

# Creative businesses across the UK receive funding boost and government backing to spur future growth

- £950,000 sector-wide careers programme to help more young people from underrepresented backgrounds break into creative industries
- Seventeen of UK's leading start-up creative studios awarded grants of up to £25,000 to develop the next generation of video games

Creative businesses with the potential to become booming businesses in six English regions are to benefit from a new £17.5 million funding pot to help expand their operations, attract additional investment and create jobs.

It comes on the day a £950,000 careers programme for the sector is launched in England and some of the UK's brightest creative entrepreneurs are told they will be backed by the government to develop the next generation of global smash-hit video games.

The creative industries are one of the major UK economic success stories in recent years. They have grown at twice the rate of the wider economy since 2010 – generating approximately £115.9 billion for the economy and providing more than two million jobs.

Data from the Association for UK Interactive Entertainment (Ukie) estimates the value of the UK consumer games market reached a record £7.16 billion in 2021.

Today's plans will build on this stellar success and make sure the next generation of creative talent succeeds, companies continue to scale-up and those that need support have access to it.

Creative Industries Minister Julia Lopez said:

From product design and video games to music and film, the creative industries are a stellar UK success story.

Today's plans will help get more creative businesses off the ground so they can spread jobs and wealth and help more people, including those from underrepresented backgrounds, break into these world-class sectors.

## **Create Growth Programme**

Companies in six regions will receive support through the Create Growth Programme to help get themselves investment ready. The regions are Greater Manchester; the West of England and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire; Leicestershire, Derbyshire and

Lincolnshire; Kent, Essex and East and West Sussex; and the North East of England.

Each of the six regions have been awarded £1.275 million in grant funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to develop a targeted programme of business support. Regions will also benefit from a number of investor building activities such as networking and pitching events to attract investment and exchange ideas.

Businesses across the six regions will also be able to apply to a new £7 million investment fund to fuel their expansion. Companies applying for finance will need to demonstrate their potential to grow rapidly and become sustainable through private investment. The investment fund and investor building activities will be delivered by the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK.

### **Creative Careers Programme**

To develop the next generation of talent, the Government has chosen ScreenSkills, the screen industry's skills body, to lead the delivery of a £950,000 Creative Careers Programme. This programme, targeted in 53 priority areas across the country including Barking and Dagenham, Wolverhampton, Rotherham, Slough and Swindon, will help young people from underrepresented backgrounds break into the creative industries.

The programme will provide specialist guidance to 11 to 18-year-olds on careers and help pay for industry-led digital and in-person events, lesson plans, a dedicated careers website with careers information and resources, and training for careers advisors. This will help ensure more young people from a diverse range of backgrounds can take advantage of the fantastic careers opportunities in these sectors.

### **UK Games Fund**

Also announced today are seventeen start-up video games studios which have been given grants of up to £25,000 to realise their ideas for innovative new projects as part of the UK Games Fund. The cash injection is for firms across the country with great ideas but lacking in development funding.

The fund, which was established in 2015, has received increased government funding of more than £8 million for 2022 to 2025. It aims to help high-potential companies raise new funding, spur economic growth and create new jobs.

Games spanning formats from virtual reality to mobile and themes from space exploration to eco-education, with developers based across the country – from Cardiff to Paisley and Brighton to Yorkshire – will benefit from the scheme's latest funding round.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to editors:**

### **Create Growth Programme**

More information on the Create Growth Programme is available [here](#).

Full list of regional consortium partners that the Create Growth Programme will support:

Greater Manchester Combined Authority; Bolton; Bury; Manchester; Oldham; Rochdale; Tameside; Trafford; Salford; Stockport; Wigan; Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership; Derby and Derbyshire County Council; Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership; West of England Combined Authority; North Somerset Council; Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership; New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority; Suffolk County Council; Norfolk County Council; Kent County Council; Medway Council; West Sussex County Council; Essex County Council; East Sussex County Council; Brighton and Hove City Council; North of Tyne Combined Authority; Newcastle City Council; Northumberland County Council; North Tyneside Council; South Tyneside Council; Gateshead Council, Sunderland City Council; Durham County Council, Rutland; Thurrock Council; Southend on Sea Borough Council; South East Local Enterprise Partnership..

### **Creative Careers Programme**

More information on the Creative Careers Programme is available [here](#).

