.
- In Uzbekistan, in 2017 the President establishment a new Fund for the Development of Arts and Culture, aiming to develop the sector and to support cultural figures and their projects, and encourage internationalisation. Reforms were also taking place in the HE sector, including increasing academic autonomy and management systems.

The review identified a number of specific opportunities and challenges to the development of the Creative Industries.

Opportunities included:

- > A focus on developing, or strengthening existing, strong ICT infrastructure and community, an enabler for entrepreneurial activity (Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ukraine).
- > Existing educational programmes integrating management and art or culture subjects (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine).
- Specific SME or sectoral support, such as international tourism in Armenia, SME development initiatives in Georgia, film industry initiatives in Georgia, cultural heritage initiatives in Uzbekistan.

Challenges including those related to cultural sector, HE system and the wider context for development included:

- > Regulation or tax regimes that create barriers to entry for new businesses.
- In HE challenges include a lack of integration of entrepreneurial skills within institution strategies and curricula and a focus on theoretical over practical skills. These challenges contribute to a skills gap particularly in aspects such as management, strategic thinking and design thinking.
- > A lack of conceptual clarity of the cultural and creative industries.
- A lack of integration of creative and cultural policy into national level economic development strategies, and a lack of action plans for the development of HE.
- Conflict and instability in the region which draws policymaker focus and resources away from longer-term economic development and cultural sector planning.

⁶ British Council (2018) 'Creative Spark: Higher Education Enterprise Programme'.

What did the programme deliver?

The main focus of Creative Spark was the funding and development of 50 bilateral HE partnerships between the UK and the seven priority countries in Wider Europe.

- > In Year 1 (2018-19), 38 partnership projects received up to £50,000 to establish new creative economy partnerships.
- > In Year 2 (2019-20), 50 partnerships received up to £30,000.
- In Year 3 (2020-21), 50 partnerships received up to £20,000.
- In Year 4 (2021-22), 49 partnerships received up to £15,000.
- In Year 5 (2022-23), 40 partners were offered one year's membership to Enterprise Educators UK and 51 individuals were offered a place on the creative hubs training course.

Whilst the programme provided a framework and focus, partnerships had a high degree of autonomy to deliver activities according to national ambitions. Partnerships designed an action plan and applied for the grant funding annually. The types of activities they delivered included:

- > Enterprise and English language skills training.
- > Workshops to develop business ideas (including preparing for the Big Idea Challenge) and business pitch competitions.
- > Creative and enterprise hub development activities.
- Activities to develop relevant curricula, materials, and resources
- > Joint research activities.

Stakeholders that were engaged as part of the programme included current students, recent graduates, academic and non-academic university staff, and external stakeholders such as industry representatives, and creative entrepreneurs.

The programme also ran national and regional events, such as launch events, roadmap meetings, and the Big Idea Challenge, to generate cohesion and community between the partnerships and engage policy and decision makers.

The programme aimed to achieve outcomes at an institutional, systemic, and individual level:

- Institutional. To improve institutional capacity to deliver inclusive enterprise education through staff training, co-creation of curricula, developing incubation centres and creative hubs, influencing institutional policy, and to increase internationalisation.
- > Systemic. To influence the policy landscape to create an environment where creative entrepreneurship can prosper through policy dialogue and developing networks.
- Individual. To build entrepreneurial skills among young people through events, workshops, and competitions.

Creative Spark's design and delivery was informed by the British Council's extensive experience of developing transnational education (TNE) partnerships and supporting institutional collaboration. This includes expertise on value of TNE partnerships, the challenges and opportunities around greater collaboration in HE, and the impact of TNE partnerships on the participating institutions.

During the programme delivery a number of significant regional and global events took place that have impacted on its delivery. These are: **War and conflict.** On 24th February 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine initiated an ongoing war. This has impacted on how Ukrainian partners have engaged with the programme, with activities suspended from 24th February until the end of March 2022. The partnerships had to reconsider their activities due to safety and security concerns and in response to ongoing power outages. Despite the ongoing war, many Ukrainian partners have continued to work on Creative Spark activities with many notable achievements. From September 2020 to November 2020 there was a six-week period of military action in Nagorno-Karabakh, impacting on Armenia and Azerbaijan. This impacted on partnerships ability to deliver their activities due to internet outages and on national policy priorities.



> The Covid-19 pandemic. This caused substantial disruption to the HE sector and impacted on partnerships ability to deliver face to face activities to students, and to conduct mobilities or international exchanges. In response, partnerships and British Council teams worked together to restructure the action plans according to the programme aims. At a system level, responding to the pandemic and then recovery from the pandemic has been a policy priority and diverted resource away from other policy areas.

The programmes' **Theory of Change** outlines the who the project intended to benefit, its activities, outputs, and outcomes. It also gives the long term impact that the programme aimed to contribute to; to increase UK influence in Wider Europe, mutual prosperity, and security. About Creative Spark continued

Theory of Change

The programme benefitted

Universities

Creative hubs

Innovation centres

Public bodies and ministries

Cultural institutions







Partnering HE & Creative organisations and HE systems in the UK and CS countries experience:

Mainstreaming of inclusive enterprise education, leading to greater capacity to support innovation and business creation

System: engender trust

More supportive policy/ regulatory environment for the development of creative economies

and creative actors

Internationalisation

Sustained engagement and trust between UK & partner countries HE and creative actors



Long-term impact

Influence, prosperity, and security

Improved entrepreneurship ecosystem in the UK and partner countries, especially in relation to the creative economy

Improved life prospects for the youth, including women and disadvantaged individuals, reducing the risk that they fall into violence

Sustained engagement and trust between the UK and Wider Europe, leading to greater UK soft power and to mutual economic benefits

Evaluating Creative Spark

This report is based on data collected from the Creative Spark evaluation over the past five years. The evaluation included quantitative and qualitative components and aimed to assess the programmes contribution to its intended outcomes.

The quantitative elements included:

- An annual partnership survey to collect data on partnership activities, outputs and outcomes. This was completed by UK lead partners in Years 1-4 of the programme. It was completed by all partnerships (38 in Year 1, 50 in Years 2 and 3, and 49 in Year 4). In Year 5, a shorter survey was completed by Wider Europe lead partners. This collected data on their views of the whole programme. It was completed by 45 partnerships.
- An annual beneficiary survey to collect data on participants of Creative Spark activities. This collected output and outcome data for young people and institution staff who took part in activities in Years 1-4.

The qualitative elements included:

- > Remote semi-structured interviews with British Council country team staff (all years), lead partners' representatives (Years 1-4), strategic stakeholders including national policymakers, Enterprise Educators UK stakeholders, programme directors (Years 1, 2 and 5), creative hubs training attendees (Year 5) and beneficiaries (Years 1 and 2), and selected stakeholders on the benefits to the UK. Sampling of stakeholders was purposive and designed to capture all partnerships over the five years, and a range of perspectives on the programme.
- > A 'system-level tracker', a questionnaire with open-ended questions completed by British Council country teams on the system-level achievements of the programme.

The methodological approach made it possible for the monitoring and evaluation team to maximise the quality and quantity of the information collected given resource, timing and methodological constraints. Nevertheless, the approach has several limitations which should be considered in the interpretation of its findings:

Low base sizes: Varying response rates to the beneficiary survey meant that some countries had very low base sizes in some years, in particular in Years 1 and 4 (n=163 and n=289, respectively). These results should be treated with caution, especially when drawing conclusions about the data being representative of a national picture. Similarly, some demographic subgroups had particularly low numbers of respondents due to the smaller proportion of beneficiaries matching that profile engaging in activity (for example, those from rural locations). This prevents robust statistical analysis for these groups and again means any findings should be treated with caution.

Attribution of outcomes: Due to challenges in the attribution of outcomes and resource constraints preventing a full contextual assessment, our analysis does not estimate the precise contribution of Creative Spark to outcomes relative to other concurrent activities or external factors. Rather, it uses informed views from the programme's stakeholders and identifies the outcomes that Creative Spark contributes to as well as the nature and origin of those contributions. These caveats should guide the interpretation of the findings across the report, but particularly in the systemic outcomes section, where outcomes are the most indirect and more likely to be supported by several factors beyond Creative Spark (e.g. the breadth and depth of existing relationships between British Council in-country offices and policymakers).



Self-reported evidence: The evaluation relied mostly on self-reported evidence from funded partnerships and the British Council teams. The evidence of progress has been largely positive and there has been limited opportunities to independently assess and triangulate findings.

Improved enterprise education

> Internationalisation and expanded networks

Developed creative hubs capacity

> Improved awareness of inclusion

What impact did **Creative Spark have** on institutions?

Improving enterprise education

Part of the British Council's 2022-25 strategic focus is to strengthen the creative and economic development of the arts, culture, heritage, and creative industry sectors in the UK and internationally. Another strategic aim is to strengthen inclusive, quality education for all learners. Creative Spark combined British expertise in education and the creative sector to support the development of enterprise education in the WE region.⁹

In the long term, Creative Spark aimed to improve the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the WE countries and the UK, particularly that relating to the creative economy. At the institution level, Creative Spark expected HE institutions in Creative Spark countries to improve the quality and inclusiveness of their enterprise education offer, and to mainstream inclusive enterprise education as a way of generating greater capacity to support innovation and business creation.

Institutions developed, delivered, and embedded new curricula designed to build students' entrepreneurship skills

Creative Spark partners developed and delivered entrepreneurship short courses. embedded topics in existing creative curricula and developed new modules or programmes.

> Entrepreneurship short courses: Georgian Technical University and Keele University developed and delivered a 5-module short course on the topics including: Introduction to and challenges in entrepreneurship; Idea generation and business development, Team building, Communications and e-commerce, and Presenting ideas and pitches. Similarly, supported by Change School, the Academy of Public Administration in Uzbekistan ran short 5-day courses for lower management, covering the themes of innovation and employment. They have developed similar courses for young leaders, women leaders, and mixed groups.

There were mutual benefits for participating WE and UK institutions. This section focuses on benefits to WE institutions, see the section "Benefits for the UK" for a discussion of benefits for UK institutions



Creative Spark successfully funded and facilitated partnerships to improve their enterprise education. Over the 4-5 years, partnerships effectively shared expertise and worked together to:

- > Develop, deliver and embed new curricula to build students' entrepreneurship skills.
- > Build staff capacity in pedagogical methods for enterprise education, including research-led teaching, and enterprise education adjacent skills.
- > Generate greater awareness of the benefits of enterprise education and creative entrepreneurship among participating institutions leadership.

- > Entrepreneurship topics embedded in existing courses: the Middlesex University and Khazar University partnership embedded elements of entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation into other university curriculums including art, political science, and engineering.
- > New standalone modules and programmes: Tashkent State University of Economics opened a new course module Creating a winning business. adapted from their UK counterpart, London Metropolitan University. The module aims to develop entrepreneurial understanding among students to begin their own businesses. The University of Southampton and National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA) partnership have developed a bachelor's degree programme encompassing entrepreneurship with management, economics, and areas of global engineering.

193 new enterprise learning courses or modules developed by partnerships for young people over four years.

