

RSA Strategic Plan: 2018 – 2020



Background

The RSA's mission to address the most pressing social challenges through ideas and action is more relevant than ever. From political shocks, to terrorism and technological disruption, the world seems characterised by unpredictability and greater insecurity. Progress, in this context suggests a need for institutions, communities and individuals to be even more resilient, when responding to deep, long-term trends such as climate change, demographic shifts and deep-seated inequalities. In response to these challenges, the RSA has built up a strong reputation.

Our priority is to focus on the "how" of social change – though identifying solutions, co-design, civic engagement, and partnerships. We design projects specifically to engage Fellows in the amplification of RSA ideas and actions in their local areas and national networks, and we take a strategic approach to Fellowship recruitment and innovative action.

In 2017 over 800 Fellows joined the Society and today, our impact is greater than ever. Fellows have access to some of the best ideas and brightest thinkers, innovative projects, a diverse network of like-minded people and a platform for social change. Our website enables Fellows to connect online according to location, skills and interests. The regional and national teams run local events, networks and projects. We also award RSA Catalyst Grants which encourage innovative thinking aimed at tackling pressing societal problems.

Matthew Taylor's appointment by the UK's Prime Minister to lead the independent inquiry into modern employment, is a testament to the breadth and impact of the RSA's research on heritage, technological disruption, work and self-employment. It also reflects the significant value placed in the RSA's methodology, which prioritises community engagement and action. The decision by the UK government and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to fund the largest ever pilot scheme measuring the impact of cultural education interventions, recognises the RSA's influence on educational research within Whitehall and cultural and educational sectors. In 2016 the quality of this research led us to win the social policy category at the Prospect Think Tank Awards. The judges' citation captured the RSA's unique offer, noting the RSA is "a great and well-respected institution which nonetheless continues to innovate".

We continue to experiment and expand the channels we use to communicate, broadening and deepening our reach to existing and new audiences. We have used Medium (a long form online platform) to publish our Action and Research Centre reports, which resulted in an increase in engagement with our content. We continue to experiment with social media – the multichannel **#GoodWorks** campaign saw the RSA lead a coalition of partner organisations, which drove engagement amongst Twitter and Facebook users, and Fellows, with our thinking on employment. This year we are launching RSA Radio.

The successes outlined above have a binding concept: a focus on **‘partners in change’**. This sees the RSA working with like-minded organisations and individuals to maximise our impact and achieve social change. As a direct result our Fellowship has increased to the highest level in our history.

Shaping the RSA’s Agenda

Global and national trends

The big global trends – austerity, globalisation, geopolitical conflict, climate change, demographic shifts, technological advancement and political volatility (and, in the UK, Brexit) – are presenting huge challenges that demand creative solutions. They come at a time when human capability and appetite for creativity is rising and people are prioritising what the World Values Survey calls ‘self-expression’ values. Disruptive technologies are providing new opportunities for creativity and the internet is enabling easy access to tools that accelerate learning, communication, trading and collaboration; this creates new challenges in the private and public sector and a rising demand for a creative citizenry.

A convenor of real world change

Independence - as we are not politically aligned or tied to a cause;

A **broad range** of research, analysis and practical work and a wide spectrum of interventions;

A **network of 29,000 Fellows**, and the support and influence that this can potentially bring.

Our **Global impact** is amplified through our partnerships and our Fellowship

Multiple contact points: the RSA is a broad and welcoming organization, there are multiple opportunities for relationships and engagement through our practical research projects, public events, networks, films, animations and podcasts, awards programmes and schools.

RSA Mission

21st century enlightenment: enriching society through ideas and action.

Three crosscutting methodologies drive how we deliver our mission:

We unleash people's power to create, finding solutions based on empowering citizens individually and collectively.

We apply our unique model of change – ‘think like a system and act like an entrepreneur’.

We convene conversations and networks, ensuring that the RSA is a democratic, welcoming space and a powerful force for progress.

RSA Values

Our values inform everything we do and how we behave as an organisation:

- **Independent and creative.** We value the quality and rigour of ideas, not where they come from or allegiance to any ideology. We take imaginative new approaches to solving problems and believe in the power of design and creativity to effect change.
- **Practical and resourceful.** We try things out and are prepared to fail in the pursuit of what works, learning from everything that we do. We make intelligent use of our resources by building on what works already, trusting people – especially Fellows and employees – and treating them as assets.
- **Consistent and demanding.** Our work is aligned with our social purpose, and we do not take on projects that conflict with our mission or values. We aspire to global excellence and develop ideas, initiatives and services we want to use and promote ourselves.
- **Respectful and philanthropic.** We value other people's work and wisdom, treat them with respect and do not attack or steal the work of others. We judge ourselves by the contribution we make to society not by the benefits we gain as an organisation.

