# Recipes
# for fairer
# creative
# work

# Who is this for?

**This booklet is for you if:**

/// You are an artist, you run a cultural organisation or a small business, you freelance or have a portfolio career in the creative and culture sector and...

/// You are looking for ways to operate more democratically, inclusively and environmentally.

This booklet aims to help you to realise change so that your work can be led by your own values, and adopt processes, structures, and policies that reflect them.

The booklet emerges from four years of research in the West of England region. We worked with over 75 creatives across workshops, interviews, collaborative conversations, and awarding grants, to collectively identify ways to overcome barriers facing the sector in changing the way we work for a fairer creative economy.

There's not one single future for the creative economy detailed in the pages that follow, but an invitation instead to experiment and to do creative work differently.
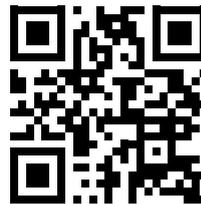
## Introduction

We know that for many people working in and around the creative and cultural sector, the primary motivator is not economic growth, competition, or the accumulation of wealth. Instead, people often strive to realise other goals alongside making a living—self-expression, community connection, social justice, experimentation—and to live and work in ways that embody those values.

It is hard to do this in a world where everything seems to be geared towards economic growth – growing your business, your profits, your reach. It's even more challenging right now with climate collapse, the cost-of-living crisis, the ongoing impacts of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability, austerity, embedded racism and colonialism, economic uncertainty and growing hostility to values of community and tolerance.

Although these challenges are real, they have driven many of us to try and create a better way to live and work for ourselves and others.

We want to put people and planet first, have practices and policies rooted in care, and be driven by the desire to promote positive change in the world.

This document explores some practical possibilities for making that happen in the world of creative work. The quotes come directly from some of the 75+ creatives we worked with to produce this work. You can read it in conjunction with our website, which has loads of other resources in our *Library of Alternatives*.

"Thinking about what matters to you, about how to generate income & get paid, as well as who you make work for & how you want them to feel."

**Reclaiming creativity**

During the late 1990s when the UK's first creative industries policies came into force, people's 'creativity' became a driver for making money. These policies mixed the socially progressive ambitions of the cultural world with the economic allure of blockbuster films, music, TV, art and new technologies to make Big Money and came up with, we were told, a bright bold vision for our society.

The Creative Industries was the name given to this new grouping of activities that made things based on human creativity – art, film and TV, computer games, advertising, and more all fall under one policy banner. The problem was that the policies were vague and disproportionately favoured things that generated wealth and prestige for the country. Art and culture, whose financial benefits were understood as indirect, were overlooked, or worse, expected to become a profit-making enterprise.

Over the last twenty years, this focus on economic growth has ended up encouraging individualism over collaboration, competition over co-operation, the exploitation of new technologies over understanding their impacts, and the production of blockbuster hits over things that matter for their own sake, even at small scales. It's not that the system doesn't believe in culture. It's just that it takes money as the best way to understand its value.

*This vision for the creative sector has turned out to be deeply exclusive. It favours young, white, middle and upper-class creatives who might have economic backing to work for long periods with no or low pay.*

It is risk averse, rarely supporting experimental work or work that has outcomes only for certain small groups. It doesn't see social wellbeing as a valid outcome, and it struggles to address climate change because it often involves practices that are very environmentally wasteful – for example the carbon footprint of touring or making a movie, or resource-hungry technological infrastructures, like AI or cloud computing. It also doesn't see how different working as an artist, freelance, creative, or values-driven organisation is from being a 'regular business'.

**Making change happen**

We believe, as you do, that it's vital for us to reclaim a way of working that champions and values the complicated, rich, meaningful impact that cultural and creative work has the potential to produce.

Working towards a fairer creative economy necessarily means doing things differently. This might mean changing the structure your business takes, the rules it adopts, or the future you want to bring into being by centring people and planet rather than profit. It involves thinking about what matters to you, about how to generate income and get paid, as well as who you produce work for and how you want them to feel.

We know it can feel impossible to change the way that things are done. Pessimism and fatalism are common and understandable. We know that we aren't all operating on a level playing field, that endemic racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and prejudice shape our intersectional experience of life and work.

We also know the challenges we face trying to tackle seemingly intractable problems like the climate crisis. Where does the individual action we take as creatives become communal action? How can change we make at the microscale radiate out?

We believe there is hope. The pages that follow show that different futures are possible, and that many are already striving towards making them a reality, despite the weight of the present. We hope that this provides inspiration to make change happen where you can.

*So here are some of the 'ingredients' that you can experiment with to build a fairer creative economy. We hope you find these recipes useful and that you can make something beautiful with them.*

# Recipes for fairer creative work

**FAIR CREATIVE ECONOMIES**

# Contents

# Recipes for fairer creative work

# Making visible the invisible

In this section, we introduce three visual tools or metaphors that foreground aspects of creative work that are largely unrecognised in the current economic climate.

/// The **Career River** helps you identify how your values and life circumstances have informed your career decisions to date, alongside how wider societal systems have acted to support you or create barriers for you.

/// The **Iceberg** helps you better understand all the other types of labour, practices and forms of exchange that are essential to your creative career that are not recognised in budgets, job descriptions, bottom lines, funder metrics, or what you pay yourself.

/// The **Ecosystem** draws attention to your relationships with other people, things, and places that enable you to do what you do and helps you consider which parts of your ecosystem you want to nourish, which parts are flourishing and which might not be. What is within your control and what is not?

## Career River

Often, we are so busy doing creative work that it is difficult to pause, take stock, and ask ourselves whether we are doing it in the best way possible for us, for others, or the planet. Spending some time reflecting on how you have got to where you are in your career can help you understand the motivations, values and drivers that inform your career decisions in-the-round, drawing attention to significant moments which you may not have acknowledged at the time, and help you think about what might come next.

## Activity

*Using the metaphor of a river, chart your creative career development journey, either as an individual or as an organisation. Take a large piece of paper and use whatever art materials you'd like to draw, paint, or collage.*

/// How did you start? As a trickle, a burst dam, or a wellspring?

/// Were there times when it was rough going? Did you hit rapids or a waterfall, or have to go underground to survive?

/// When did things go smoothly? Were there any key turning points? Did you merge with another stream, or branch off, widen, or flood and fertilise the land?

/// Once you have charted your past, think about what kind of river you would like to see in the future. How would you like to move forward?

/// What might help you navigate future obstacles? What resources will you need? What partnerships, cooperation, or collaboration might you undertake? How can you translate these into the watery metaphor?



EXAMPLES OF CAREER
RIVERS PRODUCED BY OUR
CREATIVE COMMUNITY.

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So this is where we sta off. This was in 2013.

This is me being the little tiny stream up here. And also I had a baby in this time.

This is where I didn't know what I was doing in any way, shape, or form, and had no support and was just bibbling along.

Here I feel like I dried up completely for a year.

*This spread shows an example of a career river drawn from the experience of one of our creative collaborators.*

And then after having the baby and coming through the fog of it all, then it was like a really big turning point because I was like, as a human being, I was like, I have something to say something to say about the world.'

# Career River

*So this is about six years ago here. And then, from this point, everything's just kind of grown.*

*We've got an advisory board, and we're growing our team of freelancers that we work with, growing the partners that we work with, and the ways in which we work,*

*So there was kind of like a waterfall at that point, and I met the person who's now our company manager, and we started working together.*

*...and so it feels like everything's becoming more 3D and colourful over here, and we're expanding the ways in which we work in what feels like a really positive way.*

## Introducing the iceberg

One of the features of this capitalist world is how inescapable its logic seems. Money, markets, and tough economic choices appear to govern everything. But what if this wasn't as totalising as it seems? What if there was a way to see the things we're already doing that aren't reducible only to money?

That's what two Australian authors who wrote together under the name JK Gibson-Graham were exploring when they came up with the idea of 'diverse economies'. Their argument was that we already do so many things that are invisible to capitalism — ways of working and being that already happen outside of the flow of money.

They looked at all forms of exchange, where something you value is offered to someone else, and not always for money: looking after one another's children, lending tools or clothes, giving advice or support, bartering. Gibson-Graham were not saying that money isn't important, but just that it is one of many things that we exchange in our everyday lives; one of many diverse economies.

They demonstrated this using the example of an iceberg. Above the waterline was the obvious stuff: working for wages, buying things, getting loans, markets and so on. Below the waterline was all the other stuff that makes our everyday lives. Things like domestic labour or the black market.

This is important because it helps us see how we can build systems that are based on those other forms of exchange — of ideas, compassion, and care, for example. Thinking this way is the foundation of a fairer creative economy.