Full list of regions the Creative Careers Programme will specifically target:

Barking and Dagenham, Ashfield, Barnsley, Basildon, Gloucester, Brent, Bolsover, Barrow in Furness, Crawley, Gosport, Croydon, Boston, Blackburn with Darwen, Dover, Isle of Wight, Enfield, Chesterfield, Blackpool, Fenland, Isles of Scilly, Newham, Dudley, Copeland, Great Yarmouth, New Forest, East Lindsey, County Durham, Luton, North Devon, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Kirklees, Medway, North Somerset, North East Derbyshire, Knowsley, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Mansfield, North East Lincolnshire, Slough, Rushmoor, Sandwell, Rochdale, Tendring, South Somerset, Stoke on Trent, Rotherham, Swindon, Walsall, Selby, Wolverhampton, South Tyneside, Tees Valley Combined Authority and Wigan.

Full list of industry delivery partners for the Creative Careers Programme:

The Academy of International Extended Reality, Blue Zoo Productions Ltd, The Careers and Enterprise Company, Cockpit Arts, The Crafts Council, Creative & Cultural Skills, Creative Assembly, Creative UK, Design Business Association, ERIC, Framestore Ltd, Get Into Theatre, Heritage Crafts Association, The Institute for Practitioners in Advertising, The Publishers Association, The National Archives, One Dance UK, ScreenSkills, UK Fashion and Textiles Association, UK Music, UK Theatre/Society of London Theatre.

## UK Games Fund

More information on the UK Games Fund is available [here](#).

Start-up studios supported through this round of the UK Games Fund:

- The VR Hive, in Paisley, will use the grant to develop its virtual reality team-building game Planet Pollinate. The game will see players collaborate in an arctic-like environment to solve puzzles and practice skills associated with teamwork.
- Cardiff-based developer Good Gate Media is using the funding to develop its game True Crime: A Liar's Game, in which players control the filmmaker Jack who is investigating a case of wrongful conviction.
- Yorkshire gaming company Tea Stained Games will use its grant to develop Cabbie!, which enables players to test their driving skills in an alien world where companies are polluting the planet with toxic materials.
- Norwich-based Fairer Games will develop Brewess, a narrative puzzle game which tasks players with running a successful alehouse in early modern East Anglia.
- Humble Grove, in Yorkshire, will develop Twilight Array, a game that sees scavengers explore an abandoned spaceship.
- Folkestone's Spire Games will develop Mechs Vs Robots, a mobile-first game which sees players battle robots and aliens.
- Balloon Studios, in Devon, will develop the plant-themed puzzle game Botany Manor.
- Greater Manchester's Phigames will develop a game which will see players explore hostile interplanetary systems.
- Macabre Museum, an adventure horror game set in a museum, will be developed by Brighton-based studio Different Monster.
- London-based The Line Animation will develop a driving game that will see players embark on a perilous road trip.
- Essex-based Semaeopus will make Bridgebuilder, a tool to find new ways for game developers to communicate and collaborate.
- Prism Palace in Surrey will develop The Dune Sea, a science fiction adventure game set within a vast desert planet.
- Nullpointer in Brighton will develop The Darkness Will Devour Us, a strategy game that sees players defend the last city on earth.
- Bristol's Two Headed Alien will develop Project Diagnosis, a sci-fi investigation game about caring for victims of alien abduction.
- Included Games in Brighton will develop Queens of Fortune, a multiplayer party game that sees players create their own avatars and take part in a treasure hunt.
- London-based Epoch Media Studios will make Pension\$, a game centred on a cash-strapped university professor who gets drawn into a murky criminal world.
- Crooks Peak in Wiltshire will develop By Grit Alone, a virtual reality shooter game.

**Additional quotes:**

## **Create Growth Programme:**

Esra Kasapoglu, Director of AI and Data Economy, Innovate UK said:

Creative industries offer an exceptional opportunity for innovation and can boost productivity and sustainable growth. The UK is a global leader in the creative industries and UK's creative businesses offer their goods and services to the world.

At Innovate UK, we have a passion to grow the UK's creative businesses and foster collaborative relationships across other sectors and regions to resolve challenges for digital innovation and creative change.

In collaboration with DCMS, we will continue to inspire creative businesses and help them unleash creative innovation to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth.

Mike Hill, Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, said:

We are delighted that our bid for £1.275m from the DCMS Create Growth Programme has been successful.