Including 35 in Armenia, 11 in Azerbaijan, 37 in Georgia, 24 in Kazakhstan, 2 in Kyrgyzstan, 68 in Ukraine and 16 in Uzbekistan.

UK partners provided expertise and curricula materials to support WE partners in developing curricula that reflect best practice. For

example, the Creating a winning business noted above was adapted from a similar popular module at London Metropolitan University. The University of Northampton shared their curricula and learning on Active blended learning principles to inform improvements in the BA Entrepreneurship programme at Almaty Management University. UK partners also reviewed WE partners' curricula materials and supported them in writing and publishing new course materials. The Uzbekistan State Institute of Art and Culture and Goldsmith University partnership wrote and published a course textbook to accompany their newly developed module Fundamentals of creative entrepreneurship in the field of culture and art.

44 This educational programme was developed through benchmarking with the top universities providing such kind of education, not only European but also UK universities taking their best practice with the benchmarking. ******

Creative Spark partners ensured the relevance of developed curricula by drawing on needs assessment and incorporating local context to. For example, Change School facilitated discussions with key stakeholders around how to make the curriculum relevant to the local context at the Academy of Public Administration. Westminster University supported the Business and Technology University to translate a textbook into Georgian (see other examples in Box 1).

44 It is really a good collection of materials that we have been provided... it's our inheritance from Creative Spark...apart from translation it was about contextualising them to local needs. 77 WE stakeholder

Partnerships achieved sustainability through embedding the modules, courses, and programmes they produced within universities' **curricula.** For instance, the *Creating a winning* business module developed by Tashkent State University of Economics and London Metropolitan University has been embedded within the university curriculum and will be taught beyond the Creative Spark programme. Similarly, NPUA's new bachelor's degree programme has become part of the curriculum. NPUA created an economic and management department specially to run the programme.

Armenia stakeholder

Box 1: Developing locally relevant and accessible curricula, Armenia

Yerevan State University and Nottingham Trent University developed an online interactive course suitable to both the UK and Armenia contexts by adapting the content to different audiences. It included 14 modules to teach students how to create their own start-ups with videos, reading and interactive questions for users.

The National Polytechnic University of Armenia partnered with the University of Southampton analysed labour market needs prior to developing their BA programme to ensure local relevance.

The Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology and Aston University developed a bilingual (English and Armenian) course manual on "Research Design and Science Commercialisation". In their next phase of the project (post- Creative Spark) the partnership is planning to disseminate these materials and make them more accessible to instructors in the region.

Box 2: Achieving accessibility and sustainability through online resources in Georgia

Creative Georgia and the University of East Anglia (UEA) developed a Creative Entrepreneurship Resource *Centre* as an online platform that pulled together free resources on entrepreneurship including books, guides and videos. Examples of the available resources include:

- years of Creative Spark.
- > A Creative Entrepreneurship Toolkit in Georgian designed to be a practical document for creative entrepreneurs, supporting learners to understand the different stages of creating a business (from idea generation, to budgeting, receiving funds and pitching).

These resources are accessible for all young entrepreneurs, whether they are attached to the university or not. The online platform creates a sustainable way for the partnership to showcase the learning materials they produced over the course of the programme.

Between Year 2 and Year 4 of the programme, partnerships delivered **189** "train the trainer" or educator training activities to a total of 4,623 attendees.

Between **17-26** partnerships worked on developing enterprise training materials for educators in years 1-4 of the programme.

Between **10-17** partnerships worked on developing university strategy in Years 1-4 of the programme.

Creative Spark partnerships also enabled sustainability and accessibility of enterprise education materials by making them available

online. A partnership from Kazakhstan (between Eurasian National University, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Birmingham) created a website where they featured online training courses focused on developing a practical understanding of the creative industries. It is accessible to students from any discipline and encompasses more generically applicable entrepreneurship education.

> 10 videos produced by UEA on processes of developing a business based on the bootcamps run in previous

Similarly, the partnership between the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy (UEPA) and the University of Bedfordshire has developed a nationally available online resource manual. It aims to bring together materials prepared by the partnership over the course of the programme, acting as a tutorial guide with learning and teaching materials for both students and lecturers.

Staff built capacity in pedagogical methods for enterprise education, including research-led teaching, and enterprise education adjacent skills

Creative Spark partners delivered different types of capacity building activities. These included:

Training the trainer activities. For example, Creative Georgia and University of East Anglia delivered a series of Train the Trainers sessions. By Year 3, Creative Georgia built the capacity to delivery their own training programme.

- > Capacity building workshops and seminar/ webinars. Partners from Queen Mary University ran workshops on how to publish research to develop the research capacity of attendees at Silk Road International University (SRIU), which was a key objective of SRIU.
- > Bootcamps. University of Portsmouth and Poltava University of Economics and Trade ran a three-day Bootcamp which was attended by 30 students, focusing on enterprise training, including individual assignments with support from programme instructors, culminating a project pitch.
- > Mentorship training. Brusov State University received a three day mentorship training run by Change School and a three day leadership and resilience training run by University of Essex.
- > Informal knowledge sharing. Partnerships shared learning around different topics in more ad hoc ways, during catch up calls or in person visits.

Since the beginning of Covid-19, partnerships adopted online tools and methods to carry out capacity building activities. Many partnerships gained valuable lessons from shifting to new online approaches. For example, Georgian Technical University and Keele University found that delivering sessions online allowed them to reach larger audiences. SRIU, People First International and Queen Margaret University found that online working facilitated more continuous discussions and delivery compared to in-country visits. Nevertheless, these partnerships felt that maintaining in-person meetings remained important to build relationships and share learning in a cross-cultural context.

Capacity building activities resulted in WE partners adopting new pedagogical methods and improving the guality of their enterprise education offer. Two partnerships in Uzbekistan transformed their teaching model from a more orthodox approach (with teachers teaching materials from a textbook) to a model where teachers take on the role of facilitators or coaches. This model promoted critical thinking and facilitated creativity in students. SRIU gained knowledge around how to develop content and lessons for

creative entrepreneurship education and how to build assessment into lessons.

44 Thanks to Creative Spark ... the pedagogy that we now teach is much more discovery based, not just telling. **77**

Armenia stakeholder

We have changed the approach to conducting lectures: less theory and more practice. 77

Ukraine stakeholder

WE partners developed research capabilities with the aim to improve the quality of enterprise education as well as their university profile. A partnership from Ukraine (between the UEPA and the University of Bedfordshire) and a partnership from Kazakhstan (between Eurasian National University, Oxford Brookes University and Birmingham University) worked on research-led teaching. HE staff in these institutions learnt how to use research in developing training materials, as well as how to use research publications to showcase good practice and make institutions stand out.

44 It [research-led teaching] has potential to really make the universities in the region stand out. They have great ambitions to move up the ranks building on the UK experience. And I think this project helped in that direction. "

Kazakhstan stakeholder

WE partners built capacity in broader skills adjacent to Enterprise Education such as skills in grant application and administrative functions, which enhanced the quality of Enterprise Education. For instance, Tashkent State Technical University (TSUT) and the National Institute of Fine Art and Design (NIFAD) received mentoring from their UK partners (London South Bank University and Change School) on how to source and target external funding opportunities through international agencies, and local and national government. Consequently, NIFAD successfully secured funding from the United Nations Procurement Division. Creative Georgia improved their administrative and management skills through implementing training in practice after completing training of trainer's activities.

Box 3: Capacity development on intellectual property in Kyrgyzstan

Partners from Coventry University delivered training sessions to the in Central Asian Crafts Supporting Association Resource Centre (CACSARC) in Kyrgyzstan focused on the three core topics of marketing, intellectual property, and heritage. The training and development materials were targeted to Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) entrepreneurs.

There are few organisations globally that work on the combination of these topics, and CACSARC found the training to be a unique and useful opportunity to develop their knowledge in this area. This included a stronger understanding around:

- > How to protect the rights of individual entrepreneurs.
- > How to protect the rights of communities for traditional heritage.
- How to negotiate between private business and communities.

As a result of the trainings, CASCARC understood how to address existing issues experienced by heritage entrepreneurs. They improved their staff capacity and the quality of their enterprise education.

To ensure sustainability in these outcomes, the partnership created an online hub that brought together resources on the three core topics in Kyrgyz, Russian and English. Moreover, the hub contained recordings of translated trainings, diaries/video diaries produced by mentors, and an online ICH entrepreneurship toolkit.

⁴⁴ Once you learn something theoretical it's one thing, but when you actually implement it it's the other... Having lots of experience, actually doing the job and implementing and managing things is one of the key things we have learned: like how to do administrative things, how to manage events and do different things at the same time. 77

Georgia stakeholder

Capacity building activities were designed to foster sustainability through cascaded learning to the institution and wider stakeholders. Training

of trainer activities were particularly effective in achieving this. The University of East Anglia delivered a series of Train the Trainers bootcamps to trainers at Creative Georgia. By Year 3, Creative Georgia built the capacity to delivery their own training programme. Similarly, Change School delivered trainings to Academy of Public Administration instructors. The instructors applied this learning to deliver webinars to local district representatives, "Deputy Hakims", about how local communities can develop entrepreneurship and embed innovative ideas and technologies. In this way, the partnership cascaded learning to the local community level.

44 Many of our academic staff were involved in ToT [train the trainers] and are much more capable of teaching entrepreneurship and innovations in their courses. 77

Georgia stakeholder

44 The reason why [training of trainers] it's so important? Because we only work with 10 instructors, those 10 work with the next 200, then the next 200 can reach even more people... there's a long, cascaded teaching that happens.... it is not just teaching students... there are more layers of how this knowledge is transmitted down to people at the grassroots levels. ******

UK stakeholder

Creative Spark contributed to generating greater awareness of the benefits of enterprise education and creative entrepreneurship among participating institutions leadership

3 in **4** partnerships in Year 4 felt that their partnership had supported institutional system change or reform in their institution.

92% of all UK lead partners agreed that their partnership had improved the quality of HE at their WE partner's institution more broadly.

Creative Spark succeeded in increasing awareness of the benefits of enterprise education for decision makers within WE

institutions. Decision makers from HE institutions engaged in Creative Spark activities have experienced a shift towards a more "entrepreneurial mindset" within their institution. Creative Spark partnerships have also expanded awareness and interest in entrepreneurship and enterprise education through engaging decision makers from different institutions (e.g., beyond business schools) and through developing learning materials accessible to broader audiences.

For example, the University of East Anglia and Creative Georgia developed a Creative Entrepreneurship Resource Centre, an online platform which included a variety of learning materials and toolkits on creative entrepreneurship accessible beyond the university.

We started thinking over the…entrepreneurial mindset to be developed within our community, and this will open wider prospectives in the future. 카

WE stakeholder

Creative Spark has also directly influenced institutional reform. Some partnerships have made changes to university strategies to modernise and improve their enterprise education offer (see Box 4).

We have experienced really good benefits from Creative Spark. We have changed our internal policy as well as thinking around what social entrepreneurship is- we have managed to embed it is as a professional skill for our students and it is now a part of our activities at our university. **77** Ukraine stakeholder

Box 4: Developing locally relevant and accessible curricula, Armenia

The newly appointed rector of Lviv National Academy of Arts (LNAA) in Ukraine asked the Creative Spark partnership to develop a comprehensive strategy for the whole institution. Their partners PPV knowledge Network Ltd and Cardiff University assisted LNAA to put together a faculty-based strategy group (including internal and external stakeholders), benchmarked against European models.