VISIBLE
LABOUR &
ECONOMIC EXCHANGE

INVISIBLE
LABOUR, SOCIAL
REPRODUCTION &
EXCHANGE
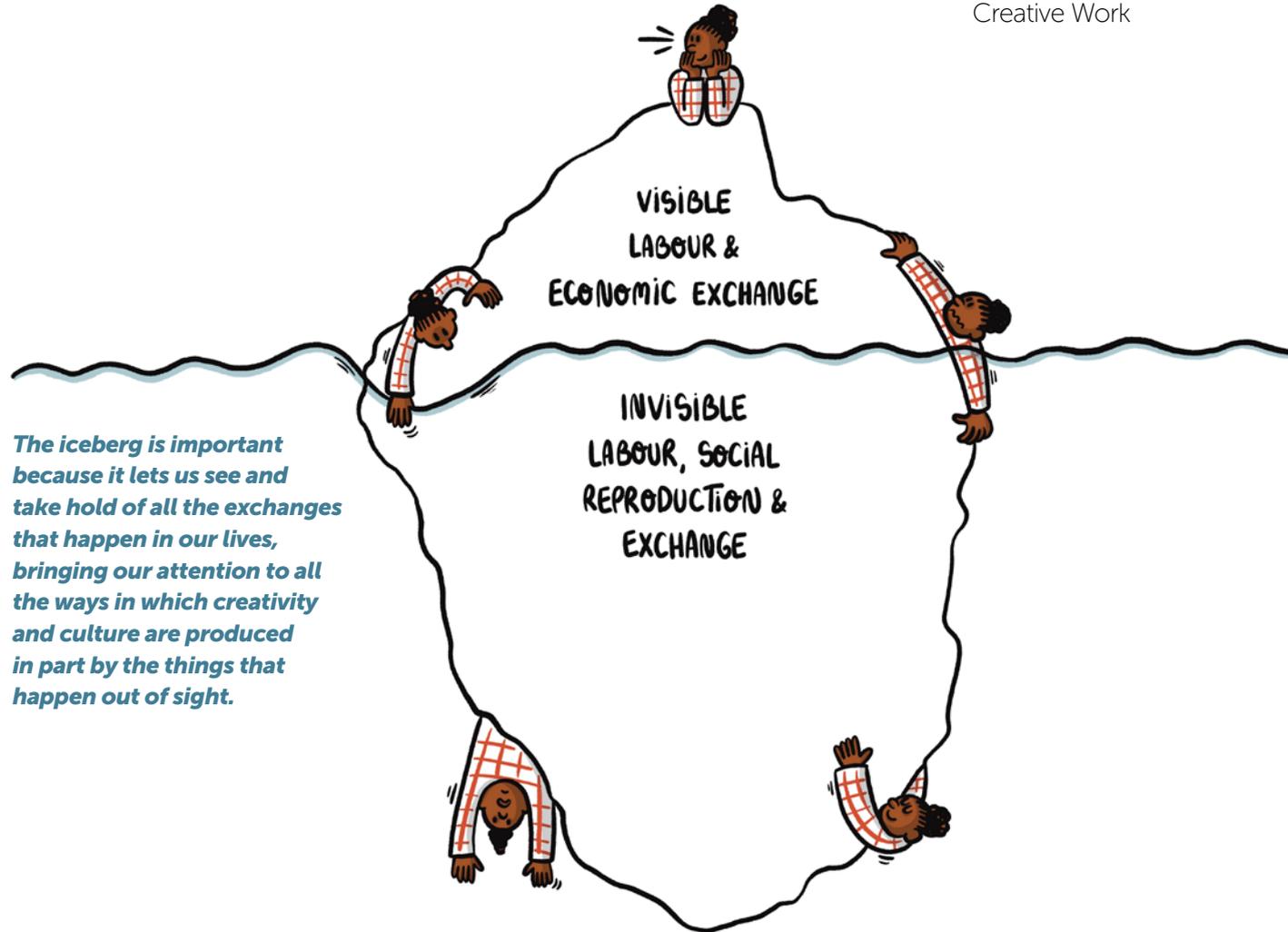
*The iceberg is important
because it lets us see and
take hold of all the exchanges
that happen in our lives,
bringing our attention to all
the ways in which creativity
and culture are produced
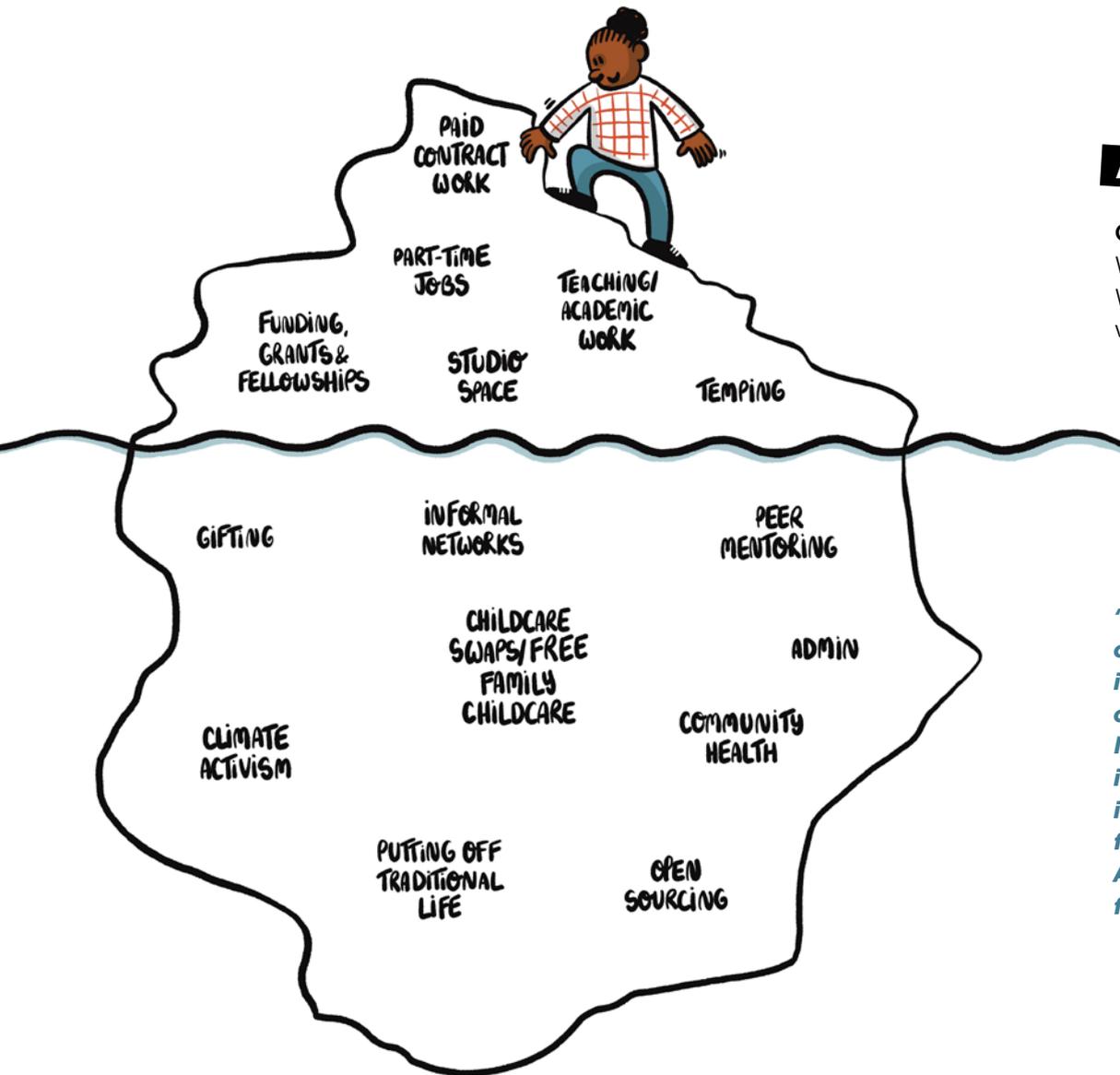in part by the things that
happen out of sight.*

# The Creative Economy
# Iceberg

We worked with creatives to come up with our own iceberg specifically for the creative and cultural economy. It shows what is recognised in the visible, formalised economies of the sector, types of invisible and unpaid labour, and alternative types of exchange that happen between creative peers, and between the sector and communities.

*'I never thought about the 95% of work which goes behind my job. You are doing this, and then delivering that, and then you're commuting as well and there are the expenses. And it's just weird that we creative people don't ask for money, don't ask for people to value us as well. I think it's because we don't value our time, our efforts, skill and what we bring as well.'*
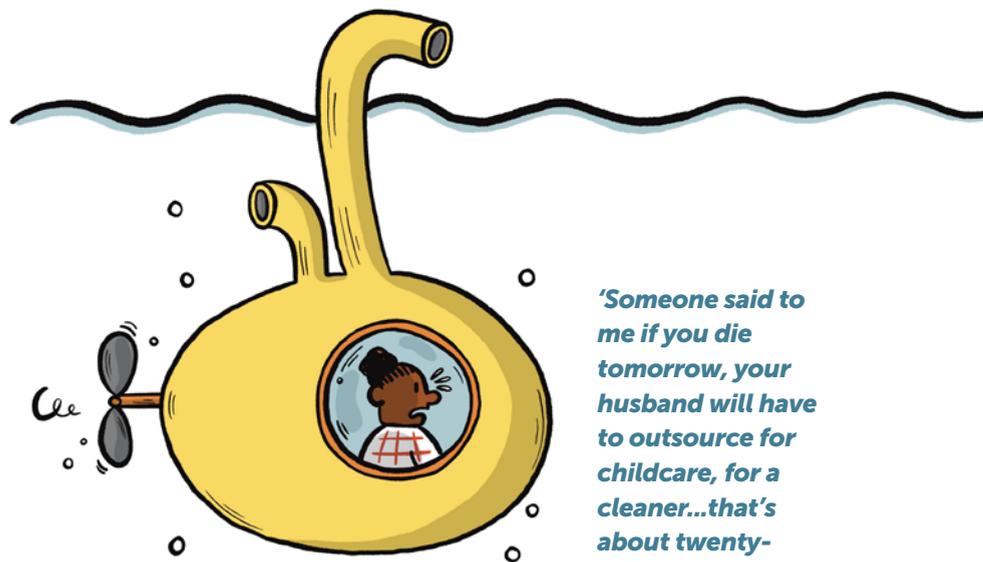
*'Someone said to me if you die tomorrow, your husband will have to outsource for childcare, for a cleaner...that's about twenty-eight to thirty plus thousand a year.'*

PAID CONTRACT WORK

PART-TIME JOBS

TEACHING/ ACADEMIC WORK

FUNDING, GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

STUDIO SPACE

TEMPING

GIFTING

INFORMAL NETWORKS

PEER MENTORING

CHILDCARE SWAPS/FREE FAMILY CHILDCARE

ADMIN

CLIMATE ACTIVISM

COMMUNITY HEALTH

PUTTING OFF TRADITIONAL LIFE

OPEN SOURCING

## Activity

**Consider:**
What does your iceberg look like?
What does this tell you about
what you do and how?

*'I'm a queer person and a person of colour, and I've had people use my identity as a token. I've worked with companies and when they hire me, I kind of know it's because of my identity. I don't get paid to be used in their advertisements and my face is the first one on the page. And even after I stopped working for them, it's still there'*

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COLLABORATORS

COFFEE SHOP

FRIENDS

ADMIN

COMMS

STUDIO

EXERCISE

CULTURE

ACTIVISM & VOLUNTEERING

NATURE

FAMILY

TRANSPORT

CHILDCARE

# Ecosystems

Another way of understanding how these 'diverse economies' work
is by thinking about how we connect to one another in our daily lives.

We're used to hearing about networks and networking. But what if we thought about something more dynamic, more organic, than a network? An ecosystem where loads of different things work together to produce the conditions for resilient creative work to happen? Think about famous examples of places like New York in the 1960s or Paris in the 1870s or Manchester in the 1980s and 1990s that have reputations for producing great art and culture. What made those things possible?

The answers tend to be about the mixture of people, opportunities, circumstances, facilities, services, places and spaces. From galleries to music venues, from cafes and pubs to record shops and recording studios, to places to rehearse and places to live.

