



# Creative Access

# Annual impact report

# 2023 – 2024



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2023 has been a very challenging year for the creative industries. We have seen funding cuts across the arts and nearly every creative industry sector we work in has faced financial challenges. This has been particularly acute in film and TV where the impact of the writers' strike and a decline in commissioning has resulted in Bectu describing it as a "sector in crisis" in February with over two thirds (68%) of film and TV workers not currently working.

This tough backdrop made us even more determined and we're incredibly proud of the impact we've been able to have in the last year in continuing to support our community and our partners.

We stepped up to provide critical support to freelancers in our community during and since the writers' strike, providing free professional development and career support in partnership with Banijay and Lee & Thompson and increased the funding in our Career Development Bursary to help those in need.

Our 2023 Thrive report, an annual snapshot looking at to what extent individuals from historically under-represented groups are thriving (or not) and how employers in the creative economy are progressing in DE&I, told us that organisations were increasingly wanting to focus on driving diversity at mid to senior levels, as well as at entry-level. We've responded to that in the last year by re-shaping and re-launching our career development programmes, exploring a senior programme, developing more fellowships and continuing to invest in our industry-leading mentoring programmes.

Looking to the future and we are excited to be welcoming a new CEO later this year. Our strategic priorities include continuing to innovate and develop our programmes and training content; focus on improving diversity at mid to senior levels and increasing the impact of our work across the UK (beyond London and the South-East).

As ever we remain steadfast in our mission to build a creative economy that reflects the society it serves and thank our brilliant community and networking of partner organisations for their continued support.

**Josie Dobrin**  
**Founder and executive chair, Creative Access**



# Our mission

We aim to see a day when the UK's creative economy will truly reflect and represent our society. Our mission is to enable people from communities that are historically under-represented in the creative economy, in terms of ethnicity, disability and lower socio-economic status, to access careers and thrive.

## Our values

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to access careers and thrive in the creative economy, regardless of their background or beliefs. We ask our employer partners to commit to bringing in and uplifting talent from communities under-represented in the sector by:

- Widening the talent pool to include candidates from all backgrounds
- Investing in staff from communities that are under-represented in the creative economy to enable them to thrive and progress to senior positions
- Creating an inclusive workplace where everyone, whatever their background, feels welcome and valued



ITV is a proud partner of Creative Access. For the past 11 years, we've delivered a range of initiatives to open doors and offer career paths for people from under-represented backgrounds in TV. In the past 12-months we've jointly staged a creative careers showcase in Manchester as well as a TV production masterclass in London; utilised Creative Access' leading DE&I recruitment expertise to expand our workforce with 8 trainees; and continued to match emerging talent with senior professionals on our ITV x Creative Access mentoring programme, on track to meet our goal of reaching 500 partnerships by 2025.

The past year has seen the inception of the ITV Academy, and we're excited to continue working with Creative Access to nurture the next generation of TV talent and create a solid pipeline of talent from diverse backgrounds.

**Sonny Hanley, director, ITV Academy**



# The story so far

Creative Access was co-founded in 2012 by three people – including current executive chair, Josie Dobrin – out of a frustration at the lack of representation in the creative economy.

Conscious of the positive impact they could have, the group set out to change the conversation around diversity and inclusion in the sector. They persuaded leading employers in publishing, TV, film, theatre and beyond to partner with Creative Access and invest in people from communities under-represented in the sector.



Today, we work with over 800 employer partners across the creative industries – from leading, household names to small, independent organisations and start-ups across the UK.

## 2023 – 2024 Highlights

- Our strategic focus on those at mid-level – providing them with career development support, dedicated networking events and career opportunities
- Re-launched our Springboard (entry-level) and Thrive (mid-level) career development programmes
- Launched our second steering committee to provide a pathway to non-executive leadership
- Supported over 60 individuals with funding through the third year of our Career Development Bursary, supported by McLaren Racing
- Conducted research into the “class ceiling” with our partners Fleishman Hillard, looking at how class impacts access to careers and progression





# Our impact

At the start of 2023, we developed and launched a new impact framework to enable us to better track the impact of our work.