The new institutional strategy was developed through a collaborative process, which included internal strategy sessions and gathering data from different university stakeholders. LNAA started implementing the re-organisation outlined in the strategy to open **new departments and education programmes**. They also hired a new project officer to work on fundraising opportunities. LNAA decision makers found the strategy and the process through which it was developed to be very useful as it brought different faculties together and created open channels for cooperation.

Developing creative and enterprise hubs

Creative hubs are physical or virtual spaces that bring enterprising people together who work in the creative and cultural industries.¹⁰ These spaces can take on many forms but their main purpose is to nurture business ideas from inception to business launch and beyond. It is about supporting prospective entrepreneurs to take an idea, assess its market potential and provide them with the tools, resources, networks, and information to make that business idea succeed.

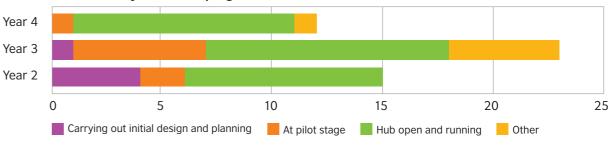
Partnerships developed hubs through developing bespoke resources, sharing knowledge, and investing in staff

To develop their hubs partnerships:

- > Contacted potential partner institutions in order to learn from their experiences of how creative hubs work.
- > Strengthened staff capacity through trainings and peer learning.
- > Enhanced the educational resources available through the hubs through curricula development activities and connecting to different creative departments.
- > Worked with UK partners to develop resources. For instance, an Armenian partner developed and published a manual on how to boost entrepreneurship through a creative hub, aimed at institutions with new or developing creative hubs.

Figure 2: Number of partnerships working on developing hubs each year

A total of 30 partnerships worked on developing hubs, with between 12 and 23 working on developing their hub in different years of the programme



10 Creative Hubs webpage, British Council https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/projects/hubs/

Creative Spark effectively supported partnerships to develop creative and enterprise hubs through the programme with between 30 partnerships working on hub development at some point during the programme (see Figure 2). Some hubs successfully supported businesses to develop revenue and profit, with nearly half a million pounds of profit generated over the course of the programme.

Hubs made institutions more attractive, enhanced their enterprise education offers, and generated revenue

Partnerships found that hubs:

- > Increase the attractiveness of creative education to students within their institution and within their country.
- > Improve the development opportunities available to students, helping them to apply theoretical learning to their own creative start-up ideas.

Businesses supported by Creative Spark incubators generated revenue and profit (totals given are from Years 1 to 4).

- > Total revenue generated: £1,936,970
- > Total profit generated: £475,196

Improving inclusivity

- > An important space to bring together resources from different sectors and disciplines to enable ideation and innovation. For example, the objective for a Ukrainian partnerships creative hub was to enable knowledge transfer and experiences of individuals from different creative fields.
- > Generating visibility and raising awareness of the value of creative industries within their institution.
- > Improve their enterprise education offer by providing interesting and engaging extracurricular activities.

The knowledge and expertise of UK partners on creative hub development was highly

valued by WE partners. Hubs were also seen as a strong channel for ongoing collaboration either at a national or international level. For instance, Enactus in Kyrgyzstan has plans to establish joint programmes with a UK-based creative hub, and a partner in Uzbekistan plans to establish a network of creative hubs within the country.

The creative hubs training

In the final year of the programme, Creative Spark stakeholders took part in a bespoke training on developing a creative hub. Participants ranged from those in the early stages of planning a hub to having a 'mature' hub of three years or older. The training was designed to be applicable to stakeholders across different stages of this journey.

Businesses supported by Creative Spark incubators generated revenue and profit (totals given are from Years 1 to 4).

- > Total revenue generated: **£1,936,970**
- > Total profit generated: £475,196

The training was an opportunity for participants to learn from other institutions, obtain good practice examples to see, first-hand, how hubs are run in the UK and what the key success factors are.

The training enabled participants to:

- > Gain a working understanding of the concept of a creative hub. Including ideas on how to use space and equipment, the added value that hubs bring, and thinking about how hub users will engage with the space. This was particularly helpful for participants in the early stages of developing a creative hub.
- > Expand their networks and potential collaboration opportunities. The training enabled partners at varying stages of hub development to meet and network, both across participating WE countries and between UK and WE countries.
- > Cascade learning to other staff. Participants cascaded learning to other institutions in their countries on the use of digital tools (Kyrgyzstan) and delivered training on topics they had learned on the study visit (Azerbaijan).
- > Gave participants greater confidence to focus on the implementation of creative hubs within their institution. For instance, learning how to create an enabling environment for young entrepreneurs and the importance of helping students to strategically plan their initiatives and mitigate against potential risks.

Box 5: Exposure to different creative EQ hub models

A Kyrgyz partner found that the training introduced them to new and diverse creative hub models and the role these different models play in developing the creative entrepreneurship ecosystem. For instance the Steam House creative hub at Birmingham City University through which students are paid to develop solutions for local companies. They plan to implement similar models in Kyrgyzstan.

Inclusive entrepreneurship is an important component to the development of the creative industries and entrepreneurship sector, and a priority of the British Council. The development of businesses by people from under-represented and disadvantaged groups helps to generate jobs; thus fighting social and financial exclusion and stimulating economic growth.¹¹

However, there are gaps that exist with regards to the inclusivity of entrepreneurship. Women are almost half as likely as men to be involved in starting a new business, and disadvantaged groups are, on average, less likely to operate high-growth firms because they lack the skills, networks, and access to finance required for business growth. The way in which the creative industries operate creates a variety of barriers for those considering entering work in the creative sector. The sector is heavily reliant on unpaid work experience and internships; thus favouring those with the financial resources to take part in such work.

Creative Spark aimed to ensure that programme activities were accessible in terms of gender, language and rural access, disability, as well as other disadvantaged groups. It did this through delivering trainings around Equality,

What Creative Spark participants thought of its inclusivity:

82% agreed that people of all backgrounds are respected and valued in Creative Spark activities.

75% thought Creative Spark activities were sufficiently advertised and had enough information to encourage diverse participation.

79% felt that Creative Spark training materials were accessible to all, regardless of gender, disability, social status, or location.

71% said they could relate to the role models, speakers and trainers and they represented the diversity of society (in terms of gender, disability, social status).

11 OECD/European Union (2019). The missing entrepreneurs 2019: Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship.

Diversity, and Inclusion for partner institutions, alongside activities such as a conference focusing on how inclusion can be an integral part of university strategy, inclusive curriculums, and student support. The programme also promoted inclusivity through the partnerships themselves by working with UK institutions who have strong inclusivity agendas and policies.

The programme was somewhat successful in embedding inclusion across its approach. Activities were "open to all" but some partnerships did not make specific efforts to understand the needs of different groups or put measures in place to address any barriers. Some partnerships took a more comprehensive and holistic approach to inclusion with representation and accessibility considered in the materials produced and events held. In some cases, barriers to entry were deeply embedded societal norms or infrastructural and beyond the scope of partnerships. It is important that work on inclusivity is tailored and specific to the operating context.

The programme was successful in achieving strong female attendance of its activities with women making up 50% of participants over the four years (14% of participants did not give their gender).

Some partnerships took a holistic inclusive approach, whilst others utilised existing policies and practices

Creative Spark partnerships took active or passive approaches to inclusion. Partners who were more active in their approach put in place specific measures to facilitate access of specific groups, for example, through targeted advertising and marketing activity. These partners often demonstrated a holistic view of inclusion and considered multiple types of inclusion.

Active measures included:

- > Working with disability advisors to understand barriers and facilitate access (London MET and Tashkent State University of Economics).
- > Using large font sizing and subtitles in presentations and video content for people with visual impairment. (Newcastle and Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication).
- > The partnership between Atameken and Capital City College Group selected participating institutions according to their location or who had a high proportion of disadvantaged students. The partnership also developed learner profiles in order to tailor materials to different target groups.
- > Using online events to reach poorer socioeconomic rural areas.

- > The Central Asian Crafts Supporting Association Resource Centre (CACSARC) and Coventry University partnership in Kyrgyzstan dedicated notable resource to translating all the materials in their online hub into Kyrgyz, Russian and English to ensure language inclusivity.
- > Targeting social media communications to rural locations or including rural location as a participant selection criteria. For instance, the Simonian Educational Foundation (TUMO Studios) and Norwich University of the Arts partnership ran an initiative to develop entrepreneurship educational materials and disseminate these across Armenia via TUMO boxes as an educational initiative, including rural areas.

Other partnerships relied upon existing university inclusivity policies. These partnerships stated that their activities were open and accessible to all but did not put any additional measures in place to enable access.

Partnerships focused on different aspects of inclusion:

68% on sex or gender.

45% on rural or hard to reach areas.

19% on socioeconomic status.

Box 6: Identifying students with disabilities to participate in Ukraine

The V.N. Karazin Kharkiv University's and Anglia Ruskin University partnership took a proactive approach to including students with disabilities in their activities. The partnership ran a training course with students on how to pitch their social entrepreneurship ideas, which included challenges around supporting people with disabilities.

Recognising the lack of data on students with disabilities at a faculty level, they worked with the students' union to create a targeted campaign. This may have contributed to students feeling more able to disclose their disabilities, as this was the first year where two participants reported having disabilities.

The partnership noted that students with disabilities were able to participate actively in the face-to-face classes and one of them was able to start their own business.

The Tashkent institute of Textile and Light industry and University of Central Lancashire partnership have integrated gender empowerment into their entrepreneurship education strategy. They are planning to run a series of high-profile courses that aim to reach a target of 6,000 women. These will be attended by heads of relevant departments, senior NGO figures, and heads of secondary schools. They aim to break down barriers to entry for women and display strong female role models.

Making materials and events gender inclusive

There was a greater focus on promoting womens' inclusion. Some partnerships took specific measures to ensure that materials were gender inclusive or that activities were tailored to reaching and supporting women's needs. Such measures included:

- > Ensuring the representation of professional female role models in materials and at events, for instance a webinar series delivered by and for female entrepreneurs.
- > Using specific communication channels to reach women (including those from low socioeconomic background or single mothers).

Box 8: Engaging community networks to reach female entrepreneurs

Some institutions leveraged local community networks in order to engage potential female entrepreneurs in their activities. These included:

- > the Kingston University, Donetsk National Technical University and Kharkiv Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education partnership, who contacted a women's financial club to engage women in their incubator. They achieved 80% female participation.
- > the Uzbekistan State Institute of Art and Culture aimed to facilitate women's participation through sending communications via partner women groups including, the Business Women's Association of Uzbekistan and the Committee on Women's Affairs.

Box 7: Integrating gender empowerment into entrepreneurship education in Uzbekistan

- > The development of activities to support the needs of women in entrepreneurship including:
 - A conference aimed at supporting young women.
 - A Women Tech Hub workshop aimed at reducing barriers to entry for women in the technology industry, and developing female technology education and training concepts.
 - A women's business accelerator incubator activity aimed at supporting a female entrepreneurs and displaced families.
- > Ensuring that there was an equal number of men and women (or majority women) on the partnership core team.