The programme offers us the opportunity to build on previous programmes, such as South East Creatives. It will help provide infrastructure and new routes to investment to support the diversity of the area's creative businesses.

James Copson, founder of Anattic, a creative production agency based in Manchester, said:

The Creative Growth pilot helped Anattic and our team to learn new skills and understand scale and development on a deeper level. We have been able to put many of the lessons learnt during the various workshops, support and advice sessions into practice and have grown the business considerably since joining the programme. Our business has since developed from a UK, localised production company to an international creative production agency with plans in place to move into Asian markets, specifically Japan. We are excited about the potential this programme has to make a real impact on creative businesses.

Mark Duddridge, Chair of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership, said:

This award will bring targeted support and investment into our high

growth potential creative industries and I'm delighted the region's bid has been successful. By bringing together the distinct industry landscapes of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and the West of England, we can share best practice and drive growth in this strategically important sector.

Professor Katie Normington, Vice-Chancellor, De Montfort University, Leicester said:

As a university with a long and proud history of teaching and research in the creative sector, we are passionate about the opportunity that this Create Growth programme presents to support creatives in the region to scale up and take that next step to grow their business.

We were delighted to be able to support the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership in shaping this successful application and believe it has real potential to transform opportunities for the thousands of people who work in the creative sector in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

North of Tyne Combined Authority Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative and Rural and Leader of Northumberland County Council, Cllr Sanderson said:

We have established a supportive and attractive environment for creative and cultural businesses and people – supporting them to locate, start-up, grow, and flourish here in the North East. I am delighted that in collaboration with our partners across the region we have shown that there is real potential for our creative businesses and freelancers. After a difficult time for the sector over the last couple of years, it is great that our vision for the sector is recognised and strengthened.

Robin Milton, founder of Fairer Game, based in Norwich, said:

It is fantastic to see this level of commitment to supporting early-stage creative businesses in this region from DCMS. I founded my games business in Norfolk because I firmly believe in the innovation, the collaboration, and the culture of this area. The Create Growth Programme will help in providing opportunities, retaining talent and accessing finance for creative businesses in this area and I look forward to seeing the positive ripple effects of this initiative.

Sir Peter Balzalgette, Industry Chair of the Creative Industries Council said:

Our world leading creative industries have the power to generate great jobs and economic growth, now and in the future. Today's announcement will enable burgeoning businesses in these areas to secure the investment they need to innovate, export and grow, and help more young people from all backgrounds make informed choices about their future creative careers. It will unlock opportunities for more communities and creative talent across the country.

### **Creative Careers Programme:**

Seetha Kumar, CEO at ScreenSkills on behalf of the Creative Careers Programme partners said:

It is difficult to contemplate a career you don't even know about which is why we are delighted to be working with so many innovative partners to ensure we can secure a strong and inclusive workforce that meets the demands of our brilliant, fast-paced sectors. I personally can't wait to see the return of Discover! Creative Careers week which will open the doors of hundreds of organisations to thousands of students who have the least access to careers in the creative industries, giving them hands-on insight into roles they didn't know existed.

### **UK Games Fund:**

Dr Jo Twist OBE, CEO of games and interactive entertainment trade association Ukie, said:

The UK Games Fund has played an invaluable role in growing our national sector and ensuring that the UK remains one of the best places in the world to make video games.

Its ongoing support for start up games businesses across the country has led to both the creation of captivating video games and real value for the economy in terms of jobs, investment and tax revenues.

We're pleased that the Government has delivered additional support for our thriving sector and look forward to seeing the great games that emerge from this support in the coming years.

Dr Richard Wilson OBE, CEO of games trade body TIGA, said:

Access to finance is a challenge for many small development studios. The UK Games Fund is a vital intervention which enables start-ups and small studios to develop game prototypes, develop commercial skills and embark upon the path to growth and success.

TIGA strongly supports the UKGF. We look forward to seeing how the latest beneficiaries build their businesses and scale-up their studios.

Tony Gowland, Ant Workshop, said:

The UK Games Fund's support during the early stages of Dungeon Golf was extremely useful in enabling us to take that initial idea and create a playable prototype. As a funded company, the UK Games Fund has been transformative for Ant Workshop and our projects – I would thoroughly recommend checking it out and considering applying if you are eligible.