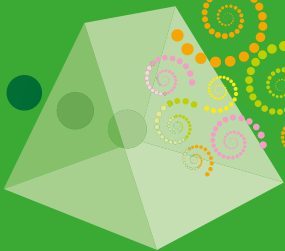


March 2011

NESTA Making
Innovation
Flourish

A Guide to Creative Credits



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Introduction:

A Guide to Creative Credits

A Guide to Creative Credits describes a new model for supporting innovation and growth within small to medium enterprises (SMEs) through knowledge transfer from creative businesses.

NESTA has produced The Guide for policymakers and agencies who might wish to adopt the model and develop their own scheme to harness the innovative potential of creative businesses for wider economic growth. The Guide:

1. Describes the Creative Credits model and how it works in practice.
2. Shows how the model supports SMEs and stimulates innovation in a cost-effective way.
3. Outlines in basic terms how to set up and run your own Creative Credits scheme.

For further information about Creative Credits, contact info@nesta.org.uk

Creative Credits has been piloted by NESTA and its partners in the Manchester City Region and a detailed evaluation has run in parallel to the scheme. A separate working paper will provide initial evidence of impact using longitudinal data. The long run effects of the scheme on SME innovation and growth will appear in a final report in March 2012.

Section 1:

The case for Creative Credits

1. What is Creative Credits?

Creative Credits is a voucher scheme that enables small and medium sized businesses to benefit from the expertise and innovative potential of the UK's creative businesses.

Businesses buying in creative services are – others things being equal – more likely to innovate. This was a key finding from a major piece of research undertaken by NESTA into the economic importance of the creative industries and their potential to drive innovation and growth in the wider economy.¹ Could more SMEs be encouraged to engage with the creative sector? Would this accelerate their ability to develop new products, new services and new markets? NESTA developed the Creative Credits pilot to test whether SMEs might be 'nudged' towards innovation by the use of vouchers that would enable them to team with creative businesses on short innovation projects.

Creative Credits was piloted in the Manchester City Region in North West England between September 2009 and September 2010. It made 150 Credits available to SMEs for use in partnerships with creative firms. Applicant businesses were chosen randomly and both the awarded businesses and those not selected are being analysed, enabling the scheme's additional impact on business to be rigorously evaluated.

2. How does Creative Credits work?

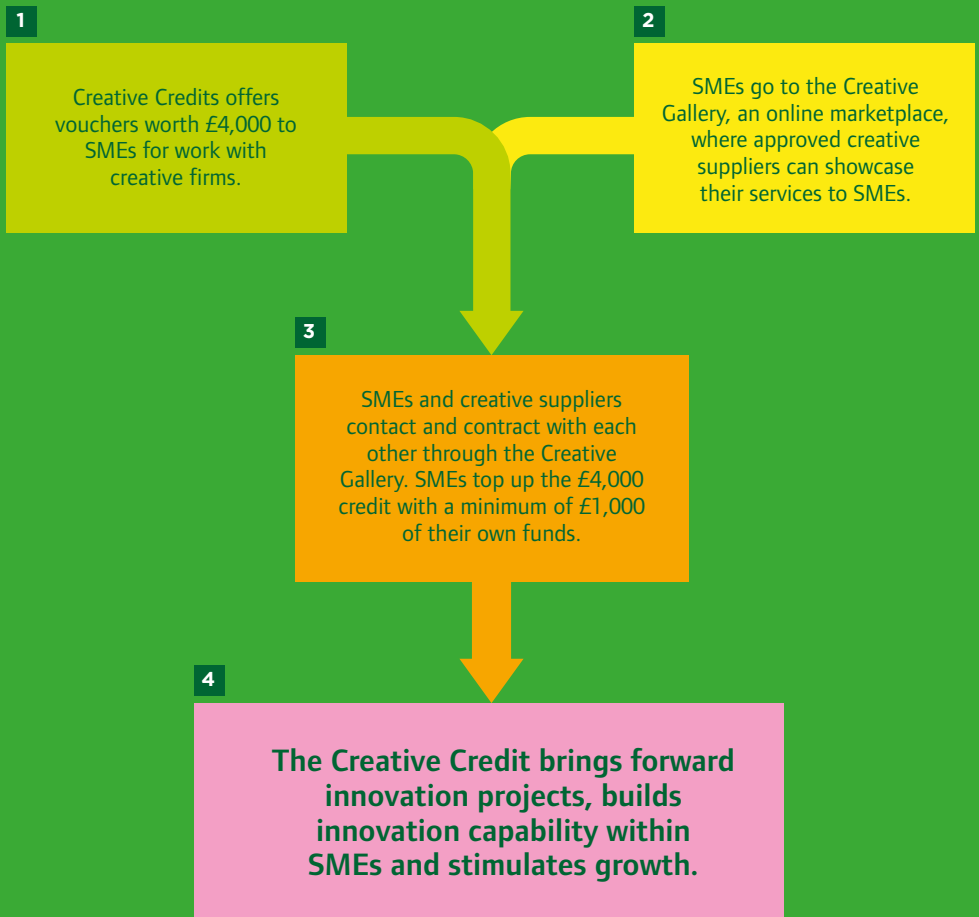
The model for Creative Credits is designed to operate at a regional level in areas where there is a high concentration of creative firms. Credits valued at £4,000 are made available to SMEs for use with creative firms on innovation projects

1. Bakhshi, H., McVittie, E. and Simmie, J. (2008) 'Creating Innovation: Do the creative industries support innovation in the wider economy?' London: NESTA.