Facing structural barriers to inclusivity

The programme was less successful in reaching rural areas, language inclusion and inclusion of disabled students.

- > Only 2% of face-to-face activities delivered outside of a city or town, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan.
- > 11% of activities had attendees with any form of disability (physical/learning/mental health) in Year 2, 16% in Year 3, and 9% in Year 4.

Partnerships faced difficulty in reaching and recording the attendance of students with disabilities due to social stigma. For around a quarter of all activities, partners did not know whether any participants considered themselves disabled. There remain notable social stigmas around disability in many of the participating countries which may lead to under reporting this in surveys or application forms. Additionally, this makes it more difficult for partnerships to engage with students with disabilities and tailor content to their needs.

In some cases the built environment of the city or institution presented a barrier to students with mobility issues. Some partnerships felt that running courses online could improve access. WE partners faced different barriers to inclusion than their UK partners. It is important that work to promote inclusive education is tailored to the national social context in order to be relevant.

Covid-19 restrictions hindered efforts to deliver activities in rural areas. Some partnerships used digital methods in order to mitigate this, with a partnership in Kazakhstan highlighting how the move to digital education platforms allowed for a greater range of students to access entrepreneurship education. However, there are challenges to this approach in areas that have low internet connectivity.

Connecting people across local, national and international networks is a key strategic priority of the British Council. The British Council runs a variety of programmes globally to establish and strengthen strategic partnerships between HE partners in the UK and other countries. Creative Spark aimed to develop sustained engagement between the UK and WE, to develop mutual economic benefits in the long term, and contribute to UK soft power. At the partnership level, Creative Spark intended to increase the national and international networks and collaboration capacity of partnering HE and creative organisations, and to facilitate internationalisation within these institutions.

Creative Spark has facilitated a large expansion of partner institutions' networks at a local, national,

Creating added value through expanded local, national, and international networks

The programme directly funded and supported the establishment of partnerships between UK and WE. Partnerships were encouraged to focus on securing long-term sustainability by the tapered funding structure (greater funding in earlier years, to allow partnerships to develop strong foundations, which gradually decreased). Building stronger networks, and expanding their collaboration locally, nationally, and internationally was a key part of securing sustainability.

Practically, Creative Spark supported partners to expand their networks through:

- **> Roadmap meetings:** each Creative Spark country held an annual meeting where partners shared best practice relating to the development of enterprise education and the creative industries. These meetings allowed Creative Spark institutions to network with policy and decision makers, and likeminded enterprise education institutions.
- > Webinars and seminars: hosting webinars and seminars emerged as key mechanisms through which Creative Spark institutions built and



and international level with 2.605 new connections being made over the course of the programme. These new connections brought notable and varied benefits to participating institutions, and created new opportunities:

- > Connections with industry collaborations enhanced staff capacity and student learning by unlocking new, relevant teaching methods and developing internships opportunities.
- > Connections with likeminded institutions facilitated knowledge sharing, chances for collaboration, and exposure to new international networks.
- > Connections with local government and stakeholders raised institutions profiles' locally and opened up sources of funding.

expanded their relationships with local, national, and international stakeholders (see Box 9) and raise their institutional profile among a wider audience.

> Industry collaboration: some partnerships worked with industry stakeholders and invited companies to sponsor competitions to build connections with the private sector. For instance, Tashkent Institute of Textile and Light Industry (TITLI) and University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) developed an Industry Collaboration Model engaging Bukhara Cotton Textile (BCT) Denim. Similarly, Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System invited Mars Kazakhstan to sponsor their case competition.

A total of **2,605** connections for Creative Spark institutions. Including:

606 with participating UK organisations.

1,114 within the local country of organisations.

465 with organisations in other Creative Spark countries.

420 with organisations in the rest of the world.

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Box 9: Establishing local networks through webinar events in Azerbaijan

Khazar University partnering with Middlesex University launched a webinar series on *The nature of entrepreneurship* and *How to set up a business*, bringing in academics and start up founders as guest speakers. They also ran a monthly webinar series on *Women in Entrepreneurship* bringing together female entrepreneurs from around the world. These series were well attended by stakeholders outside of Khazar university, both from Azerbaijan and the UK, allowing Khazar University to expand their international connections.

Collaborations with industry brought benefits to faculties and students by unlocking different ways of teaching and creating networks between students and employers. For example, through the *Industry Collaboration Model*, BCT Denim delivered employer-led workshops as part of TITLI's fashion course. This improved the quality of the course by bridging the gap between academics and local industry and providing networking opportunities for staff and students. Similarly, Mars Kazakhstan offered an internship opportunity as a prize for the case competition.

What we've been doing is looking through the Creative Spark programme to share that knowledge and share that process....to develop (industry) partnerships in Uzbekistan. That again will benefit their students, through student networking opportunities and give bridges to recruitment in Uzbekistan, which obviously helps the regional and national economy. **

UK stakeholder

New commercial connections secured financial support for partnerships during

the programme. In Year 4, a quarter (24%) of partnerships benefitted from commercial relationships with organisations outside of their Creative Spark partnerships. Overall, a total of £1,488,229 of additional funding was secured (£1,449,325 was secured by the Enactus and City University Partnership and £38,904 by the remaining partnerships), and a further £25,006 pledged. Securing funding will be important for the long term sustainability of partnerships (see "Continuing collaboration: leveraging the Creative Spark experience" section).

Institutions gained local exposure and secured financial support from local government partnerships in terms of sustainability. For example, the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy (UEPA) and the University of Bedfordshire partnership worked with 11 departments of Kharkiv City Council who pledged financial support to the partnership's start-up competition and advertised it on their local TV channel. The partnership attracted City Council sponsors through the competition and was able to expand by drawing in another education institution and an NGO of young scientists.

Local networks also enabled institutions to maximise their impact on the local community, as demonstrated by the following case study in Kazakhstan (see Box 10).



New connections between institutions facilitated knowledge sharing, generating innevative ideas and practice. For example

innovative ideas and practice. For example, Intangible Cultural Heritage entrepreneur mentors from the CACSARC and Coventry University partnership were invited to take part in a knowledge sharing event at the University of Malta. In Armenia, partnerships collaborated with other local universities to deliver joint trainings, including the Armenian National Engineering Laboratories and Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction.

 When you have a mix of people from a tech background, and from social sciences and humanities, great start- up ideas can be realised.

Armenia stakeholder

Institutions gained exposure of their work and new opportunities by participating in new national and international networks. For instance, Georgian Technical University was invited to deliver an entrepreneurship day at Batumi State University because of the knowledge and networking experience they gained through their Creative Spark partnership. Kazakh-British Technical University, Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory, and Reading had the opportunity to present a paper at an international conference and their joint-research featured in a Forbes magazine article.¹²

Box 10: Working with local and national government to maximize relevance and effectiveness in Kazakhstan

Two partnerships in Kazakhstan built connections with local government bodies. This ensured their projects were informed by local perspectives and to maximise impact and sustainability.

Baishev University (partnered with Kazakh-Russian International University and the University of Lincoln) held a roundtable discussion on the *Challenges and perspectives of youth enterprise in the region* attended by the local Atameken, the Youth Department of the local government, and Bastau Business project (a National Atameken programme) alumni. The event focused on identifying the main problems and opportunities for the development of youth entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan and in the Aktobe region specifically.

The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Capital City College Group engaged two bodies responsible for vocational education to support and inform their project: Talap (under Ministry of Enlightenment) and Atameken. These partners were selected to maximise the project's impact and achieve sustainability because of their respective roles in ensuring quality and engagement of colleges (Talap) and ensuring educations' alignment with industry needs (Atameken).

Institutions increased their capacity to collaborate internationally

Through capacity building activities (for example on international research collaborations, see "<u>Staff built</u> <u>capacity in pedagogical methods...</u>" section) and their wider experience of working with UK partners, WE partners have improved their understanding of how to work with UK and international institutions in cross-cultural settings. For instance in terms of communication style and preferences, institutional requirements, how to resolves differences in expectations. This facilitated ongoing collaboration between WE with UK partners and for WE partners to further expand their international networks.

⁴⁴ The project sets a certain quality standard in how things are being done, from research to internal communications, and reporting, and that helps us reflect as an institution on what our standards are, how we how we operate and how we collaborate with partners. ⁷⁷

Kazakhstan stakeholder

⁴⁴ We're hugely aware of the possibilities that Creative Spark creates for universities, partnerships and students. We want to capitalise on the knowledge expertise and transfer the project gives us. It has shown how a project can be successful internationally and opened many doors for us. ⁷⁷ Azerbaijan stakeholder

403 educators took part in study visits in Years 2-4 of the programme.

Continuing collaboration: leveraging the Creative Spark experience

Access to funding and resources is a key barrier to continued collaboration for any partnership. Creative Spark facilitated access to and development of cutting-edge resources, access to new networks, and built institutional capacity. Wider Europe institutions are leveraging this experience to secure funding for further international collaborations.

> Enactus Kyrgyzstan, who partner with City University and Change School won funding from the EU to create grassroot creative enterprise hubs at the village/local government level. They plan to bring together a group of experts from their Academic Advisor network built during Creative Spark to support the European Development Bank with research into design thinking methodology.

Partners were positive about the prospect of sustainability in their partnerships.

86% of UK partners said their partnership would continue beyond Creative Spark.

84% of WE partners said their partnership with the UK partner was likely to continue beyond Creative Spark.

91% of WE partners said partnerships with national partners were likely to continue beyond Creative Spark.

> The University of Bedfordshire supported the UEPA to secure two grants via the House of Europe Programme. One project was based on direct learning from the University of Bedfordshire on the use of Lego simulation and the development of entrepreneurship and business skills training materials using gamification.

44 [To secure this type of funding, it] requires a lot of evidence of what have you done in the past and have you done it at aggregated level and have you worked with multiple institutions? And can you do it at scale? And I think because we...have worked with between 7 to 10 universities at a time and with a fair amount of outreach. I think that credibility transfers when you're saying that we want to do it at a local government level. "

Kyrgyzstan stakeholder

Partnerships planned to continue their collaborations by:

- > Student and staff mobility: including through the Turing Scheme, Erasmus+, and bilateral arrangements for staff and student exchanges and knowledge sharing.
- **Research collaborations:** some partnerships plan to conduct and publish joint research beyond the programme. For example, the University of Bedfordshire in partnership with the UEPA have taken a survey of educators of social entrepreneurship and prepared to publish a scientific article on this topic.
- > Sharing academic resources: some partnerships have made arrangements to continue sharing learning materials and knowledge, for example, through online portals, online courses, seminars/webinars. conferences and other events (see "Improving Enterprise Education" section).
- > Joint degrees and educational programmes: some partnerships are exploring pathways to establish formal commercial agreements for TNE partnerships such as franchised delivery, joint/dual degrees and twinning arrangements (see Box 11).

Box 11: Developing new TNE pathways in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

Developing new TNE pathways is a complex process. For some partnerships, collaborating on the programme – learning about ways of working and developing shared curricula – has provided a solid basis to initiate this process.