Through this framework, we track the impact of each of our programmes and services but also the overall combined impact of these interventions on our mission and on the creative economy and gain valuable insight on where we need to focus and further develop our services for the future.

## Impact for individuals

Our unique combination of training, mentoring and career development support is having a significant impact on the career progression and optimism of people from communities under-represented in the creative industries.

### In the last year:

- **418** people participated in mentoring programmes as either mentors or mentees
- **312** people supported through our career development programmes
- **4773** people received careers advice and employability training

### Impact data shows as a result of our interventions in 2023 – 2024:

- **84%** of individuals say their confidence improved
- **90%** of individuals say their optimism for career development increased
- **87%** of individuals say they improved their knowledge and skills
- **64%** of individuals say they increased their professional networks



## Impact for our employer partners

In 2023 – 2024, we supported **446** employers to become more inclusive through training, paid internships, recruitment and mentoring programmes. **Over 2,860** people from our employer partners were trained via **143** bespoke workshops and we placed **209** people from into paid internships with our partners.

### Impact data shows as a result of our interventions in 2023 – 2024:

- **94%** say they now have a greater awareness and understanding of DE&I
- **58%** say their team now has a greater diversity as a result
- **92%** say they are now using more inclusive recruitment practices
- **94%** planning to take further action to create a more inclusive organisation



The McLaren Racing Engage Alliance aims to address systemic inequalities in our industry to enable us to set the benchmark in sport. Our partnership with Creative Access as part of the Engage alliance is helping us achieve this goal.

Together over the past year, we've provided early career routes for two interns, spearheaded a mentoring programme matching mid-level women from under-represented groups with senior professionals at the top of their game in McLaren Racing, and announced the recipients of our third annual Career Development Bursary. It is with these initiatives with DE&I at their core, that McLaren Racing is committed to closing the gap in our wider diversity, equity & inclusion strategy.

**Rajnie Uppal, senior manager, diversity, equity & inclusion, McLaren Racing**



# Our programmes



## Career development programmes

This year we refreshed and re-launched our two industry-leading, career development programmes for those at entry and mid-level. At entry-level, we renamed the programme 'Springboard' and added new training sessions, including dedicated 'transition training' to support individuals as they move from a traineeship to a permanent role.

For those at mid-level, we created 'Thrive' - a new, more defined 12-month programme giving individuals access to a mentor, new dedicated mid-level networking events, leadership training and much more.

Over the last year, **209** individuals have been enrolled on Springboard and **103** on Thrive.

## Community growth

This year we have continued to invest in reaching more individuals from groups under-represented in the creative economy through our outreach and partnerships with universities, youth groups, community groups and other partners. We now have over 100,000 individuals from historically under-represented groups registered with us.



I never would have had this opportunity if it wasn't for Creative Access. It can feel like such a closed door industry without opportunities like this. I'm learning so much and have been offered a further 6 months of my internship and gaining more responsibilities!

**Creative Access intern**



## Steering group

In October we launched our second Steering Group; a pioneering year-long programme which provides a leadership pathway for participants from historically under-represented communities to become trustees or non-executive directors of other creative organisations, social enterprises or charities.

The group undertakes a training programme, including workshops on leadership, financial governance; the role and responsibilities of non-executive directors; shadowing a working board meeting and group mentoring from our own board of non-executive directors.



## Employability support, training & skills

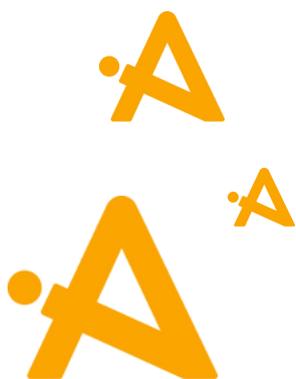
We held employability sessions attended by almost 5,000 people. These sessions provide a mixture of employability support, training and skills sessions on topics including how to write a covering letter, create a CV and how to navigate the creative industries.