A healthy creative ecosystem supports collaboration, experimentation, diversity and stability. It thrives on the exchange of skills, access to collaborators, mutual support, inspiration, time. These are all ingredients that help make culture happen.

We might even think about what a regenerative ecosystem looks like. If we take the example of a forest ecosystem, forests harvest solar energy, store carbon and rainwater, fertilise soil, purify the air and more. What does a creative ecosystem look like when it is redistributive and abundant? How do we replenish our own ecosystem rather than diminish its resources (individually or societally)?

**Activity**

**Consider:**
What does your creative ecosystem look like?
What places and people do you rely on to do your work?
Your favourite coffee shop to work in?
A favoured fabricator to work
with? A bus route? A childcare provider?
Artistic collaborators? Venues? Shops?

# Recipes for fairer creative work

**Section 3:**

# What matters?

This section considers different ways to embed your values into your work and make sure that you are valuing and counting what often gets ignored or de-prioritised currently.

In this section, we:

/// Provide **Prompts** to explore your or your organisation's **Values** more fully

/// Propose opportunities for building **Values-Centred Measures of Success**

/// Introduce **Individual and Collective Care** frameworks and provide TIPS from the creative sector

/// Share a note on **Volunteering** and **Internships**

**Values...**

Our values are what matter to us. They shape our way of understanding and being in the world. In the world of creative work, they inform not just what we want to make, but how we want to make it, with whom, and why.

The values we have found to be at work in the sector are varied. They can be about providing the best experiences for people, about challenging people and experimenting with new forms, about community and self-expression. But in one way or another, they nearly all come down to caring about ourselves, our relationships, and about the planet. We want to tackle inequality. We want to see social justice realised.

**...and Value**

Then there's also the question of 'value'. How do you qualify the importance of something? It might be a way of working, a feeling, an item you've made, a show you've produced, a service you've offered. It all has value.

The dominant way of assessing something's value in our society is economic. We see this in the arts. How much is this product worth? How much money does every £1 spent in the cultural sector generate for the local economy? What can I charge for my time? How many tickets have you sold?

The challenge is that creative and cultural work involves time. It involves imagination. It affects the people who are engaging with the things we produce and generates meaning far beyond money. Watching films, gigs, plays – these things can change people's lives in ways we can't capture monetarily. But so can the process of making those things – being part of a community of makers. Coming up with new ideas. Connecting with other places and spaces in your ecosystem. These things all have value, but it's hard to capture in economic terms. After all, what is the economic value of a feeling of safety and satisfaction? What is the economic value of experiencing togetherness and joy in a performance? As we've seen in the Iceberg diagram, there are lots of activities that go unnoticed or are not counted because they are not viewed as having monetary value within the economy.

"HOW DO YOU QUALIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF SOMETHING? IT MIGHT BE A WAY OF WORKING, A FEELING, AN ITEM YOU'VE MADE, A SHOW YOU'VE PRODUCED, A SERVICE YOU'VE OFFERED. IT ALL HAS VALUE."

## Where values and value meet

The two ideas of value and values interact in how you and your organisation work, and the choices you make. You are constantly having to balance generating money or justifying economic choices, while living in a way that makes sense to you. This makes decision-making hard. Can I take this commission from an oil company? Can I accept this grant funding that doesn't allow me to pay the people I work with?

Money is a supposedly neutral abstract medium that facilitates exchange. However, it is loaded with emotional weight because it enables our basic survival, and its presence or absence can change our relationships with people, processes and things and affect how we feel about and value ourselves.

*'A lack of money can really challenge any values that you might want to have, because it might mean that, practically, you can't uphold those values. It seems to be easier to uphold our values for everyone else that's working with us, and not really for ourselves.'*

**What are your or your organisation's values?**

**Have you written them down or agreed them together?**

Articulating your core values helps to make them visible and allows other people to accept or challenge them. In a group or organisation, they can become a common bond that draws people together and holds the group. You can use them as a guide by which to weigh decisions or set priorities.

**However, values can also cause divisions.**

Sometimes when conflicts emerge within a group or organisation, it is because of competing good values such as accessibility and environmental sustainability, for example, when booking transport. When looking at making a decision, you might want to identify which core values are at stake and which ones might conflict. There might then be ways to find a dynamic balance between them. Starhawk's *Empowerment Manual* (2011) offers some good exercises and ways of thinking about this such as ways for a group to identify their core values together and strategies for balancing competing values. The manual is a useful guide and toolkit for working in collaborative groups.

**How do you embed your values in your ways of working and decision-making?**

Responding to specific commissions or funder briefs and requirements can sometimes make this tricky. But some simple things can be done.

Aligning your values and practices:

/// Make budgets radical - make sure your values are reflected in your budgets.

/// Use your values to determine the value of your own and other people's labour rather than the normalised 'day rates' which externally decide the worth of what you are doing.

/// Test out opportunities to push back when external factors mean your values are being compromised.

/// Use your values to decide whether a funder, a commission, or a collaborator is the right one for you. Which ones are dealbreakers?

/// Create your own measures of success that reflect your values – see below for our section on success.

*'I suppose the most radical thing you can do is write a budget and say, "Well, we value our people, so we're going to put most of our resources into people".'*

## Measuring success

Counting, accounting, and measuring can seem onerous, pointless, or intimidating. However, these processes can make things visible that might not otherwise be acknowledged. What is measured, counted, and therefore valued, can determine what happens. And there are other ways to think about these things.

Accounting can also be understood as accounting for something, as in 'telling the story of'. You can also think about accountability in terms of what kind of accountability would be most appropriate for a particular project, or who you would like to be accountable to and for what. Often there is a requirement for practitioners from external funding bodies to demonstrate value in a particular way, that may not match an artist's or organisation's values. What kinds of success do these requirements promote? How can you make what matters to you visible and valued? What are your or your organisation's values?

**Do you have your own measures (metrics) of success?**

**Looking at your core values, how might you measure what is important to you?**

**How often do funders' metrics match your values? Where is there most often a mismatch?**

**How could you communicate this to a funder? What scope or methods do you have to push back?**

*An example of alternative measurements of value*

*A collaboration between the Community Spaces Network and Solidarity Economy Network in Barcelona created The Community Balance Sheet, a self-diagnostic tool which groups, spaces or organisations (although an individual could use some of it too) can use to evaluate projects they carry out from the perspective of community engagement and citizen participation. They consulted with a number of community spaces on how to demonstrate the value of being community led, owned, and managed. The survey gathers data about a range of topics including a project or organisations' internal participation and democracy, its relationships with networks, services, and institutions in the local area and its responsiveness to the needs, demands, and concerns of local citizens. While as a whole, it may not be completely appropriate to your context, you might find bits of it can be adapted. You can find out more in our* Library of Alternatives.

In measuring the success and value of arts, culture and creativity there is undeniably a reliance on numbers: whether that be sales or audience related, more is generally considered better. For many creatives, having a profound impact on a smaller number of people is just as rewarding, especially if the work is for community benefit. Conveying feedback and learnings through narratives and case studies are often preferred over metrics by the sector itself. But it can be difficult to share these types of evaluations with funders and sometimes results in organisations collecting different types of data for the funder than for themselves. If a funder appears to have strict metrics for reporting, it is always worth attempting a conversation to share what is more meaningful for you or your audiences/community.

*'Over the last year and a half, I've tried to document things in different ways....I pass all of our metrics to my colleague who transforms them into really cool infographics. And funders like that. So I'm able to say "Okay, these are some of your metrics, but then these are ours." And when you present your metrics in that way it's possible to show successes in ways beyond what they were thinking.'*

**What does failure look like to you?**

Measuring success also means measuring failure, even if it is just implied. The *Failspace* research project explores how the creative and cultural sector can better acknowledge and learn from failure: **https://failspaceproject.co.uk/**

Creatives intuitively do this all the time, but making this an explicit part of your evaluation might mean you are better able to embed the learnings in future projects. Given the emotional investment required to carry out many creative projects, it can be easy to catastrophise failure and make it the overall narrative of the project. In reality, there were probably many successful elements of the project and some areas that failed. So why not come up with your own metrics for success that work for you?

*'Creating joy as a measure of success. I just want to go round recording people's first reactions; this whole kind of whoa, wee, kind of noise, and let that have its own impact. But you can't put it in words. A scale of one to ten, what does it even mean. It's finding new ways of capturing.'*