How Creative Credits works

NESTA research suggests that businesses buying in creative services are more likely to innovate.

How can we encourage more of this to happen?



that aim to grow their business. In accepting small financial grants, participating SMEs agree to contribute a minimum of £1,000 themselves to the creative project and to spend their grant on services from creative firms in their region that have opted into the programme.

SMEs and creative firms freely select each other through an online marketplace – NESTA calls this the Creative Gallery. Eligible suppliers showcase their creative services on the Gallery and both parties can contact each other directly to identify companies they are best able to work with.

3. What is distinctive about the Creative Credits model?

Knowledge transfer partnerships and voucher schemes are not new, but Creative Credits is the first scheme that seeks to harness the expertise and innovative potential of the creative industries to SME growth.

Innovation voucher schemes in the UK have their origins in a pioneering scheme developed in the Netherlands in 2004. The aim of the scheme was to increase interaction between institutes that generate public knowledge (for example, universities and technology transfer institutes) and SMEs. This was seen as the first step towards increasing and making more effective the transfer of knowledge to SMEs, with the ultimate aim of stimulating innovation and growth.

Eight regions within the UK are currently operating innovation voucher schemes, most offering varying degrees of brokerage as part of the voucher offer: Scotland, Northern Ireland, Greater London, the North West of England, Yorkshire, the North East of England, West Midlands and East Midlands. These offer vouchers worth between £3,000 and £7,000 with different levels of co-funding required of SMEs.

Creative Credits is different in that it seeks knowledge from new sources – creative businesses. But it does not directly broker relationships between creative servicers and SMEs. Using the Creative Gallery, businesses are able to contract directly with each other, and are free to develop a project that suits the developmental needs of their business.

Creative Credits are awarded at random. Knowing that all applicants have equal chance of selection, as well as a light touch application process, encourages a wide range of businesses to apply.

Distinctive features of the model

The Creative Credits scheme:

- Taps into and exploits the particular expertise and innovative potential of creative businesses.
- Supports potentially powerful business-to-business knowledge exchanges.
- Minimises administration costs with no brokerage costs as businesses contract directly with each other online.
- Allows participants the freedom to develop innovative solutions together, as reporting requirements are minimal and outcomes measures are flexible.
- Randomly selects participant businesses, thereby encouraging a wider range of applications.

4. How does the Creative Credits model economise on brokerage?

The Creative Credits model does not directly broker relationships between SMEs and creative servicers. This means it is less costly to run than other knowledge transfer schemes.

The Gallery displays all the information businesses need to apply to the scheme and all applications are made through the website, which reduces the volume of telephone enquiries and makes all paperwork associated with the scheme easy to process. Once the applications of creative firms have been checked and approved, they are responsible for building and maintaining their profile on the Gallery. Meanwhile, SMEs allocated a Credit through the scheme use the Gallery to search for the services they need and to contract with their preferred supplier. Using a website to facilitate business-to-business partnerships saves time, reduces cost and simplifies the matching process for everyone involved.

5. What are the benefits and impact on SMEs?

NESTA's Creative Credits pilot has helped to develop many projects that would not otherwise have taken place and survey evidence suggests that it has accelerated projects in other cases. NESTA is publishing a working paper that will present these findings.

Creative Credits also established new business-to-business relationships, and over half of the creative businesses involved in the scheme worked with SMEs in a different sector from their usual clients.

Participant SMEs are already reporting that their Creative Credits project had increased the innovative strengths of the business and stimulated ideas for new innovation projects.

The scheme may also have brokered business relationships that will endure in the long term – our long-term evaluation will assess this. The majority of participants expressed the possibility of follow-on work. Creative Credits has so far demonstrated a number of benefits for participating SMEs.

Benefits for SMEs

- Enabling projects that would not otherwise happen.
- Accelerated innovation, bringing forward projects that might have happened much later.
- An increased awareness of the opportunities for growth of their business, and thinking about development in new areas.
- New developments and new products produced to a higher standard than without the scheme.
- New skills transferred from partners: many reported new areas of learning such as how to use media and to exploit the potential of new media for marketing and advertising purposes.

NESTA has found that the scheme also benefits creative businesses who contract with the SMEs.