Notable new partnerships are with Loughborough University where we held an insights day offering 30 students the chance to go behind the scenes at the ITV Studios and meet influential role models working in TV as well as taking part in employability training.



Using Creative Access as a tool to look at jobs in the creative industry is effective. No matter what you are currently studying, you can get jobs in the creative industry if you apply yourself.

**Loughborough University undergraduate student**



News UK V&A

## Masterclasses and events

Creative Access hosts monthly masterclasses for those in our community, which provide networking opportunities, training on soft skills needed to navigate and progress in the creative industries, such as personal branding and insight into working in different sectors.



In the last year we hosted 12 masterclasses and showcases attended by over 1,000 people – a mix of virtual and in-person – at ITV Manchester, News UK, BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol, the V&A, the Tate and Warner Music.



I met some likeminded people at the same career stage as me, it was great to hear their experience of entry level roles in different industries. I also got to talk to some top level people in PR & Communications and understand their career trajectory which was inspirational and useful.

**Hana Walker**



So many good tips and advice from industry professionals and people who have been in the same position as me once. Really appreciated the openness and honesty of everyone there, and to hear from people who genuinely want to help the next generation of industry professionals.

**Johanna Lee**



## Networking events and webinars

We also hosted **14** other networking events and 'learn more' webinars, attended by over **5,800** people. These included:

- A mid-level networking event with ITV
- A 'learn more' webinar with advertising agency, Wieden+Kennedy
- A 'learn more' webinar with Penguin Random House on sales roles in publishing
- A mid-level networking event for our Thrive community at McCann World Group



## Mentoring

Research shows that people from communities that are under-represented in the industry who advance the furthest in their careers, all share one characteristic: a strong network who nurture their professional development.

This year we have run **8** mentoring programmes with different organisations, including universities, industry bodies and companies. We have launched new programmes with advertising agency, Ogilvy, and McLaren Racing and continued with our long-term mentoring programmes for Penguin Random House and ITV. Over **800** people (mentees and mentors) have participated in the last year.



The mentoring scheme has massively helped me get into the industry. My mentor has been amazing and honestly changed my life.

### Mentee on ITV x Creative Access mentoring programme



**Joanne Fu** · 3rd+  
Publishing Design Hopeful | Penguin Random House '23 Mentee | Harper...  
6mo · 🌱

It has been a wonderful 6 months as a mentee on this scheme, and being a part of a passionate cohort. I can't wait to use the skills I have learnt from this mentorship to reach my future aspirations! Thanks again to **Creative Access** and my amazing mentor **Anda Podaru** for motivating my growth.



## Consultancy support

We provided consultancy support to multiple organisations to help them shape their diversity, equity and inclusion plans, set benchmarks and hold themselves to account. This has included working with The Publishers Association to running a series of consultations and draft their new industry Inclusivity Action plan; and supporting BAFTA to develop Employee Resource Groups.

# Our employer partnerships

We are proud to partner with over **800** employers, working together to build a creative economy that reflects UK society.

This year have welcomed **126** new organisations into our network and have continued our long-term partnerships with ITV, Penguin Random House, Sky, McLaren Racing and White Cube



## Recruitment & listings

This year we have placed **209** people from communities under-represented in the creative industries into paid internships. We have also recruited for 15 intern cohorts for employer partners across the sector, including Sky, ITV, Bain & Company, Cambridge University Press, British Film Institute and the British Library.

Over **1,500** roles were listed on our jobs board of which over **30%** were at the mid to senior level, where we are now focused on really driving change.