"A REAL MEASURE OF SUCCESS WOULD BE HAVING ENOUGH TIME & NOT CONSTANTLY FEELING LIKE YOU CAN'T STOP."
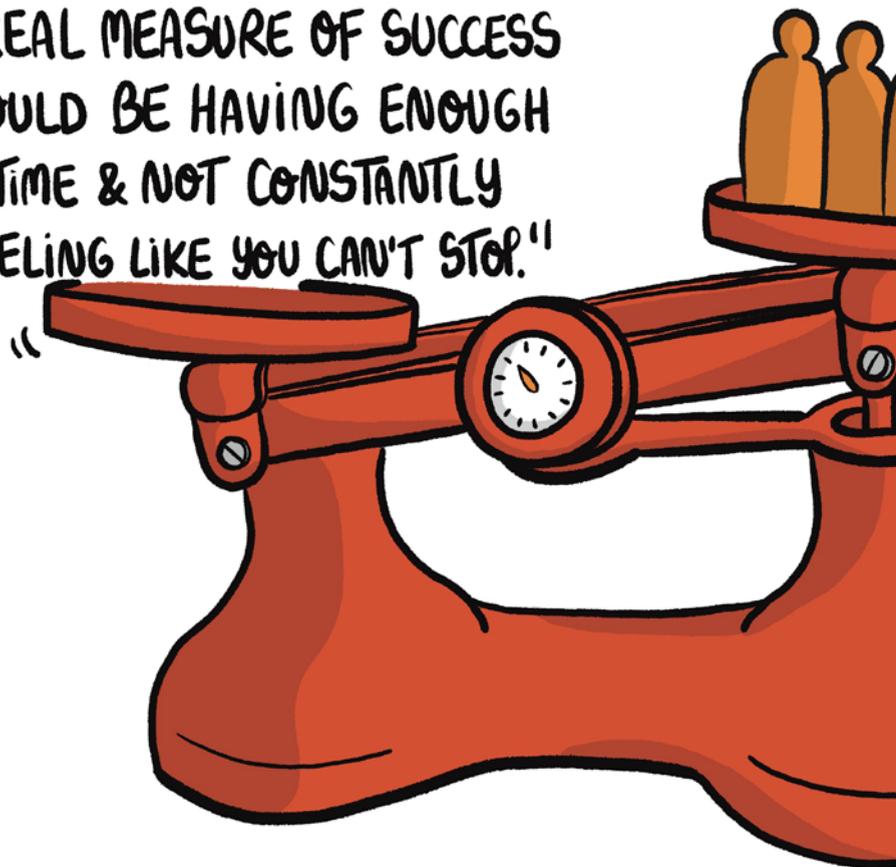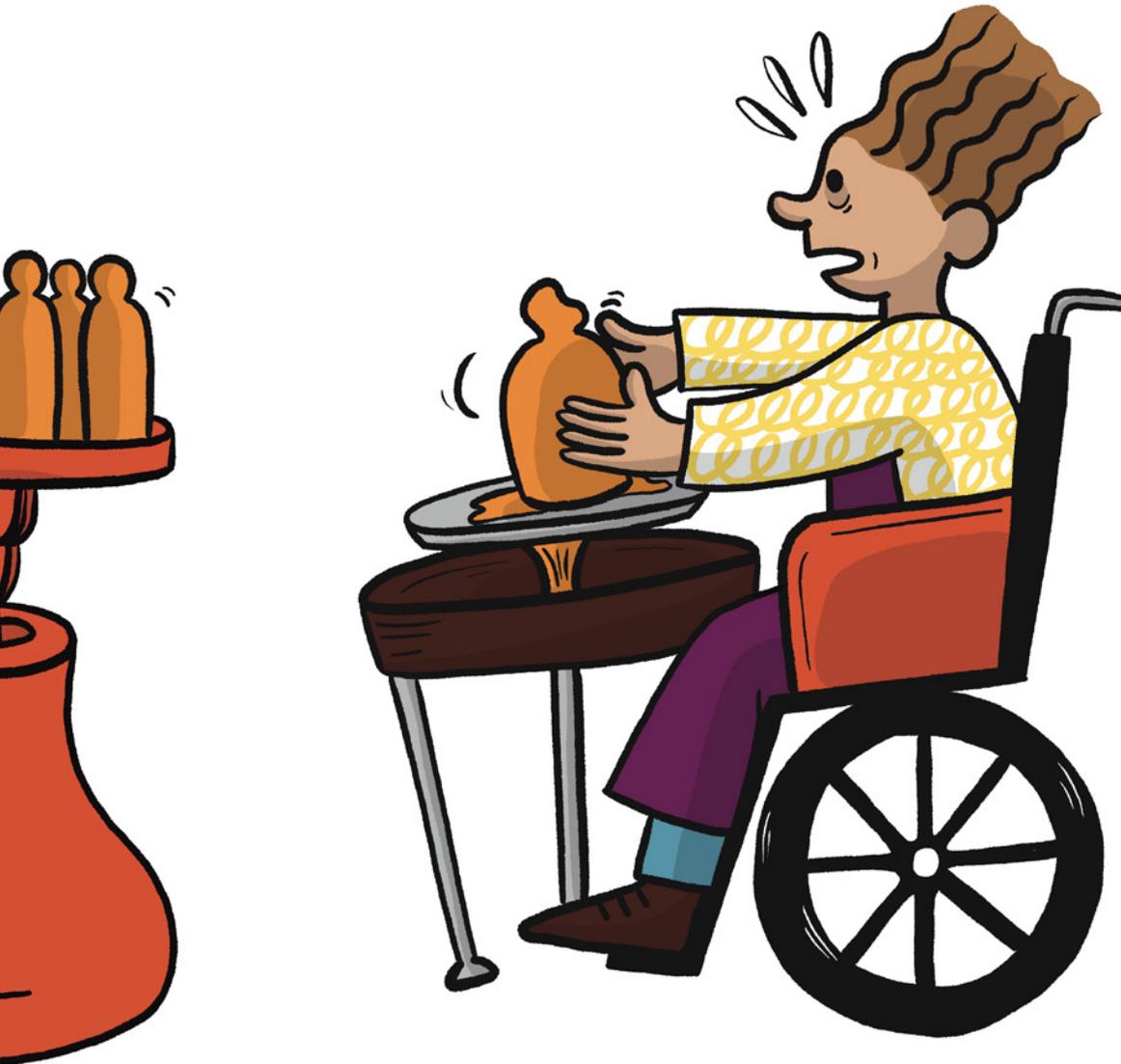
*'The implication here is that success is tied to a target as opposed to a process. So when you say everything is good, it's not a target you're aiming for, it's a state of being, and that's success; it doesn't have a measure per se.'*

*'It had so much emotional value, but you could say "Well, there were only 25 participants".'*

*'You're going to have challenges, you're going to do wrong things, you're going to go into cul-de-sacs, but that's okay. It's part of it all, and I suppose it's harnessing that feeling and keeping that bigger picture perspective of life. Because you get so in the trenches with the project, and then you're taking that stock of it and giving yourself the breathing space to check in, and it goes back to wellbeing.'*

## Care and wellbeing

For many of the creative practitioners we've worked with, care and wellbeing are important values. Many of them see the arts and care as being intertwined, either in relation to themselves as practitioners or as an ethic to work with others by. This might mean building community, co-creating projects, upholding certain values, or balancing art, work and other aspects of life.

*'Arts is wellbeing'*

*'How are you going to take care of yourself while you... put your mask on....before helping others?'*

**Caring for Self**

Here are some ways that creatives told us they build self-care while balancing it with the realities of the sector.

It's important not to just 'keep your mouth shut and plough on through'.

RINGFENCE TIME FOR NETWORKING & LOOKING FOR THE NEXT JOB.

BUILD IN TIME FOR CREATIVE WORK PURELY FOR YOURSELF OUTSIDE OF PAID BRIEFS, TO REINSPIRE YOU & REKINDLE YOUR LOVE FOR WHAT YOU DO.

## 1. Resting and re-energising

///    Have a clearer idea of when you're working, and when you're not working.

///    Ringfence time for checking in or wellbeing.

*'I also have just started paying the company a certain amount, not just myself for my hours, which I'm delivering, but also, the hours which I'm planning, research, and applying.'*

///    Work in 'time blocks' and take breaks or go for walks. Set an alarm to remind yourself.

///    Use yoga, meditation, massage to look after mind and body.

///    Make time for hobbies.

*'Badgers go into this state when there's not much food around, a low-energy state called a torpor. So you could become torpid — we'll go into a torpor where we're conserving some energy, but also resting in order to then be able to come out of it a bit stronger at the end.'*

LOOK TO ANIMALS OR PLANTS.

*'You just want to keep working, but you almost need another person to tell you in your face very simple things, like "go for a walk or do time blocks." And then I realised, yeah, I hadn't been doing that.'*

/// Recognise the symptoms of stress before they before they lead to burn out. For example, not eating properly, sleeping badly, or starting to compromise on the work/life boundaries of your core values.

*'Just feeling really hopeless, and especially because I live alone and I work from home. So it's just me staring at the computer and then feeling like the world is caving in. And then I realised that I had to stop, but stop strategically to think of what help I could get. So I feel like when I burn out, I realise I need to ask for help and then I just turn my focus into trying to get the help.'*
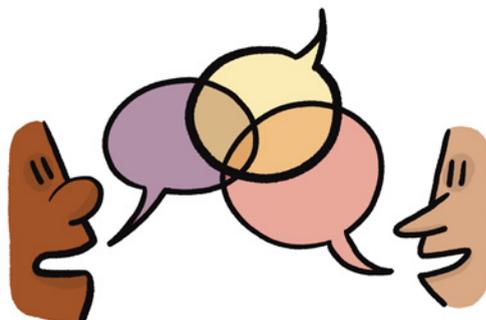


BE WILLING TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS, LISTEN & TRY TO USE FEEDBACK WELL.

2. Building support networks

/// Find places and ways to talk openly with others about your practices and struggles.

/// Build relationships with people who you might be able to exchange things with.

/// Reach out and ask for help.

### 3. Paying yourself properly

///   Try asking for more than you feel
comfortable with.

*'I found these internships where, essentially,
they would pay a small arts organisation or
whoever you wanted to work for, and then they
would pay your salary. So the arts organisation
would have you, essentially for free, but you'd
still be getting paid. So that was great.'*

///   Aim to create a buffer for when things
get scarce or difficult – this might be
financial but it might also be social through
networks and relationships.

///   Aim to get yourself into a position
where you can say no to things.

///   Find alternative sources of funding.

RE-FRAME WHAT
SUCCESS & FAILURE
MEAN FOR YOU.

### 4. Letting go of perfection

///   Remember that 'perfection is never possible'.

*'The creative process itself needs time, fallow time,
planting seeds time. So that idea that this fallow
time or this kind of quiet time, reflective time,
has value hasn't really been put into the mix'*

**Care for the Ecosystem**

As well as self-care, we can also care for our ecosystem and relationships through how we work. Here are some ideas from our creatives:

*'Now it's time to tend.*
*Tend to the land, tend to your houses,*
*tend to yourselves, your little ones, each other.'*

/// Embed diversity, inclusion and accessibility in what you do.

/// Make sure that unheard voices have opportunities to be heard.

/// Practice acceptance, respect, and openness with people you work with.

/// Build solidarity and mutual aid.

/// Prioritise building relationships and the social aspect of projects.

/// Connect with green spaces and consider who is in charge of their stewardship.

/// Provide food at events and workshops.

/// Find alternative ways of paying people e.g. in vouchers if they are on benefits and you can't pay them with money.

/// Look to non-human nature for inspiration, e.g. 'companion planting' in permaculture as a metaphor for creating a thriving creative ecosystem.