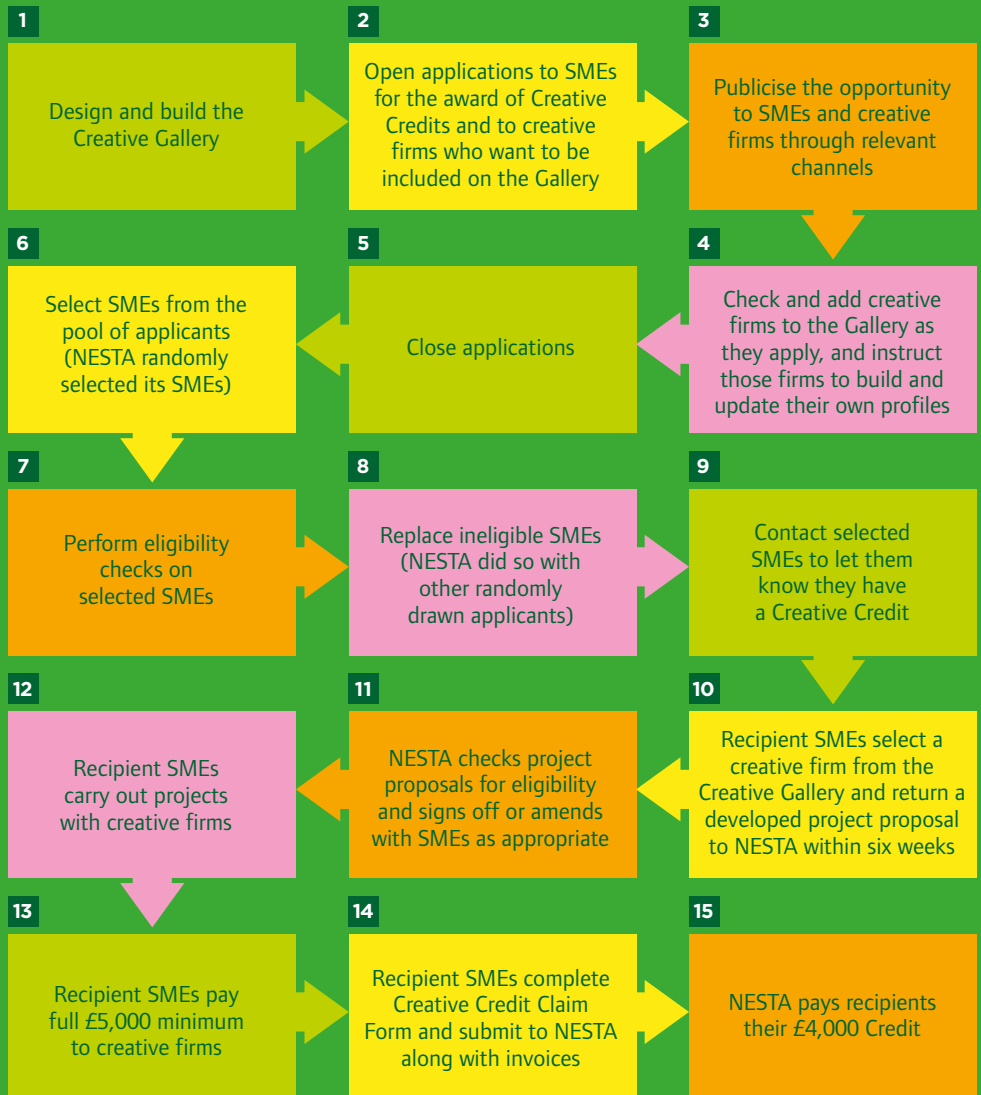
Benefits for creative businesses

- Opportunity to market their creative services to a new set of potential clients.
- New experience within other industries on low-risk projects.
- Short-term financial gains through multiple contracts.
- Boost to growth: smaller companies report that the scheme has brought them into direct competition with bigger agencies.

6. What is the end-to-end delivery process?

The end-to-end delivery process is relatively straightforward: building the Creative Gallery, managing the applications process, checking project and business eligibility, providing telephone advice on the rules of the scheme and processing final payments. The full process is detailed overleaf.

The end-to-end process



Section 2:

The Manchester experience – Creative Credits in practice

1. Setting up the scheme

Creative Credits was piloted in the Manchester City Region in North West England between September 2009 and September 2010. NESTA's strategic partners in the scheme were Manchester City Council, North West Development Agency (NWDA), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), along with Aston Business School and Warwick Business School (who are the evaluators of the pilot).

The scheme made Credits available to SMEs. Each Credit was valued at £4,000 and was designated for use with creative firms in the region on creative projects. In accepting small financial grants, participating businesses agreed to contribute an additional £1,000 to the creative project and to spend their grant with creative firms selected to the programme.

Creative Credits was marketed through various channels in the Manchester City Region. NESTA's partners played a crucial role in promoting the opportunity to relevant SMEs and creative firms through Business Link Advisors, NWDA networks, Manchester City Council networks, and other business and financial advisors to SMEs. Promotional efforts also included a regional media campaign, a launch event, targeted email and telemarketing, as well as an online presence developed through Facebook and LinkedIn. More than 2,000 firms made an enquiry about the scheme through its two waves of operation.

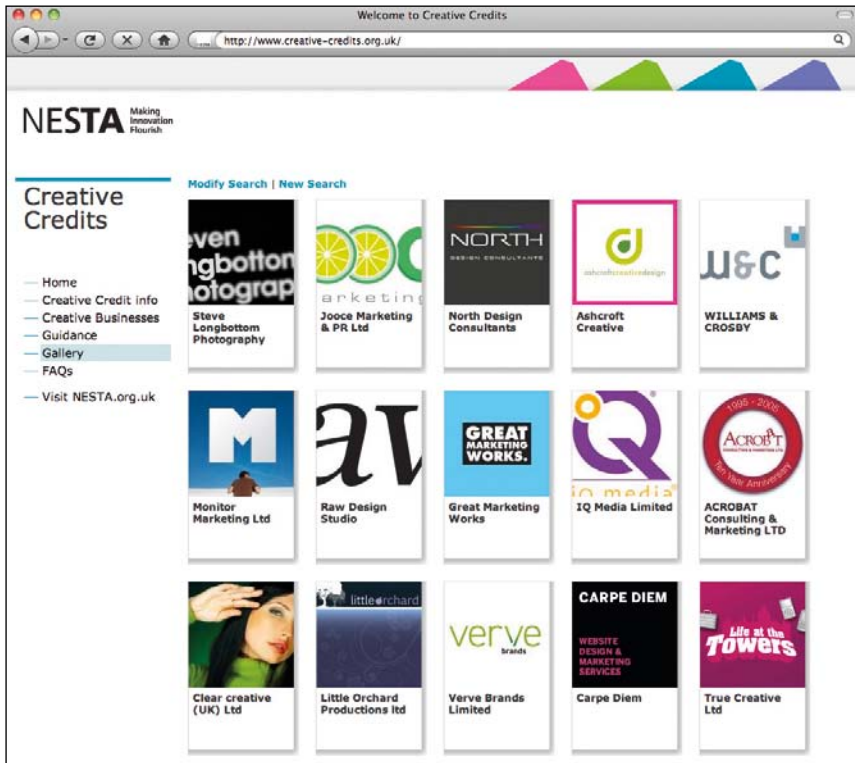
2. Matching through the Creative Gallery

