



**How this brief will be judged**

- 1 Social and environmental benefit
- 2 Research and insights
- 3 Design thinking
- 4 Commercial awareness
- 5 Execution
- 6 Magic

Please see the next page for further details

# Citizens as Shapers



## Awards

There is one award available for this brief.

### Twitter Award of £2,000

The judging panel may decide on more than one winner and will allocate the award accordingly. In addition, the judging panel may award commendations.

### Brief

Design a solution that harnesses digital tools to increase the quantity and quality of citizens' participation in democratic processes.

### Background

- Participation in public decision making, voter turnout and trust in politicians is low throughout Western democracies. With populism and distrust in public institutions rising, many people report feeling that traditional systems and structures are irrelevant to their lives.
- Citizens are rarely engaged with the people making public decisions that affect them – even though they are often closer to the problems than those developing the policies to tackle them. This divide between policy-makers and citizens means that there is a hugely untapped resource of creativity and insights that could be harnessed, to ensure democracy isn't just about a mass compromise when elections come around.
- Greater citizen participation would draw a wider range of voices and experiences into public decision making, which could help to identify new ideas and solutions. This could also help ensure that solutions are effective, and do not have unintended consequences for groups who are under-represented among policy-makers, such as women, ethnic minorities, disabled or LGBT+ people.
- In the UK, research shows that despite the current sense of dissatisfaction with formal politics and democracy, many people are becoming politically engaged in other ways, for example being vocal on social media, supporting local projects and taking part in demonstrations – and there is an appetite amongst the public to make a difference and get involved in their communities.
- Social media has its controversies when it comes to democracy and accountability – platforms can create echo chambers, anonymously spread disinformation, game the system, and avoid the regulations that traditional media must abide by.
- But digital tools and social media can also open up debate, re-engage people in the political process and connect them to civil servants and politicians!

- Particularly in elections, social media is increasingly used by candidates to communicate with voters and the digital space is a central part of civic engagement.

### How should you approach this brief?

- Investigate the barriers to citizen participation in voting and decision making. Identify a target group and explore their needs – whether that's a retiree in rural England or a young professional in Berlin. What might empower and engage them in constructive dialogue, debate and participation?
- We are looking for solutions that harness digital tools, but also consider the interplay of online and offline behaviour. Pay attention to the important factors that sit beyond the screen (eg face to face interactions, organisational structures, physical environments). What role can digital spaces play in moving people closer to the decisions that impact their lives?
- Explore the concept of 'deliberative democracy', which has informed new approaches such as citizens assemblies, and consensus conferences. How might these approaches be enhanced or reimaged to dramatically increase civic engagement in policy development in the long term?
- Rather than designing something to engage people who typically are already engaged, think holistically about how digital tools can enable democratic processes to better resonate with personal priorities and feel current. You might think about targeting a marginalised group, such as those who are homeless or have a language barrier.
- Your idea can address any level of participation, ranging from neighbourhood issues to national government policy. But whatever the scale of your solution, consider the potential unintended consequences that your idea might have – how would you make sure your idea doesn't make the situation worse or create new problems?  
*(continued...)*

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**Aug 2018**  
Briefs launch  
+ register your  
interest online

**14 Jan 2019**  
Competition  
opens

**13 Feb 2019**  
'Early bird'  
submission  
deadline (£25)

**13 Mar 2019**  
Final submission  
deadline  
(£35)

**20 Mar 2019**  
Judging begins:  
shortlisting and  
interviews

**May 2019**  
Winners  
announced

For the purposes of illustration only, viable responses could include:

- A new digitally enabled way for citizens to constructively input and envision the changes they want to see.
- A product, strategy or event that harnesses social media to encourage constructive debate in the run up to an important decision.
- A tool that captures citizens' opinions for policy makers (this could be in places where normal people would interact with it, such as at a market or the hairdressers).
- An organisation that works with residents to redesign their local services and campaigns for their ideas to be implemented.

... and many more are possible.