/// Value the margins. One of the principles of permaculture recognises this -

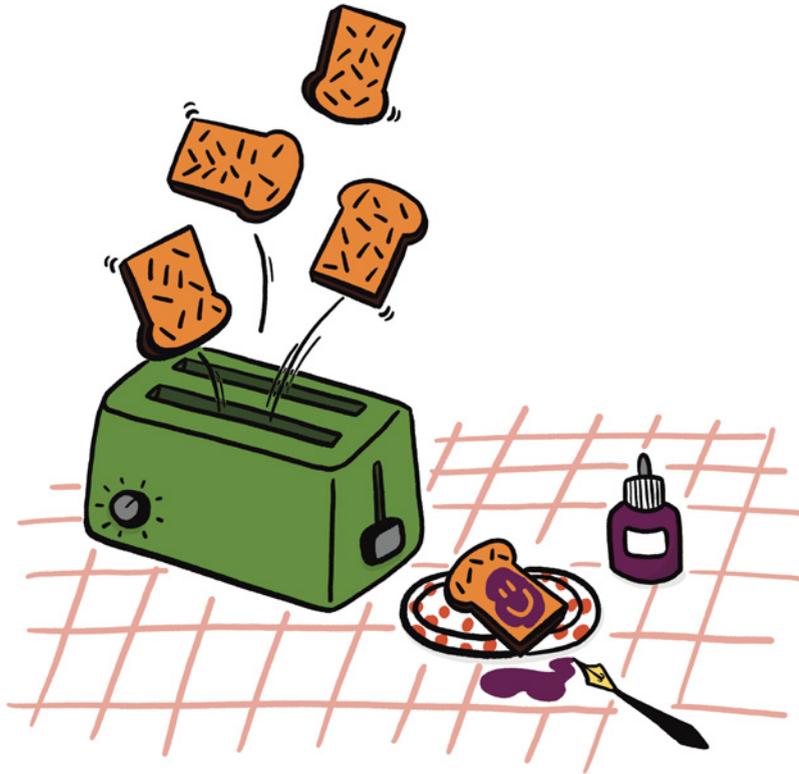*'We know that most of the innovation happens from those that are in the margins of society where you have lack of resources... So... it's valuing everyone in the ecosystem.'*

/// Cooperate with others as a form of care:

*'Being part of a bigger group, that bigger thing.*
*And being able to lean on other people'.*

/// Find, join, or create a peer community network.

/// Join or form a union as collective care.

## Making care more than a buzzword

There can also be tensions and contradictions in the notion of care. These can play out in relationships with public funding bodies and their reporting requirements, within workplaces, and when working with others. Care can seem a bit of a buzzword - it has been talked about in the arts a lot, particularly since the pandemic. Some scholars argue that it plays a crucial role within capitalism, helping to sustain, reproduce, and replenish the workforce for the capitalist economy. At the same time, care can also open up spaces of autonomy and possibility in organising economic alternatives, which is why it can be so radical. You can read the *Care Manifesto* (2020), by the Care Collective, for more on the topic. Some practitioners found pushback by some cultures of work, with them stating that 'this is the way we've always done things'. It does feel, though, that in Bristol there is a culture of taking care and wellbeing seriously; something that doesn't happen everywhere. For example, Rising Arts Agency, amongst others, have developed contracts that include periods of paid rest, especially for practitioners who find themselves doing the invisible labour of diversity and inclusion. See our *Library of Alternatives* for more information on this.

*'Someone putting a sticker on the wall that says this is a safe space does not make it a safe space.'*

*'Self-care has an in-built contradiction, because if I want to take care of myself financially, that means I'm going to have to put aside my mental stress. You've got to find a way of getting the job done so you can get paid.'*

## A note on volunteering and internships

While it may seem a no-brainer to always make sure that people are paid for the work they do, the issue of voluntary working can be a little more nuanced.

It is clear that for some organisations it's really important to pay people with money. Some chose not to have volunteers because it benefits those who can afford not to be paid, while excluding those who can't.

*'As part of our flat pay structure, we made a decision to not have any unpaid interns, because although it would be great, you know, free labour...it unevens the playing field because it means that the people who can afford to work for months unpaid will get more and more on their CVs, and then the people who have to work in McDonald's are still working in McDonald's.'*

For others, especially those that are run completely by volunteers and embody a DIY culture, paying people might actually devalue the work that they do.

The altruistic contribution of members to a community, in helping to keep the organisation going can be its own reward. This seems especially the case for organisations which have a strong DIY ethos and culture of sharing and openness. This might include skill-sharing sessions, where members learn from each other.

*'We're doing a very good thing for the community. We're very proud of what we've achieved and pleased it exists and very keen to keep that going. So there's an aspect of that being its own reward.'*

If you are a fiercely independent and autonomous organisation, running solely on voluntary labour can create a robustness and flexibility in terms of being less reliant on public funding:

*'We're completely independent. We got some recovery funding in the pandemic, so we own the building and we're all volunteers, so we've got a lot of flexibility in terms of finances, really. We're not rolling in it, but we have a lot of freedom, a lot of autonomy in what we do.'*

*'We don't use the word lobby, but we're trying to incite change. As soon as you've got funding, do you end up backing yourself into a corner and being answerable to someone? At the moment, we don't have to answer to anyone. We're literally doing what we want.'*

Within organisations, free labour can be used in a hierarchical way, with more junior staff given more onerous tasks.

Unpaid internships can also devalue everyone else's time. It is of course important that people have the means to survive and thrive, through monetary or other means.

However, sometimes, volunteers are actually in positions that are quite integral to a company and when they leave it can be challenging.

*'there's always people coming and going. So someone might put some energy into something for a while, but then they're gone again and there isn't any legacy in the work that they've put in.'*

All of these dynamics can create unequal power relations and raise questions about who is entitled to financial compensation. Being aware of levels of unpaid labour, understanding it and making it visible, can help to make it a conscious decision or choice rather than being something you just slip into.

# Recipes
# for fairer
# creative
# work

**Section 4:** # Building, growing, generating, cultivating, influencing

The previous section explored practical ways that you can build your values, care, and non-monetary value generation into your creative work, practices, organising, and measures of success. We now explore further tools, ideas, and inspiration for working differently within the current structures of the creative economy and for working towards building new structures for the future.

It's not all on you – the big changes need to be made by those in the positions of most power – but we can help identify what the changes should be. And then apply pressure, demanding and proposing best practice for how those changes should take place, and more quickly.

So how can we work towards a fairer creative economy?

This section provides you with:

/// A **Support Flowchart** to identify what you are already doing and what you know about – and then what gaps you have and where to get information and resources to address those gaps.

/// **Practical Steps** for lobbying and campaigning for change with funders and decision makers.

# Getting Started: What resources do you need and where can you find them?
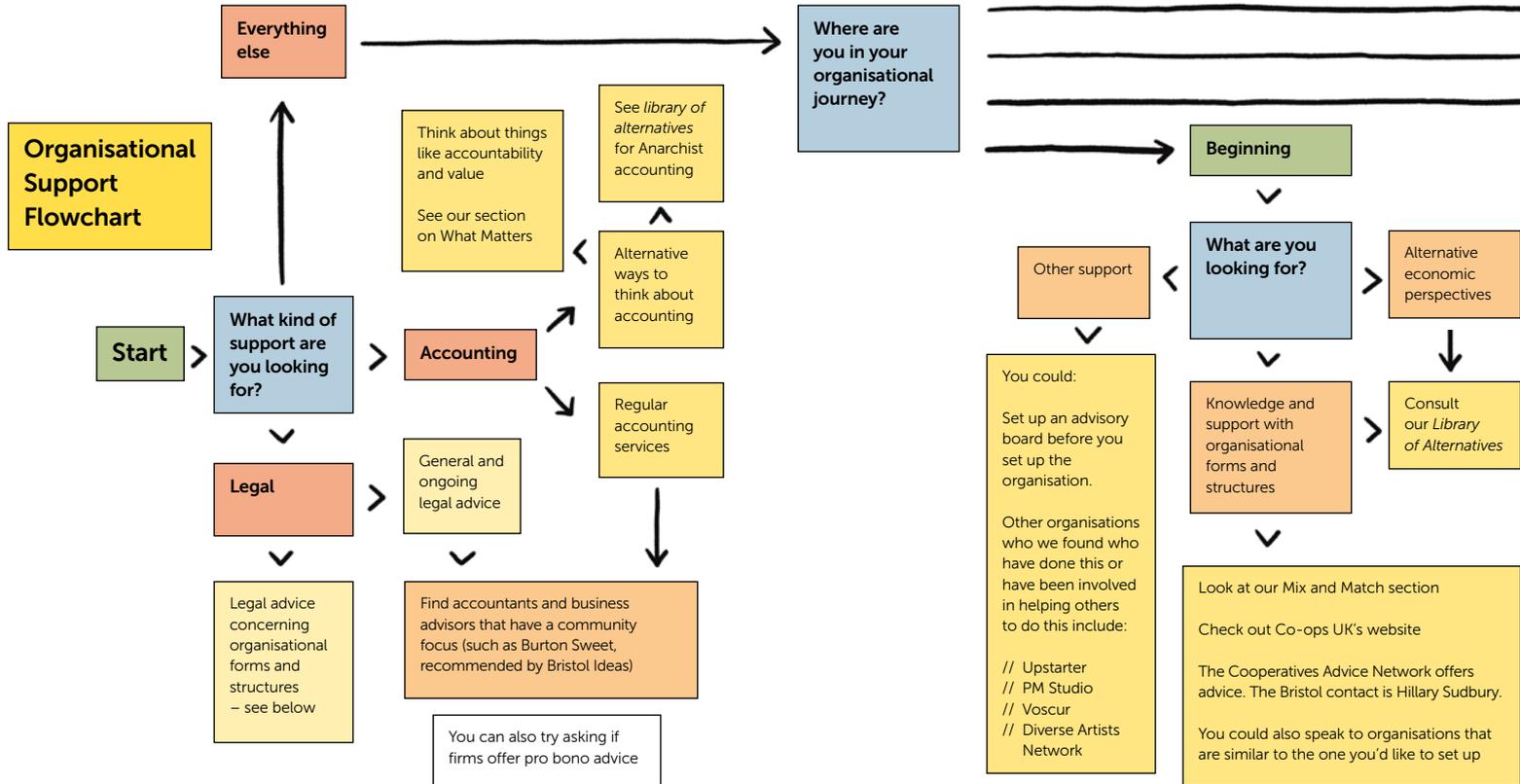
'Well, back in the day, four people founded it, four guys who were mates, and they originally thought that they were going to run it as a small business. They would be directors. Some volunteers would help out and they would make some, you know, make a living off that, like really rough living. And after about two months, they realised that was like absolutely not going to work at all.'

## Organisational Support Flowchart

**Start** → **What kind of support are you looking for?**

**Everything else** → **Where are you in your organisational journey?**

**Accounting**
- Think about things like accountability and value
- See our section on What Matters
- Alternative ways to think about accounting
- See *library of alternatives* for Anarchist accounting
- Regular accounting services
- Find accountants and business advisors that have a community focus (such as Burton Sweet, recommended by Bristol Ideas)
- You can also try asking if firms offer pro bono advice

**Legal**
- General and ongoing legal advice
- Legal advice concerning organisational forms and structures – see below

**Where are you in your organisational journey?** → **Beginning**

**Beginning** → **What are you looking for?**

**What are you looking for?**
- Other support
- Alternative economic perspectives
- Knowledge and support with organisational forms and structures
- Consult our *Library of Alternatives*

**Other support** — You could:

Set up an advisory board before you set up the organisation.

