

# RSA Strategy 2015–18: The Power To Create

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# Introduction: context

Like all charities, the RSA needs to ensure that it remains relevant and true to its charitable objectives. To this end, over the last few years, we have undertaken a process of strategic inquiry, development and change. This process was externally focused and looked at the global and national drivers of change, the state of the markets we operate in, our potential collaborators and competitors, and the technological landscape. We identified key drivers of change:

## The challenge

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They come at a time when human capability and appetite for creativity is dramatically rising and more people are prioritising what the World Values Survey calls ‘self-expression’. Disruptive technologies are providing new opportunities for creativity and the internet is enabling easy access to tools that accelerate learning, communicating, trading and collaborating. In both the private and public sector, the pace of change is creating a rising demand for a creative citizenry.

## Creating ‘real world change’

Charities are increasingly emphasising impact. Funding pressures and changes in traditional grant funding models make demonstrating the effects of our work more important than ever. In response, the RSA is shifting toward programmes that are explicitly focused on the external

changes we are trying to achieve and the most effective ways to exert influence to deliver measurable impact.

## **Harnessing our skills and resources**

The RSA is a complex organisation and includes Fellowship engagement, practical research projects, public events, films and animations, awards programmes and external events. The risk is that our impact is wide but thinly spread. We want to strengthen the connection between the Fellowship and our work; in particular our Action and Research Centre (ARC) and public event series and ideas platforms.

# The mission

*“The encouragement of the Arts Manufactures and Commerce... by the advancement of education in and the encouragement and conduct of research into the sustainable context within which the said Arts Manufactures and Commerce may prosper and to make such research findings available to the public.”*

**RSA's charitable objects**

In 2012 we clarified our modern mission, focus and values to ensure the most effective delivery of our charitable objectives:

*“21st century enlightenment: enriching society through ideas and action”*

**The RSA mission**

Our focus on impact led to an account of the current approach which we call **The Power To Create**

*“The RSA believes all should have the freedom and power to turn their ideas into reality.”*

**The Power To Create**

This resonates strongly with our historical emphasis on opening up the process of innovation to all. The 21st century is presenting us with challenges of increasing scale and complexity yet, just as creativity is in ever-greater demand; a vast resource of creative potential remains untapped. We believe that this potential can be released through new ideas, new forms of leadership and new institutions that champion individual and collaborative creativity.

# The focus

The RSA offers clarity of purpose, political independence and a range of research and action powerfully enhanced by our network of 27,000 Fellows. We increasingly work in partnership, not just with Fellows but also external organisations that see the RSA as a space for cutting edge thinking, public debate and practical action.

We have identified three areas of priority, which were selected on the basis of the RSA's existing knowledge and expertise, history, reputation, values and our commitment to impact.

## Public services and communities

*A shift in power to people and communities so that they can better meet their social and economic needs and aspirations.*

The current environment of austerity, an ageing population and shifting consumer demands make this a challenging time for those delivering and using public services. On the other hand, new technologies and the emerging 'social economy' make this a period of potentially great innovation. We will focus on:

- *Creative cities* will demonstrate how the UK's cities and metro regions can develop strategies to capitalise on the assets of citizens, enterprises and communities.
- *Creative public services* seeks to develop a new philosophy and practical models for public service delivery, which show how open, innovative institutions and a relational approach can release the creative capacity of people and communities.

- *Creative communities* will test methods of design and delivery that tap into the collaborative economy and social networks, demonstrating their impact on community enterprise, productivity and wellbeing.

## Creative learning and development

*To close the creativity gap: leading an approach to learning and development that enables everyone regardless of background to generate original, valuable ideas and make them happen.*

Growing complexity and unpredictability mean our economy and society demand ever greater creativity from workers and citizens. Differing levels of confidence, inequalities of wealth and varying skills mean not all individuals are equally able to meet this challenge. We will lead an approach to learning and development that enables everyone, regardless of background, to generate original, valuable ideas and make them happen. Our programme of work will relate to one of the three areas:

- *Creative learners* will contribute to narrowing attainment gaps and broader outcomes through a focus on improving the creative capacities of learners.
- *Creative educators* will champion the development of creative educators through professional development and learning, so that they have the capacities, motivation and opportunities to practise disciplined innovation, inquiry and design thinking.
- *Innovative institutions* will lead a re-engineering of institutions and systems (including accountability levers) to drive systemic capacity for innovation and a sustained focus on creative teaching and learning as part of a wider culture of inquiry, design and disciplined innovation.



## Economy, enterprise and manufacturing

*Unlocking creativity to enable a sustainable, inclusive and dynamic economy.*

**However resources are increasingly scarce and inequality and poverty are an ongoing cause of human misery**

The world's economy is undergoing enormous change. New technologies, business models and changing aspirations are making the creativity of organisations, workers and even consumers more central to our future wealth. However resources are increasingly scarce and inequality and poverty are an ongoing cause of human misery. The consequences of rapid technological change are great but unpredictable. Overall, we seek to release the Power to

Create of as many people and organisations as possible to build a sustainable, fair and dynamic economy. We will focus on three objectives

- *Circular economy* will seek to make circularity (the complete recovery and reuse of all materials involved in the production process) a powerful source of creative thinking among policy makers, companies and citizens.
- *Making* will work to ensure manufacturing will increasingly be seen as an important and valued aspect of the UK economy.
- *Creative economy* aims to create an economy that values responsible, socially inclusive creativity and this will be an idea that has gained traction and which has led to practical changes in the economy.