The Creative Gallery was the central tool for running Creative Credits. NESTA developed the online marketplace in collaboration with a website designer. All the information businesses needed to apply to the scheme was posted on the Gallery,

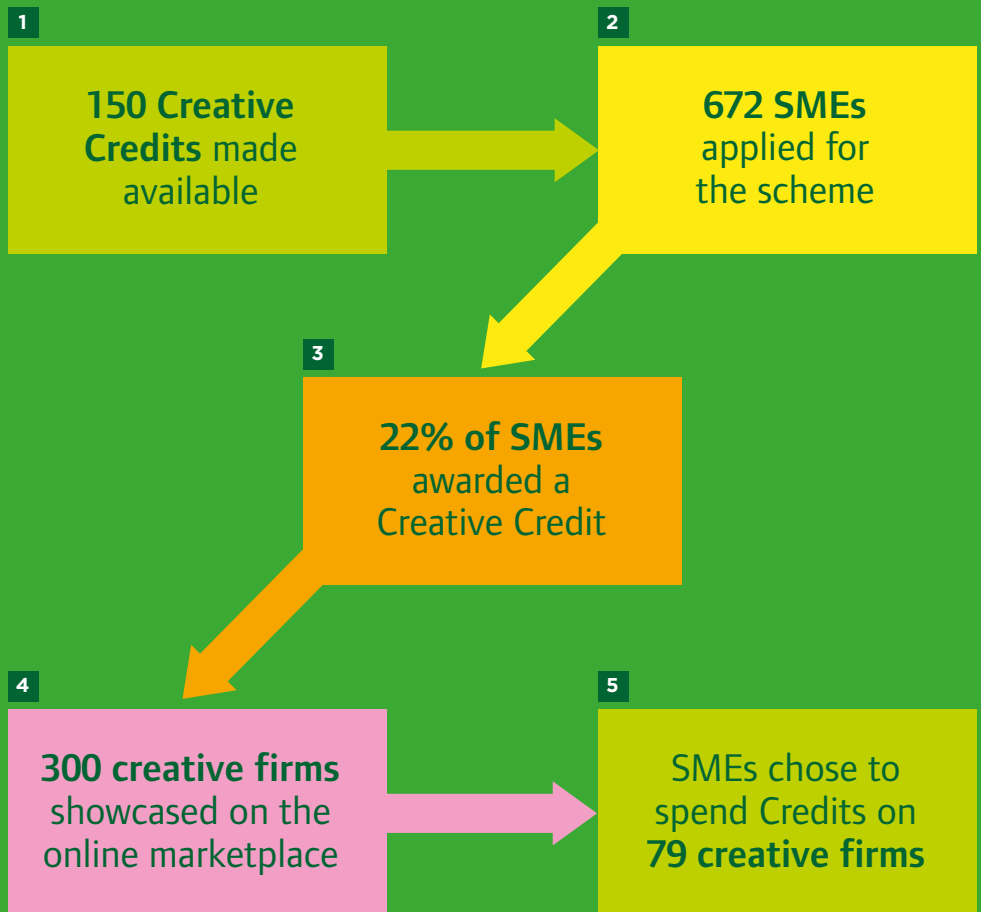
and all applications were handled through the website, which reduced the risk of a large volume of telephone enquiries and made all paperwork associated with the scheme easy to process.

Though it streamlined and simplified the application process, the Gallery's most important function was to enable SMEs awarded a Credit to browse a marketplace of creative suppliers. Once the applications of creative firms had been checked and approved, they could build and maintain a profile on the Gallery. SMEs allocated a Credit through the scheme used the Gallery to search for the services they needed and to contract directly with their preferred supplier without involving an intermediary. SMEs then submitted a project proposal to NESTA, and once this had been approved, undertook work with the chosen partners.

Figure 1: The Creative Credits Gallery



Participation in the pilot



3. Participation in the pilot – the SMEs

NESTA received 672 applications from SMEs, and 22 per cent of applicants were awarded one of 150 available credits. Allocation of the Creative Credits was carried out on a strictly randomised basis, the only condition being that the SMEs met NESTA's eligibility criteria (see below). Applications were invited from all sections of the economy with the exception of the primary industries (for state aid reasons). Creative firms were also not eligible to apply for a Creative Credit.

Criteria for eligibility

All SMEs – including creative firms – participating in the programme were required to be:

- **Small to medium sized** with 250 employees or fewer and a turnover of under £46 million.
- **Local operators** with their main office located in the region.
- **Legally trading** with liability insurance, VAT registration and a trading history of at least a year.

4. Participation in the pilot – the creative firms

Over 300 eligible creative firms applied to participate in the scheme and upload their profiles – along with primary and secondary services they offer – to the Creative Gallery.