Other organisations who we found who have done this or have been involved in helping others to do this include:

// Upstarter
// PM Studio
// Voscur
// Diverse Artists Network

**Knowledge and support with organisational forms and structures:**

Look at our Mix and Match section

Check out Co-ops UK's website

The Cooperatives Advice Network offers advice. The Bristol contact is Hillary Sudbury.

You could also speak to organisations that are similar to the one you'd like to set up

'Now I'm part of a group of that partnership, the community groups, I feel like, are getting support. I'd be interested in being like part of a group of people that wanted to do alternative methods and we, like, learn from each other.'

'We've done a big sustainability evaluation on our tour and we work with Julie's bicycle tools, but we also got an environmental advisor in - she was brilliant.'

'I think we need to be talking about ending, and to be talking about it in a way that [it] doesn't have to be negative... that's not ending equals failure. But actually, that ending equals the beginning of something new... A city and cultural ecology should always be refreshing itself... Move out of the way, let someone else have a go.'

**Ending**

**Thinking about change**

**Ongoing**

You could think about:

// Contacting peers
// Creating networks
// Setting up an Action Learning Set

Think about who would be most useful to connect with – sector specific, cross-sector or even representatives from your supply chains.

**What kind of change do you want to make?**

**Frameworks and perspectives**

Try taking a deep dive into doing things from alternative perspective using resources in the *Library of Alternatives*:

– e.g. Doughnut Economies Lab tool for businesses

The PM Studio's framework for change

The Three Horizons framework

Theory U

**Have you thought about what it means to end well?**

Organisations and advisors we found that have provided support to others include:

// ARC - (Stephen Lyon)
// Back to Basics
// Bottle Yard Studio
// Bristol Arts Marketing
// Bristol Film Office
// Brown Girls Doc Mafia
// Community tech working group (Careful Trouble)
// Creative Local Growth programme
// Cultural Leaders meeting
// One City Cultural Board
// DIY Arts Network
// Co-operative directors meeting

// Kino Climates
// Gill Wildman
// Julie's Bicycle
// Music Venues Trust
// Outlandish
// Pervasive Media Studio
// Practical Governance
// Rising Arts Agency
// Watershed – Pervasive Media Studio
// Women in Social Tech
// Bristol Creative Industries
// Voscur
// WECA Creative

**Ownership and governance**

Look at examples of alternative examples of ownership and governance in our *Library of Alternatives* such as employee ownership or sociocracy.

Baxendales offer support for employee-ownership transitions

The PG (Practical Governance) Collective can offer support

Outlandish can provide sociocracy training

**Technology**

Organisations we found that have been doing interesting things in this area include:

Careful Industries

KWMC

The Community tech network

Outlandish are a digital cooperative, co-founder of Co-tech, UK network of digital cooperatives and a specialist in sociocracy.

You could:

// Look to other organisations that have ended – e.g. Theatre Bristol, Bristol Ideas
// Discuss your digital legacy with your web developer
// Contact archives, The British Library
// Create a reflective publication celebrating your work
// Pass on projects to others

What will happen to your assets?

Think about your:

// Digital assets
// Physical assets
// Written records

Think about:

// How to end gracefully
// How to continue your legacy
// What to pass on to who

## What else can you do?

When asked, the key thing that creative practitioners wanted more of was stronger networks and more sharing, collaboration and peer support. We know that the organization of art and creativity often involves practices that are very wasteful in resources – touring, materials and infrastructure. So, for example, more collective strategic thinking about culture in Bristol might be about organisations getting together to create and share a template for measuring an organisation's carbon footprint.

These are some of the ways the individuals, groups, and organisations we've been working with have been doing things differently.

*'It can be very isolating and I think when you're producing products and when you're asking for funding, you have to put on a very confident, polished presentation of your work. But it's quite hard to deal with the uncertainty of freelance. If you have a group, you really see it as a bonding experience. It can be really, really valuable.'*

**Build your community**

// Set up a cooperative.
// Become a member-led organisation.
// Use consensus-based decision-making like sociocrac.
// Build meaningful relationships.
// Host skill-sharing sessions.
// Build trust.
// Build solidarity networks.
// Join a union like BECTU or Artists Union England.
// Find a mentor.
// Provide food at all events.

**Be a champion**

// Embed diversity and inclusion.

// Champion black and global majority creatives.

// Champion neurodivergence.

// Focus on engaging and benefiting the
wider community, in a local area or a community
of interest.

// Work for the public/common good.

// Be trauma-informed.

// Champion local creatives and the local economy.



PRACTICING
ACTIVE LISTENING

// Do an environmental audit.

// Be generous and interruptible.

// Model what you'd like to see.

// Find alternative ways to pay people on benefits.

// Aim to be a B Corporation.

*'We spoke about the importance of co-creating
as well. So if you're leading a project individually
or as part of a team, in order to truly know that
you're serving the needs of your community,
can you get a handle on what the needs of your
community truly are? You might do that through
schools or libraries or community centres,
museums, galleries, colleges, universities. And we
just discussed the importance of reaching those
hard-to-reach people who might have trouble
accessing transport or different venues. So, yeah,
building up a sense of people's agency through
co-creating from the start of the project.'*

*'How are we talking collectively about not just
"What is my theatre doing to reduce our carbon
footprint?", but what are we all doing collectively
[to] bring down the carbon footprint of the arts and
culture more broadly? It's easier then for us to do it,
or to say, "This is the Bristol standard.".'*

### Share the load

// Share leadership.

// Become an employee-owned business.

// Have co-directors.

// Take inspiration from the natural world to think about or structure your organisation - do you operate like slime mould or a fern?

// Foreground co-design and collaboration.

// Adopt a 'generous' and 'compassionate' hierarchy.

*'There were 30 households — students, people living alone, couples, families — but the idea was "how much could we do communally?" And it was for six weeks. So if it was our cooking day, we'd make everything for the 30 households, and then you could come and eat with us, or you could take it home. We all got together and said "what could we share?" So it was laundry, it was cooking, it was childcare — which was interesting — pet care, home maintenance. I got to meet so many people that I never would have met, and it was just over a six-week period, and it was just really, really cool.'*

### Take care of future you

// Start a flexible, ethical pension. (Penfold and Pension Bee were the ones mentioned to us, but the Make My Money Matter website can help you find one).

// Take out life insurance to cover you if you can't work for a period of time.

// Use tools like Glaze to protect from being exploited by AI.

// Make time to plan.



INSIST ON HIGHER, FAIRER FEES

*'Penfold is great, because you can pay in whatever you want per month. You can start, you can stop. And there's an ethical plan that you can sign up to as well.'*

**Grow your autonomy**

// Be funded by membership donations.

// Own land, buildings and other resources.

// Hold on to a DIY ethos.

// Foreground play.

// Take risks.

// Develop conflict resolution processes and bring in third parties when needed.

*'I don't know if anybody's seen this great YouTube film about the second follower. It's a film of somebody dancing at a festival, and it's just one dude who's rocking out on his own. And it's this whole theory: to start a movement, you need the second follower. So he's just doing everything on his own, and then one person gets up and starts dancing and is like "yes, this is amazing," and then everybody joins in at the festival. The theory is that the second follower is actually the leader. They're the ones who kind of lead the tribe. I feel like I have that now. Someone who went, "I believe in you. We could do this together." I feel like that was really instrumental in actually opening up loads of different avenues of work.'*

## What demands need to be made?

Some ideas from the creatives we spoke to include:

**Funding:**

// More funding for the arts across the board, but especially in rural areas.

// More support for grassroots culture and cultural venues.

// More funding to environmentally retrofit existing buildings rather than sustainable new builds.

// Some kind of basic income or support for when you're not earning money.



TAX RELIEF FOR THE ARTS

*'In that time of the pandemic, even though it was hard for a million reasons, lots of people started having access to their own creativity in that time. And because there was actually a version of a universe, a kind of artist wage, because we had these SEISS grants and furlough, there was actually money for people to respond creatively to problems that they could see in their locality. It's always having to be like "okay, I'm going to respond to this funding pot that an external party has dictated is what this place needs." Because you were getting a universal basic income, you're getting an artist wage of some kind, people were starting all these projects.'*

**Infrastructure and local development:**

// More affordable small studios for creatives.

// Housing and accommodation for artists, both in terms of those who live in Bristol but also those who are visiting the city for short periods of time.

// A cultural levy that could pay for housing for artists as part of 'an ecosystem of solidarity'.

// Rent caps.

// Tightening up on the circumventing of spending on infrastructure and the local community when new developments happen (Section 106 spending) and extending it to include local culture.

// For local authorities to stand up to big developers.

// To make unused and meanwhile spaces much more available for creative projects.

// More community and collective ownership of spaces, buildings, and resources.

// Better transport links to and from different parts of the city in order to open up access to culture to a wider demographic.

// More subsidies for local businesses.

*'Just proper dealings with developers that not only preserve the character of an area, but actually continue to grow it in the same way. Recognition that the creative industries, even if they're not especially profitable in their own right, actually massively contribute to the value of other businesses.'*

**Education**

// More arts in education.

// More employment pathways for young people interested in going into the arts.

// Increase and improve media literacy.

// More mentoring opportunities.

// Creative apprenticeships or sponsorships.

*'If we can match the brilliant neuroscience and well-being research around how important creativity is for your mental health, for your emotional health, for community-building, for loneliness, for depression...then maybe we could go back to those models where there were a lot more community provisions that were free and community art centres, and I think particularly right now in Bristol.'*

*I feel like if we integrate it here at the very basics, people would grow up thinking that art is not, like, a fake thing, or just a side gig. They would take it seriously because it's been embedded into their everyday lives, into education.*

**Relationships with local government**

// More involvement from local government in cultural activities.

// More outreach to increase audiences for art and culture.

// Increased dialogue with local authorities.

// For local authorities to trust communities more.

// More free community arts provisions and community art centres.

**Animating a fair creative future.**

How might we depict a better future for creative work? We brought together a group of creatives to imagine possibilities for a fairer creative world, which we then bought to life as a three-minute animation. First, we talked about the frustrations the group felt about the current economic model and imagined a range of possible futures where those frustrations had been resolved. We then collaborated with an artist to create an animation that bought aspects of these futures to life.