In Uzbekistan a number of partnerships are working towards developing joint-degrees and other TNE pathways.

- > London Metropolitan University and Tashkent State University of Economics partnership in Uzbekistan are exploring the possibility of creating a joint, accredited degree programme following on from the curriculum development work they have done under Creative Spark.
- > The University of Central Lancashire and Tashkent institute of Textile and Light industry have put forward a business case for a franchise model to support enterprise curriculum development.

The British Council team in Uzbekistan is continuing to facilitate further TNE pathways. Their Creative Spark closure event, in collaboration with University of Westminster, brought programme institutions together to discuss future TNE opportunities between the UK and Uzbekistan institutions.

In Kazakhstan, the University of Lincoln, Kazakh-Russian International University and Baishev University have won a British Council INTERLINKS grant and received additional finance to further develop their TNE strategy aimed at exploring options for joint online entrepreneurship degrees. Similarly, Almaty Management University and the Kazakh-American Free University are looking for joint-degree or franchising opportunities with UK partners.

Creative Flame: the EEUK Network Membership

Under Creative Flame (CF) 40 Creative Spark partners were given one year's membership to Enterprise Educators UK (EEUK). This enabled CF members to participate in knowledge exchange and networking opportunities.

The key objectives of CF were to:

- > Develop existing networks of Creative Spark institutions and to extend their reach to the wider, international community of Enterprise Education stakeholders.
- > Create an open channel of communication to facilitate knowledge exchange and best practice showcasing between the UK and WE institutions in both directions.
- > Build pathways for sustaining the networks of CF members and test the possibility of scaling a similar offer to other regions.

CF members were given the access to:

> Enhancing the Curriculum toolkit: a rich set of resources on developing enterprise education curricula, including case studies and how to guides. CF members were invited to submit their own resources to showcase best practice in WF countries.

> Access to funding for professional development and partnership projects.

This includes:

- A personal and professional development fund for entrepreneurship educators and practitioners, of up to £500. 6 out of the 10 applications received this year were CF members.
- A multi-organisational project fund of up to £5,000 for entrepreneurship projects.
- The Creative Spark Legacy Fund to support the continuation of Creative Spark collaborations.

- > Ongoing online engagement. Monthly calls co-chaired by EEUK directors, with key discussion topics to be suggested by CF members.
- > Enterprise Exchange Events. Regular EEUK membership events (either online or hybrid) to exchange best practice via presentations and discussions. CF members can attend and lead sessions. Three out of the 16 applications to lead session came from CF members, and the committee has approved Georgia National University to host a hybrid event in November 2023.
- International Entrepreneurship Educators Conference. An annual EEUK global conference to be held in September 2023. CF members are invited to attend (for a fee) and to submit proposals to lead sessions.
- ⁴⁴ Based on the feedback that we've had so far with the Creative Flame members, I think it's a really strong offer. I think what we're doing is of benefit. ⁷⁷

UK stakeholder

Creative Flame is designed to encourage and enhance cross country collaboration within the WE region by creating a platform for WE institutions to establish networks. EEUK is planning to set up "cluster groups" to enable CF member-led discussions on partnership and collaboration opportunities nationally, regionally, or internationally. CF members have used EEUK social media groups to connect with new partners. These collaborations are expected to enhance the entrepreneurship ecosystem across WE.

By providing access to small funding pots, CF aims to further increase the capacity and appetite of members to continue to apply for similar funding.

44 We've given them a platform to stay connected and for them to explore future opportunities together. **

UK stakeholder

Creative Flame is enabling partnerships to continue to build on the foundations they developed during Creative Spark, contributing to sustaining regional and international partnerships.

⁴⁴ I'd be really interested to see how many lifelong friendships have been created, because that's true trust, you know, and it doesn't matter where we all move on to whichever institution we would go to, we would take that friendship with us. ⁷⁷ UK stakeholder

The programme intends to bring benefit the UK by enabling EEUK to continue expanding internationally. Through CF, EEUK has been able to test different ideas about how they could work with international partners in different regions. For example, by setting up a subregional committee to continue to engage CF members. If this is successful it can be used as a model of engagement in other regions.

⁴⁴ [Creative Flame] rocketed us into a much wider landscape, like a much bigger geographical landscape. And I think that that is going to continue to have repercussions for the organisation, the sort of things that we can do as well. I think it's involved quite a significant change in mindset, if you like, in terms of what we are as an organisation. ⁹⁷

UK stakeholder

Creative Flame has also been important in influencing WE stakeholders' perceptions of the UK. In the context of Brexit, there have been some perceptions that the UK is "closing its doors" to collaborating in Europe. CF aims to show that the UK is committed to international collaboration in the WE region.

What this network proves is that we are an open community that we give and not just take.
 UK stakeholder

Looking forward: Learning on developing sustainable partnerships

The British Council aims to develop long-term partnerships built on trust between institutions in the UK and around the world. In developing partnerships between HE institutions from the UK and WE countries, Creative Spark can contribute learning on key factors that support the development of strong and sustainable partnerships. The learning in this section draws on both strengths of the programme and challenges faced.

Developing relationships built on shared goals and trust

- > Having shared goals: working on shared goals and objectives allowed partners to better focus resources while maintaining an agile and adaptable approach.
- > Focusing on mutual benefits: Creative Spark partnerships were mutually beneficial as WE and UK partners gained learning from each other and both parties expanded their knowledge and expertise in enterprise education. This created strong foundations for shared partnership goals and equitable relationships.
- We were talking to each other in the same language... Instead of teaching us, we are discussing at the same level, the common problems, and solutions. From this perspective, I can be sure that this collaboration between our universities and UK universities... mutual conversation can be and should be established. ⁷⁷

Armenia stakeholder

> Understanding partnership needs and strength: it was important for partners to understand the unique strengths of their partner institution and the differences in cultural contexts. This enabled Creative Spark partnerships to develop relevant and successful partnership activities and adapt to each other's ways of working together.

- Enabling some flexibility in programme design: the structure of Creative Spark enabled each partnership to design their own partnership activities, which meant that they could address relevant institutional needs and draw on specific institutional strengths.
- ⁴⁴ This programme was so effective because it allowed each university, each partnership, to design the programme themselves. ⁷⁷
 Kyrgyzstan stakeholder
- > Developing positive personal relationships: where partnerships worked well, they involved positive personal relationships between key players based on reciprocity, mutual respect, and clear communication. Personal links between partners strengthen mutual understanding and trust.



Supporting communication needs

- The role of the British Council: British Council country teams played an important role in facilitating initial communication between UK and WE partners. WE partners valued the British Council's insight and advice on the UK and its HE system and how to engage with UK partners.
- > Time investment requirements: managing partnership communication took time in Year 1 of the programme. Embedding a longer inception period (about six months) could support partners to build trust, establish working arrangements, and learn about the context and (business) culture of their counterpart. It could also help alleviate pressures on staff time.

Digital and in-person collaboration

- Digital collaboration: as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many partnerships adopted online tools for collaboration. For some partnerships, this improved partnership engagement by facilitating more continuous discussions and delivery.
- > In-person collaboration: despite the benefits of digital collaboration, partnerships found that in-person meetings and visits remained important to building relationships and sharing learning, particularly in the context of cross-cultural settings.

Student and staff mobilities and staff turnover

- > Relationship building opportunities: partnerships found that staff and student mobilities and exchange opportunities enabled improved cross-cultural learning, and understanding and cemented relationships between partnership institutions.
- Staff turnover: some partnerships were weakened or discontinued in the final year of the programme due to key members of teams leaving their roles at respective partnership institutions. Building institutional capacity and knowledge rather than relying on individual staff could partially address this barrier. Nonetheless, in some cases staff that moved to new institutions remained in contact with their Creative Spark partners and even expanded the partnership to include their new institution. This illustrates the importance of the strong personal and professional relationships built through partnership working.

Growing networks and expertise as part of an ecosystem

- > Holistic approach: Creative Spark partnerships used a holistic approach to connect with relevant stakeholders including HE institutions, industry stakeholders, young entrepreneurs, and relevant policy-level decision makers. Partnerships were brought together as part of an ecosystem. This approach is designed to develop a sustainable network of experts and people who are informed and inspired to create long term change within enterprise education and the creative industries.
- > Building regional and programme-wide networks: Creative Spark partnerships emphasised the importance of building networks between WE countries to create a programmewide community and sustainable networks within the WE region. Activities which brought different WE partners together, such as nationallevel activities (e.g. roadmap meetings and the Big Idea Challenge), were important facilitators. Opportunities to further develop regional and international networks, for example through EEUK, are important facilitators for sustainability.



Short-term and long-term funding

- Funding allocation: the phased approach to Creative Spark with tapered funding and dedicated time for embedding supported activities, including skills programmes, knowledge exchange and innovation hubs, provided a foundation for long-term sustainability. Differences in funding allocation between UK and WE partners created some challenges where, in some instances, UK partners had less time capacity to invest in partnership activities. This presented a barrier to relationship building in some partnerships.
- Securing long-term funding for sustainability: securing funding for further collaboration was crucial to the sustainability of Creative Spark partnerships. Creative Spark enabled partnerships to secure long-term funding through activities that presented commercial opportunities (such as incubators and joint proposals for grant funding); facilitating commercial partnerships; and capacity building activities that enabled partners to apply for international funding.
- ⁴⁴ If I'm a university and you provide me a grant, this is really good in terms of capacity building, but if I don't have sustainable longer-term support either locally or international, it's very hard for me to continue doing this. And so I think the knowledge transfer component here is really useful. ⁷⁷

Armenia stakeholder



Engagement, awareness, and new networks

Creative Spark aimed to support HE policy reform to foster a more supportive environment for the development of creative economies. Through engaging decision and policy makers, the programme aimed to build greater awareness of the creative economy as a key policy concept and its components, its contribution to economic development, and the role of enterprise education in creative economy development.

National British Council teams and Creative Spark partnerships successfully delivered sustained engagement of key stakeholders over the five years – fostering a sense of community and creating opportunity for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Partnerships felt that they contributed to these systemic outcomes:

94% to generating awareness or interest about the benefits of enterprise education and the creative economy from policy/decision makers or industry representatives.

96% to greater engagement including new/ stronger cross-sector dialogue over creative entrepreneurship; stronger networks around Creative Spark or creative entrepreneurship.

61% to greater commitment including funding earmarked for the development of creative economy/entrepreneurship; expressed commitment to supporting the creative economy.

73% to political and policy influence including increased political access; creative economy and entrepreneurship are referenced in policy documents/political priorities; change in policy positions; change in legislation or regulation.

A flagship of this engagement were the strategic annual roadmap meetings which brought together educators, industry representatives, entrepreneurs, and local and national policy, and decision makers. By creating these opportunities the programme facilitated the formation of new networks that will be key in continuing the programmes impact on fostering a more supportive environment for the creative economy. As in other areas of the programme, national British Council teams had autonomy in how they developed this area of work. This enabled teams to develop approaches that were well suited to their institutional and policy context.