RSA People

The RSA's impact and influence will be strengthened through bringing greater focus and synergy across the organisation and making the RSA a great place to work with and for.

The RSA aims to exemplify its values as an employer, inspiring our colleagues to strive for excellence and be change makers in whatever role they have. Both performance management and staff engagement is built around our core people values:

- **We achieve excellence**, setting high standards and striving to exceed them.
- **We continuously improve**, constantly innovate to drive performance and effect social change.
- **We are not afraid to take risks**, celebrating successes and learning from failures.
- **See the bigger picture**, staying aware of the wider context in which we operate and making intelligent use of our resources.
- **Value each other**, respecting the feedback, ideas, expertise and diverse views of colleagues and recognising that we achieve more when we work together.

Our Areas of Work

The core purpose of the RSA is to give people the tools to make progressive change in the world.

Our research projects develop powerful ideas about how to achieve change in our focus areas of education, the public sphere and the economy. As researchers and consultants we work in partnership with organisations who share our values to co-design with them powerful routes to change.

Our strategy focuses on three key aims:

Creative Learning and Development	We aim to expand and enrich the education children and young people receive in school and to create a wider culture that supports learning across society and throughout the life cycle.
Public Services & Communities	We seek to help bring about a shift in power to people and communities so that they can better meet their social and economic needs and aspirations.
Economy, Enterprise & Manufacturing	We want to help create an economy that enables everyone to have basic economic security and to fulfil their creative potential, is environmentally sustainable, and which supports and rewards meaningful and creative activity.

[View our highlights from last year here.](#)

RSA Fellows 2018-2020

None of our work would be possible without the support and engagement of our 29,000 Fellows. Fellows have the ability to help bring about great improvements in society and we recognise that they have a range of skills, experience and networks that can be of great value and extend our reach.

Over the next two years we will become more systematic in mapping and articulate the progression route for Fellowship engagement in all our work. We will show a strong account of the impact achieved as well as developing a deepening data-based knowledge of how progression is best achieved.

We will also increase our support for our most active Fellows, enabling them to increase impact and networks in their areas of interest and expertise. We have already begun to develop more networks than ever before (including over 260 engagement events held across the regions and nations) and these will expand opportunities for collaboration. We will support the further development of **RSA Transform**, a new programme for Fellow-led ventures and we will continue to invigorate the **RSA Crowdfunding** offer, bringing in expertise from our new partners Spacehive.

RSA Global 2018 -2020

With over 29,000 Fellows worldwide in over 100 countries, the RSA is committed to becoming a global organisation through developing innovative partnerships that leverage our research, networks and global ideas platforms enabling us to contribute to positive change around the world.

Our strategy to 2020 is to demonstrate impact by building international, content-led partnerships linking RSA's major research areas and existing Fellowship, with the aim of growing the non-UK Fellowship to represent 20% of all Fellows.

Since 2015 the RSA has invested in a five-year programme to become a global organisation. So far results include:

- Nearly £300k income from global project funders;
- Continued global Fellowship growth;
- Fellows joining from more countries (66 in 2016/17 vs. 37 in 2012).

By 2020, we will develop partnerships around key content and build strong local affiliates in key global regions (the US and Australia and New Zealand amongst others) that accelerate our charitable impact.

Research projects in 2018-2020

Our ambition is to continue to grow in range and influence over the next two years. Major projects areas include the future of work, food and farming, technology and society, and creative education.

Future of Work Centre

Work is the crucible around which we form our identities, make a living and build relationships.

Advances in artificial intelligence and robotics, the emergence of new business models, demographic shifts leading to increased caring responsibilities, and the competitive forces of globalisation are all trends that will further disrupt our labour market.

The RSA believes that a better world of work is possible.

Having achieved its funding target, the RSA Future Work Centre will scale up during the course of 2018 and 2019 into a major multi-partner programme to research and test policy and business interventions that can increase the quality of work for everyone, as well as ensuring widespread opportunities for work.

Food, Farming and Countryside Commission

Launched in November 2017, the RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission is a major, two-year independent inquiry, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and chaired by Sir Ian Cheshire. Its remit is to explore how we can achieve a safe, secure, inclusive food and farming system for the UK, a flourishing rural economy and a sustainable and accessible countryside.

As the UK embarks upon the process of exiting the EU, it's become essential to think afresh about where our food comes from, how we support farming and rural communities, and how we invest in the many benefits the countryside provides. What direction should domestic policy take us? How can we assure public health and protect natural assets through the disruption? How can government, business and society cooperate to support our diverse farming sector, while revitalising rural communities?