In the film, an unnamed creative is showing their young child a graphic novel which tells the story of what creative work and society was like in the past – our present. The animation then zooms into one of the panels from the comic and begins to travel through the novel to tell the story of the activism and resistance that led to the fairer creative world in which they now they live in 2050. Scan the QR code above to watch the video.

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## What can you do individually or as an organisation to push for wider change?

You are part of a community that is already lobbying for change. These are ways you can join in. This can mean joining forces to amplify your message, pushing back against systems, when it feels safe and possible, as well as modelling change and loudly leading by example.

*'With things like carbon footprints and other measures of land use and water use and trying to quantify the environmental impact of the technology we're using, and amorphous things like bandwidth, it's like, if you're running an online class with a hundred students connecting online, what's the carbon footprint of all of that bandwidth? We found it really difficult to find ways for people to relate.'*

/// Create an 'ecosystem of solidarity'.

/// Join a collective to have a louder voice with policymakers.

/// Join a Union.

/// Connect with and form alliances with bigger organisations that reflect your values.

/// Consider your ecosystem and think about which doors you feel most comfortable pushing at.

/// Broker conversations (faceless institutions are made up of people who often want to help you do well).

/// Issue press releases/invite the media (to hear your argument).

/// Ask funders for clearer guidelines. Email them.

/// Creating projects which explicitly communicate the importance of the arts.

/// Share your learnings wherever possible, for example, on low carbon and environmental sustainability with peers. Consider working together to create new toolkits that are more suitable to creative freelancers and small organisations.

We know that organising and campaigning takes time and hard work which might otherwise be used for creative work or to make sure you don't burn out. See our section on care for some tips gathered from the practitioners we worked with.

*'Acknowledging that the media centres may be the incubator for all the different sites and change-making initiatives in the local community. We really want to put that to the fore, and see this more as an ecosystem, and also work across the different entities more. The Knowle West Alliance is a very good blueprint of how this could be formalised, because they are already working as a network. And also very distinctive for Knowle West Media Collective is that it's always grassroots with the community.'*

# Recipes for fairer creative work
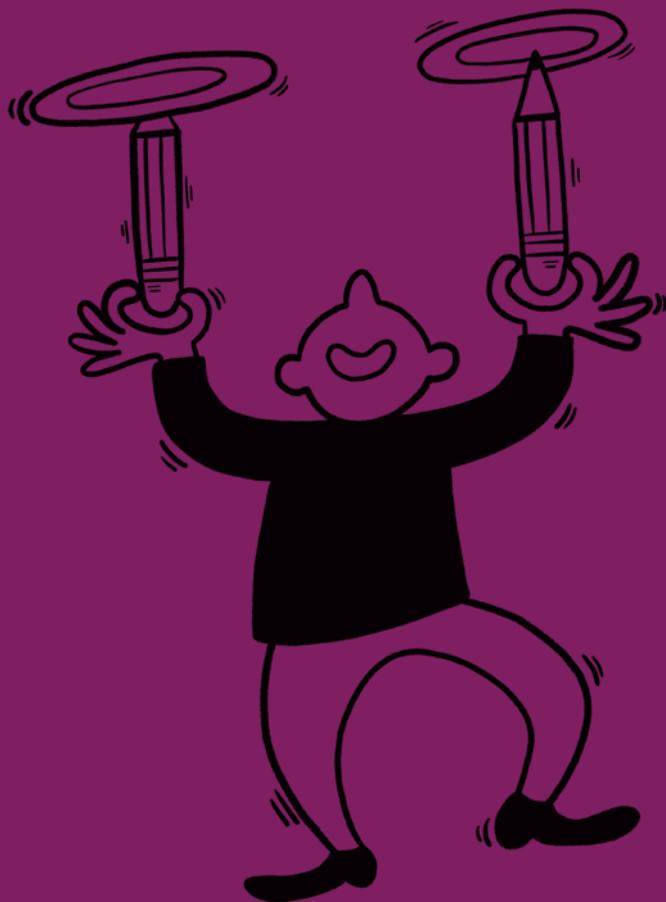
# Hacking business

Speaking about 'business', accounting, marketing or profit can feel like a betrayal of the values that drive us towards creative practice in the first place. Art is very often assumed to be the opposite of commerce. But we've seen many ways in which artists are demystifying business language, doing board meetings in different ways, building slowness and care into their practices, working with each other and their communities to co-create imaginative responses to the world we live in.

There are many different ways to do artistic business with integrity.

In this final section, we look at ways to hack traditional business models, the language of business and the expectations around being a business.

This section will:

/// Propose a **Mix and Match Approach** to adopting legal and organisational business structures.

/// Consider the role of risk and offer a **Risk Matrix** to help make business decisions.

/// Introduce **Three Horizons** to find the sweet spot for matching aspirations with the current status quo in business.

## Mix and match

It can sometimes feel as though there is a right way to be an 'alternative business', as if you need to be a cooperative, or a partnership, or an employee ownership trust to be doing it 'properly'.

But this isn't the case. Lots of people trying to work differently actually mix and match their approaches. For example, you can have a Community Interest Company that functions like a profit-making business but that uses those profits for the benefit of a particular cause or group of people. Or you could decide to have a business which is owned by its founders but has fully democratic decision making involving all of the employees and partners. Or an organization could have a representative for nature on its board of directors, or pay everyone the same wage, or ensure that a defined percentage of its profits go into a variety of third sector organisations.

To find out what works for you, imagine a series of experiments. Try something, and if it doesn't work, then try something else. Like cooking with what you already have in the fridge, rather than rushing out to buy all the extra ingredients a recipe requires, you can make something delicious and nourishing with what you have lying around. It requires creativity and some determination, which are qualities that all artists, and arguably all people, already have.

Try playing with the different elements of your business – authority, job titles, job roles, payment structures, appointments, decision making, finance, investment, shareholders, advisory boards and so on. Each of the different decisions that you make about your business can reflect your values, whether about hierarchy, inclusion, carbon emissions, nature or whatever. Rather than your business and your art being in tension with one another, they can be part of the same thing.

We recognise this takes time and energy which you may not feel you have on top of everything else that you are doing, so remember to practice care for yourself and collectively while experimenting.
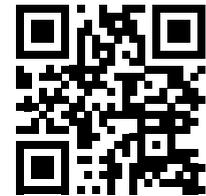


*From Radical Admin, to sociocracies, explore our website to find links to inspirational projects, platforms, and ideas.*

### LIGHTS! LIGHTS! LIGHTS!



LIGHTS! LIGHTS! LIGHTS! are a Community Interest Company (CIC) based in Knowle West, Bristol. They create playful, place-based projects that respond to community needs, working with and for local residents. Directors Megan Clark-Bagnall and Claudia Collins have been exploring approaches to organisation based in the Wellbeing Economy and Creative Commons to build a sustainable, ethical structure. They've also been experimenting with their processes to make them as accessible and democratic as possible:

**'We wanted to have a playful Annual General Meeting (AGM) to talk about how far we've got with the organisation, and let the community know that we were now a CIC and how we were now working. We bought in some artists we worked with previously. We used some of the grant funding to buy food for everyone that came. It was hosted in an old travel agent and we had a 'Bureau du Chips' in the old Bureau du Change, and everyone had some fish and chips. We did a chair's report stood on a chair.'**



LIGHTS! LIGHTS! LIGHTS! have also recently added new members to their Advisory Board, and tried to reimagine its role and purpose "We came up with the Spice Girls framework – from Organised Spice to Seasonal Spice – helping us frame our board culture in a joyful, person-centred way, These changes, although playful, also inform the day-to-day working practices and values of LIGHTS! LIGHTS! LIGHTS! representing a way of working that reflects their commitment to transparency, inclusion, and community accountability.

## The dangers of doing business differently

We know that there is a lot of risk involved in doing this kind of experimentation.

This could be financial risk, whether for your own livelihood, or your employees, or the money that you currently have. It could be reputational risk, to ourselves, our communities, or our funders. It can also be personal or physical risk.

Risk makes conversations about alternative ways of working even more complicated because we can't all take the same risks. Also, if our work relies on funders, they need to trust us. This might be more difficult if the business model of the artist appears to be risky, without a full and legible plan written in management language.

One solution is to explore how to spread the risks out, so they are less acute. Working with a network of friends and co-creators, by sharing equipment and expertise, and collectivising voices, but also educating funders in how to be more accepting of risk. This might involve funding for early versions of work, creating spaces where people can experiment and present work in progress.

Developing artists are in a precarious and vulnerable position, and this is also an opportunity to collectivise by partnering them up with mentors who will alleviate some of that risk. This is particularly true if people with more business experience take mentoring roles. Nonetheless, mentors shouldn't be trying to guide too much because some sort of risk-taking is at the heart of any creative project – 'rather than stopping you from running off the cliff, just figure out how to put a parachute in.'

All of these categories of risk are felt differently because not all artists are the same. Some artists are in a better position to take financial risks or political risks, but the general point about collectivising risk seems to apply to all of them. The co-creation of a fair creative economy requires an experimental approach to business and organizing but all of these risks need to be clearly understood and shared. Each artist, and collective, is different, but they face common challenges.

*Art Business Ltd*

Art Business Ltd is a business, an art project and performance by the Bristol-based artist Rachael Clerke. It is part of their ten-year series *Businesses 2019-29*. They describe it as 'an irreverent yet earnest attempt to understand, expose and co-opt systems of money, trade and exchange through the creation of real-life businesses'.



Their work playfully deconstructs and questions what a business is and what it means to 'do' business. They've also been quite vocal in their use of tools such as the **Bank of England inflation calculator**, using it to push organisations to pay artists more. In 2024 Rachael set up a limited company as a way to continue this questioning while responding to the need to professionalise. They created a uniform and wrote daily reports. During the financial year 2024-25 they published data on their website which included, money in and out for the year, good and bad workdays, their menstrual cycle, invoices sent, payments received and applications submitted.