Though the marketplace contained hundreds of suppliers of creative services, SMEs chose to spend their Credits on just 79 suppliers (some took on multiple clients and were clearly more successful than others at securing contracts).

Who were the creative firms?

NESTA invited creative firms from the 13 sectors listed below to participate in the scheme, using the definition for the creative industries from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport:

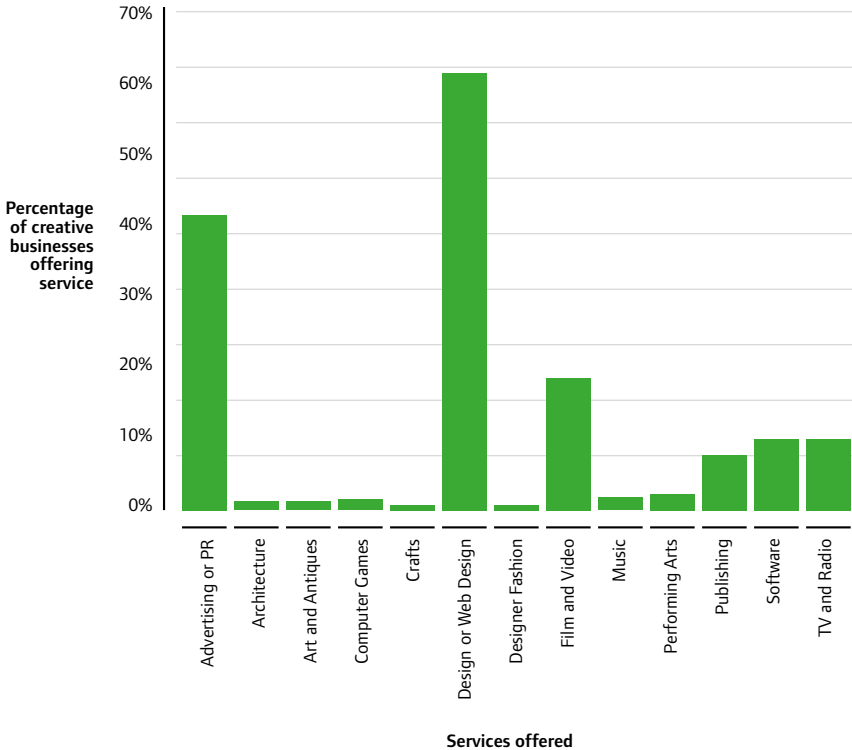
- Advertising
- Architecture
- Art and Antiques
- Crafts
- Design
- Designer Fashion
- Film and Video
- Interactive Leisure Software
- Music
- The Performing Arts
- Publishing
- Software and Computer Games
- Television and Radio

The majority of businesses on the Gallery classified themselves as offering 'Design or Web Design' (79 per cent) with 63 per cent of businesses listing this as their primary offering. Over 50 per cent of businesses offered 'Advertising or PR' as a service (20 per cent of businesses listed this as their primary service). Twenty-four per cent of businesses offered 'Film and Video' services; 9 per cent listed this as their primary service. Very few businesses listed any other service as their primary offering.

'Software' was not listed by any businesses as the primary service but it was offered as a secondary service by 13 per cent of creative businesses. 'Publishing' and 'TV and Radio' were also significant secondary services offered.

Figure 2 shows the services offered by participating firms.

Figure 2: Services offered by participating creative firms



5. The creative projects

Creative Credits provides an incentive to SMEs to undertake creative projects that encourage them to develop a new area of business. Once SMEs had been awarded a Credit and chosen a creative firm with which to partner, they submitted a one-page proposal for approval to NESTA. Activities undertaken through the scheme had to meet NESTA's criteria for what was creative and innovative (published in the application guidelines), with any 'non-creative' elements of the contract amounting to no more than £1,000 (unless the value of the project was more than £5,000).

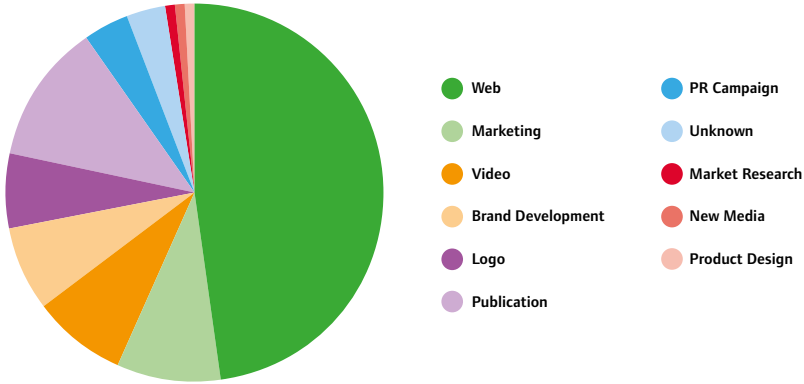
NESTA developed clear guidance around the kind of web design activities that were and were not acceptable under the scheme. Projects that involved expenditure in relation to a website, for example, were asked to be aiming directly for improvements. This could mean:

- Opening up a new market to the business (e.g. providing a route to do business with the public where only trade customers had been targeted previously).
- Altering the way the business distributes its products (e.g. adding e-commerce to a site where it wasn't previously used).
- Providing a new way of interacting with customers (e.g. adding functionality for newsletters or blogs or interaction with social media).
- Improving the way a site performs on search engines or user experience (e.g. Search Engine Optimisation).

Changes that only altered the design or text content of the website without providing one of the above improvements were not eligible.