Creative Spark successfully engaged relevant stakeholders, including policy and decision makers, for five years

British Council teams took different strategies to engaging policy and decision makers. In Ukraine, the British Council team facilitated engagement between partnerships and local policymakers, but this was led by key Creative Spark partners (see Box 12). In Uzbekistan, policy engagement was driven more by the British Council team, including the engagement with the Ministry for Higher Secondary and Specialised Education on developing the Quality Standards Framework, and developing the agenda on empowering female entrepreneurship (see Box 13). British Council and Creative Spark stakeholders successfully engaged decision and policy makers via:

30 roadmap meetings, with over 2263 attendees including 54 national decision or policy makers.

103 one to one meetings organised by British Council teams. These were used to engage the leadership of Creative Spark institutions, securing support for initiatives (e.g. engaging the director of the EI-Yurt Umidi Foundation on the Quality Practice Framework in Uzbekistan), and on country-UK relations.

93 Creative Spark activities organised by the British Council and by partnerships, such as the Big Idea Competition judging panel, roundtable discussions with local government and industry stakeholders, the meetings of new initiatives or work councils.

A notable stakeholder engagement tool was the annual national roadmap meetings organised by British Council teams. These played an important role in bringing together Creative Spark stakeholders to set objectives and foster a sense of community and shared goals. In some countries they were also an opportunity to engage external stakeholders. British Council teams took different approaches to these meetings in terms of scale and focus. Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan had large events with between 400 and 650 attendees, whilst Georgia, Armenia, and Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan had smaller events. The meetings provided a useful space:

- To coordinate and strategise Creative Spark activities for the year and generate new ideas to enhance existing collaborations. These were attended by Creative Spark partnerships and, in some countries, industry and policy stakeholders.
- > To develop innovative approaches to achieve long-term sustainability and cooperation amongst the partnerships.

Box 12: Partnership engagement with policymakers in Ukraine

In the third year of the programme, Ukrainian partnership institutions worked closely with local policymakers to deliver joint trainings and events.

- Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU) actively engaged with the Lviv Region Administration throughout Year 3 of Creative Spark. LPNU also attended a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Digital Transformation and Euro-integration where they discussed the potential for a joint development of video content for start-up trainings.
- Poltava University of Economics and Trade (PUET) worked closely in partnership with Poltava city administration on the delivery of Creative Spark activities and the Directorate of the Ministry of Culture approached PUET to deliver a training on their behalf for creative entrepreneurship for artists.
- Ivano-Frankivsk National University and V.N. Karakin Kharkiv University cooperated with their respective City Councils and participated in joint events organised by the city mayor.
- To build networks between Creative Spark stakeholders, facilitate new working groups and professional bodies and develop a sense of community.
- > To produce collaborative and cross-partnership resources (Ukraine).
- For engagement between Creative Spark stakeholders and policymakers in charge of developing relevant areas of policy (Kazakhstan, Ukraine).

Creative Spark contributed to development of the creative industries as a consolidated policy area, and the role of enterprise education within this

Through providing a dedicated resource on the interplay between the creative industries and HE, Creative Spark has developed a foundational understanding amongst key stakeholders that can be built upon and taken forward. Creative Spark:

- > Brought together diverse stakeholders and set the agenda. The programme created platforms for engagement between HE, industry, and policy stakeholders. As a cross-cutting policy area, a key feature of the programme was to bring together enterprise education stakeholder groups that would not normally engage with each other, to discuss industry challenges and ways forward. This had some notable successes:
 - As a result of engagement via a roadmap meeting in Ukraine, a new Regional Development Fund was expanded to include the Creative Economy as a key sector.
 - In Armenia, institutional and policy stakeholders came to an agreement that a national working group was required to develop the enterprise education agenda nationally. They have contacted EEUK in order to seek advice on establishing this.

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Box 13: Empowering female entrepreneurs: A roadmap meeting in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, the roadmap meeting in the third year of the programme focused on the empowerment of women and girls in creative education and industries. The meeting was held over a number of sessions, and were attended by a total of 470 participants, including key stakeholders such as the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Higher Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE), the Director of the El Yurt Umidi Presidential Foundation, the Chair of the Higher Education Council, the British Ambassador, and rectors and vice-rectors of partner institutions. Individual meetings with the Deputy Minister of the MHSSE and the director of the El-Yurt Umidi Presidential Foundation were also held, in preparation for the policy dialogue meetings.

When we got all relevant stakeholders in a room, they started to see the connections between themselves...they don't make these connections otherwise. ⁷⁷

WE stakeholder

44 I think that's the major outcome because ... putting together a committee is a challenge by itself because people, they have different priorities...if you manage to really bring them on the same wavelength and make them make them understand what the challenges and opportunities are, then it's an achievement by itself. ??

WE stakeholder

- > Developed an understanding of the creative industries as a unified policy area, including:
 - Key terminology and component concepts to create a shared language amongst stakeholders.
 - The role of different ministries and policy areas such as education, creative or cultural, economic development and the interplay between them.

This has enabled a shift in national discussions from foundation concepts such as "what makes up the creative industries" to focused, specific topics such as intellectual property, inclusivity, standards, and primary/secondary education and creative hubs.

- > Cultivated national creative enterprise education ecosystems. The programme has substantially contributed to the development of national expertise, in terms of practitioners, resources and models to be replicated, that are contributing to multiple agendas.
 - For instance, in Uzbekistan Creative Spark stakeholders attended a British Council conference on Inclusive Universities. The Ministry for Higher Secondary Specialised Education is establishing a working group on the topic, for which Creative Spark is a case study.
 - In Azerbaijan, the Creative Spark partners published and presented to the Ministry of Education an advisory paper on

The Development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education in HE Institutions. This paper provides the Government with information on how to bring together best practice for HE institutions engaging in creative work with creative industries and how to enable creative approaches.

 At the roadmap meetings in Kazakhstan, Creative Spark stakeholders were able to engage with the National Corporation of Kazakh Tourism, mandated with implementing the Concept for the Development of the Creative Industries, and discuss the development of the Concept with Creative Spark stakeholders.

Box 14: Establishing the Georgia Enterprise Educators Alliance

The Georgia Enterprise Educators Alliance (GEEA) was set up following the Creative Spark Oxford Conference in 2019. This conference brought together Creative Spark stakeholders from across the participating WE countries and the UK and included a presentation by Enterprise Educators UK. Decision makers from six top Georgian universities began discussions on how to establish a similar organisation in Georgia, to bring together educators and practitioners, facilitate best practice exchange, and influence policy.

This initiative has been led by Georgian Creative Spark institutions and facilitated by the British Council in Georgia – who set meetings and engaged the Minister of Culture and Sports, and other university leaders – and EEUK. UK partners were involved in and consulted on the set-up of the organisation.

Since its inception in 2019, GEEA members have:

- > Signed a declaration on the establishment of the GEEA (the eight founding members), stating the vision, mission and values, and initial actions.
- > Developed a clear organisation strategy, informed by the EEUK model.
- > Held an inaugural meeting and began developing an action plan based on the strategy.
- > Expanded to include 12 new members, who joined as part of the closing Creative Spark ceremony in 2022.

The GEEA is seen as a key institution for the development of creative enterprise education in Georgia, as a way to bring together a large HE sector and reduce competition between actors. Additionally, as institutions have a high degree of autonomy in Georgia, creating system level change needs to be directed at an institutional rather than only policymaker level. The GEEA provides a good single point of access for those wanting to collaborate with and improve the HE sector in Georgia.

Creative Spark contributed to development of national working groups, networks, and councils to take forward specific agendas

A key outcome of the programme has been the establishment of national bodies or working groups on key, nationally relevant issues. These have successfully secured the **time and sustained engagement** of key stakeholders, which are essential in influencing policy or achieving systemic change. Creative Spark has successfully contributed to the **creation of important channels for engaging both policy and decision makers**, facilitating dialogue with experts, producing relevant outputs, and hosting meetings for them to attend.

This has been an important outcome facilitated by the programme through institutional networking and engagement at roadmap meetings and other national-level activities.

Box 15: Developing the Enterprise Educators Ecosystem in Uzbekistan: Quality Practice Framework and the Entrepreneurial University Awards

In Uzbekistan, the programme has contributed to the development of the Quality Practice Framework for Enterprise Education ("the Framework"). The Framework, submitted in 2022 to the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE), is a toolkit on how to design and develop creative entrepreneurship education and how to create a sustainable ecosystem for it to thrive.

In Year 3 of the programme, Creative Spark partners formed part of the working group developing the Framework and contributed their expertise and learning from the programme. They also trialled training programmes for academic staff to inform "good practice" sections of the Framework.

The Framework brings together learning from the Creative Spark partnerships, including lessons on innovative practices in teaching, learning, curriculum development and teacher training. Additionally, it illustrates key case studies from the programme such as organising the Entrepreneurial University Awards. When finalised, it will be a national guidance document – a sustainable resource – that practically contributes to the development of creative enterprise education in Uzbekistan.

One of the case studies presented in the Framework is the Entrepreneurial University Awards (EUA) which was piloted in Year 3 of the programme. As a new and developing discipline, the EUA was intended to celebrate and recognise university achievements in enterprise teaching, entrepreneurship training and student hub activities. The pilot was delivered by a partnership between British Council, Change School London (a UK partner institution) and the MHSSE. In applying for an award, universities had to provide evidence and case studies of their work and achievements. In alignment with policy priorities, this has facilitated institutional learning and teamwork, and prepared universities for international recognition processes.

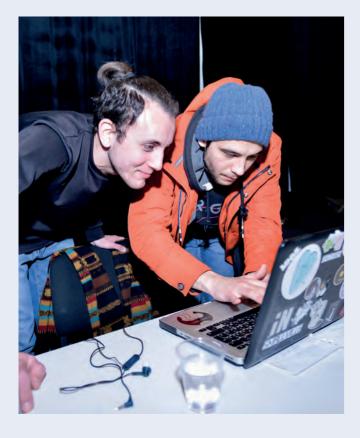
The pilot demonstrated that the EUA gave universities recognition and experience in evidencing their work. Participating institutions found that the process led to an improvement of within department and cross-departmental collaboration and changes to university policy. It is understood that the EUA will raise the profile of entrepreneurial education within universities.

- In Ukraine, the higher education and creative industries working group was established via an open call amongst Creative Spark institutions, from which 14 members were selected. The group, facilitated by PPV Knowledge Network, aims to develop a roadmap on how to strengthen university institutional capacity and academic adaptation. To date, the group has agreed on significant issues, possible approaches and policies, and a roadmap for the implementation of these policies.
- In Armenia, the Creative Spark team are in the process of developing the Enterprise Educators Armenia Council. This aims to develop a network of all entrepreneurship education providers in Armenia, to develop shared resources, and engage in advocacy. The development of the committee is supported by the Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry, who has allocated resources for mapping stakeholders in enterprise education and organising meetings.

Looking forward: Learning on creating system change

The programme generated a number of lessons on promoting systems change. This section includes learning from successes and challenges.