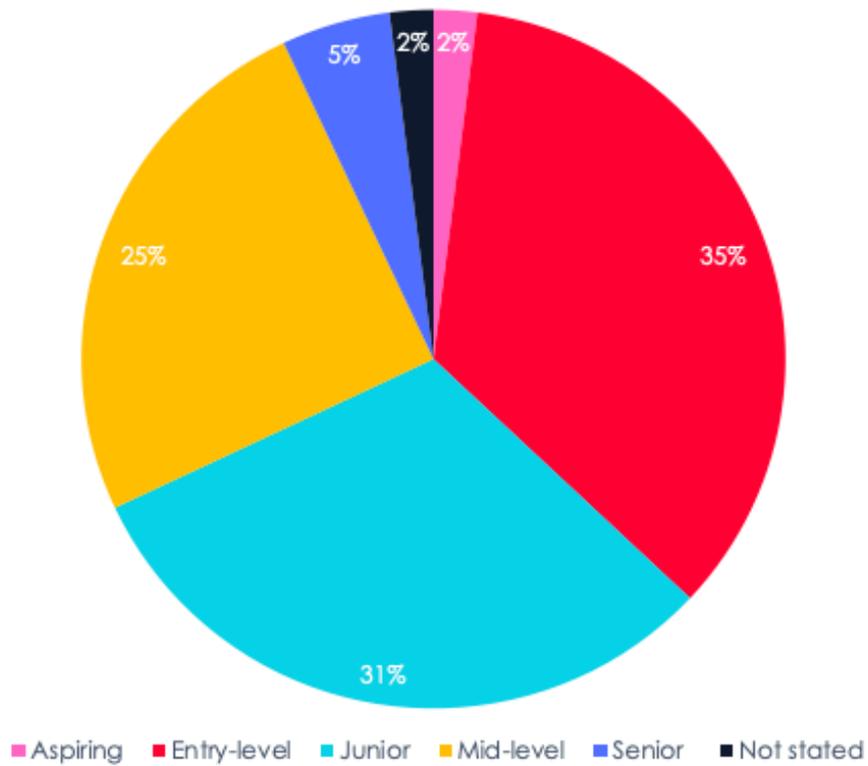
Really impressed, satisfied and excited having had the opportunity to work with Creative Access on this process – the applications we read were very strong and the candidates we met at interview were impressive. Reaching a decision on the successful applicant was challenging and we hope to find ways to work with some of those who applied but were ultimately not selected for the role. Communication with Creative Access was easy, clear and uncomplicated – hope we can find ways to work together in the future.