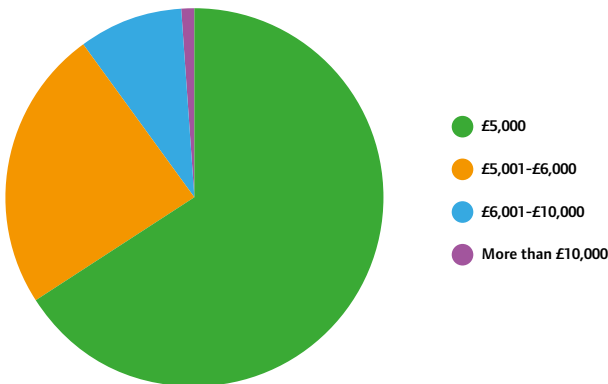
The majority of projects (60 per cent in total) had website development as either their primary or secondary goal, followed by the production of one or more publications (15 per cent), marketing (11 per cent) and video production (10 per cent).

Figure 3: Business goals of creative projects stimulated by Creative Credits



The majority of projects (66 per cent) were specified at the minimum level of investment needed to qualify for the Creative Credits scheme, which is £5,000, consisting of the £4,000 Credit plus £1,000 contribution from the SME. A significant third of projects exceeded the scheme's £5,000 threshold size. Two projects were valued at over £10,000, the largest being £28,178.

Figure 4: Spend on creative projects stimulated by Creative Credits (£5,000 minimum)



Case Study:

The Chook / The Green Field

“I have a fabulous live website connecting buyers and sellers in one clean slick marketplace that is growing by the day. Without the support from Creative Credits, I would not be offering this value to the thousands worldwide that use The Chook.”

Claire O’Connell, Founder, The Chook

The creative industries’ new yellow pages

The Chook is a dynamic online visual arts directory that enables a wide selection of creatives to showcase their work and collaborate across the arts, digital and creative sectors. The site was the brainchild of former brand consultant Claire O’Connell, who had identified a market need and had gone as far as writing the first draft of a business plan and developing several iterations of the brand. Yet Claire was still grappling with essential questions about the platform, and knew that having an external creative perspective was critical to the success of The Chook. As she explains: *“I had this great idea for this company and how it would look, feel and function but it’s not just about having something that looks pretty, it’s about having something that really works.”*

Getting the early support

Claire had been searching for investors for some time without much success: *“At the beginning of a recession there was not much out there.”* The Creative Credits scheme was the first financial support her idea received, and she used her Credit to enlist Andrew Thomas, MD of The Green Field, for web development advice, coaching and his extensive knowledge of the digital sector.

Claire describes her thought process in commissioning The Green Field: *“I want to know who I should build my website with, I want to know what platform is best for The Chook, I want to know if I’ve got my proposition right. Is there true value? I’m talking to a huge audience – so what’s my key message? Is the business model right? I wanted to be really pushed to refine my thinking.”*

Andrew helped The Chook refine the business model and user groups, rein in the language, re-think the information architecture and usability, and consider intellectual property issues. As Claire says: *“Andrew wanted to make sure it connected as a whole. He was really interested, and helped make the overall proposition a lot clearer.”*

He adds: *“She was already so far down the line being a great designer. She had the ideas, but she needed somebody to be able to actually develop the concept from a production perspective ... I think that I was able to provide a frank and honest sounding board but from a position where I was completely on her side and wanting to make this work for her.”*

Mutual benefits

For Andrew, signing up for the scheme was an opportunity to offer his existing and potential clients (often nascent SMEs or lone entrepreneurs with little capital funding) a development opportunity. It also opened up



Claire O'Connell,
Founder, The Chook



Andrew Thomas,
MD, The Green Field

a new revenue stream. As he explains: *“When you meet people who would like to work with you but may not be able to afford to, you can say, ‘Well, actually there is some funding available.’ I was able to push what I could do with them a bit further.”*

Who you know

For Claire, one of the biggest advantages in using her Creative Credits to hire Andrew was the experience she could now draw upon. As she comments: *“To get years of amazing knowledge of everything Andrew has done – that’s true value for me.”* She also benefited from a new network of contacts that had been opened up by the collaboration. Andrew explains: *“I wanted to expose Claire to other people that I was aware of. If you choose the right partner it is, above and beyond, about added value that comes out of their network of contacts.”* Andrew’s contacts included a web development agency and an IP lawyer – new contacts for Claire that have made a significant contribution to the new business.

Taking flight

Claire and Andrew both felt that the Creative Credits scheme still had room to grow – in particular with a more developed Creative Gallery. They also felt that the selection process – randomisation – needed to be explained more clearly to businesses. But there’s no doubt about the overall success of their experience. The Chook is now live with a presence in over 80 countries and growing by the day, and Claire is keen to stress Andrew’s contribution to that growth.

Claire plans to commission The Green Field again: *“I think I’ve got 6 to 12 months, giving The Chook time to breathe and getting it out there as a working tool and effective marketplace. Then I’ll definitely go back to Andrew and say, ‘This is where we are now, how can you help me to grow it further?’”* She plans to work with more creatives as well, because, as she says: *“They add value on many levels and in so many different ways.”*

Creative Credits offered something to The Chook that other innovation support schemes did not – an emphasis on encouraging creative design input in the early stages of a young company. As Claire describes: *“Creative Credits is not just giving money away. It is encouraging SMEs to recognise the true value of creative industries.”*

Case Study:

Applied Language Solutions / Glorious Creative

“Creative Credits has changed the way my colleagues view creatives. They can now see the value of the creative process.”