This Commission will convene and debate solutions and create new possibilities for action. Bringing together citizens, producers, businesses and academics from different sectors and with diverse perspectives, we'll work together to find common purpose, to identify practical and radical solutions, and make policy proposals which can deliver what the nation needs from food, farming and the countryside.

[Download the Food, Farming and Countryside Prospectus here.](#)

Forum for Ethical AI

The RSA and its partners, DeepMind, are co creating a new project to encourage and facilitate meaningful public engagement on the real-world impacts of AI.

As decisions are increasingly automated or made with the help of artificial intelligence, machines are becoming more influential in our lives. These machines are generating a range of predictions, such as the likelihood of a defendant reoffending or what sort of political messaging is most likely to appeal to a particular group. In some cases, these predictions could lead to positive outcomes, such as less biased decisions or greater political engagement, but there are also risks that come with ceding power or outsourcing human judgment to a machine.

The RSA's Forum for Ethical AI is running a series of citizens' juries exploring the use of artificial intelligence to make decisions. Drawing on the model of the [RSA's Citizens' Economic Council](#), we will use immersive scenarios to help participants understand the ethical issues raised by this application of AI under different circumstances and enter into a deliberative dialogue about how companies, organisations, and public institutions should respond.

Learning About Culture

Learning About Culture is a two-and-a-half year investigation into the role that cultural learning plays in improving educational outcomes for children.

It will provide evidence on what really works educationally and support schools and cultural organisations to use that evidence, to improve their practice. At the centre of the programme are partnerships between the RSA and the EEF (Education Endowment Foundation), the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Arts Council England, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Foyle Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation to deliver the UK's largest ever study of cultural learning. The RSA's research and engagement will also go beyond that study, working with partners to build together a cultural and education sector that is as committed to self-improvement as it is to ensuring access.

[Download the Learning About Culture Prospectus here.](#)

Design – 2018-2020

RSA Design seeks to demonstrate a clear account of how design approaches can enable positive social change.

Bringing together the RSA Student Design Awards (SDA) with our networks, including SDA alumni and high-profile designers such as the faculty of the Royal Designers for Industry as well as the wider Fellowship engaged in design, we plan to create “partners in change” across all RSA projects.

Going forward, we will work to articulate, develop and experiment with the role of design in the RSA’s model of change.

Measuring our impact 2018-2020

Every RSA project has clear and measurable objectives and KPIs which will be regularly reviewed by the Board.

Using internal (and external) peer review and engagement of Trustees, Fellows and stakeholders, we will clarify the impact that we wish to achieve in each of our chosen areas and focus our networks, expertise and offline and online presence on the delivery of that change.

Our influence will be amplified by engaging with our unique network of Fellows in the UK and internationally who share our passion, and by utilising our expertise in methods of change.

Everyone who works for the RSA will understand the impact the RSA is aiming for, the importance of their role and contribution and we will ensure that they have the tools and skills necessary to succeed.

We will also carry out bi-annual surveys of our stakeholders to measure our external profile and value.

We will carry out a further Fellowship and staff survey.

RSA Model of Change 2018-2020

The RSA's model of change – ‘think like a system, act like an entrepreneur’ - encourages people to think systematically about a problem and its context and adopt an innovative approach to encourage change.

Over the next two years we will assess the impact of our model of change – ‘think like a system, act like an entrepreneur’ – and make sure learning is captured so that our approach can be developed and re-applied. The newly formed **RSA Lab** provides the backbone architecture and resources for delivering our unique model.

Alongside the activities above the RSA aims to achieve the following by 2020:

- Develop the ambition and coherence in our areas of work and in each area create a distinctive RSA presence.
- Continue to develop examples of projects which combine various RSA resources (including ever greater Fellows engagement) and platforms to maximise impact.
- Expand the overall scale of our research and be able to demonstrate more concrete impacts resulting from this work.
- Increase support to Fellows wishing to improve society in line with our charitable aims.
- Increase our partnerships with organisations that share RSA values and together become more effective change agents.
- Develop RSA House to become a thriving hub for those wishing to improve society via the creation of a global 21st century enlightenment coffeehouse. The coffeehouse will provide new spaces which will help foster creative thinking, collaborative action and global connections.
- Further strengthen our stakeholder journeys by embedding the “convening” and “change” messages in our platforms, communications and processes.
- Continue to engage our online audiences through our online portal RSA Comment and project blogs and extend the reach of and strengthen our public events programme.
- Create more digital content through innovations including the video series RSA Backstage and RSA Radio.
- Continue to work closely with RSA Academies to ensure that all pupils have high quality opportunities in the areas of arts, culture and creativity in curriculum time and through extra-curricular activities.