**Platform Arts Centre**

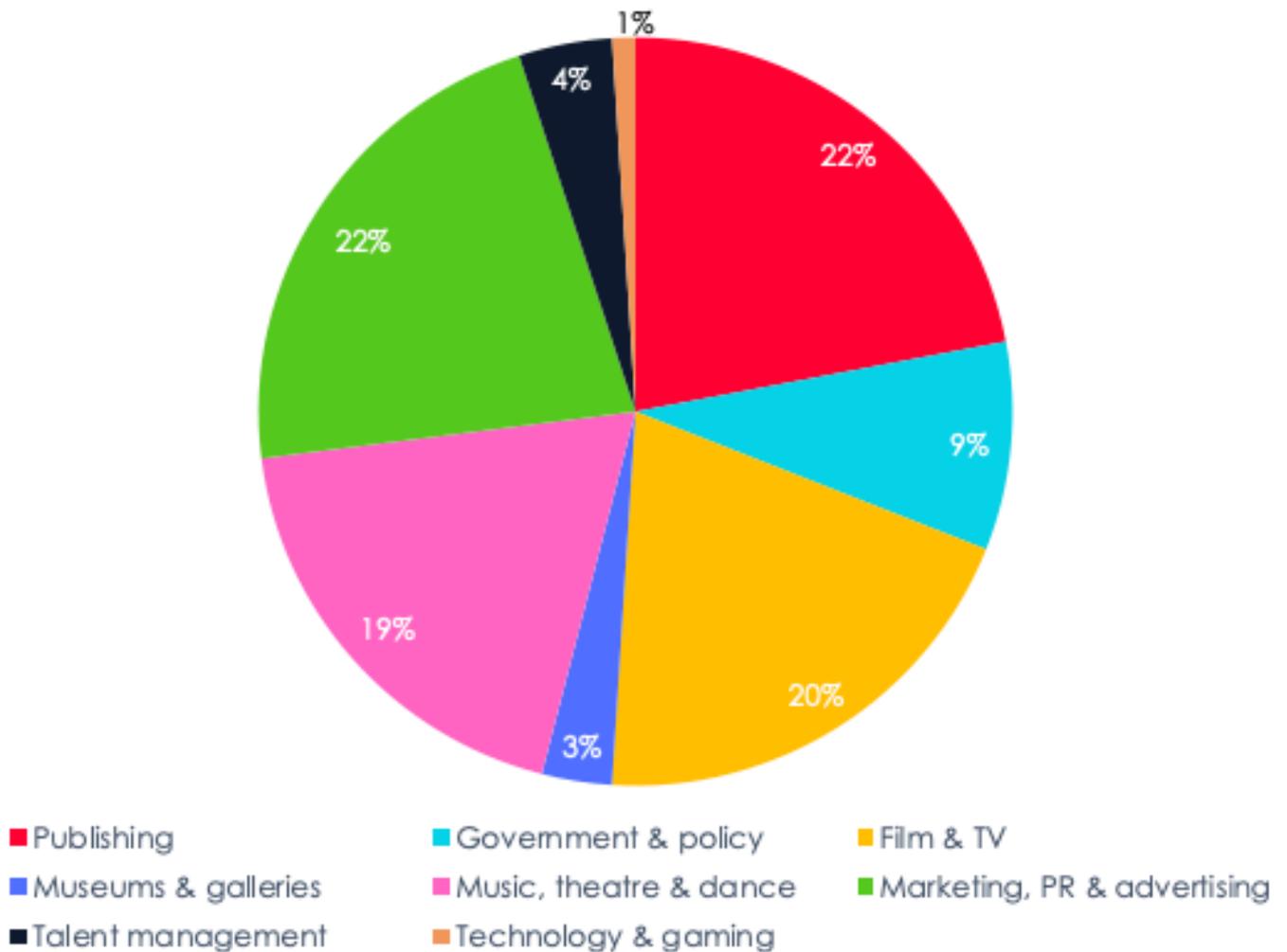
**platform**  
the arts centre in Glasgow's east end



## Listings by level



## Placed internships by sector

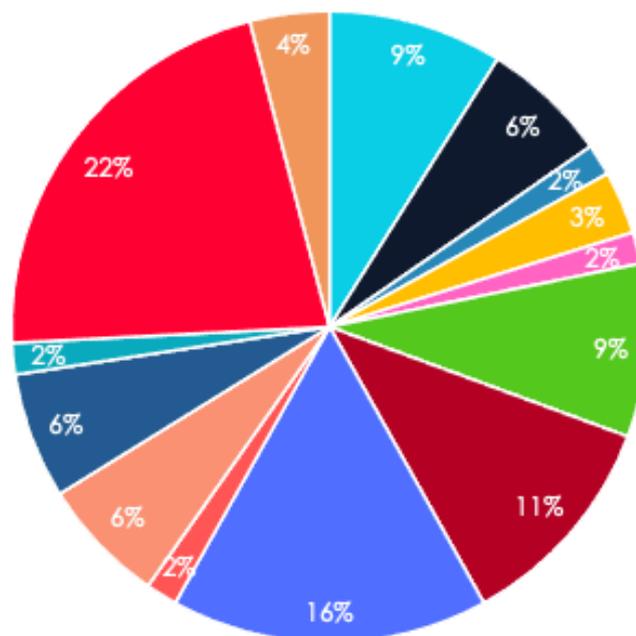


## Building inclusive cultures through training

Training continues to be a critical part of the work we do. In the last year, we have trained over **2,860** people this year via **143** employer training sessions and open workshops.