**'I've always been interested in how things work…. I like to take things apart and put them back together and see… what the mechanism is… So I started setting up kind of DIY businesses as ways of trying to talk about… not really to talk about the arts, but to talk about capitalism and […] setting up as a company is a way of me treading a kind of line between maintaining the questioning of how things work and… the DIY way I was working.'**

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*Interval Collective*

Interval is an artist support network and collective of individual artists. Establishing in 2011, it currently has 23 members. Interval has a co-working space for creatives, but they operate differently from the standard models for co-working or hotdesking which can feel quite corporate and profit-driven. They operate a leadership model with three key roles - Leader, New members, and Finance – and rotate every three months via a rota where you put your name in throughout the years. This equates to approximately a three-month role each year for each member:

'**And at that time, we really firmed up what those roles were, and we developed open-source manuals so that anybody coming into one of those roles would understand how to do it, and all the information was available to stop this unofficial hierarchy forming of oldest member retains the most information. And we also set up a few things, like an emergency response fund. So we upped our membership fee to £35 and then £40 a month, which is the cheapest price of any studio you'll ever get. So we started putting £5 aside from each person's payment to create this emergency response pot that any member can apply to if they're in trouble, because most people are freelance and don't earn very much money. If you can't pay your rent or something, you can apply, and there's a process. When we have a little bit of money in our collective bank account, we buy things that we can share, like a projector, microphone, PA, printer, stuff like that. Rather than us all having individual tools as artists, we have these shared resources which are really important to us, including an amazing selection of books that people access in the space and borrow informally.**'

## Risk Matrix

This matrix is designed help you articulate aspects of your work that might be making you feel uneasy. This could be something about a future project, funder or collaborator. The matrix lets you rank these worries as they emerge in your work. The traffic light colours sit across the degrees of risk so you can more honestly reflect on what you feel most and least comfortable with. This could either be as an individual or help you to acknowledge and accommodate differences related to risk across a team or collective. For example, if the red box is in column one for low degree of risk, that might be something you can live with and simply be cognisant of. Whereas if the red box is in column three, that might become a deal breaker, or something you need to find a way to negotiate. A printable template is available on our *Library of Resources*.

*'Is it a bit too far out there in terms of what may or may not be socially acceptable, politically acceptable? Is it within mainstream culture, or is it something outside of mainstream culture?'*

| Comfort level | |
|---|---|
| High | 🟩 |
| OK | 🟧 |
| Low | 🟥 |

| Risk type | Degree of Risk | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| **Personal** (Physical, legal, burn out) | | | 🟥 |
| **Financial** (Guaranteed income, reliable, timely payments, security for employees or contractors) | | 🟧 | |
| **Creative** (Bravery, experimentation) | | | 🟩 |
| **Reputational** (Future income, community disapproval) | 🟩 | | |
| **Risk to Collaboration** (Level of buy-in, power dynamics, loss of trust) | 🟥 | | |
| **Organisational values** (Co-optation, superficial engagement, compromising values) | | | |

## Three Horizons

'If we move away from patronage, what system
can we have? What is a truly democratic, inclusiv[e]
support system? How does it feel? What does it
look like? And is it government-led, or is it
completely not? We didn't really get to the utopi[a]
because we got really stuck in the mud. So we're
still in that transition; we didn't get to the dreami[ng]
phase, because we were like "how do we get to
the dream when the system feels so broken?"'

We know that creating and driving change in a
world that doesn't seem ready for change can
be difficult. But what if there was another way
of imagining how change and progress happens
in society, one that didn't feel so tough but that
reassured us that we were in fact part of a wave
of people trying new things?

Bill Sharpe's 2013 book *Three Horizons:
The Patterning of Hope* suggests a way of doing [that]
by cultivating what he calls a 'future consciousne[ss'.]
The idea is that you can understand the relations[hip]
between the actions we take now, how they rela[te]
to the status quo, and their consequences for th[e]
long-term future.
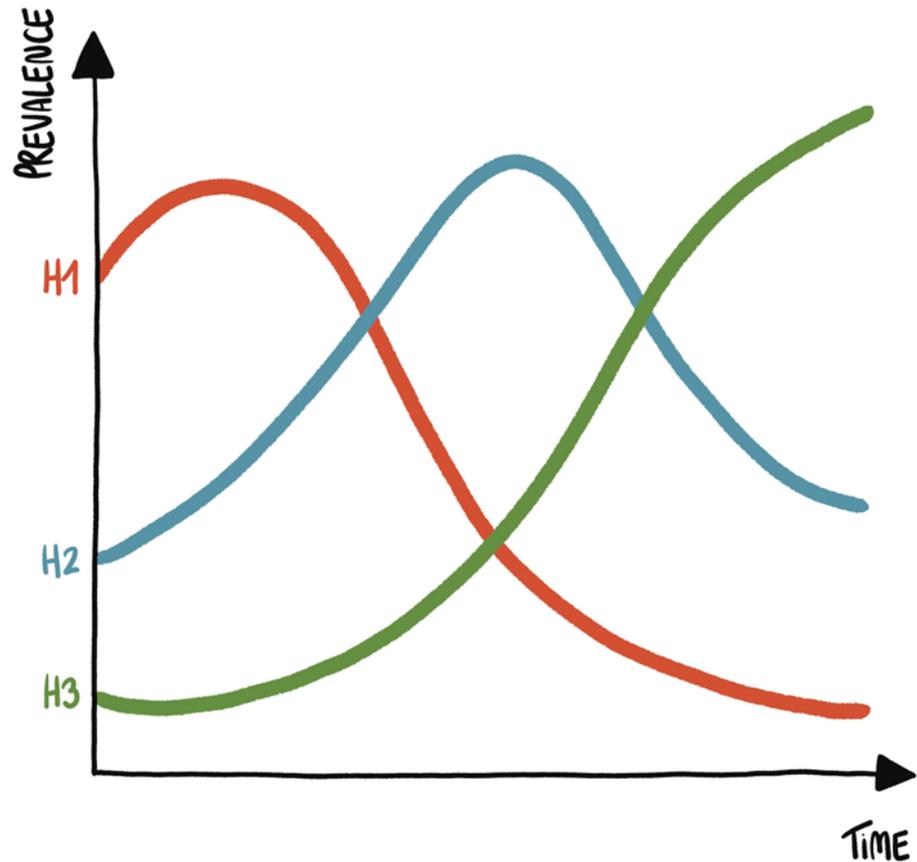


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**The graph shows three different waves of activity called Horizons.**

**Horizon 1**, the red line, is the status quo: what we do at present, within the constraints and opportunities of our current economic, social and environmental norms.

**Horizon 2**, the blue line, is a new wave of activity which emerges from the first horizon, in which current assumptions are destabilised, and new practices emerge. It responds to the shortcomings of the H1 'status quo' with practical attempts to do the world differently, to change the way that business is conducted, how social and cultural systems operate, or how we think about our relation to the natural world.

**Horizon 3**, the green line, is where we might like to be, the long-term successor to business as usual which relies on a set of radical innovations that introduces a completely new way of doing things.

Importantly, H2 is a transition, a state of affairs that we realistically can imagine enacting, and that will (hopefully) provide a platform which brings a better, fairer system into being. It may well lead to H3 thinking and practice but H2 is built from a sense of dissatisfaction with the present, not ungrounded utopianism.

This model usefully offers a way into a conversation about the dominant system (H1) and the challenges to its sustainability into the future. It makes the case for change based on the elements of the present that we find undesirable or destructive and that we might imagine addressing in H2. These are practical questions about how to do things differently and which gradually move us towards a desired future state, some sort of social and economic system that we desire (H3).

The three horizons also help us identify innovations that serve to prolong the status quo and those that serve to bring the H3 closer. It encourages us to consider the small steps that people and organizations might take now that make possible more radical changes in the future: H2 policymaking underpinned by H3 aspirations.

If you're trying new things, trying to build a different or better future, then you are often trying to make change in a world that isn't ready to work like that. The work of change isn't easy, but creative experiments with different business forms, ways of organising or funding arrangements, however small or risky, are vital elements in a long-term horizon of change.

# Recipes
# for fairer
# creative
# work

**Section 6:** Dreaming and thinking big

One thing that is clear from our work with so many creative people is that the passion, imagination, and dedication to create something better runs throughout the sector and beyond. Creativity and culture – and your work – are not bounded by markets or economic categories but instead united by the desire to work with and for communities and one another to realise different possibilities for us all.

*Don't forget to check out all the online resources on our website if you're looking for more inspiration!*

This booklet shows us there are already so many alternative approaches being lived, experimented with, and explored, and we hope these approaches – whether small scale, personal activities or signposts to new infrastructures and ways of working – have given you some things to think about, some approaches to try, and some actions to take.

It's worth stating again that we know not everything described here is easy. Time and money are short. The intersecting complexities of our lives – who we are, what resources we have, and how society privileges or undermines us – mean that structural challenges are hard to navigate. We know that not everyone is beginning from the same position either: some of you might be running a small company; some of you might be freelancers or sole traders; others might be looking to collectivise in more informal ways.

We hope this guide has drawn attention to a range of alternatives and empowers you on a journey towards building that critical mass we all know we need, but above all, that it shows there is hope. Hope in the diverse economies that flourish in between the cracks of capitalism, in the ecosystems we thrive in, to the new horizons we can strive for. Putting ourselves first as people, caring for our needs and values, navigating money and systems in more nuanced ways, and learning from others, we can build a better future.

And that future won't look the same for everyone, but instead be plural – lots of different people moving through the world in different ways, united, hopefully, by a common set of values and ambitions to make the world of creative work more vibrant, and more spectacular – and more fair.

## Thank you for reading!

This booklet has been produced by the Fair Creative Economies (FaCE) project.

Between 2021 and 2026, FaCE worked with over 75 creatives from across the West of England to explore new ethical, progressive, and sustainable models for creative work. We sought to identify the barriers facing creatives wishing to make changes to the way they worked, think of solutions, and raise the need for alternatives with policymakers, stakeholders, and funders.

The project was led by Dr Simon Moreton and Dr Liz Roberts (UWE Bristol) and Prof Martin Parker and Dr Claudia Firth (University of Bristol), alongside our PhD researchers Will Hunter and Alice Quigley and with support from Melissa Blackburn (UWE Bristol) and Dr Jack Lowe (UWE Bristol).

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Find more resources for realising a fairer creative economy at our website **https://faircreative.org**

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We know that for many people working in and around the creative and cultural sector, the primary motivator is not, economic growth, competition, or the accumulation of wealth. Instead, people often strive to realise other goals alongside making a living—self-expression, community connection, social justice, experimentation—and to live and work in ways that embody those values.

If you work in the creative and culture sector and are looking for ways to operate more democratically, inclusively and greenly, this booklet aims to help you to realise change so that you can be led by your own values, and have processes, structures, and policies that reflect them.

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