### Judging criteria

There are 6 criteria that your entry will be judged against – make sure that your submission materials demonstrate that your solution meets these criteria:

- 1 Social and environmental benefit** – how does your solution benefit society and/or the environment?
- 2 Research and insights** – how did you investigate this issue? What were your key insights?
- 3 Design thinking** – how did your research and insights inform your solution? How did you develop, test, iterate and refine your concept? Demonstrate the journey you've been through to the end result.
- 4 Commercial awareness** – does it make sense from a financial point of view? What is unique about your solution compared to other interventions? Who would need to pay for, deliver or support your proposal in order for it to succeed?
- 5 Execution** – we are looking for a design solution that feels pleasing and well resolved.
- 6 Magic** – we want to see a bit of 'magic' – a surprising or lateral design solution that delights.

### Submission requirements

All entries must be submitted through our online entry system, accessed via [www.thersa.org/sda](http://www.thersa.org/sda)

If you are unable to submit online, please contact us by email at [sdaenquiries@rsa.org.uk](mailto:sdaenquiries@rsa.org.uk)

As you prepare your submission, please ensure that:

- You do NOT include your name, university/college or other identifying marks anywhere on your submission.
- None of your PDF submission files exceed 10MB – this is the maximum size for each individual file / board when you submit online.

The submission requirements are:

#### – 1 x A3 PDF Hero Image, with project title and 1 sentence description

A singular 'poster image' that conveys the essence of your project, and includes your project title plus a 1 sentence description. For example: *'Bare Technology: a product and service design solution to convert old computers (e-waste) into simpler, more straightforward, accessible computers for older people'*. Your hero image should aim to bring your concept to life – make sure it is vibrant and engaging.

#### – 1 x A3 Written Summary

A single A3 PDF page that summarises your big idea using the following format:

##### – Problem (50 words max)

What is the specific problem you identified within the brief topic? Who experiences this problem, and how does it impact them?

##### – Process (75 words max)

How did you investigate this issue – what were your key insights? What journey did you go through to get to your final solution?

##### – Solution (50 words max)

What is your proposed solution? How will it solve the problem?

#### – 4 x A3 PDF Boards Outlining Your Proposal

4 pages describing your proposal and demonstrating that you have met the 6 judging criteria. Each board should include a heading. It is important that you number each board in the top right hand corner, in the order you want them viewed by the judges.

#### – 5 x A3 PDF Pages of Supporting Material

Up to 5 A3 pages of additional material illustrating your development process – this could include scanned pages of your sketchbook or computer modelling (if applicable).

#### – Optional YouTube / Vimeo + website links

Please note that we cannot guarantee supporting films and websites will be viewed at the shortlisting stage. If you have created digital materials, we recommend referencing them (for example by including labelled film stills or website screen grabs) in your 4 main PDF boards.

### Partner information

#### Twitter

Twitter, Inc. is the best place to see what's happening and what people are talking about. Every day, instances of breaking news, entertainment, sports, politics, big events, and everyday interests happen first on Twitter. Twitter is where the full story unfolds with live commentary and where live events come to life, unlike anywhere else.

For the first time this year, we invited the RSA Student Design Awards (SDA) Alumni community to propose a brief topic and vote on the suggestions. Our first attempt to open source a brief topic from this community was a big success, and 2017 SDA Award Winners Thomas Wastling and Ethan Howard submitted the winning topic, 'Citizens as Shapers'.

The brief was devised by Thomas Wastling, design consultant at service design agency Uscreates, and Ethan Howard, Founder of Bare Tech (developed from his winning RSA project) who has recently joined the London Cross River Partnership. With input from Twitter and the RSA team.

1 Demos (2016) 'The Rise of Digital Politics' <https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Demos-Rise-of-Digital-Politics.pdf>

### Key dates

**Aug 2018** – Briefs launch  
+ register your interest online

**Mon 14 Jan 2019** – Competition opens for submissions via [www.thersa.org/sda](http://www.thersa.org/sda)

**Wed 13 Feb 2019, 4 pm GMT**  
– Deadline for 'early bird' submission at reduced entry fee of £25

**Wed 13 Mar 2019, 4 pm GMT**  
– Final deadline for online registration + submission (£35 entry fee)

**Wed 20 Mar 2019**  
– Judging begins (2 stages: shortlisting + interviews with finalists)

**May 2019** – Winners announced

**Jun 2019** – Awards Ceremony