We have seen a significant **66%** increase in the uptake of neurodiversity training by employers in the last year. In response to this demand, we have developed new initiatives to create more inclusive workplaces for neurodiverse staff, including specific line-manager training and reflective peer-support sessions facilitated by our expert team of clinical psychologists.

### Training by topic



- Mixed content
- Imposter syndrome
- Class in the workplace
- Neurodiversity
- Conscious inclusion
- Inclusive leadership
- Anti-racism
- Mental health and resilience
- Disability equity
- Inclusive line management
- Allyship
- Microaggressions
- Intro to ED&I
- Equalities Act



Both content and trainer were excellent - dealt with a difficult topic with tact, empathy and intelligence.

**Shalini Moodley, people & talent manager, Pitch**



## Mo Siewcharran Fund

In 2018, Mo Siewcharran's husband, John Seaton, launched a memorial fund to support internships for young talent from ethnicities that are under-represented in the theatre, publishing and music industries. The Fund contributes to the salary for a six-month traineeship and a full programme of support is provided by Creative Access. Since 2018, the Fund has supported **42** trainees. In 2023 – 24, **£36.4k** was given to fund **9** internships.

Its impact can be clearly seen across each sector: two-thirds (**63%**) of interns supported by the Fund have stayed on at their host organisation at the end of their traineeship, whilst 9 out of 10 (**89%**) trainees placed continue to work in the same sector.



The continued support of the Mo Siewcharran Fund has been transformative, allowing us to reach further in our efforts to radically improve accessibility and opportunities in the industry for people seeking sanctuary in the UK – a mission deeply aligned with that of Creative Access – and challenge harmful narratives about refugees. Thank you to both Creative Access and the Mo Siewcharran fund for their unfaltering belief in the programme and efforts to help us make the industry more reflective of our wonderfully diverse country.

**Hannah Harding, development & communications manager, Good Chance Theatre**



If you're a publisher, theatre, or music organisation interested in hiring a trainee through the grant, please email: [info@creativeaccess.org.uk](mailto:info@creativeaccess.org.uk)



# Creative Access team

We now have 23 permanent team members and trainees and work with a network of consultants to deliver training and other services. Significant hires, team changes and promotions this year include:



## **Emma Shah, promoted to finance director**

Emma has worked with Creative Access for over a decade and is an indispensable part of the CA team, critical to ensuring we have the funding we need in place to achieve everything we want to. Emma previously worked with CA as a consultant but is so passionate about what we do, she joined the team full time.



## **Yasmin Hemmings, promoted to head of Thrive**

Yasmin started her career as an intern through Creative Access at the London Symphony Orchestra. After working at the Barbican, she re-joined Creative Access and this year was promoted to head of thrive, a newly created team which brings together our employer training alongside our career development and mentoring programmes and bursary.



## **Laura Turner-Blake, new director of Access**

We welcomed Laura Turner-Blake back from maternity leave in January to the new role of director of access, where she leads on all of our work related opening up access to careers, including recruitment, paid internships and outreach to colleges, universities and community groups.

We also say goodbye to our outgoing chief executive, Bibi Hilton, who is returning to the corporate PR world and will be shortly announcing our new chief executive.

# Creative Access Board

We have also made some changes to our board, including welcoming two alumni to hold positions. These changes include:



Ameet Shah, consultant, has taken over as chair of the board from Stephen Page. Ameet has many years experience in business and consultancy. Currently a senior adviser at Accenture, he has also worked at BT, Ericsson and Europa Partners.



Cameron Myers, former Creative Access trainee at Hodder & Stoughton and current commissioning editor at Penguin General has joined our board.



Lizzy Burden, a former intern via Creative Access at The Times in 2017, Lizzy is now UK correspondent at Bloomberg TV has joined the board.