> Alignment with national level priorities and national level autonomy. As outlined in this report, Creative Spark took place in the context of growing interest in and recognition of the development of the creative industries in national strategies. This created, to some extent, a supportive environment within which the programme could operate. A key strength of the programme was its framework structure, in which the programme set the agenda but gave a lot of autonomy to both local British Council teams and the institutions delivering the programme. This facilitated ownership by British Council teams and national stakeholders, as well as ensured relevance to differing national institutional and socio-economic contexts.



- > Developing national and local professional networks and groups can be a successful indirect policy engagement tool that supports sustainability in short to medium term programmes. Influencing policy has multiple layers that must be tailored to the current policy landscape and takes sustained engagement over time. Programmes (short/medium term) that aim to influence policy are faced with the challenge of delivering change within the programme timeframe and issues, such as policymaker turnover, which threaten any gains made. Focusing programme efforts on developing networks or bodies with policy influence agendas can create sustainable structures which address some of these challenges. The sustainability of this approach is vulnerable to issues such as i) the level of structure in place by the end of the programme, and ii) any need for ongoing funding. These should be considered in the programme design (i.e. aim to develop structures with low resource requirements, look for opportunities to embed within existing structures, or search for required funding/consider legacy funding).
- > Long term funding enables sustained engagement. Simply put, contributing to system level or policy change is a complex process that is facilitated by sustained engagement. Creative Spark's five year funding allowed greater time for relationships between stakeholders to develop, for expertise and networks gained over the programme to be used/leveraged, and for the process of establishing new networks/bodies to take place.

- Creative Spark effectively used multiple national level events to create a community of enterprise educator stakeholders. Events such as the Big Idea Challenge, the roadmap meetings and country-specific events brought diverse stakeholders together and created informal and formal networking opportunities.
- > Building on other relevant programmes. The British Council has delivered Creative Central Asia and Creative Economy, these focus on different but complementary topics. The British Council's experience in delivering complementary programmes generates efficiencies by building expertise and networks, and by producing cumulative impacts in the country.



> Clearer focus on policy engagement and/ or greater external engagement. While the programme encouraged the involvement of policy makers in programme activities, it did not deliver specific activities for policy makers. The main focus was at an institutional level which was leveraged to engage and influence policy and decision makers. Whilst this had certain benefits – such as building community and networks – some stakeholders raised that specific activities directed at policymakers could have targeted additional points within the entrepreneurship ecosystem and contributed to greater overall change.

What impact did Creative Spark have on the UK?

Mutual benefits of quality enterprise education, expanded networks, institutional learning and strengthen the UK brand

The British Council's strategic purpose is to support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding, and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. By building, deepening, and extending international connections and partnerships, the British Council aims to increase trust in, collaboration with, and favourability towards the UK. The British Council also aims to open vital avenues for mutual learning so that the UK can benefit from best practice being developed and championed across the globe.

Within the education sector, the British Council aims to build lasting international ties not only to support partners to benefit from UK educational expertise, but also to support the UK to learn and benefit from connections with educational institutions around the world. With regards to higher education, on key British Council priority is to promote the UK as a world-class study destination.

71% of UK partners said Creative Spark has created significant wider benefits for them, their colleagues or students, or their institution. They identified these benefits as:

94% increased knowledge sharing.

90% better cultural understanding of the partner country.

88% an expanded network.

82% of UK partners felt that their partnership was mutually beneficial.

UK institutions expanded their international networks and future collaboration opportunities.

Creative Spark enabled UK institutions to expand their international networks through facilitating partnerships between UK and WE institutions. Creative Spark brought notable benefits to the participating UK institutions including:

- > Expanded networks and institutional experience of working in the WE region, opening the door to future collaboration and funding opportunities.
- > Staff gained experience in collaborating internationally bringing professional and academical benefits.
- Improved enterprise education at participating UK institutions including new pedagogical processes, curricula development and adapting to working in cross-cultural settings.

Creative Spark also helped to strengthen the brand of UK enterprise education in the region, particularly of traditionally less-well known UK institutions.

This was one of the most important and lasting benefits of the programme for UK institutions, as it created opportunities for future collaboration within the WE region and globally.

Creative Spark enabled UK and WE institutions to build close relationships and trust over the course of the programme, providing them with a strong foundation for collaborating again in the future. Partnerships plan to continue working together through shared funding opportunities, research collaborations, staff or student exchanges, and more formal partnerships such as franchising and joint degrees (see "Improving Enterprise Education" section and "Internationalising Institutions" section).

We have already started an additional cooperation

 with our staff having internships at [UK partner institution] and have much more in planning for further bilateral cooperation.

Ukraine stakeholder

UK institutions gained experience and credibility through the programme, which

enabled some institutions to secure new funding opportunities within the WE region. For example, the University of Northampton was able to set up new projects in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kurdistan through leveraging their experience on Creative Spark. These are regions where they had not worked before.

44 You become known as somebody who's operating and working in a particular region. And the funders obviously look towards that and say, well, there's obviously some sort of long-term connection and commitment here. ??

UK stakeholder

Joint research and publications experience through Creative Spark was important in enhancing the visibility and credibility of UK **institutions**, creating pathways for securing future opportunities. For example, a UK partner in Georgia felt able to expand the reach and impact of their research and the visibility of their work through conducting research and sharing their expertise in a different geographical and cultural context. Similarly, The University of Bedfordshire, with the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy, enhanced their visibility through publishing a paper based on their experience on Creative Spark, which they presented at the European Conference on eLearning. The University of Bedfordshire plan to use evidence from their joint research in applications for future funding.

Creative Spark also contributed to an enabling environment for creative economy and trade between UK and WE countries

by creating favourable conditions for future collaboration between UK and WE institutions. For instance, Creative Spark promoted English as the core language to trade and building business opportunities, contributing to a trade-friendly environment between the UK and Wider Europe countries. Through facilitating business and entrepreneurial support centres (see "Developing Creative Hubs" section), Creative Spark has also created connections between students interested in business and startup development and UK experts and networks. The Kazakhstan office of the UK Department for International Trade received an increase in requests from UK creative sector actors on how to do business in Kazakhstan. Whilst not directly attributable to Creative Spark, this outcome can be seen within a wider context of positive Kazakhstan-UK relations to which Creative Spark contributes.

⁴⁴ [UK institution] sees the link with the city of [their partner institution] as a source of trade and export opportunities for the UK. This is based on [the city's] competitiveness strategy....and on the opportunities for direct access to [the city] and our partner university's business start-up support. Our start up school provides an important platform for UK start-ups in [the city], linking young beneficiaries with business and start up process training. ⁹⁷

UK stakeholder

Expanding the international networks of UK institutions is an important outcome because it has enabled UK institutions to reach new markets. For many of the UK institutions involved, the programme offered a unique opportunity to build new partnerships with universities and educational or training organisations in Wider Europe countries, enabling them to expand and diversify their international HE agenda. UK HE institutions have often focused their internationalisation agenda on large student markets like India and China, and Creative Spark has enabled them to diversify their reach into the WE student market.

⁴⁴ Before they came to Kazakhstan, they were quite narrow and focused maybe on the UK or Commonwealth countries. For them coming to Kazakhstan opened an absolutely different market. ⁷⁷

Kazakhstan stakeholder

International networks are particularly important for the UK in the context of Brexit.

With decreasing opportunities from EU funding mechanisms, Creative Spark partnerships have been highly beneficial for UK institutions seeking to expand their international partnership strategies.

⁴⁴ [Creative Spark] has been really helpful and really important in terms of helping universities and people in this sector to make better and wider connections... there are new partnerships forming that would not have been supported in any other way. ⁷⁷

UK stakeholder

UK institution staff have gained valuable international experience

Creative Spark has provided valuable international experience to staff from UK partner institutions. Managing and working within these international partnerships has exposed UK partners to different cultural contexts and ways of working, building their capacity to partner internationally. UK partners found staff exchanges and visits to be particularly powerful in supporting this professional development.

⁴⁴ [Creative Spark has provided opportunities for a wide range of academics to visit Kazakhstan and become involved in working directly with beneficiaries. This has included the fashion industry as well as students and academics from a number of institutions. This experience has enhanced cultural awareness, brought case material back to the UK classroom and enabled staff development. ⁹⁹

UK stakeholder

Gaining international experience has been important in boosting the academic expertise and credentials of individual staff and their ability to collaborate internationally in

the future. UK partners have valued their new connections to experts in the WE region and the knowledge they have gained from them. UK partners enhanced their academic reputation in the region by sharing their expertise with WE partners and building positive relationships. They could leverage this partnership experience to boost their CV and their ability to work on future international project. For example, the partner from Middlesex University Higher Education Cooperation developed a knowledge exchange framework to use in future collaborations.

⁴⁴ For me personally, it's connected me with some really useful and knowledgeable and skilful people in this sector. And so, I have been able to talk with them, explore ideas with them, and learn from them. ⁹⁷

UK stakeholder

We can bring together experts – across 33 people – to contribute their specialisms, we can draw on diverse teams that wouldn't necessarily work together on UK projects. The universities involved in Creative Spark, in the UK and Uzbekistan, are cross collaborating so have active collaboration with universities wouldn't have had otherwise. ??

UK stakeholder

UK institutions have improved the quality of their enterprise education

Creative Spark provided UK partners with the opportunity to develop pedagogical models in different cultural contexts. Through supporting WE institutions to develop curricula, UK institutions operationalised enterprise education international best practice models and tested and adapted their own innovative education models. This experience expanded UK partners' understandings of how to adapt enterprise education models to specific cultural contexts. Connections with WE partners enabled UK institutions to expand their international education offer. Creative Spark provided an opportunity for UK partners to learn about the educational needs of students in their partners' country, as well as institutional and professional practices. This learning enabled them to improve their international education services and expand their internationalisation strategies into new regions.

⁴⁴ The Creative Spark partnership has provided huge insight into managing and maintaining relationships overseas. It has provided opportunity to see alternative curriculum models and structures and see how learners and teachers respond to this. ⁷⁷

UK stakeholder

Through this work, UK partners also reflected on their own practices and enterprise education offer, including how to improve them.

Creative Spark activities have prompted UK partners to consider their processes for quality assurance, curriculum design and teacher training. For instance, the University of Portsmouth took inspiration from how their partner Poltava University of Economics and Trade organised timetables and modules.

Consequently, UK partners made improvements to the enterprise education

at their institutions. For example, Anglia Ruskin University introduced a new module around the role of social enterprise for Social Sciences students influenced by their partnership with V.N Karazin National University.

⁴⁴ This has inspired me to make changes to some modules that I am teaching. We like to think that our university has a global curriculum designed for addressing global challenges, but often we don't understand issue that are being faced in other regions. The workshop with students was an eye opener for me. Ukrainian students were targeting different challenges, they tended to have ideas based on needs of the local community, which my students don't often do. ⁹⁷

UK stakeholder

UK institutions have explored further collaborations with their Creative Spark partners through joint PhD offers, dual programmes and other TNE pathways. For example, Coventry University has been in discussion with their partner institution in Ukraine (Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas) to set up a joint degree with their Polish campus. Similarly, the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan has engaged with the British Council to discuss partnering with Newcastle University on double degrees in the area of renewable energy masters' programmes. There are various other examples of partners exploring TNE pathways. These opportunities are important in supporting and expanding UK institutions' internationalisation agendas.