In addition to these three thematic areas our Corporate Development team focusses on a set of cross cutting priorities and competencies:

- *A global strategy* which aims to increase our insight, influence and impact by working internationally with our partners and Fellows.

- *A design methodology* which mobilises our Student Design Awards (SDA) and the Royal Designers for Industry (RDIs) and our insights into service design to help develop a distinctive RSA methodology.
- *Organisational change* expertise which enables us to identify and work on the organisational dimension of change.
- *Behavioral change* insights which inform all our work but are particularly focused on understanding the foundation of human creativity.

# How we are organised

The RSA operates a matrix structure comprising three cross cutting change aim teams focused on our three thematic areas of work (see above) and four functional departments:

## Fellowship

Our 27,000 Fellows are a unique resource and are increasingly seen as an incubator for our most powerful ideas. Fellowship engagement is central to a recognised and valued (internally and externally) model of influence. Individually and together our Fellows can be powerful

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agents of change and are central to our strategy of steadily increasing Fellowship numbers and levels of Fellow satisfaction.

Together Fellows can drive innovation and if we are able to increase engagement and mobilisation this will add to the overall impact of the RSA. We need to continue to improve how we engage

Fellows and over the next two years we will be piloting new ways of working including reorganising the Fellowship team in line with our priority areas.

This work will be supported by strengthening our central analytical capabilities, which will give us increased knowledge about what Fellows are interested in, what motivates them and how they can most effectively engage and become a key part of our influencing strategy.

## Action and Research Centre (ARC)

Our Action and Research Centre combines practical experimentation with rigorous research to create a unique programme of work. We find new solutions to social challenges by drawing on the expertise of our networks and acting upon the very best ideas.

ARC's aim is now to achieve greater influence and impact; to move from exerting influence primarily through the production of research reports to broader and more varied ways of influencing and delivering impact. This may mean fewer but larger projects and that include a wider range of colleagues and stakeholders.

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The RSA's priority areas demand a very different way of collaborating and working and a more structured project management approach to work; to

support this, a new project management system is being introduced. This new way of working will include consideration of impact and influence before work starts and a requirement to build networks, requiring a more active online profile.

## External Affairs

RSA's External Affairs team works with staff, Fellows, partners and the wider public to generate platforms for ideas, debate and engagement. The team is working with colleagues on a wider range of ways to exert influence and to raise profile. This will include more focused messaging through the increased use of online and marketing expertise.

The press office and fundraising team will continue to work closely on the priority areas and will focus on integrated communication including clarification of the RSA brand and a more focused and planned approach to how we communicate with the outside world to increase our influencing capacity and ability to communicate with Fellows. The new website will raise the bar in terms of the frequency and variety of content and the lectures team

will generate events linked to the RSA's priorities, whilst maintaining the RSA's reputation as a platform for the best ideas in the world.

## Operations

The RSA's Operations team is essential to the smooth running of the organisation from how we recruit and support our staff, to how we use technology and manage our finances. It will ensure colleagues have the tools in place to be really effective and to make best use of their time thus releasing creativity. The aim is to empower colleagues with a greater understanding of governance, HR, finance and to maximise the returns from our income through cost control and better project management. The Operations team aims to move to a more supportive and coaching role through a combination of training, improved systems and more informative reporting.

# Our values

All our work is underpinned and informed by RSA's values:

- *Independent and creative* We value the quality and rigor 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 our employees and Fellows – and treating them as assets.
- *Consistent and demanding* All our work is aligned with our social purpose, and we do not take on work that conflicts with our mission or values. We aspire to global excellence in all our work and make products 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.

# Our governance

Good governance depends on a strong, clear and shared vision, collaborative working and being able – at all levels – to measure impact.

The RSA retains its existing Board level structures, including those of the two trading subsidiaries, RSA Adelphi Enterprises Ltd and RSA Shipley Enterprises Ltd, which report to the RSA Board of Trustees.

The RSA's strategic review is already bearing fruit. The Power to Create has been developed and this approach

**By 2017/18 the RSA will be achieving increased influence and impact across the three focus areas in which we work.**

is now steadily achieving greater traction externally and internally. At the same time progress has also been made in the RSA's overall performance including a number of influential and high profile projects, a rise in Fellowship numbers and an ever-stronger online presence. We have strengthened key aspects of our infrastructure including our human resources and IT functions.

Going forward we will have three levels of monitoring:

- Detailed metrics will be developed within the change aim teams.
- Progress on the strategic development plan will be monitored by the Board via twice-yearly updates on progress.
- Departmental and corporate performance indicators.

Our aim is that, by 2017/18 the RSA will be achieving increased influence and impact across the three focus areas in which we work. Within each area, we will be very clear as to the impact that we wish to achieve and will focus our networks, expertise and offline and online presence on the people and the institutions most able to bring about the change that we want.

Our influence will be amplified by engaging with our unique network of Fellows, in the UK and internationally,

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



The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) believes that everyone should have the freedom and power to turn their ideas into reality – we call this the Power to Create. Through our ideas, research and 27,000-strong Fellowship, we seek to realise a society where creative power is distributed, where concentrations of power are confronted, and where creative values are nurtured.

8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
+44 (0)20 7930 5115

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