# Creative Access data & insight

We are continuously working to improve understanding of the creative economy and the people who work or aspire to work in it. This year, we have commissioned three pieces of research with our community. This insight helps improve our own services and is a free resource for the wider industry, media and other stakeholders.

## The class ceiling in the creative industries

Figures show that the proportion of working-class actors, musicians and writers has shrunk by half from the 1970s to 2022. Creative Access partnered with global PR agency FleishmanHillard UK to understand class dynamics within the creative industries.



- 74% think it's harder for working-class people to land a role in the creative industries
- 70% say your class affects how you're seen by your peers
- Only one in three working-class respondents think they are rewarded equally compared to 67% of upper-class people who believe working class people are equally rewarded
- Black (75%), Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (78%) and Asian (64%) respondents are more inclined to observe class disparities in industry access compared to white respondents (61%)

## Hair and clothing discrimination

Navigating vague or confusing dress codes or no dress code at all is adding an extra layer of unnecessary anxiety and our research showed it's particularly impacting those from under-represented groups. Creative Access and Red Consultancy surveyed people to explore the experiences of different ethnicities and socio-economic groups.



Clear and inclusive practices benefit everyone:

- 59% of Black candidates worry 'dressing like themselves' or wearing their hair 'naturally' will result in discrimination at work
- Almost half (43%) said they have never received guidance on what to wear for a job interview or when starting a new job
- 59% of neurodivergent individuals stated they would find it difficult to navigate what to wear/how to style their hair without guidance for an interview

## Thrive survey 2024



In May 2024, we ran our third annual Thrive survey, which provides a snapshot of individuals' confidence and optimism about their career progression in the creative economy and to understand what stage employers in the sector are at in their diversity, equity and inclusion plans. The survey was conducted across our own Creative Access community, employer partners and the wider industry.

### Individuals:

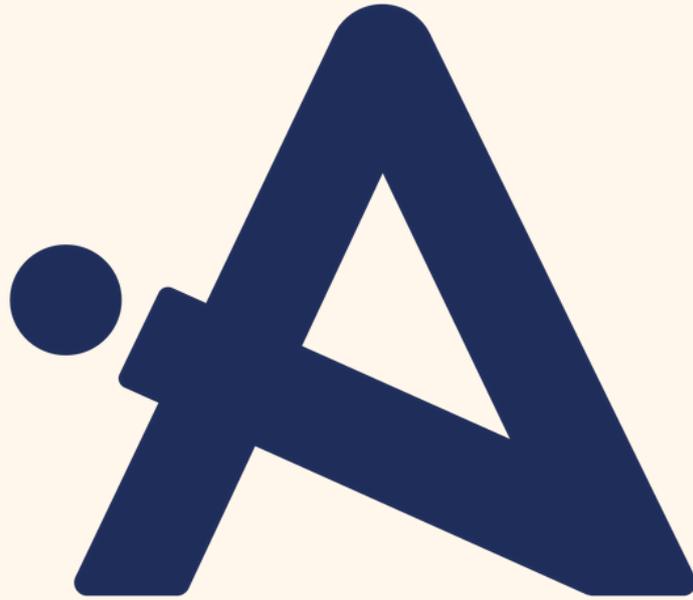
- 84% of our alumni are still in the creative economy two years after the completion of a programme with us
- 92% ranked one area of support received from CA as either 'significant' or 'very significant' to the progress of their careers
- Individuals in receipt of services from CA are much more likely to report career progression in the last 12 months than individuals who have not received services

### Employers:

- 82% attribute their organisation's progress against their DE&I goals to working with CA
- 70% of respondents told us that their organisation had either a DE&I lead or a dedicated DEI team
- When asked about the current DEI focus, 52% said effort is still mainly focused on entry level positions
- 35% of respondents told us that their organisation had increased spend on DEI in the last 12 months, down from 60% last year



Everything Creative Access has done from training to recruitment has been incredibly professional, helpful, and game-changing for our organisation.



# CREATIVE ACCESS



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