Creative Spark has strengthened the brand of UK enterprise education

Creative spark has contributed to strengthening the global brand and profile of UK enterprise education within the WE region. The programme enabled UK institutions to serve as the European role model in supporting WE countries to develop their enterprise education ecosystem. Through Creative Spark, UK institutions have not only shared expertise within their partnerships but have also engaged with and gained recognition from policy-level decision makers in WE countries.

⁴⁴ [Creative Spark] has contributed to this positive change...in terms of the perception of the UK as a leader in different fields, different sectors and as a force for good in the sense that they're willing to share this expertise with countries like Armenia which are developing. ⁷⁷

Armenia stakeholder

71% of UK partners said Creative Spark has created significant wider benefits for them, their colleagues or students, or their institution. They identified these benefits as:

94% increased knowledge sharing.

90% better cultural understanding of the partner country.

88% an expanded network.

82% of UK partners felt that their partnership was mutually beneficial.

Creative Spark has been particularly valuable in strengthening the educational brand and profile of lesser-known UK institutions. For smaller

UK institutions, the programme was vital in securing new international partnerships, that can be hard to develop. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Kazakhstan has shown increased recognition of the value of smaller and lesser-known UK universities who had demonstrated strong engagement with and valuable contributions to Kazakhstan creative economy and enterprise education.

- If you see Creative Spark, there is a really good and wide range of institutions involved. That shows that this is the right vehicle to help with institutions that are not in the top ten of attracting government funding to still do research, still do knowledge exchange." **
 - UK stakeholder

Strengthening the brand of UK enterprise education has been important in increasing the interest and demand in UK education and

expertise. There are several examples of students and staff from different Creative Spark Countries who have started working or studying in UK institutions as a result of participating in the programme. This enabled UK institutions to diversify their international staff and student body. In Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, Creative Spark has been a particularly active platform for promoting UK institutions as a destination for scholarships and student exchange programmes. Opportunities for students and staff to visit the UK and to participate in the Big Idea Challenge have been key enablers in increasing knowledge of and interest in UK education, as well as UK models of developing creative industries and enterprise education.

When we were doing exchanges with students and staff they weren't just talking about the project. They were talking about all kinds of things like their lives and ambitions. I think this will definitely increase interest in the UK. ⁷⁷

Georgia stakeholder

Strengthening the brand and international profile of UK enterprise education has been seen as an important enabler in increasing the rankings of UK institutions. A few UK institutions saw their involvement in the programme as playing a role in rising their QS international rankings, because it helped to demonstrate a thriving internationalisation agenda.

[Two UK partners] have both progressed in prestigious rank. You need hundreds of these projects to have international standing, but Creative Spark is part of the contribution. Leading universities need international exposure. ⁷⁷

UK stakeholder



What did Creative Spark achieve for individuals?

Creative Spark participants improved a range of entrepreneurship skills and expanded their networks.

A total of **101,538** attendees¹³ took part in workshops, courses, seminars and training activities designed to improve a range of entrepreneurship skills. After taking part in these activities, students and recent graduates reported:¹⁴



improved their self-confidence and their ability to confidently market themselves 36% improved their team working skills 34% improved their leadership skills

Improved enterprise skills and English language abilities

Key to a healthy creative industries ecosystem are the individuals who make up and drive that ecosystem. Creative Spark delivered skills workshops and language courses to individuals to build a critical mass of young people, educators, and relevant stakeholders with the skills needed to develop their own businesses ideas and participate in an (international) entrepreneurship community.

The programme was successful in reaching 65,508 participants¹⁵ including students, alumni, young entrepreneurs, and educators with training on entrepreneurships skills, interpersonal skills, confidence, and leadership.

44% improved their awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurship 46% increased their entrepreneurship skills

32% improved their creative thinking **33%** improved their problem solving skills

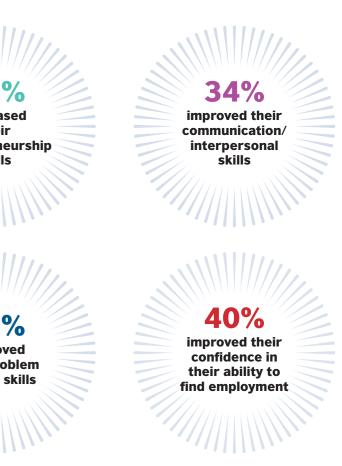
13 This is the total number of attendees between Years 1-4, participants are not unique.

14 The averages have been calculated from Years 2-4, when the questions in the beneficiary survey were asked of all students and recent graduates. It should be noted that while the number of beneficiaries taking part in the survey varied across the programme years, the averages have been calculated giving equal weight to Years 2-4.

15 This is the total number of unique participants per year from Years 1-4, participants are not unique between years.

Through attending these events, participants were able to build their personal and professional networks. The programme also successfully increased participants English language abilities, confidence, and interest in the UK.

A flagship activity of the programme was the Big Idea Challenge, developed in collaboration with London Metropolitan University. This 60 second pitch competition was delivered across the seven Creative Spark countries each year with national and regional winners. Over 2,600 teams took part in the competition over the five years.



Young people widened their professional networks through participation in the Creative **Spark programme** with many beneficiaries making new student, academic, and business contacts at Creative Spark events. The proportion of participants reporting different types of contacts varied across the years, although making contacts with students was most common.

New student contacts: 43%

New academic contacts: 22%

New business/entrepreneur contacts: 18%

The opportunity to make new contacts at events remained consistently important for participants across the years, with 67% saying this in Year 2, 68% in Year 3, and 63% in Year 4.

44 The Createathon has vastly increased their selfconfidence, working to develop an idea from scratch with businesses they hadn't met before, working in multi-cultural teams... One of our students from Baku university is currently on placement in the US and is still in touch with one of the businesses that they worked with on the Createathon. 77

WE stakeholder

44 Creative Spark has made our students ready for the employment market. It has turned them from passive to active graduates. ******

WE stakeholder

Creative Spark participants improved their English abilities and interest in the UK

The programme successfully reached 15,520 attendees¹⁶ with English language courses and workshops. By improving the English skills of young people Creative Spark aimed to facilitate greater employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

30% of participants increased their English level.

44% participants increased their use of English in a business context.

37% of participants increased their confidence using English.

Creative Spark increased participants level of knowledge of, and interest in, the UK creative industries and business environment.

9 in 10

(91%) participants improved their knowledge of the UK creative industries and business environment.

9 in 10

(93%) participants increased their interest in the UK creative industries, business environment and enterprise education.

7 in 10

(69%) of participants had a more positive perception of the UK after taking part in Creative Spark activities.

The Big Idea Challenge

The Big Idea Challenge (BIC) was an online enterprise pitch competition for students of **Creative Spark institutions. Students were** invited to develop a business proposal and present it in a 60-second video pitch under one of the three possible categories: Digital Technology, Social Impact, or Creative. Creative Spark institutions supported young creative entrepreneurs through training and mentoring to develop their business ideas and pitching skills.

- > 2,683 teams consisting of 5,574 individuals applied to the BIC over four years (2019-2022).
- > 1,326 teams with a total of 2,654 individuals were successful in their application.

Participants took part in workshops on ideation, developing ideas, pitching, and accessed mentoring (see Figure 3).

44 I personally really benefitted from the online sessions. We talked about pitching, how to create a business model canvas, how to create a startup, how to develop it... They also invited some successful businessmen so we could ask them questions. *****

Student participant

Figure 3: Participation in BIC preparation activities

Workshops to help you think of a business idea

Workshops to help you develop your business idea

Workshops to give you pitching training or practice

One-on-one mentoring or support to help you prepare or practice your pitch

Base: Those who attended activities to prepare for the Big Idea Challenge (2019-2022)

44 Participating in the BIC was a great exercise.. They contribute to the team with the knowledge they have. A good exercise was preparing the 60 second video pitch, this increased their selfconfidence, as they were working with a camera and had to make a presentation in a limited time. 77

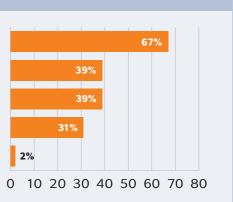
Ukraine stakeholder

The BIC was successful in inspiring participants to continue developing their **business ideas** with eight in ten participants saying they were likely to continue developing their business idea after the competition (79%).

After taking part in the BIC, two-thirds of participants submitted a business idea or pitch to their university. Almost all (96%) BIC participants said they felt it was a meaningful and authentic way to learn about creative enterprise.

One of the main competition prizes for country category winners and country champions was a personalised mentoring programme. Each winner or winning team was matched with a dedicated mentor, who coached them for 6 hours over the course of 6 months. Support was tailored to the level of development of each team and aimed to bring the ideas closer to launch stage. Some teams also received grant funding. By the end of the programme 12 of the teams' ideas had been launched and were generating revenue, and 14 teams had hired staff.

Something else 2%



Some of the winning ideas were:

GreenDom: 2019 Social Impact Winner from Armenia

The concept was to create a therapeutic greenhouse to teach children with disabilities employability skills. After winning the competition, the team managed to secure additional funds at a national business pitching competition. This allowed partners to hire one employee to work in the greenhouse.

BOOKI: 2022 Social Impact Winner from Georgia

The concept was to create an easy-to-use online shopping platform for second-hand book sellers and buyers of all ages. The team identified that there was a large market for second-hand books in Georgia (1 million sold annually) but no online platform for sellers to use. This meant sellers had to spend their own resources on selling online. They planned to generate revenue through advertisements, a 10% price mark up, and through premium service.





Spotlight on: Kekalove Adaptive Fashion: 2020 Big Idea Challenge Grand Champion

Kekalove Adaptive Fashion is an adaptive fashion collective founded by **Mahammad Kekalov in 2019**. Kekalove designs and produces clothing for people with disabilities. The team ask questions like "How does someone in a wheelchair put on a pair of trousers?" or "How does someone with scoliosis wear shirts?". Mahammad, together with his team, design the answers he finds into easy-to-wear clothing.

44 I am working to transform our fashion brand into an international advocate for adaptive design and disability inclusion. 77

Mahammad, an undergraduate student at the Azerbaijan State University of Economics, started working on the idea after observing his grandma who had a disability struggle with clothing for many years. He carried out research into ableism in the fashion industry and explored his ideas with friends coming to the conclusion that this was a global issue that needed to be addressed.

I felt the responsibility to take action about this issue – disability inclusion and adaptive design are very important for me, my loved ones, and the whole disabled community... There was a huge room for improvement in this industry, and this improvement would have a significant impact on people's lives. I firmly believe in the idea's impact and positive social outcomes. ??

Kekelove has successfully developed their first line of fully adaptive clothing and, with the support of Creative Spark, launched their online store.¹⁷ They also developed a digital storytelling campaign to fight misconceptions, ableism, and discrimination in the fashion industry. The finale of the campaign, a Disability Fashion Day, was reported on in the UK media.¹⁸

17 For the company website see here.



¹⁸ For The Guardian article see here.



Call British Council Customer Services Within the UK: 0161 957 7755 Outside the UK: +44 (0)161 957 7755

http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/creative-spark

All photos in this report were taken by Creative Spark stakeholders.