Anna Simpkins, Applied Language Solutions

Finding the right look

Applied Language Solutions (ALS) is an international company offering interpretation and translation services to multiple industries in over 200 languages. ALS launched a new business division in early 2010 and with it ML Frontline, a new online product for public health agencies, local authorities and emergency services. As part of the launch, Head of Marketing and PR Anna Simpkins wanted to initiate an ‘identity’ project to look at the overarching branded logo and artwork to be integrated into all areas of the new business, and used the Creative Credits scheme to make the process happen.

The Creative Credits buzz

Anna first heard about Creative Credits in 2009 in her previous role in a marketing agency. By the time she joined Applied Language Solutions the following year she says there was: *“a lot of noise about the scheme in the North West. The creative agencies were really promoting it, doing a good marketing job on behalf of Creative Credits.”* As a result she used the scheme to commission Glorious Creative, led by Managing Director Scott McCubbin and Creative Director Tom Shaughnessy, to carry out ALS’s new web design.



Tom Shaughnessy, Creative Director, Glorious Creative

Anna saw the scheme as a major opportunity for the company to develop a new web-based resource, and also as a powerful advocacy tool in its own right. *"It is just brilliant to have funding available to give you the opportunity to really show the rest of the company what can be achieved if you invest in a professional service. I think there are a lot of companies out there like ours where they are trying to do things themselves in-house."*

Glorious Creative was equally encouraged by the scheme and the opportunity to work with ALS. Tom explains: *"In the times that we are in, SMEs generally don't have a lot of money to spend [on creative services]."* Scott adds: *"It's a sector that we had never worked in before, which is growing internationally and they're very technology-based – it was an exciting company and we wanted to be involved with it."*

New relationships

The Creative Gallery allowed ALS to source and compare potential design agencies. While both parties felt the Gallery would benefit from more search features, they both felt it enhanced the process of commissioning. The range of new companies opened up by the scheme also challenged Anna professionally. *"I had worked with the same creative people over and over again,"* she says. *"It's very easy to stay with people you are comfortable with and Creative Credits forced me to get out of my comfort zone and try somebody new."*



Anna Simpkins, Head of Marketing and PR, Applied Language Solutions

A changed company

Through their collaboration with Glorious Creative, ALS developed a keen eye for brand aesthetics. *“The second design decision was unanimous – everyone knew straight away and went with their gut feeling,”* Anna says. The company’s perspective about the value of creative design also changed. *“My boss had been very clear at the beginning of the process – ‘Don’t go over the £5,000 mark!’ Well we did, because they started to see this brilliant work coming through.”*

The Creative Credits scheme also had a broader effect on the company’s attitude towards hiring specialist creative firms. *“People holding the purse strings in the company can now see the difference between getting professionals to come in and trying to cobble something together ourselves in-house,”* Anna says. *“Glorious Creative was able to come up with these concepts very quickly and have them in a format that we can very quickly implement. My colleagues see the cost benefit of investing in a professional creative agency. And, as a result, I hope that I am better at selling internally!”*

Market globally, invest locally

Creative Credits also enabled ALS to invest locally in Manchester, where the company is based. As Anna explains: *“As an international company you’re always looking at your cost base ... For example, some of our web build has been done in India, and while it might seem like there’s fantastic cost saving, the process takes a lot longer because of the time zones, communication challenges, and because people have a different kind of working style.”*

With the Creative Credits scheme, the process took place closer to home. *“I gave a quick brief to Tom and he knew exactly what I was talking about, he was able to pop over and meet us, and understand how the business works. And as a result he created relevant concepts for us very quickly.”*

Case Study:

Concept Shape / Give the Dog a Bone

“Go through a creative collaboration with the spirit that is required – be open to change, be open to challenges and listen to the advisors.”

Ian Morton, Director, Concept Shape

Ian Morton founded the consulting firm Concept Shape to help complex organisations operationalise, manage and deliver effective change programmes in the UK and overseas. Ian used Creative Credits to commission a project his company had been developing but had not yet been able to put into practice: a portfolio of innovative diagnostic e-products for existing and new clients looking for a relatively low-cost option to use his company’s services. As he explains: *“Apart from the obvious funding dimensions of Creative Credits, the opportunity to broaden the horizon of potential partners was very useful, and it was a good catalysing opportunity to get our ideas moving.”*

A precise specification

Ian describes his original idea: *“We were looking for innovative ways to introduce new channels into the business and looking to use the web as a new channel. This is not really groundbreaking in terms of providing services over the Internet, but relatively innovative for the types of professional services that we’re in the marketplace for – strategy development and management of change.”*

Finding the right partner with the appropriate experience was essential. Ian describes what he was looking for in a creative design firm: *“It wasn’t just pure creativity – it was also the pragmatic side and it was the assurance that financial transactions [online] can be constructed as well. So consequently it was a*

relatively precise and, in my eyes, challenging specification and it needed a little bit of care and attention in terms of deciding which way to go.”

Ian short-listed seven creative firms (from his own network and the Creative Gallery) and interviewed four in person before selecting Give the Dog a Bone, led by Managing Director Russ Sidebottom. As he explains: *“Russ is very knowledgeable, he’s been in the industry a long time, he’s got lots of practical experience from before his creative business. So he is a very rounded individual.”*

The power of constructive criticism

Ian describes working on the new project with Give the Dog a Bone: *“They were willing to push the envelope and push the possibilities further than I’d expected – not just on the service, but also on the marketing of the service, which was really helpful. Whilst as consultants we fall in love with diagnostic tools and get a view that these are fantastic bits of intellectual capital, Russ came at it from a marketing perspective and gave some feedback. Now these weren’t his words, but I’m paraphrasing him – he was sort of suggesting that they could be a little bit dull!”*

As a result of Russ’s input the online user interface became much more developed. *“Russ did a good job of really working on the marketability of the products,”* Ian explains. *“And the actual channelling through the website which gets you to those products is*



Ian Morton,
Director, Concept Shape

far more interesting and stimulating to the user now than my original construct would have been."

The collaboration has also allowed Ian to think about moving into new markets. He explains: *"Using guidance from Give the Dog a Bone, we have a pretty good understanding of how we are going to segment the market and get the marketing messages right. The involvement of Give the Dog a Bone has certainly improved all of that."*

An ongoing relationship

Ian was put in touch with Creative Credits through an associate, and describes finding the scheme as *"a happy coincidence"*. Russ shares the view that the scheme and others like it would benefit from greater publicity, to reach even more companies that would benefit from the creative catalyst the scheme offers.

For their own two companies, the benefits have been clear. Thanks to Creative Credits, Ian says that Concept Shape will triple investment into creative firms in the next year. He explains: *"We have a couple of ideas in the making – but of course, I'm quite keen that we leverage the work so far before we push farther."*

For Give the Dog a Bone, the Creative Credits scheme has opened up another route to new business. Russ also argues that the type of collaboration the scheme encourages is an essential skill for business survival: *"In this market we all have to be adaptive."* Ian also stresses the need to explore as many potential collaborators as possible, in order to get the most out of Creative Credits. *"Sit down and speak with them – you get a feel for the organisations and for what the individual's capabilities are like. The individual interaction has a big value for me."*

Case Study: Grimwood & Dix / Dreamscape

“The Creative Credits scheme gave a business which perhaps may not have had a marketing budget for creative design, an opportunity. We hadn’t worked in their sector before, so it was also an opportunity and an eye-opener for us.”

Bernard McCabe, Dreamscape Solutions

Giving a launch that extra boost

In 2009 the electrical and mechanical contracting firm Grimwood & Dix launched its Fountains & Features service, a new division delivering waterfall and water feature development, planning design and maintenance. Financial director Sean Brennan decided that a web designer could raise the profile of the new venture, and applied to the Creative Credits scheme in the hope of finding a suitable company. Through the scheme he partnered with Dreamscape Solutions, led by director Bernard McCabe, and in March 2010 fountainsandfeatures.co.uk, a bespoke site with a professional online portfolio, was launched.

Making it happen

Sean and Bernard met several years ago in a business networking group in Manchester, and had previously considered collaborating on an overhaul of the company’s website. But, as Bernard explains, the project failed to gain momentum: *“Grimwood & Dix loved our proposal, but there was no impetus or funding for them to go ahead at that point.”* The project was shelved until a colleague alerted the group to the Creative Credits scheme and Grimwood & Dix applied. As Sean said: *“It was excellent that you could apply for money to fund a creative project, and the actual process was so simple.”*



Bernard McCabe,
Dreamscape Solutions

NESTA's online Creative Gallery allowed Grimwood & Dix to assess the competition before selecting Dreamscape for their brief. The Gallery also led to Dreamscape being commissioned by the franchise event-marketing company Spice Manchester. Having invested considerable time applying for government funding schemes in the past and receiving no return or feedback, Bernard had initially been sceptical about the value of the Gallery. As a result, he was *"totally surprised to be commissioned."*

A new working style

Sean describes his experience with the creative firm that developed the company's first website: *"They basically went away, dropped everything into a template and that was the site."* Dreamscape's approach was much more consultative, and Sean was impressed by the willingness and ability of Bernard and his colleagues to understand their company. *"They didn't talk about the website for the first hour of the meeting,"* he explains. *"They found out about us and our new division rather than coming in with preconceived ideas about what the website should do, or how it should look."*

Bernard viewed his role as part designer, part educator, teaching the client about the multiple benefits of having a strong web-based presence integrated with the rest of the business. *"The vast majority of small businesses out there know that they need a website but aren't clued up on what the best*

way is to go about it,” he explains. “For our clients it is often about leaving them with the tools and trying to instil a kind of new thought process about how they should be effectively marketing themselves with low costs but better return.”

New skills and a new site

As well as teaching Grimwood & Dix new skills, Dreamscape actively enhanced the site’s content. New bespoke features include a live project portfolio, which Grimwood & Dix initiated but which has been delivered beyond their expectations. As Sean explains: *“we had a sense that we wanted the portfolio, but Dreamscape gave a consistent look to every project. The site does exactly what Grimwood & Dix wanted”,* says Sean. *“It is a profile-raising resource – our potential clients can immediately go on and look at the work that we have done. We are very satisfied.”*

Looking to the future

Grimwood & Dix has recently contracted Dreamscape for the next phase of the web project, to implement a consistent brand across the company’s entire site. Bernard comments: *“The scheme has had a significant impact on this year’s turnover and on a longer period it has provided us with two additional customers in two new industries, who I firmly believe will continue to work with us as ongoing suppliers. I would speculate that this vastly outweighs what Creative Credits put in. You really can’t put a value on that – Creative Credits has had a massive impact on our business.”*

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ISBN 978-1-84875-121-7



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